

Report on the GNEL/ASNEL Conference “Post-Empire Imaginaries? Anglophone Literatures, History and the Demise of Empires” in Berne, May 18-20, 2012

Members and non-members of ASNEL met in the Swiss capital from May 18- May 20 in occasion of the 23rd annual Gnel/ASNEL conference “Post-Empire Imaginaries? Anglophone Literatures, History and the Demise of Empires”.

I was quite nervous when leaving for Berne, because as a new ASNEL member this was the first conference I had attended so far. I had the opportunity to present my PhD project in one of the two “Under Construction” panels. In this article I would like to share my impressions of Berne and the conference with you.

In the first keynote lecture Prof. Landry emphasized cross-cultural relations by speaking about Post-Ottoman Rifts in time, pointing out parallels between the British Empire and the Ottoman Empire. The second refreshing keynote lecture by Alfred Hiatt brought a historical dimension into the discussion. Hiatt talked vividly about medieval cartography and the visual representation of Empires across history. The third keynote lecture by the American scholar Ann Laura Stoler challenged traditional notions about postcolonial history by linking modern political conflicts to postcolonial history.

There were many interesting panels, too many to go into detail. Formats which were particularly helpful for me were the Under Construction Panels and the Teachers’ Workshop.

The presentation of my PhD project in *Under Construction* was a really good experience for me. I got helpful comments and feedback from fellow PhD students from all over the world. I especially liked the idea of including mentors in the panel. The three of them had different national and professional backgrounds and also due to that their feedback was enriching and helpful.

As I work as a teacher I attended one of the Teachers' workshops and did not regret it. The workshop showed that postcolonial contents are deeply rooted in the curricula of German and Swiss secondary schools. The focus on "Slumdog Millionaire" was interesting for all participants, because in many parts of Germany India and its history is a compulsory A-level topic. It would be a good idea to attract more participants by promoting the workshops more on a local level, so that a larger audience could benefit from the manifold offers.

The "Brown Bag Reading" was a further highlight. During lunch break the novelist Yvette Edwards read a chapter from her debut novel "A Cupboard Full of Coats".

All in all, the conference was helpful for me in many ways: I got feedback for my PhD project, met many interesting people and could learn a lot about current issues in postcolonial studies.

A big thank you goes to the conveners Prof. Virginia Richter and Prof. Barbara Buchenau, Marijke Denger-Kähler and all of the students involved in the organisation!

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