



2025 CAPONEU CONSORTIUM CONFERENCE (on Zoom: see p. 5 for links)

## **Travelling Knowledge: Global Epistemologies and the Political Novel in Europe** PROGRAMME

15 September 2025

### ***Day 1: Alternative Epistemologies and the Political Novel***

9.30 Coffee and chatroom (bring your own coffee!) [10.30am Central Europe; 3pm New Delhi; 5.30pm Beijing]

9.55 Welcome: Sarah Colvin

Chair: Tara Talwar Windsor

#### **10.00-10.50 Keynote**

10.00-10.35 **Shambhavi Prakash, “Schichten statt Geschichten” (Layers instead of Stories): Alternative Epistemologies in Hubert Fichte’s *Petersilie* (Parsley)**

10.35-10.50 *Discussion*

#### **10.50-11.00 SHORT BREAK**

Chair: Katie Unwin

#### **11.00-12.30 *Alternative Epistemologies* Panel 1: *Ghosts and Resistant Knowledge***

11.00-11.25 Mark Devenney, ‘Ghosts of the Novel’s Past: Coloniality, Ecocide and Western Imaginary’

11.30-11.55 Sarah Colvin, ‘Haunting times: Ghosted memory and epistemic revenants in Serhiy Zhadan’s *Voroshilovgrad* and NoViolet Bulawayo’s *Glory*’

12.00-12.30 *Discussion*

#### **12.30-13.00 BREAK**

Chair: Alrik Daldrup

#### **13.00-14.30 *Alternative Epistemologies* Panel 2: *Ex-centric Knowledge on the Move***

13.00-13.25 Błażej Warkocki, ‘Queer Discourse and Theory in Poland – Travelling Knowledge on the (Semi)Peripheries’

13.30-13.55 Charlotte Woodford: ‘Ethnographic fictions? Travelling Stories and their Portable Forms’

14.00-14.30 *Discussion*

16 September 2025

**Day 2: Entangled Knowledges and the Political Novel**

Chair: Chalo Waya

10.00-10.50 **Keynote**

10.00-10.35 **James Ogone, 'Epistemologies on Safari: Mobilities, Contestations, and Politics of Global North-South Knowledge Entanglements'**

10.35-10.50 *Discussion*

10.50-11.00 SHORT BREAK

Chair: Melina Mandelbaum

11.00-12.30 *Entangled Knowledges Panel 1: Translation Politics*

11.00-11.25 Tara Talwar Windsor, 'Resonances across Time and Space: A Festival of Literary Performance, Knowledge Production and Political Intervention'

11.30-11.55 Niki Sioki, 'Publishing the Political Novel: The Role of Material Form and Typographic Design in the Circulation of Translated Literature'

12.00-12.30 *Discussion*

12.30-13.00 BREAK

Chair: Miriam Schwarz

13.00-14.30 *Entangled Knowledges Panel 2: Knowledge across Borders*

13.00-13.25 Aurore Peyroles, 'Imparting Knowledge: The Ambiguities of the Class Mobility Narrative'

13.30-13.55 Florentia Antoniou, 'Bildungsroman Novels from the European Periphery: Marangou's *From Famagusta to Vienna* and Savičević's *Farewell, Cowboy*'

14.00 *Discussion*

14.30 Coffee and chatroom



17 September 2025

**Day 3: Decolonial Epistemologies and the Political Novel**

9.30 Coffee and chatroom

Chair: Charlotte Woodford

10.00-10.50 **Keynote**

10.00-10.35 **Divya Dwivedi, 'The Anti-decolonial Anti-caste Vision of O. V. Vijayan's Dharmapuranam'**

10.35-10.50 *Discussion*

10.50-11.00 SHORT BREAK

11.00-12.30 *Decolonial Epistemologies and the Political Novel* Panel 1 *Other Voices*

11.00-11.25 Shuangzhi Li, 'From Daoism to Pseudo-Christianism: How German Novels Tell Stories of Chinese Rebellions'

11.30-11.55 Joanna Kellond, 'Gender Politics and Subjugated Knowledge in Tlotlo Tsamaase's *Womb City*'

12.00 *Discussion*

12.30-13.00 BREAK

Chair: Clara Busch

13.00-14.30 *Decolonial Epistemologies and the Political Novel* Panel 2 *Crossing Continents*

13.00-13.25 Chalo Waya, 'Negotiating Imbricated Positionalities: Critical Afropolitanism as Epistemic Self-assertion in Djaimilia Pereira de Almeida's *Esse Cabelo*'

13.30-13.55 Branimir Janković, 'One Knowledge, Different Uses: André Gide's *Travels in the Congo* in the Two Yugoslavias'

14.00-14.30 *Discussion*

18 September 2025

**Day 4: The Global Political Novel**

Chair: Sarah Colvin

10-10.50 **Keynote**

10.00-10.35 **B. Venkat Mani, 'The Global Novel in an Age of Refugees'**

10.35-10.50 *Discussion*

10.50-11.00 SHORT BREAK

11.00-12.30 *The Global Political Novel Panel 1 Reading for the Future*

11.00-11.25 Eric Bergman & Mirela Dakić, 'Departures of (Reading) the Political Novel in Post-Yugoslav Literature'

11.30-11.55 Tomasz Mizerkiewicz, 'Political Novels and Travelling Knowledge of Saving a Democratic Future in "Strange Times"'

12.00-12.30 *Discussion*

12.30 – 13.00 Lunch

13.00-13.30 Book launch

Ivana Perica, *Politics, Literature and Tertium Datur: Socialist Central Europe, 1928–1968*, Bloomsbury 2025

Aurore Peyroles, *Voyages au bout de la banlieue: Représentations romanesques de la banlieue parisienne (1820–1950)* [Journeys to the Edge of the "Banlieue". Representations of the Parisian Suburbs in the French Novel (1820-1950)], De Gruyter 2025

Mirela Dakić, *Rod, avangarda i politika pisanja* [Gender, Avant-Garde and the Politics of Writing], Durieux, 2025

13.30-14.30 Celebratory concluding chatroom (bring your own champagne)



## ZOOM LINKS

Please do not circulate publicly

### Day 1 (15 September):

<https://cam-ac-uk.zoom.us/j/89249436604?pwd=DAi3G9LRPnMqWEsUQgrxE6TQvJzeYk.1>

Meeting ID: 892 4943 6604

Passcode: 192516

### Day 2 (16 September)

<https://cam-ac-uk.zoom.us/j/86573556991?pwd=l4jSb9QypaMra2n8KShSAXdGKpx0KJ.1>

Meeting ID: 865 7355 6991

Passcode: 727325

### Day 3 (17 September)

<https://cam-ac-uk.zoom.us/j/85600682729?pwd=dTpCfcPypaCpef4FE6BJG0Bk6iyMIW.1>

Meeting ID: 856 0068 2729

Passcode: 550024

### Day 4 (18 September)

<https://cam-ac-uk.zoom.us/j/85632745819?pwd=jfktxozLF4VrCFMzB6aC7rkOUmXoSV.1>

Meeting ID: 856 3274 5819

Passcode: 303941



## ABSTRACTS

### **Florentia Antoniou (University of Nicosia)**

#### Bildungsroman Novels from the European Periphery: Marangou's *From Famagusta to Vienna* and Savičević's *Farewell, Cowboy*

The Bildungsroman novel often focuses on the connection between national experience and the life of its protagonist. In their semiautobiographical stories, both Marangou and Savičević use memories and fractured timelines to form narratives that paint the cultural and geopolitical histories of Cyprus and Croatia, respectively, in the 20th century. The study will also consider the linguistic question of whether, or to what degree, the knowledge of the original text is affected when transformed into the translated version of it.

Originally written in Greek, *From Famagusta to Vienna* (2003) is a Postcolonial Bildungsroman that follows the life story of George, from the time he is a boy in Cyprus, at the beginning of WWI, until he is in his thirties, after the end of WWII. The novel is split into five sections: Famagusta, Vienna, Athens, Limassol, and Alexandria, each city symbolizing a significant era in the narrator's life, and all the while, the 20th century history and politics of Cyprus, Asia and Europe are subtly woven into the narrative. *From Famagusta to Vienna* was translated into numerous languages, and it is the first Greek-Cypriot novel to have ever been translated into Turkish.

Originally written in Croatian, *Farewell, Cowboy* (2010) is a female Bildungsroman that is also situated in politically troubled peripheral Europe; it takes place in Split, a tiny coastal town in Croatia. Savičević, and her heroine, Dada, grew up during the Yugoslav wars and were affected by its consequences. Although the novel does not directly dwell on war, its aftermath lingers in the background throughout. Savičević experiments with structure and language; Dada often speaks in slang and local dialect, something that a reader of the English version of the novel can access only indirectly. At the core of the story, there is the heroine's quest as she plays the detective, emphasizing the influence of the western world.

Both Cyprus and Croatia have often been identified as tourist destinations; and yet, Marangou and Savičević, through their melancholic storytelling, showcase how personal and national histories and tragedy are intertwined, revealing how while people are a product of their environments, they are simultaneously connected to the grander scheme of things.

### **Eric Bergman & Mirela Dakić (University of Zagreb)**

#### Departures of (Reading) the Political Novel in Post-Yugoslav Literature

In this paper we will provide an insight into the concept and corpus of post-Yugoslav literature(s) – especially its novelistic part – in the context of the discussions on world literature that have taken place in the last two decades since Pascale Casanova's study *La République mondiale des Lettres* (*World Republic of Letters*; 1999) and Franco Moretti's influential article *Conjectures on World Literature* (2000). We will consider the recent discussion on world literature, keeping in mind the case of post-



Yugoslav literature(s) as a specific corpus that eludes the traditional historiographical and critical categories developed in the context of asserting particular national literatures. This heterogeneous corpus consists of authors, oeuvres and works that are connected in different ways to the reference field of Yugoslav and post-Yugoslav literature and culture and brings to light different conceptualizations of the cultural history and present of the former Yugoslav countries. Since in much of this corpus the original point of departure becomes a source of constant displacement – as manifested both in the itineraries and in the narratological strategies for articulating the post-Yugoslav cultural state – we will consider the theoretical and methodological challenges posed by the post-Yugoslav political novel in line with recent discussions of world literature as well as the development of alternative notions such as transnational and postnational literature.

### **Sarah Colvin (University of Cambridge)**

#### Haunting times: Ghosted Memory and Epistemic Revenants in Serhiy Zhadan's *Voroshilovgrad* and NoViolet Bulawayo's *Glory*

*'There cannot not be ghosts in these testimonies -- ghosts, graveyards, hauntings – because we are dealing with what has not been dealt with'* (Sara Ahmed)<sup>[i]</sup>

Zhadan's *Voroshilovgrad* (2010) plays in a fictional Ukraine in the early 2000s: an imaginative world where the dead and the living intermingle. The narrator-protagonist, Herman Korolyov, travels back to the world of his childhood to deal with his brother's disappearance (or death), has ghostly encounters and even plays a football match on a team of ghosts. In going back, he deals (and indeed allies himself with) with spirits who who have been violently ghosted in a capitalist oligarchy. Bulawayo's novel *Glory* (2022) plays in a fictional Zimbabwe in the 2010s. The protagonist, Destiny, is (like Herman) returning to her childhood home; like Herman she has picaresque qualities; and like Herman she encounters ghosts from a past that has not been dealt with. Unlike Herman, Destiny does not survive her own story – about a third of the novel plays out after her death, in her haunting presence.

The paper will consider how the novels expose the repressive practice of epistemic ghosting; but also the resistant practice of epistemic haunting. Epistemic ghosting erases not only memory and knowledge of the past, but particular people or groups as rememberers. It is a necropolitical practice: epistemic ghosting is repressive and serves the self-reproduction of power.

But the novels also show how those who have been ghosted return resistantly, bringing (back) memories and history. These ghosts are (in Braidotti's terms) *nomadic subjects* who cross conceptual as well as temporal boundaries; dead people who paradoxically affirm the principle of life.<sup>[ii]</sup> They address history and politics and seek epistemic or (to borrow David Lloyd's term) poetic justice.<sup>[iii]</sup>

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[i] Sara Ahmed, *Complaint*. Duke University Press 2021, 306

[ii] Rosi Braidotti, *Nomadic Subjects*. New York: Columbia University Press 2011.

[iii] David Lloyd, 'Nomos and Lyric: On Poetry and Justice'. *Law, Culture and the Humanities* (2017), 1-17.



### **Mark Devenney (University of Brighton)**

#### Ghosts of the Novel's Past: Coloniality, Ecocide and Western Imaginary'

The European imaginary is haunted. This is most obvious in the legacies of two global wars and of the holocaust – the Shoah that saw the murder of almost 7 million Jews; and the genocides against the Roma and Sinti peoples and of those deemed mentally or physically incapable. These unique horrors can never be relativised, but they must be historicised. These were not the first genocides committed by European societies. Many of the practices developed in the colonies were replicated in Europe, including the camp, the exercise of a politics of exception, claims about the purity of the race, legal and extra-legal killing *inter alia*. The Spanish, Portuguese, German, Italian, British, Dutch, and Belgian colonial enterprises were responsible for multiple ontocides, epistemicides, ecocides and genocides that continued well into the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

The 'European novel' is haunted by coloniality, but in ways often unacknowledged. Its language, narrative forms, plots and its representations of social orders are all in negotiation with the uncanny presence of these ghosts. Drawing on a range of decolonial and indigenous scholarship, I revitalise Edward Said's notion of a contrapuntal reading (Said 1993) to engage in a séance with these ghosts. I develop a reading practice that calls to presence the materiality of these spectres. I begin with Edna O'Brien's Night focusing on the ghosts that haunt the English language. My reading is literal, almost banal, discerning coloniality in the fragile lucidity of deceptively simple, descriptive sentences and words. I link this reading of language, and of its form, to both epistemicide and ontocide. I turn second to Isabella Hamad's Enter Ghost. Here I discuss the continued legacies of dispossession that haunt the present, with a particular focus on property – the material embodiment of generational loss. I read physical property against the grain, as a material symptom, requiring interpretation, that in its insistent solidity acts as the uncanny protrusion of the past into the present. The ongoing genocide in Gaza is read against this backdrop. Last, I consider the relationship between literature and ecocide as figured in the landscape described in Uwe Timm's 1970 novel Morenga. The novel addresses the German genocide of the Herero people in Namibia. Ecocide, I argue, conceptually pegs the various forms of killing constitutive of the European imaginary. Said argued that a contrapuntal reading "connect[s] the structures of a narrative to the ideas, concepts, experiences from which it draws support", notably histories of imperialism. Linking Said's work with recent work on ecocide, I argue that we can productively read coloniality through certain novels as a 'critique of the very historical process which has brought it to such heights of fulfilment' (Sylvia Wynter: 1972).

### **Branimir Janković (University of Zagreb)**

#### One Knowledge, Different Uses: André Gide's *Travels in the Congo* in the Two Yugoslavias

André Gide's travel diary *Voyage au Congo* was published in 1927 in Paris and was soon translated into English in 1929 as *Travels in the Congo*. The book is dedicated to Joseph Conrad. Gide's criticism of French colonial rule was reformist, retaining its civilizing mission and not questioning colonialism itself. However, his book had a strong public impact worldwide, comparable to his *Return from the U.S.S.R.* (*Retour de l'U.R.S.S.*) published in 1936. For that reason, *Voyage au Congo* was also translated in Yugoslavia (as *Put u Kongo*) first in 1934 and later in 1953. The two Yugoslav editions of this influential book in 20 years appeared in very different contexts. Interwar Yugoslavia was a



monarchist state seemingly quite distant from any questions of colonialism and in which colonialism was almost never discussed. In contrast, post-war Yugoslavia was a socialist country with a clear anti-colonial political stance and firm public discourse against colonialism, further influenced by far-reaching decolonization processes of the time. In my paper, I will ask how Gide's book and its knowledge production were discussed, used and reused in these different political contexts of the two Yugoslavias? What was the role of Gide as a writer and his political literature in fashioning these discussions, uses, and reuses? What is the place of Yugoslavia in transnational travelling of Gide's knowledge and in global debates on colonialism in the 20th century and today?

**Joanna Kellond (University of Brighton)**

Gender Politics and Subjugated Knowledge in Tlotlo Tsamaase's *Womb City*

Tlotlo Tsamaase's *Womb City* (2024) is a work of speculative fiction set in a future Botswana, where advancements in reproductive technology exist in parallel with deeply familiar forms of gendered and racialised oppression and inequality. Despite its recent publication, the novel has attracted the attention of sexuality and gender studies scholars. Though ectogenesis has become a reality in the novel, Preite and Xausa (2024) highlight that it has not brought about the kind of utopian emancipation imagined by feminists of the second wave (Firestone 1969, Piercy 1976), because the technology remains deeply imbricated with the patriarchal family. Additionally, Jenna N. Hanchey (2024) argues that the novel is concerned with exposing the violence of a gender order that fears the feminine and oppresses all, those who are assigned female or resist the dominant binary gender order in particular. For Hanchey, the text's depiction of the Tswana origin deity, Matsieng, as gender expansive can be read as a comment on the fear of the feminine and its consequences.

While Preite and Xausa note the connection between the family form that dominates *Womb City* and the colonial order, Hanchey does not comment on the relationship between coloniality and the misogyny central to the world of the novel. Developing these responses, this paper considers the text's contribution to the project of decolonisation, reading the novel's critique of male dominance and binary gender in relation to the colonial matrix of power (Quijano 2007) which, scholars note, continues to shape knowledge production in Africa (Ndlovu-Gatsheni 2013, 16). Using this lens, the paper considers whether *Womb City's* treatment of the myth of Matsieng, a figure who is often referred to as male, suggests that gender emancipation might involve "exhuming subjugated knowledge and liberating marginalised epistemes" (Oyěwùmí 2016, 1), rather than advancements in reproductive technologies alone.

**Shuangzhi Li (Fudan University, Shanghai)**

From Daoism to Pseudo-Christianism: How German Novels Tell Stories of Chinese Rebellions

Plenty of modern European novels with focus on Asian scenarios may be read as a reaction of the extensive connection and confrontation between Europe and Asia in the age of colonialism in the 19th and 20th centuries. Such so-called exotic writings participate in the transcultural exchange of knowledges about the foreign peoples, lands and histories in their particular ways. They transport and transfer political, social, religious and ideological notions and practices from the Asian countries into



literary narrations which are shaped in the context of colonial discourses. It is thus important to examine the representations of Asia in these novels in the perspective of their orientalist gaze on the one hand. On the other hand, we can trace the travel of knowledge of Asia as a special form of self-reflections on the European modernity, as the narrations of Asia always stand in relation with Europe. In the German-language literature history, two historical novels from different times share one topic: Chinese rebellion. Alfred Döblin's *Die drei Sprünge von Wang-lun* (The three leaps of Wang Lun), published in 1916, illustrates a Chinese revolution against the Manchu-Qing regime in the 18th century. In this political turbulent movement, the Daoism, an essential Chinese philosophical and religious tradition, takes a central role. By emphasizing the Daoist belief as spiritual guidance of the rebels, Döblin applies contemporary sinological knowledge to articulate his own revolutionary conception. The other example proves to be a more direct knowledge transfer: Stefan Thome, who holds a doctor title in China studies, published his novel on the Taiping-Rebel in the mid-19th century in 2018. *Gott der Barbaren* (God of the Barbarians) presents the encounter of West and East during the political turmoil in China. The pseudo-Christianism on the side of rebels embodies the mixture of European and Chinese ideologies in the time of great changes. In both cases we can see how the travel of knowledge in various fashions generates new ways to construct the self and others.

## **B. Venkat Mani (University of Wisconsin-Madison)**

### The Global Novel in an Age of Refugees

Drawing on his current book project, *Tales of Unsettlement*, in this paper Mani situates the figure of the refugee and the forced migrant at the center of contemporary novels. Mani proposes that “refugee” narratives reveal much more than just the plight and flight of refugees, which has largely been the focus of contemporary studies. Instead, Mani argues that novels of refuge open doors to reframe our thinking of histories of European colonialism and its morphed manifestations in contemporary Europe. Moving narratives of refuge from a marginal to a central space, Mani underlines, opens up possibilities of thinking of the European novel as novel as a site of new political and aesthetic examination of race-, religion-, caste- and class-based discriminations in the contemporary era.

## **Tomasz Mizerkiewicz (Adam Mickiewicz University, Poznań)**

### Political Novels and Travelling Knowledge of Saving a Democratic Future in “Strange Times”

“We are living in strange times... and your identity is your enemy” – these words summarized political initiation of young protagonists of the novel *The Cliffhangers* (2020, Polish translation 2024) by Sabin Iqbal from India. The group of local youngsters’ gang called “cliffhangers” living in the southern resort of India was suspected to rape a European tourist. The course of events presented in the story reveals the unjust suspicions, grounded by the ethnic and religious prejudices, directed towards boys rebelling both against their Muslim society and Hinduist nationalists. The proposed study is to trace novelistic art of presenting characters dealing with the antagonistic, authoritative powers, deadly political tensions, and seeking for more hopeful and democratic future. The cliffhangers discover some unexpected and discrete practices and knowledges of how to avoid cultural clashes. The knowledges they reveal need to be drawn from the immersion in their local worlds and close relations with political “others”, since



these knowledges travel across cultures, classes, religions, continents. Agents of these knowledges make decisions resulting with their sacrifices and risking dangers of crossing rigid cultural boundaries. They learn to appreciate effectiveness of semi-secret knowers dispersed in all political sides and forming discrete alliances to save hopeful democratic future in “strange times”.

The presentation will be the case study aiming to describe some more general rule of the political novels depicting people confronted with challenges, crises, and catastrophes. Political novels assist them when they rely on the multifaceted knowledges of dealing with troublesome political realities so as to survive and defend the possibilities for the better democratic future.

Methodological backgrounds for the analysis will be studies on epistemic injustice, travelling knowledges (Renate Eigenbrod), theory of ethical choices in literature (Zhenzhao Nie), side-taking theories of reading, cognitive 4E analysis of literary characters.

### **James Odhiambo Ogone (JOOUST University/University of Mainz)**

#### Epistemologies on Safari: Mobilities, Contestations, and Politics of Global North-South Knowledge Entanglements

Knowledge travels. At no time has this been clearer than in the current digital era characterised by unprecedented increase in the speed and magnitude of communication across the globe. However, it must be acknowledged that the widespread circulation of knowledge has hardly been marked by uniformity. Being an epistemic commodity, the availability of knowledge is extensively governed by capitalist determinants. Further, a host of historical and political factors have constrained equal access to knowledge for some groups of people especially in the global South as evident in Africa. As knowledge journeys through various global intellectual systems from its sites of production, it hardly ever remains indifferent to the unique contexts it encounters. To make sense of this, I intend to demonstrate sensitivity to discourses on the geopolitics of knowledge in my lecture. I coin the phrase ‘epistemologies on safari’ to theoretically invoke the dual nuances of travel at play as knowledges embark on their journeys across the world. The different meanings invoked by the term safari as used locally in East Africa and in global circles point towards the transformation of epistemologies as they circulate across multiple cultural terrains. I seek to put into critical perspective the intrigues that characterise the circulation of epistemologies of the global South in the global North and vice versa. What fuels the travel of knowledges across the world? How does knowledge travel in the unequal spaces across the globe? Do the travelling knowledges remain provincial or do they become transcendental? What theoretical and methodological issues arise as knowledges travel? To answer these questions among others, I will seek inspiration from the theoretical notions of conviviality and incompleteness (Nyamnjoh, 2015) and incompleteness of all knowledges (Santos, 2014). The lecture hopes to explore the intrigues of the contemporary multidirectional flow of knowledges in the globe in ways that defy any existing unilateral explanations.



**Aurore Peyroles (Leibniz Centre for Literary and Cultural Research [ZfL], Berlin)**

Imparting Knowledge: The Ambiguities of the Class Mobility Narrative

It has developed into a genre of its own: since the early 2020s, the 'class transfuge narrative' has become a recipe for success, tracing the paths of so-called upward social mobility. The awarding of the Nobel Prize to Annie Ernaux in 2022 confirmed its institutionalisation. Regardless of their form, these narratives have the ambition to impart knowledge: autosociobiography is about writing about oneself only (or mainly) from a sociological perspective that emphasises the tensions between different social worlds. In particular, it aims to portray the social milieu of origin - the working class or the dominated - and the gap that separates it from the milieu of arrival - the intellectual bourgeoisie or the dominant. The difference in habitus occupies a central place, not only as a narrative device, but also as an object of cognition. Literature is thus ascribed a sociological role: it must participate in the elucidation of the social world by publicising and expressing the symbolic violence that structures it. Indeed, literary narratives have made a decisive contribution to the impressive dissemination and circulation of the sociological concept of the 'class transfuge' or class mobility.

Academic critics, however, are beginning to take a more critical look at these narratives: how do they portray social mobility, how do they comment on it and how do they politicise it? What use do they make of the concept of class? What - often implicit or even unconscious - assumptions are they based on? What discourses run through them? Using a series of autosociobiographical works from the French literary field, this contribution aims to examine how the technical term 'class transfuge' has become an editorial label, losing the descriptive precision of its sociological use. What remains of sociological knowledge when it travels through literature? And what political significance do these narratives have? For although they seem to question the solidity of the social order, they do not deconstruct class barriers but rather emphasise their contours or even evolve with them.

**Shambhavi Prakash (Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi)**

"Schichten statt Geschichten": Alternative Epistemologies in Hubert Fichte's *Petersilie*

Hubert Fichte's preoccupation with what resides at the margins yet defines the centre, with syncretism of Afro-American religions, and the manner in which these inform the aesthetic strategies employed in his literary works makes them a pertinent medium to explore the political potential of travelling knowledges and the extent to which they contribute to questioning Eurocentric approaches. Published in 1980, Hubert Fichte's *Petersilie* is an experimental literary work based on his and the photographer Leonore Mau's travels in the previous decade in Santo Domingo, Venezuela, Miami, and Grenada. Drawn from his ethnographic research on the Afro-American syncretic religious rituals, this work is composed of a variety of material such as snippets of conversations, newspaper articles, interviews with local politicians, staccato descriptions of trance ceremonies, phone book entries, supermarket prices, and litanies, among others. By engaging with this work together with Fichte's "Ketzerische Bemerkungen für eine neue Wissenschaft vom Menschen" (1977 speech at Frobenius-Institute), this paper will consider how the continued preoccupation with the ethnographic mode, aesthetics of openness, emphasis on the politics of cultural contact and silences enables this work to resist an easy classification, while at the same time, allowing it to challenge and subvert the traditional functioning of categories, both at the level of disciplines – anthropology and literature – and discourses – scientific and poetic. Through this, the paper will also examine the relational approach that informs Fichte's



understanding of the spatial and temporal as well as the biographical and the subjective. On a broader level, the paper explores how aesthetics can shape and reveal the political.

**Niki Sioki (University of Nicosia)**

Publishing the Political Novel: The Role of Material Form and Typographic Design in the Circulation of Translated Literature

In today's global context, books travel across linguistic borders through translation. The positioning of a translated novel in a new publishing market remains a demanding decision-making process that shapes its content and material form. The latter encompasses the book's production characteristics, including its format, size, paper, binding, cover design and page layout. This paper will investigate how the material form of a novel can influence, either by shifting or expanding, the perceived political messages and reflect broader trends in the circulation of knowledge. By examining the design characteristics of a sample of political novels published in Europe and translated into Greek, the paper will discuss what is preserved, lost, hidden or modified when publishing practices and design decisions negotiate the formal qualities of a text entering a different socio-cultural environment. (A few of these novels will be drawn from the CAPONEU project collection of political novels profiles as this ongoing digital archive was the starting point for the abstract's idea.)

Drawing on Leslie Atzmon's notion that the 'material aesthetic form of design artefacts [is] profoundly rhetorical' as it 'plays a role in meaning-making' (2011, p. 13), this paper will show that even in books in which typography is typically 'transparent' – that is, designed to be invisible to readers so that they engage in immersive reading – and linear prose dominates, every detail in the typographic presentation of the text and the design of paratextual elements such as the cover, can either reinforce or redirect the reader's perception of a novel's political narrative. Through the adoption of a comparative lens, in this study books emerge as rhetorical artefacts that can expose cultural beliefs and biases arising when political novels navigate a global publishing landscape.

Atzmon, L. (2011) *Visual Rhetoric and the Eloquence of Design Artifacts*, Parlor Press.

**Błażej Warkocki (Adam Mickiewicz University, Poznań)**

Queer Discourse and Theory in Poland – Travelling Knowledge on the (Semi)Peripheries

In my presentation, I will analyze the dynamics of knowledge production about queerness in Poland, within the context of the West/East distinction and Poland's position as part of the so-called 'second world' or the semi-periphery of global capitalism (as theorized by Immanuel Wallerstein). The starting point will be the Polish Penal Code of 1932—the first one adopted after the restoration of independence—which did not include a provision criminalizing homosexuality (i.e., there was no equivalent to Germany's Paragraph 175).

The literary works (both pre- and post-war) of Polish writer Witold Gombrowicz will also be an important focus, particularly in relation to his connections with Oscar Wilde (pre-World War II) and comparisons to James Baldwin's *Giovanni's Room*.



Another key aspect will be local knowledge and a specific queer discourse that emerged in socialist Poland, especially around the work of the literary scholar Maria Janion and her series of anthologies, *Transgressions* (1980s). In the final section of my talk, I will explore the assimilation of American queer theory into Poland in the 1990s and its impact on the reception of (political) novels, with a particular focus on Michał Witkowski's *Lovetown* (2005).

Finally, I will compare this novel with another work addressing homosexuality in 1980s Poland but written in straightforward English: *Swimming in the Dark* by Tomasz Jedrykowski. The theoretical framework of my reflections will be a discourse on world literature, but also a critique of certain aspects of Polish 'post-dependence discourse'.

### **Chalo ũa Waya (University of Cambridge)**

#### Negotiating Imbricated Positionalities: Critical Afropolitanism as Epistemic Self-assertion in Djaimilia Pereira de Almeida's *Esse Cabelo*

Mila, the mixed-race protagonist in Djaimilia Pereira de Almeida's *Esse Cabelo* (That Hair), sees bits of herself in Will Counts' iconic photo of Elizabeth Eckford's first day at a recently desegregated Central High School in Little Rock, Arkansas in 1957. She sees herself in the deceptive poise and calm of Eckford. But she also sees herself in the baying hatred of the Eurodescendant people who mob Eckford, threatening to lynch her. This photo, which unusually is included in and presented as part of the novel, captures the complex nuances of *Esse Cabelo*'s conflicted protagonist. Half Portuguese and half Angolan, she is born in Luanda to an African mother and raised in Lisbon by a European grandmother whose dismissive comment on 'that hair' provides the novel with its title. Her imbricated positionality on the margins of Portuguese society provides an interesting study of the African presence in global and shared spaces. Her affective and mental travails as she goes 'in search of myself' in time, space and even madness is a study in travelling knowledge. In this paper, I will look to analyse *Esse Cabelo* as a praxis both of critical Afropolitanism and epistemic justice—an attempt to inscribe in globality the lived experience of a protagonist who faces rejection from Afrodescendants and Eurodescendants alike as a direct consequence of the complex and dynamic moorings of her personal identity.

### **Tara Talwar Windsor (University of Cambridge)**

#### Resonances across Time and Space: A Festival of Literary Performance, Travelling Knowledge and Political Intervention

In this paper, I take the literary festival *Resonanzen* – curated by the writers Sharon Dodua Otoo and Patricia Eckermann – as a case study to explore the role played by political novelists as public intellectuals in contemporary Germany. I demonstrate that *Resonanzen* is a key example of a kind of interventionist praxis enacted by marginalized groups in contemporary Germany to make themselves heard and to make others listen. The conception and organization of this event as "ein Festival im Festival" ("a festival within a festival") points to the incursion of hitherto marginalized actors into established cultural spaces in order to challenge and change the structural composition of such events from within. One of the overarching aims of the *Resonanzen* festival is to counteract the



erasure of long-standing Black literary and scholarly traditions in the German context by highlighting the rich heterogeneity of Black literatures and identities in the past, present and future.

My paper argues that the festival does this by invoking networks of knowledge across time and space, not only through the literary texts performed and discussed at the festival, but also in the wider curation strategies and the presentation and promotion of the festival through written and visual documentations. In doing this, I also reflect on the titular concept 'resonances' – which originates in this case in the grassroots activism of Black queer-feminists – to explore its critical potential as a more inclusive extension of the notions of visibility and audibility. As a site of intersectional alliance-building and multiple forms of epistemic translation, the festival enables the writers involved to derive, assert and redistribute intellectual authority in the public domain.

### **Charlotte Woodford (University of Cambridge)**

#### Ethnographic fictions? Travelling Stories and their Portable Forms

'Ethnography' is the writing of culture. Older definitions (e.g. OED, 1989) referred to it as a discourse of 'scientific description', a notion particularly prevalent in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. But its products are fictions and as written versions of a culture they involve acts of translation. According to James Clifford (1986), ethnographic writing is also closely related to allegory. This paper will take up the notion of allegory in relation to a French political novel with links to the ethnographic from the period of literary modernism, *Batouala* (1921), by René Maran, which won the prestigious Prix Goncourt in 1921 and whose socially critical preface by its Caribbean-born author addressed the violence of colonial modernity. How is the idea of 'exo-centric knowledge' to be understood in relation to this novel, set in French Equatorial Africa, and its translation into German by the avant-garde author Claire Goll (*Batouala*, 1922)? Drawing on Caroline Levine's (2015) ideas of travelling forms and their latent potentialities, this paper will examine its forms' portability as they travel into German in the context of the political aesthetics of the avant garde.