

COSMOPOLITAN CULTURES, COSMOPOLITAN HISTORIES
An Interdisciplinary Conference

The Pyle Center
University of Wisconsin–Madison
Friday, March 2, and Saturday, March 3, 2007

The Mellon Workshop on “Cosmopolitan Cultures, Cosmopolitan Histories,” sponsored by the Center for the Humanities at the University of Wisconsin–Madison (Susanne Wofford, Director), will host a two-day conference on its central theme on the first weekend in March. The conference is supported by a generous grant from the Anonymous Fund of the College of Letters and Science (Gary Sandefur, Dean), and by funds provided by the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation.

The individual papers and the collective discussion at the conference will focus critically on many different facets of cosmopolitanism: its general theory in the humanities and social sciences, particularly as it has evolved over the past decade; its practice in a range of cultures in different periods and locations around the globe; its history as a multi-dimensional formation in diverse social and political environments; and especially its role as a cultural correlate—whether constitutive, collaborative, or subversive—of economic globalization today. The primary goal of the conference will be to substantially advance our understanding of cosmopolitanism by injecting new languages, materials, contexts, and voices into current debates, cutting across time-zones, positions, and disciplines.

The papers planned for the conference will raise many exciting and unexpected questions. What are the theoretical distinctions, if any, between cosmopolitanism and internationalism? How does translation—and the network of texts it creates—explain the workings of cosmopolitanism and global communities? Is imperialism compatible with cosmopolitanism? What are the similarities and differences between the Latinate *imperium* and the Sanskrit *cosmopolis* of classical times? What forms does cosmopolitanism take in the German Enlightenment and in English Romanticism? Or in the postcolonial cathexis of Haiti and France in the nineteenth century? How does the contemporary Chinese-French writer and film-maker Sije Dai mediate between capitalism and ethics, cosmopolitanism and national identity?

Furthermore: What is the relationship between cosmopolitanism and human rights? Does Micahel Ondaatje’s *Anil’s Ghost*, set in Sri Lanka, suggest that cosmopolitanism and violence are incommensurate? How would a cosmopoetics explain the aspirations of Iraqi and Iranian women writers trapped in times of war? What is a “world,” and how should we conceive of world literature today? In what ways does Orhan Pamuk’s *Snow* complicate the history and culture of cosmopolitanism in Turkey (and everywhere else)? How do environmentalism and cosmopolitanism converge in the embattled Indian writings of Arundhati Roy? Are multilingualism and hybridity synonymous with cosmopolitanism? Will globalization create a truly cosmopolitan and democratic world one day? Is it possible—or even desirable—to define something called “the cosmopolitan condition”?

The conference program will include three distinguished guest-speakers:

Etienne Balibar (French, English, and Comparative Literature, University of California–Irvine; and Paris), the leading French theorist of our times, and author recently of *We, the People of Europe?* (2003);

Sheldon Pollock (Middle East and Asian Languages and Cultures, Columbia University), author most recently of the monumental *The Language of the Gods in the World of Men* (2006); and

Pheng Cheah (Rhetoric, University of California–Berkeley), editor with Bruce Robbins of the ground-breaking *Cosmopolitics* (1998), and author of the new *Inhuman Conditions: On Cosmopolitanism and Human Rights* (2007).

The program will also feature several members of the University of Wisconsin–Madison faculty: Susan Stanford Friedman and Rebecca Walkowitz (English); Deborah Jenson (French and Italian); B. Venkat Mani (German); and Vinay Dharwadker (Languages and Cultures of Asia). In addition, it will highlight the work of several advanced graduate students on our campus: Aarthi Vadde, Mark Estante, and Suh-Reen Han (English); and Subha Xavier (French and Italian).

Up-to-date information on the conference will be available on the website of the Center for the Humanities, at http://www.humanities.wisc.edu/programs/awm_cosmopolitan.html. The event is free and open to the public. We look forward your participation on this occasion.

Organizing Group

for the Mellon Workshop and Conference on
“Cosmopolitan Cultures, Cosmopolitan Histories”:

Vinay Dharwadker, Professor, Languages and Cultures of Asia (Faculty Coordinator)

Deborah Jenson, Associate Professor and Associate Chair, French and Italian

B. Venkat Mani, Assistant Professor, German

Aarthi Vadde, Graduate Program, English

Adam Woodis, Graduate Program, German

Mark Estante, Graduate Program, English

Inquiries about the conference may be sent to Vinay Dharwadker at vdharwadker@wisc.edu, Deborah Jenson at djenson@wisc.edu, or B. Venkat Mani at bvmani@wisc.edu.