



CFP: New Perspectives on Imagology

Conference Date: April 3–5, 2018

Location: Department of Comparative Literature, University of Vienna, Sensengasse 3a, 1090 Wien, Austria

Organizers: Katharina Edtstadler, Sandra Folie, Andrea Kreuter, Sophie Mayr, and Gianna Zocco for the Department of Comparative Literature, University of Vienna

Confirmed Keynote Speaker: Prof. Dr. Joep Leerssen (University of Amsterdam)

Deadline for Proposals: January 7, 2018

Contact: imagology2018@univie.ac.at

Conference Website: <http://imagology2018.univie.ac.at>

Conference Fee: regular: EUR 30 / reduced: EUR 10

In her widely known introduction to comparative literature, Angelika Corbineau-Hoffmann (2013, 195) relates the emergence of this discipline to the development of one of its most traditional fields: imagology. Both have their roots in the early nineteenth century when the academic study of literature along national categories was closely linked to political demands for national unity, and when comparisons between both different literatures and different nations as represented in literature were thought to contribute to the field of ‘Völkerpsychologie’. The ties of early imagology in an ethnically-deterministic way of thinking have led to a relatively problematic status of this field within comparative literature as studied after 1945. Although imagologists such as Marius-François Guyard, Hugo Dyserinck, and Joep Leerssen have long since introduced a constructivist approach, which studies representations of national character as “discursive objects: narrative tropes and rhetorical formulae” (Leerssen 2016, 16), imagology has hardly gained the prestigious status that fields such as intertextuality, intermediality, or world literature studies enjoy within comparative literature.

While twenty-first century imagology has developed into a fairly visible scholarly field, a certain “ambivalence of imagology” (Ruthner 2011) can be observed in many academic contributions: Ruth Florack, for example, argues that imagological interpretations still run the risk of conceiving a writer as the privileged voice of a collective and of viewing nations as “Kollektivindividuen” (2007, 18). Zrinka Blažević criticizes imagology’s “obstinate adherence to the tacit universalizing of Eurocentric orientation, and an uncritical metatheoretical promotion of the ‘supranational standpoint’” (2014, 356). Birgit Neumann notes that there is astonishingly little reflection on imagology’s key notion ‘image’/‘Bild’ (2009, 39), and Claudia Perner – who considers imagology’s relation to its “natural sister discipline” (2013, 30) postcolonial studies – concludes “that most basic assumptions of imagology require a fundamental ‘makeover’ before they can sensibly be employed” (30). Taking up these objections, Joep Leerssen – at this time one of the most proficient scholars in the field – lately combined his observation that ethnic stereotyping gained “new political virulence” (Leerssen 2016, 29) in the current ethnopopulist climate with the claim for the continuing urgent need of imagological analysis from a number of “recent and emerging perspectives” (2016, 21).

Drawing on the recent suggestions by Leerssen and others, the three-day conference in Vienna aims to promote academic discussion and exchange by focusing on what we consider four particularly promising ‘new perspectives on imagology’: (1) a cognitive-psychological view of stereotypes and images, (2) the ‘triangulation’ of ethnic framing with other identity categories, (3) a more global imagological perspective adequate to the changes in today’s societies, and (4) a more thorough awareness regarding the modes and

influence of genres in articulating ethnotypes. We are glad to announce Joep Leerssen as our keynote speaker and we would like to invite both proficient imagologists and junior researchers – from comparative literature as well as from neighboring disciplines and interdisciplinary fields – to participate in the conference. Applicants are asked to submit a short biography (max. 100 words) and a brief abstract (200-300 words), both written in English and addressed to one of the four conference sections described in detail below (deadline: January 7, 2018). Notifications about the acceptance of proposals will be sent within two weeks after the deadline. A publication of the conference papers is planned.

Section 1: Rethinking Images: Imagology & Cognitive Sciences

Stereotype/ethnotype, image, and cliché are omnipresent terms in imagology. They point to complex interdisciplinary questions about how we make sense of the world, which are not only situated in the field of comparative literature, but also in psychology, (intercultural) philosophy, and cognitive sciences. Oscillating between hetero-images and auto-images, the tendency to schematize is probably as old as humankind itself and, therefore, suitable to be discussed in a broader context. This is reflected in a growing imagological interest in the underlying cognitive processes of social thinking and categorization. As Leerssen puts it:

The cognitive-psychological model of “frames” and “triggers” has deepened our understanding of ethnotyping, and of stereotyping in general. [...] The experience of “triggers” activating pre-existing explanatory “frames” is close to the hermeneutics of reader response theory, the “frame” being fairly close to the social-psychological notion of prejudice, or what Jauss would call an *Erwartungshorizont* or horizon of expectation. (2016, 24)

Drawing on these expressions of interest in a direct interdisciplinary dialogue between scholars of ‘traditional imagology’ and those of related fields, it is the particular aim of this section to explore the cultural dynamics connected to the triad *stereotype/ethnotype – image – cliché* from various disciplinary angles. Findings in the field of implicit social cognition, for example, provide insights into related mental processes, which occur outside conscious awareness (cf. Gawronski 2010). In this context, scholars working on various forms of ‘otherness’ connected to either ‘culture’, ‘ethnic groups’, or ‘nations’ are equally welcome to contribute to a lively scientific exchange. Papers taking up on psychological, philosophical, or cognitive approaches to the terms are especially encouraged. The presentations may either give a general discipline-specific overview of the terminology or discuss a concrete example in order to introduce “recent and emerging perspectives” (Leerssen 2016, 21).

Section 2: Intersectional Approaches to Imagology: The Multiple Entanglements of Ethnotypes

Intersectionality describes overlapping or intersecting social identities and related systems of oppression, domination, or discrimination like gender, race, ethnicity, class, nationality, sex, age, religion etc. (cf. Cooper 2016). Recently, intersectional theory has found its way into literary studies (cf. Klein/Schnicke 2014), within which it might prove especially useful as an analytical tool for scholars moving between numerous philological and cultural areas. Despite rising globalization and transnational connectedness, languages as well as cultures have retained close links with the concept of ‘nation’. It can, therefore, be concluded that national auto- and hetero-stereotypes as key concepts of imagology continue to hold potential as analytical categories, if not as the only ones.

Manfred Beller and Joep Leerssen have already included various related working concepts and approaches like gender, orientalism, postcolonialism, or race in their critical survey on *Imagology* (2007). They describe their interdisciplinary positioning as “a difficult and open-ended” (xiii) – but nonetheless necessary – task. Whereas their list is meant to provide a broad outline for further interdisciplinary research, Ruth Florack delivered with “Weiber sind wie Franzosen geborne Weltleute” (2000; transl. “Women like Frenchmen are born sophisticates”) a case study on the linkage between gender clichés and national patterns of perception. Despite the gradual implementation of these approaches, the intersection of ‘nation’ and further identity-forming concepts still is an under-researched area; a fact Leerssen recently stressed when observing that ‘ethnotypes’ – the result of the temperamental characteristics stereotypically imputed to

particular nationalities – “never function by themselves; they always work in conjunction with other frames, especially gender, age and class” (2016, 26). In the recent context of globalization, migration, and the occurring rise of nationalism, religion presents itself as another highly relevant frame for understanding today’s conflicts. However, rather than providing a fixed cluster of analytical categories we would like to keep the debate on this issue open and invite you to elaborate on whichever imagological intersection you may encounter in your research.

Section 3: Imagology in a Transnational, Post-Colonial, Globalized World

The historic entanglement of imagology with the European process of nation-building has led to a Eurocentric orientation, with imagological research projects typically investigating the representation of European nation A in the literature of European nation B. An exclusivist focus on such questions has become problematic for various reasons. It not only overlooks the hegemonic function of “imaginative geography” (Said 2003, 54) and stereotypical representations of the ‘Other’ in colonial and postcolonial contexts, but it also seems inadequate to the contemporary experience of living in a world in which ‘hybrid identities’ are rather the norm than the exception and in which the demarcation line between ‘foreign’ and ‘own’ has often become “indistinct and blurred” (Blažević 2014, 356). Combining theoretical insights from imagology, postcolonial studies, and ‘new’ world literature studies, this section aims to promote discussion on questions such as: Does it make sense to ‘synthesize’ imagology with concepts such as Bhabha’s stereotype theory, Said’s ‘orientalism’, or Muftić’s recent critique of world literature studies as a problematic variety of “one-world thinking” (2016, 5) – and how can this task be undertaken? How do national stereotypes function in literature describing migratory and post-colonial experiences, for which – according to Bhabha’s diagnosis – the ‘unhomely’, the confusion of borders between home and world, has become “a paradigmatic colonial and post-colonial condition” (Bhabha 1994, 9)? What is the role of national stereotypes in recently emerging genres of world literature, in which transnational comparison, global cities, and “multidirectional memory” (Rothberg 2009) play a major role? And how do stereotypes of national identity relate to images connected to ‘spatial’ identity categories of regional, urban, ethnic, or continental levels?

Section 4: Stereotypes, Nation Building, Landscape Depiction – How Different Genres Interact with Imagology

As Birgit Neumann (2009, 65-68) points out, every genre has its own modes of representation concerning images. The aim of this panel is to consider to what extent such generic conventions shape the literary depiction of ethnotypes or other social identity categories. Do certain literary genres predetermine how identities are articulated? And have today’s transcultural and transnational societies fostered the development of new genres dealing with questions of identity?

The answers have yet to be found regarding most literary genres. Referring to previous research, Emer O’Sullivan (2011) has presented an overview examining the relation between imagology and children’s literature. Marieluise Christadler, for example, examined the change of national stereotypes in pre-1914 French and German children’s literature and pointed to a militarization in the use of auto- and hetero-images (cf. O’Sullivan 2011, 6). Beyond that, cultural, national, or regional identity may often be conveyed through the landscape, e.g. the Alps in Swiss books, creating so called “Nationale Mythen” (cf. O’Sullivan 2011, 7-8). Further intersections between imagology and children’s literature include: the particular functions of these images, their role in contexts of cultural transfer and translation, as well as the topic of migration (cf. O’Sullivan 2011, 8-11).

Contributions to this section may consider the above-mentioned and possible other intersections between imagology and literary genres; on the one hand by examining genres traditionally analyzed in imagological contexts like travelogues, (post)colonial literature, or migration/hybrid literature. On the other hand, contributions may elaborate on less researched links between imagology and other genres, such as the regional crime novel (cf. Simonek 2015/16), science fiction (think of *Star Trek*’s famous proclamation of going “Where no man has gone before”), or (auto)biographical literature.

Bibliography

- Beller, Manfred/Leerssen, Joep (eds.): *Imagology: The Cultural Construction and Literary Representation of National Characters. A Critical Survey*. Amsterdam: Rodopi 2007.
- Bhabha, Homi K.: *The Location of Culture*. London: Routledge 1994.
- Blažević, Zrinka: "Global Challenge: The (Im)Possibilities of Transcultural Imagology." In: *Umjetnost riječi* LVIII, 2014, pp. 355-367.
- Cooper, Brittney: "Intersectionality." In: Disch, Lisa/Hawkesworth, M. E. (eds.): *The Oxford Handbook of Feminist Theory*. New York: Oxford University Press 2016, pp. 385-406.
- Corbineau-Hoffmann, Angelika: *Einführung in die Komparatistik*. Berlin: Schmidt 2013.
- Florack, Ruth: *Bekannte Fremde: Zu Herkunft und Funktion nationaler Stereotype in der Literatur*. Tübingen: Niemeyer 2007.
- Florack, Ruth: "'Weiber sind wie Franzosen geborne Weltleute'. Zur Verschränkung von Geschlechter-Klischees und nationalen Wahrnehmungsmustern." In: Florack, Ruth: *Nation als Stereotyp: Fremdwahrnehmung und Identität in deutscher und französischer Literatur*. Berlin: De Gruyter 2000, pp. 319-338.
- Gawronski, Bertram [et. al.]: *Handbook of Implicit Social Cognition: Measurement, Theory, and Applications*. New York: Guilford Publications 2010.
- Klein, Christian/Schnicke, Falko (eds.): *Intersektionalität und Narratologie: Methoden, Konzepte, Analysen*. Trier: WVT 2014.
- Leerssen, Joep: "Imagology: On Using Ethnicity to Make Sense of the World." In: *Iberic@l, Revue d'études ibériques et ibéro-américaines*, 10, 2016, pp. 13-31.
- Mufti, Aamir R.: *Forget English! Orientalisms and World Literatures*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press 2016.
- Neumann, Birgit: *Die Rhetorik der Nation in britischer Literatur und anderen Medien des 18. Jahrhunderts*. Trier: WVT 2009.
- O'Sullivan, Emer: "Imagology Meets Children's Literature." In: *International Research in Children's Literature* 4, 1, 2011, pp. 1-14.
- Perner, Claudia: "Dislocating Imagology – And How Much of It Can (Or Should) Be Retrieved?" In: Munkelt, Marga/Sein, Mark/Schmitz, Markus (eds.): *Postcolonial Translocations: Cultural Representations and Critical Space Thinking*. Amsterdam: Rodopi 2013, pp. 29-44.
- Rothberg, Michael: *Multidirectional Memory: Remembering the Holocaust in the Age of Decolonization*. Stanford: Stanford University Press 2009.
- Ruthner, Clemens: "Between Aachen and America. Bhabha, Kürnberger and the Ambivalence of Imagology." In: Dukić, Davor (ed.): *Imagologie heute*. Bonn: Bouvier 2011, pp. 137-160.
- Said, Edward: *Orientalism*. London: Penguin 2003.
- Simonek, Stefan: "Der Brenner und die Nadeshda. Imagologische Anmerkungen zu Wolf Haas' Kriminalroman 'Brennerova'". In: *Jahrbuch der Österreich-Bibliothek in St. Petersburg*, 12, 2015/2016, pp. 166-180.