



Interrogating Cosmopolitan Conviviality: New Dimensions of the European in Literature

University of Bamberg, 24 – 25 May 2012

Call for Papers

Ever since the publication of Appadurai's groundbreaking study *Modernity at Large* (1996), concepts like "multiculturalism", "globalisation" and, more recently, "cosmopolitanism" have contributed to raise questions about the future of Postcolonial Studies – opening up to issues of "canon expansion" and "rerouting", among others (Madsen 1999; Wilson *et al.* 2010). From a somewhat counter-perspective, attempts at turning Europe itself into a highly problematic region of postcolonial analysis have also been made. Significantly, Paul Gilroy has coined the concept of "convivial culture" to signal a possibility for the development of a new cosmopolitan dimension to European culture, namely one of "radical openness" to its colonial past and postcolonial present (Gilroy 2004).

Rising to the challenge of Gilroy's intuition, the conference seeks to be a first step towards the mapping of individual literary paths into such "radical openness". The aim is to bridge European colonial past "abroad" and current issues of migration, race and ethnicity "at home". Ideally, this should involve seeking out the transformative potential of individual experiences of cohabitation and interaction across European borders – geographical, economic, literary, historical, etc. Such individual practices of "cosmopolitan conviviality", as they take place in literature written in Europe especially over the last twenty years, represent the main focus of this project.

Examples of this literary attitude towards "radical openness" can be found interspersed in the works of several contemporary European authors. Among these are, for instance, the novels *Soul Tourists* (2005) and *Oltre Babilonia* (2008), by British author Bernardine Evaristo and Italian writer Igiaba Scego respectively. Other European migration novels to tackle – if sideways – this issue are Donato Ndongo-Bidyogo's *El metro* (2007) and Tahar Ben Jelloun's *Au Pays* (2009). According to the conference organizers, all of these can be considered attempts towards the redefinition of European convivial spaces in literature.

From an institutional point of view, the conference also sets out to blur borders between distinct national discourses on so-called minority literatures in Europe. In fact, while a considerable number of studies has been published over the last fifteen years which testify to a renewed historical interest in Europe's shameful colonial past (especially with regard to lesser colonial powers like Italy and Germany), wider literary approaches to the same subject matter are still a rare sight (noteworthy exceptions are Lindner *et al.*, *Hybrid Cultures – Nervous States*, 2011; Sandra Ponzanesi and Daniela Merolla, *Migrant Cartographies*, 2005).

Opening up to contributions from the fields of Literary, Cultural, Art and Media studies, conference organisers hope to 1) stimulate dialogue across distinct colonial and migration histories in Europe, as well as 2) chart new routes out of the impasse which has been holding

sway over postcolonial studies since the emergence of notions of “multiculturalism” and “globalisation”, around the end of the 1990s (cf. Appadurai, 1996; Lazarus, 2004; Wilson *et al*, 2010).

Possible topics may consider, among others, the following aspects:

- refashioning Europe as a postcolonial region of literary, historical, artistic and cultural analysis;
- negotiations of colonial memory from a wider European – rather than national – perspective;
- migration to and travelling across Europe as a postcolonial operation of historical recovery;
- debating the need for convivial approaches to national or cosmopolitan canon(s) in Europe;
- defining the concept of the “European” in literature, particularly in connection with issues of cosmopolitanism and the individual;
- convivial boredom as complementary to racial/ethnic/religious fear and their relation to representations of colonial and postcolonial European violence in literature and popular culture;
- how the notion of “intercultural dialogue” in social and political sciences is synergized across different generations, particularly with respect to European literature and the “politics of recognition” (Taylor 1994);
- the Mediterranean as the topical site where European stories of conviviality and violence meet;
- new and forgotten “isms”: Eastern European cosmopolitan “provincialism” and Irish postcolonialism.

We welcome proposals for individual papers of 20 minutes. The official language of the conference is English. Selected contributions will be submitted for publication in an essay collection. Postgraduate students are also welcome to present their proposals for a special postgraduate panel to host up to five papers, each to last 15 minutes in length.

Please send abstracts of no more than 300 words to conviviality@englit.de. Include your name, affiliation, email address and a brief biography (max 100 words). You will receive an email of confirmation shortly after your submission. The deadline for abstracts is: **17 October 2011**.

If you have any questions concerning either the application process or the conference itself, please get in touch with the conference organizers via email or at the following address:

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