CALL FOR PAPERS

Contemporary Jewish Women’s Writing in Germany and Austria – A ‘Minor’ Literature?

A workshop organised by Maria Roca Lizarazu and Godela Weiss-Sussex

Friday, 27 April 2018
at the Institute of Modern Languages Research, University of London, Senate House, Malet Street, London WC1E 7HU

The landscape of German-language Jewish writing has changed significantly in recent years, due to the growing prominence of female contributions. The popularity of writers such as Alina Bronsky, Mirna Funk, Lena Gorelik, Olga Grjasnowa, Katja Petrowskaja, Nele Pollatschek and Julya Rabinowich marks a departure from what can still be considered a male-centred canon of contemporary Jewish writing, not least because their works raise genuinely different issues: the majority of these authors come from a migrant – in many cases Eastern-European – background and therefore straddle and negotiate various cultural heritages and transnational notions of (Jewish) identity, alongside conceptions of femininity. Furthermore, their sense of Jewishness and their encounter with German ‘mainstream’ society are shaped less and less by memories of the Holocaust, but encompass various other experiences and histories of anti-Semitism, totalitarianism, war and violence.

These entanglements raise the question of how to best approach this literature. This one-day workshop aims to explore whether the label and concept of a ‘minor’ literature (Deleuze/Guattari, 1975) can be usefully applied when examining contemporary Jewish women’s writing in Germany and Austria. As women, Jewesses and migrants, many of these writers belong to a whole range of minority groups, while also being firmly embedded in the literary market, as the success and public visibility of Funk, Grjasnowa, Gorelik or Petrowskaja demonstrates. So what – if anything – makes their writing ‘minor’? How can we conceptualise the relationship between being ‘minor’/writing ‘minor’ literature and contributing to the mainstream? How do these writers negotiate the various and intersecting components of their identities? And how does their writing contribute to and re-calibrate our understanding of German-and Austrian-Jewish literature more generally?

The workshop will focus on three aspects of ‘minor’ writing in contemporary Austrian- and German-Jewish literature by women, inviting contributions that engage with the following questions:

Minority, Identity, Community:

- What images of the self and the Other are presented in this body of writing?
- What is the relationship between the authors'/narrators'/protagonists’ self-understandings and attributions from the outside?
- How do these texts de- and re-territorialise existing boundaries and/or binaries?
- What practices of inclusion and exclusion are portrayed, embraced, rejected?
- What is the relationship between affirming and subverting the mainstream?
- What forms of community are negotiated?
- What is the relationship between the centre and the periphery in these texts?
- How does the issue of minority relate to concepts such as diasporic writing, transnationalism, cosmopolitanism, multidirectionality, translingualism etc.?
- How do notions of a ‘minor’ literature and ‘deteritorialisation’ relate to other conceptualisations of (German-)Jewish writing, such as for example Andreas Kilcher’s notion of ‘Exterritorialität’ (Kilcher 2002)?

Minority and Aesthetics:

- Is there a discernible aesthetics that unites these works?
- To what extent do notions of ‘écriture feminine’ (Cixous 1975) apply to this body of writing?
  - What – if any – is the relationship between ‘Jewish’, ‘minor’ and ‘feminine’ writing?
- What aesthetic and literary traditions and heritages do these writers resort to?
- How do they approach and adapt the canon of German and Austrian (Jewish) literature?

Minority and the Literary Field:

- What is the role of the literary market? How does it contribute to constructions of minority?
- What mechanisms of inclusion and exclusion are at play?
- To what extent is the minority status part of a marketing strategy?
- What is the role of other public institutions – such as universities, libraries, literary prizes – in creating a minority status?
- How does the label ‘minor’ affect our reception of these works?

Abstracts of no longer than 250 words should be sent to Dr Maria Roca Lizarazu (M-D.Roca-Lizarazu@warwick.ac.uk) by Monday, 13 November 2017, along with a short biographical note.

29 September 2017