

Call For Papers

Literature in the Nobel Era

Theoretical, archival, and critical approaches to the Nobel Prize in Literature

International Symposium

German Literature Archive, Marbach

26 - 29 August 2020

A cooperation of: Bielefeld University, Germany / German Literature Archive, Marbach, Germany / Linköping University, Sweden / The Swedish Academy, Stockholm, Sweden

General Remarks

The Nobel Prize in Literature is the most widely known and most prestigious literature prize worldwide. Since its first distribution in 1901, the prize has established itself as the epitome of cultural value. Considering this stature of the Nobel Prize, it is all the more remarkable that its ways of functioning and actual influence on the global literary field remain little known and poorly understood. This may have something to do with the fact that systematic research into the function and impact of the Nobel Prize in Literature and its effects in the literary field is a task of enormous dimension and staggering complexity. Taking recent scholarship on awards and vocational prizes, recognition and esteem, comparative literature, and the sociology of literature as a starting point, we would like to take on this task head-on and invite experts from around the globe to an international and interdisciplinary Nobel Prize symposium at the German Literature Archive, Marbach.

The Rise of the Nobel Prize: Creation, Production, and Reception of Literature in the Nobel Era

Given the massive amount of press coverage that the Nobel Prize in Literature receives all over the world each year, its importance seems to be beyond discussion. But to what extent does this public awareness of the prize coincide with its actual impact on the literary field? In what way has, for example, the Nobel Prize enabled, enriched, influenced, informed and changed the reception of certain authors and their work? To what degree does the Nobel Prize mark a turning point in the careers of its laureates or even just such authors that have been publicly associated with it? Focusing on the Nobel authors, which are also in most cases the focal point of public attention and discussion, we would like to invite scholars from all continents to subject to critical scrutiny what may be termed the “impact” of the Nobel Prize, i.e. the evidence of its actual effects.

Such “Nobel Prize effects” may, of course, take various forms and do not concern the author alone. They also involve publishers, printers and suppliers, literary agents and translators, shippers and booksellers (wholesalers, retailers), journalists and literary critics, and, finally, the book buyers and library cardholders that make up the reading public. The Nobel Prize can

be viewed in the light of its intellectual influence and publicity, but equally in the light of economic and social conjunctures, ideological influence and taste, or political and legal sanctions (censorship, import and export regulations, commercial pressure vs. public funding, etc.). The specific forms and functions of cultural mediation must be taken into account and should be a part of our collaborative investigation.

Nonetheless, the impact of the Nobel Prize seems ultimately to hinge on the importance of an author and his/her work before and after the public association with the award. The question of authorship in the Nobel era seems thus to be a natural starting point in determining the cultural “reach” of the prize. How do authors respond to public attention? How do they present themselves prior to and during the prize ceremony, in their acceptance speech, or in interviews? Will the prize even influence his/her future writing? How does, on the other hand, the prize shape the public attention toward an author, e.g. in critical reviews, on the radio, on TV, or on social media (Facebook, Twitter, etc.)? In what way does the prize affect publishing houses, with respect to performance measures, marketing strategies, sales, turnover, profits, priority shifts in expenditure profiles, or even employment associated with the prize? Can one observe significant changes in the self-fashioning of the author? In the quantity and quality of translations? How does the Nobel Prize influence academic scholarship and intellectual culture more generally (conferences, events, etc.)? Does an author, by virtue of being a Nobel Prize winner, suddenly become a reference point to other authors? And, from the literary archive’s perspective: Are the prices of Nobel Prize winners’ estates rising? In short: To what extent has the Nobel Prize come to shape global discourses and practices of literature in the cultural fields of the 20th and 21st centuries?

We invite contributions from scholars in the fields of literary, comparative and cultural studies, sociology, book history, as well as other researchers whose area of expertise is relevant to the study of the Nobel Prize. We especially encourage contributions combining critical or archival research with theoretical and methodological reflection. We thus welcome (qualitative, quantitative, computational) best practice studies focusing on aspects / actors within the global cultural field (authors, literary texts, publishers, agents, global markets, public awareness, academia, press, etc.) as well as presentations that (starting with the collections of the German Literature Archive and the Swedish Academy) allow to discuss how an archival perspective can enrich historical and critical studies on the Nobel Prize. How can archival research best be integrated within existing discourses? What kind of source material should be examined, and in what order?

Please submit abstracts (300 words, preferably in English) for a 30 minutes presentation by **10 November 2019**, including a short CV/publication list. The conference language will be English.

Please submit by email to: forschung@dla-marbach.de

Costs for travel and accommodation during the conference will be covered.

Organized by:

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