

IRISH CENTRE FOR TRANSNATIONAL STUDIES



Questioning Intercultural Literature in Europe

Workshop Description

From the mid-20th century onwards, intercultural literature in Europe developed mainly because of postcolonial and work migration, and as a consequence of the disintegration of political regimes and social utopias. Writers of various nationalities sought ways to express their experiences of exile. If we consider its content and aesthetics, intercultural literature has established itself as an unplanned extension of national identities nurtured and discussed in the writing of native speakers after the Second World War. In this context, intercultural literature has dealt with challenging topics and rethought questions of sociological, linguistic, legal and cultural emancipation of people throughout Europe.

From the point of view of literary studies which until very recently assumed that a literature written by native speakers was the norm, many questions arise in the light of an increasing number of publications from non-native speakers. These include the following:

Does a writer have to be multilingual and publish in two languages in order to be called intercultural? Are languages intrinsically intercultural in themselves? What are the consequences, if any, of globalisation on literary texts? Can we characterize intercultural texts as exceptionally close to autobiography? Do spatial processes have a special role in this kind of literature? How can we make a distinction between the intercultural character of literature and the general poetic development of literature in the last decades? What is the role of stereotypes and triviality in intercultural literary texts? Why does a writer choose to abandon his or her mother tongue and become a writer in a 'foreign' language, and how does the exchange of languages affect the creative process of making literature? And lastly, which differences and similarities are there in the intercultural literatures written in different European languages, if any?

The contributions to the workshop focus on narrative and poetic texts of the last few decades, which deal with diverse aspects of intercultural literature. Possible focus points are: genre boundaries, i.e., similarities and differences between intercultural literature and subgenres such as travel writing, 'Bildungsroman', transnational literature, literature of migration and postcolonial writing.

Please note: The main language of the workshop is German. However, we also welcome contributions to the discussion in English!