

Call for Articles for Special Issue “Depicting Destitution across Media”

Guest editors:

Nassim W. Balestrini (University of Graz) & Katharina Fackler (University of Bonn)

The *Journal for Literary and Intermedial Crossings* (ISSN 2506-8709; www.jlic.be) offers an online publication platform to researchers who wish to explore various aesthetic ‘crossings’ concerning media, genres and/or spaces. Targeted squarely at investigating the ‘in-between,’ the journal seeks contributions from scholars broadly covering medial, literary, generic, spatial and cultural crossings that bridge a plurality of potential discourses, modalities, and methodologies. This special issue on “**Depicting Destitution across Media**” brings together different approaches to intermedial depictions of poverty. It asks how a focus on poverty can reinvigorate theories and methods for the literary and cultural analysis of representations of social inequality. In particular, it addresses the ways in which intermedial and transmedial perspectives enhance our understanding of such depictions.

The “new poverty studies,” which took shape primarily in Anglo-American scholarship in recent decades, is indebted to the Marxist tradition but springs from the observation that “class analysis often fails to focus sharply on what poverty means as a social category” (Jones 2008, p. 8; also see Goode and Maskovsky 2001). It asks how the study of the system of capitalist production and consumption can be complemented by more focused attention to “the individuals and groups who have remained partly excluded from it” (Jones p. 8). How can the “socioeconomic suffering” (Jones, p. 3) of poverty serve as a critical lens that opens up clearer perspectives on social inequality? How may this critical lens be sharpened with the help of theoretical formations from fields such as working-class studies, critical ethnic studies, gender and sexuality studies, and disability studies? Might it even help us address what Walter Benn Michaels has called “the trouble with diversity,” i.e. the tension between the affirmation of difference that many see at the heart of identity politics and the (more unpopular) critique of economic inequality?

With this topical issue, we seek to encourage dialogue between political and economic inquiries and studies of artistic and media representations. More specifically, contributions need to address the intersection between central questions in poverty studies (e.g. Desmond and Western 2018; Lemke 2014; Hill Collins 2012; Butter and Schinko 2010; Jones 2008) and intermediality studies’ concern with borders and in-between spaces within various forms of mediation (e.g. Bem 2017; Rajewsky 2010; Müller 2010).

In particular, we would like to consider the gaps and tensions inherent in representations of poverty in literature and other media and, particularly, in intermedial forms. As the presence of poverty in so-called developed nations in the global North has tended to “antagonize the liberal assumptions of freedom and universality that underpin a market economy” (Jones,

2008, p. 1), representations often fail to address the ways in which poverty is (re-)produced by existing social and economic arrangements in which audiences, producers, and representations may all be implicated in different ways. Instead, many representations of poverty keep the poor at arm's length. Poverty evidently persists despite the fact that it is regularly "discovered" by the larger public to the extent that "images of poverty [have become] a staple of liberal society's guilt" (Rabinowitz 4). In other words, while representations frequently claim to be bridging social gaps, often by combining different media (Agee and Evans 2001 [1941], p. 10), distancing practices structure countless dimensions of our social world (Bourdieu; Harvey) and of ubiquitous cultural representations. We agree with Eric Schocket's claim that scholarship needs to "hold[...] representations accountable as operations deeply implicated in the exploitive relations they seek to document" (2006, p. 11). In this context, it is also worth considering whether and how intermedial representations may escape or exacerbate such dynamics.

We invite papers that address these or related questions:

- How do depictions of poverty combine different media? Which intermedial effects result from specific intersections?
- Do representations of deprivation differ across media? If so, how and why?
- How do intermedial strategies take up the tension between the material and the immaterial dimensions of poverty? Does poverty figure as an economic condition and/or as a socially defined positioning of individuals within groups?
- To what extent do class-based forms of representation function as cultural capital?
- What are the conditions of the production, distribution, and reception of intermedial representations of poverty?
- How do representations evoke notions of deprivation as a 'given,' 'natural,' and thus unchanging condition or as a product of unequal economic and political arrangements?
- How and where are subjects and audiences placed with regard to the experience of destitution? Do representations imply the convenient position of the socially distant observer or voyeur? Or do they imbricate perceivers in the structures that produce socioeconomic suffering? How do intermedial techniques figure in this context?

The range of relevant cultural forms and practices includes but is not limited to poetry, fiction, spoken drama, protest performances, opera, film, television, and multimedia Internet platforms.

Please send **an abstract of maximum 500 words** (in English and, if applicable, also in the language of your article, i.e. Dutch, French, German, Italian or Spanish) and a list of **5 keywords** (in the same (two) language(s)) and a **100-word author bio** (in English only) to nassim.balestrini@uni-graz.at and to kfackler@uni-bonn.de by **15 June 2021**. **The deadline for full articles will be 1 October 2021**. Articles should be between 5,000 and 6,000 words long (references and footnotes included) and can be written in Dutch, English, French, German, Italian or Spanish. *JLIC* supports textual as well as multi-media formatting. All work submitted to *JLIC* should reference and be formatted according to its [Author Guidelines](#). Articles may be submitted in Word format. Figures, video and audio files etc. should be saved separately from the text. Potential contributors should bear in mind that a two-stage review process is envisaged for full essays. In the first stage, articles will be reviewed by the guest editors. In the second stage, articles will be double-blind peer-reviewed by at least one external anonymous expert referee.

JLIC considers all manuscripts on the strict condition that:

- the manuscript is your own original work, and does not duplicate any other previously published work, including your own previously published work.
- the manuscript has been submitted only to the *Journal of Literary and Intermedial Crossings*; it is not under consideration or peer review or accepted for publication or in press or published elsewhere.
- the manuscript contains nothing that is abusive, defamatory, libellous, obscene, fraudulent, or illegal.
- the author has obtained the necessary permission to reuse third-party material in their article. The use of short extracts of text and some other types of material is usually permitted, on a limited basis, for the purposes of criticism and review without securing formal permission. If you wish to include any material in your article for which you do not hold copyright, and which is not covered by this informal agreement, you will need to obtain written permission from the copyright owner prior to submission.

Bibliography

- Agee, James, and Walker Evans. *Let Us Now Praise Famous Men: Three Tenant Families*. 1941. Houghton Mifflin, 2001.
- Bem, Caroline. "Introduction: Intermediality Is the Map as Much as the Territory." *Intermedialités: Histoire et théorie des arts, des lettres et des techniques*, no. 30–31, 2017, doi:10.7202/1050892ar.
- Bourdieu, Pierre, et al. *The Weight of the World: Social Suffering in Contemporary Society*. 1993. Stanford UP, 1999.
- Butter, Michael, and Carsten Schinko. "Introduction: Poverty and the Culturalization of Class." Special Issue: "Poverty and the Culturalization of Class." *Amerikastudien/American Studies*, vol. 55, no. 1, 2010, pp. 5–18.
- Desmond, Matthew, and Bruce Western. "Poverty in America: New Directions and Debates." *Annual Review of Sociology*, vol. 44, no. 1, 2018, pp. 305–318.
- Goode, Judith, and Jeff Maskovsky, eds. *The New Poverty Studies: The Ethnography of Power, Politics and Impoverished People in the United States*. New York UP, 2001.
- Harvey, David. *Spaces of Capital: Towards a Critical Geography*, Routledge, 2001.
- Hill Collins, Patricia, "Social Inequality, Power, and Politics: Intersectionality and American Pragmatism in Dialogue," *Journal of Speculative Philosophy*, vol. 26, no. 2, 2012, pp. 442–57.
- Jones, Gavin. *American Hungers: The Problem of Poverty in U.S. Literature, 1840-1945*. Princeton UP, 2008.
- Lemke, Sieglinde. "Poverty and Class Studies." *American Studies Today: New Research Agendas*, edited by Winfried Fluck et al. Winter, 2014, pp. 37–64. American Studies: A Monograph Series 230.
- Müller, Jürgen E. "Intermedialität digital: Konzepte, Konfigurationen, Konflikte." *Intermediale Inszenierungen im Zeitalter der Digitalisierung: Medientheoretische Analysen und ästhetische Konzepte*, edited by Andy Blättler et al. Transcript, 2010, pp. 17–40.
- Rajewsky, Irina. "Border Talks: The Problematic Status of Media Borders in the Current Debate about Intermediality." *Media Borders, Multimodality and Intermediality*, edited by Lars Elleström. Macmillan, 2010, pp. 51–68.
- Schocket, Eric. *Vanishing Moments: Class and American Literature*, U of Michigan P, 2006.