European Jewish Literature Studies: State of the Art and Outlook to the Future

June 13-15, 2022
Institute of Jewish Studies, University of Antwerp, Belgium

10th Conference of the Association for European Jewish Literature Studies | Gesellschaft für europäisch-jüdische Literaturstudien e.V. (EJLS)

Organizers: Vivian Liska (University of Antwerp) and Chiara Caradonna (The Hebrew University of Jerusalem)

This conference organized by the Association for European Jewish Literature Studies and hosted by the Institute of Jewish Studies at the University of Antwerp aims at critically reflecting on the achievements, challenges and expectations in the discourse on European Jewish Literatures since the inception of this area of literary studies. The conference encourages a reconstructive approach that illuminates the developments in the field over the past decades, but also intends to go beyond mere literary history. It is conceived as a forum in which to reassess and evaluate the scope and stakes of actual and potential activities, goals and concerns of this field of research, and venture an outlook for the future. It thus invites participants to bring to this meeting their own preoccupations and situate them in the larger context of the field. We thereby intend to create a shared space for a critical discussion that both looks back and points to new directions – a room with many views.

Achievements

The study of European Jewish Literatures has had a significant impact in the field of literary studies and has made a major difference for the visibility of Jewish Literatures in European languages. It has contributed significantly to the formation of a shared and still expanding corpus and has drawn attention to previously lesser-known authors and works, in a multiplicity of heterogeneous locations and political constellations, thus uncovering both common grounds and differences between Jewish literatures in different epochs and regions. It has fostered attention for the remarkable variety of European Jewish literatures and reflected on the potentials and dangers of canon-formation and the celebration of margins. Beyond detecting, unearthing and bringing to the fore literary developments and introducing theoretical innovations, this field of research has enabled the cross-fertilization of Jewish Literature Studies with numerous other preoccupations and discourses such as postcolonialism, post-secularism,
migration studies, gender studies, the spatial turn, inter-media research, new approaches to minor and minority literatures, and more.

Challenges

European Jewish Literature Studies, has, simultaneously, participated in theoretical discourses that include the awareness of the complexity and the dangers of approaching literature from a national, ethnic or, more generally, “identity-defined” angle. These pitfalls include biased interpretations, the obliteration of nuances, ambivalences and “grey zones”; problematic stabilizing of identity discourses, particularly discourses of “national self-affirmation” (Derrida); “ghettoization” and self-marginalization; an obliteration of the specifically literariness resulting from an overemphasis of the cultural dimension of literature and more.

Expectations

The reconstruction of past developments and the critical reflection on the State of the Art of European Jewish Literature Studies – both its achievements and challenges – will be the basis of an attempt to formulate aims and expectations for the future of the field.

We invite talks addressing the following topics:

- Identification and Reconstruction of specific discourses and/or approaches
- Contextualization of specific discourses and/or approaches in their historical and/or interdisciplinary framework
- Genealogies and/or archaeologies of specific discourses and canons
- Theoretical conceptualizations of the issue at hand, looking back and forward
- Analysis of specific authors and works against the background of the theoretical discussion: either entirely new approaches, forgotten works or a rewriting of previously discussed topics

Additional topics pertaining to the conference theme are welcome.

We charge a conference fee of 70 Euro which includes a two year membership in the Association for European Jewish Literature Studies.

Please send the title of your talk, an abstract of max. 500 words and a short bio by March 30, 2022 to:

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