

Call for Papers

Interpreting Communities: Minority Writing in European Literary Fields

A Conference at the Institute of Modern Languages Research (IMLR), London

29-30 October 2015

“The three characteristics of minor literature are the deterritorialization of language, the connection of the individual to a political immediacy, and the collective assemblage of enunciation.”

- Deleuze and Guattari

The past three decades have seen a widespread surge of interest in writing by and about ‘minority’ communities across the European continent. Both broad, ‘transnational’ subfields of literary study and more localised and rooted fields have turned to the writing of Turkish authors in Germany, Caribbean and Asian authors in Britain and Somali authors in Italy, to name just three examples, in search of what these writers and their works add to our understanding of the communities from which they hail and the ‘majority’ cultures with which they converse. While these studies have championed the works of often neglected authors and opened up new areas of enquiry, they have only rarely fed upon each other systematically. This conference aims to redress this. By uniting researchers focused on literary texts produced by ‘minority’ writers throughout the countries of Europe, this conference will offer the opportunity for a systematic, comparative study of the content, status, and reception of ‘minority’ writing in European letters across the 20th and 21st centuries.

‘Minority’ identification is, of course, something that is neither fixed nor stable. It is an identity that is always imposed and which alters from decade to decade and from space to space. One of the major issues at stake in this conference, then, is the kind of epistemic work that ‘minority’ identity undertakes and the aesthetic, market and evaluative ramifications of this granted identity. We aim to encourage comparative reflection on how being named or understood as a member of a ‘minority’ group – as fundamentally marginal – shapes artistic response, alters public reception, provides a catalyst for literary art, and forces particular forms of authorial and community representation.

Questions of particular interest include:

- How is difference expressed or resisted in minority literatures in terms of language and form?

- How have minority authors and texts responded to their positioning in relation to a putative 'mainstream'?
- Are there similarities in the way migrant/minority authors' identities have been made across Europe, and if so, what are their implications?
- How do multiple 'minority' identities, not least those of sexual orientation and regional location, intersect with and illuminate each other in 'minority' writing?
- What is the role of markets, marketing and academic practice in creating and curating the concept of 'minority' writing?
- How do works of 'minority' literature interact with and/or alter the prejudices of their readers? Can these works incite change?

We particularly encourage papers which do one or more of the following: interrogate the term 'minority' (and its equivalents), adopt a comparative approach, question the value of prevailing theories of identity to the European context (including, but not limited to, concepts of 'minor' literature expanded from Deleuze and Guattari, and those drawn from post-colonial studies), and consider the practical implications of teaching minority literatures.

Confirmed keynote speakers include Margaret Littler (Manchester), Mari Jose Olaziregi (University of the Basque Country) and James Procter (Newcastle).

Please send a **200-word abstract with a 50-word bio by 28 February 2014** to both organisers: Malachi McIntosh (Cambridge) and Godela Weiss-Sussex (IMLR, London and Cambridge): msam2@cam.ac.uk; godela.weiss-sussex@sas.ac.uk

Please note: Postgraduate students are actively encouraged to submit proposals.