

Australia as Topos: The Transformation of Australian Studies

We are delighted to announce that the University of Pannonia (Veszprém, Hungary), in cooperation with *Topos – Bilingual Journal of Space and Humanities*, will be hosting the 13th biannual international conference of the European Association for Studies on Australia (EASA) between 30 September and 3 October 2015.

The conference will provide an ideal venue for exploring Australia as a ‘topos’ in the academy and beyond, in ways that will seek to mobilize the manifold meanings of ‘topos’ as place, common place, and commonplace. The very fact that the discipline of Australian studies has constituted itself as a discrete branch of cultural studies, aggregating itself around self-contained and space-bound ideas of the nation, begs the question of biases possibly informing much research it has produced in the past, and points to the possibility of deconstructing today some of the foundational premises underlying the correlated discourses.

We propose therefore to reconsider the perspectives and practices endorsed by scholars and students of Australia, considering:

- (1) the role played by geography, the ‘lie’ and the lure of the land, or indeed of any other cultural stereotype now felt to be clearly limiting, in the construction of a sense of national identity for Australians;
- (2) the genealogy of nationalist ideologies and of rhetorical apparatuses centered on the valorization of blood, land and belonging;
- (3) the political implications of the preoccupation with place apparent in many discursive elaborations of a sense of identity conceived in national terms;
- (4) the history and the current fate of the myth of Australia as a ‘post-colonial’ nation, as well as the possibility that a post-colonizing agenda may sometimes be subliminally encoded in attempts at collective articulations of experience inspired by any ‘unitarian’ nationalist model;
- (5) the methodological consequences for the discipline of ‘Australian studies’ if it must outgrow its own conceptual boundaries and problematize the constitutive appeal to a distinctively local font of knowledge and experience;
- (6) the problematic centrality accorded to questions of cultural identity, displacing as they do other possible approaches within Australian studies;
- (7) any subareas of research previously eclipsed in consequence of an identified erstwhile prominence of nationalist, geographic, identity-related modes of thinking.

The Conference will be a cross-disciplinary one and we shall consider papers on topics relating to any branch of ‘Australian studies’, including History, Literature, Culture, Film Studies, Cultural Anthropology, Media Studies, Architecture, Geography, Spatial Studies, Environment, Political Science, Indigenous Studies, Gender Studies, Linguistics, Translation Studies, Education, Sociology, Art History, Religion, Philosophy, Music — or indeed papers inscribed at any fertile crossroads between the aforementioned categories.

We envisage to group together the selected papers under the following rubrics:

- (1) Interpreting the ‘topos’ of Australia (seen as place, common place, and commonplace);
- (2) Problematizing mainstream immigration and integration policies;
- (3) Diasporic ‘takes’ on so-called Australian identity;
- (4) The exclusiveness of nationalist communities and arguments;
- (5) Inherited responsibilities and the moral requirements of belonging;
- (6) Transnational perspectives on Australian society and/or history;
- (7) The ‘war’ on terror and the revival of nationalism;
- (8) The crisis of the humanities and the future of ‘Australian studies’;
- (9) Any other rubric that will suggest itself.

We are planning to publish selected papers in the peer-reviewed *Topos – Bilingual Journal of Space and Humanities*, as well as in EASA’s home journal *JEASA*, both in print and online.

Conference fee: 100€. (This will include a welcome drink, refreshments, lunch on Thursday and Friday, and a conference dinner on Thursday.)

An optional trip to Lake Balaton (Balatonfüred and Tihany) on Friday afternoon with wine-tasting and dinner accompanied by a folk music and dance program is offered. **Participation fee: 40€.**

Scholars and graduate students interested in presenting a paper are invited to submit a proposal (300 words) and a short CV to: easa2015veszprem@almos.uni-pannon.hu

Deadline for submission of abstracts: **April 13, 2015.**

Payment of registration fee: 10 May, 2015

Payment of participation fee for the optional trip: **10 May, 2015**

Notification of acceptance: **April 30, 2015.**

Please note that conference participants must be members of EASA. (Annual membership fee is 40€.)

Organizing committee:

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