

31st ANNUAL WOMEN IN GERMAN STUDIES CONFERENCE
8-9 November 2019
Hosted by UCD School of Languages, Cultures and Linguistics

ABSTRACTS

Friday 8 November: Museum of Literature Ireland, UCD Newman House, 86 St. Stephens' Green, D2, room 8.

16:00-17:30 Navigating memories and landscapes

Anne Fuchs, Towards a cultural history of walking in the twentieth century

This presentation presents an emerging research project on the cultural history of walking in the 20th century. Departing from the prevailing emphasis on the Benjaminian figure of the flaneur, it proposes a shift towards cultural mobility studies that paradigm that explores the body/ environment/ technology relationship.

Helen Finch, 'Every form of assumed pathos is repugnant': Silbermann's queer archive of memory

This paper examines Alphons Silbermann's *Verwandlungen. Eine Autobiographie* (1989) to argue that it provides an unexpected queer supplement to the genre of the exile or Holocaust memoir. Alphons Silbermann was a prolific sociologist and musicologist émigré, who fled from Cologne to Australia but who eventually re-emigrated to Germany to establish an academic career there. His autobiography is both a chronicle of his career and an account of his struggle to live both as a gay man and as an observant Jew. By foregrounding his identity as an observant Jew, gay man and academic, he thus emphasises his alterity from his reading public and his outsider status by a hybrid combination of queer emotion and sociological precision.

My paper argues that the impersonal style and academic ambition of Silbermann's *Verwandlungen* creates strategies that baffle the generic expectations of confession, traumatic suffering and redemption associated with the Holocaust or emigré testimonial (c.f. Eaglestone 2004). Instead, they provide a valuable insight into the queer history of the Holocaust by documenting the author's gay experiences in interwar Cologne, in exile in wartime Australia, and after the war as an older man in Germany. The memoir also develops an unexpected queer Jewish ethical standpoint from which to critique the hypocrisies of Australia and postwar Germany.

Written before the 'memory boom' of the 1990s, and without recourse to the standardised tropes of Holocaust testimony established during the late twentieth century (see e.g. Waxman, 2008, or Horowitz, 2016), Silbermann's autobiography uses a critical, empirical prose that foregrounds sociological analysis. His book explicitly refuses the psychoanalytical schema of 'repression' and 'neurosis', but at the same time functions as a queer 'archive of feelings' (Cvetkovich 2003), juxtaposing cool sociological observations about prejudice and discrimination with enraged rhetoric about unfaithful lovers, societal homophobia and queer isolation. His hybrid prose critiques contemporary homophobic and antisemitic politics and regimes of discourse, in an intellectually and emotionally uncomfortable fashion. Silbermann's work thus marks a unique point in the 'history of emotions' (Frevert) and in queer history, as well as in Holocaust testimony.

Jean Conacher, Navigating familiar and unfamiliar landscapes: Jenny Erpenbeck's *Gehen, Ging, Gegangen* (2017)

Century-old methods of navigation that help travellers identify location, time and trajectory have often served to provide individuals and communities with a sense of security and rootedness in an ever-moving world. They help pinpoint our place in that world, map the borders and contours of our physical space and navigate the landscapes of, and spaces between, "home" and "abroad". Yet such understandings are intrinsically culturally bound, reflecting differing traditions of text- and oral-based navigation systems. As a result, intercultural encounters across national boundaries trigger a process of disorientation and reorientation which challenge participants to question their perspectives on the world around them. This paper explores the intercultural negotiation of competing navigation systems between apparently settled and disrupted migrant nomadic communities, revealing how each draws on a culturally specific world view, increasingly challenged as relationships deepen and a process of self-reflection begins.

9:30-11:00 Third Reich (Room D301)

Simone Schroth, The texts behind *The House Behind*: On the latest editions of Anne Frank's diaries

Returning from the concentration camps as the only survivor of a group of eight Jews, Otto Frank put together a selection of his daughter Anne's written legacy: her original diaries, the version she wrote with an eye on later publication, and further sketches of life in hiding. *Het Achterhuis* ('The House Behind', Amsterdam 1947) was translated into various languages and became a worldwide bestseller. Since 1986, it has been possible to retrace Otto Frank's compilation work using the first-ever Critical Edition, presented by the Netherlands Institute for War Documentation. In accordance with copyright law, Anne Frank's texts entered the public domain in a variety of countries seventy years after her death. As a consequence, several new editions have been published since the beginning of 2016, the latest being an individual German edition of the last version written by Anne Frank (May 2019). This presentation will examine the criteria used in these editions as well as the way they are introduced in the relevant paratexts and presented in the media.

Sophie Bayer, The Ernst Levin Collection

Many scholars have worked on historical persons' letters and used them as a source of history, cultural history or literary work. Especially in Holocaust Studies plenty of research has dealt with diaries and letters of those who had been persecuted by Nazi Germany. The archived material I am working with, stands out in a unique way for it contains not only the correspondence of the years of the Third Reich but spans a whole family's collected letters from the 1890s to 1975. Thus my thesis will be able to address the issue of linguistic and narratological developments and changes throughout time with special attention to the relation of the moment of the experience and the moment of writing about it.

My PhD Project is based on an uncatalogued collection of personal papers created and collected by Jewish neurologist Ernst Levin who emigrated from Germany to Scotland in the 1930s. Specifically I will be looking at what language was used to describe the atrocities of the Third Reich amongst friends who suffered as well as gained from it. I argue that each letter and its text is 'activated' every time it is read. Each reader adds various aspects to the story told and thus makes it a different text every time. In conclusion this project sheds new light on the little recognized issue of a letter's recipient and a later formed collection's reader and her or his contribution to the written text.

Alex Lloyd, Sophie Scholl: Interpreting an Icon

In 1943, five students and a professor at the Ludwig-Maximilians-Universität in Munich were arrested, tried, and executed. They were members of *Die Weiße Rose*, a clandestine group which wrote and distributed political pamphlets calling on Germans to resist Hitler. Among them was the 21-year-old Sophie Scholl who played an active part in producing and disseminating the group's texts and supporting the endeavour. This paper traces Sophie Scholl's legacy in Germany after 1943. At times, her involvement and significance within the White Rose resistance has been marginalized (along with that of other women); yet at others she has been transformed into an icon, co-opted and invested with meaning in ways that silence her own unique voice. Here, I examine the extent to which we can speak of an instrumentalization of Sophie Scholl in post-war German memory and situate this discussion within the broader context of post-war memorial culture.

9:30-11:00 Representations of femininity (Room D201)

Sina Stuhlert, Emma Vely's *Herodias*: Problematising the image of the femme fatale

Despite having written many novels, stories and articles as well as having led an actively engaged life, the German writer Emma Vely (1848-1934) has largely been neglected by scholarship thus far. Supporting women's rights, she herself led a remarkable life fending for herself and her daughter, earning her living by writing.

Questions of women's position in society are also a recurring topic in her stories. In her novel *Herodias* (1883) she uses the reference to the image of the popular femme fatale figure from the New Testament to conjure a whole set

of connotations to describe her female protagonist. Taking the example of this novel I will show how Vely makes use of the Herodias myth to problematise stereotypes of femininity and the pressure of socially enforced gender roles, which condemned female sexual independence.

I will further focus on the critics' reaction at the time to Vely's novel *Herodias* and show how they comment on the portrayal of her main protagonist and the reference to the biblical myth. Those reviews show that Vely was well known and widely read. My paper will therefore demonstrate how the engagement with Vely's work can enrich our critical understanding of the late 19th century.

Katherine Calvert, Negotiating Intergenerational Tensions: The Mother-Daughter Relationship in Elfriede Brüning's *Kleine Leute*

In this paper I analyse the central mother-daughter relationship in Elfriede Brüning's novel *Kleine Leute* (written 1932-3, first published 1970), a semi-autobiographical portrait of a family's struggles in the economic hardship and political instability of the late Weimar period. Brüning joined the KPD and the *Bund proletarisch-revolutionärer Schriftsteller* in 1931 and I consider her portrayal of Anna and Trude's relationship within the context of the tensions present in Weimar-era left-wing movements between promoting opportunities for women beyond the domestic sphere and, simultaneously, socially conservative notions of mothering as women's primary occupation. Through Anna and Trude's relationship, the novel engages with contemporary discussions of women's role in the family, their financial (in)dependence, and reproductive choices. The portrayal of Anna and Trude's complex relationship includes examples of closeness, distance and compromise, and I argue that Elfriede Brüning thus offers a more nuanced representation of intergenerational female relationships than is typical of left-wing fiction from the Weimar period.

11:00-11:30 Coffee break (Floor 3, D Corridor)

11:30-12:30 Places and spaces (Room D301)

Claudia Gremler, Deutsche Schuld und skandinavische Gnade – das Norwegenbild im deutschen Gegenwartsfilm

Das deutsche Verhältnis zu Skandinavien war seit dem frühen 19. Jahrhundert von identifikatorischen Aneignungsprozessen geprägt, die sich sowohl auf politisch-militärischer als auch kultureller Ebene ereigneten und kolonialistische Tendenzen aufwiesen.

In der Folge stehen die kulturellen Repräsentationen der nordischen Länder aus deutscher Perspektive bis heute in einer Darstellungstradition, die eine Instrumentalisierung des skandinavischen Raumes für deutsche Imaginationsbedürfnisse favorisiert und vergleichsweise selten hinterfragt wird. Das lässt sich besonders im Bereich des Films beobachten, wo – anders als etwa in der Literatur – zudem die finanziellen Abhängigkeitsstrukturen internationaler Koproduktionen einen Einfluss ausüben.

Dieser Vortrag wird kurz die Geschichte der auf Skandinavien gerichteten (kulturellen) Appropriation skizzieren und sich dann der Analyse von deutschen Filmen widmen, die in Norwegen spielen. Matthias Glasners Film *Gnade* (2012), der im Zentrum dieser Untersuchung stehen wird, kann als Paradebeispiel einer deutschen Befindlichkeiten unterworfenen Vision der subpolaren Region gelten. Zur Kontextualisierung und Kontrastierung von Glasners Film wird Thomas Arslans 2017 entstandene Produktion *Helle Nächte* herangezogen.

Rebecca Wismeg, Tranquil Austria? A nation between trauma and tourist idyll

30 years after the Waldheim affair and following the scandals around and eventual breakdown of Austria's right-wing government under chancellor Kurz – just weeks before the 2019 European elections – Austria is once again subject of international scrutiny. Her right-wing politics and approach towards her Nazi-past are taking centre stage, painting an unfavourable picture of the nation that is the polar opposite to the image constructed, distributed and maintained by Austria's tourism industry. Against this backdrop my paper seeks to analyse the way in which the image of Austria as a tourist haven is employed, reinforced or criticised in contemporary texts by Austrian authors. Looking at novels such as Robert Seethaler's *Ein ganzes Leben* and Wolf Haas' *Das Wetter vor 15 Jahren*, questions as to the relevance, impact and reach of the country's internationally marketed image will be addressed, taking their political dimension into account.

11.30-12.30 Adaptation, rewriting, refashioning (Room D201)

Deirdre Byrnes, Reading Seán O'Casey in the GDR

Seán O'Casey's plays were staged regularly in the GDR, growing in popularity to the extent that, by the early 1970s, he was the most performed of all playwrights from the West. However, it was through his autobiographical writing that he first came to the attention of GDR readers. O'Casey's life-long commitment to the socialist cause and the focus in what became known as his Dublin trilogy (*The Shadow of a Gunman*, *Juno and the Paycock* and *The Plough and the Stars*) on the harrowing conditions of the Irish working class meant that writer and oeuvre found favour in the anti-fascist state.

In this paper, I will focus on two hitherto neglected aspects of O'Casey's reception in the GDR: the highly politicised use of an adapted extract from his memoirs in textbooks for the teaching of English and the no less political *Nachworte* – contextualising afterwords that accompanied the publication of his multi-volume autobiography and of his plays. The perception of Ireland reinforced both in the GDR classroom and in the afterwords was of a nation oppressed by the yoke of British imperialism. My paper will demonstrate how ideology and literature collided, in often unexpected ways, when reading Seán O'Casey in the GDR.

Rachel MagShamhráin, Faking Amphitryon, Or: Things You Can Do to An Author When He's Dead

This paper looks at the role of the fake and the false in literary scholarship, taking as its central artefact a recent new original by Heinrich von Kleist commissioned by me from Berlin-based artist, author and forger Miriam Sachs: a recreated page from the lost manuscript of his play *Amphitryon* (1807). The page in question contains that crucial scene in the play in which Alkmene tries to prove her fidelity to her suspicious husband *Amphitryon*, just now returned from a long absence fighting the Theban war. Alkmene, who has just unbeknownst to herself spent a night of passion with Jupiter cunningly disguised as Amphitryon, presents a gem which Jupiter had given her and on which the letter A, for Amphitryon, was carved. However, the jewel now inexplicably bears the unequivocal letter J, for Jupiter, and has gone from being proof positive of her fidelity to being proof positive of falseness. In the newly created original manuscript page, Sachs, who is an expert forger of Kleist's writing, was asked to make the As and Js literally indistinguishable on the page, an act of retroactive sabotage that introduces entirely new and foreign meanings into the original text, and cuckolded the author Kleist just as Amphitryon himself was cuckolded by Jupiter. This paper explores what this Sachs-MagShamhráin act of wanton interference does to the text, the author, the reader and the scholar. It is important to recall that Kleist's play was itself an adaptation of a plot taken from Plautus via Molière, and was itself a third-party interference in other authors' stories.

12:30-13:30 Lunch (Floor 3, D Corridor)

13:30-14:30 AGM (Room D301)

14:30-16:00 Female voice in poetry and visual arts (Room D301)

Stephanie Galasso, Violence of Framing in Ayim's *Blues in Schwarz Weiß*

This paper performs a close reading of the multivalent images of frames in a constellation of poems entitled "aus dem rahmen," in May Ayim's *Blues in Schwarz Weiß*. To be outside the frame, Ayim suggests in "grenzenlos und unverschämt," is to transcend all aesthetic and social categories and hierarchies. In "deutschland im herbst," Ayim exposes the physical violence that permeates these categorizations through her image of shattered window frames. The broken glass portends the repetition of racist acts of destruction at regular intervals in German history: at Kristallnacht and in a spate of white supremacist violence that, as Ayim demonstrates, undermined the concept of "German reunification" in 1990. Frames image the white masculine gaze that has historically determined Western aesthetic categories, and, I suggest, crucially expose the violence that undergirds these categories. By tracing this image, I connect Ayim's critique of colonial legacies of Western aesthetics to her political activism against German racism and sexism.

Niamh Burns, Women in the abstract: spiritualism and materialism in modernist women's abstract poetry and visual arts

This paper takes as its cue the exhibition 'Weltempfänger' at Munich's Lenbachhaus (6th November 2018 – 10th March 2019), which presented what it called 'an extraordinary and largely unknown chapter of modernism' in the work of Georgiana Houghton, Hilma af Klint, and Emma Kunz. These women, all of whom were mediums, 'developed their own abstract visual language' with which to express their radical spiritual experience. My paper identifies (perhaps unlikely) affinities between these women's spiritual abstraction and what I assert is a materialist abstraction found in the lesser-studied early poetry of Claire Goll and Emmy Hennings. Inspired by the exhibition's presentation of 'diverse manifestations of abstraction', I argue that a careful (re-)consideration of women's diverse artistic output in the modernist period may contribute to a more nuanced vision of what abstraction means and can do in modernism. These women's formal experimentations in visual arts and poetry are radical, and are so in surprising ways.

Caroline Bland, Nina Schmidt, Girlsplaining: A Comparison of German Graphic Art in the era of the Suffrage Campaign and Contemporary Comics

This paper will present first findings from our research collaboration "Graphic Art and Feminism – today and 100 years ago". In comparison to Britain, where the suffrage movement was supported by many artists especially in the climactic years before the First World War, German feminists were far more inclined to campaign with words rather than images. Nonetheless, there are important examples of visual artists engaging with feminism which have yet to be examined in detail. During the second major phase of the women's movement in the 1970s, feminism became more visible and humorous, as the trenchant cartoons of Franziska Becker demonstrate. Today an increasing number of explicitly feminist comics and graphic novels are appearing to growing acclaim, among them Katja Klengel's *Girlsplaining* (2018). Our paper will focus on a diachronic comparison of visual presentation techniques, formats and the political intentions among selected (representative) cartoons, comics, and other graphic art publications from the first, second and contemporary women's movement/ feminisms.

14:30-16:00 Authority, Agency, Resistance (Room D201)

Rebecca Braun, 'What is a German world author?'

This talk explores the practical ramifications of Goethe's concept of world literature for the evolution of German authorship, with a particular focus on the period from 1945 to the present. Reading Goethe's term as first and foremost an insistence that literature comes about through a series of worldly interactions between people, I consider how any author situates themselves within a world literature network by the extent to which their work manifests one or more of four major modes of authorship: the celebratory, commemorative, satirical and utopian modes. These points and their further significance are made tangible through reference to work by Gisela Elsner.

Catriona Corke, 'Party politics, public intellectuals and West German left-wing terrorism during the 1970s'

Political responses to the Red Army Faction (RAF) during the 1970s frequently sought out the intellectual roots of terrorism. Academics, authors, lawyers and pastors were considered 'Sympathisanten' for protesting on behalf of imprisoned members of the RAF. These intellectuals were not usually motivated by mere ideological affinity but instead wished to raise broader concerns about the Federal Republic's criminal justice system. Furthermore, while the term 'Sympathisant' implies ideas of scapegoating and exclusion, it is striking that many of the intellectuals involved were close to the political establishment. For example, pastor Heinrich Albertz had previously served as an SPD politician, while Heinrich Böll was in personal correspondence with Willy Brandt and served as President of International PEN. This paper will therefore explore the extent to which the sympathiser debate was less about counterterrorism efforts and more a manifestation of the CDU-CSU's desire to discredit the left-wing SPD while serving in the opposition.