



BESS 2019 Symposium

2019 Inside Black Europe and African Diaspora Symposium

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Lombokstraat 40, 1094 AL, Amsterdam
(www.iire.org)

Introduction

This is the 10th annual international symposium organized as a component and extension of the summer school on Black Europe programme. Previous symposia were organized under the heading of Trajectories of Emancipation. These symposia benefited from insights of similar conferences and workshops at Johannes Gutenberg-Universität Mainz, Germany organized by the Black European Studies (BEST) Network (2003-2006), Maison des Sciences de l'Homme (Paris) organized by Ramon Grosfoguel and Eric Mielants (2004-2006) and Northwestern University (USA) organized by Darlene Clarke Hine and Trica Danielle Keaton (2006).

Objective

The purpose of the “Inside Black Europe and African Diaspora” symposium is to provide Black Europe Summer School participants and alumni with the opportunity to share their research, activism, and creative projects as they relate to broader questions of Blackness and the African diaspora; immigration and xenophobia; racism and anti-racism; and postcoloniality.

Programme:

Part I: Borders, “Security,” and Racial Nationalism

09:30–11:00

Alessandra Benedicty-Kokken, City College of New York “Terrorism, Anti-Colonialism, and Human Rights; Camus, Daoud, and Mbougar Sarr”

Alessandra Benedicty-Kokken reads across three novels drawing notably on the most recent work by human rights literary scholar Joseph Slaughter, but also the provocative life of Jacques Vergès, to examine the history and discourses that awkwardly have created both genealogies, but also schisms, among the traditions of: anti-colonialism, terrorism, human rights institution building, and the decolonial. Albert Camus’ *L’Étranger* (1942), Kamel Daoud’s *Meursault, contre-enquête* (2013), and Mohamed Mbougar Sarr’s *Terre Ceinte* (2015) make it possible trace the uncomfortable, but changing relationship, between and among terrorism, anti-colonialism, and human rights building.

Alberto Ganis, University of California, Santa Cruz “Sub-State Nationalism and the Other(s): Mediated Identity in Friuli”

The recent migration crisis has had a powerful influence on the political, societal, economic and cultural balances of the European Union and its nation states. This “crisis” and the alleged “failure of multiculturalism” reactivated latent narratives surrounding race, nation and identity. The result of the referendum on the British Exit from the EU is just one, yet powerful, example of the nationalistic turn of many European nation-states that feel or argue to feel threatened by the influx of people with different sociocultural, economic and religious background: the other. It is worth noting the ironic double leverage on ideals of Europeanness and of the nation-state in the discursive construction of the self and the other. Nationalist institutions across the continent resist the influx of extra-European individuals due to their alleged inability to assimilate the core values that define the very concept of Europe, yet, at the same time, they condemn the European superstructure for its cosmopolitan and homogenizing policies. Complicating this power and identity struggle are sub-state communities with their own specific agendas negotiated against the nation-state and the supranational frameworks. In order to understand how sub-state nations, construct their cultural and political identities in relation to Europe and its European nation-states, this paper will discuss how these concepts evolved and came to mean what they mean today, paying special attention to the discursive evolution of the idea of Europeanness, and the centrality of methodological nationalism. This article analyses the sub-state nation of Friuli (Northeast Italy), which serves as a rich case study due to its geographic and cultural placement between East (Balkans) and West (Western Europe) and North (Transalpine regions) and South (Italy). This paper looks into how the Friulian media construct, develop, and negotiate the identity of Friuli in relation to Europe, the Italian nation-state and other sub-state communities through the analysis of the content of two of its formal media outlets: the ARLeF (regional agency for the Friulian language) website and the magazine *La Patrie dal Friul* (The homeland of Friuli).

Robyn Maynard, University of Toronto

“A Grammar of Transnational Black Capture: Slavery’s Aftermath, Empire, and (Un)Free Black Movement in the ‘Migrant Crisis’”

This paper addresses the narrative of the “migrant crisis” in the West (in particular, the UK, US and Canada) as an extension of slavery’s aftermath, looking at the current crisis of captivity and dislocation enacted on Black migrants by modern border regulation, including expulsion, detention, forced displacement. In conversation with recent scholarly critiques of border control/militarization, this paper considers the contemporary border regime as an extension of controls over Black movement that emerged during the trans-Atlantic slave trade. Writing the prevention of Black freedom and free Black movement into the instantiating logics of border regulation, the author then traces this legacy into the present day, attending to detention centres, the mass expulsion of Black migrants from Western nations via the “migrant crisis”, and the increasing overlaps between immigration and criminal controls over Black migrants’ lives. The author takes Western empire into consideration, attending, too, to the free travel of African and Caribbean resources alongside the immobilization and forced displacement Black populations in these regions. The paper concludes by asserting that border abolition is a fundamental requirement toward 21st century Black liberation.

Part II: Black Europe’s Entanglements and Interconnections

11:00–13:00

Norrell Edwards, University of Maryland, College Park

“The Land of Asylum or the Land of Deportation? France’s Changing Migration Policies”

Throughout the 19th and early 20th century, France received numerous refugees, typically from other neighboring European countries. Since the French revolution, France’s constitution has promised to give asylum to those seeking liberty while opposing tyrants. Yet, paradoxically, as the complexion of incoming refugees began to darken, France’s asylum acceptance rates declined. Yet, despite declining acceptances for asylum, France has accepted many government officials from corrupt ex-colonies such as Jean-Claude Duvalier, Ayatollah Khomeini and Teodorin Obiang. This presentation will draw on a range of news sources; reports from NGOs like Human Rights Watch, International Centre of Immigration Policy Development and Transparency International; as well as academic articles and chapters from scholars such as Dominic Thomas, Alec Hargreaves, Winnie Lem, and Regine Jackson in order to discuss the contradictions of France’s migration policy in the last 40 years.

Azeezat Johnson, Queen Mary University of London
“Intersectionality and the British grammar of race: centring Black Muslim women in Britain”

This paper sets out the theoretical context of my research into the clothing practices of Black Muslim women in Britain. Here, I used intersectionality to address how Black Muslim women (and Women of Colour more broadly) are and have been erased from social discourses that claim to be speaking to our experiences. From here, intersectionality is paired with Hortense Spillers’ work on the American grammar book of race to think about how the erasure of particular experiences occurs within a wider grammar that produces our understanding of racialized bodies. It is within this context that I want to think through the broader conversations that could be animated through examining a British grammar of race.

Theophilus Marboah, University of Pavia
“Echi e Accordi” [“Echoes and Agreements”]

Initiated as an experimental work on social media, “*Echi e Accordi*” (“Echoes and Agreements”) is a series of 500 diptychs that mostly pairs old European paintings with contemporary African and African Diasporan artworks. Each diptych is a slant rhyme, in which the images comment on one another creating a visual dialogue. A conversation that unfolds concealed meanings that may go unseen when the images are not traced to each other. The series “*Echi e Accordi*” is conceived in the “in-between,” in the encounter of Theophilus Marboah’s cultural backgrounds: Ghanaian and Italian, African and European. A “both/and” duality that embraces seemingly contrasting entities. A duality articulated in his everyday life as a diasporic subject.

Jeanette Oholi, Justus Liebig University Giessen
“Afropolitanism and Black European Literature”

This presentation examines the question of how the concept of Afropolitanism can be used to analyze literary drafts of Black European identities in Afro-European literatures. Theoretically, my research question is embedded in Black European Studies and is methodically guided by postcolonial literary criticism, which consists of close reading and context-conscious literary analysis. My comparative doctoral project is located at several interfaces, which is why theories such as Black Europe, Afro-Europe, Postcolonialism, Blackness, Diaspora and Critical Race Theory are significant. Afro-European texts, among others from Germany, France and Great Britain, are put into conversation with the Afropolitanism discourse, which has been increasingly influenced by literary studies in recent years. On the one hand, my aim is to broaden the discourse through Black European perspectives, which goes hand in hand with a disclosure of the interconnectedness of Europe, Africa, and the world. On the other hand, through the analysis of Afro-European contemporary texts, my research makes visible a great variety of Black European identities, their complexity, and multiple localizations as part of the European literatures as well as the history and present of Europe.

-----13:00-14:30 Lunch-----

Part III: Racism and Anti-Racist Resistance

14:30–16:30

Mano Delea, BESS and NiNsee

“Pan-Africanism, Sovereignty and Knowledge Production”

Pan-Africanism has transformed from a social movement in the US and the Caribbean, to a liberation movement, and subsequently to an institutionalized phenomenon on the African continent. Simultaneously, Pan-Africanism has had a massive impact on knowledge production and played a leading role in the Africana intellectual tradition. Both Pan-Africanism, as a mode of knowledge production, and the Africana intellectual tradition emerged directly from history and experience. Against the background of a changing world order, global sovereignty transformed, as did the epicenter of Pan-Africanism. The transformation and knowledge production practices of Pan-Africanism made Pan-Africanism into one of the most successful social movements in history. Its transformation and epistemologies can help us understand current issues related to sovereignty, which I use in three ways: citizenship, nation-state, and “international law.” In this presentation, I will highlight some Pan-African epistemologies and histories in relation to Europe.

Charlie Kaufhold, Justus Liebig University Giessen

“Psychoanalytic and Social Psychological Approaches to Racism”

Racism structures Europe's internal and external borders, as well as its national and supranational institutions. We also find racism in everyday interactions as well as in our most inner feelings—also seemingly hidden in the unconscious realms of our psyche. To understand how racism as a societal power structure reflects in a society's subjects, this paper will discuss selected psychoanalytic social psychological approaches to racism and race. Though psychoanalytic theory historically was not and is not immune to racist thinking itself, it can immensely contribute to an understanding of racism where the individual and the collective level intersect. This paper asks how psychoanalytic concepts such as splitting, projection or projective identification, object relations and the “racial other”—a concept coined by Fakhry M. Davids—can help understand racism, and therefore might contribute to end its existence.

Roc (Monica A. Rochon), Florida State University

“Rooted Resistance: Reimagining and Liberating Queer Folx through Fitness and Wellness”

The Queer and Trans* community are some of the most vulnerable populations in society due to the systemic barriers that impede access to affordable fitness and wellness resources. Rooted Resistance is committed to creating socially just wellness environments for the queer, trans*, gender non-conforming, and non-binary, and intersex populations. Each functional training workshop is designed to cultivate an environment that increases

long term accessibility, expands consciousness and healing through movement. Rooted Resistance is currently based in Florida where queer and trans* folx have come together in physical affirming spaces that lend themselves to community connections. Through social media the organization has been able to connect to the Queer and Trans community. This platform has provided an opportunity to amplify visibility and accessibility of queer and trans* affirming trainers and wellness spaces.

Pelin Turan, Central European University

“Gazing at Intellectual Property Law through the Lens of Critical Race Theory: The Subordination of Racial Minorities and Indigenous Peoples via Copyright and Trademark Laws”

This talk is centred on the hypothesis that law is not a neutral field of science, and Intellectual Property (IP) Law is not an exception. On grounds of this hypothesis, I argue that being Western-centric in nature, the ostensibly neutral, objective, formal and abstract conceptions and legal framework of IP are subtly politicized and racialized. In line with the former, I further argue that IP concepts and framework as such serve as a tool to advance the materialistic interests of Western groups meanwhile resulting in the marginalization, stigmatization and subordination of non-Western “others.” Drawing upon the social constructionism thesis and postmodern legal theories, I adopt Critical Race Theory (CRT) as my approach to IP Law in general, and copyright and trademark laws in particular. With regard to its two building blocks, namely CRT and IP Law, my research entails a comparative legal study focusing on four jurisdictions: The United States, the United Kingdom, Australia and Germany.

-----16:30–17:30 Closing Reception-----

For additional information see: www.blackeurope.org