

Holocaust Literature and Ego Documents

2nd EHRI-AT Conference

A conference of the Center for Jewish Studies in cooperation with the Vienna Wiesenthal Institute for Holocaust Studies in the framework of EHRI-AT

December 11-12, 2023

Unicorn, Conference Desk

Schubertstraße 6a, A-8010 Graz

Writing about the Holocaust has been shaped from the beginning by considerations of form, of the limits of language and the medium itself, and of the (im)possibilities of transmitting knowledge to future generations. So what are we talking about when we talk about Holocaust literature? And how can we discuss and analyse literary texts as well as ego documents together?

The concept of "Holocaust literature" has received increasing attention in literary studies in recent years, which shows in various attempts at definition. These focused on questions of genre as well as on different time levels, themes, and experiences. Questions were raised about textual and narrative structures, and a certain canon of texts and authors emerged.

In Holocaust Studies, not least in the wake of Saul Friedländer's call for an integrated history of the Holocaust, ego documents increasingly became the focus of research. This involved questions of agency, experience as well as factuality.

The conference "Holocaust Literature and Ego Documents" takes up the various debates and aims to bring literary and historical perspectives on Holocaust literature and ego documents into conversation with one another. In addition to an inventory of collections of life-history and literary texts in and about Austria, the focus will be on questions of overlap and demarcation as well as on methodological approaches and the significance of Holocaust literature and ego documents for Holocaust research.

The following sets of questions will be the focus of the conference:

- How can the concept of Holocaust literature be defined by delimiting or including ego documents? Which texts or text types of life-writing (e.g. autobiographies, diaries, letters, collages, testimonials, also court records, etc.) can be subsumed?
- How can these documents be classified and understood in the field of tension between historical document and literary text?
- Which (inter-)disciplinary approaches (historiography, literary studies, digital humanities, etc.) to texts arise?
- Which concept of experience (direct - transgenerational) can be applied?
- What is the role of Holocaust literature in Holocaust Studies?
- On which victim groups does the debate on Holocaust literature primarily focus and to what extent did it determine the perception of the different victim groups in public and literary discourse, taking into account temporal dynamics?
- What transformations in terms of content and narrative do life-writing stories undergo?

- What is the significance of life-writing for the authors? What interactions between life stories and individuals can be identified?
- What statements can be made about the use and reception of life-writing texts?
- What collections of Holocaust literature and ego documents can be identified in Austria or on the Holocaust in Austria?
- To what extent can categories of texts be identified that could in turn serve as a basis for digitization?

The interdisciplinary conference is aimed at literary and cultural scholars as well as historians.

The organizers are seeking funding, and travel and accommodation expenses will be covered according to available resources. Non-institutionalized scholars as well as early career researchers will be given priority for financial support.

Please send an abstract (max. 500 words) and a short CV to:

office.cjs@uni-graz.at by July 15, 2023.

Feedback on acceptance of the submission will be provided by September 30, 2023.