



Women Writers in History: Toward a New Understanding of European Literary Culture.

Last week, the new European COST Action “Women Writers in History” was launched in Brussels. The first meeting of the Management Committee, with members representing the fifteen European countries involved as yet in this collaborative network, was held at the COST office in Brussels. This collaborative Action will last four years and will be financed by COST (European Cooperation in Science and Technology). The initiative was originally taken by the NEWW network (“New approaches to European Women’s Writing”; cf. www.womenwriters.nl), which seeks to renew literary historiography from a gender and a transnational perspective. This COST Action will allow the extension of the existing network and the preparation of a large scale research project in which European scholars will further collaborate – in the real and virtual world.

The aim of this COST Action is to lay the groundwork for a new history of European women’s participation in the literary field of the centuries before 1900. What was these women’s influence? Which active roles did they play as authors and readers in the broadest sense of the word, *i.e.* including their roles as transcribers, translators, mediators and educators? What happened to them when they fell into the hands of 19th-century canonizers? How is their disappearance from literary history to be explained? Technological progress now allows addressing these questions by means of large scale empirical research: the COST Action will make use of an innovative database allowing researchers to stock and manipulate data concerning the contemporary *reception* of women’s works and interventions. Particular attention will be paid to women’s participation in transnational cultural dynamics and to the overlooked role of “smaller”, less internationally known literatures within the larger European context. This interdisciplinary research will lead to a new way of looking at Europe’s literary past – male *and* female –, which also implies a different perspective on Europe’s *present*.

Manager of this Action, based at Huygens Institute The Hague (NL): Suzan van Dijk.

Universities currently represented in the Action’s Management Committee: Universiteit Gent, Université de Liège (Belgium), University of Southern Denmark, University of Turku (Finland), Université Nancy 2 (France), Friedrich-Alexander-Universität Erlangen, Ruhr-Universität Bochum, Universität Trier (Germany), National University of Ireland Galway, Bar Ilan University (Israël), University of Utrecht, University of Groningen (Netherlands), Volda University College, University of Oslo (Norway), Universidade de Lisboa, Universidade Nova de Lisboa (Portugal), University of Bucarest, University of Cluj (Romania), University of Belgrade (Serbia), University of Nova Gorica (Slovenia), Universidad Complutense Madrid, University of Valencia (Spain), University of Bern, Université de Genève, Université de Lausanne (Switzerland), University of Southampton, Oxford Brookes University (United Kingdom).

The first activity of the Action will be :

.....a Workshop, organized together with the NEWW network and Huizinga Institute Amsterdam, about:

Quantitative methods in cultural history.

It will take place at the Huygens Institute, The Hague, Friday 20 November 2009,
starting 10.00.

Keynote speaker will be:

Franco Moretti

Author of: *Atlas of the European Novel 1800-1900* (1998),
Graphs, Maps, Trees (2005).

For further information and registration: www.womenwriters.nl
(follow: "Workshop" or "COST Action")

