

TRAVELLING GOODS // TRAVELLING MOODS

Call for Papers for the International Symposium

Travelling Goods//Travelling Moods. Cultural Appropriation of Foreign Goods, 1850-1950

International Congress Centre, Kiellinie 5, 24105 Kiel, Germany
March 31 - April 2, 2011

objects – here/there
them/us – commodities

Chow Mein in America, Ford's Model T in Germany, Mercedes-Benz in Great Britain, British detective novels in Germany, English saddles in France, stylish shirts, woollen trousers and chic coats from Paris travelling to South America, a poncho from Mexico decorating a hall somewhere in North America.

All these instances refer to at least one phenomenon: the cultural exchange of objects. All these objects, some of them mass-produced commodities, are circulating on a global scale. At first sight, it seems that this transnational/transcultural circulation of commodities and their worldwide consumption leads to a global homogeneity. But this 'McDonaldisation' (Ritzer 1996) – which is often seen as a Westernisation of the World – is on closer examination neither exclusively a homogenization nor exclusively a Westernisation. Our DFG-funded research project "Travelling Goods//Travelling Moods" (www.travellinggoods.uni-kiel.de), which examines transcultural processes of exchange in the pre-WW II period – that is, before the pillars of modernity started to crumble – analyses historically as well as culturally specific appropriations of commodities of foreign origin in a new cultural setting. For example, an 'American-made' Ford Model T, disassembled, shipped in a box to Berlin and re-assembled in a hall at West Harbour in Berlin-Plötzensee was no longer the same artefact as in its domestic market. It was perceived differently by various groups within the German society, labelled with meanings distinct from those meanings attached to it by American farmers (the foremost buyers of the Ford car in the US), purchased by other social groups than in America, which had to overcome different obstacles and who faced other opponents on the discursive battlefield.

The scheduled symposium has two main objectives. On the one hand, we would like to discuss the findings of our research project and learn about further empirical findings that point to heterogeneity in the process of globalisation. On the other hand, we would like to set up a discourse on the theoretical benefits of the concept 'cultural appropriation,' which has become a common currency in academic discourse throughout the disciplines, but which is at the same time challenged by other, related concepts like 'creolization,' 'accommodation,' 'transculturation,' 'tropicalization' or 'nostrification.'

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Papers examining specific instances of ‘cultural appropriation’ (of food, automobiles or books, but also of similar commodities) in the time period between 1850 and 1950, as well as papers discussing theoretical or methodological problems in a specific research project concerning (historical) ‘cultural appropriation’ are equally welcome. There will be four panels: Food, Cars, Books, Other Commodities. Papers should not exceed thirty minutes.

In their proposals, authors might also state their disciplinary and theoretical background and – if presenting a case study – shortly present the wider context of the study.

We would be glad to welcome speakers to the international port city of Kiel from all disciplines concerned with specific historical instances of the cultural appropriation of foreign goods as well as speakers dealing with methodological and theoretical concerns. The symposium will include no more than fifteen speakers in order to ensure a thorough exchange between all speakers. Further (non-paper giving) participants are more than welcome, free of charge; please register up to six weeks before the event.

Since it may help you to secure funding for transport and accommodation, the organizers will send out letters of acceptance for the selected papers as soon as possible.

Information concerning travel routes, accommodation, registration and further information about Kiel can be found on the following website from September on:

www.travellinggoods.uni-kiel.de/events.html

Submission

Please send an extended abstract (1-2 pages) to the symposium organizers:

Prof. Dr. Christian Huck • Institute of English Studies, CAU Kiel • Germany:
huck@anglistik.uni-kiel.de

Dr. Stefan Bauernschmidt • Institute of English Studies, CAU Kiel • Germany:
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Deadlines

Submission of extended abstracts (1-2 pages) October 17, 2010

Notification of authors November 10, 2010