

CONFERENCE REPORT

DISCUSSING FREEDOM AND OPPRESSION ON THE 5TH INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON ORIENTAL LITERATURES AND ORIENT IN LITERARY TEXTS “ORIENT IN LITERATURE – LITERATURE OF THE ORIENT” (OLLO) Toruń (28-29 March, 2019), Faculty of Languages, Nicolaus Copernicus University

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The paper reports the 5th International Conference on Oriental Literatures and Orient in Literary Texts “Orient in Literature – Literature of the Orient”, organized by the oriental units of the Faculty of Languages at Nicolaus Copernicus University in Toruń on March 28–29, 2019. It presents the idea of annual meetings of scholars researching problems related to perception, interpretation and translation of the Oriental literatures, as well as the scope and process of the fifth edition of the conference.

Orient and its cultural heritage has been an inspiration for numerous artists, researchers and travelers for centuries. The fascination of the Orient is also visible among the scientific interests of contemporary literature researchers, representing the world’s leading academic centers, national universities and research institutes. The idea of organizing an international platform for dialogue on Oriental literatures and their perception in different countries and regions of the world was born at the Department of Languages of Nicolaus Copernicus University in Toruń, which is home to three relatively young but active Oriental units: Department of Japanese Studies, Arabic Language and Culture Center, and Chinese Language and Culture Center. Representatives of the abovementioned institutions – Dr. Adam Bednarczyk, Dr. Magdalena Kubarek and Dr. Magdalena Lewicka, Dr. Maciej Szatkowski respectively, all doing research on the literatures of the Orient, proposed a periodic international conference on Oriental literatures and Orient in literary texts, entitled “Orient in Literature – Literature of the Orient” (OLLO). The first edition of the conference took place in 2014 and it was dedicated to “Meetings”. The initiative was considered a success, noticing more than 30 respective scholars delivering their papers, which encouraged organizers to work on the future editions. The number of participants and the level of international experts participating in OLLO systematically grew from the first to the fifth edition. Following 2014’s debut, OLLO took place on March 19–20, 2015 (second edition, “Between Tradition & Modernity”), March 17–18,

2016 (third edition, “Sources and Inspirations”), March 23–24, 2017 (fourth edition, “Borders & Borderlands”), and March 27–28, 2019 (fifth edition, “Freedom and Oppression”).

Before this year’s edition of OLLO, organizers had received almost 100 outstanding abstracts. After reviewing their content, 60 scholars representing 19 countries, including Algeria, Austria, Bangladesh, China, Egypt, India, Indonesia, Iraq, Italy, Japan, Latvia, Germany, Norway, Qatar, Poland, Portugal, Slovakia, the United States, and the United Kingdom, were accepted to present their papers. Polish researchers participating in the conference represented the main national universities (Adam Mickiewicz University, Fryderyk Chopin University of Music, Jagiellonian University, Nicolaus Copernicus University in Toruń, Pomeranian University in Słupsk, University of Gdańk, University of Łódź, University of Social Sciences and Humanities, University of Warmia and Mazury in Olsztyn, University of Warsaw, University of Wrocław), as well as international institutions: INALCO – CERMOM (Paris, France), University of St Andrews (St Andrews, UK) and Xi’an Jiaotong-Liverpool University (Suzhou, PRC).

Remembering about the jubilee character of this year’s conference, the organizers chose the issue of freedom and oppression – a rather difficult concept, whose importance in contemporary literature is still growing – as a motif of OLLO 2019. As underlined in the well-received Call for Papers,

[t]he key-theme [...] implies numerous perspectives in research on literary texts: literature as a laboratory of freedom and oppression, literature as a release from..., literature against totalitarianism, rebellion, alienation and striving for freedom in literature, prison literature, an image of an oppressed man, motive of freedom and oppression, relations between freedom and the existential philosophy, creative freedom and the right of experiment with the word, author’s autonomy, political and ideological independence of the creator and the characters he drew, symbols of the struggle for freedom, definitions, topoi and ranges of freedom and oppression, ... and many other issues connected with the topic of the current edition of the conference¹.

The Conference – similarly to the previous editions – was held in the representative building of Nicolaus Copernicus University – Collegium Maius, which is one of the two homes of the Faculty of Languages, including Chinese Language and Culture Center. The unique architecture of the building, as well as the fact that it is located within the medieval Old Town, created an unusual atmosphere that supported academic discussions and exchanging opinions. The conference was officially opened by Dr. Maciej Szatkowski, Chair of the Chinese Language and Culture Center, and Prof. Dariusz Pniewski, Deputy Dean for Student Affairs and Education at Faculty of

¹ More information on the conference website: *Recent information*, <https://ollo2019en.wordpress.com/call-for-papers/> (accessed on: April 6th, 2019).

Languages. The latter welcomed a Honorary Guest of the 5th OLLO: H.E. Mr. Mahmoud Khalifa, Ambassador of the State of Palestine in Poland, as well as all the respected scholars. In his speech, Dean Pniewski expressed his gratitude towards the organizers of the conference and appreciation for the contribution of all three oriental units of the Faculty of Languages towards the research on the Oriental literatures.

The first keynote lecture was delivered by Stephan Guth, Professor of Arabic and Middle Eastern Literatures at the University of Oslo, Norway (*Three Middle Eastern Utopias and the Fading Trust in the Nahdah*). It was followed by the second keynote, entitled *Thought Control and Totalitarian System in Recent Japanese Literature: Yoshimura Man'ichi, Tsushima Yūko and Kirino Natsuo*, presented by Lisette Gebhardt, Professor of Japanese Literature and Culture at Johann Wolfgang Goethe University, Germany. Both lectures were well-received and initiated interesting questions and discussion, which continued during the coffee break.

The program for the first day of the conference was divided into three sessions (noon, afternoon and evening), all consisting of three parallel panels. Although the primary conference language was English, organizers prepared some exceptional panels, held in Polish and Arabic, remembering about including English abstracts of non-English papers in the book of abstracts. The nine panels were entitled as follows: “Freedom and Oppression in Chinese Literature” (panel 1), “Concepts of Freedom” (panel 2), “Different Perspectives of Freedom and Oppression” (1; panel 3), “The Dimensions of Freedom in Arabic Literature” (panel 4), “Freedom and Religious Texts” (panel 5), “Discourses about Freedom” (panel 6), “The Experience of Oppression in Contemporary Japanese Literature – Precarity, Imprisonment, Totalitarian Tendencies” (panel 7), “Woman: between Freedom and Oppression” (1; panel 8), “China: the Picture of Freedom and Oppression” (panel 9). After a busy and fruitful day, conference participants could enjoy the welcome reception, an occasion to discuss topics analyzed, as well as maintain friendships with colleagues from Polish and international academic institutions and make new connections.

The second day of the conference was opened by Dr. Magdalena Kubarek from Arabic Language and Culture Center, who have moderated the plenary session. It was inaugurated by the keynote speech delivered by Marek Dziekan, Professor of Arabic Culture and Literature at the University of Łódź, Poland and President of Polish Oriental Society, Honorary Patron of OLLO (*Koncepcja wolności w Al-Lisan al-murib an tahafut al-adžnabi hawla Al-Maghrib Muhammada as-Salaymaniego [1869-1926]*) [The Concept of Freedom in *Al-Lisan al-mu'rib 'an tahafut al-ajnabi hawla Al-Maghrib* by Muhammad as-Salaymani (1869-1926)]. It was followed by the lecture presented by Daniel Kalinowski, Professor of Polish Studies at the Pomeranian University in Słupsk, Poland, entitled: *Trzy drogi do*

buddyjskiej wolności (Jack Kerouac, Janwill van de Wetering, Artur Cieślak) [Three Ways to Buddhist Freedom (Jack Kerouac, Janwill van de Wetering, Artur Cieślak)].

The program for the second day of the conference was divided into two sessions (noon, afternoon), similarly to the first day consisting of the three parallel panels. The panels were devoted to the following issues: “Woman: between Freedom and Oppression” (2, panel 10), “The Freedom in Colonial and Postcolonial Perspective” (panel 11), “Freedom in Contemporary Arabic Literature” (panel 12), “Freedom in Violence in Narration” (panel 13), “Spheres of Freedom and Oppression between Orient and Polish Literature” (panel 14), “Different Perspectives of Freedom and Oppression” (2, panel 15). After Dr. Magdalena Lewicka, Chair of the Arabic Language and Culture Center, had officially closed the conference, organizers invited all guests for another integration event – a guided tour through Toruń’s Old Town, entitled “Get Gothic”.

As previously announced, selected papers presented during the 5th OLLO will be published in peer-reviewed monographic collective work², edited by Dr. Adam Bednarczyk, Dr. Magdalena Kubarek and Dr. Magdalena Lewicka. Since the jubilee edition of International Conference on Oriental Literatures and Orient in Literary Texts “Orient in Literature – Literature of the Orient” can be considered a success (which was explicitly expressed not only by the Faculty authorities, but most importantly, by a significant number of participants), its organizers have already invited for the next edition, tentatively scheduled for March 2021.

² The series “Orient in Literature – Literature of the Orient” includes numerous volumes published after each edition of OLLO: A. Bednarczyk; M. Kubarek; M. Szatkowski (eds.), *Orient w literaturze - literatura w Oriencie: spotkania*, Wydawnictwo Naukowe Uniwersytetu Mikołaja Kopernika, Toruń 2014; A. Bednarczyk; M. Kubarek; M. Szatkowski (eds.), *Orient i literatura: między tradycją a nowoczesnością*, Wydawnictwo Naukowe Uniwersytetu Mikołaja Kopernika, Toruń 2015; A. Bednarczyk; M. Kubarek; M. Szatkowski (eds.), *Traditional Orient, modern Orient: literary studies*, Wydawnictwo Naukowe Uniwersytetu Mikołaja Kopernika, Toruń 2015; A. Bednarczyk; M. Kubarek; M. Szatkowski (eds.), *Między Wschodem a Zachodem: w poszukiwaniu źródeł i inspiracji*, Wydawnictwo Naukowe Uniwersytetu Mikołaja Kopernika, Toruń 2016; A. Bednarczyk; M. Kubarek; M. Szatkowski (eds.), *Rethinking Orient: in search of sources and inspirations*, PL Academic Research, Frankfurt am Main 2017; A. Bednarczyk; M. Kubarek; M. Szatkowski (eds.), *Granice i pogranicza w perspektywie orientalistycznej: szkice o literaturze i kulturze*, Wydawnictwo Libron, Kraków 2017; A. Bednarczyk; M. Kubarek; M. Szatkowski (eds.), *Borders and beyond: Orient-Occident crossings in literature*, Vernon Press, Wilmington, DE 2018.

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Recent information, <https://ollo2019en.wordpress.com/call-for-papers/>.