

International Workshop „Migration, Mediality, Liminality“

Organized by the
Leibniz-ScienceCampus “Europe and America in the Modern World”
(*Leibniz Institute for East and Southeast European Studies & University of Regensburg*)

in cooperation with the
Department of Slavic Languages and Literatures, University of Michigan, Ann Arbor

January 28-29, 2021

per ZOOM

<https://ios-regensburg-de.zoom.us/j/89151723697?pwd=L3pGaVdqOGNkblZ5d0E4Ymh1RHhFZz09>
Meeting-ID: 891 5172 3697, Code 171613

How do media shape the ways in which migrants can represent the experiences of their migration? What are the communicative possibilities of a given medium? What are its pressures, what are its limits when it comes to representing departures, journeys, arrivals and searches for belonging in the country of destination? Do these experiences exist prior to and independent of their medialization, or are they always the result of the meaning-making activities enabled, structured and shaped by the communicative pragmatics of the media in which they take place? If the latter is the case, can we establish a connection between the medial possibilities and limitations of the genre used for the representation of migration experiences, and how the migrants represent them? Is liminality not only inherent to the experience of many a migrant itself but also inherent to the media they use to articulate it? In nineteenth-century emigrant letters, for example, a strong sense of the writers' frustration with the limits of the letter as a medium for communicating migration experiences surfaces time and again. Today, Whatsapp messages and cell phone videos promise a greater range of communicative options to represent migrant experiences in their ambivalent complexity and to re-create communality with people left behind. Yet, also these media have their limits and are unable to communicate migration experiences in their fullness. There is always something that cannot be communicated, a rest left unsaid, and we hypothesize that the shortcomings of the media used to represent migration experiences constitute an integral part of migrant liminality.

Our workshop is conceived as a space of intensive exchange and joint discussion, based on the close reading of textual and visual (self-)representations of migration experiences ranging from departure, border crossings, transit to arrival and new searches for belonging. The workshop will address three different media of self-representation: letters and life-writing, fictional writing, and visual testimonies. We will embrace a *longue durée* approach, discussing the mediality of migrant liminality from the 19th century until today. One of our main concerns is the question of continuity and change in the patterns of representation of migrant experiences as conditioned by the media used.

Convenors:

Ulf Brunnbauer (History) – Volker Depkat (American Studies) – Sabine Koller (Slavic-Jewish Studies).

PROGRAMME

All times are CET!

Thursday, January 28

14.00

Opening and introduction

Ulf Brunnbauer, Volker Depkat, Sabine Koller

14.30-16.15

Panel 1: Writers and their Itinerant Experiences

Mikhail Krutikov (University of Michigan, Ann Arbor): "From Khurbn to Utopia: Holocaust Survivors' Journeys to Palestine and Birobidzhan in the Mirror of the American and Soviet Yiddish Press"

Sabine Koller (University of Regensburg): "Destination America: Experiences of liminality in Russian Jewish and Yiddish literature"

Chair and discussant: *Ursula Regener* (University of Regensburg)

16.30-18.15

Panel 2: (Auto)Biographical Migrant Writing

Sidonie Smith (University of Michigan, Ann Arbor) / *Julia Watson* (Ohio State University, Columbus): "Migrations of Life Writing in the United States—Geographies and Trajectories of 2020"

Volker Depkat (University of Regensburg): "Negotiating Presences and Absences. Nineteenth-century German Immigrant Letters and the Limits of Transatlantic Communication"

Chair and discussant: *Ger Duijzings* (University of Regensburg, tbc.)

Friday, January 29

14.30-16.15

Panel 3: Migrant Agency and its Visuality

Vida Bakondy (Austrian Academy of Sciences, Vienna): "'Rio Grande' House of Horror: Photography as social criticism on the living conditions of immigrants in Austria"

Vita Zelenska (Leibniz-Science Campus, Regensburg): "Expressions of multiple solidarities toward refugees and migrants in Greece: pictures, posters, sounds and open discussions"

Chair and discussant: *Ulf Brunnbauer* (IOS Regensburg)

16.30

Keynote Lecture

Claudia Sadowski-Smith (Arizona State University, Tempe): "The US Post-Soviet Diaspora in Fiction and Reality TV"