

**30<sup>th</sup> Annual Conference of the Post-Graduate Forum of the  
German Association for American Studies  
University of Passau // December 5-7, 2019**



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**PANEL I**  
**Identity, Sexuality, and Narratology**  
(Thursday, 15:30, NK 403)  
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Transmedial Negotiations of Sexual Violence in *When They See Us*

## Florian ZITZELSBERGER (Passau)

### Closeted Narratology: Metalepsis as Queer Signifying Practice

This paper critically reviews the concept of narrative metalepsis, introduced by Gérard Genette to designate the transgression of the border between distinct narrative levels, from the perspective of queer narratology. Emanating from the transmedial adaptation and application of the phenomenon (by scholars such as Werner Wolf, Marie-Laure Ryan, Jan-Noël Thon, or Erwin Feyersinger, to just name a few), I will position metalepsis as a queer signifying practice: Looking at the relationship between metalepsis, mimesis, and heteronormativity, I propose that metaleptic occurrences constitute an exceedance of the compulsory form of narrative, which is based on linearity and heteroreference, and thus questions, clashes with, if not undermines, normative conceptualizations of narrative.

The previous narratological study of metalepsis hinges on the perpetuation of a logic based on binaries, which, considering the “ideological connection of narrative and sexuality” (Roof 7), establishes intersecting norms of gender and sexual normativity. Since a transgression of narrative levels is only ever metaleptic when these levels are internally hierarchized, the interpretation of metalepsis similarly dips into a rhetoric of the asymmetrical distribution of power, agency, and viability within the context of narrative *and* sexuality. The reductive either-or logic afforded by structuralist criticism thus attests to the “paranoid insistence with which the definitional barriers between ‘the homosexual’ (minority) and ‘the heterosexual’ (majority) are fortified” (Sedgwick 83-4). In this sense, the structuralist framework of classical narratology arises as a closet-like structure that imposes a sacrosanct heteronorm on both text and recipient, and equally impedes queer signification and identification.

By reassessing metalepsis through the intersectional lens of a postclassical, queer narratology, this paper inevitably scrutinizes notions of naturalness and normativity in narrative discourse and works against their reductive ascription to narrative in scholarly discourse. I eventually want to argue that metalepsis has always possessed the potential of being queer and that classical narratology, through its very emphasis on normativity, has straightened—or closeted—that which did not fit any compulsory form to begin with.

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#### Biographical Note

Florian Zitzelsberger studied English and German (teacher training for secondary education) at the University of Passau, Germany, where he currently teaches American literature as well as new media. His research is prompted by an interest in American popular and queer culture and focuses on self-reflexivity and metareference across media, digital communication, ecocriticism, the American film musical, and queer theory. He has published articles on contemporary film, covering hybridity in queer cinema, representations of gender and motherhood as well as theatrical remediation, alienation, and self-reflexivity (most prominently in the genre of the musical), which have, among others, appeared in *Humanities* and the *Iowa Journal of Cultural Studies*. Other publications include essays on YouTube and environmentalist metafiction. His most recent work is centered on queer narratology and examines the intersections between metareferential forms, such as metalepsis, and queer signification, which constitutes the primary focus of his PhD project.

**Selina FOLTINEK (Bayreuth)**  
**The Creative Potential of Literature:  
A Postcritical Approach to Narratives about  
Female Same-Sex Relationships**

In his essay on detrimental effects of a critique informed by social constructivism, Latour points out that “there is no greater intellectual crime than to address with the equipment of an older period the challenges of the present one” (231). Undoubtedly, the post-truth era calls for a critical reaction of humanities scholars. However, I argue that the humanities’ reaction to posttruth arguments employed by populists should not result in solely focusing on ‘hard facts’/‘scientific knowledge’ and an obsession with the hermeneutics of suspicion. Working on knowledge production in literature, I am interested in what Felski calls ‘social knowledge’ in her third chapter of *Uses of Literature* (2008) and knowledge “as a dynamic process rather than an entity” (Jobs 3).

In 2017, Christopher Castiglia stated that “[t]hese are disenchanted times in literary criticism” (1). Calling for more affirmative readings and perspectives on literature that refrain from mainly deconstructive techniques which Felski equates with contemporary doxa and paranoia (1–3), she elucidates what literature can be and how it can enrich our lives rather than what it hides. What she later called ‘postcritique’ is not to be mistaken for an acritical criticism but it seeks to shift attention to the creative potential of fiction. I would like to “avow the creative, innovative, world-making aspects of literature and criticism” (Anker and Felski 20) and make a case for literary analyses that transcend the deconstruction of heteronormative frameworks to shift attention to the queer visions provided by narratives about female samesex relationships. While ‘felt truth’ and emotions in the context of knowledge production are often stigmatized as derogatory terms due to the post-truth era impacted by Trumpian logic, I argue that ‘feeling something is true,’ such as feeling comfortable with one’s sexual identity and finding a home metaphorically, is crucial in the field of queer studies.

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#### Biographical Note

I am a research assistant in Dr. Katrin Horn’s DFG funded PostDoc-Project “The Economy and Epistemology of Gossip in late 19th and early 20th-century US-American Literature and Culture” (American Studies/Anglophone Literatures and Cultures, University of Bayreuth). I completed my first state exam at the FAU Erlangen-Nürnberg in 2018/19 and hold a B.A. in English and History. In 2015/16, I spent ten months as a Fulbright Foreign Language Teaching Assistant at Dartmouth College in Hanover, NH USA. Recently, I have started my PhD project that is tentatively titled “Knowledge Production and Negotiations of Agency in SemiAutobiographical Fiction about Female Same-Sex Relationships.” My research interests include gender and queer studies, campus narratives and elite education, knowledge production, and US-American literatures from the 19th and 20th century.

**Mascha Helene LANGE (Leipzig)**  
**“The Story That You Know...Is The Lie”:**  
**Transmedial Negotiations of Sexual Violence in *When They See Us***

Over the past two years, the #MeToo-movement’s influence on the role of gender and sexual violence in US-American society, politics, and culture remains unparalleled. Due to the movement’s ‘Hollywood moment,’ it created a particular stir in literary and (pop-)cultural circles. In the age of new media, with its distinct means of distribution and participation, this stirring interest in sexual violence in all its various forms is voiced in a distinctly transmedial manner. Not only do stories dealing with sexual violence (e.g. in TV shows) frequently transcend their original source medium, but moreover, audiences are able to access texts through various points of entry and via multiple delivery channels. This results in readers being able to actively expand texts beyond their initial scope, which, amongst others, creates complex forms of authorship. How do these transmedial developments influence depictions of sexual violence in contemporary US-American literature and culture, and to what end? In my presentation I am going to conduct a close reading of Netflix’s recent mini-series *When They See Us* (DuVernay 2019), which deals with the wrongful conviction of five male teenagers of color for the aggravated assault and rape of a woman known as the Central Park Jogger. I will show that transmedial storytelling, as exemplified in the series, presents a novel way of depicting the “most detestable crime” in the US – which seems of utmost importance in a time in which sexual violence, and narratives and depictions thereof, are regularly misused in sexist, racist, and xenophobic discourses.

#### Biographical Note

I graduated from the University of Leipzig with a Bachelor of Arts in American Studies and a Staatsexamen für Höheres Lehramt (German state examination to become a high school teacher in English and Biology) in the fall of 2018. My graduate thesis focused on “Narratives of Intersex in Contemporary US-American Literature.” The results of my graduate research were subsequently published in the 2019 issue of *aspeers*. During the fall semester of 2018/19, I worked at the American Studies Leipzig institute as a graduate teaching assistant. Since March 2019, I am a *Research Academy Leipzig* fellow, being granted the *PreDoc Award* which funds pre-doctoral research at the University of Leipzig. My dissertation project, supervised by Prof. Katja Kanzler, investigates understandings of sexual violence in contemporary US-American literature and culture with a focus on the transmediality of current narratives.

**PANEL II**  
**Transnational Dimensions of American Studies**

(Friday, 9:00, NK 403)  
Chair: Juliann Knaus (Graz)

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Chang LIU (Heidelberg)  
Tracing the Afterlife of American Musical Waste in a Global Context

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Between Post-Factual Tropes, Narrative Interventions, and Future Scripts

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Legacies of Im/Mobilization:  
The Cane Field in Edwidge Danticat, Junot Díaz, and Roxane Gay

**Chang LIU (Heidelberg)**

## **Tracing the Afterlife of American Musical Waste in a Global Context**

Starting from the 1990s, the sales of cassettes and CDs in America's music industry dramatically decreased due to the rise of internet and online downloading. Part of the unsalable copies were treated as commercial waste, punched with a cut, and ultimately exported to China to be recycled. Based on interviews with professionals from America's music industry, I will initially outline the process of recycling musical waste in the U.S. I will then move on to Chinese language sources published in music magazines from mainland China in the 1990s and 2000s. This will elaborate on how this musical waste entered China, accidentally becoming valuable, and consequently being resold. I will particularly focus on the writings of Chinese music critics Yan Jun, Qiu Dali, and Yang Bo to analyze how American musical waste is represented. Further, to identify how American musical waste is employed as a tool for identity construction, and to achieve empowerment in post-reform China. Drawing on my studies of the afterlife of American musical waste in China, I will argue that current critique of the unequal transnational distribution of waste between rich and poor nations tends to deny agency to the poor. Furthermore, how it forges a new stereotype of the poor as the environmentally underprivileged Other.

### **Biographical Note**

I received my M.A. in Intercultural Anglophone Studies from Bayreuth University, and then studied Sinology in Würzburg. I am currently working on my PhD at Heidelberg University studying the cultural work that American musical waste is doing in China. Before Germany, I lived in Beijing serving as the musical affairs officer at the French Embassy. My research interests include discard studies, porn studies, race and ethnicity.

**Chris KATZENBERG (Bochum)**

**“The Iconic Ghetto” and Postindustrial Urban Change Across the Atlantic: Between Post-Factual Tropes, Narrative Interventions, and Future Scripts**

I will discuss the role of American ghetto tropes in the transatlantic imaginary of postindustrial urbanity that emerges from ongoing cultural translation processes. I will analyze the functioning of this post-factual figure in both the narrative framing of urban development discourses and the textual interventions in these discourses that social-educational reform initiatives perform. I will argue that such organizations, like the American-inspired Ruhr-area initiative *RuhrFutur*, attempt to re-script the dominant narratives of these former urban industrial centers, which have tended to rehearse generic story lines of a troubled recovery and limited future potential. Instead, the initiatives' retellings envision the future city as a place of equity and inclusion.

*RuhrFutur*'s reform work often addresses the cities' most disadvantaged inhabitants and their segregated, dilapidated neighborhoods. Their central, if problematic, position within the dominant narrative framing of Ruhr postindustrial urbanity is in part what motivates and justifies such reforms: ghetto-like 'problem spaces' seem to have become a synecdoche for these cities as a whole. I posit that the dynamics of ethnic, raced and classed otherness and exclusion at work here may be grasped with Elijah Anderson's concept of the "iconic ghetto".

This transnationally mobile set of problematic narrative tropes contributes centrally to the discursive framing of postindustrial urban settings on both sides of the Atlantic. Hence, it also prestructures the textual interventions reform initiatives develop in response, which showcase a peculiar strategy of inversion, where sparse references to the ghetto discourses launch attempts at positive re-writings. I will analyze the ways popular media frames the urban spaces these initiatives work in, but also address how they are depicted in the *RuhrFutur* initiative's own publications. This perspective will be supplemented by the study of similar oral narratives in the everyday practices of this reform initiative, collected during ongoing qualitative field work.

### Biographical Note

Chris Katzenberg holds an M.A. in English American Studies and History from the Ruhr-University Bochum, which he completed in 2018 with a thesis on representations of Nigerian-immigrant flânerie in Teju Cole's *Open City* and Chimamanda Adichie's *Americanah*. He is a doctoral candidate in American Studies at Bochum in the University Alliance Ruhr graduate research group *City Scripts*. His project is tentatively titled "Social Change for Engaging Cities: Translating Urban 'Collective Impact' between the Rust Belt and the Ruhr". In this context, he traces the trajectories and transformations of an influential American cultural script for social inclusion in recent transatlantic urban planning and policy texts. To interrogate the script's translation into (non-textual) urban practices, he is currently conducting qualitative fieldwork with the regional reform initiative "RuhrFutur" in Essen. His research interests include Contemporary U.S. Literature, Transnationalism and Globalization, Race and Ethnicity, as well as Urban Studies.

**Natasha ANDERSON (Mainz)**

## **Outsiders Looking In: Comedians from Three Continents**

The recent rise of political humor in American late-night shows reveals how comedy serves as a platform of cross-cultural social and political critique during an age of fluid truths and ubiquitous uncertainty. These shows employ humor not only to entertain, but also to educate and to create an imagined community through shared puns, jokes, and laughter. The international point of view and satirical observations of three popular comedians expose U.S. idiosyncrasies to the American public: Trevor Noah of *The Daily Show* from South Africa, John Oliver of *Last Week Tonight with John Oliver* from the United Kingdom, and Samantha Bee of *Full Frontal* from Canada. Their witty commentary places American political events and popular culture in contrast to the wider world and parodies common stereotypes, thus defamiliarizing their audience's everyday experiences and expectations. By alternating between uncovering discrepancies in journalism and lampooning biased reporting with exaggerated reenactments, these comedians critically examine the widespread impact of declining trust in factual information in the United States. With self-deprecating humor and observational comedy, these television entertainers act as mediators between cultures and draw upon their transnational background to provide diverse topics while offering a fresh perspective of U.S. politics and society. The meshing of stand-up comedy with journalistic analysis captures live studio audiences, television viewers, and online communities alike. This widespread reception reflects the international engagement and encourages further transnational communication between viewers from across the globe. The distinctive perspective of these three comedians facilitates recursive, self-critical humor by enabling spectators to observe outsiders studying American culture and to see themselves in a new light that reconfigures hierarchies and crosses cultural borders.

### Biographical Note

Natasha Audrey Anderson is a doctoral research fellow in English Literature and Culture at the Johannes Gutenberg-University Mainz. She earned her M.A. in American Studies at the University of Mainz, received her B.A. in English and History at the University of Stuttgart, and spent a year abroad on scholarship at Marymount University in Virginia, U.S.A. She is currently working at the Department for English and Linguistics and recently represented the University of Mainz at the Institute for World Literature at Harvard University. Her research interests include transatlantic literature, narratology, migration networks, and nineteenth century transnational periodicals.

**Julia WEWIOR (Wuppertal)**  
**Conflating War and Migration:**  
**State of Exception Discourse in *The Farming of Bones***

“Tradition shows as a fatal fact,’ the Generalissimo continued, ‘that under the protection of the rivers, the enemies of peace, who are also the enemies of work and prosperity, found an ambush ..., keeping the nation in fear and menacing stability.’” (*The Farming of Bones*)

Framing migrant lives as threats to the nation, using the notion of ‘fact’ to give power to non-factual, fear-mongering and dehumanizing thought, and mobilizing and radicalizing men from a (very) low socioeconomic background, Generalissimo Trujillo’s rise to power as portrayed in Edwidge Danticat’s *The Farming of Bones* (1998) shows striking similarities to the U.S.’ current head of state’s. While none of the aforementioned strategies are ‘new’ or singular to the Dominican Republic under Trujillo or to the United States under Trump, the continuance and to a degree re-activation of the state of exception as a paradigm of government, especially in connection to migration politics, is noteworthy. Haitian migrant workers in the novel live in a state of ‘bare life’ (Agamben) where “certain subjects undergo a suspension of their ontological status as subject(s) when states of emergency are invoked” and “deprived of rights of citizenship enter ... a suspended zone” (Butler, *Precarious Life* 67). Working as cane cutters on a sugar plantation and as domestic servants, the protagonist Amabelle and her Haitian community are pertinent to the Dominican economy and society, yet are denied the rights (and protections) of citizenship. Tracing and illustrating connections between grievability and precarity, the novel anticipates Butler’s *Precarious Life* (2004) and *Frames of War* (2009) stressing a conflation of war (rhetoric and practices) and migration (politics). Trujillo’s anti-immigration stance culminates in the execution of a ‘border operation’ in October 1937 during which tens of thousands of Haitian migrant workers are captured and killed. Looking to the Caribbean and analyzing a female Haitian-American perspective, this paper seeks to further the ongoing discussion on challenges of the post-truth era in American Studies.

Sources:

Butler, Judith. *Precarious Life: The Powers of Mourning and Violence*. New York/London: Verso, 2004.  
Danticat, Edwidge. *The Farming of Bones*. London: Abacus, 1999.

### Biographical Note

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 Goethe-University Frankfurt and studied American, English and German Studies in Frankfurt, in Olomouc (Czech Republic) and, as a stipendiary of the State of Hessen, at the University of Wisconsin, Oshkosh. Her research interests include Caribbean Studies, African American Studies, Ethics and Aesthetics, Precarity, Narratology, Gender Studies, Women Writers and Postcolonial Studies.

**Sigrid THOMSEN (Wien)**  
**Legacies of Im/Mobilization:**  
**The Cane Field in Edwidge Danticat, Junot Díaz, and Roxane Gay**

In much Caribbean literature (including Caribbean diaspora literature), both the cane field and the finished product of sugar figure in multivalent, complex ways. Works such as Edwidge Danticat's 1998 novel *The Farming of Bones*, Junot Díaz's 2007 novel *The Brief Wondrous Life of Oscar Wao*, and Roxane Gay's 2011 short story collection *Ayiti* draw on the space of the cane field in order to highlight tensions and continuities between the past and the present as well as within the societies they depict. The fields represents both (forced) mobility and immobilization – enslaved Africans and later indentured laborers from Asia were brought to the cane fields to work them, and Caribbean workers continue to migrate to the fields in search of work. While the mobility *to* a cane field is therefore often a prerequisite for the work, and the work itself requires constant and painful bodily mobility, the field also fixes the workers in space. While these dimensions are both explicitly and implicitly present in Danticat, Díaz and Gay (especially in *The Farming of Bones*), the cane field and its product also serves to signify an immobilization linked to violence and persecution, as characters in *Oscar Wao* and *Ayiti* are dragged into cane fields and sugar factories to be beaten, raped and murdered. In my talk, which forms part of my dissertation, I will analyze the ways the forced im/mobilities of labor and of violence overlap in these works. I will be using the *new mobilities paradigm* (Sheller/Urry 2006) to show how one (literary) space can hold both the possibility of movement and its opposite, the im/mobilization itself always stratified, varied and historically contingent.

### Biographical Note

Sigrid Thomsen is pursuing a PhD in Comparative Literature as part of the research platform “Mobile Cultures and Societies: Interdisciplinary Studies on Transnational Formations” at the University of Vienna. For her dissertation, she is looking at cultural mobility in the diasporic Caribbean fiction of writers such as Edwidge Danticat, Jamaica Kincaid, and Junot Díaz. Sigrid got her MA in Comparative Literature (Africa/Asia) from the School of Oriental and African Studies (SOAS) at the University of London, where she wrote a master's thesis on the intersections of landscape and whiteness in contemporary South African poetry. She holds bachelor's degrees in Comparative Literature and in Philosophy from the University of Vienna and spent semesters abroad at the University of Bergen, Norway, and at the University of Chicago. Her research interests include Caribbean and South African literature, mobility studies, comics, and popular culture. She has published on the depiction of OCD in comics.

**POSTER SESSION**  
**The Many Faces of American Studies**  
(Friday, 11:30, NK 412a/b)

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Axelle GERMANAZ (Erlangen-Nürnberg)  
Imagining a White 'City upon a Hill':  
The American White Power Movement, National Myths, and the Logics of Exceptionalism

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Raja-León HAMANN (Halle-Wittenberg)  
Being and Becoming Gullah Geechee:  
Identity Movements in the Era of Post-Truth Politics

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Jana KECK (Stuttgart)  
Nineteenth-Century Digitized German-American Newspapers:  
A Digital Approach to the Study of German-American Culture

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Bethany WEBSTER-PARMENTIER (Flensburg)  
Indigenous North American Gothic: Narratives of Presence, Strength, and Survivance

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Christina WURST (Tübingen)  
Higher, Further, Faster? Implicit Controversial Discourses on Gender  
in Pop Culture Fan Spaces around *Captain Marvel* and *Star Wars*

**Axelle GERMANAZ (Erlangen-Nürnberg)**

**Imagining a White ‘City upon a Hill’: The American White Power Movement, National Myths, and the Logics of Exceptionalism**

My PhD dissertation examines the influence of American foundational myths in the reemergence of a white supremacist discourse in mainstream America. More precisely, I observe how the discursive construction of white power identities draws on national memories, on hegemonic narratives, and on foundational myths. I build my argumentation on findings from the various fields of cultural studies, sociology, political science, and history in an attempt to chronicle the diverse configurations that arose, and continue to exist in the interplay between right-wing extremism and mainstream society in America. Throughout this project, I rely on the analysis of white power cultural products (i.e music, films, literature, video games, as well as websites and social media) in order to uncover patterns related to race, nationalism, collective memory and mythology, as well as local and global pro-white racist identities.

My dissertation project is very much concerned with issues related to the ‘post-truth,’ as I try to decipher the propaganda generated and circulated by members of the American white power movement. This racist propaganda is multi-faceted, and includes blunt misinformation campaigns (with ‘fake news’), vast conspiracy theories, as well as more ‘subtle’ rewriting of history. White power members actively attempt to reconstruct and alter cultural memory through the revision, fabrication and propagation of ‘sacred’ narratives about US’s history, foundational principles, origins, and peoples. Their vision, and version, of America is ultimately exclusionist, deeply racist, and anti-democratic but powerful and resonant. Indeed, some theories have recently gained ground in more mainstream settings—even at times been relayed by the president of the United States himself<sup>1</sup>—, and, in most extreme cases, have inspired acts of extreme violence. Those conspiracy theories are more than mere online tales relayed by a few. They can have real life consequences, and are representative of broader social and cultural anxieties.

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.washingtonpost.com/politics/2019/08/12/bizarre-conspiracy-theories-trumphas-elevated/>. Accessed 28.08.2019

### Biographical Note

Axelle Germanaz received her B.A. in Foreign and Regional Languages, Literatures and Civilizations from the University of La Réunion (France), and her M.A in American Studies from Friedrich-Alexander University Erlangen-Nuremberg (FAU) with a thesis entitled “Soundtrack for the Invisible Empire: Visions of America in White Power Music.” Since 2018, she is a doctoral student at FAU, working on a project with the working title: “Imagining a White ‘City upon the Hill’: The American White Power Movement, National Mythology, and the Logics of Exceptionalism.” She has taught undergrad level classes on American populism, on white supremacy and popular culture, as well as introductions to American Studies. Her research interests include theories of race and racism, white supremacy and political extremism, as well as mythology, knowledge, ideology and discourse analysis.

**Raja-León HAMANN (Halle-Wittenberg)**  
**Being and Becoming Gullah Geechee:**  
**Identity Movements in the Era of Post-Truth Politics**

The ongoing success of right-wing populists in winning over voters may be understood as symptomatic of a crisis of liberalism in the United States. A great proportion of the population feels left behind, misunderstood, and forgotten. As a result, there is widespread mistrust not only in politics, but in everything deemed liberal, as expressed most prominently by the accusation ‘fake news’ coined towards liberal media. In his recently published book *The Once and Future Liberal* (2017) the scholar Mark Lilla argues that the increasing embrace of identity politics by the Democratic Party in the wake of the social movements of the 60s and 70s is to be seen as responsible for said crisis of liberalism. By focusing primarily on the recognition of minorities, Lilla argues, liberals failed to present the public with a unifying vision cutting across categories as race, gender, class, or sexuality. Taking as empirical reference point the ethnic revitalization movement of an African American population group called Gullah Geechee, my doctoral project strives to investigate the potentials, as well as tensions created by identity politics in the Era of Post Truth Politics, and examine the relations between the recognition of marginalized groups, and the creation of a unifying vision for society as a whole.

In my presentation I will demonstrate how, at first sight, the Gullah Geechee revitalization movement appears to focus solely on the particular concerns of Gullah Geechee people. However, as I found during my research, the (re-) construction of Gullah Geechee identity carries the great potential to provide a Pan African American identity, connecting African Americans across different regional and social identities, as well as to politically mobilize European Americans through their involvement in the struggle for recognition of Gullah Geechee people.

### Biographical Note

I have submitted my Master’s thesis on June 10, 2019, and am currently waiting for my defense in October to officially finish my studies in Social and Cultural Anthropology at the Martin-Luther-University Halle-Wittenberg. My graduate thesis titled “Gullah Geechee Identity Politics and Cultural Heritage Tourism in Charleston, South Carolina” investigated the positioning of Gullah Geechee within narratives of the past produced by the heritage and tourism industry in the Charleston area, with a particular focus on the use and experience of Gullah Geechee identity as a restorative cultural heritage and counter hegemonic narrative. My dissertation project, supervised by Prof. Olaf Zenker, builds upon my previous research and examines the role of Gullah Geechee culture and identity in broader social discourses about history, culture, race, and belonging in light of the current political climate in the United States.

**Jana KECK (Stuttgart)**

## **Nineteenth-Century Digitized German-American Newspapers: A Digital Approach to the Study of German-American Culture**

German-American newspapers flourished during the era of 19th-century mass immigration to the United States. The recent digitization of newspaper archives and the ever-growing array of tools for accessing and assessing them provide a fruitful platform to (re-)evaluate the networks through which news and concepts of German culture traveled. Aside from conveying local, national, and transnational news and information that would pertain to the lives of immigrants, native language papers functioned as powerful tools of language retention and national identity construction and preservation. So far, this rich archival primary material has only been used essentially in non-digital form for site-related and genealogical work. Cross-cultural and socio-historical representations are virtually non-existent. However, prior to copyright legislations and enforcements, texts – political, economic, scientific, religious, literary – circulated promiscuously among newspapers as editors freely reprinted materials borrowed from other venues. This project hence seeks to address the following guiding question: What texts were reprinted in the German-American press? This project shows that the German-language newspapers textualized more than battles and events. They circulated how-to columns, lists, business advice, religious affirmations, medical information, festivities' notifications, jokes and above all literature. Specifically, I will show how to develop a computational framework to extract texts, literary and non-literary, from digitized historical German-American newspaper collections. The resulting data can be considered a substantial set of enumerative bibliographies of German-American history. Due to the expansive and demotic nature of newspapers, using computational methods paired with the qualitative analysis of textual data within its historical and cultural contexts delivers insights on the dynamics of knowledge transfer about German culture to show that assimilation and continuing transnational connections are neither incompatible, nor are they binary oppositions (Levitt and Glick Schiller).

### Biographical Note

Jana Keck studied English and American Studies and Linguistics at the University of Stuttgart. Since 2017, she is a doctoral researcher at the University of Stuttgart, Department of American Literature and Culture, and works in an international Digital Humanities-research project “Oceanic Exchanges: Tracing Global Information Networks in Historic Newspaper Repositories, 1840-1914” (DFG). In her own research and teaching, she is particularly interested in German-American Literature and Culture, Periodical Studies and Digital Humanities. In her PhDproject, she uses digital corpus analysis methods to examine the construction of German identity – in the form of news, advice, vignettes, popular science, poetry, fiction, and more – through digitized 19th-century German newspapers in the United States.

**Bethany WEBSTER-PARMENTIER (Flensburg)**  
**Indigenous North American Gothic:**  
**Narratives of Presence, Strength, and Survivance**

The centrality of “spectral,” “stoic,” and “doomed” Indigenous figures in both the USA-American and Canadian gothic literature has been well documented by scholars such as Andrew Lloyd-Smith, Renée Bergland, Louis Owens, and Cynthia Sugars. Incorporating theories from fields such as Ecogothic, Indigenous Futurisms, and Postmodern Gothic, this project seeks to uncover myriad ways in which Indigenous authors have reconfigured and revised gothic motifs to counteract the myth of the vanishing Indian and confound the stereotypes of the noble savage that persist today, thus liberating the “doomed Indians” of Western gothic literature.

Michelle Burnham’s essay “Is There an Indigenous Gothic?” provides perhaps the most comprehensive, and thus necessarily cursory, overview of Indigenous gothic literature. Initially answering her titular question with a resounding “No,” Burnham continues by exploring the flexibility and malleability the gothic has displayed since its literary emergence in England in the eighteenth century. Although a “Yes” is never explicitly stated, Burnham makes clear throughout her piece that the gothic mode has taken root in Native American literature, or, perhaps, that the gothic is part of the very root of Native American storytelling (226) – a controversial notion warranting further consideration and research which this project also seeks to address by paying particular attention to works that incorporate both traditional Indigenous stories and gothic conventions.

This poster presentation aims to spark a discussion revolving around twenty-first-century Indigenous literature from North America and its interaction with gothic literary traditions in an evolution of the mode which does not evoke images of spectral or doomed Indigenous figures. Instead, these works assert the continuous, self-determined presence of Indigenous peoples, create characters who experience terror(s) and horror(s) in ways which refute stereotypical literary portrayals of “noble savages” and “doomed Indians” alike.

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Biographical Note

After completing her B.A. in German and Music at the University of Wisconsin – Eau Claire in 2011, Bethany Webster-Parmentier completed a Fulbright Teaching Assistantship in Kiel, Germany and has been living in Germany ever since. She received her M.A. from the EuropaUniversität Flensburg in 2016, after which she held a position as a senior TESOL lecturer at the Kiel University of Applied Sciences. In 2019, she returned to the Europa-Universität Flensburg, where she is currently working as a lecturer and doctoral researcher in the English and American Studies Department. Her dissertation project examines the ways in which Indigenous North American authors are reconfiguring and (re)defining gothic themes and tropes beyond American and Canadian gothic’s “doomed Indian.”

**Christina WURST (Tübingen)**

**Higher, Further, Faster? Implicit Controversial Discourses on Gender in Pop Culture Fan Spaces around *Captain Marvel* and *Star Wars***

Being a fan of popular culture has gone from a once stigmatized subculture to a widely celebrated mainstream activity. As its role in young people's lives increases, scholars and educators are embracing fan culture as a positive force that fosters community, tolerance and can help improve writing skills for learners of English as a foreign language.

While fan culture is mostly regarded as an apolitical form of personal expression or entertainment by society in general, scholars of fan studies have in contrast tried to highlight its positive influences. Accordingly, much research has particularly focused on explicit examples of fan activism intended to raise awareness of social issues. However, fan spaces on social media are highly influenced by cultural discourses and while they can teach especially young participants values such as tolerance and cooperation, they can also facilitate radical mindsets and negative behaviors like cyber-bullying or sending death threats. This "dark side" of fandom is both understudied and often distinguished from regular fan culture as "just trolling".

I on the other hand propose that these behaviors can be seen as two sides of the same coin. The thin line between fandom on social media being an educational space, a place of pure entertainment, and a "propaganda tool", can be seen in the case of the (anti-)feminist discourses surrounding the Star Wars sequel trilogy and the movie *Captain Marvel* on social networking sites like Twitter, Tumblr and Youtube. Even before their release, both movies were criticized for featuring a female protagonist and their roles were often deemed "overpowered". Additionally, for *Star Wars*, female fans often created a hostile online environment that shamed and excluded fans supportive of a relationship between the movie's protagonist and antagonist. By analyzing popular contributions to these media sites, I will be looking for the motives of and mechanisms behind these controversial gender discourses which illustrate both the complexity and hazardous potential of online fan culture.

### Biographical Note

Christina Wurst is currently starting her PhD thesis at the University of Tübingen as well as working as a teacher in training at an Allgemeinbildendes Gymnasium, after finishing both a Staatsexamen in English and Biology, as well as a Master's degree in American Studies. In her Master's thesis, Christina examined *Star Wars*' fan fiction as a tool of media criticism. In her PhD project she will – building on her previous research - focus more broadly on the intersection between fan cultures, engagement in social media and political online activism. Additionally, she will approach the topic from a pedagogical point of view, both by understanding fan spaces as a site of informal learning, as well as questioning if and how fan cultures could be taught at schools. Her other research interests include the figure of the monster in literature and visual media, as well as dystopian novels and children's cartoons.

**PANEL III**  
**Negotiating Violence, Memory, and Heroism**  
(Saturday, 9:30, NK 403)  
Chair: Gesine Wegner (TU Dresden)

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Tamara HEGER (Regensburg)  
Experience and Memory of the Flossenbuerg Concentration Camp Liberation  
from the Perspective of US Soldiers

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Rebecca RÖSSLING (Frankfurt)  
African Americans and the Racial Politics of Armed Self-Defense

*Page 21*

Lorena BICKERT (Bamberg)  
Heroes in Body Bags: Renegotiating Heroism  
in Rebecca Roanhorse's *Trail of Lightning*

**Tamara HEGER (Regensburg)**  
**Experience and Memory of the Flossenbuerg Concentration Camp**  
**Liberation from the Perspective of US Soldiers**

The paper that I would like to present in this year's Post-Graduate Forum centers in my dissertation project. This will explore the experience and memory of US soldiers liberating the Flossenbuerg Concentration Camp in April 1945. The aim of the project is twofold: On the one hand, the study seeks to provide systematic insight into what the soldiers experienced and how they remembered these events through the analysis of selected life writings. On the other hand, the investigation will trace how individual memories became collective memory. In order to do that, the analysis will ask how, when, why and by whom individual memories were made publicly available, how these memories tied into the broader (trans)-national discourse about the end of the Holocaust both in the US and Germany, and how this structured the public history of the concentration camps. In this context, the study will analyze the Flossenbuerg Concentration Camp Memorial as a mediator and shaper of memories for the present and future. Therefore, the tentative research questions are: What narratives and memories of US soldiers were made public? How and when did they become part of the public memory discourse, and how have they shaped the transnational narrative about the liberation of the Flossenbuerg Concentration Camp? My thesis is, that changing cultural and social developments both in the United States and Germany have led to the publication and discussion of very different memories about the liberation and shown changing perspectives on this event. The Concentration Camp Memorial plays a special role in this context as both a specific site of memory and an institution, which is both mediator and shaper of memory. This is due to the fact that it is both an address for veterans and their families to "give" their memories to, and an institutional actor that renegotiates memories in its educational efforts.

### Biographical Note

Tamara Heger is a research assistant in the Department of American Studies at the University of Regensburg, where she works as administrative manager of the Regensburg European American Forum (REAF) and teaches undergraduate courses in US cultural history and literature. She studied English, History, Social Studies and Education at UR and received her State Exam in 2018. Parallely, she gained experience in the field of American Studies as student research assistant from 2014 to 2018. Tamara is currently working on her PhD project about the liberation of the Flossenbuerg Concentration Camp by US-American soldiers, focusing on the experiences and memories of the soldiers who were present during and after the liberation of the camp and their connection to collective memory and (trans-)national relationships.

For her *Zulassungsarbeit* she received the *Preis der Dr. Katharina Sailer - Stiftung* on German-American contact in Grafenwöhr in 2017.

**Rebecca RÖSSLING (Frankfurt)**  
**African Americans and the Racial Politics of Armed Self-Defense**

The project explores African American men's attempts to use armed self-defense to protect themselves from police brutality in urban America during the post-civil rights era. Focusing on the 1970s and 1980s, it examines under which circumstances black men were able to claim the right to self-defense after engaging in armed confrontations with white police officers, how black and white Americans interpreted such claims, and how these interpretations shaped discussions on self-defense, black crime, and racial stereotypes during the post-civil rights era and beyond.

### Biographical Note

Rebecca Rössling is a PhD candidate at the Goethe-University Frankfurt am Main where she is currently working on her dissertation "Black Male Violence as Self-Defense in 1970s and 1980s America" as a subproject of the research project "Armed Self-Defense in Recent America: Intersectional Perspectives", grant-aided by the German Research Foundation (DFG).

**Lorena BICKERT (Bamberg)**  
**Heroes in Body Bags: Renegotiating Heroism  
in Rebecca Roanhorse's *Trail of Lightning***

Heroes in Body Bags: Renegotiating Heroism in Rebecca Roanhorse's *Trail of Lightning* This paper discusses how the indigenous "heroine" of *Trail of Lightning* (2018) by Rebecca Roanhorse (Ohkay Owingeh Pueblo) negotiates her own status as the apprentice of a Native American mythological hero and her own rejection of said role in an apocalyptic North American society where Native American tricksters and terrifying monsters appear in the aftermath of ecological disaster. The novel paints an ambivalent apocalyptic image that not only questions traditional notions of heroism but also, as a work of Indigenous Futurism, the meaning of life in a "post-Native Apocalypse" (Dillon 10). Indeed, the Anthropocene has different meanings for indigenous peoples who have already had to adapt to radical changes of their immediate environment in the past (Powys Whyte 208-209). In indigenous futurist novels, "characters who resist injustices are often imbued with traits of ancient supernatural beings" (Adamson 217), highlighting interconnections between various (non-)human agents that reflect the manifold Native American oral traditions in those works (217-218). Profoundly empowered, yet also troubled by her supernatural "clan powers" (Roanhorse 2), Maggie is torn between the expectations associated with her status as the new Monsterslayer and her selfperception as merely a "human, a five-fingered girl" (6). This paper argues that Roanhorse's novel demands a renegotiation of indigenous and non-indigenous hero figures, highlighting how Maggie's most heroic qualities arise from her challenge of stereotypical heroism in the wake of ecological disaster. As she says in the novel, "I'm no hero. I'm more of a last resort, a scorched-earth policy. I'm the person you hire when the heroes have already come home in body bags" (2).

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Biographical Note

Lorena Bickert is a Ph.D. candidate and contract lecturer at the University of Bamberg's American Studies department. Her Ph.D. project is funded by the Cusanuswerk and focuses on representations of eco-heroism in contemporary North American literature. She has taught courses on nineteenth-century American women's poetry and "Eco-Heroines in American Literature and Culture" at the University of Bamberg. She holds a teaching degree in English and Spanish and completed her master's degree in English and American Studies at the University of Bamberg with a master's thesis on "The Power Structures in *The Hunger Games*: Analyzing the Panoptic Spectacle and Counter-Spectacle."

**PANEL IV**  
**Broadcasting (in) the Post-Truth Era**

(NK 403)

Chair: Maxi Albrecht (FU Berlin)

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Manuela NEUWIRTH (Graz)

Which Truth Out Where?

Extraterrestrials as Challengers and/or Markers of Post-Democracy

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Alyn EURITT (Leipzig)

*The Flop House's* Narrative Tangents

*Page 25*

Eva Maria SCHÖRGENHUBER (Wien)

Twinkle Twinkle Little Star:

Celebrities' Children between *Retrotopia* and the Illusions of a National Future

**Manuela NEUWIRTH (Graz)**  
**Which Truth Out Where?**  
**Extraterrestrials as Challengers and/or Markers of Post-Democracy**

The central premise of *The X-Files* (Fox, 1993-2002; 2016-2018) is a global government conspiracy covering up the existence of extraterrestrials and the protagonists' quest to expose this truth and make it known to the public. The central premise of *Stargate SG-1* (SciFi, 1997-2007) is a top secret military operation which is able, through wormhole space travel, to explore the galaxy and to interact with beings from other planets.

The extraterrestrial, a staple in science fiction texts, is thus situated right at the center of the discussion of one of the most pressing philosophical and political issues of our times, of the question of publicity in democracy. Placed in a war zone between secrecy and disclosure, the alien questions established truths in more than one way: Not only does it challenge trust and confidence in the government and the authorities, the question of the existence of extraterrestrial life obliges us to doubt the most basic binaries on which we as humans have built our worldview. Either there is extraterrestrial life or there is not, either they have been to earth or they have not. As Jodi Dean points out in *Aliens in America*, there is no room for polyvalence when it comes to these beliefs. Expressing doubt about the grand narrative of human uniqueness is to run the risk of being put into a subculture of conspiracy theorists and mentally unstable abductees (Dean 11).

Yet, contemporary television turns this subcultural belief into its Truth, placing the extraterrestrial at the center of the secrecy/publicity debate. The present paper argues that, in approaching the subject from opposing viewpoints, the two series complicate moral and philosophical debates on the nature of truth itself and anticipate the post-truth era we currently find ourselves in.

### Biographical Note

Manuela Neuwirth is a recent graduate of the master's program English and American Studies at the University of Graz, Austria. She specializes in American Cultural Studies, and more precisely, American Film and Television, has spent an academic year at the University of Minnesota, and has so far presented papers at conferences in Austria, Germany, Croatia, Romania, Sweden, Turkey, and the United States. Her bachelor's thesis – "Cancer Culture: The American Way of Death in *Breaking Bad* and *The Big C*" – already reflects her research interests, which include Health and Illness Studies, Affect Theory, and the Gothic. Her M.A. thesis, entitled "Little Green Men in a Gray Area: From the Post/Modern to the Posthuman Extraterrestrial in *The X-Files*" investigates questions of Liminality and Alterity, while her PhD project is broadly situated in the fields of Suicidology, Madness Studies, and Antinatalism.

**Alyn EURITT (Leipzig)**  
***The Flop House's Narrative Tangents***

"That thing we'll never get from podcast is the notion of 'live,'" podcast editor Nick Quah tells Martin Spinelli and Lance Dann in *Podcasting: The Audio Media Revolution*, "and the thing we'll never get from podcasts is the sense of liveness or being on the ball of where we are at any given point in time" (46). In linking liveness to synchronous temporality, Quah draws on the construction of liveness in radio. Live radio generally focuses on broadcasts happening as the event unfolds with reporters learning about them and telling the public in real time (Scannell, Jeffords, Chrisell). Because the majority of podcasts are pre-recorded, Quah is right in distancing them from this concept of live. Instead of completely abandoning any claims to liveness, however, many podcasts incorporate notions developed through music ("live shows") and digital culture ("going live"). This paper's examination of the comedy movie review podcast *The Flop House* shows that, while the podcast does not make large claims to actual temporal synchronicity, its use of the improvisational tangents draws on live speech similar to Scannell's analysis of news media during the September 11th attacks. In doing so, *The Flop House* incorporates the narrative aesthetics of temporal liveness into its show. When serialized, this aesthetic temporality encourages audience engagement by positioning the podcast as an approachable ongoing project in which listeners can participate.

#### Biographical Note

Alyn Euritt is a PhD candidate studying the aesthetics of intimacy and liveness in podcasting publics at the Institute for American Studies, Universität Leipzig. After finishing her MA at the John F. Kennedy Institute for North American Studies, her work as an English teacher and Director of Studies for German Language for Refugees in Dresden sparked her current interest in the role of listening in public discourse. Alyn has also worked in a variety of academic contexts, including as a guest researcher and Fulbright English Teaching Assistant at the Université libre de Bruxelles.

**Eva Maria SCHÖRGENHUBER (Wien)**  
**Twinkle Twinkle Little Star: Celebrities' Children**  
**between *Retrotopia* and the Illusions of a National Future**

Shiloh, Chicago, and Blue Ivy are part of a large subcategory of stars which feature prominently in U.S. culture: as the offspring of their famous parent(s), these children attract a substantial amount of interest from fans and larger audiences as well as the media. For example, Kylie Jenner posted the first image of her daughter Stormi on *Instagram* which has since been among the most-liked images on the social media platform. Similarly, in 2008, Angelina Jolie and Brad Pitt sold the first photos of their twins to print magazines for a whopping 14 million U.S.-dollars. *E! Entertainment* has somewhat jokingly named this craze around celebrities' children 'celebrity-kid worship' (Finn).

This paper seeks to study the popularity and function of celebrities' children in U.S. culture by way of looking at a selection of cultural texts from a various media contexts. It will be argued that these representations can be read as "provid[ing] a logic of the national future" (Berlant 18) and can thus speak to and/or against a precarious neoliberal cultural moment. Through the 'sacralization of the child' (Zelizer), the ensuing centrality of children in U.S. society, as well as the operation of the famous offspring in the consumption-driven celebrity culture, a future-based thinking of the United States along the lines of kinship, affect, and belonging is evoked. Additionally, it will be demonstrated how illusions of intimacy established on a narrative and visual level in discourses around celebrities' children can also function as a form of escapism and 'retrotopia' (Bauman).

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### Biographical Note

Eva Maria Schörgenhuber is a PhD student at the University of Vienna, Austria where she also works as a university assistant in the field of American cultural studies. In her dissertation, she explores the intersection of celebrity culture and American studies by looking at representation of celebrities' children as forms of belonging and national future.