

KONF: The Heritage of Humanism and Enlightenment in Exile Literature, Oxford (24.03. - 25.03.2022)

Discussion published by Margit Dirscherl on Thursday, March 10, 2022

The Heritage of Humanism and Enlightenment in Exile Literature

International Conference, Thursday 24 and Friday 25 March 2022

Maplethorpe Seminar Room, St Hugh's College, Oxford OX2 6LE

Organisers: Ritchie Robertson (Queens, Oxford), Arturo Larcati (Stefan Zweig Zentrum, Salzburg), Margit Dirscherl (LMU Munich), Tom Kuhn (St Hugh's, Oxford)

'The literature of German writers who fled into all countries of the world can most aptly be conceived of and described as a humanist front against the National Socialist Third Reich, despite all antagonisms and tensions in their own free realm', wrote Walter A. Berendsohn, who is considered the founding father of the study of exile literature, in 1946. His conception of exile literature as 'a self-contained period of German literary history' may no longer be accepted in scholarship. Yet its premise, namely that writers were drawing on a certain set of shared values, remains broadly valid, no matter how varied the awareness and understanding of what is 'humanist' may have been.

Our conference aims to illuminate the commonalities, differences, and nuances in the ways German-speaking exiled writers are committed to salvaging, upholding, and reinterpreting values that date back to - or are associated with - humanism and Enlightenment. To what extent do these values serve as a common heritage? In his biographical essay on Michel de Montaigne (1942), Stefan Zweig contrasts barbarism with the spiritual and intellectual freedom of the individual. He invokes a shared history, reclaiming the ideals of the Enlightenment, yet how these can be preserved for future generations remains unanswered - this applies not only to Zweig, but also his contemporaries.

Contributions address the extent to which humanism and Enlightenment serve as orientation for exiled writers; identify traditions and representatives of intellectual life that are invoked in support; explore literary utopias developed in literature which are modelled on the ideas and ideals of humanism and Enlightenment; evaluate the limits of these ideas and ideals as well as their 'dialectics'; consider the function of mythological and historical narratives, and the role of biographies of iconic figures; and last but not least, examine the relevance of humanism and Enlightenment to the question of how literature can, or should, exercise political influence in, and from, exile.

Programme

THURSDAY, 24/3/2022

9.30 Welcome note by Waltraud Dennhardt-Herzog, and introduction

9.50 Keynote 1: Jeremy Adler: 'Who will write our history?' The Defence of Civilised Values in Exile,

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<https://networks.h-net.org/node/79435/discussions/9906968/konf-heritage-humanism-and-enlightenment-exile-literature-oxford>

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the Ghettos and the Camps

10.30 tea & coffee

11.00 Steffan Davies (Bristol): 'Der Wille zum wirklich Wahren': Language and Reality in Heinrich Mann's *Henri Quatre*

11.40 Sven Hanuschek (Munich): Komik und Humanität? Heinrich Manns *Die traurige Geschichte von Friedrich dem Großen*

12.30 lunch

14.30 Karolina Watroba (Oxford): A Different Humanism, A Different Exile: Kurban Said's *Das Mädchen vom Goldenen Horn* (1938)

15.10 Ritchie Robertson (Oxford): Humanism versus Primitivism in the Exile Fiction of Arnold Zweig

15.50 tea & coffee

16.20 Arturo Larcati (Salzburg): Das Erbe der Aufklärung und des Humanismus bei Stefan Zweig

17.00 Horatio Morpurgo (Bridport): Unseasonably Speaking

short break

18.00 Keynote 2: Daniela Strigl (Vienna): Der Beruf des Dichters in Zeiten des Faschismus. Theodor Kramers humanistische Antwort auf das Inhumane

19.00 conference dinner

FRIDAY, 25/3/2022

9.30 Keynote 3: Robert Vilain (Oxford): John Landless on the Hudson: Humanism, Humanity, and the German Exile Community in New York

10.10 Werner Michler (Salzburg): Geschichtskonstruktionen und Erbe-Konstellationen der Literaturtheorie im Exil

10.50 Margit Dirscherl (Munich): 'Karges Dasein' and 'wahre Humanität': Walter Benjamin's *Deutsche Menschen*

11.30 concluding discussion

The programme is also available [here](#).

Please register by 20/3 via email to margit.dirscherl@lmu.de

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<https://stefan-zweig-zentrum.at/de/das-zentrum/veranstaltungen/konferenz-in-oxford/>

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