

RUHRCENTER of American Studies presents

2021 Ruhr PhD Forum in American Studies

「HOME MADE」

University of Duisburg-Essen | TU Dortmund University | Ruhr-University of Bochum
February 12 & 13, 2021 via Zoom



FRIDAY, 12 FEB. 2021

9:00 – 9:15

WELCOME

9:15 – 10:45

PANEL ONE / DEAD MEN TELL (NO) TALES: NARRATING HIMSELF

9:15 – 9:30

DILARA SERHAT-SAWITZKI#TUD / CARL DJERASSI'S *CANTOR'S DILEMMA* (1989): A CAMPUS NOVEL

9:30 – 9:45

HILARY MEUTER#TUD / THE DEBATE OVER CONFEDERATE MONUMENTS: AN ANALYSIS OF CURRENT DISCOURSE

9:45 – 10:00

CHARLOTTE PIWEK-MENGEDE#UDE / MALE PEER GROUP DYNAMICS IN HEMINGWAY'S WRITING

10:00 – 10:45

QUESTIONS & ANSWERS

10:45 – 11:00

COFFEE BREAK

11:00 – 12:30

PANEL TWO / QUO VADIS THY SELF?: AMERICAN SELF-DESCRIPTIONS

11:00 – 11:15

HANNES KOBERG#RUB / "I GOT THIS UNDER THE BRIDGE:" EMBODYING HYBRID SELVES IN TRANSNATIONAL LIFE WRITING

11:15 – 11:30

LAURA KOST#TUD / "CAPTURING THE SPIRIT OF OUR COUNTRY:" THE RUNNER'S AMERICAN DREAM

11:30 – 11:45

EVAN SANDSMARK#UVA / IS THERE AN "AMERICAN CONSENSUS"? PUBLIC REASON AND THE LIMITS OF NATURAL LAW

11:45 – 12:30

QUESTIONS & ANSWERS

12:30 – 13:15

LUNCH BREAK

13:15 – 14:45

PANEL THREE / CAN'T STOP THE FEELING!: EMOTIONS IN LITERATURE

13:15 – 13:30

JULIET KASZAS-HOCH#TUD / ANXIETY, CALAMITY, HUMILITY: THE POETRY OF CLIMATE CHANGE

13:30 – 13:45

ZOHRA HASSAN-PIEPER#UDE / N.Y. CITY – THE CITY OF DESTRUCTION: DISASTER BUILDING IN DROOKER'S *FLOOD! A NOVEL IN PICTURES*

13:45 – 14:00

JULIA MACHTENBERG#RUB / VULNERABILITY IN US-AMERICAN POETRY

14:00 – 14:45

QUESTIONS & ANSWERS

SATURDAY, 13 FEB. 2021

9:00-10:30 PANEL FOUR / MEMORY & GRIEF IN CONTEMPORARY FICTION

- 9:00 – 9:15** JULIA WEWIOR#BUW / ESTABLISHING 'UNGRIEVABLE' LIVES IN THEIR 'GRIEVABILITY:' PRECARIITY IN DANTICAT AND ADICHIE
9:15 – 9:30 ANN-KRISTIN JÜTTE#RUB / MEMORY AND IDENTITY IN ETHNIC AMERICAN FICTION
9:30 – 9:45 JANINA WEDIG#HHU / ALONG THE EDGES OF DARKNESS – NARRATIVE GROTESQUE AND NORMALIZATION IN SOUTHERN FICTION
9:45 – 10:30 QUESTIONS & ANSWERS

10:30 – 10:45 COFFEE BREAK

10:45 – 11:45 PANEL FIVE / STORIES AS NEW AS THE CITY: SCRIPTING THE URBAN

- 10:45 – 11:00** HANNA RODEWALD#TUD / THE CONDUCT OF THE CREATIVE CITY: TRANSATLANTIC CULTURALIZATION OF URBAN SPACE
11:00 – 11:15 KATHARINA WOOD#TUD / TRACING URBAN SUSTAINABILITY THROUGH THE 'TRIPLE BOTTOM LINE'
11:15 – 11:45 QUESTIONS & ANSWERS

11:45 – 12:00 FINAL WORDS / END OF COLLOQUIUM

IMPORTANT LINKS

ZOOM ROOM: <https://uni-due.zoom.us/j/94445949203?pwd=eGpvNUtkM0F6WVY0MFBWVjRENjhVZz09>
Meeting-ID: 944 4594 9203 Kenncode: 111483
MOODLE HUB: <https://moodle.uni-due.de/course/view.php?id=24622>





FRIDAY, 12 FEB. 2021

9:00 – 9:15	WELCOME
9:15 – 10:45	PANEL ONE / ALL THE FEELINGS IN THE WORLD: EMOTIONS IN LITERATURE
10:00 – 10:45	QUESTIONS & ANSWERS
10:45 – 11:00	COFFEE BREAK

9:15 – 9:30

DILARA SERHAT-SAWITZKI#TUD /

CARL DJERASSI'S *CANTOR'S DILEMMA* (1989): A CAMPUS NOVEL

The "Campus Novel" or "Academic Novel" became an increasingly popular sub-genre of literature in the second half of the 20th century. Set mostly at university, the campus novel provides insights into the wheelings and dealings in the elitist world of academia – insights which, due to the high exclusivity of academia, are usually reserved to the members of this elitist group.

In my presentation, I will show how the "Campus Novel" goes beyond the means of satisfaction of the reader's curiosity about looking behind the scenes of academia. I will investigate the characteristics of the "Campus Novel" in the context of *Cantor's Dilemma* (1989), a novel written by the chemist and writer Carl Djerassi (1923-2015). As I will argue in my dissertation, scientists in Djerassi's literary works act amid a distinct culture with a specific code of conduct – oftentimes detached from basic principles in life, taking the behavior of scientists oftentimes to the absurd. I will show how *Cantor's Dilemma*, as a representative of the sub-genre "Campus Novel," exposes the culture of academia as rigid, codified, and oftentimes absurd, and thus deconstructs the (self-)perception of academia as the crown of human excellence.

Dilara Serhat-Sawitzki is a PhD candidate in the American Studies Department at TU Dortmund. In her dissertation, she investigates the role of gender as a central aspect in the culture of the natural sciences as portrayed in Carl Djerassi's "Science-in-Literature" works. She received a BA in British and American Literary and Cultural Studies, Protestant Theology, and Pedagogy in 2014 as well as a MEd in English and Protestant Religious Education in 2016, both from TU Dortmund. Additional to her work in American Studies, she is a secondary school teacher for English and Protestant Religious Education at Phoenix-Gymnasium Dortmund, where she currently completes her Referendariat für das Lehramt an Gymnasien und Gesamtschulen.

9:30 – 9:45

HILARY MEUTER #TUD /

THE DEBATE OVER CONFEDERATE MONUMENTS: AN ANALYSIS OF CURRENT DISCOURSE



FRIDAY, 12 FEB. 2021

Confederate monuments have been at the center of debate witnessed in mainstream media, political debates, as well as historical studies. Current discourse regarding Confederate monuments includes those who support monument existence and argue for them to remain where they are, relying on arguments of Southern pride and heritage. Monument removal is supported by scholars and political organizations who argue the monuments represent racism and a false narrative of the American Civil War. The style of arguments is predominantly “us against them,” more specifically “the right versus the left.” To demonstrate this discourse and style of argument, letters written and published by the Alt-right will be compared to discourse on the Southern Poverty Law Center’s website and Caroline Randall Williams’ article, “You Want a Confederate Monument? My Body Is a Confederate Monument.”

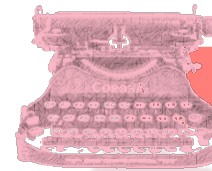
By analyzing current discourse, the differing collective memories that come to odds over the existence of Confederate monuments will be demonstrated. It will be focused on how people read an object, how the collective memory is defined by the monument, and how the collective memory can change over time. My research will apply Maurice Halbwachs, James Wersch and Henry Roediger’s theories of collective memory. Specifically, I am interested how texts demonstrate what Halbwachs wrote as “social preference and habits,” which have changed over time.

Hilary Meuter is a PhD student at TU Dortmund University. The working title for her dissertation is “Mapping the Change in the Discourse of Memory: An Analysis of the Expression of Collective Memory.” She teaches in the American Studies and is an instructor of English and academic writing at TU Dortmund’s Zentrum for Hochschulbildung.

9:45 – 10:00

CHARLOTTE PIWEK-MENGEDE #TUD /

MALE PEER GROUP DYNAMICS IN HEMINGWAY'S *THE SUN ALSO RISES*, *A MOVEABLE FEAST* & *ISLANDS IN THE STREAM*



FRIDAY, 12 FEB. 2021

In this presentation the dynamics of the competition for masculine status in Hemingway's texts will be examined, revealing the hegemonic standards conveyed in the texts. The key criteria for Hemingway's hegemonic American male abroad in *The Sun Also Rises*, *A Moveable Feast*, and *Islands in the Stream* will be explained and related to the contemporary American ideal of white masculinity promoted during the 1920s and 1930s. Raewyn Connell's model of hegemonic masculinity and its repercussions will be applied to the different American peer groups as portrayed in the texts; the roles of different male American characters for the narrative and the characterization of the protagonists will be examined. Further, the protagonists' positions within the hierarchy of American men in the specific foreign settings and the establishing of these positions will be analyzed. The peer groups in focus will be Jake Barnes and his male American friends in *The Sun Also Rises*; Hem and the other male American expatriates in *A Moveable Feast*; and Thomas Hudson, the hero of *Islands in the Stream* among the other American men in Bimini, and then, as the captain of a crew on a boat near Cuba. All of them underline the inconsistency of hegemonic status and the contextuality of performed gender identity. Finally, a conclusion concerning the hierarchy within American peer groups abroad in Hemingway's work will be drawn and the impact of the toxic competition for a position at the top of the hierarchy on the protagonists' relationships with their peers will be explained.

Charlotte Piwek-Mengede studied German and English Literature, Language and Communication at the University of Duisburg-Essen and received her Master's degree in Creative Writing & Literature at the University of Aberdeen in Scotland. She is currently a PhD student at the University of Duisburg-Essen and is in the process of enrolling in a Cotutelle Degree at the Macquarie University in Sydney, aiming to complete her dissertation on "White Male Americanness in Travel Fiction: Hemingway, Kerouac & Lerner" in 2023.

11:00 – 12:30

PANEL TWO / QUO VADIS THY SELF: AMERICAN SELF-DESCRIPTIONS

11:45 – 12:30

QUESTIONS & ANSWERS

12:30 – 13:15

LUNCH BREAK



FRIDAY, 12 FEB. 2021

11:00 – 11:15

HANNES KOBERG#RUB / "I GOT THIS UNDER THE BRIDGE:" EMBODYING HYBRID SELVES IN TRANSNATIONAL LIFE WRITING

Life narratives that create imaginary spaces beyond national territories and construct identities across national borders have become the object of Transnational American Studies. Some of these autobiographical texts not only present "sustained cross-border relationships, patterns of exchange, affiliations and social formations spanning nation-states" (Vertovec 2009: 2), but also challenge and transcend national ideology, reflecting a critical hermeneutic perspective on the nation as analytical category. My project explores the role of the body in these critical discursive contestations. I argue that they contest the nation and its subject conception, which renders these life narratives sites of "talking back" (Smith 1993, 20) to the national center, disrupting the nation's assertion of oneness. They disturb "the power hierarchies that have relegated [...] non-national autobiographers to the cultural periphery" (Hess 2016, 1) through discursive ways of de-centering the national and the autobiographical subject by embodying it. Alterity and embodiment are closely interlinked in these narratives. They suggest that the creation of boundaries between self-other can only work on the basis of repressing the self's own embodied existence. Hence, these autobiographical texts show an emphasis on the body in the process of identity construction.

Audre Lorde's biomythography *Zami*, published in 1982, will serve as an example in my talk. She uses the body to overcome the self-other dichotomy and to produce counter-hegemonic meanings of the nation. In doing so, she evokes an ambivalence that makes her hybrid self. At the same time, however, Lorde constructs her self within autobiographical discourse which is ideologically allied to national discourse, posing the question of how effectively a marginalized self can be formed in this genre. In this sense, "talking back" becomes an ambivalent practice.

Hannes Koberg is research assistant at the chair of American Studies at Ruhr-University Bochum, where he also teaches courses. He is currently working on a PhD thesis tentatively titled "[Dis]embodying the Nation: The Body in Transnational Life Writing". After obtaining his MA in English & American Studies from the RUB he worked as education manager for culture, photography and visual arts at an adult education center. In October 2019, he joined the RuhrCenter of American Studies as PhD candidate. His research interests include: Contemporary US Literature, Transnationalism, Autobiography Studies, Phenomenology, Body and Gender Studies.

11:15 – 11:30

LAURA KOST #TUD /

"CAPTURING THE SPIRIT OF OUR COUNTRY:" THE RUNNER'S AMERICAN DREAM



FRIDAY, 12 FEB. 2021

Fueled by the memoir boom of the last decade, an increasing number of long-distance runners [or "endurance athletes", as they are often referred to], were inspired to publish their life stories. The memoir as a form of "life writing" presents a suitable genre for the athletes' representation and self-marketing in the 21st century. While some authors choose the format to tell their entire career story, others use it to emphasize one of many athletic pursuits that has contributed to their success. A comparative reading of runners' personal narratives reveals common autobiographical elements and strategies, but for those dealing with the exploration of their home country on foot, the reliance on an ideal or personal "American Dream" appears to be the most prominent concept. I therefore aim to trace the "runner's American Dream" in the memoirs of athletes who have chosen important routes or adventure runs in the United States and have turned those into a book-length project.

In my presentation, I consider the self-portraits of two contemporary American athletes and their perception of the country in order to characterize the modern narrative of the runner. The stories of Rickey Gates, *Cross Country: A 3.700 Miles Run to Explore Unseen America* (2020), and Marshall Ulrich, *Running on Empty: An Ultramarathoner's Story of Love, Loss, and a Record-Setting Run Across America* (2011), represent the phenomenon of running across America and will serve as examples for my talk. Their tales about extreme physical effort, encounters with fellow Americans, observations of nature, and dialogues with the self, offer an interesting perspective on their nation and its "spirit" experienced in close physical contact.

Laura Kost is a research assistant and PhD student at TU Dortmund University, where she has earned both her BA and MA in Applied Literary and Cultural Studies with minors in Linguistics and Sociology. Her dissertation project explores the use of American cultural narratives in autobiographies of athletes. She is currently teaching introductions to American Literary and Cultural Studies. Her research and teaching interests include LGBTQ* representation in popular culture as well as sports and athleticism in the US.



FRIDAY, 12 FEB. 2021

11:30 – 11:45

EVAN SANDSMARK #UVA /

IS THERE AN “AMERICAN CONSENSUS”? PUBLIC REASON AND THE LIMITS OF NATURAL LAW

This paper examines the relationship between John Rawls’ account of public reason and John Courtney Murray’s understanding of natural law. Rawls held that in pluralist societies like the United States, laws and policies should not be made on the basis of religious beliefs, but instead should be based on principles that all citizens can endorse, regardless of their personal views. In Rawls’ terms, laws and policies must be justified in terms of “public reason,” and Rawls’ development of the idea of public reason provided a fresh theoretical basis for a basic principle of the American political system, the separation of church and state.

Writing a few decades before Rawls, Murray was also concerned with the challenge posed by pluralism in the US, but as a Jesuit priest and theologian, he approached church-state relations differently. Rather than appealing to a narrow and procedural notion like public reason, Murray instead developed a rich account of natural law, a set of divinely ordained ethical principles that Murray thought underpinned what he called the “American consensus.” Although differing in content, natural law serves effectively the same function as public reason in pluralist societies: it provides a common set of principles that citizens can use to address political questions. Murray’s work was hugely influential, and served as the foundation of *Dignitatis humanae*, the Second Vatican Council’s declaration affirming the value of religious freedom. Although this signaled a change in the Church’s teaching, the Catholic understanding of natural law voiced by thinkers like Murray contains considerably more propositional content than Rawls’ account of public reason. Consequently, natural law theory does not supply a neutral set of principles that citizens of all backgrounds can endorse, and so it must be rejected in favor of Rawls’ account of public reason, at least in pluralist societies.

Evan Sandmark is a PhD candidate in the Department of Religious Studies at the University of Virginia. For the 2020-21 academic year, he is a teaching fellow in American Studies at TU Dortmund. He works at the intersection of religion and politics, and is writing a dissertation that explores how basic philosophical and theological commitments influence the way we approach political and ethical problems.

13:15 – 14:45

PANEL THREE / DEAD MEN TELL (NO) TALES: NARRATING THE MALE

14:00 – 14:45

QUESTIONS & ANSWERS



FRIDAY, 12 FEB. 2021

13:15 – 13:30

JULIET KASZAS-HOCH#TUD / ANXIETY, CALAMITY, HUMILITY: THE POETRY OF CLIMATE CHANGE

The global climate crisis continues to intensify – despite naysayers; despite pacts. Extreme weather events unfold with greater frequency and force. Lives waver and reel, disrupted, even wrecked. Writers preserve the storms, the flooding, the drought. American poetry has a long history of examination of, and reverence for, the natural world, its landscapes and its creatures. Over time, though, a new – green – category formed within nature poetry, to meet the ecological present: poems of climate change. Poet Kristin George Bagdanov notes: “Poetry is a place where I try to hold all of these contradicting emotions and experiences next to one another, a fraught ecology that is both urgent and emergent.”

For the 2021 Forum, I’d like to discuss Bagdanov’s 2019 poetry collection, *Fossils in the Making*, with mention, if time, of two other modern poems, “How to Let Go of the World,” by Franny Choi, and “Letter to Noah’s Wife,” by Maya C. Popa. I will discuss the works’ language, devices, voice, and structure to explore the potential of poetry to express – and at the very least, document – accountability and humility, anxiety and helplessness, hope or doom.

Juliet Kaszas-Hoch is a writer from Long Beach Island, off the coast of New Jersey, USA. She is a graduate of Princeton University and received her MFA from The Pennsylvania State University. Currently she is enrolled as a doctoral student at TU Dortmund University.

13:30 – 13:45

ZOHRA HASSAN-PIEPER#UDE /

N.Y. CITY – THE CITY OF DESTRUCTION: DISASTER BUILDING IN ERIC DROOKER'S *FLOOD! A NOVEL IN PICTURES*



FRIDAY, 12 FEB. 2021

In graphic novels, it is usually the multimodal ensemble of text and imagery that provides a foundation for comprehension. However, the lack of text in Eric Drooker's works suggest that they are wordless. They tell stories solely by using images whilst discarding the use of words and verbal tracks. As a result, his works defy the typical definition of a graphic novel and of a picture book – instead they intensify the graphic narration's plurimedial demands on the reader. The main focus of my dissertation is to show how wordlessness in his works functions as a narrative mode that then enables both the process of worldmaking and affective patterns of spaces and places, in order to express fundamentally unlivable urban conditions.

My project proposes to conduct a study of his graphic novels *Flood! A Novel in Pictures* (2010) and *Blood Song: A Silent Ballad* (2011). Drooker's visual renderings function as narrative portraits in the sense that they operate in the same way a text does, therefore, possessing a narrative structure that involve similar processes to achieve cohesion. By applying Paula Moya's concept of schemas, I would like to uncover Drooker's schemas that direct reader's attention, condition her perception, and shape the resulting interpretation. Secondly, I am interested in the way he evokes multiple reference worlds. Drooker yokes together various topographies and spaces that can be considered both imaginary and real, thereby confronting the reader with various versions of worlds. Finally, by mapping the different ways of movement in Drooker's works, it becomes obvious that they serve as strategies of configuring mental states and emotional states of the protagonists. Moreover, it becomes clear that the ways of traversing convey the psychological and affective patterns that these spaces and places elucidate.

Zohra Hassan-Pieper is a member of the Afghan diaspora in Germany, who is an avid supporter of women's rights and reproductive rights. She completed her Bachelor's degree in Anglophone Studies and German Studies; and her Master's degree in Anglophone Studies and Literary and Media Studies (LuM), with a focus in literature, media studies and postcolonial studies at the University of Duisburg-Essen. She is a PhD candidate and a research assistant at the University of Duisburg-Essen. Her research interests include but are not limited to: narratology, gender studies, war studies, representations of Othering and Muslim women in conflict zones.





FRIDAY, 12 FEB. 2021

13:45 – 14:00

JULIA MACHTENBERG#RUB / VULNERABILITY IN US-AMERICAN POETRY

In recent years, scholars like Judith Butler and Erinn Gilson have demonstrated a renewed interest in the concept of vulnerability. Although renowned philosophers like Emmanuel Levinas (1974) already pointed toward the concept's universal relevance for human life, vulnerability as such has largely been construed as an unfavorable social condition in US-American culture. Butler and Gilson attribute this negative perception to national emphases on, e.g. "bodily integrity and self-determination" (Butler 2004: 25) and a capitalist ideology furthering "social distancing and detachment, which supports an invulnerable stance" (Gilson 2011: 317). These and similar national outlooks presuming the nation's and its citizens' capability to assert themselves against outside influences have become perceivable by, for instance, the US-American response to the 9/11 terrorist attacks. Given these observations, an examination of the role vulnerability plays in US-American culture may appear less rewarding than an investigation of the nation's fixation on invulnerability. However, Gilson and Butler follow Levinas by insisting on vulnerability's fundamental significance for human life, regardless of whether that significance is acknowledged or not.

Taking Gilson's definition of vulnerability as "a basic kind of openness to being affected and affecting in both positive and negative ways" (310) as a starting point, my dissertation project seeks to explore the devalued yet essential role vulnerability plays in US culture. To do so, I will examine how a diverse array of contemporary US-American poets represent vulnerability in their poetry. By analyzing representations of vulnerability in the poetry of Sylvia Plath, Audre Lorde, Agha Shahid Ali, and Ocean Vuong, I will explore how these depictions become a means to convey complex cultural processes involving re-examinations of self, nation, as well as inter- and intra-cultural relations. These poets' representations of vulnerability thus give shape to cultural dynamics that an exclusive emphasis on invulnerability tends to obscure.

Julia Machtenberg is a PhD student at the Ruhr-University Bochum. Julia received a BA in Anglophone Studies in 2017 from the University of Duisburg-Essen and an MA from the RUB in 2020. After exploring representations of trauma in their Master's thesis "Towards a Reenvisioning of U.S. Space: Meena Alexander's Raw Silk," Julia now continues to examine how a diverse array of US-American poets represent vulnerability in their poetry.

9:00 – 10:30

PANEL FOUR / VIOLENCE, DARKNESS, MEMORY
IN CONTEMPORARY FICTION

9:45 – 10:30

QUESTIONS & ANSWERS

10:30 – 10:45

COFFEE BREAK



SATURDAY, 13 FEB. 2021

9:00 – 9:15

JULIA WEWIOR#BUW /

ESTABLISHING 'UNGRIEVABLE' LIVES IN THEIR 'GRIEVABILITY:' PRECARITY IN DANTICAT AND ADICHIE

In their writing, Nigerian writer Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie and Haitian American writer Edwidge Danticat bring to the fore the suffering of those whose lives are derealized by Western discourse. As Judith Butler argues, "discourse itself effects violence through omission" (34), claiming that "[i]t is not just that a death is poorly marked, but that it is unmarkable" (2004: 35). While the violence of derealization serves to maintain traditional power dynamics, Butler suggests that narratives play a vital role in humanizing victims of violence, thus, making their lives and deaths grievable. Analyzing Claire of the *Sea Light* and *The Farming of Bones* by Danticat as well as *Half of a Yellow Sun* and *Americanah* by Adichie, my dissertation project seeks to map narrative strategies that address and challenge (international) discourses of oppression in their contemporary guise. Pinpointing the connection between dehumanizing discourse and (deadly) violence, the selected novels show the struggle of voicing suffering due to ellipses in discourse while simultaneously presenting (on the intra- as well as the extradiegetic level) different strategies of claiming and molding space in discourse. The various narrative strategies employed (e.g. multi-voiced linear and non-linear storytelling, unreliable protagonists, purposeful gaps and ellipses, explicit representations of intimacy, intertextuality, and self-reflexivity, to name only a few) are aimed at engaging the reader to become witness and accomplice. The narrative strategies of both writers invite readers to insert themselves and thereby connect with their stories, establishing Black lives as grievable lives within Western dominant discourse while simultaneously generating a new transnational aesthetic centered around Black female agency. My talk will bring together American studies, gender studies, trauma studies, reader engagement theory, postcolonial studies, Caribbean studies, and African studies.

Julia Wewior is a research assistant at the University of Wuppertal and is currently working on her PhD project tentatively entitled "Narrating Precarity in Adichie's and Danticat's Writing". She holds a Magister degree from the Goethe-University Frankfurt and studied American, English, and German Studies in Frankfurt, in Olomouc (CZE), and, as a stipendiary of the State of Hessen, at the University of Wisconsin, Oshkosh (USA). She recently co-organized the graduate symposium "Current Trajectories in Narrative Research" and a related workshop on Ecocriticism and was part of the organizational team of the international symposium "Migrant States of Exception." Her research interests include Caribbean studies, African American studies, ethics and aesthetics, precarity, narratology, gender studies, women writers, and postcolonial studies.



SATURDAY, 13 FEB. 2021

9:15 – 9:30

ANN-KRISTIN JÜTTE#RUB / MEMORY AND IDENTITY IN ETHNIC AMERICAN FICTION

"The past is all that makes the present coherent."
–James Baldwin

James Baldwin's quotation highlights the inextricable relationship between memory and identity that lies at the heart of human existence. Memories establish connections between our past and our present, between individual and collective, among origins, heritages, and histories. It is the existential need to remember, to reconstruct the fragments of the past, tell the story of our lives, and reconnect with a culturally relevant narrative that unites mankind. By illuminating an ever-changing present, memories are intersubjectively negotiated against the backdrop of a current meaningful framework. They are in constant flux and subject to changes, challenges, and ongoing contestations. The dynamism of this reconstructive process not only mirrors the interplay between memory and identity on an individual as well as on a collective level, but it also emphasizes memory's vital role as a driver for social change.

In the globalized world of the 21st century, memories are no longer culturally or nationally specific, but instead become transcultural; a development which has also been addressed by Michael Rothberg, who announces the end of competitive memory's "zero sum approaches" and instead proposes a multidirectional, prospective conceptualization of memory "as subject to ongoing negotiation, cross-referencing and borrowing; as productive and not privative" (Rothberg 2009: 3). Using Rothberg's concept of multidirectional memory as its methodological base as well as Maurice Halbwachs's conceptualization of 'mémoire collective,' Pierre Nora's 'lieux de mémoire,' Aleida and Jan Assmann's 'Cultural Memory' and Birgit Neumann's integrative model of 'memory cultures' as its theoretical foundation, this PhD project develops a transcultural perspective on culturally specific strategies of individual as well as collective forms of memory and remembrance in selected works of African American, Chicano/a, Native American, Chinese American, and Jewish American fiction.

Ann-Kristin Jütte studied English, German and French at the University of Paderborn. She is currently a PhD student in American Studies at the Ruhr University Bochum. Besides, she works as a secondary school teacher at the Reinoldusand Schiller-Gymnasium in Dortmund.



SATURDAY, 13 FEB. 2021

9:30 – 9:45

JULIANE WEDIG#HHU /

ALONG THE EDGES OF DARKNESS – NARRATIVE GROTESQUE AND NORMALIZATION IN SOUTHERN FICTION

I would like to present my PhD thesis, the goal of which is to develop a set of theoretical and analytical tools to examine the phenomenon of the "Southern Grotesque" with a focus on its narrative structure. The core of this dissertation is the analysis of the narrative construction of the grotesque effect as it is employed by the core authors of the genre, which I will describe as the "Narrative Grotesque". By concentrating less on violence and grotesque physical manifestations in content, as earlier studies have done, but on the distinct way these events are depicted, I want to demonstrate that what is perceived as "grotesque" is not necessarily caused by the subject being written about alone, but by its narrative representation. I aim to prove that the classic Southern Grotesque presents a South which is not sensationalistic entertainment for the North that exploits negative stereotypes of a degenerated and ridiculous part of the United States, but intends to reveal something brutal, hidden behind the scenes and expose its normalization in literature and everyday life. The classic Southern Grotesque therefore should be seen a positive force which intends to give voice to the voiceless or those that are cast aside in mainstream society and are used as society's scapegoats and regarded as "degenerate" or "lesser than" such the mentally ill, the disabled, and the sick. Unfortunately, the modern version of the 21st-century Southern Grotesque often falls back on these earlier stereotypes of a "degenerate South" by reducing the genre to showing the apparent strangeness of the South without the intent of being a social critique. Narrative styles as well as motifs are used to indicate the "weirdness" of a story and its setting which reverses the original intention of the authors of the Southern Grotesque.

Janina Wedig has been a research assistant at the Heinrich-Heine University in Düsseldorf since 2016 and is currently in the process of writing her dissertation on the purpose of the grotesque as a literary device in Southern women's literature of the late 19th and early 20th century as well as in modern Southern literature and film. She completed her BA degree in English and Art History at the Ruhr University of Bochum in 2013 and moved on to the MA program of Comparative Studies in English and American Language, Literature, and Culture at the HHU which she completed in 2016. Her research is focused on Southern Studies, grotesque literature and the Gothic, as well as the representation of mental and physical illness in both media and literature.

10:45 – 11:45

PANEL FIVE / STORIES AS NEW AS THE CITY:
SCRIPTING THE URBAN

11:15 – 11:45

QUESTIONS & ANSWERS

11:45 – 12:00

FINAL WORDS / END OF KOLLOQUIUM



SATURDAY, 13 FEB. 2021

10:45 – 11:00

HANNA RODEWALD#TUD / THE CONDUCT OF THE CREATIVE CITY: TRANSATLANTIC CULTURALIZATION OF URBAN SPACE

"Creativity has now become an object of governmental control."

–Andreas Reckwitz (2017)

Artists living and working in former industrial lofts in New York's Soho in the 1970s have become the blueprint for a transformative movement of American and Western European urbanity. My presentation will thus trace how this "Loft Lifestyle," as Sharon Zukin (1982) has termed it, developed further into the culturalization of urban space under an ever evolving "creativity dispositif" (Reckwitz 2017: 178). Since the turn of the millennium, the model of the creative city, which is heavily based on ideas of both urban and economic consultants Charles Landry and Richard Florida, has become a staple tool for the economic revitalization of struggling postindustrial cities. City administrations on both sides of the Atlantic have since been keen to follow top-down approaches of this creative script which promises new economic growth.

The production of stories around 'atmospheres' and 'experiences' of urban vibrancy, which ought to attract any members of the creative class, can thus not only be found in Michigan's Cool City Initiative from 2003, but also, for example, at the "Kreative Klasse Ruhr" festival (2009) of Germany's Ruhr Area. The quest to find new urban identities leads to an international competition for creativity which bears dangers of cultural uniformity and architectural standardization (Kaschuba 2015). Or as Sharon Zukin describes it in *The Naked City: The Death and Life of Authentic Urban Places* (2011) as cities losing their souls. My talk will take a deep dive into creative city theory and practice. I will examine how postindustrial cities, in particular Dortmund, have applied this quintessentially American model of the creative city as a script for their economic revitalization.

Hanna Rodewald is a doctoral researcher in the Graduate Research Group *City Scripts* at the University Alliance Ruhr (UAR). Looking into narratives of the Creative Class in postindustrial cities from a transatlantic perspective, she combines three of her major fields of interest, art and cultural studies, urban imaginaries and American studies. Hanna studied English and American Studies, Fine Arts and Educational Science at TU Dortmund University and spent a year abroad as a German Teaching Assistant at the University of Iowa. In 2018, she completed her studies with her thesis on "Urban Complexity: The Representation of Harlem in Ann Petry's *The Street*". In 2018 she joined the artist collective Salon Atelier based in Dortmund.



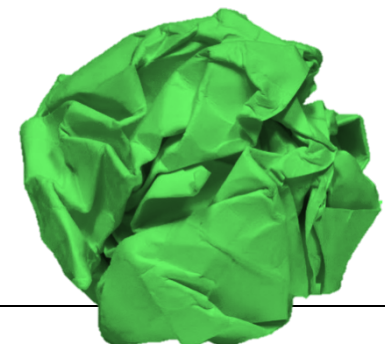
SATURDAY, 13 FEB. 2021

11:00 – 11:15

KATHARINA WOOD #TUD / TRACING URBAN SUSTAINABILITY THROUGH THE 'TRIPLE BOTTOM LINE'

In 1996, environmentalist Bill McKibben wrote that sustainability was a “buzzless buzzword” that would never find a salient position in mainstream society. In 2021, it has become very clear that his prediction was quite wrong. My paper traces some conceptual baselines for current understandings of sustainability. Central will be the definition of the “triple bottom line” of sustainability: “ecology, economy, equity” and its relevance for urban visions of sustainability. Like many other cities around the globe, the German city Dortmund is currently planning a tiny-house settlement. The model project will consist of individually owned houses as well as communally shared spaces. It is not only an experiment in tiny-house living, but also a model project in collective planning and building. This paper analyzes the narratives surrounding the proposed tiny-house community and its so-called “triple bottom line” of sustainability, an accounting framework that measures the impact of a building in social, environmental, and economic terms. It examines one tiny-house community as an example of the ecological narration and imagination underlying its planning and building whilst also acknowledging the challenges and criticism faced by tiny-house communities. The paper answers the following questions: “Through which narratives is the model project in Dortmund-Sölde scripted by engineers, urban planners, and interested parties?,” “Who profits from this building solution?,” and “How can this tiny-house settlement contribute to urban sustainability?”

Katharina Wood is a doctoral researcher at TU Dortmund University in the Graduate Research Group *City Scripts*. Her main fields of interest are sustainability, green building, African American literature, media studies, cultural studies, and urban studies. In her dissertation “Conserving Whose World? Green Building Standards in the U.S. and Germany,” she will dissect transatlantic scripts used to build a greener future as brought forth through visionary approaches towards the creations of sustainable cities. The project aims to analyze the underlying cultural scripts and visions of a ‘green’ future through transatlantic comparisons of green building projects.



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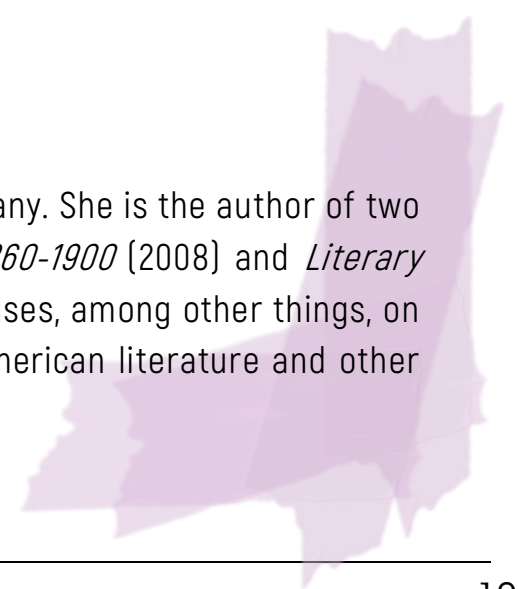
senior experts

REGINA SCHOBER // **heinrich heine university of duesseldorf**

Regina Schober is Professor for American Studies at Heinrich-Heine-University Duesseldorf. She teaches American literature and culture from the early colonial period to the 21st century, with a focus on digital culture, intermediality, and theories of the global information age. She is author of *Unexpected Chords: MusicoPoetic Intermediality in Amy Lowell's Poetry and Poetics* (2011) as well as of *Data Fiction: Naturalism, Numbers, Narrative* (2011). She was visiting scholar at the University of California, Santa Barbara (2017) and at Harvard University as well as at the University of Virginia, Charlottesville (2008). Her research interests include transformations of subjectivity in the information age, network concepts, the quantified self, theories of reading, and discourses of failure. She is part of the DFG research network The Failure of Knowledge/Knowledges of Failure, of the DFG research project Probing the Limits of the Quantified Self, and of the DFG research network Narrative Liminality.

BIRGIT SPENGLER // **university of wuppertal**

Birgit Spengler is Professor of American Literature at the University of Wuppertal, Germany. She is the author of two books, *Vision, Gender, and Power in Nineteenth-Century American Women's Writing, 1860-1900* (2008) and *Literary Spinoffs: Rewriting the Classics – Re-Imagining the Community* (2015). Her research focuses, among other things, on articulations of states of exception, bare life, and precarious being in contemporary American literature and other cultural media.



HOME MADE

THANKS TO...

Rebecca Brückmann / Barbara Buchenau / Florian Freitag /
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