Hospitality and Hostility in the Multilingual Global Village

Third International Conference of the Department of Modern Languages and Literatures, University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg, South Africa: 12 -15 September 2011

FIRST CALL FOR PAPERS

Deadline for proposals: 31st March 2011

This conference aims to bring together scholars from a number of disciplines, interested in the question of hospitality and hostility not only in today’s globalized world, but also in previous centuries when cosmopolitanism was viewed as an ideal. This topic is closely related to cultural diversity and integration, globalization, multilingualism, identity, as well as the creolization of languages, amongst others. The proposed outcome is one or more refereed publications.

The theme of the conference alludes to Immanuel Kant’s famous definition of hospitality as a human right which he offered in his seminal treatise Perpetual Peace (1795). Hospitality, which he saw as a precondition for world citizenship or cosmopolitanism, is based on our common possession of the earth. Yet Jacques Derrida (1995) problematized this notion of hospitality when he posed the question whether the host could not become the hostage of the foreigner. The conflict already exists in the etymology of the keywords: host or guest (hospes) and enemy (hostis). With the typical relativism of the Enlightened, Voltaire had suggested with reference to the colonizer that the host’s hostility is a by-product of the savage guest in his tragedy, Alzire où les Américains (1736): “Notre nom, je l’avoue, inspire la terreur, / les espagnols sont craints, mais ils sont en horreur: / fléaux du nouveau monde, injustes, vains, aaves, / nous seuls en ces climats, nous sommes les barbares”.

Proposals are invited on topics that offer fresh approaches to the study of these questions in their relation to European, Francophone, Lusophone, Hispanic etc. languages and literatures.

Suggested topics may include, but are not limited to:

- Linguistic identity versus multilingualism
- The theme of migration in literature
- Inclusion versus exclusion
- Literary constructions of otherness
- The representation of ethnicity and xenophobia in literature and the arts
Abstracts of a maximum of 300 words, along with a short biography stating background and research interests, should be sent to:

General/English: Kathleen.Thorpe@wits.ac.za
French: Alexia.Vassilatos@wits.ac.za
Italian: Franco.Arato@wits.ac.za
German: Anette.Horn@wits.ac.za
Spanish and Portuguese: Ana.Rocha@wits.ac.za

Abstracts must be received no later than 31st March 2011
The conference will have plenary and parallel sessions grouped according to topic and/or language.
Papers may be in English, French, German, Italian, Portuguese or Spanish.
Invited key-note speakers will have a maximum of 45 minutes allocated for their presentation and other delegates should prepare papers that are no more than 20 minutes in length.
For further information please contact the conference organizer:
Kathleen.Thorpe@wits.ac.za