Call For Papers

ASAL 2014 Conference 9-12 July 2014

Worlds Within

In 2014 the annual conference of the Association for the Study of Australian Literature (ASAL) will be hosted by the Australian Literature Program at the University of Sydney: the convenors are Brigid Rooney (Sydney) and Brigitta Olubas (UNSW).

The conference theme, Worlds Within, invites engagement with Australian literature in relation to the world. It will be linked with Robert Dixon's ARC DORA project, Scenes of Reading: Australian Literature and the World Republic of Letters. The project asks how Australian literature – both as a field of cultural production and as an academic discipline with a cultural-nationalist legacy – can best be located in relation to world literary space while seeking at the same time to provincialise such overarching concepts as world literature.

Keynote speakers: Vilashini Cooppan, Kim Scott (Barry Andrews Lecture), and Suvendrini Perera (Dorothy Green Memorial Lecture).

The conference theme is drawn from Vilashini Cooppan’s Worlds Within: National Narratives and Global Connections in Postcolonial Writing (Stanford UP, 2009). Interrogating narratives of modernism, nationalism and globalization, Cooppan undertakes a rethinking of the ontology of nation, arguing that nations ‘are fantasmatic objects knotted together by ambivalent forces of desire, identification, memory, and forgetting, even as they simultaneously move within, across, and beyond a series of spatial and temporal borders (us/them, territory/flow, present/past, life/death).’ Such a ‘broad understanding of the nation makes it the mark of a certain locality, rootedness, and even oppositionality, in contrast to the mobility, routedness, and expansive cosmopolitanism that defines the “world” in world literature.’ For Cooppan, to imagine ‘worlds within’ is to think about nations not before or against but in their interrelations with globality.

Some questions that Cooppan’s work raises for the study of Australian Literature include: How does a work that arises from a specific place and time, travel? How do bounded identities coexist with global connections? What happens when a text marked by specificities of time and place is re-located? How can Australian literature – as a field of cultural production and as an academic discipline – best be located in world literary space? How are texts grounded in settler, indigenous, migrant or diasporic configurations located in relation to the national and the global?

NB: Revised Due Date: Please send 200-word abstracts & brief bio by 14 February 2014 to Brigid Rooney brigid.rooney@sydney.edu.au AND Brigitta Olubas b.olubas@unsw.edu.au. Please use ASAL2014ABSTRACT in the subject line of your email.
Papers addressing the following issues are encouraged. We also welcome offers of papers on other aspects of Australian literary studies:

- worlds within: uncanny spaces of nation and/or globe
- globe as national outside, nation as global inside
- relations between interiors and exteriors
- provincialism and world literature, provincialisation of world literature
- ‘always localise’: location-oriented studies
- reanimations in/of national/world literature
- worlding settler, indigenous, migrant texts and experiences
- writing careers: cosmovolcanism, expatriatism, repatriation
- modernism and colonialism, modernism in the world
- modes of memory in national literature
- trauma and reconciliation in national literature
- the poetics of relationality
- questions of untranslatability and the incommensurable
- the spectre of comparisons: double consciousness as writing or reading method
- rhetorics of belonging, poetics of longing
- linear and nonlinear movement – e.g. of narratives, genres
- lost objects and oscillating identifications

Vilashini Cooppan is Associate Professor in Humanities at University of California Santa Cruz, and the author of Worlds Within: National Narratives & Global Connections in Postcolonial Writing (Stanford: Stanford UP, 2009). Her research interests include postcolonial studies, comparative and world literature, literatures of slavery, diaspora, colonialism, and apartheid, globalization studies, psychoanalytic theories of nationalism, critical theories of race and ethnicity, genre theory, and memory studies.

Kim Scott, a member of the Nyungar community, is Professor of Writing in the School of Media, Culture and Creative Arts at Curtin University. His multilayered storytelling is invested in language recovery projects that aim to ‘return oral histories and archival language material to their home communities’ (Curtin University Website). Scott’s fictional and non-fictional writings, include True Country (1993), Kayang and Me (2005), collaborative works for the Wirlomin Noongar Language and Stories Project (http://wirlomin.com.au/), and two highly acclaimed Miles Franklin Literary Award winning novels – Benang: From the Heart (Fremantle Press, 1999) and That Deadman Dance (Picador, 2010).

Suvendrini Perera is Professor of Cultural Studies in the School of Media Culture & Creative Arts and Deputy Director of the Australia-Asia-Pacific Institute at Curtin University. She is the author/editor of six books, including Australia and the Insular Imagination: Beaches, Borders, Boats and Bodies (Palgrave-Macmillan, 2009), Our Patch (API 2007); Enter at own risk (co-edited with Graham Seal and Sue Summers, Black Swan, 2010) and Living Through Terror (coedited with Antonio Traverso, Routledge, 2011).

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