

Call for Papers

Disrespected Neighbo(u)rs – Cultural Stereotypes in Literature and Film

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Neighbourly relations frequently position a self against an Other. This is the case between individuals, nations or within various cultural groups of a nation. Our racial, ethnic, social, or gender identities are created in demarcating ourselves from others who differ from us in culturally significant ways. These processes of identity formation are often spurred by stereotyping the Other. Sometimes these stereotypes take the form of humorous teasing or satirizing critique. Often, however, stereotypes turn into petrified value judgements of others and lead to discriminatory acts, violence, and sometimes culminate in warfare and genocide.

Disrespect of the immediate neighbour based on stereotypical pre-conceptions and cultural bias may lie dormant for a long time and then, activated by changes in the economic and political macrocosm, surfaces instantly and fuels economic exploitation, political suppression, destructive propaganda and, ultimately, pogroms. What had up to this point been recognised as a familiar neighbour, who was defined through linguistic, cultural, and religious distinctions, now not only transmutes into the unfamiliar, but the disrespected and, finally, hateful, Other.

A more detailed look at the rhetoric of recent conflicts around the globe related to religious fanaticism, economic crises, racism, or sexism reveals deeply entrenched pre-conceptions of the gendered, ethnic, or social Other. Such stereotypical representations of the Other are shaped and disseminated through fictional and non-fictional texts, television, films, and the internet as well as in everyday cultural practices. As a result, media products feature prominently in producing, propagating, and maintaining cultural difference in ideologically effective ways. Degrees of covert or overt forms of disrespect range from conventional hetero-stereotypes (e.g. Southern laziness, African inertia, Polish cunning, Greek economy, Scottish meanness, Irish drunkenness) in everyday encounters to open de-humanisation (axis of the evil, unbelievers, terrorists) in times of heightened ideological or military tensions.

The conference aims to probe the liminal spaces of construction and perception in literary and media representations. It aims to lay open the interplay of textual and media representations and other ways of producing stereotypes; and it intends to shed light on the issue of how such representations both react to as well as impinge on the spheres of cultural, political, and economic practice.

The focus of this conference will be on discourses in four geographical areas: (1) North America, (2) Europe, (3) UK/Ireland/Scotland/Wales (4) the Commonwealth.

We are interested in, e.g.:

- nation states and their “neighbourly relations” (e.g. Poland and Germany, Europe and Russia; Europe and Greece, the US and Canada; England and Scotland; India and Pakistan)
- tensions between regions, cities, neighbourhoods, and cultural groups within a nation as represented in literary and media discourses (e.g. TV series and shows, pop culture, fiction).
- linguistic and cultural encounters/clashes between main- and non-mainstreams/regions and nation states (e.g. Sorbians in Germany, Turkish suburbia in Berlin, Bretons in France, Catalans in Spain; Irish in Glasgow, Scottish Highlands in the UK, Atlantic and Central Canada) as created/reflected by media and literature parameters of gender, race, ethnicity, class, age, etc. that contribute to processes of stereotyping beyond and in connection with national and regional strategies of creating cultural meaning.

We invite abstracts of app. 300 words by **December 1st, 2015**. Please send them to Laura.Burger@uni-jena.de.

The language of the conference will be English. This is the third conference under the heading “Us and Them – Them and Us. Constructions of the Other in Cultural Stereotypes” and the first one co-organised by the English Departments of the universities of Jena, Germany and Szczecin, Poland.