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Gender and the City – Urban narratives in travel writing by German-speaking women in the 19<sup>th</sup> century

„Eine Frau vermag London nicht zu ertragen.“ (A woman can not bear London) – with these words the German travel writer Emma von Niendorf sums up her London experience in her travel book *Aus London – Dissolving Views* (1856). Niendorf's reaction to the metropolis seems typical for the way female German travel writers saw the city. In contrast to their male contemporaries, women felt lost, insecure and uncomfortable when confronted with the metropolis – a space that was associated with masculinity. In order to represent the city, they had to find their own narrative strategies in accordance with the requirements of female writing.

In examining the role of the female in the modern city experience, studies have so far concentrated on the figure of the *flâneuse* in late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century literature and film as well as on more recent imaginations of the urban woman. The proposed paper, however, plans to look at earlier examples of female urban writing by analyzing travel accounts about London by German-speaking women in the first half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century: Authors such as Johanna Schopenhauer, Ida Pfeiffer, Ida Hahn-Hahn, Fanny Lewald as well as the aforementioned Emma von Niendorf visited and wrote about London, which for most of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, was seen as a paradigm for modernity. Their texts illustrate how the genre of urban travel writing is gendered by an overlapping of a range of gendered discourses such as modernity, mobility and luxury. An analysis of how these women explored the urban space and developed a narrative for the city can contribute to a broader understanding of both the relationship between gender and modernity and between gender and the genre of urban travel writing.