

33rd Postgraduate Forum of the German Association for American Studies (GAAS/DGfA)

Spaces of Affect in the Americas

November 9–11, 2023, Leibniz Universität Hannover

Abstracts and Bios

Thursday, November 9, 2023

Niedersachsensaal (Building 1501, Conti Campus)

15:00 – 16:30

Panel 1: Centering Marginalized Voices in Affect Studies

Chair: Philipp Kemeter (Leibniz University Hannover)

"Memory is a river and now it is unbound:" Trauma, Kinship, and Spaces of Belonging in Rivers Solomon's Afrofuturist Underwater Utopia *The Deep* (2019)

Natalie Erkel (Ruhr-Universität Bochum)

Abstract: Literary utopias have been part of Western literature at least since Thomas More wrote his *Utopia* in 1516. Present day literary utopias, however, have taken on new content, forms, and functions. A particularly compelling contemporary utopia is Rivers Solomon's novella *The Deep* (2019). This Afrofuturist utopia imagines an underwater community formed by thousands of kidnapped and pregnant African women thrown overboard by slavers in the Atlantic Ocean. The main character, Yetu, is tasked with holding the memories of her people and thus functions as a link to the trauma of their ancestors. As an Afrofuturist literary utopia, *The Deep* is strongly connected to the spatial dimension of affect and emotion as well as the memory and the affectivity of the past. The creation of the underwater society speaks to a form of survivance in

the face of unspeakable horrors and the utopia functions as a memorial to the historic murder of millions of enslaved Africans.

Through the lens of Afrofuturism and utopia, I will focus on themes such as memory and trauma, identity, individual hopes vs. communal responsibilities, community healing, and the power of storytelling. In my presentation, I will argue that Rivers Solomon uses some of the conventions of a literary utopia in order to open up a space of belonging, create a bridge between the past, present and future, and create an empowering and lyrical narrative that gives voice to the trauma and haunting of the slave trade.

Bio: Natalie Erkel is a PhD student and research assistant at the Ruhr-Universität Bochum (RUB). She completed her Master of Education in French and English and her Master of Arts in North American Studies and English Language, Literatures and Cultures at the University of Göttingen. Her research interests include feminism, gender studies, African-American literature, utopias, dystopias and science fiction.

Affective Worldmaking and Counterpublic(s): Afrofuturism and Planetary Posthuman Critique in NK Jemisin's *The City We Became*

Arunima Kundu (FAU Erlangen-Nürnberg)

Abstract: Literature and film, as means of cultural production, have consistently participated in cultural discourse, contributing to epistemic transformations by raising valuable questions pertinent to contemporary historical and cultural moments. The genre of science fiction in particular has performed this task significantly since it can demonstrate how "intervening into the material world can change human relations and generate new futures" by dramatizing cultural anxieties and aspirations (Yaszek 385). Science fiction film and literature, particularly in the 2010s have tackled cultural discourse on the human condition by thematically addressing human relationship with technology and articulating complex theoretical discourse in a way that translates into popular culture. Critical posthumanist theory (N. Katherine Hayles, Rosi Bradotti) has addressed the human condition by advocating a dynamic partnership between humans and technology in its critique of liberal humanism, and the anthropocentric discourses of human superiority over all non-human entities. Studies in the concept of "planetary" (Amy J. Elias,

Christian Moraru, Gayatri Spivak) insist on viewing the world we live in as an interconnected whole and the concept offers itself as the alterity to "globalization" and the "planet" as an ethical, relational and inclusive alternative unit to that of the "globe" which is tainted by the exclusionary trappings and homogenizing tendencies of globalization and the global neoliberal capitalist economy. In my work, I bring planetary and posthuman together in dialogue to conceptualize a planetary posthuman subject – a posthuman subject who can think planetarily, or in other words, a posthuman subjectivity in relation to the planet. In order to provide an embodiment to the planetary posthuman subjectivity, I utilize the concept of the cyborg (Donna Haraway). I explore how science fiction film and literature utilize the theoretical model of the planetary posthuman and contribute to cultural discourse on the human condition in a way that translates into popular culture. My particular focus is on Afrofuturist science fiction and what a "planetary posthuman" would mean in that context and how such an Afrofuturist planetary posthuman could contribute to public discourse and to the cultural formation in the United States and North America, where intervention in the ideas of race, otherness and blackness are critical in its political and cultural landscape where institutionalized racism is an everyday reality. Concepts of affect, belonging, recognition, memory, and emotions are key to the understanding of any Afrofuturist work. In my presentation, I would explore how NK Jemisin's novel *The City We Became* (2020) engages in affective worldmaking (Schultermandl) and creates counterpublic(s) with the help of planetary posthuman embodiments, assemblages based on kinship (Haraway, for example), belonging, and recognition. Some of the other questions I would ask are: What is the significance of lived experience, trauma, and collective memory in this particular example of affective worldmaking? How does the novel create living planetary posthuman embodiments of counterpublic spheres?

Bio: Arunima Kundu holds a master's degree in Global History from the Free University and the Humboldt University in Berlin, Germany, after which she studied for her second master's degree in Intercultural Anglophone Studies at the University of Bayreuth, Germany. She holds a bachelor's degree with honours in History from Jadavpur University, Kolkata, India. In 2022, she joined the Research Training Group "Literature and the Public Sphere in Differentiated Contemporary Cultures" at the Friedrich-Alexander-Universität Erlangen-Nürnberg (FAU) in Bavaria, Germany as a PhD candidate. Her research interests include American literary and cultural studies, critical posthumanist theory, postcolonial studies, and intellectual history.

Abandoned Shame in *A History of My Brief Body*

Can Aydin (Technische Universität Dresden)

Abstract: "I'd like to ask a couple questions about my sexual health, I say, trying to maintain at least a sliver of secrecy in the small room peopled to capacity. *Oh, like STDs?* she wonders aloud, without concern for my privacy. *Yup.* I clear my throat" (Belcourt 64). In his essay collection, *A History of my Brief Body*, that contains a rich autobiographical vein, First Nations (Cree) author Billy Ray Belcourt recounts his experiences within the Canadian healthcare system. After an awkward and turbulent sexual encounter, the narrator is overwhelmed with fear and anxiety due to a possible HIV infection. As a queer Indigenous man in the settler state Canada, he faces the indifferent treatment by the Canadian healthcare institutions. Clinics and hospitals become a "zone of abandonment" (65) where the subject who speaks from the intersection of Indigeneity and queerness in the heteronormative settler state is rendered vulnerable to shame. Here, shame gets especially transgressive when the narrator is denied what Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick argues as a "friendly witness" (Sedgwick). In my contribution, I will talk about the role of shame for the queer Indigenous subject in the space of settler medical institutions. There is a 'confessional' interaction between the medical personnel and the narrator who gets denied the 'friendly witness' to help him release the shame, leading to feelings of abandonment. In these encounters, shaming due to both the narrator's sexuality and the 'triviality' of his medical condition creates a wasteland instead of a space for healing for Belcourt's narrator.

Bio: Can Aydin is a research associate who is currently working on his PhD at TU Dresden in American Studies. His dissertation focuses on contemporary poetry, and prose created by Indigenous authors such as Billy-Ray Belcourt, Joshua Whitehead, and Terese Marie Mailhot in which Indigeneity and sometimes queerness and Indigeneity are both explored against and within the settler state Canada.

Friday, November 10, 2023

Niedersachsensaal (Building 1501, Conti Campus)

17:30 – 19:00

Panel 2: (Em)bodied Affects

Chair: Yining Zhang (Leibniz University Hannover)

Animated Bodies: The Worker's Body as a Space of Affect in *Sorry to Bother You*

Maria Menzel (University of Amsterdam)

Abstract: This paper investigates the minor affect of animatedness (Ngai) as presented in the film *Sorry to Bother You* (2018). I illustrate how affects "stick" to certain forms of embodiment, depending on "histories of contact" (Ahmed 90). My research question is how different forms of animatedness are presented in *Sorry to Bother You*. Using concepts such as plasticity (Jackson) to inform my narrative and formal analysis, I posit that in the film, workers' subjectivities are constituted by the work that they do. Their subjectivity is presented as plastic, by formal techniques such as the use of Claymation or animatronics, but especially by the corporate plan to transform workers into human-horse hybrids dubbed Equisapiens, to improve their workplace productivity. This paper outlines the connections between this plasticization and the American history of slavery, and the continued dehumanization of Black people, to justify the exploitation of their labor. I find that the film illustrates how animatedness is an antithetical affect: The workers become automatized by their work, but their excessive animation is also presented as holding subversive potential. I explain this antithesis by investigating the "White Voice" used by the two protagonists, Cassius and Detroit, at work. Rather than using the Equisapiens as figures symbolizing the loss of the workers' agency, *Sorry to Bother You* presents both the workers and Equisapiens as excessively animated, ultimately allowing them to form a coalition based on this shared affect.

Bio: Maria Menzel is a graduate of the Research Master program in Literary Studies at the University of Amsterdam. Her research interests include affect studies, posthumanism and the interplay of embodiment and labor.

"Except for this Hysteria, She's the Perfect Wife" – Women and Medicalization in *An Inconvenient Wife*

Nina Marie Voigt (Universität Heidelberg)

Abstract: Being hysterical is defined by the Cambridge dictionary as an inability to control one's emotions. Hysteria stems from the Greek word *hystera* – uterus. As the name suggests, it is inherently linked to women's bodies. Hysteria is caused, it was believed, by a number of bad habits. Its symptoms – emotional outbursts, irrationality, or sadness, to name but a few – were as varied as its causes. What they had in common was that they were seen as either an excess or absence of feminine characteristics. Treatments were linked to traditional feminine occupations such as marriage and motherhood. Although hysteria is no longer a clinical diagnosis, labeling a woman as hysterical today refers back to the gendered understanding of hysteria and its implications. Under the assumption that novels help address cultural shifts and attitudes, this paper aims to investigate how and with what implications medical discourses surrounding women are depicted in fiction. To illustrate this point, this paper will analyze *An Inconvenient Wife* (2009), written by Amy McKey. Set against the backdrop of New York's High Society at the end of the 19th century, the novel depicts the life of a newly married woman diagnosed with hysteria and infertility. To turn her into an 'acceptable' wife, she is subjected to different medical treatments. The novel depicts her as being controlled by different men who use medical and psychological regimens to coerce her into socially appropriate behavior. Using a Foucauldian approach, this paper will address the complex conceptualization of gendered emotions and medicalization, using the events within the novel as illustrative points. Through understanding historical fiction as not merely commenting on the past, but as addressing contemporary issues, the text helps to understand how medicalization can be used for moral as well as social policing, and affects our understanding of emotions and gender today.

Bio: Nina Marie Voigt, MA, (she/her) began her MA at the University of Heidelberg. There she was granted a research scholarship at the University of Cambridge. Afterwards she transferred to the University of Bremen, where she wrote her master thesis on the conceptualization of psychopathy in contemporary serial narration under Professor Norbert Schaffeld. As of now, she is beginning her PhD located at the intersections of feminism and the medical humanities, investigating discourses of reproduction and miscarriage in writings of the long 19th century. Her research interests are found within the larger realm of cultural theory: the conceptualization of medicine within literature, as well as questions of otherness, especially in their intersections with gender and the fantastic.

Fat Life Writing as an Affective Call for Action

Judith Schreier (Humboldt Universität Berlin)

Abstract: At the beginning of 2023, social media fat activist Aubrey Gordon published her second book *'You Just Need to Lose Weight' and 19 Other Myths about Fat People*, another example of the genre I call fat life writing. One of the main characteristics of the genre is that it centers on the experience of existing in a fat body written by authors who label themselves as fat. Gordon's second publication differs from her first book *What We Don't About When We Talk about Fat* (2020) in the sense that her second book is a call for action. This example of fat life writing "equips readers with the facts and figures to reframe myths about fatness." Most of the chapters in which Gordon explains myths (e.g., about the BMI) and adds her personal and autotheoretical viewpoints and experience end with questions to explore and "opportunities" for action. As the fat life writing genre is closely related to the self-help book genre, Gordon's work questions the idea of the self-help genre as it becomes an affective 'call-for-action' book that carries tools the reader should engage with to stand up for fat people. Many times, the fat life writing genre has fat people themselves as their audience. *You Just Need to Lose Weight* appears to have a varied audience. Some reflection questions ask to interrogate one's own fatness, while most questions and requests are targeted at non-fat people to use their privilege of not existing in a fat body. Gordon's publication, thus, is a thought-provoking to the fat life genre that broadens the scope of what the genre does.

Bio: Judith Schreier is a Ph.D. student at Humboldt University of Berlin and holds a scholarship of the Hans-Böckler-Foundation after completing her M.A. in American Studies at the University of Leipzig in 2021. She holds a position as a research assistant in the department of Gender and Media at FernUniversität Hagen. She received her B.A. in American Studies and German as a Foreign Language from Leipzig university in 2017 and has studied abroad at Stockholm University and HWS Colleges, Geneva, USA. Her main research interest lies in the representation of 'deviant' bodies, such as fat and queer bodies, in American popular culture. She further enjoys thinking about feminist narratology, (writing) poetry, and social media. While studying at Leipzig, she has been a member of the editorial team of *aspeers 11*, and now she co-edits the academic blog *Food, Fatness and Fitness*.

Claiming the Abortion Narrative: Trajectories of Feminism in Glennon Doyle's Writing

Nadine Walter (Universität Rostock)

Abstract: On Friday, June 24, 2022, the US Supreme Court overturned *Roe v. Wade*, the landmark decision that had made access to abortion a federal right in the United States since 1973. Overturning this decision marks a renewed crisis in women's rights, asserting once more the destructive power that conservative evangelical Christian thought can have on gender equality. The Supreme Court's decision anew forces evangelical-adjacent authors to take a stand on the decision. Especially since the 1970, abortion has been instrumentalized as a politically divisive issue by evangelical groups, and since then, associating oneself with evangelical beliefs has been almost exclusively tied to an antiabortion ("pro-life") attitude, as opposed to a pro-choice attitude.

Evangelical author, speaker, and activist Glennon Doyle has been especially vocal in her responses to *Dobbs* and her support for access to abortion. This paper analyzes Doyle's trajectory in understanding abortion as a structural issue used to control women's bodies. Doyle addresses abortion on multiple occasions in her publications previous to *Dobbs*: In *Carry On, Warrior* (2013), in her memoir *Love Warrior* (2016), as well as in *Untamed* (2020).

In my analysis, I will show how Doyle uses her own story to complicate the perception often found in evangelical accounts on abortion. Doyle's trajectory in her beliefs about abortion in many respects deviates from and complicates the traditional evangelical abortion narrative,

and shows how affect and emotion work in changing people's minds regarding contested issues in evangelicalism.

Bio: Nadine Walter (she/her) is a 3rd year doctoral researcher at the interdisciplinary graduate school "Hermeneutic Power – Religion and Belief Systems in Conflicts over Interpretive Power" of the German Research Association (DFG) at the University of Rostock. After her studies in Göttingen and Amherst, Massachusetts, she worked at the Emigration Museum in Hamburg before committing full-time to her academic career. Her research interests include American Christianities, Women and Gender Studies, Life Writing, Memory and Museum Studies, and American Popular Culture.

Saturday, November 11, 2023

Niedersachsensaal (Building 1501, Conti Campus)

09:00 – 10:30

Panel 3: Exploring the Emotional Landscape

Chair: Sahar Al Kharsa (Leibniz University Hannover)

"This dream of water – what does it harbor?" Agha Shahid Ali's Affective Re-Mapping of the Americas

Julia Machtenberg (Ruhr-Universität Bochum)

Abstract: In his poetry collection *A Nostalgist's Map of America* (1991), Kashmiri American poet Agha Shahid Ali reimagines the US as a landscape transcending conventional borders. Ali's imaginative way of transgressing geographical, national as well as socio-temporal borders results, I argue, from his charting of vulnerable states of dis- and emplacement. I argue that it is through his representation of these vulnerable states that Ali constructs "affective landscapes" (Berberich, Campbell, and Hudson) in his poetry.

By presenting a close reading of Ali's poem "I See Chile in My Rearview Mirror," I will show how Ali's representation of vulnerable states of dis- and emplacement allows him to construct affective landscape that re-maps the South and North American continents as a "transnation"

(Ashcroft). Through his speaker's "affective witnessing" (Richardson and Schankweiler) of the military coup d'état of Chile, Ali represents an affective relationality between the witness and the witnessed that transcends bounded notions of place and time. It is on this basis that Ali constructs an affective landscape through which he reconfigures the two continents as a transnation. This re-mapping of the American continents reveals how the condition of vulnerability undermines bounded notions of selves and places and thereby inspires a reconfiguration of the Americas as a globally embedded socio-cultural affective space.

Bio: Julia Machtenberg is a PhD student at the Ruhr-Universität Bochum (RUB). Julia received their BA in German and Anglophone Studies from the Universität Duisburg-Essen in 2017 and their MA in English and American Studies from the RUB in 2020. Currently, Julia is working on their PhD project with the working title "Vulnerability in US-American Poetry." Next to vulnerability and trauma studies, Julia's research interests include in gender and queer studies.

Perceptions of Space: The Effect of Socio-Political Geography on Foreign Policy in the Pacific
Sandra Meerwein (Johannes Gutenberg-Universität Mainz)

Abstract: Ryan D. Enos' theory on the impact of social geography deals with the question how our perceptions are shaped by geographical parameters that determine the degree of every-day life interactions, such as *size*, *proximity*, and *segregation*, and how they ultimately affect our behavior toward each other.¹ In this regard, social geography eventually impacts and defines political perceptions and behavior. In my own research, I translate Enos' assumptions to the geographical realm of maritime spaces, more specifically, the Pacific. My paper thereby focuses on the issue of national identity formation processes and how these are shaped by perceptions and national interests regarding the oceanic space. In this framework, I juxtapose U.S. foreign policy agendas pertaining to the Pacific with those of Pacific Island nations. How do national decisionmakers perceive, define, and promote their nation's role within the geographic space of the Pacific? How are these aspects connected with the intersection of national interests and identity formation? And how become these ultimately translated into foreign policy agendas that serve as decision making guidelines?

With regard to these questions, my paper argues that the features of U.S. national identity presuppose a predominantly geostrategic approach in the Pacific whereas the Oceanian approach to policies in the region is primarily socio-economic. This ultimately creates a discrepancy in regional decision-making and calls for a rethinking of joint foreign policy approaches under spatial-ideational considerations of human-environment relations. My argument thereby leans on the elaboration of how nations socio-culturally define their relationship with the geographical space of the Pacific Ocean and how this process is interrelated with the historical legacy of identity formation in the context of geographical perceptions and national interests.

Bio: Sandra Meerwein is a PhD candidate and instructor for Transnational American Studies at Johannes Gutenberg University in Mainz, Germany. She obtained both of her degrees (B.A., Political Science/M.A., American Studies) at JGU. During her studies, she participated in exchange and language programs at Doshisha University and Kwansei Gakuin University in Japan, and Wenzao University of Languages in Taiwan. Her research interests lie in Transpacific American Studies related to issues of collective memory, identity, and foreign policy. Her current dissertation project focuses on the U.S. and territorial interpretations of maritime spaces, specifically regarding the Pacific region. For her research, Sandra Meerwein participated in the *Daniel K. Inouye Asia-Pacific Center for Security Studies* research fellowship program 2021-23 in Honolulu, Hawai'i. She further had been a recipient of the GAES (DAAD) scholarship for PhD students for research abroad in 2022/23. In this framework, she conducted both archival and empirical research at several academic and governmental institutions in Japan and Hawai'i.

"A Vast and Howling Wilderness": Otherness in the Early American Landscape

Philip James Grider (Georg-August-Universität Göttingen)

Abstract: Mary Rowlandson was taken captive by Nipmuck people during King Philip's War and forced to navigate parts of the Massachusetts countryside. In her own words, this countryside was a "vast and desolate wilderness" (71), even though, in reality, it was mere miles outside of Rowlandson's hometown of Lancaster. And yet, on more than one occasion, Rowlandson does not fail to mention that this landscape is devilish, hostile, threatening, wild, howling, or desolate – to

name a selection of her descriptors. William Bradford, upon arrival at Plymouth with the Mayflower, observes that his men could find nothing but "a hideous and desolate wilderness, full of wildd beasts and wildd men" (78). Voyagers like Louis Hennepin, John Smith, or John Josselyn time and time again characterize the North American landscape of the 17th and 18th centuries as hostile, full of swamps and dark forests, and, aside from the established colonies of the French and British, as uncivilized and wild spaces.

In this paper, I argue that geography in early American writing figures as the spatial representation of Anglo-European anxieties along lines of notions of race, civilization, witchcraft, and more. The American landscape thus also serves as a space and a means of othering the Native peoples inhabiting this space, fostered by these very anxieties. Spaces that seem to be of no use to colonizers and settlers – allegedly uncultivable swamp and marshland, mountains, or forests – become the epitome of non-civilization defined against the Anglo-European self.

Bio: Phillip James Grider is an assistant professor and Ph.D. candidate in the North American Studies department at the University of Göttingen in Germany, with an emphasis on literary and cultural studies. Phillip is also a member of an early Americanist research network titled "Voices and Agencies: America and the Atlantic, 1600-1865" funded by the German Research Council. They are the 2023 Ebeling fellow at the American Antiquarian Society in Worcester, Massachusetts. Their PhD project is concerned with nonhuman agency in the representation of flora, fauna, and landscapes across a number of early American textualities. They attempt to answer how these representations are capable of sustaining discourses of hegemonic and colonial mythmaking and how their understanding as more-than-human agents is able to subvert or counter these discourses. Phillip's most recent publication will be an article in the European Journal of American Studies titled "There is a beast they call Aroughcun: Raccoons and Colonialism in America," which is currently under review.

14:00 – 16:00

Panel 4: Crossing Boundaries of Space, Body, and Genre

Chair: Nathalie Rennhack (Leibniz Universität Hannover)

Affective Boundaries: Death, Trauma, and Digital Space in the fiction of Ben Lerner and Jennifer Egan

Wesley Moore (FAU Erlangen-Nürnberg)

Abstract: In this talk, I explore Ben Lerner's *Leaving the Atocha Station*, as well as Jennifer Egan's *A Visit from the Goon Squad* and *The Candy House*, comparing the authors' literary representations of the boundaries between physical and virtual spaces, primarily through analyzing characters' affective experiences related to violence and tragedy. Engaging Fredric Jameson and Walter Benjamin, I investigate the waning of affect that results from digital representation and repetition, while also examining Manuel Castells' claim that encounters with death in post-industrial societies have been almost exclusively relegated to the digital sphere and are, therefore, detached from subjects' material reality. *Atocha Station*'s protagonist, Adam Gordon, experiences this emotional distance as he watches videos of beheadings and reads coverage of the Iraq War online, while his encounter with an injured teen at the aftermath of the Atocha bombings, as well as his friend's trauma after failing to rescue a drowning woman prove more memorable and affective. These experiences, I argue, along with clearly-marked juxtapositions between digital and material signs, depict a reality where virtual and physical spaces are distinctly parallel. In *Goon Squad* and *Candy House*, on the other hand, Egan portrays, through literary representations of digital forms, physical and virtual spaces merging into a hybrid environment. Here, digital media have more affective potentials than in Lerner's fiction or Castells' theory, as *Goon Squad*'s "Great Rock and Roll Pauses" narrates Mile's processing of trauma of Rob's drowning through a PowerPoint presentation, while, in *Candy House*, the trauma resurfaces as Miles watches a recording of Rob's final moments. I conclude by briefly relating Egan and Lerner's differing depictions of space to their ideologies on the ideal function of creative media: Egan foregrounds art's emotional potential in her fiction, while Lerner analyzes its capacity to accentuate material reality.

Bio: Wesley Moore is originally from Charleston, South Carolina and has a B.A. in German Studies and an M.A. in Linguistics from the University of South Carolina, as well as a second M.A. in North American Literature from the University of Erlangen. He is currently a PhD candidate at the University of Erlangen and is in the graduate research training group "Literature and the Public

Sphere." In his dissertation, he investigates how recent U.S. fiction promotes collaboration, the creative arts, and focused attention amidst individualistic, illiberal, and distracting settings of twenty-first century life.

Mattered Being

Franziska Wolf (Heinrich Heine Universität Düsseldorf)

Gin a body meet a body
Flyin' through the air,
Gin a body hit a body,
Will it fly? and where? [...]

Abstract: Scottish physicist James Clerk Maxwell was not merely concerned with physics and the sciences, he also wrote poetry. In one of his most famous poems, "Rigid Body (Sings)", the speaker wonders what happens to two bodies colliding in the air. Will they continue flying? Will they deviate from their path, change directions? How does matter matter? How does matter behave *in* matter and in relation to it? Maxwell was one of the few who expressed his curiosity and understanding of the characteristics and structure of matter, its different states, both in scientific and artistic terms, but he was certainly not the only poet intrigued by the plethora of new insights and discoveries about the structure of *everything* – matter, animate and inanimate; life, nonhuman and human – that spawned in the 19th century. The atomistic hypothesis found its way from more specialized debates and expert communities into wider public discourse and the arts, stimulating new ways of conceptualizing the world and the universe on the grand scale – as well as the human and the mind on the small scale. There are, for instance, literary references to the human's "shell" (James 225) and "nucleus" (Wharton 39), its flowing and crystallizing character. It is the aim of this project to explore more comprehensively the extent to which atomistic and material notions of (human) life were probed and negotiated by late 19th and early 20th century literature as well as the forms and functions these reflections and discussions could take on and fulfil. What are the prevailing states of matter that characters "move in"? Are there gender-related differences in the representations, connotations, and meanings of respective states? Addressing questions like these, it will try to disentangle the mesh of materiality, psychology, and affect that is at the basis of such considerations.

Bio: Franziska Wolf studied Psychology and British and American Studies at the universities of Mannheim and Granada, Spain. Since October 2022 she has been a research assistant and PhD student at Heinrich Heine University Düsseldorf. Her research interests include ecocriticism, new materialism, and affect studies.

"Motor Forces of Revolt." John Berryman Reading Affect in Keats's Letters

Franz Liebster (Universität Tübingen)

Abstract: British Romanticism's resistance to categorization suggests that, according to Jerome Christensen's influential account, its "real movement of feeling" is still with us and "challenges the present state of things". The American poet John Berryman actively reckons with this Romantic legacy whilst also navigating the more anxious affective terrain of his own postmodern moment. By probing the legacy of Romanticism against this backdrop, Berryman repeatedly comes up against the limits of Romanticism's usefulness for his art. In search of a solution, he turns to the work of John Keats, particularly his famous letters. Keats's kaleidoscopic rendering of thought, experience, and emotion gives Berryman a model for a wider range of affective states to find expression in style, with clear literary potential. However, Berryman's engagement with Keats repeatedly results in acts of projection, including his rewriting of Keats's concept of negative capability as urging the poet to remain "*between faiths and doubts*" (emphasis Berryman's), an interpretation that reflects, in my view, his unwillingness to completely dispense with the promises or "faiths" of bygone literary moments.

This presentation discusses the affective consequences of John Berryman's negotiating the "faiths and doubts" of his Romantic inheritance. Through an analysis of Berryman's attribution of "malice" to John Keats, I consider one gesture of several that together produce what I call "Berryman's Keats", a product of his creative and critical interventions. I base my arguments on archival research conducted at the Upper Midwest Literary Archives in Minneapolis, with a particular emphasis on my study of Berryman's richly-annotated copy of Keats's letters. This remarkable artefact provides an invaluable account of Berryman's conception of Keatsian affect.

Bio: Franz Liebster is a PhD candidate at the University of Tübingen, writing his dissertation under the supervision of Prof. Dr. Astrid Franke. His research focuses on the poetry and criticism of the

American poet John Berryman, as well as Berryman's midcentury American peers. Liebster's dissertation joins a recent uptick in attention to Berryman's work by exploring the legacy of British Romanticism as it takes on new forms in his poetry. As an undergraduate at Trinity University in San Antonio, Liebster published his research on Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales* under the title "The Limits of Scribal Creativity: Rewriting the *Cook's Tale* in Bodley 686". He received his Master's degree in education from Loyola Marymount University in Los Angeles and teaches both English and German at the International School Hannover Region.

A Soul's Release: Elizabeth Bishop and Lauren MacIver – friendship, anxiety, and emotional correspondence

Susen Halank (University of Bamberg)

Abstract: *One Art: Letters, selected and edited* was the first published collection of Elizabeth Bishop's letters. The collection includes Bishop's letters to several friends, contemporary poets, and family members which provides easy access for scholars whose work, however, has mainly focused on the correspondence with contemporary poets (Lowell, Moore), her partner Lota Soares or her therapist. While *One Art* succeeds in illustrating the mere range of Bishop's various correspondents and includes many of her great literary letters, the edition is not nearly comprehensive – perhaps due to the fact that Robert Giroux was asked to edit the letters by Bishop's late companion Alice Methfessel whose entire correspondence (naturally?) receives no mention in the collection. What is more, the volume's implicit focus on describing Bishop's relationship with Lota restricts the collection in many ways. Combining *One Art* with new archival material reviewed this summer at Vassar College allows for a more comprehensive approach to Bishop's correspondence concerning female friendships and expressing emotions within those friendships.

Analyzing Bishop's relation to close female friends revolve around questions of emotional stability and show how both Bishop's poetic and epistolary practice are intricately interwoven concerning tone, form, and descriptive detail (Biele 92, Baldock 209) while also illustrating how emotions can guide the writing process itself. In this paper I want to focus on selected letters by Bishop to painter Loren MacIver and provide a case study that not only shows how Bishop wrote

to female friends about her daily problems, anxieties, and alcoholism, but that portrays her complicated, slow process of writing poetry in stark contrast to describing emotions in prose.

Bio: Susen Halank completed both her teaching degree and her M.A. in English and American Studies at the University of Bamberg where she is now a PhD-student and contract lecturer at the American Studies department. Her PhD-project is funded by the *Cusanuswerk* and her research interests include Dickinson studies, gender and feminism studies, genre theory, and ecocriticism.

16:30 – 18:00

Panel 5: Queering Affect: Exploring Emotional Landscapes in Queer Studies

Chair: Shiwen Xu (Leibniz Universität Hannover)

Desire and Intimacy During Doomsday: Indigiqueer & 2Spirit Apocalypses in *Love After the End* (2020)

Corina Wieser-Cox (Universität Bremen)

Abstract: The term Indigiqueer was coined by Plains-Cree filmmaker TJ Cuthand to title the Vancouver Queer Film Festival's Indigenous/Two-Spirit program in 2004 and is most popularly used by Two-Spirit author, Joshua Whitehead of the Oji-Cree Nation in his book *Full-Metal Indigiqueer* (2017). The term Indigiqueer refers to queer and/or trans* peoples of Native American and First Nations tribes, while the phrase Two-Spirit (also known as two spirit, 2S, or twospirited) was introduced in 1990 to replace the term "berdache" for self-described lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans* and queer Native individuals in Turtle Island/North America. Yet, both of these terms should not be viewed as universally accepted by all Indigenous communities in the Americas, as each individual tribe holds their own vocabulary for people who do not adhere to western gendered and heteronormative structures. Two-Spirit and Indigiqueer literature specifically focuses on how colonialism and settler-colonialism integrate western binaries of sexuality and gender and thus hinder queer and/or trans* Indigenous peoples from existing. Two-Spirit and Indigiqueer literatures are often speculative and they imagine futures that are not centered in western ideas

of sex and gender, but instead dream of new worlds in which queer and/or trans* Indigenous desire and intimacy are centered. This paper explores the intersection of apocalyptic fiction and Two-Spirit/Indigiqueer futurisms through the short story collection titled *Love After the End*, which is edited by Joshua Whitehead and contains nine short stories from various Two-Spirit authors from the North American continent. Each story speculates what an apocalypse might look like for peoples who have already suffered the apocalypse of colonialism/settler-colonialism. In doing so, this paper brings to light two major questions: "What does it mean to be Two-Spirit during an apocalypse?" and "Can we have intimacy during doomsday?" (Whitehead 10).

Bio: Corina Wieser-Cox (they/them) was born and raised on the Mexico-US border in Brownsville, Texas and is both Chicanx and a scholar of Chicanx, Borderland & Queer theory. Corina holds a BA degree from Troy University in English Literature and Creative Writing and an MA degree from the University of Bremen in English-Speaking Cultures with a specialization in postcolonial literature and culture. Their MA Thesis titled "Brujeria in the Borderlands: Portrayals of Mexican American Witchcraft in Hollywood Horror films" won the GAPS Graduate Award (Gesellschaft für Anglophone Postkoloniale Studien) in May 2021 and the Bremerstudien Preis in 2022. Corina is currently a Ph.D. student and research assistant at the University of Bremen and their doctoral dissertation, titled "We're Trans, We're Queer and We're Here" focuses primarily on the representations of transgender and queer Mexicans and Chicanx people within cinema from the past decade. Corina currently also works as a co-editor of *COPAS* (Current Objectives of Postgraduate American Studies) and the *Routledge Handbook of Indigenous Film* with Kerstin Knopf, Ernie Blackmore, and WG Pearson.

Beyond Hero and Heroine: Queering the Popular Romance Novel Protagonist

Johanna Kluger (Rheinische Friedrich-Wilhelms-Universität Bonn) (online)

Abstract: The days in which romance novels featured exclusively thin, white, heterosexual couples are long gone and the genre is more diverse than ever. Despite this development, queer romance rarely enters into discussions about the genre as a whole and scholarship continues to focus almost exclusively on heterosexual romances, and one of the main obstacles in discussing queer

and same-gender romance novels is the lack of an established terminology. "Hero" and "heroine" are intensely gendered and gender-essentialist categories that do not account for a diverse constellation of romance protagonists, although both of these figures have evolved over the course of the genre's history (Wendell and Tan, 2009, Kamblé, 2014). In order to develop a definition of the narrative functions of the romance protagonists that is applicable to and inclusive of all popular romance novels, this paper first surveys existing scholarship on the traits and functions of the romance hero and heroine from the 1980s onwards, then examines a series of queer romance novels by Cat Sebastian to explore how this gendered dynamic is adopted or challenged and how pre-existing traits and narrative elements are used in this new context.

Bio: Johanna Kluger is a research assistant in the North American Studies Program at Rheinische Friedrich-Wilhelms-Universität Bonn. After writing her Master's thesis on the changing role of the romance hero in the aftermath of the 2016 U.S. presidential election, she is now working to establish a queer narratology of the popular romance novel.

Affecting from the Margins – Politics of Trauma Disclosure in Queer Manifesto Memoirs

Laura Handl (Technische Universität Dresden)

Abstract: The manifesto is a literary form more frequently used since 2015 by academics, activists, and artists. I want to focus on a specific intersection of texts: memoir manifestos of queer activists and their use of trauma disclosure in political discourses. Michelle Bowdler's *Is Rape a Crime?* (2020) is representative of this subgenre and explores the mechanism of the anger-silencing-spiral (Bailey 114) and its effects on marginalized groups in the case of institutional indifference towards rape in the US. The book posits knowing resistant anger as productive (Bowdler 216), and other manifestos of the same subgenre by George M. Johnson (2020), Edefe Okporo (2022), and Sasha Velour (2023) use similar approaches. The authors narrate personal memories, emotions, and the meta-emotions the political reflection of trauma can produce. Exploring anger about injustices on an individual and systemic level is often presented as a blueprint for queer activism. The texts offer possibilities of identification and compassion while not shying away from the aspects of the narrative refusing to conform to respectability or acceptability politics, manifesting an activism fitted to personal experiences.

Bio: Laura Handl is a research associate (Wissenschaftliche Mitarbeiterin) at the TU Dresden in the field of American Studies. While working on a dissertation on the politics of anger in contemporary queer-feminist manifestos, her further research interests include queer-feminist media studies as well as critique.