

Workshop: Literature and the Region: Transnational Perspectives.

Convenors:

Dr Margu rite Corporaal & Dr Tom Sintobin (Radboud University)

Description:

Our time is marked by a revival of the region in politics, the media, culture, and literature: folk museums enjoy popularity; local heritage sites have been deployed as tourist attracts, the label ‘artisanally produced’ boosts sales, and local color narratives have been converted into successful theatre productions and film adaptations. This fact echoes similar phenomena in the past: every now and again, the regional seems to be put at the centre of literary discourse: from the pastoral genre in Antiquity to regional fiction – a genre which records the vernacular, folklore, and customs of people living in a specific region (Snell 1998), and which was particularly popular between the 1820s and 1940s, from ‘Blut und Boden’ literature in Nazi-Germany to postmodern rewritings of the genre to what could be called ‘neoregionalist’ fiction of numerous 21st-century authors.

Hitherto, most scholars have interpreted literary and cultural representations of the region through the lens of nation building and nationalism and related processes of standardisation (Donovan 2010; Moretti 2010; Baycroft and Hopkins 2012). This nation-oriented focus overlooks important facts: first, the fact that literary and cultural representations of the region often include interactions between the local and the ‘transnational’ (foreigners, gypsies, (r)emigration, great technological works). Second, the transnational dissemination of texts and images concerning the region, through emerging periodical cultures and transcultural networks across Europe and North-America, in the form of periodical reprints, republications for markets elsewhere, adaptations or translations; And third, reconfigurations of European regions in literature by diasporic communities: while some recent studies (Okker 2012; McGill 2013) have analysed North American periodical cultures in relation to European literary infrastructures, the ways in which texts and images ‘travelled’ between the presses and periodicals at home and the often ethnically specific publishing houses and magazines abroad, is mainly unexplored territory.

This workshop will reassess literary representations of the region and local colour literature in light of their transnational dimensions, in processes of cultural production, reception and cultural transfer. Such an approach can yield insights into how past and present conceptions of the region are intertwined with negotiations of multiculturalism and globalisation, today and in former eras. Furthermore, by examining regional literatures in their contexts of transcultural impact, reception and dissemination, we can gain new insights into cultural infrastructures, readerships and literary brokerage in relation to an underresearched genre of popular literature (De Geest et al. 2008).

The aims of this workshop are:

1. To develop transnational, comparative perspectives on literary representations and literary writings of the region, looking for recurrent patterns that shed light on how the concept has functioned culturally over time and space;
2. To assess theoretical tools and approaches to research regions in literature as spaces and cultural tropes;
3. To explore opportunities for future collaborations among OSL members.

Format:

4-5 Panel participants will briefly pitch their research on the basis of a set of research questions that structure the panel (7-8 mins per speaker). This will be followed by a chaired

debate between the panellists (on the basis of statements, 25 mins) and active discussion with the audience (25 mins).