

Editorial

I.

‘Cohabited space’ is a useful term for defining complex social areas. Often, however, it oversimplifies the experience of different ethnic and social groups living together in a shared environment, and ignores the numerous tensions arising from the condition of multi-ethnicity within a limited territory. The margins or boundaries of settlement have always been acutely at issue. Besides being real spaces – countries, ghettos, cantons – there are cultural spaces too, which are fought over at the level of discourse and style and which are produced by authors and artists with varying degrees of autonomy.

The contributions to this volume address different aspects of these issues, and they do so by applying a very precise historical focus. Much has been written lately about the ideology of the Diaspora. Frequently, however, debates have been given a very contemporary spin. This volume, on the other hand, is looking specifically at the three decades between 1920 and 1950 and at the rise of discrete or emergent cultures during this period; cultures that found themselves without a home, and which attempted to fashion one out of various materials. The transitory homelessness of these cultures and groups and their search for new spaces, as depicted in most of the articles of the volume, resulted, for one part, from the disintegration of multinational empires after the First World War; e.g. Russia. In the interwar period, a number of Russian writers and artists found themselves in Berlin, keeping up and organizing an imagined as well as a real community there, and at the same time getting in touch with protagonists of the local avant-garde.

Closely connected with the outcome of the Great War is also another strand of the volume, namely the strengthening of the Zionist movement after the Balfour Declaration of 1917, which was taken as a promise that the dream of and longing for the old-new home would become real.

A third aspect of ‘cohabited space’, as analyzed by another couple of articles in this volume, is the construction of a cultural space by incomers forming a minority group, which may have some elements of tradition, but is also meeting the expectations and preconceptions of the native majority, e.g. by going together with its prevalent colonial and post-colonial attitudes.

The Diasporic imagination, which resides in a landscape of regret and yearning, is firmly located in historical determinants, and it is one of the tasks of this volume to begin to sketch these out. Although there have been an increasing number of studies in recent years on the experience of twentieth century migration and Diasporas, the coverage of ‘cohabited space’ and its

possible research landscape is still very patchy. While both migrant communities and their agents and institutions have been the subject of major studies and conferences, the role of their textual representation during the various stages of reorientation in the new environment, although of vital importance for academic enquiry, has so far been neglected.

During the mid 1920s, the new audiovisual media of sound recording and cinema dealt with forward-looking emotions such as yearning and expectancy, but were even more preoccupied with nostalgia, homesickness and the dilemmas of coping in a new environment, whether seen from a humorous or dramatic angle. The volume tries to move towards mapping out that landscape of desire and regret that characterizes Diasporic cultures during this period.

II.

As for the content of the present volume, Sue Harpers article “**Landscapes of Desire: the Power of Imagines Spaces**” serves as an **Introduction** to the general subject of the volume, as it leads into essential intentions, proceedings and achievements of “the cultural productions of groups competing for geographical and ideological space”. This includes a survey of relevant methodological and conceptual approaches, some of which are chosen as appropriate in dealing with the subject, whereas others are rejected as inadequate. The author exemplifies her outline by analyzing the specific contribution of immigrant Jewish producers, directors, designers and authors to the British cinema in the 1930s and 1940s.

Promised Lands, the second section of the volume, discusses varieties in expressing and awakening the Zionist longing for an autonomous homeland, which would end the shortfalls of the Diasporic existence. Manja Herrmann looks at “**German Zionism and the Construction of a National-Cultural Hybridity in Interspace**” [original in German: “Der deutsche Zionismus und die Konstruktion einer national-kulturellen Hybridität im Zwischenraum”] by analyzing the wedding gift for a Zionist German couple, a privately printed brochure from 1907 with texts and illustrations of and about the Holy Land, thus enabling the couple to go on an imagined honeymoon tour, imagined both in German and in Zionist mindsets.

Alexander Ivanov’s article “**‘To the Jewish Country!’ Representations of Birobidzhan in Soviet Mass-Media, 1920s-1930s**” investigates textual and illustrative productions aimed at a distinct minority (Jewish Russians in the Soviet state), but fabricated and distributed under supervision of the political leaders of the majority (Soviet Communists). The campaign for a Jewish settlement of the Birobidzhan district in the far east of the country tried to combine elements of the Zionist mentality with centralist communist concepts of forced re-education and internationalism – and culminated in a failure, which has already been criticised by a few contemporary scholars.

Michael Nagel picks out a single journal in his article “**Palestine and it’s Arab Population in the *Kinder-Rundschau*, Children’s Supplement to the**

Jüdische Rundschau, appearing in Germany, 1933-1938 [original in German: “Palästina und seine arabische Bevölkerung in der *Kinder-Rundschau*, Beilage der in Deutschland erscheinenden *Jüdischen Rundschau* 1933-1938”], which was issued for Jewish children in Nazi-Germany until November 1938. He examines how this newspaper depicts Palestine as ‘cohabited space’. He addresses especially the issue as to whether the Arab population in this future home country, imagined or real, is described as strangers or neighbours, hostile or sympathetic.

Transformed Neighbourhoods, the third section of the volume, deals with the media representation of individuals and groups who find themselves in exile and in a minority status, and thus have to transform their cultural knowledge and practices adequately to the new surroundings. In her article **”Russian Berlin in the 1920s and the Café as a Space of Non-Encounter“** [original in German: “*Russkij Berlin* in den 1920ern und das Café als Ort der Nicht-Begegnung“] Britta Korkowsky analyzes the poetical reflections of Russian émigrés who were spending their days and nights in the Berlin Café, a place of gathering as well as isolation.

Malgorzata A. Maksymiak in her contribution **”Nadja Stein’s Presentation of her Pedagogical Project aimed at a Jewish-Arab Approach at the Levante Fair, Tel Aviv 1932“** [original in German: “Nadja Steins Präsentation ihrer pädagogischen Initiative für eine jüdisch-arabische Annäherung auf der Levante-Messe in Tel Aviv 1932“] describes the plan of a Jewish female pioneer to establish educational cinema in Jewish as well as in Arab areas in Palestine. The dissemination of European knowledge into both groups should, in her opinion, foster the difficult process of understanding each other.

Monica Riera in her article **“Creoles, Pioneers, ‘Speemen’ and the Creation of an Argentinean Bavaria”** analyzes a process of transforming and ‘inventing traditions’ – mainly via architecture – undertaken by newcomers in an area of Argentina that, until that time, had experienced rather different forms of settlement and cultural practices.

Areas of Encounter and Reinterpretation, the fourth and last section of the volume, examines the cultural co-existence of immigrant and local population groups and the ways in which their encounter is described and passed down in text, illustration and cinema. From Susanne Marten-Finnis’ article **“‘Water and Oil’? Cultural Encounters between Russians and Germans in early 1920s Berlin”** we learn that Russian artists and writers who emigrated to Berlin after the revolution did not only stay by themselves – as depicted by Britta Korkowsky, s.a. – but also cooperated with local artists and sponsors.

“A Museum taking Refuge in Flight: The Danzig Judaica Collection and the Heterotopic as a Place of Oblivion” [original in German: “Ein Museum auf der Flucht. Die Danziger Judaica Sammlung und die Heterotopie als Ort des Vergessens“] by Andrea Zittlau follows the destinies and locations

of the Danzig Jewish Museum's treasures, which were donated to the community in 1904, escaped the Nazi's persecutions and robberies in 1939, and are presented in the Jewish Museum of New York today, at each stage changed in meaning and commemorative function.

Hiu M. Chan in her article "**Limehouse and its Haunted Nostalgia**" reflects on the poetic and cinematographic representations of the London "Chinatown" district from the 1920s, especially looking at three films starring the American-Chinese actress Anna May Wong, who fulfilled, according to the screenplays, the public's desire for imaginations of exotic sexuality and far-eastern villainy.

Tanja Seider's article "**Historical Voices from the Archive: Audio Records as Sources in the post-colonial Documentary Film**" [original in German: "Historische Stimmen aus dem Lautarchiv: Tonaufnahmen als Quellen im postkolonialen Essayfilm"] presents a collection of rather special historical documents: voice records taken from Indian First World War prisoners in a German camp. In a second step she analyzes the way in which a German 2007 documentary film tried to return to these voices, that is to say to their protagonists, an autonomy and personality which they lost when they were transported from their homeland to the battlefields in France.

III.

Is there anything we can learn for the present situation from the scholarly glance into three decades, which were rather meaningful for the phenomenon of 'cohabited space'? There certainly is. Taking the concept of 'cohabited space' in its ample meaning, we become aware that it determines the human existence, individual and social, everywhere and at any time, always stimulating progress and development. But the successful, relatively conflict-free inhabitation of a space shared by parties differing in cultural, mental or linguistic terms requires a certain amount of 'civilised thought' on the part of the individuals and groups concerned, which means, above all, openness, empathy and the ability to compromise.

We have reason to feel hopeful for the present and the future, as this 'civilised thought', expressed in different forms, belongs to the traditional system of values of most, if not all groups, ethnicities and cultures. We have reason to feel apprehensive too, as we have sufficient historical evidence that it can easily be overcome by exorbitant individual and collective striving for power, by existence-threatening ideologies and by the 'invention of traditions' and construction of historical images which stimulate aggression.

The question as to which way it will take is today, much more than 1920-50, determined by the mode and tendency in which text, illustration and film depict the phenomenon of 'cohabited space'. Our analytical understanding of these representations in the media will benefit by taking a look at the decades 1920-50, during which modern societies were, for the first time, confronted

with the phenomenon of ‘cohabitated space’ on a larger scale, and dealt with what they experienced by means of literature, press, sound and cinema.

IV.

Most of the articles in this volume are based on papers read at the international interdisciplinary conference “**The Experience of Cohabited Space. Representations of Contested Areas in Text, Cinema and Sound, 1920-50**”, which was jointly organised by 1. the Centre of European and International Studies at the University of Portsmouth, 2. the Institute “Deutsche Presseforschung” at the University of Bremen and 3. the Graduiertenkolleg *Kulturkontakt und Wissenschaftsdiskurs (Cultural Encounters and the Discourses of Scholarship)* at the University of Rostock and was held on 14-17 July, 2012 at the University of Rostock. The organizers of the conference and editors of this volume would like to express their gratitude to the three sponsors for generously funding both the conference as well as this volume:

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the editors.

