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Conference Report

The İzmir Cultural Studies Seminar

The second cultural studies seminar organized in Turkey, entitled “Turkey/ Britain/America: The History of Culture - The Culture of History” was held in İzmir on 6-9 May 1997. The seminar was co-organized by the Departments of American Culture and Literature, and English Language and Literature of Ege University, the American Studies Association of Turkey, The British Council in Turkey, and the USIS in Ankara. The theme of this year’s seminar was based around the contribution of history to cultural studies, in order to foreground the interdisciplinary nature of cultural studies and invite papers interrogating the notion of historiography in the cultural context.

On May 6, after the welcome address by Gönül Öney, Vice-President of Ege University, the opening speeches were made by Clive Gobby, the British Council Representative in Turkey, and William Jones, Cultural Affairs Officer of the US Embassy in Ankara. The first keynote speech was delivered by Susan Bassnett of Warwick University, invited by the British Council for the occasion. She spoke on “Translation, Travel Writing and the Construction of Cultures.” The second keynote speaker, Elaine Tyler May, a Fulbright scholar at the University of Dublin invited by the USIS, spoke on “The Cold War and Issues of Gender and Family” on the second day.

Twenty four papers were presented in joint sessions during the three days of the seminar. In the final afternoon session, the theme of the seminar was discussed in three concurrent workshops entitled “The Invention of Traditions,” “Hegemony, Individuals and Groups,” and “Differences and Oppositions,” moderated respectively by Susan Bassnett, Elaine Tyler May, and Norman Stone of Bilkent University. The moderators brought the suggestions made from each workshop to the closing panel discussion.

Below are the titles of the presentations in order of appearance:

Michael Pickering (Loughborough University), “History, Cultural Studies and the Concept of Tradition.”

Seçkin Ergin (Ege University), “Two Models of English Colonialism in North America and the Formation of the Early American Cultural Identity.”

Marcia Vale (Bilkent University), “Hong Kong: End of Empire.”

Ronald Tamplin (Bilkent University), “Statues, War and Empire.”

İrem Balkır (Bilkent University), “Under Construction: European Culture: Readings in Monogenealogy and Fractal Interventions.”

Chris Rumford (The British Council), “The Politics of Identity or the Politics of Disorientation: Us and Them.”

Fatmagül Berktaş (İstanbul University), “Writing and Reading Women’s Autobiographies.”

Meldan Tanrısal (Hacettepe University), “Red Mothers and Corn Maidens: Misconceptions and Truths About Native American Women.”

William S. Haney II. (Eastern Mediterranean University), “Culture, History and Consciousness: The Aesthetics of Cyberspace.”

Nuri Yurdusev (Middle East Technical University), “The British School of International Relations: Between British Tradition and American Social Science.”

Randall Ward (Başkent University), “Speculative Pre-histories and Real-World Futures: How the Fictional Past Can Help Determine the Future.”

Murat Seçkin (Marmara University), “From Mary Shelley’s *Frankenstein* to Mary Shelley’s *Frankenstein*.”

Engin Uzmen (Mersin University), “Nationalism in Shakespeare.”

Himmet Umunç (Hacettepe University), “The Jews and the Turks in Renaissance England: The Hermeneutics of Negative Stereotyping.”

Burçin Erol (Hacettepe University), “British Colonial Expansion and the Expansion of British Food Culture 1500-1800.”

Can Abanazır (Hacettepe University), “The Pros and Cons of Football Hooliganism.”

Gülşen Canlı (Hacettepe University), “Construction and Deconstruction of Stereotypes.”

Sinem Bingöl and Aykut Uluer (Hacettepe University), “Reinvention of Kipling and Bateman’s.”

Oya Batum Menteşe (Hacettepe University), “Representations of History: Erendiz Atasü’s *Dağın Öteki Yüzü* (The Other Side of the Mountain) and Pat Barker’s *Regeneration*.”

Kathlene Postma (Bilkent University), “Turkey in the Shadow of the Early 20th century Western Popular Romance: A Critique of Demetra Vaka’s *In the Shadow of Islam*.”

Şebnem Toplu (Ege University), “English Kings vs. the Ottoman Sultans: Life in 18th-19th century Britain and the Ottoman Empire.”

Saliha Paker (Boğaziçi University), “The Study of Translation for a History of Culture.”

Simon Philo (University of Derby), “Getting Dumber and Dumber: MTV, the Global Footprint.”

Feza Tansuğ (Boğaziçi University), “Cross-Border Flow of Popular Culture: Redefining Cultural Boundaries and Traditions in Turkey.”

Donald MacDonough (Eastern Mediterranean University), “Black on Black: The Metamorphosis of Identity.”

Over seventy participants from various universities in Turkey and abroad, and around a hundred students from Ege and other universities attended the seminar. On the whole, the seminar provided an opportunity for the participants from English and American departments to renew their professional and social ties, and to exchange views on the developments in cultural studies. Ege University has to decided to host this seminar annually in May, and thus help establish a tradition of comparative cultural studies in Turkey.