TENNESSEE WILLIAMS IN EUROPE

A CENTENARY CELEBRATION, 1911–2011

24–25 JUNE 2011

NANCY–UNIVERSITÉ
FRANCE

CONTACT:

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The research group I.D.E.A. (“Théories et pratiques de l’interdisciplinarité dans les études anglophones”) is announcing a call for papers for its international conference “Tennessee Williams in Europe: A Centenary Celebration, 1911-2011.” The conference, which will be held at Nancy-Université in the east of France from 24-25 June 2011, conjoints with other major conferences celebrating the Williams centenary (e.g., New Orleans, Columbus, Clarksdale, and Provincetown) by focusing on a topic underdeveloped in theatre studies: Williams’s Europe. Confirmed speakers from around the world include distinguished Williams scholars and theatre specialists Robert Bray (USA), Johan Callens (Belgium), Claude Coulon (France), Franco D’Alessandro (Italy), Gilbert Debusscher (Belgium), Dirk Gindt (Sweden), David Kaplan (USA), Thomas Keith (USA), Colby Kullman (USA), Wolfgang Lippe (Germany), Felicia Londré (USA), Brenda Murphy (USA), Michael Paller (USA), R. Barton Palmer (USA), Rui Pina Coelho (Portugal), Zuélika Martínez-Jiménez Pretelini (Mexico), David Román (USA), Annette Saddik (USA), Henry Schvey (USA), and Laura Torres Zúñiga (Spain). The conference keynote speaker will be William Jay Smith, Williams’s “literary factory” schoolmate in St. Louis and former U.S. poet laureate.

Williams first came to Europe on 12 July 1928, accompanying his grandfather on a tour for parishioners of the pastor’s Episcopal church in Clarksdale. Williams’s travelogue, published in installments the following academic year in his high school newspaper, U. City Pep, reveals the young man’s fascination with the continent’s various people, cultures, and histories. Williams eventually returned to Europe on 30 December 1947, and his renewed interests in post-war France and Italy altered the course of his life and his literary aesthetics forever. “Europe?” he wrote in his notebook for January 1948 while retracing his and his grandfather’s earlier steps from Paris to Rome, “I have not yet organized my impressions.” Williams would eventually forge those impressions into the many stories, plays, and one-acts he wrote while living in Italy or traveling through Spain. Over the next thirty years, Williams repeatedly sought solace on the European continent, whether in the inspiration it provided when the creative wells of New Orleans or Key West ran dry, or in the tolerance its catholic audiences promised when Broadway failed to appreciate the experimental nature of his later works. By 1948, and perhaps as early as 1928, Europe was in Williams as much as he was in Europe.

Though he was drawn to the sultry climes of southern Italy and Spain, Williams traveled extensively throughout the continent, having also visited countries like France, England, Holland, Germany, Austria, Belgium, Greece, Turkey, and Sweden. This conference proposes to examine how each country left its mark on Williams, just as he had left his mark on each country he visited, and invites individual talks or collective panel discussions on such topics as:

- the European premieres of Williams’s plays and their receptions;
- the subsequent European theatre productions of Williams’s work and their receptions;
- the European film and television adaptations of Williams’s work (e.g., Noir et Blanc, Lo Zoo di vetro, Poko u trati, Ein Vreemde liefde);
- Williams’s work on various European films and film sets (e.g., Senso, La terra trena);
- Williams’s relationship with various European filmmakers (e.g., Fellini, Visconti, Bergman, Zeffirelli, Truffaut, Antonioni);
- European drama’s influence on Williams’s early and late plays and stories (e.g., Theatre of the Absurd, Theatre of Cruelty);
- European film’s influence on Williams’s early and late plays and stories (German expressionism, Italian neorealism, French nouvelle vague);
- Williams’s influence on post-war European drama and film;
- the translations of Williams’s plays into European languages;
- European lifestyle and history and their effects on Williams and on his work (e.g., war, religion, mores, bull-fighting, cruising, festivals, etc.);
- any other aspect of Williams in Europe or Europe in Williams not mentioned above.

Please send an abstract of 500 words and a brief cv for individual papers or proposed panels (for panels, include a brief cv of each speaker) to John S. Bak (john.bak@univ-nancy2.fr) and Jean-Marie Lecompte (jean-marie.lecomte@univ-nancy2.fr) by 15 October 2010.