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# Cultural Literacy in Europe today

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## Foreword

In less than a hundred years, the academic field of European literary studies has seen many radical changes. As early as 1919, Roman Jakobson called for a 'science of criticism' that would define what was distinctively literary and T. S. Eliot argued for the impersonality of poetry. In the 1930s and 1940s, critics as diverse as F. R. Leavis, René Wellek and Erich Auerbach took the long view of literature, replacing a stress on the specifics of authors, histories and *œuvres* with a more systematic understanding of how one reads. Such thinkers were defining and thus safeguarding the autonomy of literary studies as a discipline; in this sense they were continuing a line from the ancients. From the 1960s, however, with the rise and adoption of French critical theory, literary studies grew away from the tradition of 'pure' philology and textual criticism and began to borrow from other fields, such as anthropology, linguistics, philosophy and psychoanalysis, to think about its objects and practices. In the next few decades, it became further politicised, reading texts through the lenses of feminism, queer studies, postcolonial studies etc., and thus came, in turn, to direct the gaze of literature onto other objects.

In October 2007, the ESF Standing Committee for the Humanities (SCH) raised a concern about what was happening in and to literary studies. As a field it seemed difficult to recognise and support, both because its specificity was unclear and because its researchers appeared to be less visibly networked than those in many other humanities fields. The SCH commissioned a Working Group of four members active in literary studies – Péter Dávidházi (Hungary), Ulrike Landfester (Switzerland), Bohuslav Manek (Czech Republic) and Naomi Segal (UK) – to consider how to develop a strategy for literary studies. Over the next 18 months, through a variety of international networking activities, a momentum developed to redefine and name the areas in which scholars whose formation was in literary research now worked in 'literary and cultural studies' (LCS), and to focus the ways in which this work can have a direct impact on European society. In 2009, the SCH project became a collaborative synergy with the parallel domain of COST, *Individuals, Societies, Cultures and Health (ISCH)*, and a joint committee of active members of both organisations (listed at the end of the Briefing) proceeded to investigate, through a series of workshops involving both LCS and non-LCS researchers from Europe and beyond, four areas where the most vital research is going on: Cultural Memory; Migration and Translation; Electronic Textuality and Biopolitics, Biosociality and the Body.

The role of literary studies remains diffuse and complex; its scholars are only now beginning to perceive themselves as a coherent interdisciplinary grouping whose work has a unique part to play in contributing to the challenges of 21<sup>st</sup> century European society. The reason for this may lie precisely in the fact that, since the latter decades of the last century, far from directing its attention into the mirror of its distinctiveness, as it had earlier, it had become so



Cover

Marie-Denise Villers (1774–1821, French), *Young Woman Drawing*, 1801

interdisciplinary, taking its enquiries so far afield, that it had lost a sense of its specificity. The aim of this document and the project it represents is to bring back to light the specificity of literary studies, now redefined as literary and cultural studies, and see what it is ready to do.

The impact of LCS researchers and their research depends on continuing the work of this ESF–COST synergy into further activities of networking and visibility. Cultural literacy is already active in many areas but it is not sufficiently recognised. This project has been the first step in making it so, and this paper sets out its conclusions and recommendations. Readers are invited to support the future actions embodied in those recommendations.

**Mr Martin Hynes**, ESF Chief Executive  
**Dr Ángeles Rodríguez-Peña**, COST President  
**Professor Milena Žic-Fuchs**, SCH Chair  
**Dr Marc Caball**, COST DC ISCH Chair  
**Professor Naomi Segal**, Chair of the Steering Committee



## Executive Summary

In the last decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century and the early years of the 21<sup>st</sup>, the contribution made to European science, society and intellectual cultures by work produced by scholars trained in literary studies (philological, literary-historical and allied fields) has increased significantly as their research has broadened out to include a wide range of interdisciplinary fields and new objects of study. This Science Policy Briefing focuses on the broader societal

relevance of such research in ‘literary and cultural studies’ or LCS. Its aim is to highlight the relevance of LCS research to policy-makers and to society in general. The authors argue not only that LCS research makes a key contribution to analysing European identities and cultures but also that it has a significant role to play in enhancing the essential responses to a range of broader challenges facing Europe today. They also recommend specific actions in order to demonstrate the added value that knowledge and expertise of LCS researchers offers.

### Recommendation 1: Create a Cultural Literacy conference series

A biennial Cultural Literacy conference should be created, to be organised under the aegis of a pan-European organisation, e.g. the newly formed Science Europe, COST or ALLEA, and to present, to both LCS researchers and their collaborators in other fields, new research developments, urgent debates, and general issues such as interdisciplinarity and communication or the future of the field.

The first of these conferences would bring together around 80 delegates: representatives of up to 40 LCS national and pan-national organisations with European policy-makers concerned particularly with migration, demographic change, health, equality and education. Workshops and plenary discussions would lead to greater clarification and coherence of purpose among LCS researchers, a rebranding of the concept of Cultural Literacy, and the creation of a Forum which would take forward a number of actions, including the organisation of further conferences.

Subsequent conferences would focus on major issues, such as strategies of funding agencies in relation to LCS research (see the section on Develop flexible funding instruments), or Cultural Literacy and higher education (see the section on Embed Cultural Literacy in higher education). They would continue to involve a mixture of academics and policy-makers but they would also explicitly be open to the general public within specified interest areas.

### Recommendation 2: Inaugurate a European Forum for LCS research

The pan-European Forum should be created at the first biennial conference. Its role would be to develop methods for integrating LCS research on two levels: into the explicitly interdisciplinary strategy of the proposal for *Horizon 2020* and into national research strategies. It would coordinate activities within each European country in relation to issues to be discussed at the biennial conferences, which would be run by the Forum.

Led by LCS researchers with a European perspective, this Forum should also include representatives of governmental institutions concerned with societal challenges such as migration, demographic change, health, equality and education, and representatives of the major European research funding agencies.

### Recommendation 3: Develop flexible funding instruments

With the examples outlined in this Briefing and an improved understanding of the contribution of LCS research, European and national funding and policy-making agencies should be invited to introduce flexible funding instruments that respond more productively to the profile of the LCS community.

An organisation like COST, which focuses its funding on research networking, would be an ideal partner for this development, for example. Its ISCH domain, which covers a massive field across the humanities and social sciences, currently receives more applications than it can support. Future expansion of ISCH COST funding or the creation of a sub-field for LCS are among possible ways forward.

### Recommendation 4: Embed Cultural Literacy in higher education

Higher education models providing students from non-LCS programmes with access to LCS curricula would be promoted.

One model involves the reinstatement of a concept of higher education based on the basic training through the study of the liberal arts known as the *studium generale* which, at the time when the European universities were first founded, was mandatory for all students. This educational concept enables students to acquire not only specialised training in a field of study but also an education in scientific and societal contextuality, i.e. in Cultural Literacy as such. *Studium generale* courses are specifically designed to make students conscious of the fact that, whatever their future research or career interests, the practices of their chosen field are necessarily embedded in and directly related to the whole context of society. This could be strengthened by forms of study which bring together students with secondary school pupils, teachers, governmental and non-governmental actors, etc. The involvement of non-academics in the study process is another idea that is gaining ground in this age of impact and outreach.

Exposure to LCS studies should also be achieved through guided but essentially student-led events such as short conferences, at which LCS and non-LCS undergraduates and postgraduates would debate issues of concern to them. This would be modelled on the innovative *Humanities Spring* run between 2007 and 2011 by the ESF Standing Committee for the Humanities.

## What are Literary and Cultural Studies?

In the last decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century and the early years of the 21<sup>st</sup>, the contribution made to European science, society and intellectual cultures by work produced by scholars trained in literary studies (philological, literary-historical and allied fields) has increased significantly as their research has broadened to include a wide range of interdisciplinary fields and new objects of study. The common principle of the research they pursue in all these areas is the essential *readability* of their objects.

Researchers in Literary and Cultural Studies (LCS) examine the ways in which human beings form thought or action into ‘text-like structured artefacts’ through a range of techniques and practices and following a set of characteristics outlined below. The LCS mode of enquiry understands bodies of knowledge, fields of social action, individuals or groups as being culturally readable. The broad aim of LCS research is the enhancement of ‘cultural literacy’. Cultural Literacy is the ability to recognise, reflect on, use and potentially modify the many interacting cultural artefacts, including texts and other media, which shape our cultural existence. It is an attitude to such artefacts that highlights communication, comparison and critique, bringing ideas together in an interdisciplinary and international ‘collaboratory’.

### ESF–COST Project *Cultural Literacy in Europe today*

The project *Cultural Literacy in Europe today* was set up in January 2009. It was co-organised by a steering group of eight academics from seven European countries, half from the ESF Standing Committee for the Humanities (SCH) and half from the COST Domain Committee for Individuals, Societies, Cultures and Health (ISCH). Between December 2009 and August 2010, the group ran four Strategic Workshops on the fields of research detailed in section 4 of this document. Each of these Workshops was an international, interdisciplinary discussion involving about twenty academics from three continents, combining LCS scholars and researchers from other disciplines. The aim of the ESF–COST project is to highlight the relevance of LCS research to policy-makers and to society in general. The authors argue not only that LCS research makes a



key contribution to analysing European identities and cultures but also that it has a significant role to play in enhancing the essential responses to a range of broader challenges facing Europe today. The two immediate outcomes of the ESF–COST project are this Science Policy Briefing and a collected volume of essays. For the longer term a number of ways forward are suggested in the Recommendations section of this Briefing.

## European research and the new ‘Grand Challenges’

In response to major challenges facing humankind today – the intermixing of formerly distinct cultures as a result of mobility and the internationalisation of technological and economic developments, the global threats posed to the environment, and the fluid political nature of social and religious conflicts, to name but a few – the scientific community has undergone a major transformation in its perception of academic disciplines and their relationships. The established yet arbitrary dichotomy between nature and culture has begun to collapse as, for example, genetics and environmental sciences come to recognise that what used to be seen as naturally given facts are fundamentally influenced by human culture. Moreover, the humanities and social sciences have opened up towards the so-called ‘hard sciences’, seeking methodological interfaces and encompassing research issues once thought to be unrelated. Researchers in the ‘soft’ and ‘hard’ sciences have discovered that they have much to learn from each other.

LCS research offers a multitude of techniques and heuristic paradigms for analysing cultural phenomena and this analysis is crucially relevant to dealing with the Grand Challenges that European society is facing today. Up to now, LCS researchers have not made this potential contribution visible enough. The reasons for this are both historical and structural. At the beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, when the critical study of literary and other texts was first granted a place of its own in the newly created universities, researchers in this field took it for granted that their scholarly work was as rigorous, exact and truthful as any research conducted under testable conditions in the natural sciences. When, however, towards the end of that century, Wilhelm Dilthey declared the gap between the natural sciences and the ‘human sciences’ to be insurmountable, each side began to close off defensively from the other. While under-

standable, and reinforced no doubt from both inside and outside, this attitude perpetuated a separation of spheres that has increased misunderstandings and arbitrary divisions. At the start of this millennium, such divisions are unjustifiable, particularly in Europe and in relation to global challenges that can only be met by collaboration between all types of research. LCS has set an example of interdisciplinary border-crossing to all researchers in both close and distant fields, with both similar and different methodologies.

LCS researchers are now seeking innovative ways to demonstrate the added value that their knowledge and practice offers, and to encourage other disciplines to join them in thinking about how to develop a culture of open-mindedness and dialogue between theoretical paradigms. Interdisciplinary collaboration should be more than the sum of distinct disciplinary perspectives: the questioning of disciplinary boundaries is its most productive principle and this should also be encouraged in research policies.

### European context

The five targets for the Europe 2020 Strategy – to raise the overall employment rate, to increase investment in research and development, to counteract rapidly continuing climate change by optimising the use of renewable energies, to improve education and to reduce the risk of poverty and social exclusion<sup>1</sup> – all concern matters which are deeply rooted in a cultural context. Confronting the Grand Challenges represented by those targets – health, demographic change and wellbeing; food security and the bio-based economy; secure, clean and efficient energy; smart, green and integrated transport; resource efficiency and climate action – will necessitate close collaboration among disciplines and groups of disciplines that until now have mostly remained separate. The proposal for *Horizon 2020: The Framework Programme for Research and Innovation*<sup>2</sup> published in November 2011 not only promotes a transversal, leading role for humanities and social sciences in these Grand Challenges but also includes a sixth Grand Challenge, *Inclusive,*

*innovative and secure societies* which is an important step in the right direction, creating opportunities for research led by humanities and social sciences.<sup>3</sup> The detailed content of Horizon 2020, including the sixth Challenge, is still under discussion and development in the European Parliament and the European Commission and this Science Policy Briefing aims to contribute to this debate.

With its exceptionally mixed and dynamically changing network of societies and languages, contemporary Europe is one of the most complex cultures of any time or place. The European Research Area can no longer afford to marginalise the part of its potential represented by Literary and Cultural Studies if it is to take up a leading role in meeting these urgent global challenges. LCS research offers crucial input both into the cultural aspects of existing problems, particularly those of education and social exclusion, and into the interdisciplinarity which is needed in order to make the best use of increased scientific investment.

LCS research is one part of the work that humanities scholars are doing together with or alongside their social science colleagues, and which feeds into the overall effort to meet today's challenges. Within this range of activity it contributes directly to a culturally literate understanding of the issues facing us all.

## Where are Literary and Cultural Studies researchers active today?

As pointed out above, research conducted today by scholars trained in literary studies has branched out widely from its original objects of study. No longer restricted to studying manuscripts, printed books or other language-based genres in a philological mode, LCS researchers are now concerned rather with four essential conceptual elements, using them to describe, analyse and evaluate what may broadly be called the symbolic dimension of humanity's relationship with material reality. The four elements

1. Cf. <http://ec.europa.eu/europe2020/targets/eu-targets>.

2. *Communication from the commission to the European parliament, the council, the European economic and social committee and the committee of the regions, Horizon 2020 – The Framework Programme for Research and Innovation.*

3. On the role of social sciences and humanities in Horizon 2020 see: *Academia Europaea position paper on the situation of the Humanities and Social Sciences in Europe*, January 2012; *Social sciences and humanities: essential fields for European research and in Horizon 2020*, League of European Research Universities (LERU), June 2012; *Position Paper by the British Academy in response to the consultation on the Green Paper From Challenges to Opportunities: Towards a Common Strategic Framework for EU Research and Innovation Funding*, 9 May 2011.



are *textuality*, *rhetoricity*, *fictionality* and *historicity*. These concepts both represent crucial structures and processes at work in cultural objects and at the same time offer key techniques for understanding them. Working often together or in comparative engagement, they indicate ways in which all knowledge, all social activity, can be read.

- **Textuality:**

A text is a weave of meanings. The concept of ‘textuality’ – what Roland Barthes<sup>4</sup> describes as a ‘galaxy of signifiers’ or Clifford Geertz<sup>5</sup> identifies as the intricate ‘thickness’ of the structures that constitute cultures – represents the complexity of all cultural objects and activities. Whether it is an aesthetic construction or a social process, any cultural object can be understood as an artefact. Textuality may or may not presume a maker; the focus is on the formal shape of the thing. LCS techniques that describe, explain and contextualise such structures are valuable tools for understanding and analysing any social entity, from a law to a bodily gesture.

- **Fictionality:**

In cultural meaning there is no fixed ground of materiality; yet the referentiality of many artefacts supposes a difference between the real and unreal that is best described by the term ‘fictionality’. As its Latin root suggests, a fiction is a thing fashioned; like ‘textuality’, it may well assume a maker, but the identification of fictionality does not necessarily focus on authorship. Like other virtual forms, fictionality may be rule-bound in the sense that it presupposes rules of artifice, but it is not bounded by natural laws. A fiction is not a lie, but its truth-claims are not testable. To study the fictionality of any object is to study how kinds of truth-effect are artfully achieved.

- **Rhetoricity:**

Assuming language (or similar structures) to have probable purposes and undoubted effects is ‘rhetoricity’. The concept is derived from the art of persuasion through speech – rhetoric – as developed and practised in Greek and Roman antiquity, but it may be extended to any formal or informal techniques that persuade or manipulate. Metaphors and other figures of speech pervade every level of discourse, and they are never innocent: why, for example, do we still speak of ‘hard’ and ‘soft’ sciences? To be able to identify rhetoricity not only as a tool of specialised forms of discourse but as a phenomenon that invades all kinds

of communication is one of the most important facets of Cultural Literacy.

- **Historicity:**

All human artefacts and practices have extension in time, whether or not they have extension in space. Their freight of past is essential to their meaning. While the age of the ‘grand narratives’<sup>6</sup> is over, the historicity of things relates to their formation as ‘little narratives’, the quality of being a tale told and heard. Historicity has two faces: it relates both to the synchronous historical context of a socio-cultural phenomenon and to its position in the diachronic processes of change of which it is a part. The study of all these aspects of historicity can make a direct contribution to the process of cultural problem-solving.

## Developing research directions

The notion of Cultural Literacy, bringing together the four concepts outlined above, provides a framework within which new pan-European and indeed global research directions can be developed. In this context we now present four exemplary research directions in which LCS scholars are working. These research directions are by no means exclusive, but are offered as key instances, ‘spot-mapping’ a vast field of activity. They are: Cultural Memory; Migration and Translation; Electronic Textuality; and Biopolitics, Biosociality and the Body. They were debated in the project workshops mentioned earlier. Summarising the outcome of these debates, the following sections map outlines of present and future research in each of the fields, providing examples of the potential of LCS expertise for tackling key issues of contemporary European society. All the workshops developed their results through intensive interdisciplinary dialogue with colleagues from inside and outside their own fields. In this way they offer a paradigmatic perspective on the constructive integration of LCS research into the European Research Area.



### Cultural Memory

Chairs: Daniela Koleva, Naomi Segal

Memory has become one of the crucial issues of our day for a variety of reasons. In the last decades researchers in history have recognised that what used to be thought of as objective ‘historical truth’ is in fact strongly influenced by ideological – political and/or religious –

4. Roland Barthes, *S/Z*, (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1970).

5. Clifford Geertz, *The interpretation of Cultures* (New York: Basic Books, 1973).

6. Jean-François Lyotard, *La condition postmoderne* (Paris: Minuit, 1979).

## Speaking to one another: personal memories of the past in Armenia and Turkey

Authors: Leyla Neyzi, Sabanci University, Turkey; Hranush Kharatyan-Aragelyan, Armenian Centre for Ethnological Studies, Armenia

There is much heterogeneity in ways of remembering (and forgetting) the destruction of Armenian communities in 1915 in Turkey, as well as contradictions between public discourse, local memory and individual (post)memory. In both Armenia and Turkey, it is imperative to study how the past is viewed in the present, as the past, especially through its reconstruction through memory and postmemory, has great purchase on the present and the future.

In 2009, with the aim of contributing to the Turkish–Armenian reconciliation process, *dvv international* (Institute for International Cooperation of the German Adult Education Association) launched a research project funded by the German Federal Foreign Office. After a century of conflict and lack of dialogue, this project aimed to build bridges between the populations of Turkey and Armenia through adult education, intercultural exchange and oral history.

In this research, students from Armenia and Turkey interviewed individuals from diverse backgrounds and regions in both countries to record how they remembered and reconstructed recent history. One of the aims was to investigate postmemory: how individuals recount events they have not experienced themselves but which have been part of their family memory. While the study was interested in memories of the Armenian experience in Turkey in particular, the researchers conducted open-ended life-history interviews which allowed interviewees to construct their own narratives and engage actively in setting the research agenda. This approach was particularly important given the political sensitivity of the subject. The idea was to listen to ordinary individuals and to understand how they subjectively experienced, remembered, narrated and interpreted this painful history.

The collaboration resulted in a book in Armenian, Turkish and English, an international workshop on reconciliation and a travelling exhibition shown so far in Armenia, Turkey and Georgia. The project has



**Figure 1.** Memorial in the Ashnak village dedicated to the victims of Genocide, courtesy of NGO “Hazarashen”, Armenian Centre for Ethnological Studies

viewed memory in cultural-literacy terms, engaging mainly with its ‘cultural tools’, textuality and historicity. It has foregrounded the complexity of meanings, the intricacy of rhetorical repertoires and the dynamics of the way they are handed down between generations. Focusing on personal and local narratives, rather than those of the national histories, on the intentionality rather than the referentiality of the narratives, the participants – both researchers and interviewees – have made small but crucial steps towards the democratisation of memory. Their efforts to listen and understand invite the readers of the book and the visitors to the exhibition to think about the weight of the past on the present, the need to live together and the paths to reconciliation.

See: <http://www.speakingtooneanother.org> for details and free access to the publications:

- *Speaking to one another: Personal Memories of the past in Armenia and Turkey*, (dvv International: Bonn 2010)
- *Prospects for Reconciliation: Theory and Practice (Proceedings of the International Workshop, Yerevan, 27 November 2010)* (dvv International: Bonn 2011)

aesthetic, philosophical and other preconceptions. What is perceived as history varies according to the way memory is shaped through different techniques of remembering: whether it is passed on orally or written

down, what elements are deemed important and what are left out and how facts are interpreted in their relationship to each other. The relevance of LCS is implied by the fact that, both individually and collectively,

remembering and forgetting are only made possible by the use of ‘cultural tools’<sup>7</sup>. Perhaps the most widely used of such cultural tools is the creation and dissemination of narratives. Conveying values as well as knowledge and experience, narrative memory practices employ a vast array of textual (and quasi-textual) resources to communicate the meaning of the past and summon communities to defend that meaning. Conceptually, LCS is uniquely well equipped to engage with the rhetorical repertoires of memory and with the interpretation of narratives in their relation to truth, fiction and intentionality. It can contribute to the understanding of how texts construct and undermine identities, how trauma is processed into cultural memory through fiction, and how language partakes in the development of discourses and counter-discourses.

At the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, the question of how to deal with memory is more important than ever – for example the legacies of the totalitarian regimes which extended the devastation of Europe beyond the two World Wars. In this context, LCS research has become relevant to a range of academic fields within the study of cultural memory, such as social anthropology, psychology, urban studies and museum studies. It has contributed to improving the basis of practical decision-making in local, national and international political areas of memory and commemoration, for example in urban planning and cultural heritage as well as conflict resolution and post-conflict reconciliation. The present situation of increasing trans- and inter-culturality, of reappropriation of the past by post-colonial and post-totalitarian subjects, of competing memory claims and identities, reveals the timeliness and urgency of wider academic and public debates on cultures of memory and the tools for crafting and sustaining them.

LCS-informed memory studies can be seen as particularly useful in dealing with situations where conflicting strategies of remembering and forgetting create boundaries and exclusion and thus social and political friction – for example, in the area of ethnic or religious identification. Such situations are ever more frequent in Europe, but societies and institutions often lack an awareness of their historical roots and consequently an essential sense of cultural perspective.

Research is therefore needed to understand the links between memory and community, and memory and participation, concentrating on questions such as the following:

- As the European tradition of coexisting nation states is slowly superseded by political constructions like the European Union, which aims to serve the whole European community yet may create economic advantages for some countries while disadvantaging others, how do such constructions adapt or even newly create what they see as ‘the’ European memory?
- Who in the course of such construction processes decides what should be remembered and what forgotten?
- How are these decisions transmitted to the public by being implemented in school curricula and ‘memory institutions’ (museums, commemorations, national literary canons, etc.)?
- Who exactly owns cultural memory and how does this ownership change (e.g. passing from nation states to multi/trans-national agents)?
- What impact does the advent of new technologies have on such regimes of memory – how, for example, does the change from pre-digital writing culture to electronic communication affect the transmission and storing of knowledge, and with what social and political consequences?



## Migration and Translation

Chairs: Marc Caball, Margaret Kelleher

At a time when global mobility is increasing exponentially, as economic growth and scientific progress rely more and more on international knowledge transfer, most contemporary European societies are preoccupied by the social and cultural effects of migration and by the need to develop efficient techniques of intercultural translation. In the dynamic process of exchange between migrants and their host cultures, both parties are affected, as migrants do not simply assimilate (or fail to assimilate) into their new surroundings but also bring their cultural backgrounds as active contributions to the life of the host community. This process can be fruitful for both sides, but it is a complex and sensitive one in relation to communication and collective identification.

A common approach to migrant cultural products, especially literature, focuses primarily on the manner of their reception in the host society, where they are produced. Related research examines the degree of migrants’ integration into the cultural environment of the host country, whether their publications become part of the mainstream or whether their circulation remains limited to specific – often marginal – circles of readers, publishers and reviewers. Yet the cultural products of migrants can reach wider publics beyond the host societies. The

7. James Wertsch, *Voices of Collective Remembering* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002).



## Writing, memory, migration and place: the *Moving Manchester Project* (2006–2010)

Author: Robert Crawshaw, Lancaster University, United Kingdom

It has long been common to associate memory with place, both in terms of features of the physical environment that evoke recollections of past experiences and as a metonym of the social relationships to which that environment is linked: the places and spaces of our minds. For immigrants and, by extension, for their children, grandchildren and other members of their families, the past is, quite literally, another country. It is a country recalled as the embodiment of known experiences or imagined through stories told by representatives of earlier generations which seem in retrospect to the recipients to have been lived by them at first hand. It is a characteristic of the writing of authors of immigrant origin that the place of 'arrival', the host country which for some has become 'home', is always perceived as a complement of the place of familial origin. While the first priority on arrival is material survival, the urge to have recourse to writing in order to understand better the link between past and present and the places associated with them emerges as a potent means of defining the evolving relationship between writers of immigrant origin and the society of which they are now part. It was the purpose of the Arts and Humanities Research Council-funded *Moving Manchester Project* to understand better the mediating role played by creative writing – text – in expressing a relationship of transition and the critical role it plays in changing the culture of the environment in which it takes place.

Autobiography was a dominant, but by no means exclusive, form of textual translation to which the project bore witness. Where they featured in narratives, places, names and events were subordinated to a certain vision of experience whose fictional transformation or 'textualisation' could be said to characterise the diverse condition of previously colonised groups living in a British city whose past epitomised colonialism. Narrative forms ranged from short stories, novels



Figure 2.  
*Moving Manchester Project Image Gallery*

and performance poetry to the very texts which constituted the discursive matter of the project; interviews, personal statements by writers on the website as well as specially commissioned pieces.

In that sense, the *Moving Manchester* project became a reflexive component of the process which it was seeking to capture: the meeting point between literature, technology, culture and academic research. It studied not just the forms of the outputs and their social impact in terms of reviews, readings, exhibitions and public education programmes but also the modes of cultural production which made their dissemination possible. The *Moving Manchester* project drew together cultural agents and creative authors of different backgrounds. Their motivation for writing was clear: to express the ambivalence of their condition, to draw it to the attention of the reading public and to celebrate its diversity. In this, the project played an active part in assisting them to achieve their goals while analysing processes of cultural production. See: <http://www.lancs.ac.uk/fass/projects/moving-manchester/>

range of cultural practices – writing in mother tongue, self-translation, the commissioning of translation to and from the mother tongue – testify that migrants' cultural production may be inscribed within a cultural environment different from that of their host country. In this way, problems of reception and integration acquire a new dimension that requires a transnational approach,

tracing literary and cultural circulation beyond national borders.

'Cultural translation', a term used frequently in LCS, describes processes of spatial mobility and functions as a paradigm in which to situate journeys, migrations, dislocations and re-territorialisation across languages, geographies, identities or social landscapes. In this

way, LCS research also re-establishes the importance of agency, demonstrating how in the process of dialogic exchange new voices can emerge, new spaces of cultural production and consumption can be created, and new audiences can be shaped. Translation may thus be understood not as a homogenising tool or a means of converting difference into sameness, but rather as a set of complex practices which allow the heterogeneity of society to remain productive.

The forms of cultural knowledge about migration and migrants require both further research and policy consideration. The category of 'the immigrant' is a product of discourse, which may not match the experience or status of the person it purports to describe. While cultural policy-makers have paid some attention to how migrants are positioned in terms of diversity, the politics of representation remains under-discussed in the areas of media production, national media cultures, and the creative industries, and here the perspectives developed by LCS research have much to offer.

Further research in this field is needed on such questions as:

- How can a fuller understanding of the processes and methodologies of 'social engagement' be built into the production and dissemination of migrant cultural production?
- It is widely accepted that cultural production associated with migrant communities and cultures tends to be marginalised, but what particular forms does this marginalisation take?
- In what ways can this marginalisation both diminish and enhance the cultural capital of migrant artists or cultural operators and their audiences?
- What are the roles of major, mainstream publishers, theatres, theatre companies and distributors? And, comparatively, what are the roles (including cultural and economic capital) of non-mainstream cultural operators, organisations and activists?
- To assist in answering these questions, fuller and more concentrated research is needed into the audiences for migrant cultural production: how are audiences and sites of reception anticipated and built into creative production, what determines the choices made by 'users' of cultural products, and what are their consequences for migrant creative practices?

### ••• **Electronic Textuality**

Chairs: Leopoldina Fortunati, Sibel Irzik

We live today in what is often called the post-Gutenberg era, which has generated new communication technologies, new sites and forms of literacy, a new visual and

techno-oral culture which parallels, if not replaces, the culture of the book. Listservs, chat rooms, discussion boards, texting and other social networking, and the web, to name but a few, have enabled forms of discourse that are unfettered by regional and national borders and challenge the boundaries established by print culture between the private and the public, the author and the reader, the aesthetic and the instrumental. Under these conditions, the issue of reading and writing – a crucial ingredient of European self-consciousness since the development of vocalised alphabetical writing in the 8<sup>th</sup> century BCE – emerges afresh, bringing new challenges, paradoxes and opportunities. While individuals need highly developed skills of reading and writing in order to function in today's societies, many of the new information and communication technologies seem to weaken these skills. Similarly, the rapid proliferation and internationalisation of digital texts may enhance accessibility and communication to an unprecedented degree, but they also generate unsolved problems related to quality, reliability, language policies (e.g. linguistic imperialism vs. lesser-used languages) and the whole field of intellectual property. The 'end of the book' which some people claim we are facing is not simply the potential disappearance of the book as an object but more realistically a radical restructuring of the institutions that surround it – institutions such as the library, the university, intellectual property law, and literature itself.

LCS research enables interdisciplinary perspectives on the transformation of reading and writing, including social-science and empirical research, to explore how different media, textual modalities and forms of access affect the content and interpretation of textual material. For example, is it indeed correct that on-line reading cannibalises off-line reading to an extent where it negatively affects the cultural competencies of the 'born-digital' generation? Or is it possible, rather, that it creates new forms of reading and writing such as books written to be read on smart-phones or tablets, and new possibilities for collective and anonymous authorship, as the success of Wikipedia seems to suggest? One urgent step is to focus the education policies of the European Research Area both on generally improving people's understanding of the linguistic and textual characteristics of this new flow of knowledge and on inculcating ways of detecting and analysing its rhetorical and fictional characteristics. Another is to develop intelligent and critical usage and improved technological fluency on the part of both generations of users, in order to maximise the potential of their research.

## The Gutenberg Parenthesis Research Forum

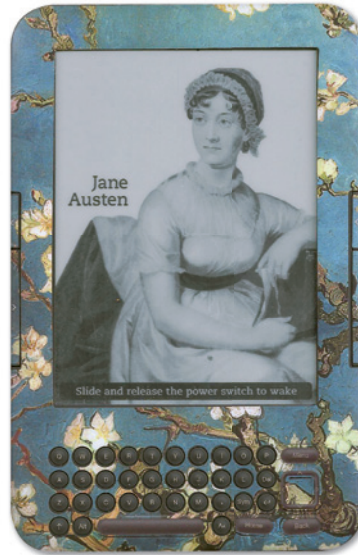
Authors: Tom Pettitt, Marianne Børch, Lars Ole Sauerberg, University of Southern Denmark

It is likely that from the perspective of a not too distant future, the period from the late Renaissance to the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century will be seen as dominated and even defined by the cultural significance of print – not least in the form of the mass-produced book which is virtually synonymous with Western culture. Accordingly it seems appropriate to designate this period, roughly corresponding to the half-millennium from 1500 to 2000, as “the Gutenberg Parenthesis”.

In the early 21<sup>st</sup> century, conventional notions of the text which, since Gutenberg, have often been conflated with the book, are being radically transformed. On the one hand, the emerging notion of the text is a both qualitative and quantitative expansion of the particular form of virtuality generated by the mass-produced book. On the other, despite its apparent variety, we find a new uniformity of the virtual, caused not least by a shift from a publishing-house culture to a diffuse internet culture determined by technological standards that are no more “natural” than those of the book. In this IT version of textuality, visual and auditory, elite culture and mass culture, old and new, text and commentary, sacred and secular are placed on an equal footing. This development has significant consequences for our approach to the world. By changing the material conditions for cognition, it changes the form and content of cognition.

In the transition from the printed book to digitalised textuality, the very mode of cognition changes from a metaphors of linearity and reflection to a-linearity and co-production of “reality.” This means changing from the rationality characteristic of the printed book to an altogether different way of processing, characterised by interactivity and a much faster pace. The book as privileged mode of cognition is marginalised and transformed. On the one hand our experience of being in the world – which typically within the Gutenberg Parenthesis is cognitively determined by the book – is now determined by cognitive parameters originating as often as not in multi-medial manifestations. On the other hand, there is a new global effort to keep up with digitalised media, a pursuit of uniformity and standardisation in an on-going climate of change.

During the Gutenberg Parenthesis, the encyclopaedia developed into an exhaustive, nationally oriented



**Figure 3.**  
“Vincent-Jane-Kindle”  
(picture taken  
by Naomi Segal)

means of printed and mass-distributed information dissemination, typically in the form of a massive set of leather-bound volumes. This represented a homogeneous state of authority and at the same time implied the ideal of a civilised standard of *Bildung* shared by the community. Before the Parenthesis, hand-copied compilations of information reflected highly idiosyncratic and differentiated attitudes to knowledge. After the closing of the Gutenberg Parenthesis digitisation and multi-media facilities make information generally and instantly available, which leaves the user with the problem of authority, quantitatively different from but qualitatively similar to the pre-Gutenberg-Parenthesis situation.

Gutenberg Parenthesis Research Forum at the University of Southern Denmark:

See: [http://www.sdu.dk/en/Om\\_SDU/Institutter\\_centre/Ilkm/Forskning/Forskningsprojekter/Gutenberg\\_projekt](http://www.sdu.dk/en/Om_SDU/Institutter_centre/Ilkm/Forskning/Forskningsprojekter/Gutenberg_projekt).

- *Orbis Litterarum: International Review of Literary Studies*, special issue on the Gutenberg Parenthesis: Vol. 64, issue 2, April 2009 (Wiley-Blackwell; ed. Lars Ole Sauerberg).
- Tom Pettitt, “Media Dynamics and the Lessons of History: The ‘Gutenberg Parenthesis’ as Restoration *Topos*.” Forthcoming Dec. 2012 in *Blackwell Companion to New Media Dynamics*, ed. Jean Burgess, John Hartley and Axel Bruns (Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell), pp. 53–72.



In the light of these considerations, the following research questions should be pursued:

- What new modes of publication, assessment and research are made possible in LCS by the new technologies?
- What forms of rhetorical analysis are called for by the malleable, playful and self-conscious surface of the electronic text?
- What happens to the distinctions between high and low culture, commercial and aesthetic usage, purposeful and chance creation in the face of the possibilities and changes presented by electronic textuality?
- What are the possible interfaces between information technology industries and cultural practice, and how can such links be improved to the benefit of all parties?
- In what ways do electronic texts disrupt the intimate links between author and work, voice and self, and what impact does this disruption have on contemporary notions of selfhood, individuation and the humanities?

### ••• **Biopolitics, Biosociality and the Body**

Chairs: Ulrike Landfester, Naomi Segal

One of the most frequently cited effects of progress over the last 50 years has been the improvement in knowledge about the human body – an improvement which has been due mainly to technological innovation in medical and biological sciences. While at first glance this may seem to guarantee the ‘objectivity’ of the results achieved, at a second glance it is clear that in the course of this development the ontological status of the human body has become more and more questionable. Living in a body is perhaps the most taken-for-granted aspect of human existence, the most direct encounter between identity and ‘nature’. Yet as biotechnological progress, for example in deciphering the human genome, makes the body ever more ‘readable’, as transplantation and prosthetic medicine destabilise the seemingly inviolable boundaries between the body and the realm of cultural artifice, and as modern healthcare politics increasingly imposes a morally normative imperative of ‘wellbeing’ on individuals, human bodies are rapidly becoming what Donna Haraway called in 1991 ‘theorized and fabricated hybrids of machine and organism’, physically enhanced in terms of life expectancy and quality, but also increasingly tied to cultural processes of creating and disseminating meanings.<sup>8</sup>

8. Donna Haraway, ‘A Cyborg manifesto: science, technology and socialist-feminism in the late twentieth century’, repr. in *Simians, Cyborgs and Women: The Reinvention of Nature*, (London: Free Association Books, 1991).

For more than a century, LCS research has actively participated in debates about the body. European research into sexuality and psychology from the 1890s to the 1930s recognised its debts to literary forebears. The term ‘biopolitics’ was coined by Michel Foucault to describe the growing connection between the human body and its cultural contexts<sup>9</sup>, and in 1996 Paul Rabinow defined the concept of ‘biosociality’ as the idea that relations between humanity and its environment are mutual and reciprocal, with the human element as much a shaping one as a reaction<sup>10</sup> – as the current recognition of the causes of climate change show. Based on these terms and their methodological implications, LCS research on the body has a direct link to such non-humanities fields as biology, medicine and healthcare, or to politics and communication technology, as well as to such issues as the cultural history and geography of the senses, the ubiquity of body metaphors, gender and other differences, disability studies, animal studies, the rhetoric and politics of intercorporeal relations, the overlap of the physical and the psychical, and so forth.

Within this burgeoning research field, here are some examples of questions being pursued:

- In what way does research on the human body, from aesthetic to genetic conceptualisations and beyond, construct its object?
- Is it possible to separate the ‘factual’ content of such constructions from their rhetoricity and if it is not, what does this tell us about how we – including doctors and patients – may think and speak of the body?
- How far are human bodies talked about differently in different cultures, where do such differences stem from, and how can they be described, analysed, possibly modified and/or put to practical use?
- If the development of new communication and medical technologies is indeed changing the notion of the human body, what does this development mean for the future: will the human body still be distinguished from its techno-medical prostheses or is this becoming both impossible and unnecessary?
- If the human body is infinitely changeable, such that concepts like beauty, identity and the ‘natural’ no longer carry any fixed validity, how can we rethink ancient notions like artifice, creativity and the aesthetic?

9. The term ‘biopolitics’ first appears in Michel Foucault’s 1979 lecture series ‘*La naissance de la biopolitique*’, delivered at Collège de France, published in: Michel Foucault, *Ethics: Subjectivity and Truth*, ed. by Paul Rabinow (New York: The New Press 1997).

10. Paul Rabinow, *Essays on the Anthropology of Reason*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996).

## History Within: The Phylogenetic Memory of Bones, Organisms and Molecules

Author: Marianne Sommer, University of Lucerne, Switzerland

Since the launch of the Human Genome Diversity Project, genetic anthropology has increasingly undertaken to genetically identify human populations and to reconstruct their migration histories. Such projects impact the self-understanding of human groups that especially in the case of indigenous peoples – whose genomes are regarded as particularly informative – tends to be politicised. Some indigenous organisations have come to regard such scientific endeavours as colonialist, racist and exploitative. In addition, these DNA technologies have been commercialised. Companies genetically attribute their customers to a particular ‘haplogroup’, ‘tribe’, ‘clan’, ‘primitive people’, ‘ethnicity’ and/or geographic region. By means of exchanges via customer databanks, on company online forums, and websites, and with books and films on genetic history, people who have taken such DNA tests may build meaningful self-narratives on the basis of the genetic information. They may form novel kinds of biosocieties that define themselves through common origins and histories. While this is a fun industry, genetic information can be unsettling also at the individual level, for example when it does not confirm a person’s cultural identification. Overall, there is no simple answer to how genetic information on history and identity may affect groups and individuals, how it shapes their perception of self and the ways in which they are perceived by others. Rather, the negotiations between different available sources and narratives are highly context-dependent and demand an interdisciplinary effort as well as comparing local and regional case studies to further our understanding.

Although genetic history is a 20<sup>th</sup>-century approach, it shares similar interests and/or technologies with other, older endeavours, for example in physical anthropology that, too, was interested in classifying human groups and reconstruct their histories. In the Swiss National Science Foundation



**Figure 4.**  
A Clinical Examination, 2001 (stills from the video *Clinical Examination*)

project ‘History Within: The Phylogenetic Memory of Bones, Organisms and Molecules’, we engage with the cultural history of the historical life sciences. We are interested in longer-term developments and the continuities and breaks that characterise them. We analyse the contributions that sciences such as evolutionary biology, (paleo)anthropology, primatology, and human genetics have made to cultures of remembrance since the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. How do these sciences provide orientation, meaning, and identity through the popularisation and commercialisation of origin narratives and historical images? The project focuses on the reconstruction and communication of biologically founded history – the scientific theories, objects, practices, media, genres and institutions involved – as well as on processes of reception, such as the appropriation, translation, and rejection of scientific history by particular individuals and groups and in different media and genres.

See: [http://www.unilu.ch/deu/phylogenetic-memory\\_782483.html](http://www.unilu.ch/deu/phylogenetic-memory_782483.html)

## Recommendations for a new European policy in LCS research

### 1. Create a Cultural Literacy conference series

LCS is urgently in need of a self-definition that will serve both its own proponents and those who stand to benefit by knowing it better. This should lead to rebranding LCS as the representative field for Cultural Literacy within the humanities and social sciences in Europe. Key among the tasks of such a ‘rebranding exercise’ is the need to distinguish its aims and objectives from the broader context of interdisciplinary studies or humanities research within which it has its place. As this document has sought to make clear, LCS focuses in a broad variety of ways on the readability of cultural and societal phenomena and aims to inculcate an enquiry into various modes of Cultural Literacy.

LCS researchers work in a range of areas in interdisciplinary ways, both with other LCS scholars and with scholars from other fields, and this is part of the reason why they are not yet a coherent group aware of itself. This Briefing proposes the development of networks to raise the coherence and profile of their work, with the aim of creating corresponding support and recognition from existing national and pan-European organisations. The first step will be the creation of an international conference series.

#### Recommendation 1

A biennial Cultural Literacy conference should be created, to be organised under the aegis of a pan-European organisation, e.g. the newly formed Science Europe, COST or ALLEA, and to present, to both LCS researchers and their collaborators in other fields, new research developments, urgent debates, and general issues such as interdisciplinarity and communication or the future of the field.

The first of these conferences would bring together around 80 delegates: representatives of up to 40 LCS national and pan-national organisations with European policy-makers concerned particularly with migration, demographic change, health, equality and education. Workshops and plenary discussions would lead to greater clarification and coherence of



purpose among LCS researchers, a rebranding of the concept of Cultural Literacy, and the creation of a Forum which would take forward a number of actions, including the organisation of further conferences.

Subsequent conferences would focus on major issues, such as strategies of funding agencies in relation to LCS research (see the section on Develop flexible funding instruments), or Cultural Literacy and higher education (see the section on Embed Cultural Literacy in higher education). They would continue to involve a mixture of academics and policy-makers but they would also explicitly be open to the general public within specified interest areas.

### 2. Inaugurate a European Forum for LCS research

The conference series is the first step to developing lines of communication that are publicly visible. Such visible collaboration is needed, to amplify the effects of research activity in a more coherent and practical way. This emphasis on communication and collaboration is in line with that of the humanities and social sciences more broadly, in the context of the role offered to them by the EC proposal for *Horizon 2020 – The Framework Programme for Research and Innovation*.

Thus the first Cultural Literacy conference will inaugurate a Forum to speak for LCS research in the European context. The Forum would be responsible for collecting information, organising further conferences and communicating the views of the LCS constituency within and beyond the European context.

#### Recommendation 2

The pan-European Forum should be created at the first biennial conference. Its role would be to develop methods for integrating LCS research on two levels: into the explicitly interdisciplinary strategy of the proposal for *Horizon 2020* and into national research strategies. It would coordinate activities within each European country in relation to issues to be discussed at the biennial conferences, which would be run by the Forum.

Led by LCS researchers with a European perspective, this Forum should also include representatives of governmental institutions concerned with societal challenges such as migration, demographic change, health, equality and education, and representatives of the major European research funding agencies.



### 3. Develop flexible funding instruments

LCS scholars working in the European Research Area have particular and relatively modest needs in respect of research funding. Their work is comparatively inexpensive to support, having low-cost infrastructural needs in relation to those of their colleagues in the natural sciences. LCS research is conducted mainly in the form of individual study and through small groups locally or inter/nationally sharing practice and concepts. Some of this can be carried out online but communication in person and in the form of workshops, conferences, etc., is crucial to the cross-disciplinary debate that is the lifeblood of LCS. The essential elements which cannot adequately be covered by institutional support are funding for time and collaboration: updating of technical skills, research leave, research travel and other forms of networking. The financial modesty of these needs has led, paradoxically, to their being seen as less urgent or less important than larger demands. However, they offer remarkable value for money for a relatively small outlay.

Few funding institutions currently offer instruments that meet the specific needs of LCS research. This recommendation aims at a fundamental change of attitude on the part of funders. Increasingly in recent years, both national and pan-European funders (and indeed those responsible for allocating research funding within universities) have tended to value the ability to generate research income above the ability to generate research itself. While this is understandable in certain ways, it has skewed funding to the disadvantage of those very areas that offer the best value for money. A larger number of smaller grants would prove enormously beneficial to such a field as LCS, and return a disproportionate cultural advantage to the bodies that provide it.

Examples of such ‘small is beautiful’ research funding strategies are:

- the **Exploratory Workshop** instrument run by ESF which brings together around 25 academics from at least two fields that have not met directly before for an intensive debate of around two days on a problem of common interest; or
- the erstwhile **Research Leave Scheme** of the UK Arts and Humanities Research Council, which awarded a term or semester of leave to follow a similar leave period provided by the researcher’s university.

Despite an initial outlay of administrative and peer review effort which may appear large in relation to the funding awarded, these schemes exemplify the remarkable productivity generated by such small-scale provision, by supporting both individual and group research and helping it disseminate its debates.

### Recommendation 3

With the examples outlined in this Briefing and an improved understanding of the contribution of LCS research, European and national funding and policy-making agencies should be invited to introduce flexible funding instruments that respond more productively to the profile of the LCS community.

An organisation like COST, which focuses its funding on research networking, would be an ideal partner for this development, for example. Its ISCH domain, which covers a massive field across the humanities and social sciences, currently receives more applications than it can support. Future expansion of ISCH COST funding or the creation of a sub-field for LCS are among possible ways forward.

### 4. Embed Cultural Literacy in higher education

As has already been demonstrated, collaborative cross-disciplinary relations are well established between LCS and other fields at the research level. But it is clear – and this chimes especially with the Europe 2020 strategy target on improving education across Europe – that more groundwork needs to be done at earlier stages of the higher education system. While they are willing and even eager to engage in interdisciplinary exchange, scholars raised in today’s university system are often insufficiently *au fait* with differences and similarities between their disciplinary discourse and others. This not only limits the extent of useful communication but also makes it more difficult for researchers using one paradigm to represent it clearly to researchers using another, or to any non-specialists. What is proposed here is to create a more coherent and systematic introduction to Cultural Literacy for all students from all disciplines, to be implemented across Europe. A number of models for the future are suggested in the recommendation below.

### Recommendation 4

Higher education models providing students from non-LCS programmes with access to LCS curricula would be promoted.

One model involves the reinstatement of a concept of higher education based on the basic training

through the study of the liberal arts known as the *studium generale* which, at the time when the European universities were first founded, was mandatory for all students. This educational concept enables students to acquire not only specialised training in a field of study but also an education in scientific and societal contextuality, i.e. in Cultural Literacy as such. *Studium generale* courses are specifically designed to make students conscious of the fact that, whatever their future research or career interests, the practices of their chosen field are necessarily embedded in and directly related to the whole context of society. This could be strengthened by forms of study which bring together students with secondary school pupils, teachers, governmental and non-governmental actors, etc. The involvement of non-academics in the study process is another idea that is gaining ground in this age of impact and outreach.

Exposure to LCS studies should also be achieved through guided but essentially student-led events such as short conferences, at which LCS and non-LCS undergraduates and postgraduates would debate issues of concern to them. This would be modelled on the innovative *Humanities Spring* run between 2007 and 2011 by the ESF Standing Committee for the Humanities.

## Editorial Group

- **Professor Naomi Segal**
- **Dr Nina Kancewicz-Hoffman**
- **Professor Ulrike Landfester**

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## Steering Committee members

- **Dr Marc Caball**  
University College Dublin, Ireland; *COST ISCH*
- **Professor Leopoldina Fortunati**  
University of Udine, Italy; *COST ISCH*
- **Professor Sibel Irzik**  
Sabanci University, Turkey
- **Professor Margaret Kelleher**  
University College Dublin, Ireland; *ESF SCH*
- **Professor Daniela Koleva**  
University of Sofia, Bulgaria; *COST ISCH*
- **Professor Ulrike Landfester**  
University of St. Gallen, Switzerland; *ESF SCH*
- **Professor Lea Rojola**  
University of Turku, Finland; *COST ISCH* (until June 2010)
- **Professor Naomi Segal**  
University of London, United Kingdom; *ESF SCH*

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**COST**  
COST Office  
Avenue Louise 149 • 1050 Brussels • Belgium  
Tel: +32 (0)2 533 38 00 • Fax: +32 (0)2 533 38 90  
www.cost.eu

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**European Science Foundation**  
1 quai Lezay-Marnésia • BP 90015  
67080 Strasbourg cedex • France  
Tel: +33 (0)3 88 76 71 00  
Fax: +33 (0)3 88 37 05 32  
www.esf.org

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