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# SCIENCE, CULTURE, & POSTCOLONIAL NARRATIVES

// University of Oldenburg, 13-15 May 2021

// Annual Conference  
German Association for Anglophone Postcolonial Studies (GAPS)

Carl von Ossietzky  
Universität  
Oldenburg

**GAPS**

gesellschaft für anglophone postkoloniale studien  
association for anglophone postcolonial studies

// GAPS 2021

# SCIENCE, CULTURE, & POSTCOLONIAL NARRATIVES

// Annual Conference of the  
Association for Postcolonial Studies (GAPS)

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## // Emergency contact

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## // Program Outline

All times are given in Central European Summer Time (UTC+2).

Thursday, 13 May

// 9am	<b>Conference Opening</b> <b>Room 1</b>
// 9:30 am	<b>Keynote address:</b> Warwick Anderson, University of Sydney: Between Postcolonial Histories of Science and Decolonial Science Studies <b>Room 1</b> – Chair: Karsten Levihn-Kutzler
// 10:30 am	Short break, setup phase for presenters
// 10.50 am- 12:20 pm	<b>Parallel Panels, Session 1</b> <b>1.1 Digital Narratives and Global Crises: New Perspectives on Literacy and Agency</b> <b>Room 1</b> – Chair: Caroline Kögler <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Roman Bartosch, University of Cologne: 'Distance Learning': Scaling (Digital) Narrative</li><li>• Julia Hoydis, University of Graz: Climate Change, Literacy, and Serious Games.</li><li>• Daniel Becker, University of Münster: #mystory: Hashtags, Narrative and Global Education</li></ul> <b>1.2 Science in Speculative Fiction I</b> <b>Room 2</b> – Chair: Jennifer Leetsch <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Indrani Das Gupta, University of Delhi: Worlding of Worlds: History of Assemblages in Select Postcolonial Indian Science Fiction Texts</li><li>• Christin Höne, Maastricht University: Jagadish Chandra Bose and the Anticolonial Politics of Science Fiction</li><li>• Victoria Herche &amp; David Kern, University of Cologne: Scientists and their Discoveries: A Postcolonial Reading of Ted Chiang's Speculative Short Fiction</li></ul>

### 1.3 Narratives of Anthropology

**Room 3** – Chair: Eva Bischoff

- Arunima Bhattacharya, University of Leeds: Anthropology, Ecology and the Indian Nation State: Andaman Islands in *The Miraculous True History of Nomi Ali and Glorious Boy*.
- Anna Auguscik, University of Oldenburg: Encountering Strangers in Lily King's *Euphoria*

### 1.4 Under Construction I

**Room 4** – Chair: Frank Schulze-Engler

- Guðrun í Jákupsstovu, University of Berne: Encountering Time: Understanding Deep Time Through Encounters and Interactions on the Beach
- Sebastian Jablonski, University of Potsdam: From Manifest Destiny to “Seagoing Manifest Destiny” – Pitcairn Island as a Case Study
- Narges Mirzapour, Semnan University, Iran: Homogenization from Post-Apartheid to Post-Covid19 South Africa (1994-2024): The Infinite Past in Future

// 12:20 pm Lunch Break

// 1:30 pm

**Keynote address:**

**Banu Subramaniam, University of Massachusetts Amherst:  
Decolonizing Botany: From the Herbarium to the Planetarium**

**Room 1** – Chair: Jana Gohrisch

// 2:30 pm

Short break, setup phase for presenters

// 2:50-

**Parallel Panels, Session 2**

4:20 pm

### 2.1 Imperial Knowledges

**Room 1** – Chair: Ellen Grünkemeier

- Rajani Sudan, Southern Methodist University: Mines, Minerals, Mimesis, and Memory
- Rovel Sequeira, University of Pennsylvania: Scandals of the State: Prison Architecture and the Sciences of Pederasty in Late Colonial India
- Andrew Ash, University of Alabama: How the Present Is Translated Into the Future: Bhabha, Achebe and Latour

### 2.2 Science in Speculative Fiction II: SF and Indigenous Epistemologies

**Room 2** – Chair: Alena Cicholewski

- Alessandra Boller, University of Siegen: “I’m a patented new fucking life form”- Material Practices of Knowing and Becoming in Larissa Lai’s Speculative Fiction
- Julia Gatermann, University of Hamburg: Bodies of Knowledge – Discredited Sciences and Technologies of Resistance in Larissa Lai’s *The Tiger Flu*
- Christina Slopek, Heinrich-Heine-University Düsseldorf: Specious Species Taxonomies: Porosity and Interspecies Constellations in Nalo Hopkinson’s *Midnight Robber*



### 2.3 Science, Technology, and Postcolonial Nationalisms

**Room 3** – Chair: Gigi Adair

- Lucy Gasser, University of Potsdam: Reaching for the Stars: Postcolonial 'Science', Progress and Irony
- Fabian Hempel & Krutika Patri, University of Bremen: Manu Joseph's *Serious Men* as a Subaltern Prism on Modern Science and Indian Society
- Souvik Kar, Indian Institute of Technology Hyderabad: The Empire Bombs Back: The Indian Nuclear Tests of 1998 and the curious case of *Parmanu: The Story of Pokhran* (2018)

### 2.4 Under Construction II

**Room 4** – Chair: Barbara Schmidt-Haberkamp

- Fabienne Blaser, University of Berne: Trouble in Paradise: The Beach as the Site of Disaster. Coastal Disaster Representations in Contemporary Anglophone Fiction
- Indrani Karmakar, TU Chemnitz: Mother in the Making: Commercial Surrogacy and the Politics of Motherhood in the Fictions of Two Indian Women Writers

// 4:20 pm Coffee break

// 5:30 pm **GAPS Graduate and GAPS Dissertation Award Ceremony**

**Room 1** – Master of Ceremonies: Pete Marsden

// 6:30 pm **Reading and discussion**

Petina Gappah, author of *Out of Darkness, Shining Light* and *The Book of Memory*

**Room 1** – Introduction by Magdalena Pfalzgraf

Friday, 14 May

// 9 am

**Keynote address:**

**Josie Gill, University of Bristol:**

**Black Literature and Science in the Age of Coronavirus**

**Room 1** – Chair: Anna Auguscik

// 10 am

Short break, setup phase for presenters

// 10:20 -

**Parallel Panels, Session 3**

**11:50 am**

### **3.1 Narratives of Science, Narratives of Race**

**Room 1** – Chair: Eva Ulrike Pirker

- Paula von Gleich, University of Bremen: Yaa Gyasi's *Homegoing* and the Genealogy of "black is black is black"
- Gigi Adair, Universität Bielefeld: Technologies of Race and Identity and the Social in the Globalized Caribbean
- Wolfgang Funk, University of Mainz: "They were all blondes": Intersections of Racism, Feminism and Eugenics in Mary Bradley Lane's *Mizora*

### **3.2 Science in Speculative Fiction III: Postcolonial Posthumanisms**

**Room 2** – Chair: Alessandra Boller

- Haydar Jabr Koban, Al-Ma'moun University College, Baghdad: Representations of Science: Questions of Postcolonial Biotechnology and Dehumanization in Margaret Atwood's *Oryx and Crake*
- Hasan Serkan Demir, TU Chemnitz: Post-Human Other: Kazu Ishiguro's Science Fiction Novel *Never Let Me Go*
- Paul Hamann-Rose, Goethe University Frankfurt: A New Poetics of Postcolonial Relations: Global Genetic Kinship in Amitav Ghosh's *The Calcutta Chromosome* and Zadie Smith's *White Teeth*

### **3.3 Science, Power, Knowledge, and the State**

**Room 3** – Chair: Pavan Malreddy

- Harshana Rambukwella, Open University, Sri Lanka: 'Patriotic' Science: The COVID 19 Pandemic and the Politics of Indigeneity
- Anton Kirchofer, University of Oldenburg: From the "danger of truth" to the "long truthful dance"? On Cosmopolitan Science and Cultures of Violence in Michael Ondaatje's *Anil's Ghost*

### 3.4 Under Construction III

**Room 4** – Chair: Timo Müller

- Sára Bagdi, Kassák Museum Budapest: Primitivism and Class Consciousness, the Representation of the “Other” in the Hungarian Workers' Movement
- Beatrice Falucci, University of Florence & Gianmarco Mancosu, University of Warwick: Exploring the Former Colonies: Safari (Visual) Cultures in Post-colonial Italy
- Stefanie Kemmerer, Goethe University Frankfurt: Yogascapes - The Visual Politics of Transcultural Yoga as seen on Instagram

// 11:50 am Lunch break

// 1 pm Setup phase for presenters

// 1:20 pm-  
2:20 pm **Parallel Panels, Session 4**

### 4.1 Science and Postcolonial Environments I

**Room 1** – Chair: Angela Kölling

- Dominic O'Key, University of Leeds: 'From the Other Side of Millions of Years': Narrating the Sixth Extinction
- Alexa Weik von Mossner, University of Klagenfurt: (Neo)colonial Histories and Scientific Futures in Fernando A. Flores's *Tears of the Trufflepig*

### 4.2 Negotiating Indigenous Knowledges

**Room 2** – Chair: Hanna Teichler

- Ana Carolina Torquato, Federal University of Paraná, Brazil: Scientific and Popular Healing Practices: Complementary and Antagonistic Relationships in Works by J. Guimarães Rosa, Jorge Amado, and Pepetela
- Sandra Neugärtner, University of Erfurt: Lena Meyer-Bergner's Teaching of Weaving Technology in Mexico: Attempts to Abolish Post-Colonial Rule

### 4.3 Under Construction IV

**Room 3** – Chair: Elahe Haschemi Yekani

- Rita Maricocchi, University of Münster: Intermedial Manifestations of (white) German Identity via Transnational and Postcolonial Contexts in Birgit Weyhe's *Madgermanes* and *Ich Weiß*
- Francesco Costantini, Jagiellonian University, Kraków: An Anti-Colonial and Inter-Imperial Literary Criticism of Scientism as a Post-Enlightenment Façade of Colonial Modernity

// 2:20 pm Coffee break

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**// 3 pm**

**GAPS-members assembly**

Conducted by the board of GAPS, access through separate invitation.

**// 6:30 pm**

Snack break

**// 7:30 pm**

**Reading and discussion**

Jaspreet Singh, author of *Helium* and the upcoming *Face*

**Room 1** – Introduction by Anton Kirchofer

## Saturday, 15 May

// 11 am Short break, setup phase for presenters

// 11:20 am-  
12:20 pm **Parallel Panel, Session 5**

### 5.1 Science and Postcolonial Environments II

**Room 1** – Chair: Geoffrey Rodoreda

- Virginia Richter, University of Berne: A Theatre of Decay: The Aesthetics of Zoology in Jim Crace's *Being Dead*
- Kanak Yadav, JNU New Delhi: Writing the Space of Postcolonial Environment: *Latitudes of Longing* (2018) and the Quest for the Non-Human

### 5.2 Postcolonial Narratives of/and Space Exploration

**Room 2** – Chair: Victoria Herche

- Hedley Twidle, University of Cape Town: From the Edge of Representation: Radio Astronomy, Postcolonial Memory and South Africa's Square Kilometre Array (SKA)
- Jens Temmen, Heinrich-Heine-University Düsseldorf: "My Battery is Low and It's Getting Dark": Posthuman Imaginaries of Life on Mars and the NASA Rover Missions

### 5.3 Under Construction V

**Room 3** – Chair: Kylie Crane

- Mahtab Dadkhah, University of Erfurt: Power of Media in Forming Cultural Identities of Immigrants from India and Africa to Germany
- Vahid Aghaei, University of Münster: Moral Indeterminacies and Discernments pertaining to Colonialism in Africa: From Joseph Conrad to J. G. Ballard

// 12:20 pm Lunch break

// 1:30 pm Setup phase for presenters

// 1:50 -  
2:50 pm **Parallel Panels, Session 6**

### 6.1 Forgotten Histories of Science

**Room 1** – Chair: Jens Martin Gurr

- Jennifer Leetsch, University of Würzburg: "I trust England will not forget one who nursed her sick": Nursing the Empire in *Wonderful Adventures of Mrs Seacole in Many Lands* (1857)
- Laura Zander, University of Münster: Blank Spaces and Hidden Figures – Rewriting the Gendered History of Science

## 6.2 Bodies in Crisis/Environments in Crisis

**Room 2** – Chair: Paul Hamann-Rose

- Lara Choksey, University of Exeter: Interiority after Genealogy: States of Somnambulism in Claude McKay's *Romance in Marseille*
- Rebecca Macklin, University of Leeds/University of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia: "Seeing through the end of the world": Storytelling and Environmental Crisis in the Fiction of Leanne Betasamosake Simpson

## 6.3 Science and Fiction in Postcolonial Counterfactuals

**Room 3** – Chair: Sebastian Jablonski

- Hayley G. Toth, University of Leeds: The Limits of Postcolonial Counterfactual Histories: Responses to Malorie Blackman's *Noughts & Crosses* (2001) and the BBC television adaptation *Noughts + Crosses* (2020)
- Alena Cicholewski, University of Oldenburg: Science as an Empowering/Exploiting Force in Esi Edugyan's *Washington Black* (2018)

// 2:50 pm Coffee break

// 3:30 pm **Keynote address**

**Graham Huggan, University of Leeds:**  
**"What's in a Colony? Invasion Science, Eco-Narrative and the (Mis)Uses of Alien Species."**

**Room 1** – Chair: Frank Schulze-Engler

// 4:30 pm **Concluding roundtable**

Input statements by Roman Bartosch, Julia Gatermann, Josie Gill, Graham Huggan, Rajani Sudan, Harshana Rambukwella  
Chairs: Anton Kirchhofer and Karsten Levihn-Kutzler

// 5:30 -  
6:00 pm

**Conference closing**

**Room 1**

## // Keynotes

### Warwick Anderson, University of Sydney: Between Postcolonial Histories of Science and Decolonial Science Studies

Thursday, 13 May, 9:30 am, Room 1

I want to discuss the presumed tension—which seems to me ultimately more performative than substantive—between postcolonial and decolonial approaches, between the multiplicities of borderlands and the binaries of settler colonial studies. Or the shift in emphasis from what I've called "conjugated subjectivities" to "subjugated knowledges." Or the distinction, if you like, between poststructuralist approaches and structuralist framings in colonial critique. This is the contrast that concerns me here: postcolonial and decolonial, ocean and land, beach and continent. But I'd like to attempt a reconciliation or bridging of sorts—at the risk of appearing to evade or at least displace more absolute demands. I want to argue pragmatically for the family resemblance, rather than the irrelation or autonomy, of existing postcolonial and decolonial approaches. Even so, there is clearly a need for more incisive and radical critique of attempted Indigenous effacement and imagined settler sovereignties than those postcolonial frames that tend toward the conciliatory, or merely consultative, can deliver. I would like to believe that the "postcolonial" epithet might still be retained, reoriented, and reinvigorated by drawing on radical aspects of decolonial critique, especially its refiguring of agency and authorship. I conclude with a reflection on the benefits of decolonizing, or situating, our framing of the colonial.

**Warwick Anderson** is the Janet Dora Hine Professor of Politics, Governance and Ethics in the Department of History and leader of the Politics, Governance and Ethics Theme with the Charles Perkins Centre at the University of Sydney. As an historian of science, medicine, and public health, focusing on Australasia, the Pacific, Southeast Asia, and the United States, Professor Anderson is especially interested in ideas about race, human difference, and citizenship in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. He has written programmatically on postcolonial science studies and, more generally, on science and globalisation. He is the author of *The Cultivation of Whiteness: Science, Health and Racial Destiny in Australia* (2002), *Colonial Pathologies: American Tropical Medicine, Race, and Hygiene in the Philippines* (2006), *The Collectors of Lost Souls: Turning Kuru Scientists into Whitemen* (2007) and *Intolerant Bodies: A Short History of Autoimmunity* (2014).

## **Banu Subramaniam, University of Massachusetts Amherst: Decolonizing Botany: From the Herbarium to the Planetarium**

**Thursday, 13 May, 1:30 pm, Room 1**

I draw on recent scholarship in the biological sciences, queer ecology, indigenous ecology, anti-colonial, postcolonial and feminist STS, and critical race theory to show how the foundational language, terminology, and theories of modern Botany remain grounded in the violence of its colonial pasts. While much of our literature on colonialism, slavery, and indentured servitude remain exclusively focused on the “human,” our understanding of the ideologies of the plantation can be enhanced by understanding the complex biologies of plants and animals that shaped these agricultural labor practices. The transnational circulations of the global plantation centrally included circulations of science, and technology and where humans went, their flora and fauna quickly followed. The science(s) of gender, race, class and sexuality were shaped by these global circulations. By tracking their shared histories, we develop more robust naturecultural histories of the past, as well as recover lost histories of more liberatory and sustainable models of planetarity, now critical for anti-colonial and de-colonial projects as we face new naturecultural realities due to climate change. Indeed, I argue, feminist science studies is well poised to explicate what we mean by intersectionality itself since science has been central to “scientizing” human differences as natural, biological, essential and innate. In short, feminist and queer theories need feminist science and technology studies.

**Banu Subramaniam** is Professor and Chair of Women, Gender, Sexuality Studies at the University of Massachusetts Amherst. Originally trained as an evolutionary biologist and plant scientist at the University of Madras and Duke University, Subramaniam’s pioneering research in Feminist Science Studies has made her a leader in the field. Her work explores the philosophy, history, and culture of the natural sciences and medicine as they relate to gender, race, ethnicity, and caste. She is the author of *Holy Science: The Biopolitics of Hindu Nationalism* (2019), which focuses on how science and religion have become interwoven in emergent nationalist politics and novel conceptions of modernity in India, and of *Ghost Stories for Darwin: The Science of Variation and the Politics of Diversity* (2014), the winner of the Ludwik Fleck Prize 2016. She is co-editor of *Feminist Science Studies: A New Generation* (2001), and *MEAT! A Transnational Analysis* (forthcoming). Her latest research rethinks the field and practice of botany in relation to histories of colonialism and xenophobia and explores the wide travels of scientific theories, ideas, and concepts as they relate to migration and invasive species.



## Josie Gill, University of Bristol: Black Literature and Science in the Age of Coronavirus

**Friday, 14 May, 9 am, Room 1**

It has perhaps never been clearer than now that racism in Britain is a public health issue. The last few years have revealed in public and prominent ways how the health of Black and Minority Ethnic Britons is informed by institutional and structural discrimination and inequality, leading to illness and in many cases, death. The Windrush scandal saw the withdrawal of NHS services from those wrongly labelled as non-citizens (resulting in severely delayed treatment and care), as well as high levels of stress and anxiety caused by the loss of jobs, homes, benefits and wrongful deportation. Many Black Britons labelled 'illegal immigrants' and targeted by the UK government's 'hostile environment' policy have died in their 50s and 60s. The Covid-19 pandemic has also had a disproportionate impact on Black Britons, who have been found to be four times more likely to die of Covid-19 than white people, due to living arrangements, jobs, geographical and socioeconomic factors. The global Black Lives Matter movement that saw large protests in Britain in 2020 highlighted once more a long-standing issue that the UN had confirmed in 2018; that in Britain a disproportionate number of people of African or Caribbean descent die due to 'excessive force by the state', which is the result of 'structural racism'.

How do we do literature and science studies, medical humanities, or examine science and narrative in this context? How do we read, imagine, intervene and understand the way that hostile environments and spaces – the street, the hospital, the university – shape the experience of Black Britons in ways which science and medicine are unable or unwilling to capture? Who is the 'we' I am referring to here and who is 'our' audience for this work? In this talk I will sketch out some possible responses to these questions, in dialogue with Katherine McKittrick's *Dear Science and Other Stories* (2021) and with the work of other Black thinkers and writers which asks us to carefully attend to our methodological and physiological responses to racism across disciplines.

**Josie Gill** is lecturer in Black British Writing of the 20th and 21st Centuries at the University of Bristol, where she is also Director of the Centre for Black Humanities. Her research focuses on contemporary literature, in particular on Black British, Caribbean and African American writing. Her book *Biofictions: Race, Genetics and the Contemporary Novel* (2020) explores how the contemporary novel has drawn upon and intervened in debates about race in late 20th and 21st-century genetic science. From 2016-2017 she was Principal Investigator of the AHRC funded project 'Literary Archaeology': Exploring the Lived Environment of the Slave, which brought together archaeological scientists, creative writers, and literary scholars to develop a new, interdisciplinary approach to the study of the lives of enslaved people. She is also interested in how the current movement to decolonise universities might impact upon interdisciplinarity research and collaboration.

**Graham Huggan, University of Leeds:  
“What’s in a Colony? Invasion Science, Eco-Narrative and the (Mis)Uses  
of Alien Species.”**

**Saturday, 15 May, 3:30 pm, Room 1**

What the word ‘colony’ means depends on from whose perspective it is seen as well as who has the power to control the definition. It is thus perhaps unsurprising that the two standard geopolitical definitions of ‘colony’ thus work in entirely different directions: as a country controlled by a foreign power, or as a group of people living in a foreign place. Biological definitions of ‘colony’ are less ostensibly political: individual organisms living together in close association, often though not necessarily in large numbers: colonies of bacteria, for example, or colonies of insects, which ‘colonize’ larger organisms in their turn.

Such definitions, of course, are more political than they seem, or are at least susceptible to political uses, one prominent example being the ongoing debate over ‘native’ versus ‘invasive’ species, in which the latter are often seen simultaneously as ‘alien’ even when there is abundant evidence, in some cases, that they are not. The study of invasive species has generated a field of its own, invasion science, which deals with the spread and impact – nearly always seen as negative – of alien species and considers ways of managing their numbers. Needless to say, biology to culture transfers, which are perilous at the best of times, are particularly dangerous here, and the field of invasion science has been seen, not always fairly, as implicitly or even inherently xenophobic in the context of our turbulent political times.

This paper considers what a postcolonial/ecocritical approach might have to add to a debate that is all too often grossly simplified or polarized, looking in particular at the function of eco-narrative as a template for empathy and/or cooperation across the species divide. Two examples will be drawn upon to illustrate this. The first, Germaine Greer’s 2013 memoir *White Beech*, tells the story of Greer’s attempt to restore a plot of land in the southern Queensland rainforest by adjusting the ratio of ‘native’ to ‘invasive’ species; the second is my own account of some recent trials and travails surrounding a de facto ‘native invasive’ species, the spruce bark beetle, which has colonized large areas of old-growth European forests, with destructive consequences in some cases but generally mixed ecological results. In both examples, I will move between ‘scientific’ and ‘popular’ understandings of the human/non-human interactions involved, also asking what is to be gained – but also risked – by seeing biological processes in cultural terms.

**Graham Huggan** teaches in the School of English at the University of Leeds. His research straddles three fields: postcolonial studies, tourism studies, and environmental studies, with each of these fields being brought together in his most recent book, *Colonialism, Culture, Whale: The Cetacean Quartet* (Bloomsbury, 2018). The author or co-author of fifteen books over a thirty-year career, he is currently working on a full-length co-written study of modern British nature writing and a monograph on ecocritical approaches to Australian literature.

## // Panel presentations

### 1.1 Digital Narratives and Global Crises: New Perspectives on Literacy and Agency

Thursday, 13 May, 10:50 am, Room 1

**Roman Bartosch, University of Cologne:**  
**'Distance Learning': Scaling (Digital) Narrative**

Drawing on critiques in postcolonial and Anthropocene studies that challenge the tendency in ecological thinking to uncritically speak of humanity as a single, geological agent, the presentation interrogates educational frameworks (such as global citizenship education) and teaching objectives (such as climate or science literacy) in light of the concept of scalar literacy and transcultural competence. These concepts, it will be argued, are more capable of making productive use of inevitable tensions and incommensurabilities inherent to narratives of global crises. In a second argumentative step, scalar literacy and transcultural competence will be discussed with regard to their utility when it comes to forms of digital narrative and practices of remote education. With a particular focus on (the limits of) agency in this context, it probes into the idea that a reconceptualisation of 'distant reading' (Moretti; Harpham) potentially supports ways of 'distance learning' and scrutinises forms of collaboration and cooperation afforded by 'creative climate communications' (Boykoff) in participatory media ecologies. It will show that while educational modelling in sustainability contexts has so far focused on individual agency, educational theory and practice need to rethink the role and potential of collaboration and cooperation as crucial factors for flourishing and societal transformation.

**Roman Bartosch** is Associate Professor of Teaching Anglophone Literatures and Cultures at the University of Cologne, Germany. He is author and editor of more than 10 books and over 50 scholarly articles and is interested in environmental and transcultural learning, inclusive education, and the intersections of literature pedagogy and literary theory. Recent publications include *Interkulturelles Lernen mit Literatur: Fokus Nigeria* (as co-editor; Klett Kallmeyer 2020) and, as editor, *Cultivating Sustainability in Language and Literature Pedagogy: Steps to an Educational Ecology* (Routledge, 2021).

**Julia Hoydis, University of Graz:**  
**Climate Change, Literacy, and Serious Games.**

The freely available multi-platform videogame *The Climate Trail* (2019) is one of few serious games to date that deals with climate change. Modelled on the extremely popular *The Oregon Trail* (1974) and set in a post-apocalyptic America which has become uninhabitable after "the burns", the game's only agenda is to educate, shock and thus 'move' readers into action, rather than be a commercial success. Game

designer and producer William D. Volk hopes that it will be played by “millions” in schools everywhere (Volk 2020). Players have to undergo a precarious journey on foot from Atlanta to Canada and survive through heat waves, food and water shortages, and other life-threatening dangers. Drawing on theories of risk and climate change communication as well as on experiences of teaching the game to students at university, this paper argues that *The Climate Trail* epitomizes three main challenges: (1) capturing viewer’s attention on climate change as a ‘crisis without end’, (2) finding the balance between “info-dumping” and fostering science literacy, and (3) allowing for the experience of immersion and agency in carefully scripted disaster scenarios. Finally, the paper critically interrogates the proclaimed potential of ‘cli-fi’ (still predominantly produced by and for the Global North) and what interactive digital narratives might have to offer in this context.

**Julia Hoydis** is Professor of English Literature and Culture at the University of Graz. Among her recent book publications are *Risk and the English Novel. From Defoe to McEwan* (De Gruyter, 2019), *Representations of Science in Twenty-First Century Fiction: Human and Temporal Connectivities* (as co-editor; Palgrave, 2019) and *Teaching the Posthuman* (as co-editor; Winter, 2019), as well as articles on contemporary drama and climate change. Her main research interests include literature and science, gender studies, and postcolonial studies. She is general editor of *ANGLISTIK: International Journal of English Studies*.

**Daniel Becker, University of Münster:**

### **#mystory: Hashtags, Narrative and Global Education**

#blacklivesmatter, #metoo – In recent years, hashtags have become an omnipresent phenomenon in the global social media sphere and in the everyday lives of many ‘digital natives’. As such, they prominently influence the way teenagers and young adults interact in the digital realm today: Far from just being pragmatic tools for indexing conversations, hashtags shape current communicative practices (cf. La Rocca 2020) and play a pivotal role in establishing online identities and communities (cf. Zappavigna 2011). With these important functions in mind, the presentation will take a closer look at the potentials hashtags hold for global education. It will be argued that hashtags (and the tweets and posts they subsume) inherently connect the local and the global and thus provide learners with the opportunity to become aware of the interdependencies between their own actions and contemporary global crises. Consequently, working with hashtags in the classroom holds the potential to foster learners’ global agency: as will be shown, hashtags establish highly fluid practices of narrative collaboration in which the act of sharing one’s personal story becomes an active contribution to negotiating global issues on a collective level. In hashtags, in other words, micro- and macro-narratives intersect and in this dynamic narrative sphere, individuals become authors who partake in the on-going process of writing and re-writing global discourses.

**Daniel Becker** is a TEFL-lecturer and Post-Doc researcher at the University of Münster. His research interests include digital media, inter- and transcultural learning and global education. He is currently working on a monograph on digital game-based learning in the foreign language classroom and has published articles on various topics related to teaching literature and culture in English language education.

## 1.2 Science in Speculative Fiction I

Thursday, 13 May, 10:50 am, Room 2

**Indrani Das Gupta, University of Delhi:**

### **Worlding of Worlds: History of Assemblages in Select Postcolonial Indian Science Fiction Texts**

The very idea of postcolonial science fiction ushers us into a contested and unstable terrain. How do we define this moniker of postcolonial science fiction? Underpinned by imperialist and colonialist political structures and mechanisms, is this category of literature to be understood as produced by erstwhile colonized states? Or, any science fiction narratives that seeks to reveal the imperialist logic of exploitation and silencing of the other, is to be included in this paradigmatic classification? This paper seeks to examine this categorization of postcolonial science fiction in relation to science fiction narratives written by Indian authors. In so doing, I seek to intervene in the processes of history and also, to extend the paradigm of postcolonialism to negotiate the contemporary times of multinational capitalism and globalization. The key critical term in this 'thought-experiment' of intervention that shall be used in this paper is the concept of worlding. Positioning selected texts like Amitav Ghosh's *The Calcutta Chromosome: A Novel of Fevers, Delirium and Discovery* (1995), Vandana Singh's short stories "With Fate Conspire" and "LifePod" from her anthology *Ambiguity Machines and Other Stories* (2019) in the confrontation of worlds and worlding to engage in the production of knowledge of humanness and what might transpire if we exceed the limits of our assumptions underpinned by global capitalist networks, this paper seeks to encounter the contradictions that riddle our understanding of the world inscribed by Euro-American perspective. To elucidate a political representability as underscored by the operations of worlding, these stories refute the teleological pretensions of Euro-American history to "generate new subject positions, fields of agency, and possibilities of action" (West-Pavlov 2018).

**Indrani Das Gupta** is presently working as Assistant Professor (Ad-Hoc) in the Department of English, Maharaja Agrasen College, University of Delhi. Currently pursuing her Ph.D. from the Department of English, Jamia Millia Islamia, New Delhi, India in the area of Indian Science Fiction, she is engaged in the examination of the interface of science fictionality, paradigms of nation-state inflected with postmodernist and postcolonialist approaches, and the social variables that constitute the ontological human existence. Her areas of specialization are Science Fiction, Detective literature, Postmodern British Literature, Modern British Literature, Victorian Literature, British Romantic Literature, Popular Culture, and Sports Culture. She has published prolifically in international journals and books.

**Christin Höne, Maastricht University:**

### **Jagadish Chandra Bose and the Anticolonial Politics of Science Fiction**

In postcolonial studies there are two main strands of argument concerning the legacies and effects of cultural imperialism on science fiction as a literary genre. The first strand presents a critical reading of Western science fiction of the nineteenth and early twentieth century as a genre that is deeply embedded

in the discourses and ideologies of colonialism and imperialism (Rieder, 2008; Kerslake, 2007). The second strand presents a critical reading of the writing back of postcolonial authors, stressing the subversive elements of both science and fiction and their power to undermine dominant narratives of cultural imperialism and (neo)colonialism (Chambers, 2003; Hoagland and Sarwal, 2010; Langer, 2011; Smith, 2012; Varughese, 2013 and 2017). In this paper I focus on a piece of colonial-era science fiction from a non-Western writer: Jagadish Chandra Bose's short story "Runaway Cyclone". First published in 1896 and republished in an extended version by the author in 1921, I analyse how Bose's story combines elements of science fiction and magical realism. I then argue that Bose turns the narrative tropes of Western science fiction on their head and thus undermines Western science as an epistemological tool of imperial control. Reading "Runaway Cyclone" alongside Bose's non-fictional accounts on science in colonised India will then reveal a philosophy of science that embraces Western science and Indian philosophy, which in turn can be read as a politics of science that is in effect anticolonial.

**Christin Höne** is Assistant Professor in Literary Studies at Maastricht University. Her research spans modern and contemporary anglophone literature, with a particular focus on postcolonial literature, sound studies, word and music studies, and queer theory. Her current work focuses on the depictions of sound and sound technology in colonial literature and on the history of the radio in the context of imperial India. Christin is the author of the book *Music and Identity in Postcolonial British South-Asian Literature* (Routledge, 2015). Forthcoming publications include the co-edited volume *Asian Sound Cultures* (Routledge) and a co-edited special journal issue on the role of the senses in late colonial India (*South Asia: Journal of South Asian Studies*). Christin has also published essays on soundscapes in postcolonial literature, the Bengali polymath Jagadis Chandra Bose, Bengali science fiction, the colonial politics of science, and music in contemporary literature.

### **Victoria Herche & David Kern, University of Cologne: Scientists and their Discoveries: A Postcolonial Reading of Ted Chiang's Speculative Short Fiction**

"What is the role of human scientists in an age when the frontiers of scientific inquiry have moved beyond the comprehension of humans?" (Chiang, "The Evolution of Human Science" 239). Thus asking, Chiang highlights the centrality of science and the significant position of scientists not only in a time of crisis, anxiety and insecurity, but in an age of scientific advance at a pace that already threatens to exceed the human scale and human sense-making capacities. Current moments of crisis (COVID-19, anthropogenic climate change) foreground hope and trust in the scientist as a 21st century saviour figure, yet also challenge this narrative and highlight the ambiguous cultural position of scientists viewed, just as often, with suspicion and distrust. Furthermore, scientific discovery as the last 'uncharted frontier' is historically grounded in the colonial fantasy of advancement, progress and development. Against this background, imaginations of and literary engagements with scientific discovery specifically invite postcolonial analysis and critique. In addressing issues such as (language) appropriation, exploration, scarcity of resources in his stories, Ted Chiang's speculative short fiction can be read as a literary interrogation of the cultural and political significance of scientific discovery. By referring to selected short stories, it will be explored how Ted Chiang's stories offer literary thought-experiments about human/more-than human scientists and their findings, reframing scientific discovery as circular, oftentimes paradoxical, and productively ambiguous against dominant cultural narratives of linear, teleological advance and utility in the globalized

marketplace. Thereby we discuss how fiction is a critical tool to destabilize dominant cultural tropes and enables speculation about new theorizations of forms and functions of scientists and their discoveries.

**Victoria Herche** is a post-doctoral researcher and lecturer in the English Department at the University of Cologne and assistant editor of *Anglistik: International Journal of English Studies*. Since 2017 she has served as Public Relations Coordinator at the Centre for Australian Studies (CAS) in Cologne. After studying Theatre, Film and TV Studies, English Studies and German Studies at the University of Cologne, she concluded a PhD project on "The Adolescent Country – Re-Imagining Youth and Coming of Age in Contemporary Australian Film" to be published in Universitätsverlag Winter (2021). Her research interests and publications include Australian Literature and Film, Indigenous Studies, Post-Colonial Theory, Migration and Refugee Studies, Popular Culture and Psychoanalytic Theory.

**David Kern** is a researcher, PhD candidate and lecturer in the English Department at the University of Cologne, Germany. Since 2017, David serves as teaching coordinator at the Centre for Australian Studies Cologne. David's interdisciplinary research in literary activism and other forms of cultural production as intervention focuses on Indigenous writing from Australia and North America. Within this focus field, David has published and taught courses on theater and performance, memorial cultures, commemorative practices, and environmental concerns. His central research interests and theoretical groundings are in postcolonial theory, ecocriticism, theories and criticisms of the Anthropocene and decolonization methodologies. David is currently completing his PhD project on Indigenous climate fiction (CliFi) from Australia and Canada.

### 1.3 Narratives of Anthropology

Thursday, 13 May, 10:50 am, Room 3

**Arunima Bhattacharya, University of Leeds:**

**Anthropology, Ecology and the Indian Nation State: Andaman Islands in *The Miraculous True History of Nomi Ali* and *Glorious Boy*.**

This paper aims to read two contemporary novels, *The Miraculous True History of Nomi Ali* (2019) by Uzma Aslam Khan and *Glorious Boy* (2020) by Aimee Liu set in the Andaman Islands, on the Bay of Bengal, in relation to the official anthropological documentation and interpretation of the complex socio-ecology of these islands, particularly in the context of the Second World War and the post-independence consolidation of the Indian nation state. The Andaman Islands has a unique history of sustaining ancient forest tribes in their native environment secluded and yet in close proximity of the penal colonies set up by the British government and migrant communities from the eastern coast of India, Bengal and Burma. It also was invaded and occupied by Japanese forces during the Second World War and finally handed over to the Indian government post-independence. Both these novels are set against the turbulent history of the islands in the 1940's that sets this place up as a distinctive piece in the puzzle of setting up the Indian nation state. This paper investigates how the island communities speak to mainland India through an archipelago politics of existence and seclusion in contrast of the connectedness of mainland mobility networks. Khan's novel delves into the complex history of the Indian Ocean rim across South East Asia focusing on the British penal colony and its anthropological and ecological impact on the indigenous tribal population as well as the migrant colonies set up to support the business of empire. Aimee Liu's

*Glorious Boy* uses direct reference to anthropological methods of documenting experience of a different way of life, a protagonist compares it to 'entering a time capsule'. The novel form offers the exploration of the themes of community, migration and rehabilitation related to the British Empire and the later nation building processes through the spectrum of differently placed narratives. The 1940's was an exceptional decade in Indian sub-continental politics. It is during this decade that the Anthropological Survey of India evolved into a stand-alone body from its early roots in the Indian Zoological Survey, the Indian Museum and the Asiatic Society of Bengal (then the Royal Asiatic Society) in 1945. Anthropology was used as a tool to 'scientifically' document and interpret the Indian subcontinent. This institutional inquiry and knowledge assimilation were extended into classifying the local environment and relations between human settlements and the ecologies that sustained or confronted them. The Anthropological Survey as its website states, contributed "to bring in harmony among the people, separated by the clashing interests of ethnic, cultural, and religious affiliations and to devise ways and means for the aboriginal and disadvantaged social groups to suitably adjust to the changing conditions in and outside the country, without jeopardizing their ways of life". It was an institution dedicated to document the People of India through technologies of assimilating the country's diversity within categories that broadly contributed to the idea of a consolidated Indian nation state. It is of singular importance that these assimilative processes were dealing with the territorially rooted communities like the tribes of the Andaman Islands as well as the different migrant settlements initiated by the global reach of the British imperial forces as well as mass migrations like the ones triggered by the partition of India into two independent nation states.

**Dr. Arunima Bhattacharya** is a postdoctoral research assistant on an AHRC funded project titled, "The Other from Within: Indian Anthropologists and the Birth of a Nation at the School of History" at the University of Leeds. This project involves academics from the Universities of Leeds, Edinburgh and Manchester and focuses on the contributions made by Indian anthropologists to global networks of research that aspired towards the reinvention of anthropology as a cosmopolitan, transnational discipline, and contributed to the process of decolonisation in India. She has completed her PhD in English Literature from the University of Leeds and was the Anniversary Fellow at the Institute of Advanced Studies in Humanities (IASH) at the University of Edinburgh where she continues as a Visiting Research Scholar. Her forthcoming publications include a chapter titled, "Producing the Colonial Capital: Calcutta in Handbooks" in *Other Capitals of the Nineteenth Century* that she is co-editing with Dr. Richard Hibbit and Prof. Laura Scuriatti from the Palgrave Literary Urban Series and a chapter titled "Everyday Objects and Conversations Experiencing 'Self' in the Transnational Space" in *Asian Women, Identity and Migration: Experiences of Transnational Women of Indian Origin/Heritage* edited by Nish Belford and Reshmi Lahiri-Roy from Routledge.

### **Anna Auguscik, University of Oldenburg: Encountering Strangers in Lily King's *Euphoria***

In Lily King's *Euphoria* (2014), a fictionalized trio of anthropologists embark on a professional journey to research the Tam, a native tribe on the Sepik River in New Guinea in the early 1930s. Inspired by the triangular love relationship between the historical anthropologists Margaret Mead, Reo Fortune, and Gregory Bateson, King's protagonists – Nell, Fen and Bankson – allegorically represent the young discipline and its ethnographic turn. While their fieldwork promises to bear out much anticipated results, at the core of their journey as much as at the centre of novel's interest lies the eponymous euphoric encounter with another ethnographer's manuscript. Told predominantly in retrospect by the English



anthropologist Andrew Bankson, the narrative thus exhibits several layers of encounters with constructed strangers: with one's past self, with one another, as well as with the Other. In line with the dual meaning of the title of this paper and in order to draw attention to the novel's reflective but ultimately repeating position on the asymmetrical subject/object relations between professional or knowing strangers and the unknowing other, I read *Euphoria* through the lens of Sara Ahmed's critique of ethnography as a technique of knowing that produces and destroys its research object as well as one that transforms the stranger "from an ontological lack to an epistemic privilege" (2000).

**Anna Auguscik** teaches English Literature at the University of Oldenburg, where she received her PhD with a study of the Booker Prize. As a Fiction Meets Science research fellow, she has worked on the media reception of contemporary science novels, the scientist protagonist, and global dimensions of science in fiction. As a Junior Fellow at the Hanse-Wissenschaftskolleg, she is working on a project on "scientific expedition narratives" in contemporary fiction. Her research focuses on the novel in the literary marketplace and the relationship between literature and science.

## 1.4 Under Construction I

**Thursday, 13 May, 10:50 am, Room 4**

**Guðrun í Jákupsstovu, University of Berne:**

### **Encountering Time: Understanding Deep Time Through Encounters and Interactions on the Beach**

The ubiquity of the climate crisis has made clear that making sense of its many-formed challenges is not a matter purely reserved for the hard sciences to grapple with. While technical solutions are needed, the crisis also calls for a review of the structural narratives that have shaped our worldview through ages of empire, colonialism, and technological advancements. These are questions fit for the humanities to address. One of the challenges is that of understanding time in relation to climate change. As scholars and thinkers across the sciences and the humanities are adopting the term "the Anthropocene", it forces a focus on geologic time that contextualises human history into a planetary history (Chakrabarty 2019; 2018). This project proposes that literary representations of the area between land and sea – beaches and coastlines – work as ideal sites for contextualising geologic time, and thus mobilize more tangible understandings of time and future in relation to climate change. The texts examined all feature engagements or encounters that take place in littoral spaces, that all, in their own way, spur tangible considerations on deep time and future. For example, through actions of beachcombing and engaging with objects found on the beach, such as fossils, flints, and plastic waste, notions of both deep past and unsettling "visions of eternity" (Pétursdóttir 2019; Boetzkes & Pendakis 2013) are invoked. Furthermore, encounters with the nonhuman in littoral spaces highlight parallel lines of earthly existence that bring forward a more-than-human history within a planetary scale. Drawing on theories of ecocriticism, postcolonialism, and new materialism, this project seeks to ask whether these engagements and encounters at the beach can mobilize tangible understandings of time in relation to climate change, and highlight questions of how empire, colonialism, and capitalism are continually intertwined and present in the age of the Anthropocene.

**Guðrun í Jákupsstovu** was in 2020 elected as one of the two doctoral students for the SNSF-funded project *The Beach in the Long Twentieth Century*, supervised by Prof. Dr. Virginia Richter and PD Dr. Ursula Kluwick. Prior to this, she obtained an MA in Comparative Cultural Analysis at the University of Amsterdam, and a BA in Comparative Literature at the University of Iceland. Her PhD project is a study of human, nonhuman and material encounters and connections on the site of the beach in contemporary literature. Her work draws on ecocriticism, new materialism and thoughts on deep time and the Anthropocene.

**Sebastian Jablonski, University of Potsdam:**

### **From Manifest Destiny to “Seagoing Manifest Destiny” – Pitcairn Island as a Case Study**

In this work in progress chapter of my PhD project, I look at the establishment of US American imperial power on Pitcairn Island at the end of the nineteenth century. Specifically, I analyze the Seventh-day Adventist missionary actions described in the *Story of Pitcairn Island* written by Pitcairn Islander Rosalind Young, which resulted in the conversion of the islanders and acquisition of a firm foothold of US American influence in the South Pacific. I am looking at the missionary presence on Pitcairn through the lens of Roberts’ and Stephens’ Archipelagic American Studies and Kaplan’s “disembodiment of the [US] American nationalism” (Kaplan 96), which allows me to describe the missionaries’ operations as the extension of the US American archipelago of influence in the South Pacific. I argue that the Adventists’ actions, though a forgotten chapter of US American imperialism, are coinciding with the attempts at establishing US rule over the Kingdom of Hawai’i and thus are exemplifying Richard Drinnon’s “seagoing Manifest Destiny” (Drinnon 129). Pitcairn becomes a new and useful outpost/island of the US American empire represented by its Adventist envoys aiming at converting the indigenous peoples of the South Pacific. By situating the island within the framework of the archipelago of influence, I trace these actions as stemming from perpetual westward extensions of the US American empire fundamental for its power projection and world hegemony. In Pitcairn I analyze an example of this empire building in the South Pacific obscured by the more glaring example in the North Pacific – Hawai’i.

**Sebastian Jablonski** has earned degrees in Teaching English from the University of Warsaw and Anglophone Modernities in Literature and Culture from the University of Potsdam, for which he received a DAAD stipend. His research interests include ludology, archipelagic studies, and the history of nineteenth century Pacific colonization. The present abstract is a work in progress towards his PhD project titled *Pitcairn Island as the Literary Intersection of British and American Nineteenth Century Pacific Colonial Interests*.

### **Narges Mirzapour, Semnan University, Iran: Homogenization from Post-Apartheid to Post-Covid19 South Africa (1994-2024): The Infinite Past in Future**

African literary studies have proven to be a fast-growing subfield of postcolonial studies, one of the largest emerging disciplines in cultural and literary studies over the last thirty years. The collapse of the apartheid regime and the coming to power of Nelson Mandela and the African National Congress is a key event in recent world history. The central issue of my research proposal is the analyze of post-apartheid south Africa in three contexts, namely beaches, language and education, and the literary narratives of post-apartheid to post-covid19 era, so as to investigate whether, in reality, there is a change in condition of south African black people or not. By the investigation of post-apartheid beaches (case study is Cape

Town), this research comes to know that although it is a place of holidays and happiness for whites, it is still a place which reminds one of colonial violence and dispossession for blacks, of the past (pre-apartheid) and its continuation into the present(post-apartheid). Then, the focus is on education policy in post-apartheid South Africa, and the problem of using mother tongue at school, funding, and curriculum. The last but not the least goes to more relevant issues of literary studies and focuses on analyzing some selected novels which are written after 1994. The post-apartheid literary works I will address in my research emphasize how those excluded from full rights and the protections of society based on race, class, gender, species, and so on continue to experience violence in contemporary South African life. To sum up, the last chapter of my PhD thesis is going to survey post-covid19 social inequality in South Africa, which can be compared and contrasted to post-apartheid Africa. Given the current turn of events all over the world, my project meets the needs to focus much more on how the color of skin determines the health parts of lives. To conclude, my research project aims to provide new insight into the post-apartheid area, to depict that the social inequality and exploitation are still prevalent in South Africa, in comparison with the post-COVID-19 era of South Africa.

**Narges Mirzapour** is an M.A graduate of English Language and Literature from Semnan University, Iran. Her research interests include cultural studies and the relationship between humanities and social sciences in general and postcolonial-feminism studies, identity crisis, migrant literature, and gender studies in particular. Currently, she is writing a research proposal in hope of finding a PhD position in Germany. Her work has recently focused on the power of media and language in forming cultural identities of Iranian women immigrant writers.

## 2.1 Imperial Knowledges

**Thursday, 13 May, 2:50 pm, Room 1**

**Rajani Sudan, Southern Methodist University:  
Mines, Minerals, Mimesis, and Memory**

I will address the relationship between transnational electronic technology and its contemporary mining practices to an early modern moment when mining and technology coincided with such force that it altered the landscape of global economy. Much of the language generated by transnational corporations celebrates electronic technology as a “greener” system for exchanging knowledge. I claim that this language duplicates the language of earlier colonial and imperial resource extractions and knowledge exchanges. I examine four themes in this linguistic nexus: extraction, inflation, ecology, and work. Eighteenth-century Britain fantasized about inexhaustible troves of bullion in the Americas in spite of the fact that scarcity, not abundance, creates value. Ideologies of scarcity and abundance led to technological development and managerial reorganization, established a new expertise of extraction, promoted the fiction of wealth in excess of labor, and displaced an aristocratic ethos onto a putatively sustainable venture capitalist economy. In the face of Spain’s command of New World bullion—pieces of eight, fashioned from bullion mined in their holdings in New Spain and Peru, were the first example of global currency—Britain created the South Sea Company that gambled on the false reports of limitless troves of gold and silver, and that eventually collapsed as a bubble. Imperial ideologies of mining and its language of scarcity and abundance—for example, lode, extraction, and work—also define global electronic technology, particularly computers and other forms of wireless exchange that by circulating knowledge

and wealth, including Bitcoin, also create it. Rare earth minerals, for example, are in fact quite abundant on earth and in every computer, as one can learn by Googling the term. But they are difficult to isolate, used in minimal amounts, and are thus rare, controlled by a few nations and corporations at great human and environmental cost. Notions of scarce and abundant minerals, vital to wireless technologies are largely responsible for the many civil wars waged in Africa and labor abuses in Asia, much as were gold, diamonds, and oil in past colonial settings. While we think the ecological solutions to global problems like climate change rest in more and better digital and computer technology just as earlier societies believed that more gold would solve their problems, our technology comes out of the earth with all the material and ecological implications of the past.

**Rajani Sudan** holds a PhD from Cornell University and is now professor of English at Dedman College, SMU. Trained as a romanticist, her work focusses on the global encounters of the first British Empire. Her first book, *Fair Exotics: Xenophobic Subjects in English Literature* traces the simultaneous fascination with and fear of foreign people, a twin sensibility that underpinned Romantic subjectivity. Her second book, *The Alchemy of Empire: Abject Materials and the Technologies of Colonialism*, examines the non-European origins of that quintessential European era, the Enlightenment. Currently, she is working on her third book, *The Dirt in the Machine: A Place History of the Internet*.

**Rovel Sequeira, University of Pennsylvania:**

### **Scandals of the State: Prison Architecture and the Sciences of Pederasty in Late Colonial India**

Testifying before the Indian Jails Committee in 1919, the medical officer John Mulvany stunned the colonial administration by accusing the Inspector-General of Bengal Prisons of coercing him to end his research on sodomy/pederasty in Calcutta's jails since "it was a subject about which the Government desired to know nothing." Because Mulvany's "investigations had made him extremely unpopular and his life had been attempted more than once," he seemingly desisted, while secretly continuing his "experiments" at the New Alipore Central Jail which he designed in 1913. By 1919, he publicly exposed the scandal, showcasing intercepted love-letters between prisoners as exemplary evidence for prison pederasty's ubiquity. Taking this previously unstudied scandal as a provocation, I examine the early-20th-century Indian prison as a colonial sexological laboratory, arguing that it grounded a spatially-governed sexual science tied to the science of confinement. I will show, first, that Mulvany's experiments on subaltern sexual deviants helped reconstitute the architecture of the prisons he administered. Instrumentalizing racialized criminological theories about Indian prisoners' affinity for sociability over privacy, he isolated sodomites in cellular confinement instead of in association wards to correct, not cure, their deviance. Second, I will show how Mulvany's investigations shifted from foregrounding anatomical observation to documenting prisoners' voices through intercepting their letters, but paradoxically, negated the individuality of his subjects—provoking assaults on him by his resistant subjects. Instead of localizing sodomy as the interiorized truth of the individual prisoner's self, his experiments helped shift the imagination of pederasty/sodomy from repeated criminality to a moral/cultural notion of habitual excess. Finally, I will document how the state prevented the circulation of Mulvany's studies, anticipating outcry about exposing Indian political prisoners to sexual abuse. The state's coding of Mulvany's studies as unscientific, even as it prevented it from circulating, continued to enable its disciplinary and repressive exercises of power.

**Rovel Sequeira** is a doctoral candidate in English, with an affiliation in the Gender, Sexuality, and Women's Studies Program at the University of Pennsylvania. He was a Harry Ransom Center Dissertation Research Fellow in 2019 and is currently a Mellon/ACLS Dissertation Completion Fellow. He is completing his dissertation project on the colonial histories of sexual science and literary forms in turn-of-the-20th century India. His interests include the global genealogies of queer politics, the history of science, and literary modernisms in the post/colony. His work on the now-defunct HIV/AIDS/Sex Museum, Antarang, in India for sex workers has appeared in Routledge's *Museums, Sexuality and Gender Activisms* reader. A further article on the nascent genre of hijra autobiographies and global/Indian NGO activism is forthcoming in *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society* in 2021.

### **Andrew Ash, University of Alabama: How the Present Is Translated Into the Future: Bhabha, Achebe and Latour**

My presentation will show that there is a significant and previously unremarked parallelism between the theory of cultural hybridity as developed in the writings of Homi K. Bhabha and Chinua Achebe, and Bruno Latour's description of how new scientific theory comes into being, and I will argue that this parallelism has significant consequences for philosophy, political theory and literary studies generally. The presentation has three main parts: I will first demonstrate that Bhabha's description of what happens broadly at the intersection of heterogeneous cultures is remarkably similar to Achebe's description of how he understands his role as a writer negotiating a future out of his dual African and British colonial past. In each case, random elements of two disparate cultures are conjoined to create something entirely new: what Bhabha calls the "third space," and what Achebe envisions as a postcolonial African culture that moves beyond the either/or of pre-colonial tradition or colonial rupture. Each of these views is predicated on the idea that what happens at the intersection of culture is the translation of non-congruent concepts in two disparate cultures into a third language of a new culture. I will then show that in the field of science and technology studies, Bruno Latour's concept of how new scientific theory is developed is likewise based on the idea of heterogeneous elements brought together to form a new conceptual unity. In language strikingly similar to that of Bhabha and Achebe, Latour argues that new scientific practice in the laboratory brings something new into the world: the construction, out of disparate elements having no prior connection with each other, of new objects of scientific theory embodied in unprecedented language and cultural practice. Lastly, I will show that a similar idea of the combination of disparate elements informs the poetics of twentieth century poets T.S. Eliot, Wallace Stevens and Hart Crane, as well as work in post-critical literary theory by John Hollander, Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick and Virginia Jackson. In short, new poetry is made in much the same way as culture and science generally. I will conclude by arguing that these parallel theories provide the basis for a unified, interdisciplinary understanding of how new language and culture come into being. I will briefly discuss certain broad implications of this view for philosophy, political theory and literary criticism.

**Andrew Ash** is a PhD student in English Literature at the University of Alabama. His research focus is poetry, poetics and the theory of reading.

## 2.2 Science in Speculative Fiction II: SF and Indigenous Epistemologies

Thursday, 13 May, 2:50 pm, Room 2

Alessandra Boller, University of Siegen:

### “I’m a patented new fucking life form”- Material Practices of Knowing and Becoming in Larissa Lai’s Speculative Fiction

Employing a new materialist approach, my proposed talk reads storytelling and experimenting as material practices and discursive performances that imbue reality with meaning and thus have tangible effects on discourses and practices in a material-semiotic world. Hence, instead of adhering to Anthropocene discourse, which is informed by western grand narratives and the paradigm of modernity with its ideas of progress and of knowledge production as being effected by neutral scientific research, I follow Karen Barad, who regards knowing as a matter of responsiveness and intra-acting, an ongoing performance of the world that always involves diverse practices. On this basis, I argue that speculative fiction narratives incorporate the potential to contribute to epistemological reconfigurings and thus re-worlding by imagining a form of knowing that entangles culture and bio-scientific technologies. Read through a new materialist lens, such narratives challenge and transcend the optimistic eco-modernist mentality of Anthropocene discourse and experiment with ideas of how to re(al)locate agency, dissolving boundary-making practices that produce grievable and agential subjects on the one hand, and exploitable, ‘bare’ lives on the other. I will approach Larissa Lai’s speculative fiction, particularly her novel *Salt Fish Girl*, as narratives that engender a reflection on the trajectories of neo-/bio-colonialism and on knowledge-making practices that are neither neutral nor independent from discursive practices. Despite its bleak scenario, which centres on the impact of capitalist and neo-/bio-colonialist discourse and practice on lives produced as not sufficiently human, the novel points towards u(s)topian possibilities of re-worlding, providing strategies for narrating non-anthropocentric and non-Eurocentric realities. By foregrounding material practices of knowing and becoming, it joins commonly separated discourses in a speculative fiction contact zone and thereby imagines how a collaboration of the disenfranchised tells big-enough, sympoietic stories of de-colonisation.

**Dr. Alessandra Boller** is the author of *Rethinking ‘the Human’ in Dystopian Times* (2017) as well as co-editor of *Dystopia, Science Fiction, Post-Apocalypse: Classics – New Tendencies – Model Interpretations* (2016) and *Canadian Ecologies Beyond Environmentalism – Culture, Media, Art, Ethnicities* (2020). She is currently working as a researcher and lecturer at the University of Siegen, Germany. Her research interests include ecocriticism, biotechnology and bioethics, post-colonial narratives, dystopian narratives, gender studies and feminism, Irish and British short fiction. She has published articles and book chapters on speculative fiction, dystopian novels and drama, and contemporary Irish literature. She is currently working on a project tentatively titled “‘New Narratives’: Feminism, Posthumanism and Speculative Fiction” and on a study that analyses the intertwined developments and dynamics of an emerging Irish literary market, nationalist discourses and the beginnings of the Irish short story in the 1820s and 30s.

**Julia Gatermann, University of Hamburg:  
Bodies of Knowledge – Discredited Sciences and Technologies of Resistance in  
Larissa Lai's *The Tiger Flu***

The hegemonic discourse of Western science, supposedly neutral and value free, has increasingly come under scrutiny – not only in academia by interdisciplinary fields such as postcolonial science and technology studies but also in a larger public through cultural artifacts that open up the topic to a wider societal negotiation. In my contribution, I analyze how Lai's novel *The Tiger Flu* (2018) critically engages with (neo-)colonial oppression and a science discourse instrumentalized to aid in this process. In her dystopian world, the reign of Western science, blinded by notions of its own exceptionalism and superiority and too fraught with neoliberal capitalist interests, has come to an end. In order to survive in her dystopian world, rendered inhospitable by climate change, scarcity, and a global pandemic called the tiger flu that has brought humanity close to extinction, adaptability becomes key, and new and dynamic solutions are needed. These solutions, the novel suggests, can be found in alternative, indigenous knowledge traditions that, by creatively adapting Western science and technology to its own, more holistic approach, can make life sustainable again. Lai unsettles and upends the pervasive trope of techno-Orientalism in her novel and employs it to suggest creative postcolonial processes of a syncretization of different knowledge traditions and transgressive ways to re-think human identity as the way towards a more equal and egalitarian future. What is striking here is that a successful resistance against neo-colonial oppression seems to require a profound transformation, a hybridity that Lai envisions on a level deeper than the skin, a transcendence of the human as we know it which is closely tied to alternative (scientific) knowledge traditions.

**Julia Gatermann** is a PhD candidate in American Studies at the University of Hamburg where she is currently writing her dissertation with the working title "Representations of Fluid Sexuality and Gender Identity in Contemporary American Culture." She works as a researcher at the University of Bremen for the interdisciplinary research project "Fiction Meets Science II" with the subproject "Science in Postcolonial Speculative Fiction: Nature/Politics/Economies Re-imagined." From its inception in 2010 to 2020, she served as a member on the board of the Gesellschaft für Fantastikforschung (German research association for the fantastic in the arts).

**Christina Slopek, Heinrich-Heine-University Düsseldorf:  
Specious Species Taxonomies: Porosity and Interspecies Constellations in Nalo  
Hopkinson's *Midnight Robber***

Cogito ergo sum, 17th century French philosopher Descartes famously proclaimed. By anchoring being in thinking, he placed emphasis on sentience and reason. Reason became one of the central pillars of Western science (cf. Stengers 1993, 21). As a consequence, the thrust of Western notions of science devalued non-Western systems of meaning-making or sciences (and continues to do so) (cf. 24). Furthermore, the emphasis on narrowly defined sentience as a criterion of being contributes greatly to anthropocentrism (cf. Oppermann and Iovino 2017, 12). Especially in the last few decades, theorists have questioned the Cartesian legacy. To name but a few: Haraway's cyborg, "a hybrid of machine and organism" (1985, 65), serves as a foil for more parity in an ideal world, undoing distinctions between organic and digital being(s) in its stride. In the same vein, Haraway's later "oddkin" (2016, 2) as a rally cry for interspecies connections and Derrida's revision of the animal as category (cf. 2006, 8) demand greater

recognition of other(ed) species. Nalo Hopkinson's Afrofuturist novel *Midnight Robber* (2000) is a stellar example of postcolonial science fiction which imagines such productively unconventional connections between "humans and other animals" (Wolfe 2013) as well as between humans and digital entities. I argue that the ties that develop between species in tandem with the novel's cyborg characters showcase the "porosity" (Stein 2017, 140) of boundaries between forms of being and thus revise anthropocentrism from a postcolonial perspective, affirming non-Eurocentric and non-anthropocentric forms of knowing the world. The novel's entanglements of the human and the more-than-human powerfully deconstruct the otherness of animals, incorporating interspecies connections within the frame of porosity. Moreover, in *Midnight Robber*, one of the more-than-human species takes on the role of the colonized (cf. Langer 2011, 67). Therefore, the novel's negotiation of species taxonomies is indissolubly tied to postcolonial criticism.

**Christina Slopek** has recently finished her master's program at Heinrich Heine University Düsseldorf with a thesis on queerness and porosity in contemporary transcultural novels. She is a soon-to-be postgraduate assistant and PhD student in the department of Anglophone Studies and Literary Translation at HHU Düsseldorf, where she is currently employed as a graduate assistant and lecturer. Prominent among her research interests are postcolonial, queer and trauma studies. At the moment, she is teaching a bachelor seminar on non-human influences in anglophone fiction and co-authoring an article on psychiatry in the anglophone novel.

## 2.3 Science, Technology, and Postcolonial Nationalisms

**Thursday, 13 May, 2:50 pm, Room 3**

**Lucy Gasser, University of Potsdam:**

### **Reaching for the Stars: Postcolonial 'Science', Progress and Irony**

Scholars have long acknowledged the imbrication of scientific discourse with the violence of colonialism (Mudimbe 1991). The emergence of science fiction is similarly interwoven with such discourses, and embedded in histories of imperialist expansionism (Rieder 2004). Narratives of progress are a significant feature of the confluence of colonialism and science fiction. Scientific discourse enabled the construction of the colonial Other as primitive and in need of the "progress" (scientific and otherwise) brought by colonisers, serving the violent erasure of Indigenous epistemologies rendered untenable by the civilising mission's will to exclusivity. An investment in progress (often technological) is also crucial to the envisioning of futures and alternative presents common to science fiction narratives. The linearity of these progress narratives produces a particular temporality. In science fiction narratives, the present is often rendered as the past of a prefigured future. In the figuration of traditional colonial anthropology, the colonised Other's present is the coloniser's past. In 1964, anticolonial struggle fighter Edward Mukuka Nkoloso was the self-appointed head of the Zambia National Academy of Science, Space Research and Philosophy's space programme. Zambia's space programme, much-ridiculed at the time, is an ambivalent phenomenon, refracted in contemporary newspaper reports, later photo and video installations, and most recently in Namwali Serpell's *The Old Drift* (2019). In contrast to the colonial-racist framing of many early responses to it, the space programme can also be read as canny instrumentalisation by Zambians of the "science" taught by colonisers, in an anticolonial feint mobilised to mimic a desire to participate in a prescriptive trajectory of progress – deemed out of their league – while in fact animated in the name of a



different “progressive” goal. In this paper, I consider the Zambian space programme at the nexus of scientific discourse, narratives of progress, and irony.

**Lucy Gasser** is lecturer in Anglophone literatures at the University of Potsdam. She was a doctoral fellow with the Research Training Group Minor Cosmopolitanisms from 2016 to 2019, and a visiting researcher at Delhi University in 2017. She completed her undergraduate and master’s degrees at the University of Cape Town, South Africa. Lucy has published on world literature, South-South relations, and postcolonial perspectives on the Cold War, and is co-founder of pocolit.com, a bilingual platform for postcolonial literatures. Her book *East and South: Mapping Other Europes* is forthcoming with Routledge in July 2021.

**Fabian Hempel, University of Bremen/Bundeswehr University Munich & Krutika**

**Patri, University of Bremen:**

**Manu Joseph's *Serious Men* as a Subaltern Prism on Modern Science and Indian Society**

In our presentation we propose an intersectional reading of Manu Joseph’s *Serious Men* to explore the relationship between modern science and contemporary Indian Society. Cast in the realist aesthetics of modern Dalit literature, we consider the novel as a critical narrative representation of the institution of science in India that allows to rethink the multi-layered role of science in postcolonial settings, especially with regard to the cultural understanding of the autonomy of science and against the standard account of science as a pure social force that triggers and sustains the social development of societies in the Global South. The novel reflects, among other aspects, on the Janus-faced impact of the institutionalization of science in modern India from a subaltern perspective. In that regard, Joseph’s story about the co-dependency of a lower-class, Dalit assistant and an upper-class, Brahmin director of a fundamental research institute in Mumbai offers two interpretative angles: 1. A hegemonic position of collision avoidance as indigenous forces re-direct the organization of science to preserve/entrench the traditional social order. 2. A subaltern position that attempts to break the wheel of conservative and contemporary social stratification as characters excluded from institutional positions of power exercise their agency to manipulate the political strife within their workplace. In the first reading, the autonomy of science degrades into social irresponsibility; in the second, the autonomy of science is used, for right or for wrong, as a weapon against multiple structures of oppression. Based on both angles, the novel sheds new light on the conventional view of an autonomous science as a self-evident component of the “package” of (apparently postcolonial) modernities.

**Fabian Hempel** is a sociological research fellow at the University of the Armed Forces Munich and a PhD student in Sociology at the University of Bremen. A graduate in Modern South Asian Studies with a focus on Science Studies from Humboldt University of Berlin, his dissertation project examines the cultural differences in the conceptions of the autonomy of science. Both are associated with the Fiction Meets Science research program that explores sociocultural and literary aspects of novels and other forms of storytelling about science, paying particular attention to narratives that reflect the global dimensions and diverse regional contexts of science.

**Krutika Patri** is a doctoral researcher in English Studies at the University of Bremen. Her master’s was acquired in European Studies with an area focus of European Literature and Culture from Manipal

University, India. Her PhD project concentrates on the multimodal representation of the 'genius' scientist in television serials.

**Souvik Kar, Indian Institute of Technology Hyderabad:  
The Empire Bombs Back: The Indian Nuclear Tests of 1998 and the curious case of  
*Parmanu: The Story of Pokhran* (2018)**

Few technologies lend themselves to visual imagination as much as nuclear weapons. Nuclear testing, during the Cold War, concretized the idea of the mushroom cloud as an icon of technocratic mastery, correspondingly translated into political capital in Western cinema as Joyce A. Evans (1998) showed. While nuclear weapons have been celebrated as part of Indian postcolonial recovery, Raminder Kaur (2013) showed that the usual formula for depicting nuclear issues in Indian cinema has been nuclear terrorism and the Indian state's successful countering of such. Otherwise expansive, this analysis requires to be updated with respect to renewed cultural interest in India, (in the wake of the return to power of the right-wing Hindu nationalist Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), who had originally overseen the 1998 tests) about a different nuclear theme-nuclear tests. I will argue that the Bollywood movie *Parmanu: The Story of Pokhran* (2018), dramatizing the 1998 Pokhran-II nuclear tests, stages a new direction for Indian nuclear culture in its historiographic, avowedly nationalist exercise, locating the bomb as a valorized object at the heart of its project of "bombing back to the empire", in a postcolonial game of evading (and thereby defeating) American satellite surveillance (and non-proliferation coercion). *Parmanu's* showcasing of the intriguing entanglements of the discourses of family, Hindu mythology and postcolonial science with the cultural discourse of the Bomb call for critical attention to the gaps and fissures that mark these entanglements and the way they disintegrate under tensions generated by the Bomb. Decolonizing what is still a largely US, Europe and Japan-centric nuclear criticism, my paper will also thus critically analyse the way the movie occludes the Indian state's internalization of a "nuclear neocolonialism", with respect to both local narratives of ecological disruption and radiation poisoning (such as of the Bishnoi tribes indigenous to the area of the tests) and other critical cinematic depictions of the tests (such as Anand Patwardhan's documentary *Jung aur Aman (War and Peace, 2002)*).

**Souvik Kar** is a PhD Scholar in the Discipline of English, Department of Liberal Arts, at Indian Institute of Technology Hyderabad, India. He writes and performs his poetry, and is interested in nuclear studies, apocalyptic literature and postcolonial Indian science fiction.

## 2.4 Under Construction II

**Thursday, 13 May, 2:50 pm, Room 4**

**Fabienne Blaser, University of Berne:  
Trouble in Paradise: The Beach as the Site of Disaster. Coastal Disaster  
Representations in Contemporary Anglophone Fiction**

Current disaster research in the humanities has largely ignored the significance of the coast even though these areas are disproportionately affected by disasters and are inhabited by half the earth's population (Gillis 2012, 1). While many scholars include what I would call coastal disaster representations (e.g. Rigby 2020; Rastogi 2020; O'Loughlin 2015), they do so from a cause-related point of view, as examples of one

kind of “natural” disaster (e.g. flood, tsunami). Contrarily, I propose “coastal disaster” as a category that allows us to categorise and analyse literary disaster representations differently, namely from a spatial perspective. Such an approach allows for a more fluid definition of disaster, which emphasises connections rather than separations. Drawing on theories of ecocriticism, disaster studies and postcolonial studies, I aim to focus on the multiple meanings and effects the coastal setting has on postcolonial disaster narratives. The coast is prone to many different disasters: particularly in the Global South, oil spills, tsunamis, cyclones and flooding affect communities repeatedly. Often, these disasters interconnect, making it hard to disentangle “natural” or “human” causes. The examined texts underline the multi-layered impact and long-lasting consequences of disasters. The categorisation into a presupposed normality (“before”) and a return to everyday life (“after”) is questioned: pre-existing vulnerabilities blur the lines of the beginning of the disaster, while grief and ongoing destruction question the disaster’s end. By using recurring places to reconcile the timelines of “before” and “after”, disaster narratives depict disaster as a process rather than a rupture, as entangled rather than isolated. Thus, focusing on coastal disaster representations is an opportunity to address intersecting vulnerabilities, and expand and question extant disaster definitions.

Since August 2020, **Fabienne Blaser** is a PhD student and Directors’ Assistant at the University of Bern. She was selected as one of two doctoral students to be part of the SNSF-funded project *The Beach in the Long Twentieth Century*, under the supervision of Prof. Dr. Virginia Richter and PD Dr. Ursula Kluwick. Fabienne Blaser is working on her dissertation, which examines representations of coastal disaster in contemporary anglophone literature and is methodologically situated at the intersection of disaster studies, ecocriticism and littoral studies. She previously completed her MA in English at the University of Bern. Her research interests are contemporary anglophone literature, postcolonial literatures, ecocriticism, disaster studies, blue humanities, the beach in literature and spatial studies.

**Indrani Karmakar, TU Chemnitz:**

### **Mother in the Making: Commercial Surrogacy and the Politics of Motherhood in the Fictions of Two Indian Women Writers**

A contested terrain within feminist discourse, motherhood has garnered wide critical attention lately, owing to the flourishing of Artificial Reproductive Technology (ART). On the one hand liberal, pro-choice discourse advocates for surrogacy on the basis of choice and agency, and on the other hand the feminist ‘ethnographic approach’ brings to the fore the often-bject lived experiences of surrogate mothers of the Global South. This paper considers this increasingly contentious concern through the lens of fiction by two contemporary Indian women writers, Kishwar Desai and Meera Syal. As such, through their fictions, the paper investigates how the politics of motherhood shapes and is reshaped by ART in the context of a staggeringly unequal, class-and-caste-ridden India. While Desai’s novel, *Origins of Love* (2013) uses the generic conventions of a crime thriller to focus intensely on uncovering the complex web of criminality surrounding commercial surrogacy in India, Meera Syal’s *The House of Hidden Mothers* (2015) comes closer to domestic fiction in its delineation of ageing, female body and the reconfigured colonizer/colonized relationship in the surrogacy industry. Both the novels present many of the pressing concerns which accompany such a booming and exploitative industry operating within a capitalist market, while also excavating the affective aspects of individual choices. Drawing on such feminist thinkers as Banu Subramanian and Alison Bailey, the paper first examines the issues raised in the novels in the light of the feminist debates around commercial surrogacy. Second, I explore the ways in which the fictions illustrate

a contingent nature of agency in relation to motherhood and the appropriation of the maternal body. The paper concludes with the argument that the literary representations of surrogacy suggest a constructedness of notions of motherhood, an idea that has profound and ambivalent implications in the Indian context.

**Dr Indrani Karmakar** has recently joined Chemnitz University of Technology as an Alexander von Humboldt Postdoctoral Fellow. Her research project focuses on non-normative mothering modes in South Asian women's writing. Her research interests include postcolonial literature; motherhood; gender and sexuality; migration and diaspora. She is the social media editor of the *Journal of Commonwealth Literature*.

### 3.1 Narratives of Science, Narratives of Race

Friday, 14 May, 10:20 am, Room 1

Paula von Gleich, University of Bremen:

#### Yaa Gyasi's *Homegoing* and the Genealogy of "black is black is black"

The debut novel *Homegoing* (2016) by Ghanaian American writer Yaa Gyasi follows six generations of Ghanaian and African American descendants of two half-sisters born to an Asante woman named Maame in the territory of today's Ghana in the eighteenth century. While one of the sisters and her descendants remain in West Africa, the other is captured, shipped to North America, and enslaved. The two family branches reunite when the African American descendant Marcus and the Ghanaian descendant and second-generation US immigrant Marjorie meet in the late twentieth-century United States. Covering three centuries and two family branches across the Atlantic, the historical novel reflects genealogies of Blackness through the trope of the family and its perpetual quest for escape, refuge, homegoing, and homemaking in the face of enslavement, (post)colonialism, migration, imprisonment, and poverty on both sides of the Atlantic. *Homegoing* brings together discourses around slavery and recent migration across the Atlantic between Africa south of the Sahara and the United States in the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries that until recently have been received "as two distinct stories" and together challenge "expected ways of narrating both America and Africa" (Goyal, *Runaway Genres* chap. 5). Due to this complex transnational and diasporic disposition, *Homegoing* negotiates past and present concepts of Blackness and the anti-blackness that both African Americans and Black migrants face without distinction in the United States and elsewhere (cf. Sexton, "People-of-Color Blindness" 53). Drawing on recent Afro-pessimist and Black feminist critical interventions, this paper analyzes how *Homegoing* rethinks these concepts in the "afterlife of slavery" (Hartman, *Lose Your Mother* 6). As Marjorie is told: "Here, in this country [the US], it doesn't matter where you came from first to the white people running things. You're here now, and here black is black is black" (Gyasi 273).

**Paula von Gleich** is a researcher and lecturer of North American Literature at the department of Linguistics and Literary Studies, University of Bremen, Germany. She is executive director of the Bremen Institute of Canada and Québec Studies and co-editor of the journal *Current Objectives of Postgraduate American Studies*. In 2020, von Gleich submitted her dissertation "The Black Border and Fugitive Narration in Black American Literature" which analyzes concepts of fugitivity and captivity in Black North American narratives and Black feminist and Afro-pessimist theory. A past recipient of a Bridge scholarship (U of

Bremen 2014) and a doctoral fellowship (Evangelisches Studienwerk 2015-2017), she also managed the office of the Association for Canadian Studies in German-Speaking Countries (2017-2019) and was visiting scholar in residence at the Barnard Center for Research on Women at Barnard College and the Institute for Research on Women, Gender and Sexuality at Columbia University in fall 2016.

**Gigi Adair, Universität Bielefeld:**

### **Technologies of Race and Identity and the Social in the Globalized Caribbean**

This paper examines the way in which two contemporary Caribbean writers, Earl Lovelace and Robert Antoni, draw upon the colonial history and (neo)colonial concepts of technology to interrogate race, identity, culture and literature in the globalized, neoimperialist present of the Caribbean. In his 2011 novel *Is Just a Movie*, Earl Lovelace offers a bitter satire of neoliberal and neoimperialist “development” politics and the promise of technology as a cure for history and as inaugurating its end. In contrast to such imported high tech “solutions” to Trinidad’s social and economic problems, the novel offers a utopian vision of carnival as a technology of personal, cultural and social transformation and thus as an engine of futurity. Robert Antoni’s work has offered an increasingly complicated interrogation of race and Caribbean identity, suspicious of calls for a transcendent or redemptive hybridity (Smith). This has taken place via a succession of technological innovations and interventions in the traditional literary and printed form of the novel, from mirrored or breakable plastic inserts in printed books to the companion website created for his 2013 novel *As Flies to Whatless Boys*. This historical novel of technological utopianism and colonial settlement (about the inventor John Adolphus Etzler and the Tropical Emigration Society) has commonly been described as a multimedia hybrid or a hypertext (Matas). In Antoni’s own view, however, the purpose of the website is to enable access to additional texts “without interrupting the flow of the narrative” (120-21). That is, digital technologies are employed to enable non-linear reading practices whilst also preserving access to a traditional literary aesthetic. This draws attention to the West Indian novel as itself a key technology of race and identity in the Caribbean, and demands a critical appraisal of the place and use of this technology to imagine Caribbean futures in a world of globalized culture.

**Gigi Adair** is a junior professor at the University of Bielefeld who specializes in Caribbean, African and British literature, postcolonial studies and gender studies. Her first book, *Kinship Across the Black Atlantic: writing diaspora relations*, was published by Liverpool University Press in 2019. In addition to her interest in technology, subjectivity and the social, she is currently working on migration literature, time and futurity.

**Wolfgang Funk, University of Mainz:**

### **“They were all blondes”: Intersections of Racism, Feminism and Eugenics in Mary Bradley Lane’s *Mizora***

In my paper I will examine intersection of race and gender in a largely and unjustifiably neglected text – Mary Bradley Lane’s *Mizora: A Prophecy* (1881), a novel often labelled as a ‘feminist utopia’, for example in the edited version published in 2000 by Syracuse UP. As I will argue in my paper, however, this feminist utopian phantasy, which chronicles the travel of the protagonist Vera Zarovitch to a country devoid of men and entirely based on matriarchal structures, is enabled by a concomitant glorification of racial purity, meaning in this case, that all Mizoran women are equally tall, blonde and blue-eyed. I will first set the scene for my reading of *Mizora* by outlining the scientific debates which are reflected in the novel, debates which ultimately can be traced back to Darwin’s paradigm-changing theory of adaptation through natural

selection. With reference to contemporary writers such as Eliza Burt Gamble, Francis Swiney and Charlotte Perkins Gilman (whose novel *Herland* clearly shows the influence of *Mizora*), I will demonstrate how Darwin's ideas – or, to be more precise, certain readings of them – facilitated biological claims for female superiority, a proto-feminist dream which ostensibly finds its fulfilment in the all-female society of *Mizora*. At the same time, however, the notion of biological evolution as 'survival of the fittest' (H. Spencer) also expediated notions of an inter-racial struggle for existence, which, in the name of spreading civilization, not only sought to justify British colonial expansion but also eventually laid the foundation for the idea that procreation should only be allowed to individuals or groups that could be said to bring humanity as a whole closer to its presumed perfection. In the light of these seemingly disparate but ultimately inextricable scientific discourses and availing myself of Angelique Richardson's concept of 'eugenic feminism' (2001), I will read *Mizora* as a utopian thought experiment which gives evidence of both the promise for social and political change inherent in Darwinian evolution but also of the concomitant racism and threat to differentiation that potentially accompany such changes.

**Dr. Wolfgang Funk** is currently Assistant Professor (Wissenschaftlicher Mitarbeiter) at Johannes Gutenberg-Universität Mainz. He studied English, German and History at Universität Regensburg and has taught at Regensburg, Hanover and Leipzig. He is currently working on a post-doc project on late Victorian women poets and their use of evolutionary imagery. His other current research interests include the New Formalism, the representation of artificial intelligence, questions of authenticity in contemporary fiction as well as fictional representations of Brexit. He has published articles on Bryony Lavery (2007), Jasper Fforde (2010), Martin McDonagh (2010), Dave Eggers (2011), Jez Butterworth (2011), Hilary Mantel (2013), Peter the Wild Boy (2015), May Kendall (2015), Max Müller (2016) and Louisa Sarah Bevington (2017). He is the co-editor of *Fiktionen von Wirklichkeit: Authentizität zwischen Materialität und Konstruktion* (2011) and *The Aesthetics of Authenticity: Medial Constructions of the Real* (2012). His Ph.D. thesis "The Literature of Reconstruction: Authentic Fiction in the New Millennium" was published with Bloomsbury in 2015 and has been awarded the ESSE First Book Award in 2016. He is also the author of an introduction to Gender Studies (in German; utb, 2018).

## 3.2 Science in Speculative Fiction III: Postcolonial Posthumanisms

**Friday, 14 May, 10:20 am, Room 2**

**Haydar Jabr Koban, Al-Ma'moun University College, Baghdad:**  
**Representations of Science: Questions of Postcolonial Biotechnology and Dehumanization in Margaret Atwood's *Oryx and Crake***

This paper attempts to clarify the impact of technology on postcolonial science fiction. It concentrates on the pessimistic and fearful influence that technology has or may have on humanity and shows how technology can be used to enslave and handcuff people and threaten their existence by making them live in catastrophic conditions. The study also shows how the fearful merging between the artificial (technology) and the real (human) leads to a change in the traditional notion of how humanity is defined and how dehumanization took place through technological development. The paper examines Margaret Atwood's novel, *Oryx and Crake* (2003), the first part of Atwood's MaddAddam trilogy, which is written during the postmodern age. The novel presents not only the problem of biotechnology but a post-apocalyptic landscape where humanity has been destroyed and ruined by the dissemination of a man-made virus, referred to in the narrative as the "flood." The selected novel shows how Atwood changes her

ideas and expresses her fears toward the abnormal progress of technology and science and draws through her novel a near-futuristic world in which the use of technology leads to catastrophic results and threatens the human existence on earth. The paper raises a central question of how do postcolonial science fiction writers like Atwood who are anxious about technological developments make their fictional worlds so vividly bleak that readers are instilled with the legitimate fear that the evil of the pages will spill out into reality? To explore this, the study focuses on the illusionary utopia and its dwellers – the downtrodden proletariat man/woman created by scientists. The conclusion sums up the findings of the study.

**Dr. Haydar Jabr Koban** is an Associate Professor in Postcolonial and Comparative Literature. His PhD dissertation title: "Literary Representation of Environmentalism: A Postcolonial Ecocritical Study in Selected Global South Novels". He is currently a faculty member of Al-Ma'moun College University, Baghdad - Iraq. He has lectured in many local and international institutions and has written several articles. He is a specialist in Postcolonial literature in the Arab Middle East and the representation of the Arab world in Western literature and media. His research interests directly relate to the rights of marginalized minorities, migration and Diaspora, women's studies, violence, and terror, resistance and survival, histories and memorization, and other pertinent debates. Besides the academic career, he is a simultaneous interpreter with excellent experience in interpretation, a poet and novelist. He has a published volume of poetry (*An Offering of Peace*) and a novel in the process of text editing.

**Hasan Serkan Demir, TU Chemnitz:**

### **Post-Human Other: Kazuo Ishiguro's Science Fiction Novel *Never Let Me Go***

The concept of the "other" has a significant resonance in postcolonial discourse for the reason that, as Hasan Al-Saidi ironically puts it, "an imperialist must see the Other as different from the Self; and therefore he has to maintain sufficient identity with the Other to valorize control over it" (Al-Saidi 95). Thus, it can be argued that the other is the result of the estrangement of the self from the one who is different, alien and unknown, in order to gain certain authority over it. However, with the technological improvements and scientific innovations, the line between "the other" and "the self" has become blurry and ominous. In his novel *Never Let Me Go* (2005), Kazuo Ishiguro depicts the life of human clone students. Due to the fact that these students are not born from a human female womb, they are not considered as human beings, though, they are 'uncannily' similar to the humans ("self"). This uncanny similarity is threatening for the humans because it is the human who is, as Tony Davies notes, "always singular, always in the present tense, [...] inhabit[ing] not a time or a place but a condition, timeless and unrealised". Therefore, these uncanny clones are threatening the humans' perception and belief in the individual's singularity. Due to fear of the clones they are kept in a glass prison by an invisible hand. This paper will focus on the question of how Kazuo Ishiguro's novel *Never Let Me Go* portrays the fear of the other and how it illustrates the issue of the self and the other in the framework of postcolonial theory and science fiction. Furthermore, this paper will shed light on how "Western" scientific methods and their knowledge production methods are morally ambiguous.

**Hasan Serkan Demir** is an English Literature PhD student at Chemnitz University of Technology. He graduated from Celal Bayar University English Department BA program and Dokuz Eylül University American Culture and Literature MA program with his thesis: "Poesque Space as a fear factor in Kazuo Ishiguro's *When We Were Orphans* and *Never Let Me Go*". Currently, he is working on his PhD project: "In Search of Identity: The Illusional and Metaphorical Detective in Kazuo Ishiguro's Novels".

**Paul Hamann-Rose, Goethe University Frankfurt:  
A New Poetics of Postcolonial Relations: Global Genetic Kinship in Amitav Ghosh's  
*The Calcutta Chromosome* and Zadie Smith's *White Teeth***

Conceptions of genetic kinship have recently emerged as a powerful new discourse through which to trace and imagine connections between individuals and communities around the globe. This paper argues that, as a new way to think and represent such connections, genetic discourses of relatedness constitute a new poetics of kinship. Discussing two exemplary postcolonial narratives, Amitav Ghosh's *The Calcutta Chromosome* (1995) and Zadie Smith's *White Teeth* (2000), this paper argues further that literary fiction, and postcolonial literary fiction in particular, is uniquely positioned to critically engage this new biomedical discourse of global and interpersonal relations. Ghosh's and Smith's novels illuminate and amplify the concept of a cultural poetics of genetic kinship by aesthetically transcending the limits of genetic science to construct additional genetic connections between the West and the Global South on the level of metaphor and analogy. As both novels oscillate spatially between the West and a postcolonial Indian subcontinent, the texts' representations of literal and figurative genetic relations become a vehicle through which the novels test and re-configure postcolonial identities as well as confront Western genetic science with alternative forms of knowledge. The emerging genetic imaginary highlights – evoking recent sociological and anthropological work – that meaningful kinship relations rely on biological as much as on cultural discourses and interpretations, especially in postcolonial and migrant contexts where genetic markers become charged with conflicting notions of connection and otherness.

**Paul Hamann-Rose** is a research associate at the Department of English and American Studies at Goethe University Frankfurt. While pursuing an ongoing research focus on the history of literary engagements with genetics and proto-genetics, he is currently finalising a monograph on the genetic renegotiation of life itself in the contemporary novel. His publications include an article on genetic privacy in Margaret Atwood's MaddAddam trilogy in *The Journal of Literature and Science* (2019) as well as a chapter on "Genealogies of Genetics: Historicising Contemporary Science in Simon Mawer's *Mendel's Dwarf* and A.S. Byatt's *A Whistling Woman*" in *Representations of Science in Twenty-First-Century Fiction*, edited by Julia Hoydis and Nina Engelhardt (2019).

### **3.3 Science, Power, Knowledge, and the State**

**Friday, 14 May, 10:20 am, Room 3**

**Harshana Rambukwella, Open University, Sri Lanka:  
'Patriotic' Science: The COVID 19 Pandemic and the Politics of Indigeneity**

At the onset of the COVID 19 pandemic, when the prospect of a vaccine was remote, a rare space became available for mainstream discussions of 'alternative science' – particularly alternatives to 'western' allopathic medicine. This was visibly evident in the Sri Lankan context where practices ranging from ritual Buddhist chanting to indigenous syrups were promoted with much vigour. Some practices even received state endorsement. In many instances these 'alternative' discourses were framed in anti-colonial terms – as responses to an old but still keenly felt colonial injury. However, the emergence of these alternative scientific discourses also signaled a more insidious dimension to this celebration of indigeneity. On one hand members of a politically powerful professional body representing state allopathic medical doctors



claimed ownership over this discourse – as ‘scientific and rational’ interpreters of indigenous knowledge. On the other, charlatan healers emerged with various concoctions for which certain medical professionals and politicians attempted to provide legitimacy – an attempt that failed spectacularly when the ‘true’ credentials of these charlatan healers were revealed. In both these instances – of allopathic doctors becoming custodians of indigenous knowledge and the promotion of charlatans – the ‘real’ casualty was what one might call ‘legitimate’ alternative medicine. The sudden eruption of these discourses of ‘alternative science’ in the midst of the COVID 19 pandemic – and the narrowly framed ‘patriotism’ that drove these discourses – underscores a number of tensions and complexities that inform such discourses of indigeneity in post-colonial societies. This paper uses the current context in Sri Lanka to explore the historical forces that shape such discourses of indigeneity and critically interrogates the role nationalist politics plays within such discourses. Thereby, it also cautions against an uncritical fetishization of indigenous knowledge and instead argues for a more critically and historically situated dialogue about how such ‘indigenous’ knowledges can be understood and positioned in contemporary society.

**Harshana Rambukwella** is Director of the Postgraduate Institute of English at the Open University of Sri Lanka. He received his PhD from the University of Hong Kong, where he is Honorary Assistant Professor at the School of English. He is the author of *The Politics and Poetics of Authenticity: A Cultural Genealogy of Sinhala Nationalism* (2018). He has been a fellow of the Institute for Advanced Social Studies and Humanities (IASH) at the University of Edinburgh and has held a guest professorship at the South Asia Institute at the University of Heidelberg.

**Anton Kirchhofer, University of Oldenburg:**

### **From the “danger of truth” to the “long truthful dance”?: On Cosmopolitan Science and Cultures of Violence in Michael Ondaatje’s *Anil’s Ghost***

My contribution will offer a reading Michael Ondaatje’s *Anil’s Ghost* (2000) as a ‘postcolonial science novel’. Set in early 1990s Sri Lanka, a country in the midst of an apparently interminable civil war, the novel’s central characters become involved in a scientific investigation which takes them through very different areas of culture all linked through the ongoing political violence. Analysing character constellations, plot structures and narrative perspectives, my contribution will trace the ways in which the novel employs this pattern of a detection narrative, in order to rehearse dimensions of what Aihwa Ong has called “Euroamerican cosmopolitan science”. In the process, the novel takes its readers on an exploration of alternative conceptions, both *to* and *of* ‘cosmopolitan science’ – engaging with, but also going beyond, scientific projects of Sinhala cultural nationalism. By highlighting and maintaining the spectrum of alternatives, rather than resolving the problematic tension between them, I argue that the novel can become a unique tool for enabling critical as well as constructive engagements with the (self-)images and (self-)projections of science, which operate in shaping the ‘global assemblage of science’ (Collier/Ong) as well as its various cultural perceptions.

**Anton Kirchhofer** is Professor of English Literature at the University of Oldenburg. He is co-director of the *Fiction Meets Science* research group at Oldenburg and Bremen, funded by the VolkswagenFoundation. In this context he has led research projects on scientist characters in contemporary fiction, and on the reception of contemporary science novels in literary and ‘scientific’ reviews. His current research within Fiction Meets Science is a project on “The Anglophone Science Novel

and the Global Dimensions of Science". With John Holmes and Janine Rogers, Kirchofer is joint series editor of *Explorations in Science and Literature* published by Bloomsbury Academic.

### 3.4 Under Construction III

**Friday, 14 May, 10:20 am, Room 4**

**Sára Bagdi, Kassák Museum Budapest:**

#### **Primitivism and Class Consciousness, the Representation of the "Other" in the Hungarian Workers' Movement**

Prehistoric and tribal cultures became frequently discussed topics of the Hungarian labour unions' seminars between the two world wars. Lecturers introduced their audience to the anthropology of prehistoric man, tribal art, Darwinism and Freud's totem and Taboo. In this talk, I attempt to shed some light on the janus-faced nature of these seminars and I discuss the role of primitivism in socialist science education with Soma Braun in focus, who published his book (entitled *Primitive cultures*) on prehistory and tribal culture in 1923. He intended it as a general educational reading for workers and discussed several aspects of prehistory and tribal culture over 250 pages. As a progressive socialist author, Braun claimed that no biological difference between modern and tribal people could be noted, he recognised women's oppression as a structural problem and argued that solidarity could transgress the ethno-nationalist models, but he also advocated an essentialist theory of social history where labour had become the single measure of value in human society. For Braun, as well as for other socialist authors, anthropology served as a tool to find plausible model-societies outside of the capitalist world to exemplify the ideal workers' collectives, therefore discussions on the "primitive other" played a key role in the workers' movement's own self-definition process and this theoretic discourse did not remain isolated from the workers themselves. It influenced a generation of socialist educators, theatre practitioners and Esperantists. The socialist representations of the imagined "other" both contained regressive and innovative aspects; they provided an opportunity for progressive authors to tackle such issues as human rights violations and racial inequality but the discourse was also always linked to a process of constant appropriation of non-Western cultural elements which never abandoned general prejudices towards the "other".

**Sára Bagdi** graduated in Art History (2018) and Aesthetics (2019) at the Eötvös Loránd University, Budapest. In 2016, she joined the avant-garde research group of the Kassák Museum in Budapest and she has been assisting the Museum's projects since 2019. She is mainly interested in the social concepts behind the modernist and avant-garde cultural movements, and she is formulating PhD research on how the Hungarian workers' movement contributed to both the scientific and the everyday discussions about anthropology and ethnology during the 1920s and the 1930s.

**Beatrice Falcucci, University of Florence & Gianmarco Mancosu, University of Warwick:**

#### **Exploring the Former Colonies: Safari (Visual) Cultures in Post-colonial Italy**

Colonial empires have deployed a vast array of political, scientific, visual and narrative practices to "discover", classify and dominate those lands both physically and epistemically, often labelling them as

“remote”, “backwards”, exotic yet pristine. Since the late nineteenth century, the boundaries between exoticism and alleged scientific purposes in Africa became even more blurred in the pictures and films shot by the European filmmakers, who crafted footage instrumental to colonizers’ gaze and desires. Images and narratives about the untameable and dangerous flora and fauna, Big Game-hunting and Safari played a crucial role within colonial discourses. In the aftermath of imperialism, such symbols of dominance have been transformed into symbols of conservationism, which may still reflect the priorities imposed by Western powers to dominate the (former) colonial world geographically, economically as well as epistemically. Although ethnographic documentaries or travelogues focusing on the exotic encounter with “different” cultures have been largely studied in major colonial and postcolonial experiences, no thorough studies have been devoted so far to these visual products within the Italian context. Against this background, our paper aims to offer a first delve into the relationship between reportage, “objective” knowledge of Africa and (post)colonial legacies in modern and contemporary Italian popular culture. Drawing on Maria Joao Castro’s standpoint, according to which “tourism is the final stage of colonialism”, our aim is to highlight the continuities between colonial documentaries on Africa’s flora and fauna and postcolonial films dealing with travelogue, Safari and Tourist attractions. The focus will be on two documentaries set in Eritrea produced in the late 50s and 60 and showing local traditions and pristine landscapes, and on a TV travel shows (*Alle falde del Kilimangiaro, Geo&Geo*) of early 2000s. Though different in format and purposes, both case studies provided no reference to the former colonial past; both, instead, use visual and discursive tropes reiterating an ambiguous form of epistemic control over African culture, strengthening the self-declared rationality of the European gaze and its cultural (and racial) diversity, creating an idolized notion of Africa and entailing the fetishization of African wildlife.

**Beatrice Falcucci** (Ph.D candidate, University of Florence) is a Ph.D candidate in History of Science at the University of Florence. Her research focuses on colonial collections in Italian Natural History museums and fascist colonialism's relationship with science.

**Gianmarco Mancosu** (Ph.D, University of Cagliari; Ph.D, University of Warwick) is postdoctoral researcher in Modern and Contemporary History at the University of Cagliari. His research centres on histories and memories of Italian colonialism and decolonization.

**Stefanie Kemmerer, Goethe University Frankfurt:**

### **Yogascapes - The Visual Politics of Transcultural Yoga as seen on Instagram**

This thesis is concerned with the intersections of two global phenomena: yoga and Social Media. Yoga today is a hybridized bodily and embodied practice developed from a variety of religious, philosophical, and socio-political influences that has made its way from counter-cultural practice to the heart of pop culture with a heightened presence especially on Social Media. What yoga is understood to be, what it looks like and whom it is for is strongly mediated by globally circulating images as can be found on platforms like Instagram. Arjun Appadurai’s concept of scapes and global flows accounts for the global dispersal of images and imaginations about yoga on this platform. Critical engagement with his thoughts draws attention to the impediments of such visual flows based on the technological underpinnings of Social Media platforms, replicating power relations of the analogous world. Ilan Kapoor’s view of Lacanian psychoanalysis adds an understanding of how drives and desire offer a breeding ground for constant consumption but also open up room to interrogate how the consumption of certain images represent our libidinal investments in prevailing power relations by asking questions like Who is it we see? How are they

depicted? Whom do we not see? Why? Relying on the psychoanalytical concepts of desire, drive and gaze, the thesis seeks to offer answers to these questions in following W.J.T. Mitchell's understanding of pictures as "active players" in the establishment and disruption of values (Mitchell 2005: 105) while at the same time consolidating the persistence of certain visual representations and modes of seeing with regard to representations of yoga on Instagram that are "deeply involved with human societies, with the ethics and politics, aesthetics and epistemology of seeing and being seen" (337-338).

**Stefanie Kemmerer** studied Culture and Economy with a focus on Spanish Studies at the Universities of Mannheim and Alcalá de Henares. In her previous research she investigated representations of violence and power in the work of Spanish author Julio Llamazares. She has studied Comparative Literature at the University of Utrecht and is a member of Goethe University Frankfurt, where she is enrolled in the M.A. Moving Cultures – Transcultural Encounters program. She is currently working on her master thesis titled *Yogascapes – The Visual Politics of Yoga as seen on Instagram*.

## 4.1 Science and Postcolonial Environments I

**Friday, 14 May, 1:20 pm, Room 1**

**Dominic O'Key, University of Leeds:**

### **'From the Other Side of Millions of Years': Narrating the Sixth Extinction**

Since its scientific-discursive conceptualizations in the eighteenth-century, 'extinction' and its attendant logics of endangerment have often fed into colonial expansion, population management and genocide. Indigenous peoples across the global south were contradictorily cast as inhuman beings to be destroyed and as remnants of an earlier evolutionary stage in need of preservation. Extinction, then, has been part of the armature of colonialism. It is therefore unsurprising that postcolonial theory is predominantly humanist in its outlook, often asserting the 'humanity' of the colonized. Yet the spectre of bio-cultural loss that is the Sixth Mass Extinction Event compels us to reclaim extinction, to articulate a specifically postcolonial understanding of mass extinction which redeems the concept from its colonial history. To start this work, this paper turns to the writing of the Bengali author and adivasi organiser, Mahasweta Devi (1926–2016), whose texts are animated by a complex entanglement between racialized genocide and nonhuman ecocide. I will argue that her writing narrates extinction as a socio-ecological event, one which differently implicates all planetary life.

**Dominic O'Key** is a Postdoctoral Research Fellow at the University of Leeds, where he works on the cultural meanings of the sixth extinction. His writing on literature, animals and postcolonial studies has appeared in journals such as *Textual Practice*, *Style*, *LIT: Literature, Interpretation, Theory, and Parallax*. His first monograph, *Creaturely Forms in Contemporary Literature: Narrating the War Against Animals*, will be published by Bloomsbury in 2022.

**Alexa Weik von Mossner, University of Klagenfurt:  
(Neo)colonial Histories and Scientific Futures in Fernando A. Flores's *Tears of the Trufflepig***

Fernando A. Flores's *Tears of the Trufflepig* (2019) sets its tour-de-force of a narrative in a futuristic version of the Mexican-American borderland. In Flores's indeterminate future, that border features not only one but two useless border walls and transnational syndicates no longer traffic drugs but GM foods. In the aftermath of a global food crisis, a group of scientists abducted by these syndicates have developed a genetic process known as "filtering." This new scientific technology allows them not only to lab-grow grains and vegetables to feed the poor, but also to clone long-extinct animal species such as the Dodo bird, which they serve to the super-rich at exclusive and illegal dinner parties. The same careless people who feast on these lab-cloned animals also buy the shrunken head trophies of the equally extinct Aranaña Indians and admire the Trufflepig, a multispecies creature that, according to Aranaña mythology, is capable of mirroring people's dreams back to them and that now exists in flesh and blood thanks to genetic science. Meanwhile, the inhabitants of the borderlands, who cross the border multiple times a day just to keep their families afloat, are being ruthlessly exploited.

In my paper, I will use the analytical tools of cognitive narratology to explore how Flores engages readers in his deliberately weird and harrowing tale about colonial legacies and food futures. According to Frederick Luis Aldama, reading *Tears of the Trufflepig* "is to submerge oneself in a sensory overload chamber" that Flores wants us to experience "at the most cognitively, emotively, and perceptually visceral." Analyzing how exactly Flores does this is important because, like the eponymous Trufflepig, the novel itself functions as a mirror of the intertwined (neo)colonial histories of Mexico and the United States. Extrapolating longstanding border conflicts and rampant consumer capitalism into his science-fiction storyworld, Flores invites readers to viscerally experience the ruthless exploitation of humans and nonhumans alike.

**Alexa Weik von Mossner** is Associate Professor of American Studies at the University of Klagenfurt in Austria. Her research explores contemporary environmental culture from a cognitive ecocritical perspective. She is the author of *Cosmopolitan Minds: Literature, Emotion, and the Transnational Imagination* (U of Texas P 2014) and *Affective Ecologies: Empathy, Emotion, and Environmental Narrative* (Ohio State UP 2017). She is the editor of *Moving Environments: Affect, Emotion, Ecology, and Film* (Wilfrid Laurier UP, 2014), and the co-editor of *The Anticipation of Catastrophe: Environmental Risk in North American Literature and Culture* (with Sylvia Mayer, Winter 2014).

## **4.2 Negotiating Indigenous Knowledges**

**Friday, 14 May, 1:20 pm, Room 2**

**Ana Carolina Torquato, Federal University of Paraná, Brazil:  
Scientific and Popular Healing Practices: Complementary and Antagonistic  
Relationships in Works by J. Guimarães Rosa, Jorge Amado, and Pepetela**

Brazil and Angola are countries that house various cultural traditions that are alive and in practice until the present time. These traditions may come from diverse backgrounds and are connected to their history as former Portuguese colonies since they descend from indigenous, African, or European knowledge. In

this paper, I would like to analyse three important literary works that portray different healing methods belonging to traditional scientific and widespread knowledge. The texts selected are the short-story "Bicho-mau" (1969) and the novel *Tenda dos Milagres* (Tent of Miracles, 1969), by Brazilian writers João Guimarães Rosa and Jorge Amado, respectively, and the novel *O quase fim do mundo* (2019), by Angolan novelist Pepetela. I am particularly interested in investigating how these novels portray how medicinal treatments are operated and depicted in comparison to each other. While "Bicho-Mau" and *Tenda dos Milagres* portray antagonistic relationships between how science and vernacular medicinal practices treat illnesses, *O quase fim do mundo* illustrates these two worlds as intrinsically complementary and cooperative. To further discuss the theme, it is necessary to address racial and ethnical intolerance characteristically present in the debate. Such matters often touch on the validity of popular therapies usage when introduced in antithesis to science. The theoretical framework of this discussion will be based on studies such as Wolf Storl's *The Untold History of Healing* (2017), Cristina Gurgel's *Doenças e Curas: o Brasil nos primeiros séculos* (2010), Moacyr Scliar's *A Paixão Transformada: História da Medicina na Literatura* (1996), to name a few.

**Ana Carolina Torquato** holds a PhD in Literary Studies and Animal Studies from the Federal University of Paraná (UFPR), 2020. Her PhD thesis presents a history of Brazilian literature through Animal Studies' lenses under the title of "Animal Representation in Brazilian Literature: From Ecological Imperialism to Animals as Agents". Her research focuses on the interaction of Animal Studies and comparative Literature, Ecocriticism, and Disaster Studies. She holds a master's degree by Sheffield, Santiago de Compostela and Nova de Lisboa universities.

**Sandra Neugärtner, University of Erfurt:**

### **Lena Meyer-Bergner's Teaching of Weaving Technology in Mexico: Attempts to Abolish Post-Colonial Rule**

Motivated by a self-image of cultural superiority, the colonial powers formulated the mandate to civilize the "savages" and "barbarians" in other parts of the world. Under the pretense of this mission, they justified a practice of heteronomy and exploitation that today determines, on a large scale, how the history of modern art and science are linked to colonialism. The paper provides a counter-narrative that complicates the paradigm of coloniality as the "dark side of modernity" (Mignolo): On the example of Lena Meyer-Bergner (1906–1981) and her highly modern presentation forms of weaving technology as part of her attempts to set up weaving centers in Mexico, the paper deals with the interlink of science and post-colonial modernity as an effort to dissolve post-colonial rule. Born in a traditional weaver family and trained in the textile workshop as well as in technical drawing at the Bauhaus, Meyer-Bergner learned from scratch to combine folk art with modern approaches to art and technology. When she went to Mexico for ten years in 1939 she developed highly efficient depictions to explain weaving technology – using very similar display techniques as those evolved at the Bauhaus for planning modern architecture – to teach the natives how to weave using modern technology. She wanted to open weaving centers for the Otomi because textile work, Meyer-Bergner assumed, offered an opportunity to achieve economic autonomy. Her roots lay in a post-imperialist industrial state, still her ideal was that of a classless society. Before she came to Mexico, Meyer-Bergner had lived in the USSR and participated in the construction of socialist society. With the lessons learned, she wanted to undermine the continuation of hegemonic relations in Mexico. She believed that all strata of the population should participate equally in modern progress, regardless of their ethnicity or class. Her efforts to transfer weaving technology are a

counterpoint to the aspirations of the colonial rulers under the promises of modernity that were tied to capitalist ideology and adopted by the new capitalist powers of the young, democratic nation state of Mexico. Meyer-Bergner aimed to keep the promise of modernity: independence and progress.

**Sandra Neugärtner** is an art historian working as a research associate at the University of Erfurt. As part of a DFG project, her research is on Lena Meyer-Bergner's sociotransformative concept of modernity in the global social upheavals of the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Sandra Neugärtner studied design, economics, cultural studies and art history in Dessau, Berlin, Zurich and Erfurt. From 2017 to 2018 she was a visiting fellow at the Graduate School of Arts and Science at Harvard University, Department History of Art and Architecture. Her research focuses on the socio-political dynamics of artistic strategies since 1900. Her interests extend from the appropriation of artistic practices in the context of the exile movements in the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, post-war art, the discourse of Cold War antagonisms to contemporary global art.

### 4.3 Under Construction IV

**Friday, 14 May, 1:20 pm, Room 3**

**Rita Maricocchi, University of Münster:**  
**Intermedial Manifestations of (white) German Identity via Transnational and Postcolonial Contexts in Birgit Weyhe's *Madgermanes* and *Ich Weiß***

This MA thesis project analyzes the graphic novels *Madgermanes* (2016) and *Ich Weiß* (2008/2017) by German writer and illustrator Birgit Weyhe through a transnational and postcolonial framework. The analysis seeks to understand how German identity is constructed in both narratives, which have been described as expressions of Weyhe's "rejection of nationalist conceptions of home or belonging." Drawing upon Fatima El-Tayeb's *European Others: Queering Ethnicity in Postnational Europe* (2011), this project uncovers the ways in which both texts manifest the "invisible racialization" El-Tayeb posits as "the peculiar coexistence of, on the one hand, a regime of continentwide recognized visual markers that construct nonwhiteness as non-Europeaness with on the other a discourse of colorblindness that claims not to 'see' racialized difference." Through a combination of close reading and visual analysis, this study will pay particular attention to the autobiographical framing of both texts, the effects of the text-image combinations on the construction of the narratives, and associations and depictions of whiteness and Blackness. While certain formal and thematic aspects of *Madgermanes* and *Ich Weiß*, such as the intermedial graphic novel form and the acknowledgement of African presences in personal and official German histories, may appear transgressive, the way in which the narratives are positioned in transnational and postcolonial frameworks actually functions to reinforce the notion of German identity as white and prohibit the imagination and manifestation of Black German identity. In light of the overwhelmingly positive reception of the texts in the German press coupled with the relatively little critical scholarship in existence on Weyhe's works so far, this thesis project seeks to make a productive contribution to the study of graphic novels within postcolonial frameworks as well as to postcolonial scholarship within the German and perhaps even wider European context.

**Rita Maricocchi** is a second-year student in the MA degree program National and Transnational Studies at the University of Münster. She completed her undergraduate studies at Case Western Reserve

University in Cleveland, Ohio and Ruprecht-Karls-Universität Heidelberg, majoring in German, French, and Political Science. Before coming to Münster she spent one year as a Fulbright English Teaching Assistant at a secondary school in Dresden. Her current MA thesis project focuses on the graphic novels of Birgit Weyhe, seeking to interpret their portrayal of German identity through a postcolonial lens. Her additional research interests broadly include multilingual literature, adaptation studies, and the intersection of autobiographical writing and gender performance. She is particularly interested in increasing dialogue within the university about decolonial issues, reflected in her involvement in the student-initiated Arbeitskreis Postkolonialismus, for which she co-organizes a bilingual reading group engaging with various literary and academic texts.

### **Francesco Costantini, Jagiellonian University, Kraków: An Anti-Colonial and Inter-Imperial Literary Criticism of Scientism as a Post-Enlightenment Façade of Colonial Modernity**

In order to recognise the role of science within the broader concept of post-Enlightenment universal Reason as a theoretical foundation of imperialism we are compelled to analyse the critical voices which arose already within European borders, especially in the interesting cases of peripheral Ireland and Poland. Ireland and Poland underwent an especially abrupt and disastrous accession to modernity—typically the experience of colonized societies—between the middle of the nineteenth century and the revolutionary period of 1916–22. In such conditions, modernization becomes explicitly associated with the culture of the colonial power. Any straightforward embrace or rejection of modernity is difficult for the colonized people, who very often seek to enjoy its benefits, but on their own terms. In early twentieth-century Ireland and Poland, a variety of cultural and political movements struggled with the difficulties and ironies of anti-colonial nationalism and decolonization. The doctrine of progress (scientific progress) legitimates imperial conquest under the guise of the civilizing mission, while the celebration of reason disqualifies other belief systems as irrational or superstitious. In this context, scientific positivism and empiricism were perceived as a crucial component of that modernism which imperialism imposed to indigenous epistemology, and as such was opposed by decolonising native intellectuals. For key anti-colonial thinkers such as W. B. Yeats the age of the scientific revolution meant the birth of what he calls "the mechanical theory," and with it the demythologizing of the living world and its reduction, at the hands of Newton and Locke, to a mathematico-physical paradigm of celestial mechanics and a terrestrial abstraction cloven into "primary" and "secondary" qualities. Yeats's concept of "new science," which must take the place of the lost myths and legends could only be an old one, compounded of Vico's *Scienza nuova* and, more centrally, of the occult, Romanticism, and his Anglo-Irish ancestors: all of them allies against the hated mechanical theory. In other words, Yeats theorises an indigenous epistemology of science in opposition to empire. Such was the case of the Polish Noble Laureate Henryk Sienkiewicz, which strongly criticised the presentism implicit in the scientific positivist views of the time, against which he opposed an epic evocation of an imaginative past. A comparative study of such European, albeit colonised, oppositional voices would help to develop an inter-imperial criticism of scientific progress (as a notion exploited within the civilisational narrative) within the epistemology of European modernism.

**Francesco Costantini's** PhD project is entitled "On the Way to Independence: The Role of Literature from a Postcolonial Perspective in a Comparative Context between Poland and Ireland" and includes an analysis at the turn of the 19th and 20th centuries of the two cases of internal colonialisms questioning the role of literature in relation to national issues, epistemic and discursive violence, ultimately deconstructing



imperialism by unravelling its colonial “sins” within modernism. Having studied in Italy, Poland, and Ireland his research interests comprise mainly Postcolonial Studies, Memory Studies and Comparative Literature, with specific attention to its relation with globalization processes and epistemic justice. He works under the supervision of Prof. Ryszard Nycz.

## 5.1 Science and Postcolonial Environments II

**Saturday, 15 May, 11:20 am, Room 1**

### **Virginia Richter, University of Berne: A Theatre of Decay: The Aesthetics of Zoology in Jim Crace's *Being Dead***

In Jim Crace's novel *Being Dead* (1999), two middle-aged zoologists are killed on the first page. End of story. Or rather, the beginning of a different story, the story of the bodies' process of decomposition. By adopting the zoological gaze which the murdered scientists themselves used to direct at the littoral fauna of Baritone Bay, the site of crime, Crace's narrator reverses the novel's scale and perspective from the anthropocentric to the entomological, and finally microbiological. Beetles, flies, and crabs are the agents of the discovery and colonisation of the rotting corpses. While this zoological stance allows the display of an extremely naturalistic aesthetics, a parallel narrative strand reconstructs the zoologists' lives, their love story which began and ended on the same beach, and thus symbolically reverses the process of their material decomposition. *Being Dead* is both an autopsy and a wake: it undermines the idea of human exceptionalism by treating the bodies as just nature, and simultaneously celebrates the uniqueness of the departed. In my paper, I will analyse the function of the zoological aesthetics in relation to the other aesthetic modes, such as the elegiac and the romantic, to which it is juxtaposed in the novel. By employing these different modes, I argue, *Being Dead* explores the cultural role of science as thanatology, the study of death, and at the same time questions the limits of scientific representation, to celebrate literature as the art of resurrection.

**Virginia Richter** is Full Professor of Modern English Literature at the University of Bern. She holds a doctoral degree in English Literature from the University of Munich, where she also completed her habilitation on literary representations of Darwinism. She was a Visiting Fellow at the University of Kent at Canterbury and at the University of Leeds, a Visiting Professor at the University of Göttingen, and a Visiting Research Fellow at the IASH, University of Edinburgh. Her most recent publications include *The Beach in Anglophone Literatures and Cultures: Reading Littoral Space*, ed. with Ursula Kluwick (Ashgate 2015) and *Post-Empire Imaginaries? Anglophone Literature, History, and the Demise of Empires*, ed. with Barbara Buchenau and Marijke Denger (Brill Rodopi, 2015). Currently, she is the Principal Investigator of the SNSF-funded research project *The Beach in the Long Twentieth Century*.

**Kanak Yadav, JNU New Delhi:**

### **Writing the Space of Postcolonial Environment: *Latitudes of Longing* (2018) and the Quest for the Non-Human**

The academic shift towards what is termed as the “Anthropocene” has been fundamentally about recognizing the impact and interference that humans have made on their environment. Although the term continues to be debated in terms of its origins and its continued centrality over humankind, the

“Anthropocene turn” in humanities has enabled the recognition of the “non-human” in literature not merely as extensions of humanized entities but in themselves. Science-fiction has for long preoccupied itself with searching for the “non-human” but it continued to rely upon human-centric language and form. For instance, the non-human Android “Other” in American science-fiction movies like *Blade Runner* (1982) and *A.I. Artificial Intelligence* (2001) questioned humanity by blurring the difference between the “man” and the “android.” However, they continued to validate humanity, and its significance, even as they critiqued it. Contemporary postcolonial narratives however, do not just write the “non-human” but they also create a different language and form to incorporate it textually. One such novel is Shubhangi Swarup’s debut novel *Latitudes of Longing* (2018) which writes the natural environment not just as a setting to fletch out characters but as a living entity that remains beyond the grasp of rational and scientific minds. Divided into four parts, each telling interconnected stories, the novel incorporates the “unreal” or “magic realist” elements to write the space of unruly Andaman Islands. This paper seeks to assess how the novel not only makes way for “indigenous” knowledge structures by using magic realist narration but also subverts “man vs science” dichotomy in imagining their relationship. By romanticizing and even sexualizing human’s relationship with the natural environment, Swarup’s novel writes the space of the untamed natural world in experimental ways.

**Kanak Yadav** is a Ph.D. candidate at Centre for English Studies, Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi, India. In her doctoral research, she studies the representation of Indian metropolitan cities in contemporary Indian English Nonfiction. Her articles and reviews have appeared in *The Journal of Commonwealth Literature*, *Contemporary Voice of Dalit*, *Akademios*, *The New Leam* and *World Literature Today*.

## 5.2 Postcolonial Narratives of/and Space Exploration

**Saturday, 15 May, 11:20 am, Room 2**

**Hedley Twidle, University of Cape Town:**

**From the Edge of Representation: Radio Astronomy, Postcolonial Memory and South Africa's Square Kilometre Array (SKA)**

In the arid landscape of South Africa’s northern Karoo, astronomers and engineers are slowly building the biggest scientific instrument in the world. The Square Kilometre Array (SKA) will one day link radio telescopes across the African continent and the Southern Hemisphere, turning much of the planet into a vast ear for picking up the faintest echoes from the early universe. I am interested in the conceptual and representational challenges posed by radio astronomy in general, and the Square Kilometre Array in particular. What kinds of cultural artefacts and images are likely to be produced by the SKA, and what kind of relationship will a non-specialist audience be able to have with them? And how can the Karoo array’s unprecedented power to look (or listen) back in time be related to the deep human past that has left traces all through this landscape? Working through a series of images, the enquiry moves from optical astronomy in Cape Town and Sutherland to the radio dishes near Carnarvon, tracing a history of picturing the cosmos and the southern skies. I explore how questions of visibility, imagination and aesthetics might be introduced to the languages of science, policy and public relations in which such a project is most often discussed.

In addressing the SKA as a writer, the challenge is to recognise both the fascination of outer space and specificity of earthly place. Doing so has revealed to me a major difference of intellectual impetus between the sciences and the critical humanities, one that is perhaps suggestive of why they so often 'miss' each other in public conversation. The first seeks to isolate and decontextualise its object of knowledge: to filter out earthly noise; to minimise the signal of its own instruments; to avoid seeing its own structures in a distant, even unimaginable mathematical space. The second always feels the urgency of introducing contingency and context: to bring into frame the desperately poor environs of the northern Cape; to remember the British imperial project that carries astronomy to the tip of Africa; and to look for the history that hides in its brilliant and unearthly images.

If anything, I suggest that the MeerKAT/SKA project asks and needs something more than the modes of public relations, corporate governance, 'outreach' and nationalist boosterism that have so far enfolded it, something other than the model in which Big Science commissions an exhibition or subcontracts an artist to bolster its ethos. As it grows exponentially in resolving and computing power, the Array is surely a phenomenon that asks for something other than the literal or narrowly informational. It will challenge writers and artists to work with the conceptual; to linger in the difficult and blurry zones at the limits of representation; to find ways of registering the incommensurate scales and meanings compacted into a Karoo landscape that has often been figured as 'empty' but now seems unaccountably full of noise, signal, data and politics.

**Hedley Twidle** is a writer, teacher and researcher based at the University of Cape Town where he is now associate professor. He specialises in twentieth-century, southern African and world literatures, as well as creative non-fiction and the environmental humanities. He has written for *Financial Times*, *New Statesman*, *Mail & Guardian*, and *Sunday Times*. He is the author of the essay collection, *Firepool: Experiences in an Abnormal World* and of *Experiments with Truth. Narrative Non-fiction and the Coming of Democracy in South Africa*, a study of narrative non-fiction and the South African transition. He has been one of the co-founders of Environmental Humanities South, an interdisciplinary research cluster and postgraduate programme at the University of Cape Town, launched in 2015.

**Jens Temmen, Heinrich-Heine-University Düsseldorf:**

### **"My Battery is Low and It's Getting Dark": Posthuman Imaginaries of Life on Mars and the NASA Rover Missions**

My proposed paper offers an analysis of the NASA rover missions on Mars through a posthumanist and a postcolonial lens, and will look at the ways in which these missions are received in and circulated within current ecocritical debates on a multiplanetary future of humanity. Taking its cue from the recent successful conclusion of the NASA "Opportunity" rover missions, my paper looks at how different life writing practices and texts, which frame the "life" of the rovers as grievable (cf. Butler), do not only humanize the rovers themselves but also serve to illustrate the alleged queering of human life through technology in interplanetary contexts (cf. Anatasoski and Vora). By relating this analysis to narratives of a liberatory and progressive interstellar colonization prevalent within the planetary sciences, my analysis reveals how this utopian imaginary that the rovers underwrite, has become a central tenet for a number of influential techbillionaires—Elon Musk and Jeff Bezos among them—who frame their technoliberal fantasies of space colonization as an allegedly viable solution for battling climate change on Earth (cf. Temmen; cf. Wallace Wells). My paper proposes that the rising prevalence of these fantasies of space colonization in the context of our planetary climate crisis urges us to consider how the notion of an

interplanetary humanity relates to the conception of a fragile, yet fundamentally connected terrestrial ecosystem at the heart of the debates on planetarity (cf. Braidotti 5-6; cf. Chakrabarty 221-22; cf. Ganser; cf. Heise 25).

**Jens Temmen** is a postdoctoral research assistant at the American Studies department at Heinrich-Heine-University Düsseldorf (Germany). He received his PhD in American Studies as part of his PhD fellowship with the Research Training Group Minor Cosmopolitanisms at the University of Potsdam. His first monograph is titled *The Territorialities of US Imperialism(s): Conflicting Discourses of Sovereignty, Jurisdiction and Territory in Nineteenth-Century US Legal Texts and Indigenous Life Writing* (Universitätsverlag Winter) and was published in 2020. In 2016, he was a DAAD-funded visiting scholar at the Center for Biographical Research at the University of Hawai'i at Mānoa (USA). He is co-editor of an anthology titled *Across Currents: Connections between Atlantic and (Trans)Pacific Studies* (Routledge, 2018) and co-editor of a Special Forum of the *Journal for Transnational American Studies* (JTAS) on "American Territorialities". His postdoctoral research project employs an ecocritical and posthuman studies lens to analyze representations of Mars colonization in contemporary US literature and culture.

## 5.3 Under Construction V

**Saturday, 15 May, 11:20 am, Room 3**

**Mahtab Dadkhah, University of Erfurt:**

### **Power of Media in Forming Cultural Identities of Immigrants from India and Africa to Germany**

Migration from the Commonwealth to Germany, as opposed to the more common topic of migration from the Commonwealth to the UK, is a research gap, despite the internationalization of the English language and the globalization of Anglophone culture with a direct impact on Germany. From my point of view, migration, as a rapidly expanding phenomena of the modern world, is highly interconnected with media, which penetrates virtually all aspects of everyday life followed by multiple consequences. One of the main consequences of the prevalence of media (both online and offline) is that people can take on various identities. One of these forms of identity, which has a close interaction with migration and its interaction with media, is cultural identity as a significant way in which a person is known or knows oneself in relation to a community's shared values [synonym for 'culture']. Apart from 'native' cultural identity, immigrants will build an acquired cultural identity for themselves in the country they have migrated to. They encounter a new culture which may question their perceptions and impact on how they perceive their former identities. In sum, due to the importance of media and its modern effects, I am interested to explore what role media, as a vehicle for conveying cultural messages all through the world, may play in relation to identity formation and new experiences of immigrants from India and Africa to Germany. Special attention will be paid to awareness of anglophone culture and the specific knowledge of the English language in these migrant groups (as opposed to many Germans). Knowledge of English language and anglophone culture opens up a perspective on cultural globalization beyond the dichotomy of supposedly 'native' and 'new' (German) culture. The project is going to be conducted based on qualitative research methods and the data are acquired from in-depth interviews and focus group discussions.

**Mahtab Dadkhah** is a doctoral candidate at the University of Erfurt. She received her BA and MA in English Language and Literature in Iran and migrated to Germany for her PhD in 2019. Currently, she is conducting research on the role of narratives in identity formation of Commonwealth migrants which connects the fields of British Literary Studies and Communication and Media studies. She was a professional English-Persian translator and also a professional English teacher. She has published one book, a chapter in a book, and two papers all connected somehow to Foucauldian power relations. Her presentation at GAPS 2021 is an overview article of her PhD dissertation.

**Vahid Aghaei, University of Münster:**

### **Moral Indeterminacies and Discernments pertaining to Colonialism in Africa: From Joseph Conrad to J. G. Ballard**

Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* (1902) has been scrutinised in multiple ways. Some consider it as a text that lambastes the horrid effects of colonialism, while others see it as nothing more than a racist narrative that recycles pejorative views towards the colonised. I disagree with the latter, but I do believe that Conrad should have been more straightforward in presenting his own views. Overall, his novella is an ambiguous open-ended narrative. Many of J. G. Ballard's works may be seen in the same light. Two of his novels, *The Crystal World* (1966) and *The Day of Creation* (1987) are set in Africa and both depict ongoing states of turmoil as an aftermath of Western colonialism in the heart of Africa. Nevertheless, Ballard's often solitary protagonists are very different from Conrad's. They are there to provide medical care instead of looting ivory. Ballard as a master of dystopian writing does a far better job in portraying the severe inequalities of colonialism. However, similar to Conrad, he can be criticised for his lack of lucidity. *The Crystal World* and *The Day of Creation* are at times thematically similar to *Heart of Darkness*, but the works of Ballard more adequately display the lingering effects of colonialism. Scientific advancement in the West always fascinated Ballard. His works show the stark imbalance of power between those equipped with scientific advancement and those without it. He highlights this not only in post/colonial Africa, but in every human society. He was also acutely aware of the untamed scientific advancements of his time. It is for that reason that my primary focus will be on Ballard as I attempt to present a reading of his works that explores the deeply entrenched inequalities that are still prevalent today.

**Vahid Aghaei** has an MA in National and Transnational Studies: Literature, Culture, Language from Münster University. He also has a BA and MA in English Language and Literature. His first MA thesis, "An Existentialist Reading of the Selected Short Stories by J. G. Ballard", was completed in 2017. His recent thesis, "The Ethics of Life Writing and the Ethics of Immigration: Narratives of the Undocumented in America" was successfully defended in September 2020. Aghaei was also accepted to participate in the annual GAPS conference (2020) at Goethe University in Frankfurt am Main.

## 6.1 Forgotten Histories of Science

Saturday, 15 May, 1:50 pm, Room 1

Jennifer Leetsch, University of Würzburg:

### “I trust England will not forget one who nursed her sick”: Nursing the Empire in *Wonderful Adventures of Mrs Seacole in Many Lands* (1857)

In this paper, I examine the self-narrative of nineteenth-century Jamaican nurse Mary Seacole, the “black Florence Nightingale”. In her autobiographical travelogue, one can not only see at play fluctuating notions of race and belonging of the time, but also how descriptions of nature, climate and health/disease slot right into larger discussions of identity and nation-building as Seacole travels from the Caribbean to Cuba to Colombia to the Crimea. Simon Gikandi has astutely noted that “beneath Seacole’s optimistic portrait of the colonial subject in the service of empire [...] lies the author’s barely suppressed sense of crisis, a crisis about her own identity and authority” (1996, 142). I argue that this crisis is reflected in how Seacole’s self-dramatizations play out along fault lines of geography, environment and medical knowledges. Seacole cannily references stereotypical nineteenth-century representation of the tropics while at the same time positioning herself as the authority over nature/her British patients. Intersecting portrayals of landscape and human ailments function as a means to set herself apart from either white British or black Caribbean subjectivity as she instead inhabits multiple spheres at once: the “native/local” sphere in which she is able to diagnose the British who have fallen ill from the tropical climate or who have fallen on the battlefields of the Crimea; the “foreign” sphere in which she is able to judge the living conditions (dirty, damp, rotten) and natural environments (floods, etc.) which cause the outbreak of fever and disease in Central America. As Sandra Gunning observes, “the sickly English pale in comparison to Seacole and her ability to survive physical challenges the world over, whether she resides in Jamaica, Panama, the Crimea, or England” (2001, 962). Seacole’s autobiography constructs her as Jamaican mammy and Mother Britain simultaneously, a black woman who nurses back to health the British while travelling the globe.

**Dr. Jennifer Leetsch** is a researcher and lecturer at the Department for English Literature and British Cultural Studies at Julius-Maximilians-University Würzburg (Germany). She is currently working on a postdoctoral project which intertwines forms and media of life writing with 19th-century ecologies. Before joining the University of Würzburg, Jennifer completed a MA in English, Comparative, and American Literature at Ludwig-Maximilians-University Munich and King’s College London. At JMU, she convenes graduate and undergraduate modules on postcolonial and diaspora literature and theory, organises international conferences and summer schools, and coordinates the department’s DAAD/IGP-funded project “Literature in a Globalized World”. Her research interests include, amongst others: black autobiography, feminist ecocriticism, Victorian ecologies and digital diasporas.

Laura Zander, University of Münster:

### Blank Spaces and Hidden Figures – Rewriting the Gendered History of Science

The history of science, at its core, is a big book of brilliant individuals and their singular discoveries; individuals that were almost exclusively western, white and male. It is a history written from the perspective of the perceived masculinity of all scientific endeavour, whether practical knowledge, dedicated study or experimental activity, to the exclusion of ‘feeling’, which is associated with femininity. (Cf. Wagner & Wharton, “The Sexes and the Sciences,” 2019). To fill the blank spaces in scientific history, scholarship has

increasingly turned to rewriting alternative histories from different, and particularly differently gendered, perspectives. In a similar vein, historians, scientists and philosophers have set about reclaiming forgotten women scientists, those hidden figures of science, and to restoring their lost voices. Subsequently, this rich literature explores the ways in which alleged scientific objectivity is both culturally bound and constructed, effectively marginalizing non-male, non-white or non-western contributions, whether Julie Des Jardin's *The Madame Curie Complex: The Hidden History of Women in Science* (2010), Angela Saini's *Inferior: How Science Got Women Wrong-and the New Research That's Rewriting the Story*, (2017), Margot Lee Shetterly's *Hidden Figures* (2016), Dava Sobel's *The Glass Universe* or Nathalia Holt's *Rise of the Rocket Girls* (2016). Emily Temple-Woods, Wikipedia editor, practicing physician and co-founder of the WikiProject Women Scientists (2012) is dedicated to countering the effects and causes of gender bias, particularly through the creation of articles about women in science. "None of us controls who tells our stories," she says, "but we do get to choose the stories we tell." Accordingly, in my paper, I want to shed new light on some of the blank spaces in scientific history, on its hidden figures, and also the unacknowledged and often biased legislation processes that accompany, enable and promote the partial writing of the history of science.

**Laura A. Zander** is a postdoctoral research fellow at the Collaborative Research Centre (SFB) "Law and Literature" at the University of Münster, funded by the German Research Foundation. Previously a lecturer in the English Department at the University of Munich, she also worked as a Research Assistant and taught at the Faculty of Law at the Universities of Munich, Frankfurt and Saarbrücken, for a master's program in Digital Forensics. She holds an MA in English Literature and Linguistics and both state examinations in Law after completing her postgraduate judicial service traineeship. Her first book *Writing Back / Reading Forward: Reconsidering the Postcolonial Approach* was published with Peter Lang in February 2019. She was the Postgraduate Representative of EACLALS between 2014 and 2017 and hosted the 2016 Postcolonial Narrations conference in Munich.

## 6.2 Bodies in Crisis/Environments in Crisis

**Saturday, 15 May, 1:50 pm, Room 2**

**Lara Choksey, University of Exeter:**

**Interiority after Genealogy: States of Somnambulism in Claude McKay's *Romance in Marseille***

Invigorating recent consolidations of the race-concept alongside the hyper-militarisation of national borders, the genealogy plot continues to legitimise the discontinuity of citizenship and statelessness. While the postgenomic era has been characterised by a wave of scalar and temporal reorientations of embodiment across the biosciences and social theory, it has also retrenched imaginaries of ethnonational influence – soil, environment, culture. This paper asks if the genealogy plot is really in crisis, and if so, what alternative descriptions of interiority offer roots and trajectories of habitation. To think interiority after genealogy is also to reimagine the continuities of the modern nation-state and its analogical infrastructure, 'the body politic', in forms of community that move beyond them. Departing from "the limits of racial community" (Gilroy), this paper explores sleep states, scenes of recruitment, and ambivalent communities in Claude McKay's *Romance in Marseille*. McKay's long-banned novel moves its protagonist across the Atlantic, from Marseille to New York and back again, in a sea-level plot where falling asleep

means rapid and traumatic bodily transformation. Going between states of non-visibility and hypervisibility, discarded and picked back up again, Lafala takes himself back to Marseille's Vieux Port, a site for wayward transactions and hidden transitions, in the hope of giving his new shape a different future. States of somnambulance enable new forms of mobility, where the psychological intuition of living in more than one place at one time propels Lafala through the Port's fragile infrastructure of social compromise, volatile and joyful.

**Lara Choksey** is a Postdoctoral Research Fellow in the Wellcome Centre for Cultures of Environments of Health at the University of Exeter and Visiting Research Fellow at the UCL Sarah Parker Remond Centre. A scholar of literary and cultural studies, her research interests span science and technology studies, critical race and decolonial theory, and world-systems theory. She is the author of *Narrative in the Age of the Genome: Genetic Worlds* (Bloomsbury, 2021).

### **Rebecca Macklin, University of Leeds/University of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia: "Seeing through the end of the world": Storytelling and Environmental Crisis in the Fiction of Leanne Betasamosake Simpson**

Following Kyle Powys Whyte, who argues that climate change must be understood as an intensification of colonialism, this paper considers Indigenous North American responses to the threats posed by rising waters. When ways of life are dependent on enduring connections to specific landscapes, changing waterscapes can result in changing forms of community, disrupting how peoples relate to water, lands and local ecosystems. In the fiction of Anishinaabe author Leanne Betasamosake Simpson, waterscapes are centred in terms of the connection they provide to Indigenous traditions and forms of knowledge. In order to contemplate the rising waters caused by anthropogenic climate change, Simpson's collection *This Accident of Being Lost* draws on Anishinaabe origin stories that begin with the image of a flood. These stories tell of a world being brought into existence through the combined efforts of non-human creatures. Implicit within Simpson's fiction is the suggestion that the apocalypse has already happened for Indigenous peoples, placing the 'event' of anthropogenic climate change on a continuum of colonial violence. Yet, her stories assert the resilience of Indigenous peoples and cultures, conveying how traditions have survived and adapted over centuries. At the "last big flood", Simpson writes, "we danced a new world into existence". While many people are now looking to Indigenous communities in the hope that Traditional Ecological Knowledge (TEK) can help humanity to respond to the climate crisis, Simpson's work crucially rejects the extractive and exoticising dynamic that characterizes the way that Indigenous groups are frequently incorporated into settler society. Further, I suggest that Simpson's recovery of Anishinaabe stories and ways of knowing refutes colonial definitions of science, instead locating storytelling as central to environmental adaptation behaviours.

**Rebecca Macklin** is Mellon Postdoctoral Fellow at the Penn Program in Environmental Humanities, University of Pennsylvania, having completed her PhD at the University of Leeds in 2020. Her current research project examines literary and cultural engagements with gender, indigeneity and environmental justice. She has published work in *ariel*, *Interventions* and *The British Journal of Canadian Studies*, and in 2019 co-edited a special issue of *Transmotion* on Native American Narratives in a Global Context.



## 6.3 Science and Fiction in Postcolonial Counterfactuals

**Saturday, 15 May, 1:50 pm, Room 3**

**Hayley G. Toth, University of Leeds:**

**The Limits of Postcolonial Counterfactual Histories: Responses to Malorie Blackman's *Noughts & Crosses* (2001) and the BBC television adaptation *Noughts + Crosses* (2020)**

Since its publication in 2001, Malorie Blackman's *Noughts & Crosses* has become highly popular among children and young adults, in part because it has been integrated into the KS3 (ages 11-14) National Curriculum in the UK. The first in a series of novels, *Noughts & Crosses* strategically inverts events, motifs, and strategies of racial oppression from different historical formations to create a dystopian alternative history in which dark-skinned 'Crosses' hold power over light-skinned 'noughts'. The 2020 BBC television adaptation differs from the novel. Most significantly, where the novel tends to individualise racism, partly because of the YA genre's emphasis on Bildung, the television series locates racism in academic and intellectual discourse, with allusions to the discourse of racial science. As a result, *Noughts + Crosses* attracted significant negative media attention. Writing in the Daily Mail, Calvin Robinson criticised the television series' representation of racism as formalised by institutional, legal, and cultural practices. An avowed fan of the novel, Robinson bemoaned that, in the adaptation, "[e]ven the most liberal black politicians and professors believe white people are sub-human" while "[t]he all-black police treat white youths as vermin and the black-dominated media backs them up". Drawing on real responses to the book and television series, this conference paper interrogates the efficacy of each form in responding to and challenging racial science and its cultural, political, and legal manifestations. It identifies a potential limit of both texts and of the genre of postcolonial alternative histories. Specifically, responses suggest that, by foregoing the historical specificity of racism and its ratification in racial science, such counterfactual histories risk inviting readers to entertain the possibility of 'reverse racism' and to project a counterfactual future. As one viewer warned of the trailer to *Noughts + Crosses*: "[it] romanticiz[es] the irrational fear that White people generally have that if Black people were to ever have greater/equal socioeconomic power than Whites, we'd do what they've done to us".

**Dr Hayley G. Toth** gained her PhD from the University of Leeds in March 2020, and works as a Postdoctoral Teaching Assistant in the School of English at Leeds. She specialises in global reading and print cultures, and has published articles and review essays in *Interventions: International Journal of Postcolonial Studies*, *Modern Language Review*, *Comparative Critical Studies*, and *African Identities*. She is currently working on a monograph based on her PhD thesis, focusing on professional and non-professional responses to postcolonial literatures.

**Alena Cicholewski, University of Oldenburg:**

**Science as an Empowering/Exploiting Force in Esi Edugyan's *Washington Black* (2018)**

In this presentation, I will show how Canadian author Esi Edugyan's novel *Washington Black* represents science as potentially liberating practice for the black protagonist but simultaneously characterizes the scientific community as a sphere that exploits the labor of marginalized people without acknowledging

or recompensating their contributions. Combining generic influences of (neo-)slave narrative, bildungsroman and adventure writing (Davies 6-7), *Washington Black* tells the story of the eponymous protagonist who grows up enslaved on a Barbadian plantation where he is recruited by the plantation owner's scientist brother Christopher 'Titch' Wilde to help with his experiments. A friendship-like relationship develops between Wash and Titch who eventually helps him to escape. In the course of the novel, Wash becomes a proficient scientific illustrator, autodidactic marine biologist and creator of the first aquarium in London, but his accomplishments are never publicly recognized. At the center of my analysis is the protagonist's journey which I suggest exemplifies the struggles of black scientists in white supremacist societies that persist long after emancipation. Bringing Dominic Davies' ideas concerning *Washington Black's* engagement with the (neo-)slave narrative genre in conversation with Lisa Yaszek's concept of the Black Technoscientific Genius, I aim to disentangle the novel's representation of science as a potentially empowering force for the protagonist that simultaneously makes him vulnerable to exploitation by a scientific community that is dominated by wealthy white men. Reading Wash as a reinterpretation of the black technoscientific genius trope of earlier Afrofuturist fiction allows me to grasp the emancipatory implications of Wash's scientific practice, whereas Davies' suggestion that "Washington buys into [the] idea that his humanity — tautologically synonymous with freedom — might be attained through artistic and scientific achievement" (14) makes its problematic aspects visible. Through selected close readings, this presentation will set its focus on the protagonist's self-realization through his engagement with science.

**Alena Cicholewski** teaches at the Institute for English and American Studies at the University of Oldenburg (Germany), where she completed her PhD in English literature in 2020. In her dissertation "Chronopolitical Interventions in the Afterlife of Slavery: Forms and Functions of Temporal Disruptions in Contemporary Speculative Neo-Slave Narratives," she analyzes how the incorporation of elements such as time travel, reincarnation or alternate history enables speculative neo-slave narratives to reflect on the past and transform it for the purpose of envisioning different futures by destabilizing conventional notions of temporality and history. Her research interests include, but are not limited to, Afrofuturism, science fiction and young adult literature.

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## // General Information

### Conference Platform

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To be able to participate fully, you will need a webcam, a microphone, a stable internet connection and an up-to-date browser. We strongly recommend that you install the latest versions of either Mozilla Firefox (<https://www.mozilla.org/en-US/firefox/new/>) or Google Chrome (<https://www.google.com/chrome/>). There are known issues when using Safari or legacy browsers like Internet Explorer.

We have opted to forego a commercial out-of-the-box solution for conducting the conference; instead, we are using open-source software hosted exclusively on the University of Oldenburg's own servers – based on the free learning management system Stud.IP and the open-source software BigBlueButton. There may still be a few places where its provenance shows; but this should not detract from its functionality for our conference. Not all kinks may have been worked out, but by choosing this software, the conference organizers hope to contribute to a fairer and more sustainable internet for all.

The conference platform provides an overview of current presentations and the program, allows for the upload and download of material, facilitates the interaction between participants and provides access to the BBB presentations. Video conversations, lectures, and panels are facilitated through the videoconferencing tool BigBlueButton (BBB). For an introduction on how to use BigBlueButton you may check <https://bigbluebutton.org/teachers/tutorials/>

The platform is accessible as soon as you have received your account details. We recommend that you log on once before the conference starts – so that you can identify any technical issues and check the terms of use and visibility settings without hassle.

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- 1) You have received a preliminary password by e-mail on Friday, May 7 with the subject line "GAPS 2021: Conference platform access", sent by "Stud.IP - GAPS 2021". Check your spam filter if you have trouble locating it.
- 2) To access the conference platform open the conference platform (<https://gaps.uol.de/>) with your browser.
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- 4) Please select your preferred visibility status.
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- 6) Please change your preliminary password by clicking on the "Profile" icon in the upper left corner. Then open the "Personal details" tab and select "Change password" in the sidebar.
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You will enter panel presentations and plenary events muted. Please keep muted while presentations are ongoing. During the discussion after the panel, post a C or a Q to public chat for a question or a comment. Unmute when the chair calls on you. If your connection is unstable, you may opt to type out your question instead; the chair will then read it out.

During plenary events, we kindly ask the audience to switch off their video transmission, in order to save bandwidth. Of course, you may turn on your video when asking a question.

During panel presentations, we encourage you to keep your video on, unless the audience is prohibitively large.

## Information for presenters and chairs

We have indicated 20-minute "setup phase for presenters" before each panel. If you are presenting or chairing a panel, use this timeslot to enter the BigBlueButton room where your panel takes place, test your audio and video works, and to make the necessary preparations for sharing your slide. A student assistant will be present to help with any technical issues.

There are two ways to share presentations. You can either share your screen and switch to PowerPoint or a similar program. Alternatively, you can convert your presentation into pdf-file and upload it to BigBlueButton before the presentation starts. Your presentation will then be displayed within the Big Blue Button surface, so you can see the other participants and receive chat messages while presenting. The latter method is also highly advisable if you are unsure about the stability of your connection. Unfortunately, this method does not allow you to use animations embedded in the slides.

Please ensure that you keep within the 20-minute limit for panel papers to allow for a 10-minute discussion on each paper (15 minutes presentation/15 minutes discussion in the "Under construction"-section). Chairs and presenters should agree on a way for the chair to communicate the time to each presenter beforehand.

We would greatly appreciate it if you could make presentation slides available afterwards. In the Conference Lobby, click on the link "Files for download" in the sidebar on the left. There are individual folders for each panel where you can upload your presentation or any other supplementary materials you might have.

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