



© Wissenschaftskolleg

Franco Moretti, Permanent Fellow (2015–2023)

Professor (emer.) of English and Comparative Literature

Stanford University

Born in 1950 in Sondrio, Italy

Studied Modern Literatures at the University of Rome

PROJECT

Dimensions of Tragic Conflict

In 2023–24, I will return to my long-term research project on tragic form, which I see as a small-scale model for those uncanny struggles to the death – most radically, civil wars – that are one of the salient aspects of human societies.

As the tragic scene shifts from the Greek royal palace to Baroque courts and modern households, the causes and nature of conflict also change, but (at least) two formal relationships remain visible throughout the development of this genre: the fundamental properties of dramatic networks and the rhetoric of face-to-face confrontations. Translating a dramatic character-system into a network is arguably the best way to visualize the system of alliances and oppositions that lies behind tragic collision: intuitive and analytic at once, this sort of literary x-ray offers a powerful introduction to the “macro” dimension of drama. At the opposite end of the scale lies the study of the “micro” strategies adopted when the principles that are at stake in the plays are actually put into words: from the stichomythia so characteristic of Greek drama to Hamlet’s puns, Calderon’s cosmologies, Racine’s symmetry, Schiller’s explicit confrontations, Büchner’s out-of-control metaphors, or Ibsen’s prose. Combining traditional literary hermeneutics with the new possibilities of quantitative criticism, this study aims at a historical phenomenology of radical conflict as it emerges from the *longue durée* of tragic form.

Recommended Reading

Moretti, Franco. “Network Theory, Plot Analysis.” In *Distant Reading*, 211–240. London: Verso, 2013.

–. “Simulating Dramatic Networks: Morphology, History, Literary Study.” *Journal of World Literature* 6, no. 1 (2020): 24–44. <https://doi.org/10.1163/24056480-20201001>.

–. “Murder by Words.” In “American Shakespeare,” edited by Maria DiBattista, special issue, *Memoria di Shakespeare: A Journal of Shakespearean Studies* 8 (2021): 347–362. <https://doi.org/10.13133/2283-8759/17621>.

A Passion for Anomaly: Exceptions, Norms, Extreme Cases, and Carlo Ginzburg

Last September, my colloquium on tragic language was cancelled because of travel restrictions. I was about to give the exact same talk now, but - after listening to your "Three Cultures Forum" on outliers a couple of weeks ago - I decided to change plans and replace it with a talk on anomalies, norms, and extreme cases instead. I will begin with a brief discussion of Carlo Ginzburg's "The Cheese and the Worms", a classic case study of an anomaly, switch to the role of average values and extreme cases in quantitative literary history, and end by returning to Ginzburg's insistence on the significance of exceptions.

The talk, like others of a similar nature I have written recently, casts a retrospective glance at twenty-five years of quantitative literary research, focusing in particular on the conceptual difficulties that have emerged from empirical work. These include the implicit (and often wrong) assumptions that have guided our visualization of cultural data and the problematic relationship between quantification and interpretation, morphological simulation and historical explanation. Much like your "Three Cultures" meetings, the crux of the matter has to do with the possibility - or not - of establishing a unified epistemological framework for the humanities, the social sciences, and the natural sciences. Ginzburg's work, with its intransigent opposition to the quantitative historiography of the "Annales", is the perfect starting point for addressing the issue in a radical way.

Moretti, Franco ([Göttingen],2022)

Falsche Bewegung : die digitale Wende in den Literatur- und Kulturwissenschaften

<https://kxp.k1oplus.de/DB=9.663/PPNSET?PPN=1800945515>

Falso movimento

<https://kxp.k1oplus.de/DB=9.663/PPNSET?PPN=1800945515>

Moretti, Franco (London,2020)

The roads to Rome

<https://kxp.k1oplus.de/DB=9.663/PPNSET?PPN=1752188705>

Moretti, Franco (Leiden,2020)

Simultating dramatic networks : morphology, history, literary study

<https://kxp.k1oplus.de/DB=9.663/PPNSET?PPN=1752188128>

Moretti, Franco (London,2019)

Hidden in plain sight : data visualization in the Humanities

<https://kxp.k1oplus.de/DB=9.663/PPNSET?PPN=1759917087>

Moretti, Franco (New York,2019)

Far country : scenes from American culture

<https://kxp.k1oplus.de/DB=9.663/PPNSET?PPN=1662553307>

Moretti, Franco (Torino,2019)

Un paese lontano : cinque lezioni sulla cultura americana

<https://kxp.k1oplus.de/DB=9.663/PPNSET?PPN=1067231129>

Saggi ; 984

<https://kxp.k1oplus.de/DB=9.663/PPNSET?PPN=1067231129>

Moretti, Franco (Frankfurt am Main,2015)

Bankspeak: the language of World Bank Reports, 1946–2012

<https://kxp.k1oplus.de/DB=9.663/PPNSET?PPN=168761847X>

Stanford Literary Lab: Pamphlets ; 9

<https://kxp.k1oplus.de/DB=9.663/PPNSET?PPN=168761847X>

Moretti, Franco (Berlin,2014)

Der Bourgeois : eine Schlüsselfigur der Moderne

<https://kxp.k1oplus.de/DB=9.663/PPNSET?PPN=786705485>

The bourgeois <dt.>

<https://kxp.k1oplus.de/DB=9.663/PPNSET?PPN=786705485>

Moretti, Franco (London,2013)

Distant reading

<https://kxp.k1oplus.de/DB=9.663/PPNSET?PPN=1605398268>

Selections::Essays

<https://kxp.k1oplus.de/DB=9.663/PPNSET?PPN=1605398268>

Moretti, Franco (London [u.a.],2013)

The bourgeois : between history and literature

<https://kxp.k1oplus.de/DB=9.663/PPNSET?PPN=1604817453>
Wissenschaftskolleg zu Berlin