CALL FOR PAPERS

Immediate Effect: Great Textual Transformations of 1989

University of Birmingham Europe Hub, Brussels, Belgium

Call for Papers: 09 November 2019

Abstract and one-page CV deadline: 06 January 2020

Invitation to successful applicants: 15 February 2020

Deadline for papers for pre-circulation: 15 July 2020

Brussels Workshop: 27-29 August 2020

The revised travel regulations, as German Democratic Republic official Günter Schabowski’s ninth of November press conference inadvertently revealed, were being issued “with immediate effect.” Crowds gathered at the Berlin Wall, and by next morning, a city divided was one once again. Thirty years later, the implications of that day remain far from settled, and so we take the opportunity of this anniversary to invite scholars in the humanities and social sciences to submit workshop proposals focusing on a particular text from the year the Wall fell. Although the Iron Curtain was no uniform formation, Berlin’s dramatic events have often come to symbolize the year as a whole, and so proposals might have a German connection. We will, nonetheless, be selecting proposed papers that speak to any of global 1989’s geographies. With a capacious conception of “texts” (including books, plays, photographs, films, essays, speeches, artistic objects, etc.), we aim to convene a workshop comprised of about 12 sessions over two-and-a-half days, with each session dedicated to one paper on one or perhaps two texts.

This workshop follows from a previous project that looked at texts produced in 1944, and resulted in an edited volume entitled *Reading the Postwar Future: Textual Turning Points from 1944*. We recommend that applicants consult this book in order to get a sense of our approach, especially since our gathering in 2020 will also be followed by a new edited collection (which Bloomsbury Academic has already expressed interest in publishing). If our thematic focus for 1944 was one of ideas about the future, for 1989 we will consider the pace of that transformational year’s present. From Berlin to Beijing and far beyond, 1989 was often lived as experiential speed-up, or what David Harvey’s *Condition of Postmodernity* of that year termed “time-space compression.” Shifts in the structure of capitalism, as Harvey underscores, cannot be ignored here, and in part insurgencies at Alexanderplatz and Tiananmen, not to mention on the streets of Caracas and along the Afghan-Soviet border, indexed transformations in the global economic order. The same could be said about top-down expressions of power, from the US invasion of Panama to the formation of Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation to the running aground of the *Exxon Valdez*. Race and gender also shaped these events, of course, as they did the misogynist massacre at Montreal’s École Polytechnique, Ruhollah Khomeini’s *Satanic Verses* fatwa, and F.W. de Klerk’s rise to South Africa’s presidency, and all produced their own visual, sonic, literary, and prose texts. That summer, the sheer breathlessness of Billy Joel’s hit single “We Didn’t Start the Fire” captured something of this quickening sense of time, even as Francis Fukuyama tried to call time on history altogether.

Also the year that Nintendo’s “Game-Boy” first found its way into the hands of young consumers, that Michael Moore's *Roger and Me*, John Woo's *The Killer*, and Spike Lee’s *Do the Right Thing* made their mark across a range of film genres, and that Kimberlé Crenshaw’s “Demarginalizing the Intersection,” Richard Rorty’s *Contingency, Irony, and Solidarity*, Barbara Ehrenreich’s *Fear of Falling*, Steve Fraser and Gary Gerstle’s *Rise and Fall of the New Deal Order*, Alice Echols’ *Daring to Be Bad*, and Stuart Hall’s “New Ethnicities” marked before-and-after points in their respective fields, 1989 also undoubtedly defies any attempt to gather its productions under any single rubric. In order to explore a broad range of 1989’s texts and contexts in some detail, once we have selected the participants for this workshop, we will request papers of approximately 8,000 words for pre-circulation. In order to ensure an in-depth discussion of every paper, we will also ask participants to engage with the primary texts before the workshop. Each 70-minute session will be dedicated to one workshop paper and its corresponding text. As was the case with our earlier workshop on 1944, “Immediate Effect” aims to convene a conversation across disciplines, and so we will be asking participants to craft their papers with a broad audience in mind.

While we may not able to cover all costs for conference participants, there will be no registration fee for this workshop, and we expect to have sufficient funding to cover meals and a portion of transportation and/or accommodation expenses. Initial proposals of a single PDF containing an abstract of no more than 500 words and a one-page CV, should be sent to both Kirrily Freeman (Kirrily.Freeman@smu.ca) and John Munro (johnjmunro@gmail.com) by 06 January 2020. Accepted participants will be notified by 15 February 2020, and asked to submit papers for pre-circulation by 15 July 2020.