



CONFERENCE NEW WAYS OF COMMUNICATING LITERATURE

WITH FOCUS ON

digital approach / underrepresented groups

Berlin,
2020, November 13th - 15th

Lettrétagé

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GREETINGS FROM THE ORGANIZER

Relating to live-situations, other ways of disseminating literature play an important role for Berlin activists, as well as a multitude of international literary event organizers. As an anchor institution for Berlin's independent literary scene one of the tasks and pleasures of Lettrétage is to bring together international impulses, content and ideas with Berlin protagonists and vice versa.

The export and import of such ideas and content offers a great potential for synergies and allows to experience the liveliness of literature live, not least through direct personal encounters between literary activists. Cooperative projects are being developed, repulsion and attraction form a productive field of tension, important aspects also point beyond pure artistic and event organizer practices: shedding light on marginalized or underrepresented groups as well as experiencing the world digitally and the dynamics of personal self-empowerment through digital tools are themes that currently shape societal discourse outside literature as well. As a junction between creatives, projects and the public we have invited artists, event organizers and representatives of associations, initiatives and various co-operative forms to take up positions from their perspective and discuss them in work groups during a digital conference in autumn of 2020.

By utilizing digital tools often production, presentation and contemplation of the artwork coalesce; at the same time the clear differentiation between other art forms is fruitfully blurred. To open the literary artwork up for the process of creation offers a unique chance to not present the reader with a complete and finished product, not a fixed standpoint anymore, but rather a fragile, changing entity that the readers can become part of in a "text performance" and help shape its form and content. The process of production gains on meaning and the notion

of a permanently finalized (text-) product, ready for presentation, can be dismissed. Texts become alive and literature turns into an occurrence that is evenly produced and created by the author, work and recipient.

In practice literature becomes accessible in new ways as a hub of social knowledge transfer. Refraining from an idea of literature as only written text opens literature for groups that are marginalized or even completely excluded from a traditional literary scene: in projects like "handverlesen" (focussing on sign language and the exchange of hearing and deaf poets) the literary occurrence becomes a platform for perspectives of accessibility, gender diversity and inter-culturalism to take form and enter a dialogue with the public.

During the conference documented here, we have discussed potentials of performative literary occurrences in social discourse and their implications for the structures of the literary scene – together with input providing event organizers from Germany, Cyprus, Serbia, the USA, Austria and Hungary.

I thank all the participants for the lively discussions and the spirit of sharing and learning, and I thank all the sponsors for supporting the conference financially.

Tom Bresemann
Co-Direktor Lettrétage
Berlin

B. HOSTS AND PARTICIPANTS IN THE CONFERENCE “NEW WAYS OF COMMUNICATING LITERATURE”

SECTION UNDERREPRESENTED GROUPS

Host Stefanie Hirsbrunner

(b.1980) Stefanie Hirsbrunner is a political scientist with a focus on the African continent and the author of several non-fiction books, e.g. “Sorry about Colonialism” and “Hotel Fünf Sterne”. She last published the anthology “Africa. Radical new thinking” in 2016 and teaches intercultural competence and business ethics. Since 2018, she runs the InterKontinental bookstore in Berlin together with Karla Kutzner and engages in promoting African literature in German speaking countries.

Participants

Vladimir Arsenijevic

Nora Hadjisotiriou

Ovid Pop

Kinga Toth

Franziska Winkler

SECTION DIGITAL EXPERIENCE

Host Andreas Bühlhoff

(b.1987) is a poet and researcher based in Berlin. He works at the intersections of text, technology and their power structures. He holds a PhD with a dissertation on post-digital writing and interfaces. In 2018 and 2019 he published a zine every week focussing on these topics at sync.abue.io.

Together with Annette Gilbert he is conducting a Library of Artistic Print on Demand. His latest publication is the vinyl record *V – A Sound Writing Tool* (Research and Waves, 2020) with Marc Matter, a post-digital take on sound poetry and the current landscape of online debates and their ideologies.

Participants

Ferenc Czinki

Max Höfler

Alexander Lehnert

Saskia Warzecha

Traci Kim

PARTICIPANTS

ALPHABETICAL ORDER

Arsenijevic, Vladimir Serbia

is a writer and a head of Belgrade based Association KROKODIL which was established in 2009 and grew around the regional and international literary festival that bears the same name. Most of his activities both as an author and cultural worker are dedicated to social and political engagement in the post-conflict atmosphere of the region of former Yugoslavia as well as in the wider European context. <http://www.krokodil.rs/eng/>

Czinki, Ferenc Hungary

is a writer and international cultural manager. In his writings and in his projects as well he focuses on the history and current issues of the Central Eastern European region. His latest book A pozsonyi metró (Metro of Bratislava) was published in 2017, and it's Slovak translation (Bratislavske metro) in 2019. He is the vice-president of the Society of Hungarian Authors. <https://szepiroktarsasaga.hu/>

Hadjisotiriou, Nora Cyprus

A Marketing and PR specialist, with an excellent record of managing annual and ad hoc promotional events. Since 2006 – (founder partner & director) organizer of cultural events local and international, primarily in literature.

Höfler, Max Austria

Has lived in Graz since 1997; Studied sound engineering and German, philosophy and art history; Dissertation on a postwittgenstein aesthetic. Publications in various anthologies and literary journals; currently literary officer of FORUM STADTPARK GRAZ. <http://www.forumstadtpark.at>

Kim, Traci Germany/US

She is a freelance literary consultant from Chicago. Since 2018, she is The Reader Berlin's programme manager, responsible for events and weekend workshops. Founder of the popular fiction reading series Literally Speaking. <https://www.thereaderberlin.com/traci-kim/>

Lehnert, Alexander Germany

Cultural studies at the Viadrina in Frankfurt/Oder. Tour guide, presenter and drag performer. Moderated authors' talks and entertainment formats for the International Literature Festival Berlin, and the Berlinale, among others. Since 2010 hosting the anonymous reading series „Konzept*Feuerpudel“. <https://gleiswildnis.de/gleiswildnis/ueber-2/>

Pop, Ovid Austria

Ovid Pop is a political scientist, transnational writer and theorist. In 2016 he co-founded together with Radostina Patulova the kollektiv sprachwechsel: Literatur in the Zweitsprache, a literary group of second language writers based in Vienna. Also, Ovid Pop conceptualizes and organizes exhibitions and participative art workshops dealing with topics such as: modernity/coloniality, modernization, logistic capitalism, imperialism and epistemic colonialism within the European context.

<http://www.kollektiv-sprachwechsel.org/>

Toth, Kinga Hungary

writes and publishes short stories, poems and drama pieces in Hungarian, German and English languages. She is a musician, extensive vocalist, visual and sound-poet, presents her work in performances, exhibitions and installations international. 2019/2020 she won the Hugo Ball Förderpreis for her intermedia art and literary work and 2020 she won the Bernard Heidsieck Price in Centre Pompidou for her literature-media-performance work.

<http://www.kingatoth.com/>

Warzecha, Saskia Germany

Studied computational linguistics in Potsdam, then linguistic art at the University of Applied Arts Vienna and literary writing at the German Literature Institute in Leipzig. In 2016 she was a finalist at the 24th Open mike and won the Munich Poetry Prize in 2017, and in 2019 she received the Berlin Senate Scholarship. She is co-editor of the magazine Transistor, Approximanten is her first book publication.

<https://www.facebook.com/transistor.zeitschrift/>

Winkler, Franziska Germany

Berlin, thinks a lot about new forms of literature translations. She studied anthropology and media studies at the University Bremen and Yeditepe University Istanbul. Together with Katharina Mevissen she developed and founded the literature initiative handverlesen in 2017, an initiative that gives deaf literature a new perspective.

She is now studying Deaf Studies (BA) at Humboldt University Berlin and works as a project manager for "handverlesen" and other emancipatory literature projects in Berlin.

<https://poesiehandverlesen.de/>

C. QUESTIONNAIRE

ACCORDING TO THE INDIVIDUAL APPROACH ON THE TOPIC OF THE CONFERENCE

All participants were asked to send in questions on the topics of the conference.

VLADIMIR ARSENIJEVIC KROKODIL

1. Who and based on what criteria we consider to be marginal (either individuals or groups)?
2. How do we approach marginal groups (and/or individuals) that truly do not want to be approached and, even more importantly, why? To what end?
3. Do we take into consideration the uneasiness and temporality of being on the margin as well as the fact, or at least the possibility, that the members of one marginal group might show lack of interest, intense prejudice or even hostility towards the members of another marginal group and also the possibility that they do not consider themselves marginal at all?
4. And finally: who is a paradigm-creator in this case and whether the margin is solely in the eye of a beholder?

FERENC CZINKI BE(A)PART

1. What are the biggest challenges in your countries of presenting contemporary literature in the formal educational system?
2. Is it possible to create a real classroom experience and a successful group work in online courses? If yes, how will it change the

pedagogy we currently know? If no, how can we, at least, improve the methods?

3. Will online platforms, methods, techniques really guarantee access to anybody, or the challenges and disadvantages of Eastern and rural regions, marginalized groups, etc. will just be more exposed by moving from personal real contacts to the digitalized processes?
4. Create a list of future challenges we need to face in the next 5-10 years, in the world of social media, possible pandemics, cancel culture/PC, national populism, climate change, etc.

NORA HADJISOTIRIOU IDEOGRAMMA

1. How can marginalised groups/persons be 'included' without the use of a 'common language'?
2. Should organisers/venues ensure that they are included while using their own language/dialect – and how?
3. Does 'distance from each other' help or hinder creation? Is 'otherness' prohibitive in some way?
4. What is more important the creator or the work? Is it enough that the work/creation gets around? Or is it just as important that the author/creator also moves/visits places, interacts with other authors/creators and audience/public?

MAX HÖFLER FORUM STADTPARK

1. What are the new possibilities for digital literary education?
2. To what extent can streaming replace real readings?
3. What can inclusive curating look like?
4. How can the pitfalls of paternalism be avoided?

TRACI KIM LITERALLY SPEAKING, READER BERLIN

1. What other ways/formats have you been able to discuss or share literature with a live audience?
2. Have you found any ways to share or present literature that were not in real time, but just as effective/interactive as a live reading?
3. Do you think that this summer's cultural focus on representation and inclusion has made an impact or has most of it been performative? If so, how and what are positive examples of change you have seen?
4. What can we do as literary curators to bring people together safely at this time?

ALEXANDER LEHNERT KONZEPT FEUERPUDEL, AUDREY NALINE

1. How can small groups and individual actors easily connect to digitisation in the literary sector?

2. How can literary events take place online, so that they can be connected to aesthetic and conceptual viewing habits on social media channels?

3. Is an online reading a literary event?

4. Is the almost inevitable digitisation of readings an opportunity or a fate for the literary industry?

OVID POP KOLLEKTIV SPRACHWECHSEL

1. Which (inclusive or exclusionary) criteria do you apply in your organizational work in order to ensure the participation of underrepresented literary groups, persons, texts etc.?

2. How did the COVID-19 pandemic affect the digital approach in your organization and are there digital procedures that you will keep working with after the pandemic is over?

3. Do you envision strategies that go beyond the question of representation (including here underrepresentation) and are in the same time emancipatory from a literary perspective?

4. Is the digitalization of the literary production enhancing individualism in literature and impeding the collective approaches? And how can this trend be contained through strategies of literature communication?

KINGA TOTH LITERATURE-MEDIA- PERFORMANCES

1. How to change the literary education in a practical way?
2. Which kind of pedagogic methods do you know to use it?
3. What literary people you suggest to "analyze"? Who are the people in the modern literature you would love to "teach" about and why? (pls suggest here writers)
4. What is your opinion about performative literature as a modern way to "realise" literature?

SASKIA WARZECHA COMPUTATIONAL LINGUISTICS

1. Opportunities of digitality I: What makes a good online event, now that the size of the audience/the number of events is reduced in the analog world? How can mediators exchange information/learn from each other/educate themselves in this respect?
2. Opportunities of digitality II: If readings and workshops are moved into the online space by Covid-19: What digital formats can absorb the meetings and discussions about literature that would otherwise take place on the fringes of analog events? How might it possibly be set up beyond the German-speaking countries?
3. Mediation approaches: How can, according to target-groups, the access especially to more complex literature be facilitated, and inhibitions be reduced?

4. Discourse and foundations: How could a state of discussion and reception be achieved which loses the dichotomization into "primarily aesthetic" and "primarily engaged" literature, which might not be conducive to literature, its recipients or producers?

FRANZISKA WINKLER HANDVERLESEN

1. How can we combine digital and printed forms of a book together to one piece?
2. What can we start using more digital forms as an own art form and not just as a tool?
3. How can we open up literature rooms for marginalized groups and make the program more interesting for them?
4. How can we create access for marginalized artist in the literature landscape, like writing workshops, scholarships and so one?

D. RESULTS

CONFERENCE NEW WAYS OF COMMUNICATING LITERATURE

From the whole of Europe literary activists met to discuss their topics.

DIGITAL EXPERIENCE

HOST: ANDREAS BÜLHOFF

The digitization of literary events at this point in time lacks expertise, experimentation, technical knowledge, flexible and dedicated funding and interdisciplinary networking.

Experiences and experimentation are made by each organizer individually. There is a need for shared experiences, shared knowledge and shared technology.

This could be achieved by e.g. round tables, workshops, shared studios/technology etc. focussing on these particular problems.

Even sharing links of events that worked well could accelerate the process of experimentation and professionalization.

In general, more awareness is needed for the digital side of literary events and the transfer from analog to digital. Creating a new digital audience and converting an existing one, advertising events, interacting with the community and streaming and moderating events online takes time and effort, still often not seen by institutions.

Streaming and video on demand are still reliable genres to do literary events online.

More experimental approaches can be found in collective writing/conversation games, virtual reality environments, formats experimenting with the technical possibilities of streaming or with the literary possibilities of digital environments.

Depending on what kind of event you are planning, a virtual environment might put a focus on the social and the interaction of virtual bodies, whereas a VOD gives the possibility of archiving and a mode of reception not bound to a particular moment in time.

Reliable tools and possibilities have to be mapped and shared as a collective resource.

Like with offline readings, the success of online readings is based on the site-specificity of the event. Choosing the right tool for a certain type of event is crucial.

A certain level of professionalism requires a minimum of professional tools. Good microphones, good cameras, a stable internet connection and a streaming service that grants high quality streams or VODs can make the difference.

Digital events have to be watched over by admins and, if interactivity is involved, by moderators that can quickly respond to technical and social problems/dangers (e.g. Zoom bombing). This requires a level of expertise but also knowledge of the historical depth of online cultures that have already addressed such problems.

Like with all remediations, the transfer of practices from analog institutions to digital networks comes with loss and gain. This affects different aspects of readings and the organization of readings if you think of them as substitutes.

These can be avoided when digital events are developed from and based in digital cultures.

Different forms of content address different audiences that require different levels of engagement. These levels can be addressed accordingly. E.g. pricing can grant a high level of engagement and dedication on the side of an audience but might also leave people out. Audiences dropping in and out of streams or VODs constantly could be difficult for certain kinds of content. How can this be addressed with literature, for the most part a genre of slowing down, requiring long durations of engagement? It depends on what you wish to achieve if these practices of viewership need to be controlled or are faced as preconditions with new formats.

There is a need for hybrid ways of connecting digital events to the offline world. Analog takeaways could be a possibility as could be awareness of and interaction with the location you are streaming from.

There is an urgent need for disciplinary and interdisciplinary knowledge transfer. A lot of the problems and experimentation with the potentials of digital tools for events have already been made in other disciplines. Why not do workshops with e.g. Twitch-streamers on how to create and engage with an audience, with interface-designers on user experiences, but also with moderators of online forums, that addressed problems of netiquette and hate speech etc.

On the side of organizers, a diversification and professionalization needs to happen. It is not only sound engineers anymore but also programmers, social media teams, admins, broadcasters, directors, cinematographers etc. These professions have to be taken into consideration when planning digital literary events.

Funding needs to be flexible. There is a need for funding specific to digital formats (maybe even a prize or festival for digital formats to start things off). European and broader institutional solutions have to be made.

Links:

<https://www.yourworldoftext.com>

<http://omoma.glitch.me>

<https://screenwalks.com>

<https://a-maze.itch.io/amazespace>

<https://lcb.de/programm/literatur-von-see-zu-see/>

<https://joerg.piringer.net>

<https://www.lettretage.de/en/the-virtual-reality-app-b-a-u/>

UNDERREPRESENTED GROUPS

HOST:

STEFANIE HIRSBRUNNER

Introduction/Overview:

Our discussion was centred around the question how marginalized groups can become more involved in art and therefore in our specific field of interest, in literature. We chose to rather use the term “marginalized” than “underrepresented” because a) it bears the fact of a driving force which actively pushes from within the centre and b) we agreed on the necessity of keeping literature and society separate. Migrants for example can in large numbers be seen to belong to the margins of societies but the immigrant story is a popular theme in modern literature. In addition, many funding options exist in the field of migration whereas other themes often stay neglected and under-financed.

The question of what criterias exactly define marginalized groups and who would be in the position to do so kept us busy for a moment. At first, our workshop tried to identify marginalized groups – also bearing in mind that with the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic new groups are currently formed – but soon agreed that instead of getting lost in the many different aspects each of our approaches failed to address 100%, there is a much more important workfield to focus on: literature itself. Whether literature should be brought to the margins or literature produced by the margins should be brought to the mainstream – both tasks provided us with the idea of creating an inclusive literature conference.

Result:

The Inclusive Literature Conference
Our workshop group agreed upon the necessity to continue the conversation on a larger scale and with artists and literature from so called marginalized groups included. The conference should have an intersectional approach and be held in English, German and sign language.

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