

ESF-COST Synergy Initiative 2009-2010

Cultural Literacy in Contemporary Europe

A Context

A.1 The proposed ESF-COST synergy will identify, highlight and advance the contribution made to European society and intellectual culture by the body of contemporary research grouped around '**literary studies**'. The focus of the project centres on the policy and broader social relevance of this research. In the past 40 years, the research pursued by academics trained in philological, literary-historical and allied fields has broadened out to include a wide range of interdisciplinary domains. It is proposed to refer to this field of research as 'literary-and-cultural studies' or LCS.

A.2 LCS research has a new range of objects of study. No longer restricted to the study of printed books or other fictional genres, LCS researchers focus on cultural objects or 'text-like structured artefacts' which have one or more of the following elements in common:

- **TEXTUALITY:** in both the philological and the metaphorical sense of the term. When Clifford Geertz used the term metaphorically to describe the intricate structures which constitute culture(s), the operational content of this term derived much of its weight from the philological techniques used by both linguists and literary scholars to describe, explain and contextualise the structures constituting a written artefact as a text;
- **RHETORICITY:** the usage of conventions like topoi, metaphors etc., the notion of aesthetics having been developed from the ancient Greek concept of rhetoric and still deriving much of its meaning and functions from the uses of language and other forms of communication prescribed by it;
- **FICTIONALITY:** the issue of the relation between art and 'the real' in view of the fact that fictionality is part of every form of communication, so that the relationship between art and 'the real' is not organized by a categorical difference between truth and untruth but by a varying mixture of the two, eg when historiography imposes order on real events by narrating them in a certain sequence;
- **HISTORICITY:** the fact that texts and text-like structured artefacts derive their meaning both from their synchronous historical contexts and from their position in the diachronous process of epistemological change of which they are a part

A.3 LCS researchers use a variety of research methodologies. These include traditional philological research focused on analytical close reading and/or archival research seeking in-depth contextual knowledge of the production, dissemination or consumption of historical or contemporary cultural objects.

A.4 LCS researchers ask a range of research questions of interest beyond the philological or *textimmanent* level. They represent a status quo in literary and cultural theory according to which cultural existence as such, independent of the disciplinary domain or domains an individual is active in professionally, requires what our project has termed 'cultural literacy', i.e. the ability to recognize, reflect on, use and potentially modify the complex and manifold set of interacting cultural artefacts - including texts and other media - which enables and embeds cultural existence. These questions are the focus of this proposal and are grouped into the four areas of interest listed below which are the main fields of research that this ESF-COST synergy will explore. These topics have been selected in order to enhance the policy contribution of LCS.

B ESF-COST Synergy

B.1 This COST-ESF synergy seeks to articulate the policy relevance of LCS in a manner that respects the intellectual and academic integrity of the field. It builds on relevant ESF and COST programmes/initiatives to date (e.g. ESF Strategic Workshop on Literary & Cultural Studies, London, October 2008; COST Actions). 'Cultural Literacy' is the working title for the project.

B.2 The synergy will consist of four policy-focused workshops held and run by a COST/ESF team of scholars from eight universities in Europe, as well as a synthesis workshop in Brussels aimed at policy-makers and other key stakeholders. The project will result in an ESF/COST Science Policy Briefing as well as collections of essays derived from the workshops organised in the context of the synergy initiative. The synergy will also serve concretely to inform the design of relevant national and European funding programmes (e.g. EU Framework Programme 8). The synergy also seeks to overcome professional fragmentation by bringing together and developing existing vibrant networks of public policy-makers (at both national and EU levels) and academics. The Science Policy Briefing will serve as a platform for the inauguration of an ongoing multi-level dialogue encompassing practitioners and stakeholders. In this regard, it is hoped the project will create new and lasting networks which will impact on cultural policy development, transfer and application.

B.3 The following workshops will be organised:

Theme	Date	Organisers	Affiliations	Location
Remembering and forgetting	14-16 Dec 2009	Prof Naomi Segal & Prof Daniela Koleva	IGRS, University of London; University of Sofia	London, UK
Cultural migration	13-14 May 2010	Prof Margaret Kelleher; Dr Marc Caball	National University of Ireland, Maynooth; University College, Dublin	Dublin, IE
Electronic textuality ('Texting')	15-16 June 2010	Prof Sibel Irzik; Prof Leopoldina Fortunati	Sabancı University; University of Udine	Istanbul, TU
Biopolitics, biosociality and the body	30-31 Aug 2010	Prof Ulrike Landfester; Prof Lea Rojola	University of St Gallen; University of Turku	St Gallen, CH
Synthesis workshop	3 Dec 2010	Prof Naomi Segal & Dr Marc Caball	IGRS, University of London; University College, Dublin	Brussels, BE

Each workshop will consist of a maximum of 20 participants (including the leaders/organisers) and include a mix of early career and established scholars and other relevant experts (eg policy-makers, scholars in cognate disciplines). Participants will send their views on a series of questions/issues circulated in advance of the event and at the workshop each will be asked to make a presentation of approximately 10 minutes outlining relevant key concepts and 'big ideas'. Further discussions, both plenary and break-out, will follow.

C Workshop Descriptions

Remembering and forgetting

December 2009

Cultures remember both through oral communication and through other artefacts which often cross the division between the public and the private domain. Objects known to historians as 'ego-documents' are first-person witnesses ranging from court records or auto/biographies to letters and diaries; these not only reveal what has been preserved but also expose gaps in recorded events. In the public domain, sites of memory, from graveyards and museums to roadside posies, mark ways of recalling that may be very temporary. Within families, communities or individuals, remembrance may focus on made or conserved objects, but it also inheres in the body and the psyche – the most painful memories often pass encrypted, as psychoanalysis has it, from generation to generation. Theory in this field has developed rapidly in the last and the present century in the light both of vast political events and of a new spirit of understanding the everyday, experienced 'from below'. This field is studied by researchers who have adapted methods taken from literary studies into other modes of marking the passage of time through the human mind. The workshop will aim both to articulate new research questions in this area and to outline their policy relevance.

Other broad issues to be examined include:

- The truth of memory: fact and fiction
- Regimes of memory: spaces, texts, objects, bodies
- Trauma and memory
- The politics and ethics of memory; the 'right to remember'

Cultural migration

May 2010

When people migrate what do they produce in textual and cultural terms? The diversity of languages and cultures in motion is central to contemporary European experience. Such diversity is represented in a variety of forms (film, poetry, fiction, memoir, theatre, multimedia, etc) that challenge existing concepts of genre, audience and cultural production but may also face significant obstacles in achieving production, publication and dissemination. Emergent varieties of linguistic style and cultural expression may be dismissed as inaccurate or incomplete, praised as new or exotic, and/or absorbed into standardized and normalized forms. Yet the acts of self-translation by migrants into or alongside their host societies, together with the continuing traces of originary cultures, bring artistic and linguistic consequences that connect diverse communities as cultural producers and consumers. This workshop will explore the textual, cultural and policy implications and significance of migration and migrants within European cities, regions and countries.

The strategic imperatives to be discussed and advanced by the workshop include the following:

- What are the obstacles facing migrants' access to cultural production?
- What is the significance of translation as a mediating force, both historically and in the contemporary scene?
- What is the current status of non-mother tongue writing and of cultural production by second-generation migrants?
- What resources (educational, legal, etc) are needed to support the range of cultural production by bilinguals and multilinguals?
- Are new policies required to support cultural translation and adaptation beyond nationally-defined policies e.g. film subtitling in diverse languages?

The workshop will seek to develop a dynamic synthetic perspective on migration in a format which allows for interchange and discussion with policy-makers at national and EU ESF-COST levels and its recommendations will be targeted to advance such interchange. Migration, a critical political and social phenomenon across contemporary Europe, has been largely evaluated from socio-economic perspectives. The outcomes of this workshop will enable both literary scholars and policy-makers to understand and contextualize more effectively diverse cultural patterns informed and shaped by migration experiences, and to address both the challenges and

opportunities of wider cultural dissemination.

Electronic textuality ('Texting')

June 2010

The age of computers and telecommunications that we are living in has generated new sites and forms of literacy, a new visual and techno-oral culture fast replacing the culture of the book. Listservs, chat rooms, discussion boards, instant messages, and the web, to name but a few, have enabled forms of discursivity that are unfettered by regional and national borders and challenge the boundaries established by print culture between the private and the public, the author and the reader, the aesthetic and the instrumental. 'The end of the book' in this sense is not only and simply the disappearance of the book as an object, but a radical restructuring of the institutions that surround it — institutions such as the library, the university, intellectual property laws, and literature itself.

The workshop on electronic textuality aims to contribute to an understanding of the new forms of cultural literacy and the institutional changes they necessitate by exploring the questions that the electronic word poses for literary and cultural studies and by delineating the forms of textuality, rhetoricity, fictionality, and historicity embodied by electronic texts.

Some of the strategic imperatives that may be addressed in this context are:

- What features of textuality in general do electronic texts make more conspicuous?
- What happens to the distinctions between high and low culture, commercial or aesthetic usage, artistic or chance creation in the face of the possibilities and threats presented by electronic textuality?
- What forms of rhetorical analysis are called for by the malleable, playful, and self-conscious textual surface of the electronic text?
- How do electronic texts teach us to see earlier works of literature in new ways?
- How do contemporary literary works exploit the new radical interactivity and other possibilities offered by digital technology and new practices of electronic communication?
- What happens to the notions of authorship, the reading public, and intellectual property in the face of the collaborative, never finalized, radically uncontrollable nature of electronic texts?
- Do electronic texts create a new 'orality' and a participatory sense of community?
- In what ways do electronic texts disrupt the intimate links between author and work, voice and self? What impact does this disruption have on contemporary notions of selfhood, humanism and the humanities?

Biopolitics, biosociality and the body

August 2010

Over the past decades, the ontological status of the human body has become more and more questionable. The idea of the body as something naturally given which by definition precedes culture was securely anchored during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries in the traditional nature-culture-opposition. The deciphering of the human genome which led Paul Rabinow to create the term 'biosociality' and similar developments, however, have changed the perception of the body as a given entity into the body as being insolubly tied into cultural processes of 'making sense', itself at some level being a cultural artefact - and thus in and through its very 'nature' being subject to political strategies methodologically encoded in the term 'biopolitics'. This emerging concept of the body implies a breaking-down of the boundaries between nature and culture which echoes the current breaking-down of the traditional boundaries between academic disciplines, opening up new avenues for critical research on the cultural phenomenon of the 'human body'.

The strategic imperatives to be discussed and advanced by the workshop are the following:

- Identification of areas of structural interference between LCS and the so-called 'hard sciences', specifically interference based on the use of LCS paradigms (textuality, fictionality, rhetoricity) in the process of building 'hard sciences' knowledge
- Discussion of the possible - practical, ethical, social, economic - consequences stemming from the collapse of the boundaries between culture and nature for the human body

- Diagnosing the dialectical relationship between scientific and technological progress and cultural projections of the human body, specifically establishing the yet mostly unrecognized historical depth of this relationship
- Identifying functional and efficient techniques to use the culturally encoded knowledge of the human body in life sciences' working contexts and vice versa

The workshop will seek to develop a portfolio of suggestions and recommendations how to establish and broaden cultural literacy concerning the human body both for academic and for non-academic use; further, it will identify policy areas and stakeholders with a vital interest in gaining efficiency dealing with the human body (e.g. health services) and draw them into a dialogue on how to improve on the coordination of research between LCS and their areas of expertise.

Synthesis Workshop

December 2010

This workshop will draw together outcomes from the debates, discussions and conversations conducted within the thematic workshops. The dialogue and discussion generated by the first four workshops will be synthesised in this concluding event.

Key thematic linkages between the four workshops include:

1. The Culture of Testimony and its continuing significance;
2. The electronic production of new forms of fictionality, and their appeal;
3. Literature and literature-type art forms as a medium of cultural transfer and exchange;
4. The diagnosis of rhetoricity, fictionality, textuality and historicity in political, economical and scientific discourses as explored by the workshops

Key areas of policy to be targeted include the following:

1. Translation policies, services and supports in the public domain, including specifically the field of Cultural Heritage
2. Improvement of Health services through critical reflection and analysis of their cultural embeddedness
3. Stabilization of Educational services, both in lower and higher education, by integrating cultural literacy fully into the basic curricula of each discipline.

The synthesis workshop design will incorporate both written and oral feedback from the four workshops with a view to ensuring knowledge transfer. Each thematic workshop chairperson will present an overview of the proceedings and conclusions of their respective events. Building on structured interchange and information synthesis, a pre-circulated draft policy briefing on Cultural Literacy will inform and facilitate a high level discussion between academic experts and policy-makers. Representatives from the European Commission (e.g. DG Research; DG Education and Culture), European Research Council, national research councils, cultural and media industries, HERA and Norface will be invited to attend. On the basis of the outcome of this workshop, an **ESF/COST Science Policy Briefing** will be published. The Science Policy Briefing will be aimed at relevant stakeholders across Europe: national and supra-national policy-makers; research funding bodies; cultural agencies; university management; cultural and media industries etc. The Briefing will aim to articulate a roadmap for policy discussion and implementation on the part of key relevant public and private sector stakeholders and literary and cultural experts in Europe.

D Other Outcomes

D.1 Publications

It is proposed to gather together contributions made at the four academic workshops into two volumes of essays. The publication of these essays will enable the widest possible circulation and reception of themes and issues raised and debated at the various workshops. The publication of

these two volumes as well as the policy briefing will enable and support further discussion between academic experts and policy-makers.

E STEERING COMMITTEE (in alphabetical order)

Dr Marc Caball COST ISCH IE
Prof Leopoldina Fortunati COST ISCH IT
Professor Sibel Irzik ESF SCH TU
Professor Margaret Kelleher ESF SCH IE
Prof Daniela Kovela COST ISCH BU
Professor Ulrike Landfester ESF SCH CH
Professor Lea Rojola COST ISCH FI
Professor Naomi Segal ESF SCH UK

Secretariat

Nina Kancewicz-Hoffman ESF Office, Humanities Unit
Francesca Boscolo COST Office, ISCH