

## **Borders, Margins, Cartographies: Transnational Modernist Women's Writing Now**

A two-day conference on **4-5 Oct 2024, at the University of Tartu, in Tartu, Estonia**

In her introduction to *Feminism as World Literature* (2022), Robin Truth Goodman writes that “the field of World Literature seems to skirt away from feminism,” noting how the genealogical trajectory of the field is as male as it is Eurocentric (p. 1). More specifically about literary modernist studies, Susan Stanford Friedman (2011; 2015), Jessica Berman (2018), Anne Fernald (2013), and Rebecca Walkowitz (2016) have argued that the transnational debates in modernist studies often overlook women writers' work. In other words, the debates and discussions in transnational, world, global, planetary and transnational literature tend to draw their theories and conclusions by focusing on male writers and ‘strong theory’ (Saint-Amour, 2018), even if they challenge canons by shifting the focus away from Western Europe and the United States.

To avoid these totalising narratives, this conference calls for presentations on minor, forgotten, or little-known women artists and writers of modernism across the globe. Here we take modernism in an expansive sense to include modes of avant-garde and experimental writing across place and time, thereby positioning modernism broadly as an expression of modernity. We are especially interested in so-called peripheral European places and indigenous populations within Europe (east, north, and central Europe) but we also welcome papers on non-European authors and texts. We are interested in various ‘weak’, unlikely, surprising, and unexpected dialogues between lesser-known writers, and between more canonical women writers. We do not, however, encourage papers that focus solely on already canonical women. We also encourage dialogues with modernist painters, musicians, journalists, designers and other women engaged in creative labour across media.

By ‘women’, we mean cis women, trans and non-binary women, and those whose lives are or were significantly female-identified. Presenting and introducing writers who have not (yet) been translated into English is a priority for us, but the working language of the conference is English.

The topics of interest include but are not limited to:

- Case studies and close reading: building critique on little-known and understudied women authors
- Translation and the poetics/poethics of translation; untranslatability; multilingual writing; minor languages (including minor forms of major languages)
- ‘Minor’ literatures and their specific forms, styles, characterization techniques, narratives, imaginaries, totalities, and modes of composition
- Giving voices and stories to those who have been silenced; how to fill archival silences (Saidiya Hartman, 2008); how to articulate a “‘We’ - the missing people” (Rosi Braidotti, 2020)

- Narratives/representations of cosmopolitanism, nationalism, and indigeneity in different cultural settings
- How do the framings of ‘world’, ‘global’, ‘planetary’, and ‘transnational’ modernism bring forth new connections, affective vocabularies, and/or political resonances?
- The intersections of nationalism and gender and sexuality; citizenship and gender and sexuality; belonging and gender and sexuality; sovereignty and gender and sexuality
- Transgressive, marginal, and plural modes of geographical belonging read alongside queer, ambiguous, multiple, and non-heteronormative identities or expressions of womanhood
- The complex relationship between discourses of eugenics, ethnic nationalist thinking, the politics of reproductive health, and modernist aesthetics
- Changing socio-political relations and contested borders across local, global, and glocal scales
- Class, labour, and economic status: the material and affective conditions in which women writers worked (especially ethnic minority, working-class, queer, and otherwise ‘outsider’ women), as well as how class and economic status is presented in writing
- Transnational modernist iterations of care, maternity, kinship, and intergenerational solidarity
- Questions of postnationalism: decolonial, postcolonial, postsocialist/Soviet dialogues
- Looking at modernist women’s writing via critical posthumanist frameworks: ‘new’ materialism, environmentalism, and their relation to Indigenous knowledges
- The influence of traditional forms of knowledge, folk culture, oral tradition, and mythology
- Methodological challenges: working with and accessing archival material, doing translation, and getting funding and institutional support.

**The confirmed keynote speakers are professor Jessica Berman and professor Rosi Braidotti.**

**Please send abstracts of 250 words and a short bio of no more than 100 words in one document by November 15, 2023** to both Ruth Alison Clemens at [r.a.clemens@hum.leidenuniv.nl](mailto:r.a.clemens@hum.leidenuniv.nl) and Eret Talviste at [eret.talviste@ut.ee](mailto:eret.talviste@ut.ee) with the subject heading ‘Transnational Women Submission’. We will notify participants by February 1, 2024.