

Anglistentag 2015
University of Paderborn



SECTION 3: MULTIPLE MODERNITIES/MULTIPLE MODERNISMS

Organised by Jens Elze (Göttingen) und Annika McPherson (Augsburg)

Abstract Section 3

Scholarship in sociology, anthropology and cultural studies has long debated the notion of multiple modernities, foregrounding the fact that modernization has not created the same socio-cultural and institutional effects across different sites. Originally, the historiographical paradigm of multiple modernities sought to explain the totalitarian movements of the 20th century and their specific relation to modernization (Eisenstadt), but can also help to identify multiplicities within the cultural processes we have come to designate as modernist. Accounts of literary modernism have typically considered it to respond to the challenges of urban modernity that cannot be rationally detached (Simmel). Combined with its predisposition to lack in plot modernist experiment articulates the paradoxality of a world that is humanly manufactured, but ultimately rendered inscrutable by the effects of bureaucratization and industrialisation. An aesthetic celebration of the accelerations and transformations of the world is one strand of modernism that in literary studies tends to be marginalized in favour of such a subjectivist genealogy of modernist estrangement.

In the context of globalization, the primary cultural semiotic shift in the wake of multiple modernities is the replacement of the idea of development with the idea of (global) difference and the challenge of so-called “eurochronology” (Appadurai) that has also reoriented cultural studies from dominantly temporal to increasingly spatial concerns. Literary studies have also long emphasised the globality of modernism and the multiple backgrounds of almost all of English modernism’s key figures.

The section aims at addressing these tensions, trajectories and multiplicities within a now global literary historical narrative of modernism that has long held a “monopoly of legitimacy” (Lazarus). Within this context it invites participants to offer discussions of modernism’s potential to social representation, to investigate its de- and reforming of temporality, to reflect on the materials and materialities of modernism, to offer accounts of alternative trajectories of modernism, and to reassess modernist movements that have as of yet eluded canonization in the field of literary studies.

Thursday, 24 September 2015
11.00-11.15 am
Introduction

11.15am-12.00noon

Anne Enderwitz (Berlin)

The Fourth Dimension: Time and the Evolutionary Paradigm in Modern Fiction

The fourth dimension plays a persistent role in late nineteenth-century scientific romances and early modernist literature. It features in fiction by E. A. Abbott, C. H. Hinton, H.G. Wells and Oscar Wilde but also in works by (proto-) modernists Joseph Conrad, Ford Madox Ford, Ezra Pound, and Marcel Proust. In a historical perspective, the fourth dimension provides a link between nineteenth-century thought and modernist writing. It fuelled allegorical meditations on time and contributed to an understanding of History as monolithic process that subsumes different temporalities to a grand narrative of evolution and development. The fourth dimension was frequently conceived in terms of spatialised time; it suggested a total temporal space in which difference was reduced to different stages of development. This paper explores the heuristic potential of fictional representations of the fourth dimension in order to investigate the narrative of uniform even if asynchronic development. For this end the paper discusses allegories of the fourth dimension in literature. It focuses on E. A. Abbott's *Flatland*, H. G. Well's *The Time Machine* and Joseph Conrad and Ford Madox Ford's *The Inheritors*. The question that drives this exploration is in how far nineteenth- and twentieth-century allegories of the fourth dimension confirmed and helped to spread popular versions of the evolutionary and developmental paradigm at the expense of a non-hierarchical notion of difference. By using the fourth dimension as a focal lens, this paper offers a historical perspective on the pervasive influence of the developmental or evolutionary paradigm.

12.00noon-12.45pm

Kai Wiegandt (Berlin)

Nationalism, Jewishness and Modernity in *Ulysses*

Critics have tended to read the main protagonist of Joyce's *Ulysses*, Leopold Bloom, as a modern Jew whose 'anythingarian' attitude is held up against a benighted Irish nationalism. Bloom does not think his Jewishness and Ireland in opposition, however, nor do the novel's other characters at all times. I want to show that the full significance of Bloom's Jewishness emerges in the context of Irish nationalism at the beginning of the twentieth century. While Bloom does not agree with the nationalist citizen of the 'Cyclops' episode who attacks him with anti-Semitic slurs, he is sympathetic towards Irish nationalism as a liberatory movement, a movement that often cited the story of Israel's escape from Egyptian bondage as precedent for its own struggle against British domination. This complicates Bloom's position that is too often simplistically taken to be that of the outsider. As a hybrid national subject and as an object of mythification, Bloom enables Joyce not only to stage the internal contradictions of Irish nationalism but of Dublin's modernity of which nationalism is a constitutive feature. The discourses surrounding Bloom's Jewishness illustrate that Dublin's modernity is co-constituted by myths it officially denigrates as atavistic irrationalism incompatible with rationalization and secularization. I read Bloom as a 'wandering Jew' in whom myths of anti-Semitism, liberatory nationalism and cosmopolitanism converge, making him an outsider and an integral part of Ireland's colonial modernity divided against itself. Bloom's Jewishness enables us to see complexities of Irish modernity that de-historicizing accounts of modernization overlook.

4.00-4.45pm

Betsy van Schlun (Bielefeld)

Pooling Modernisms: Rediscovering the Activities of the Avant-garde Pool Group

Pool was an avant-garde group that originated in 1927 in Britain and was active under this denomination until 1933. The group consisted of three core members, the well-known modernist poet H.D. (Hilda Doolittle), the English writer Bryher, and the young Scottish writer and artist Kenneth Macpherson. Further members of the group included renowned modernist writers and Pool associated with almost all the iconic modernists of their time, was affiliated with Freud and psychoanalysis, befriended with influential filmmakers and became closely associated with Weimar Berlin film culture, yet the group is little known today.

Pool poses a research desideratum in studying Modernism: Pool is completely different from other modernists in that the group bundles contradictions and unites opposing tendencies within Modernism, and in that it joins technological progress to humanitarian concerns. Pool furthermore unites classical Modernism and modernity, two directions that are usually considered to be contradictory. The Pool phenomenon opens a new perspective onto Modernism and prompts a reconsideration of its canonical texts and figures. However, the Pool group does not merely operate in relation to other modernists but its works reveal intensely humane aesthetic concerns and anthropological ideas about humanity's necessity for art. Contrary to many artists of Modernism, who devised highly individualistic aesthetic styles, the artists of Pool strove towards a universal art of humanity that was rooted in all-human nature and psychology. In distinction to modernist abstraction and the objective, detached and dehumanized images that characterize especially the art of Ezra Pound or T.S. Eliot, Pool were concerned with representational images of the human.

Pool published their own books, produced their own films, edited and published their own international film magazine, *Close Up* and worked in many genres and media. Contrary to many other modernists who addressed only a small coterie, Pool intended a modernist art for the public.

4.45-5.30pm

Nicola Glaubitz (Darmstadt)

The End of Temporality? The Literary History of Modernism after the Spatial Turn

The field of modernist studies has recently turned into an important arena for controversial discussions about the nature of modernity and about the explanatory capacities of the concept of modernity. Modernist studies have taken up the impulses of 21st century globalization theory, which encouraged a differentiation of modernism/modernity into the idea of multiple or plural modernities and modernisms. This differentiation has largely been conceptualized in spatial terms: Modernisms and different processes of modernization in various geographical regions have come into focus, and the canon of modernist literature is constantly expanding.

The dominance of space as an analytic category in the 2000s is affirmed in Fredric Jameson's 2003 essay "The End of Temporality," which echoes the earlier 20th century postulate of an 'end of history', the chief point of departure for postmodern thinking in terms of space, difference, and presentism. My paper will set out with a discussion of Jameson's perspective on the 'end of temporality' in order to move towards a survey of recent discussions in modernist studies that suggest alternatives to existing literary histories of modernism. I will argue that the diagnosis of an end of temporality should not be taken at face value, and that a mere dismissal or replacement of categories of temporality will result in precisely this neglect of critical conceptual work on the problematic assumptions underpinning modernist studies.

My paper will ask in how far Jameson's own move towards formalism and Eric Hayot's 'flexible structuralist' model (aimed at breaking up the institutionalized periodizations of literary history)

actually succeed in criticizing, reflecting and rethinking categories of temporality, and if their categories can function as viable points of departure for rethinking modernism's place in literary history in the light of contemporary ideas of global modernity.

Friday, 25 September 2015

3.00-3.45pm

Kylie Crane (Mainz/Germersheim)

Plastic Modernities

"Plastic Modernities" probes monolithic conceptions of modernity through an engagement in material cultures. The paper thus takes up the "Multiple Modernities" component of the Section to critique the trajectory of development often implicit in thinking modernity (as well as the euro-centricism that comes concomitantly with this). Providing a more than adequate material through which to think the anthropocene and the ecological crisis, and extending on Timothy Morton's observation that we "drive around using dinosaur parts" (*The Ecological Thought*), plastic is attributed with all sorts of associations, which are spatially and temporally dynamic, as witnessed by Roland Barthes' famous short piece in *Mythologies* and any number of more recent tracts like *Plastic: A Toxic Love Story* (Susan Freinkel). In this talk, I turn to Karen Tei Yamashita's *Through the Arc of the Rainforest*, a novel that is centred around a mass of plastic that emerges in the Amazon, and the various affects it effects. Following a critique of the story of discovery of one of plastic's precursors, rubber, itself a material linked both to the Amazon and to the globalizing movements of modernity and capital engendered through colonialism, I propose an interpretative framework of invention and inventory that picks up on the magical realist impetus of the novel. Ostensibly 'just there', plastic thus provides myriads of ways of thinking about modernities, plasticizing our understanding of modernity.

3.45-4.30pm

Jessica Bundschuh (Stuttgart)

"Volcano Time": Temporal Plurality in Anne Carson's *Autobiography of Red*

Canadian poet Anne Carson's novel in verse, *Autobiography of Red* (1998), traces the development, in Bildungsroman fashion, of the mythical figure of Geryon, a winged red monster. The form of the work is not easy to unpack because it is neither a poem nor a novel, but a hybrid. Carson explores this multiplicity in her dual endings: one more lyrical—the hero flying into the mouth of a volcano—and the other more narrative-driven—three friends strolling along a palisade.

In attempting to delight (and surprise) her reader, Carson juggles these two different poetic plots or spheres, keeping them both in the air. Carson's strategy of pushing at the seams of poetry challenges traditional genre distinctions. The only way for Carson to sustain all these potentially opposing elements/positions—the narrative, the lyric, and the hybrid narrative/lyric; the writer, the text, and the reader—is to create, as she does in the poem, a new kind of temporality: "volcano time," essentially exploded time that behaves like a lyrical epiphany. Volcano time includes the past, the present, and the future in one instant, while keeping them still separate.

A reader, then, experiences Carson's hybrid form—her volcano time—by watching how the novel in verse unfolds, how it draws the reader in and satisfies (and deflects) desires. In the end, Carson's reader is poised as human desire (and the hero Geryon) is poised—on, in Carson's words, "an axis of paradox, absence and presence its poles, love and hate its motive energies." By challenging conventional expectations of genre and narrative temporality, Carson ultimately makes her reader's presence in this triad necessary and binding: a literary contract. Instead of

passionately and exclusively exchanging with her characters/speakers—making her reader a passive witness to the affair—Carson creates a poetic form wherein the reader, not the text, is the beloved.

4.30-4.45 pm
Closing remarks