

Writing Literary History: Europe 1900-1950



14-16 September 2015, University of Leuven

This conference is an initiative of the MDRN research lab at the University of Leuven (www.mdrn.be), which focuses on European literature from the (long) first half of the twentieth century. Recognizing that (modern) literary history is currently one of the main sites of theoretical and methodological reflection in literary studies, the conference aims to take stock of recent scholarship and to investigate how literary historical research has modified our understanding of writing between 1900 and 1950. We welcome proposals for papers which consider the following overall research questions and perspectives:

- Many crucial notions in literary studies have been revalued in recent years in the practice of literary history. These include archive, period, book, event, media, genre, generation, objects, style and the senses. How exactly has this conceptual revaluation affected our view of literature's and writers' complex dynamics and functions between 1900 and 1950? What aspects and notions of writing require further attention in future literary histories?
- Recent decades have seen an explosion of new or revised approaches in literary history. These include digital humanities, media archaeology, cognitive approaches, evocriticism and literary Darwinism, ecocriticism, object-oriented theories, affect theory and many more. Which of these are of special value to the history of literature from the modernist period and why?
- Our understanding of literature's 'context' has gone through drastic changes in the past decades. Once universally understood as the immediate institutional, economic or political constellation surrounding a text, 'context' in present-day literary studies means a lot of things, from the 'brain' (in cognitive studies) to the 'universe' (in so-called Big History). How can these drastic redefinitions help us to reconceive the history of literature between 1900 and 1950?
- Place and space always have been said to be of significance to the historical development of European literature. What new approaches to space and place (from translation studies and memory studies to post-socialist research and geologically inspired methods working with concepts like deep time) allow us to reread the regional, national and transnational circulation of European writing during this half century?
- Which new forms of reading to have gained weight in recent years (from distant reading and uncritical reading to non-reading and beyond) are of relevance to the historiography of literature from the modernist period? Similarly, what new or hitherto neglected aspects of the materiality, reception and production of texts can help us to cast new light on the writing in the period?
- The first half of the twentieth-century saw the rise of many historiographical methods (from Formalism and early structuralism to neo-Marxism and early Critical Theory) that went on to play a crucial role in literary history. What aspects of these methods still hold potential today? Are there perhaps other approaches in literary history developed during the period have remained largely neglected but still hold promise?

Proposals for 20-minute presentations are welcome before **4 May 2015** and can be sent to: mdrn.wlh@gmail.com. Case-based contributions that can help us to revisit the writings from the modernist period will be considered, but our principal aim is to foster methodological and conceptual debate and to enhance the dialogue between the major literary and historiographical research traditions within Europe and beyond. For that reason proposals on general theoretical and methodological topics in the field of literary historiography (always with an emphasis on the period 1900-1950) will be favored. A selection of papers will be published after the conference.

For more information, visit www.mdrn.be.