

Call for Papers

CONFERENCE “JEWISH LITERATURES AND CULTURES IN SOUTHEASTERN EUROPE. EXPERIENCES, POSITIONS, MEMORY”

University of Graz, 16 - 17 September 2019

The regions of Southeastern Europe are characterized in historical as well as in contemporary perspective by a high degree of ethnical, religious, lingual and cultural diversity and heterogeneity. Belonging to the Ottoman Empire or Austria-Hungary, forming supranational nation states such as Yugoslavia, or arising as nation states such as Slovenia, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Serbia, Croatia, but also Greece, Bulgaria, Romania, Albania, and (European) Turkey they were framed in different legal, referential and ideological settings, providing spaces for various encounters, entanglements and conflicts. Jews, be they Sephardim, Ashkenazim or Romaniots, settling there in different periods, experienced divergent *life worlds* (Lebenswelten) engendering over the centuries a rich cultural production. The language they chose depended on their respective cultural and political position – be it Hebrew, Ladino, a Slavic language such as Croatian, Bosnian or Serbian, Turkish, Greek or Italian.

Scholarly interest in those regions has grown impressively in the last years, however, predominantly in the realms of historiography. Literature and cultural production in general are still an under-researched area today demanding attention.

Concentrating on the 19th century until today, i.e. on the shifts from imperial to national setting/s, the conference aims at addressing, highlighting and analyzing the following topics:

- How did Jewish writers position themselves in the multicultural and multilingual setting of the literary field? In which ways did/do they reflect on identification processes (Jewish – Jewish, Jewish – Muslim, Jewish – Christian);
- In what ways did/do they reflect on those experiences in religiously informed literary genres (e.g. Musar literature);
- Which topics did/do they raise and how (e.g. segregation/integration; empire/nation; relation between Jewish and Christian and Muslim groups; Shoah; World Wars I and II; migration; Yugoslav wars of the 1990s);

- Which processes of entanglement and encounter took/take place (e.g. choice of genre; topics; translation) since enlightenment;
- How did/do writers define their relationship to and their understanding of Europe and the European;
- Which processes accompanied the transition from pre-modern times to modernity and postmodernity (self-perception; language choice – e.g. from Ladino to Serbian, from Serbo-Croatian to German; translation practices);
- Which experiences were/are elaborated in literature, e.g. shared experiences vs. differing experiences (e.g. alienation; belonging; situativity of belonging and multiple attachments; similarity vs. difference; perceptions and attributions; gender constructions; ambivalences; ambiguities; contiguities; the role of cultural heritage in transnational and trans-lingual perspective);
- Which preferences in genre choice were/are displayed (e.g. novel; biography; autobiography) and why;
- How did/do literary processes (avant-garde; modernism; postmodernism) reflect in Jewish literatures?
- What impact had/have conceptions of memory and post-memory (Marianne Hirsch) on Jewish literatures in Southeastern Europe;
- To what extent and in which ways did/do translation activities enhance the visibility of these literatures and create/d an awareness among the readership of world literature;
- What were/are the positions and dispositions of non-Jewish writers such as Miljenko Jergović or Aleksandar Hemon writing about Jewish conditions (compared e.g. to the 19th century Polish writer Eliza Orzeszkowa);
- To what extent and in which ways can Jewish experiences in Southeastern Europe be compared to other multiethnic regions such as the Russian Empire and the Habsburg Empire?
- What were/are the relationships between Southeastern and Eastern European Jewish writers?

Though focusing on the above outlined complexes of inquiry the conference organizers encourage scholars with other relevant topics not being mentioned to apply. We encourage especially early career researchers to apply.

The conference aims at creating a dialogue between Jewish studies, Balkan studies, and current literary and cultural theories. We intend to highlight the diverse and conflicting Jewish experiences in Southeastern Europe and the strategies of their literary representation throughout the 19th, 20th and 21st centuries.

Please submit an abstract of max. 2.000 characters and a short CV to Renate Hansen-Kokoruš (renate.hansen-kokorus@uni-graz.at) and Olaf Terpitz (olaf.terpitz@uni-graz.at) by December 16th 2018.

The working language of the conference will be English. Presentations should not exceed 20 minutes. The outcomes of the conference will be published in a peer-reviewed volume.

Accommodation (two nights) will be provided. We seek to secure travel funding for those whose home institutions do not cover their travel expenses. For further information on the conference, please visit our website:

<https://slawistik.uni-graz.at/de/veranstaltungen/jewish-literatures-in-southeastern-europe/>

The conveners

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