

Call for Papers

Writing in/as/on Exile

Fourth Annual Research Conference
Department of Languages, Literatures and Cultures
University at Albany, SUNY
April 16, 2010

According to Theodor W. Adorno's famous observation, "in exile, dwelling, in the proper sense, is impossible. In the text, the writer sets up a house... For a man who no longer has a homeland, writing becomes a place to live... [Yet] the demand that one harden oneself against self-pity implies the necessity to counter any slackening of intellectual tension... In the end, the writer is not even allowed to live in his writing." Likewise, Edward Said proposes that the writing in/as/on exile only provides at most a provisional satisfaction; since it "render[s] the text uninhabitable. Better that, than the sleep of self-satisfaction." For this conference, we invite critical studies on the tension of writing on, in, and as exile. This includes exile as a political, cultural reality and state of consciousness, as well as internal emigration (or 'insilio' in Spanish), in which a dissident writer continues living in an oppressed state but acquires the political and psychological status of an absent person.

Among others, we seek to discuss the following questions: How is the disquiet of dislocation been reflected in a literary text? In which ways is the dual (plural) perspective of the émigré been expressed? How do writers (and their characters) escape the lull of a superficial "becoming native"? Exile writing represents not merely writing of separation from home and the insecurity of space, it also expresses the search for a specific, new language that mediates the shock of linguistic, cultural and spatial change, and the experience of solitude. Which wording, tropes, and metaphors are chosen to translate these gaps and collisions? Under which circumstances, if at all, can the writing of the trauma of exile be transformed into a constructive work of mourning? And finally, how do the characters cope with the sometimes implied obligation of their hosts or other émigrés to represent a past country within a present context?

We invite critical approaches to the writing in/as/on exile from different cultural, geographic, linguistic contexts and theoretical vantage points. Although the focus of this conference is on literature, critical studies on works in other media (film in/as exile etc.) are also welcome.

Proposals should include an abstract (300 words), paper title, your name, telephone number, e-mail address, and a short bio (100 words max.). Abstracts may be submitted, and papers read in English, French, or Spanish. Please send abstracts to Ilka Kressner (ikressner@albany.edu, word attachment, subject line "Writing Exile"). **Proposal deadline: December 12, 2009.**

Please submit only original contributions, critical and rigorous in focus. Each submission shall receive a response from the organizing committee by the new year.