

Interuniversity Workshop for Comparative Literary Studies as Part of the Doctoral Program  
Comparative Literature (*swissuniversities*)

## *Aura, reloaded.*

Basel, Alte Universität (eikones Forum), **December 11/12, 2020**

Please note: If a physical meeting cannot take place due to COVID-19, a video conference will be organized instead.

Concept: Agnes Hoffmann, Tim Hofmann, Nicola Gess

The concept of *aura* has somewhat gotten out of focus in contemporary literary studies. Little seems left of the former impact it had on media aesthetic and philosophical discourses at the turn of the millennium (cf. Recki 1988; Brüderlin et al. 1997; Mersch 2002; Beil et al. 2004). One reason for this may be its affinity to the religious and esoteric, which makes it suspicious of irrationality or conceptual ambiguity.

At the same time, the historical semantics of the term *aura* is extraordinarily diverse, and it opens up valuable aesthetic and poetological perspectives for literary studies today. Theoretically and historically, this includes its connection to the category of the sublime (Pseudo-Longinus/Kant/Burke/Lyotard), to phantasm and simulacrum (Derrida/Baudrillard), to the magical (Adorno) and religious (Luther/Otto), to the "ungeheurer Spruch" (Goethe/Blumenberg), to questions of charisma (Weber), to media and production aesthetics (Benjamin) or profanation (Agamben). And questions of *aura* and the *auratic* also enable interesting perspectives with regard to current literary debates, e.g. new materialism, ideology critique, or phenomenology.

Against this backdrop, the workshop is interested in the lasting relevance of the term for comparative research. Which aesthetic, poetological or historico-conceptual approaches derive from the aura and the auratic? Which historical epochs, which medial constellations, which socio-political dynamics come into view? What can be the vitalising potential of the term for current debates in literary studies in particular?

We invite proposals for short (20-30 minutes) presentations (German, French, English) related to the main theme. The following guiding questions can (but do not have to) be pursued:

- History of concepts; What is auratic literature?
- Media and Aura with/after Benjamin
- Auratic Leadership: Popularity and Populism
- New Materialisms: The aura of things

The workshop will take place on **11/12 December 2020** in Basel (Alte Universität, eikones Forum). Confirmed keynote speakers and discussants are Dr. Eva Axer (ZfL Berlin) and Dr. Kyung-Ho Cha (Bayreuth). The event addresses doctoral students of literary studies from all Swiss universities. Suggestions for contributions are requested by e-mail by **1st of November 2020** to [agnes.hoffmann@unibas.ch](mailto:agnes.hoffmann@unibas.ch); [tim.hofmann@unibas.ch](mailto:tim.hofmann@unibas.ch); [sek-gess-germa@unibas.ch](mailto:sek-gess-germa@unibas.ch).

Costs of travel, board and lodging for the participants will be covered by the *swissuniversities* doctoral program for Comparative Literature.