

Light On! Queer Literatures and Cultures under Socialism

Initiative: Freigeist-Fellowships

Ausschreibung: Freigeist Kollegium

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Projekt-Website: <https://queersocialism.net/>

Queer cultures make one of the largest gaps in our uneven knowledge about the past due to a long and often continued criminalization and pathologization of LGBT+ expression across the globe. "Light On! Queer Literatures and Cultures under Socialism" emerges from such silences in the formerly socialist East-Central part of Europe and their alarming abuse by the growing right-wing populist movements, which over the past decade have justified introducing anti-LGBT+ laws and initiatives from Russia to Poland and beyond by the protection of respective nations from "non-traditional values." This project will help debunk a political myth of the "foreignness" of queerness to the region by bringing to light hitherto unknown queer literature that was written in private under the Communist rule and never officially published. This first multi-cultural study of underground queer creativity in the region in the 1940s-1980s will uncover and analyze queer prose, poetry, and drama across four socialist contexts of Russia, Ukraine, Poland, and the GDR. Within these four contexts, the project will focus on four research objectives: 1) exploring underground drama and theater; 2) analyzing gay prose and poetry writing; 3) examining the aesthetics of lesbian and trans sensibilities; and 4) understanding the routes of circulation of queer literature within and beyond national borders. Drawing on documents in state police and literary archives and collections of queer NGOs as well as on community interviews, "Light On!" will examine how and through what literary and linguistic means queerness was represented in literary texts; how these texts were shared, what borders they traversed to reach their reader, and how they did it. It will also question how such literature was censored and policed across socialist contexts. In so doing, "Light On!" will foster a better understanding of the role and poetics of queerness in European cultures and support the diversification of the cultural canon.

Projektbeteiligte

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