

CRITIQUE/CRITICISM

Annual workshop of the AILC/ICLA Research Committee on Literary Theory

Center for Literary and Cultural Research (Zentrum für Literatur- und Kulturforschung)
Berlin, 23–24 June 2017

Friday 23rd June

9:30 – 10:45 (Chair: Stefan Willer, ZfL Berlin)

Welcome & Introduction

Matthew Reynolds (University of Oxford): Creative Criticism?

Anne Duprat (Université de Picardie, Amiens): Literary Quarrels in Early Modern and Classical Literature – Critique or Criticism?

10:45 – 11:00 Coffee Break

11:00 – 13:00 (Chair: Sowon Park, University of California, Santa Barbara)

Jernej Habjan (Research Centre of the Slovenian Academy of Sciences and Arts, Ljubljana): World Literature between Criticism and Critique: 1848, 1945, 1989, 2001, 2008

Yvonne Howell (University of Richmond): “Kritika” is not “critique”: Drawing Distinctions in Russian Aesthetic Terminology

Raphaël Baroni (Université de Lausanne): Behind the Claim of Objectivity: When French Structuralists Created a Blind Spot by Making Covered Criticism of Plot Dynamics

13:00 – 14:45 Lunch

14:45 – 16:00 (Chair: Robert Stockhammer, Ludwig-Maximilians-Universität München)

Phillip Rothwell (University of Oxford): The Poet as Critic

Michel Chaouli (Indiana University, Bloomington): The Truth Told Urgently

16:00 – 16:15 Coffee Break

16:15 – 17:30 (Chair: John Zilcosky, University of Toronto)

Walid Hamarneh (University of Richmond): Translation Studies: from Criticism to Critique

Robert Young (New York University): Translation as Critique in “Das Kapital”

17:30 – 18:00 Coffee Break

18:00 – 19:30 (Chair: Stefan Willer)

Public Keynote Lecture

Terry Eagleton (Lancaster University): Critique and Postmodernism

20:00 Dinner

Saturday 24th June

9:30 – 10:45 (Chair: Robert Young)

John Zilcosky (University of Toronto): Critical Ethnographies: Anthropology, Psychoanalysis, Literature

Eva Geulen (ZfL Berlin): Is it Possible to Criticize Forms of Life? A Critical Discussion of Rahel Jaeggi

10:45 – 11:00 Coffee Break

11:00 – 12:15 (Chair: Sowon Park)

Divya Dwivedi (Indian Institute of Technology Delhi): Criticism, Critique and the Ontology of the Literary

Stefan Willer (ZfL Berlin): Bruno Latour's Anti-Critique as a Phenomenon of Literary Criticism

12:15 – 12:45 Short Lunch Break

12:45 – 13:45

Business Meeting

14:00 – 18:30

Excursion

Matthew Reynolds (University of Oxford): Inventive Criticism

In the UK and USA recently, modes of writing advertised as ‘creative criticism’ are enjoying a surge. The paradox in the phrase is fun but it does more to obscure than illuminate what such writing does and how it should be taken. I’ll suggest that the word ‘inventive’ offers a better way in to the questions raised by ‘creative criticism.’ Throughout its history, *inventio* / invention has oscillated between meaning ‘discovery’ and ‘making-up’, a wobble which points to the difficulty of maintaining a border between criticism that is ‘creative’ and criticism that is somehow not. The same difficulty appears in discussions of translation, where a fantasy border is again often drawn between ‘creative translation’ and another kind, supposed to be straightforward and (now) automatable. An important function of these distinctions is to hide the creativity that operates in all translations and all criticism; this may have some bearing also on the distinction between criticism and critique.

Likely points of reference are Barthes, Dryden, Christine Brooke-Rose, Christopher Ricks, Pierre Bayard and some recent ‘creative’ critics and translators.

Anne Duprat (Université de Picardie): Literary Quarrels in Early Modern and Classical Literature – Critique or Criticism?

My communication will be centered upon the role played by academic quarrels in 16th and 17th c. France and Italy. This epoch saw a rise of literary critique as a field of knowledge, and as a power/or counter-power against the rule of moral, religious and political judgement on works of art. Insofar as this example challenges the distinction between critique and criticism, it will allow me to enquire into the exact nature of the violence attributed, then and now, to literary critique when it is regarded as criticism.

Jernej Habjan (Research Centre of the Slovenian Academy of Sciences and Arts, Ljubljana): World Literature between Criticism and Critique: 1848, 1945, 1989, 2001, 2008

World literature has always been thought in terms of crisis. A year before the Revolutions of 1848, Marx and Engels turned Goethe’s metaphor, *Weltliteratur*, into a metonymy: instead of likening world literature to the world market, they saw both as parts of the rising bourgeois society and its crisis-ridden mode of production. This notion of *Weltliteratur* has haunted Auerbach, Curtius, and Spitzer after the fall of Nazi Germany but also Ahmad and Jameson before the fall of the Berlin Wall—only to haunt literary studies as such after the fall first of the Twin Towers and then of Lehman Brothers.

Yvonne Howell (University of Richmond): “Kritika” is not “critique”: Drawing Distinctions in Russian Aesthetic Terminology

The extreme concentration of political force within official Party echelons in the Soviet system created an anomalous traffic pattern for artistic and intellectual creativity. Under the guise of rigorously “scientific,” objective studies of systems, structures, and forms, Russian literary scholars have periodically revealed to themselves and to the world seminal critiques of both Soviet and Western dogmas. In practice, from the 1920s on, Soviet *literary science* (*literaturovedenie*) and Soviet *literary criticism* (*kritika*) were severed into two distinct spheres. This paper revisits the origins of the distinction in the works of Vladimir Propp and Yury Tynianov and concludes with observations about the critical field during Putin’s third term.

Raphaël Baroni (University of Lausanne): Behind the Claim of Objectivity: When French Structuralists Created a Blind Spot by Making Covered Criticism of Plot Dynamics

In 1966, Genette explained that the epistemology of structuralism consisted in “a positive study, exclusively for the purpose of knowledge, of the conditions of existence of literary works”. In the same article, he explained that this approach had to be clearly distinguished from another meaning of the word “criticism”, referring to the act of “judging and appreciating recent works in order to clarify the choices of the public.” In this conception, narrative theory was supposed to avoid evaluative judgments in order to describe objectively narrative structures. Many years later, some narratologists informed by functionalist epistemologies, argued that French structuralists were unable to deal with issues such as narrative interests and plot dynamics. One could think that the main reason for this blind spot was epistemological, but I will show that reflections on narrative dynamics existed in the works of structuralists, but they were marginalized, essentially for aesthetical and ideological reasons, thus blurring the frontiers between critique and criticism.

Phillip Rothwell (University of Oxford): The Poet as Critic

In this paper, I discuss the evolution of the concept of “crítica” among pre-independence poets based in Portuguese-speaking Africa. I begin with a discussion of the Portuguese term’s broader semantic range, encompassing more than either “critique” and “criticism,” before analysing through a number of examples how it came to be used as a tool of resistance to Portuguese colonial rule. In other words, what interests me is the ideological load of critique/criticism as something that passes for aesthetic judgment but sits comfortably in the realm of political action.

Michel Chaouli (Indiana University, Bloomington): The Truth Told Urgently

“Poetry,” Friedrich Schlegel once wrote, “can only be criticized by poetry.” What sort of critique, what sort of criticism does that yield? Critique and criticism are poetic when they venture new speech. The novelty of this speech lies not in a new approach or a new insight; it lies rather in its telling and the place from which the telling happens. Once the voice abandons the idioms of knowingness, once it is exposed—naked—to its own vulnerability, it is prepared to speak the truth with passion and urgency. That is the place from which true critique issues.

Walid Hamarneh (University of Richmond): Translation Studies: From Criticism to Critique

Despite the fact that ideas and theories about translation and translational activities have been with us for many centuries, translation studies as an institutionalized knowledge practice is relatively young. Without getting into a detailed discussion of its history and the few controversies surrounding that process, it can be safely maintained that translation studies came into being during the second half of the twentieth century. But what is interesting is the dual relationship of the rise of the discipline to both translation practice as well as theoretical shifts within neighboring disciplines like linguistics, semiotics, and literary theory. In examining more recent paradigmatic shifts within translation studies, especially the shift of emphasis from the source text to the target text, I will present this shift as more due to the impact of theoretical paradigms in the neighboring disciplines rather than being related to translational activities nor history of translation. This shift can be best seen as analogical to the shift from criticism to critique in literary studies. I will use some examples from the history of translation that could have easily facilitated this shift but have generally been ignored to provide some evidence for the hypothesis presented above.

Robert Young (New York University): Translation as Critique in *Das Kapital*

Much has been written about the original multilingual appearance of Marx’s *Capital* in German, French and English, and the problems of translating Marx’s unfinished text. *Capital* itself, however, also offers its own account of translation as an intrinsic part of the critique itself: of the transformation of commodities into capital and of capital into commodities, of the conversion of labor into abstract labor defined by its translatability, and the transnational translation of capital designed to produce its own surplus, gain or return.

KEYNOTE LECTURE

Terry Eagleton (Lancaster University): Critique and Postmodernism

Postmodern pluralism, with its scepticism of totality, nervousness of truth and accommodation to the present, may be thought to put into question a certain classical idea of critique. The paper shall seek to defend this traditional concept in the light of various political and epistemological issues which might seem to undermine it.

John Zilcosky (University of Toronto): Critical Ethnographies: Literature, Psychoanalysis, Anthropology

From within the larger fields of “critical anthropology” and the “anthropology of literature,” I will ask how modernist literature uses narrative perspective to investigate the problem of ethno-graphy in the broadest sense: What do we write about when we write about (other) people? Do “they” even exist? How much of our ethnography is fiction? And not just any fiction but an ironic one, in which the narrator/ethnographer produces a gap between himself and his “character”? My aim is to demonstrate how literature’s focus on perspective provides new insights into the main ethical questions confronting the other two major forms of modern ethnography around 1900: anthropology and psychoanalysis. Is it desirable to narrow the gap between observer and observed? And even if it were, is such a thing even possible?

Eva Geulen (ZfL Berlin): Is it Possible to Criticize Forms of Life? A Critical Discussion of Rahel Jaeggi

According to German philosopher Rahel Jaeggi (*Critique of Life Forms*, 2013), ‘external’ critique finds its standard outside the situation criticized by hypostasizing a particular or universalist norm. By contrast, ‘internal’ critique relies on a reigning recognized norm and measures its shortcomings by that norm. This distinction is finally absorbed by ‘immanent’ critique in which objects or practices are said to criticize themselves. I will discuss Jaeggi’s typology against the background of the current crisis of critique in public discourse. More generally, I will ask how exactly critique and crisis relate.

Divya Dwivedi (Indian Institute of Technology, Delhi): Criticism, Critique, and the Ontology of the Literary

It is the relation to time defined as the transcendental condition of experience that one the one hand criticism and critique are distinguished and on the other hand as Jean-Luc Nancy and Philippe Lacoue Labarthe find, a new relation to literature is opened. The opening is one in which the meaning of ontology as well as the possibility of the ontology of literature can be explored.

Stefan Willer (ZfL Berlin): Bruno Latour's Anti-Critique as a Phenomenon of Literary Criticism

Over the last years Bruno Latour repeatedly attacked critique as such, both for its destructive means and for its utopian aims. It is quite striking, though, that his relevant papers first appeared in journals that are fora of the critical tradition (*Critical Inquiry*, *New Literary History*). Given this obvious discrepancy, I will attempt a re-reading of Latour's anti-critique, examining the ways in which it is situated, addressed, and received. For the context of our workshop, references to literary criticism are of major interest, and so is the broad reception of Latour's theses in recent literary studies.