



Conference Brochure

«Embodied Acts and American Photographs»

Organized by Dr. Johanna Hartmann (MLU Halle-Wittenberg)

June 30 – July 2, 2022, online

<https://muhlenbergcenter.uni-halle.de>

Sponsored by:



Conference Program

Thursday, June 30, 2022

12:00 - 12:15	<p>Conference Opening and Welcome</p> <p>Johanna Hartmann (MLU Halle-Wittenberg, Muhlenberg Center for American Studies)</p>
12:15 – 13:30	<p>Panel 1: The Aesthetic of Vulnerability in American Photographs Chair: Johanna Hartmann</p> <p>Manuel Vogelsang (Universität Zürich): “John Dugdale: Embodied Cyanotypes” Rachel Hill (University College London): “Appearing in Unplain Sight: Astronautic (Self-)Portraiture”</p>
13:30– 13:45	Short Break
13:45– 15:00	<p>Panel 2: Embodied Acts and Intermedial Entanglements Chair: Ariane De Waal</p> <p>Allan Taylor (University Leicester): “Performance, Photography, Performativity: What Performance Does in the Still Image” Erik Redling (MLU Halle-Wittenberg): “Resonances of Literary Experiments in Photography: Zora Neale Hurston’s Visual Recordings of Embodied Acts”</p>
15:00 – 15:15	Short Break
15:15 – 16:30	<p>Keynote Lecture I Chair: Johanna Hartmann</p> <p>Steven Hoelscher (UT Austin): “Embodied Witnesses: The Photographic Afterimage of Slavery along America’s Jim Crow Roads”</p>

Friday, July 1, 2022

13:00 – 14:15	<p>Panel 3: The Photographic and Discursive (De-)Construction of Embodied Identities Chair: Nele Rodiek</p> <p>Julia Straub (Université de Fribourg): “Filters, Fame, and Faux Celebrity: Photographs and Online Identities in Contemporary American Fiction” Julia Nitz (MLU Halle-Wittenberg): “Nineteenth-Century Photographs of Blacks in 20th-century Civil War Discourse”</p>
14:15-14:30	Short Break
14:30 – 15:45	<p>Panel 4: Ecologies, Embodied Cognition, and the Aesthetic of Overpowering Chair: Julia Nitz</p> <p>Hannah Wojciehowski (UT Austin): “‘Art Looks Back’: The Creative Vision of Jerry Uelsmann’s Photography” Katharina Fackler (Universität Bonn): “LaToya Ruby Frazier’s Embodied Exposures and the Ecologies of Social Photography”</p>
15:45 – 16:00	Short Break
16:00 – 17:15	<p>Keynote II Chair: Erik Redling</p> <p>John Stauffer (Harvard University): “War Photography: The Power and Abuse of Embodiment”</p>

Saturday, July 2, 2022

10:00 – 11:15	Keynote Lecture III Chair: Johanna Hartmann Kerstin Schmidt (Universität Eichstätt): “‘I’m a Luxury’ – Embodied Consumption and Exhibiting Capital in Lauren Greenfield’s <i>Generation Wealth</i> ”
11:15 – 11:30	Coffee Break
11:30 – 12:45	Panel 5: American Photography and the Embodiment of Precariousness Chair: Laura-Isabella Heitz Yuko Yamamoto (Chiba University): “Regarding the Poverty of Others: Walker Evans, <i>Fortune</i> , and the Body Politics of the New Deal” Julia Faisst (KU Eichstätt/Universität Regensburg): “Embodying Necropolitics: Probing the Archive in Valeria Luiselli’s Work”
12:45 – 13:15	Final Discussion

Keynote Presentations

Prof. Steven Hoelscher, American Studies/Curator of Photography at the Harry Ransom Center, University of Texas at Austin

Title: *Embodied Witnesses: The Photographic Afterimage of Slavery along America's Jim Crow Roads*

Abstract: My presentation explores a crucial moment in the turbulent history of American racism, when post-emancipation hopes for African American civic equality and economic independence were crushed by disenfranchisement, lynching, and a vast array of legal structures aimed at black suppression. Central to that white supremacist project was the South's notorious convict leasing system. Although widely accepted by many whites as a natural and beneficial solution to a labor shortage, the forced use of African American prisoners for the hard and often fatal work of road building and other tasks after the Civil War did not go unchallenged. Among those critics was the radical, investigative journalist John L. Spivak, whose anti-racist work may have helped him earn the moniker "America's Greatest Reporter" from *Time* magazine, but who today has been largely forgotten. My research examines one man's efforts to expose the atrocity of racially-based forced labor through the act of photographic witnessing. The photographs that he produced embody an afterimage of slavery: that is, a series of visual images that evoke the legacy of enslavement well after the Thirteenth Amendment officially abolished slavery.

Short Bio: Born and raised in the Upper Midwest, Professor Hoelscher got to Texas as soon as he could. He joined the Department of American Studies in 2000, after first teaching at LSU and, before that, completing his Ph.D. in Geography at the University of Wisconsin. During 2003-2004, he was Senior Fulbright Professor in the North American Studies Program at the University of Bonn. Today, he splits his time between American Studies and the Harry Ransom Center, where he is the Faculty Curator of Photography.

Professor Hoelscher's research interests include: the history of photography; American race and racism; North American and European urbanism; social constructions of space and place; and cultural memory. His books include *Reading Magnum* (recognized as a 2013 Photo Book of the Year by *American Photo Magazine*), *Picturing Indians* (winner of the 2009 Wisconsin Historical Society Book Award of Merit), *Heritage on Stage*, and *Textures of Place* (co-edited with Karen Till and Paul Adams), and he has published more than 40 book chapters and articles in such journals as *American Indian Culture and Research Journal*, *American Quarterly*, *Annals of the Association of American Geographers*, *Ecumene* (now, *Cultural Geographies*), *Geographical Review*, *GeoHumanities*, *GeoJournal*, *History of Photography*, *Journal of Historical Geography*, *Public Historian*, *Rundbrief Fotografie*, *Smithsonian Magazine* and *Social and Cultural Geography*.

Prof. Dr. Kerstin Schmidt, American Studies, KU Eichstätt

Title: „*I'm a Luxury*” – *Embodied Consumption and Exhibiting Capital in Lauren Greenfield's Generation Wealth*

Abstract: Lauren Greenfield's comprehensive 2017 exhibition *Generation Wealth* chronicles a large-scale social and economic transformation of society. In an abundantly rich Kodachrome color palette, the photographer and filmmaker puts on display the ways in which market consumerism, commodity culture, and rampant materialism have shaped generations of people in their individual and group identity. More importantly, Greenfield's photographic practice focuses on how conspicuous consumption with its logic of desire and display are tied to the body of the newly rich and 'wannabe' rich. Viewing photographs such as the close-up of Limo Bob's hand with heavy golden rings on each finger as he signs a credit-card bill, or of rapper Lil' Jon's € 50,000 dollar diamond and platinum grill concocts the image of a 'new gold rush' at the end of the 20th and the beginning of the 21st century. The posing and performing in front of the camera lens as a way of exhibiting oneself and one's life-style show the conflation of self and wealth as a dominant way of being in the world. The embodied „imperative to buy” (Wilner Stack) dominates meaning-making processes and is laid bare as a prime force in shaping desire and fashioning subjectivity. Greenfield's visual archive also demonstrates how wealth absolutely needs visual display as it is conspicuously tied to the body, especially the female body. The camera, in turn, functions as a powerful collaborator to demonstrate luxury, class, and social status. Greenfield's own documentary practice, then, unveils an embodied gaze that partakes in the need for display as it engages with both sitters and scene, even though her vision is shaped by the effort to avoid moralizing and to respect the lives that she presents. Taking a possible cue from Barbara Kruger's 1987 turn on Descartes, *I Shop Therefore I Am*, Greenfield's archive unfolds as a reflecting pool of the ways in which the American Dream has turned into a neo-capitalist pipe-dream embodying the compulsion to overspend and overconsume, showing how commodities define a contemporary sense of belonging and an albeit precarious place in the world.

Short Bio: Kerstin Schmidt is Professor of English and Chair of American Studies at the Catholic University of Eichstätt-Ingolstadt/Germany. She studied at the Universities of Freiburg and of Massachusetts/Amherst (USA) and taught at the Universities of Freiburg, Bayreuth, Munich, Siegen as well as at Weber State University in Ogden, UT (USA). Scholarships and research stipends have brought her to Yale University; to Indiana University/Bloomington; to the University of Wyoming; to the CUNY Graduate Center, the "Schomburg Center for Research in Black Life" and the "Lincoln Center for the Performing Arts" in New York City as well as to the Universities of Toronto and British Columbia/Vancouver. In over 10 monographs/edited volumes and over 30 essays, she has written on 19th and 20th-century American literature and culture, focusing on American drama and theater, race and diaspora studies, theories of space/place in American culture as well as on media theory (especially American radio) and documentary photography. Together with colleagues from France and the US, she edits of the interdisciplinary review journal *Kritikon Litterarum* (Berlin/Boston: DeGruyter). She is deputy director of the Bavarian American Academy (BAA) in Munich and serves on the advisory board of US-American and Canadian journals. She acts as speaker of both the DFG-funded research training group GRK 2589 "Practicing Place: Socio-Cultural Practices and Epistemic Configurations" as well as the KU Center for Advanced Study "Dialogical Cultures: Critical Reflection Spaces for Cultural Studies and Social Sciences."

Prof. John Stauffer, American Studies, Harvard University

Title: *War Photography: The Power and Abuse of Embodiment*

Abstract: This talk focuses on the power, censorship, and abuse of "living-room wars" from the Crimean and Civil War to the present. During the Civil War, photographs of the dead were especially powerful in turning public opinion against the war, resulting in rigorous censorship of images by the government that continues today. The talk focuses on Civil War photographs of the dead, which prompted rigorous censorship that would shape the war department's response to war photographs in subsequent wars. The talk ends with analyses about embodiment in contemporary wars, and the ways in which the government and civilians respond to embodiment, war, and the costs of war

Short Bio: John Stauffer is the Kates Professor of English and of African and African American Studies at Harvard University. He is the author or editor of 20 books and over 100 articles, including *GIANTS: The Parallel Lives of Frederick Douglass and Abraham Lincoln*, a national bestseller; the award-winning *Black Hearts of Men*; *The Battle Hymn of the Republic*, and *Picturing Frederick Douglass*. His essays and reviews have appeared in *Time*, *Wall Street Journal*, *New York Times*, *Washington Post*, and in exhibition catalogs, journals, and books.

Professor Stauffer has served as a consultant or co-curator on films, exhibitions, and video games including: *God in America*; *Django Unchained*; *WAR/PHOTOGRAPHY*; *The Free State of Jones*; *The Abolitionists*; *Picturing Frederick Douglass*; *Red Dead Redemption 2*; *Reconstruction: America After the Civil War*; *Lincoln's Dilemma*; and *Black Patriots: Heroes of the Civil War*.

He received three teaching awards from Harvard and was named a Walter Channing Cabot Fellow for "achievements and scholarly eminence in the fields of literature, history, or art." The Harvard Class of 2021 voted him a "Harvard Favorite Professor."

Currently he is curating an exhibition on Frederick Douglass for the Smithsonian's National Portrait Gallery, scheduled to open in June 2023. His new book, a biography of Charles Sumner, will be published by Crown in 2024.

He lives in Cambridge with his wife, Deborah Cunningham and their two sons, Erik and Nick.

Panel Presentations

Dr. Katharina Fackler, American Studies, Universität Bonn

Title: “*LaToya Ruby Frazier’s Embodied Exposures and the Ecologies of Social Photography*”

Abstract: This presentation analyzes how LaToya Ruby Frazier’s photobook *The Notion of Family* (2016) reworks the dynamics of embodiment that have dominated social documentary photography. Social photography has frequently been criticized for tearing the sights of bodies from their contexts in order to validate reform agendas that fail to address the root causes of social suffering (e.g., Sekula 1978, Stange 1989, Tagg 1988). I suggest that Frazier’s *The Notion of Family* reconfigures these dynamics by combining social documentation and critique with various other genres, including family photography and autobiography. Thus, Frazier leaves behind the position of the distanced ethnographic observer hidden behind the camera. Not only does she insert her own body into the picture and tell her own story. She also foregrounds a communal practice of picture-taking that renders her co-subjects, i.e., her mother and her grandmother, as collaborators. The photographs that result from this collaboration counter family photography’s tendency to naturalize the White heteropatriarchal nuclear family (Hirsch 1999) by rigidly tying the personal, the bodily, and the intimate into the fold of the political, institutional, and material. As Frazier alternates portraits with panorama shots of her home town Braddock and anecdotes from its history of industrial pollution, deindustrialization and public defunding, she entangles her subjects’ bodies with an environment that is shaped by institutional and environmental racism. *The Notion of Family* thus narrates kinship as shared vulnerability to the slow violence of industrial pollution (Nixon 2011) and as resistant, embodied practices of care. In my presentation, I probe whether and how Frazier’s act of complicating the relation between photographer, subject, and observer opens up pathways toward a new version of what Ariella Azoulay (2008) calls “the civil contract of photography.”

Short Bio: Katharina Fackler is a lecturer and researcher in the North American Studies Program at the University of Bonn. Her research interests include postcolonial ecocriticism, oceanic studies, early American literature, the history and theory of social documentary photography, poverty and social inequality, affect and the senses, and Black feminism. Her articles have appeared in venues such as *Souls: A Critical Journal of Black Politics, Society, and Culture*; *Open Cultural Studies*; *The Appalachian Journal*; and the blog *Black Perspectives*. Her first book, *Picturing the Poor: Photography and the Politics of Poverty in the 1960s* (under contract with Penn State UP) examines the visual politics of social documentary photography in the early Cold War era. Currently, she is developing her second book project, which is titled “Entangled Mobilities: The (De-)Colonial Ecologies of Early American Sea Writing.”

PD Dr. Julia Faisst, American Studies, KU Eichstätt

Title: “*Embodying Necropolitics: Probing the Archive in Valeria Luiselli’s Work*”

Abstract: How can transmedia border art with a documentarian impulse embody contemporary child migration and ‘archive’ it—in order to have a very real effect on public perception of the global refugee crisis, possibly change public opinion, even anticipate potential changes of public policy in the future? To tackle the current refugee crisis as it plays out in U.S.-Mexican borderlands from the perspective of migrant children, I take into view photographic and mixed-media imaginaries of child migration. Using John Moore’s photography on the migrant crisis that depicts children and families on their journey North as a starting point, I briefly examine Valeria Luiselli’s essayistic inquiry *Tell Me How It Ends: An Essay in Forty Questions* (2017), to then tackle her novel *Lost Children Archive* (2019). With its layered visual and textual narratives, the personal and southward family journey of a family of four from New York City to the Arizona borderlands is set against the northward journey of undocumented children fleeing Central America and trying to cross the southwestern border into the U.S. I read *Lost Children Archive* as a masterful embodiment of fiction and fact, in particular through the way in which the narrative draws on photographic uses and the practices of collecting and exhibiting photography. Pitching the imagination vs. the lived experiences of migratory children, the novel plays with the reality effects various genres and media provide, including narrative sections, snippets of newspaper articles, polaroid images, self-drawn maps, and invented photographs. *Lost Children Archive* is hence shown to constitute a kind of living archive: of those who have gotten lost at the border, who try to surpass it, who have died in the heat of the no-mans-land-desert on either side of the border, and whose corpses, in the novel, get documented by a “methodical old lady” who puts “red death spots over everything.” Migration has relegated child migrants to the condition of bare life and serves as their necropolitical end, submitting them to social and political forces that determine how some migrants live and how some must die, social or actual deaths. Luiselli’s transmedial work stands as one example of a growing archive of U.S.-Mexican refugee border art which transmits the “experience of refugee life [also] through the voices and visions of the children, who are the true experts on their own lives” (Phu)—in order to visibilize human(itarian) interventions into inhuman migration policies. Ultimately, I argue that experimental transmedia fiction works particularly well towards bringing closer the embodied necropolitical realities of child migration, including the disappearance and death of undocumented minors, captured by embodied acts of photography.

Short Bio: Julia Faisst is Professor and Acting Chair of American Studies at the University of Regensburg. She received her PhD from Harvard University and her *venia legendi* from the Catholic University of Eichstaett-Ingolstadt. She has held the positions of Max Kade Distinguished Visiting Professor at Notre Dame University, Postdoctoral Researcher at the International Center for the Study of Culture at Giessen University, and Visiting Assistant Professor of English at Wake Forest University. She is author of *Cultures of Emancipation: Photography, Race, and Modern American Literature* (Winter, 2012), the (yet unpublished) manuscript *Precarious Belongings: The Unmaking of the American Home, 1980s-Now*, and co-editor of *Picturing America: Photography and the Sense of Place* (with Kerstin Schmidt, Brill/Rodopi, 2019) as well as David P. Boder’s *I Did Not Interview the Dead* (with Alan Rosen and Werner Sollors, Winter, 2012). Her research interests include North American literary and visual culture studies, African American, race and ethnic studies, migration and diaspora studies, gender and intersectionality studies, space and urban studies, economic and environmental humanities, inequality and class studies.

Dr. Johanna Hartmann, American Studies, MLU Halle-Wittenberg

Short Bio: Johanna Hartmann is Assistant Professor of American Literature at the University of Halle-Wittenberg. In her research, she focuses on American drama and theater since the 19th century, questions of mediality (e.g., American photography) and intermediality, and contemporary literature. She is the author of *Literary Visuality in Siri Hustvedt Works: Intermedial Perspectives* (Königshausen und Neumann 2015) and the co-editor of *Censorship and Exile* (together with Hubert Zapf, V&R 2015), *Zones of Ambiguity in Siri Hustvedt's Works: Interdisciplinary Perspectives* (together with Christine Marks and Hubert Zapf, De Gruyter 2016), and *The Tragic in Contemporary American Drama and Theater* (together with Julia Rössler, guest issue of *JADT* 31:2 2019).

Rachel Hill, M.A., Ph.D.-candidate at University College London (Department of Science and Technology Department)

Title: *“Appearing in Unplain Sight: Astronautic (Self-) Portraiture”*

Abstract: For general audiences, the labour and play of astronauts are perhaps most frequently encountered through (self-)portraits taken in space. Beyond the personal, these images have become icons of US technoscientific power and national prestige. And yet, a closer look at these (self-)portraits reveals vulnerable bodies bound together in complex intersubjective, intrasomatic embodiments. A full body portrait of Buzz Aldrin places a human figure at the centre of a newly walked lunar landscape [figure 1]. Aldrin’s doubled shadow reaches inwards and outwards, toward the white, reflected abruptness of photographer Neil Armstrong. Over thirty-seven years later, John Olivas takes a (self-)portrait of fellow astronaut Jim Reilly whilst working on the construction of the International Space Station [ISS, figure 2]. This close-up captures the clumsy labour of a spacesuited body, while Reilly’s visor distorts Olivas’ reflection into a seemingly distant form, semi-disguised amongst the white surfaces of the incipient space station. Interrupting these monochromatics, the unexpected vividness of an emblazoned Stars and Stripes commands attention. Continuing work on the ISS, in 2010 Garreet Reisman takes a self-portrait [figure 3]. Instead of containing and expressing emotional content, the dark, smeared orb of his helmet visor repeats and reflects the crescent of the Earth. A series of technical infrastructure, from camera to the almost complete station, lie between. Key for all these (self-)portraits is the role of visor reflectance, within which the face is shielded, screened and replaced by a curved surface that absorbs but distorts its surroundings. As the face is turned into an anonymising hall of mirrors, so too are vulnerable bodies increasingly entangled in one another. Within these visual palimpsests it is not only difficult (perhaps impossible) to parse who is the primary subject of the image, but also who is who. Peering into these reflections, this paper will interrogate how understanding astronautic (self-)portraiture as an embodied act problematises the conceptualisation of the astronaut (as individuated, self-sufficient, heroic) within US economies of meaning.

Short Bio: Rachel Hill is a PhD candidate in the Science and Technology Studies department of University College London where she researches the environmental histories of spaceflight. She is funded through the Arts and Humanities Research Council (AHRC). She is a co-director of the London Science Fiction Research Community (LSFRC) and explores the radical potential of speculative fiction as a member of the feminist research collective Beyond Gender. She is also an affiliate of the Centre for Outer Space Studies at UCL.

PD Dr. Julia Nitz, American Studies, MLU Halle-Wittenberg

Title: “*Nineteenth-Century Photographs of Blacks in 20th-century Civil War Discourse*”

Abstract: When former-slave and ardent abolitionist Frederick Douglass attended the 1893 World’s Columbian Exposition as the Commissioner of the Haitian Pavilion, he was appalled by the layout of the Midway. The sequence of exhibits was supposed to demonstrate the advance of civilization from so-called primitive cultures (i.e., Africans) to the supposedly higher stages (Europeans and North Americans)—a concept that Douglass had despised and denounced all his life. The ethnologist and Harvard professor F.W. Putnam, responsible for the ethnological displays at the fair, worked with a large number of Daguerreotype portraits to illustrate his idea of progress from race to race. Among the portraits of Africans are five pictures of male and female slaves from South Carolina plantations, who had to pose nude for the camera.

Surprisingly, we are confronted with the self-same pictures of the plantation slaves in Ken Burns’s TV-mini-series *The Civil War* (1990). The still images appear in the documentary when the topic of slavery and the role of blacks in the war are referred to for the first time. Just as Putnam, Burns takes the pictures out of their (production) context and uses them for a particular message, contradicting and re-emphasizing some of the stereotypes originally attributed to the images.

Burns is one of many authors of Civil War histories who use nineteenth-century photographs of blacks in order to tell the story of their involvement in the American Civil War (1861–1865). In this study, I shall examine the use of photographs of black individuals in the first photo-essay book, Alexander Gardner’s *Photographic Sketch Book of the War* (1866), in Trevelyan Miller’s monumental *Photographic History of the Civil War in Ten Volumes* (1911) and in Ken Burns’s *The Civil War*. I am interested in tracing the origin of the photographs, in looking at the different contexts and forms they appear in, and, in particular, in analysing how they are employed to provide a particular version of the role of blacks in the Civil War, and, to thereby, anchor a particular image of them in public memory.

Generally speaking, what I am looking at is the adaptation process of photographs in different contexts. That is why I propose Gary R. Bortolotti’s and Linda Hutcheon’s theory of cultural adaptation (“On the Origin of Adaptations: Rethinking Fidelity Discourse,” 2007) as a useful methodology to examine the re-usage of particular images over time. Bortolotti and Hutcheon allow us to shift the focus to where a photograph came from, how it came to ‘survive’ and to be repeated in different forms, and how its representation changed within a changing cultural environment.

Short Bio: Julia Nitz is Associate professor of Anglo-American Cultural Studies at Martin Luther University Halle-Wittenberg. She has served as Executive Director at the Center for American Studies and is co-founder of the Intercontinental Crosscurrents Network for the study of transatlantic women’s networks in the long nineteenth century (crosscurrents.uni-halle.de). Her research focusses on the American Civil War, women’s life writing, intertextual cultural studies, historiographic and museum narratology as well as Anglophone (Caribbean) film and adaptation studies. Her publications include *Towards a Historiographic Narratology* (2011), *Intercontinental Crosscurrents: Women’s Networks across Europe and the Americas* (2016) and *Women and US Politics* (2020). Her most recent monograph *Belles and Poets: Intertextuality in the Civil War Diaries of White Southern Women* (LSUP, 2020) establishes the extent to which literature offered a means of exploring ideas and convictions about class, gender, and racial hierarchies in the Civil War-era South.

Prof. Dr. Erik Redling, American Studies, Martin-Luther-Universität Halle-Wittenberg

Title: “*Resonances of Literary Experiments in Photography: Zora Neale Hurston’s ‘Embodied’ Picture of ‘Felicia Felix-Mentor, the Zombie’*”

Abstract: Hurston’s photography is usually treated as part of her anthropological endeavour to create an archive of diverse folklore material, such as stories, songs, recipes, video recordings, and photographs. In this presentation, I propose that Hurston extends her interest in visuality to photography which displays resonances of her earlier literary experiments in dialect writing. My focus will be on Hurston’s photograph of a closed-eyed patient at a Haitian hospital facility which, as Hurston claims in her 1938 volume *Tell My Horse: Voodoo & Life in Haiti & Jamaica*, shows “Felicia Felix-Mentor, the Zombie” (180). Her photograph will be placed in multiple theoretical, cultural, and literary contexts, including in particular photography and embodiment, Voodoo culture in Louisiana and Haiti, the rise of zombies in popular culture (film and comics), and the discourse on blindness in Modernist writings.

Short Bio: Erik Redling is Professor of American Literature at the Martin Luther University Halle-Wittenberg (since 2013) and Managing Director of the *Muhlenberg Center for American Studies* (<https://muhlenbergcenter.uni-halle.de>), which he founded in 2014. His main areas of interest include intermediality, jazz poetry, cognitive poetics, translation theories, film analysis, and dialect literature. He has published two monographs (*Translating Jazz into Poetry: From Mimesis to Metaphor*, De Gruyter, 2017, and “*Speaking of Dialect*”: *Translating Charles W. Chesnutt’s Conjure Tales into Postmodern Systems of Signification*, Königshausen & Neumann, 2006) and is (co-)editor of several anthologies, including *Traveling Traditions: Nineteenth-Century Cultural Concepts and Transatlantic Intellectual Networks* (De Gruyter 2016), *Handbook of the American Short Story* (De Gruyter 2022), and *Protestantism on Screen: Religion, Politics, and Aesthetics in European and American Movies* (Oxford University Press, forthcoming). Currently he is working on a book about Zora Neale Hurston, dialect writing, and translation.

Prof. Dr. Julia Straub, Modern English Literature, Université de Fribourg

Title: *“Filters, Fame, and, Faux Celebrity: Photographs and Online Identities in Contemporary American Fiction”*

Abstract: Several recent novels by US-American authors revolve around influencer figures, bloggers, or instagrammers. Kiley Reid’s *Such a Fun Age* (2019), Megan Angelo’s *Followers* (2020), Patricia Lockwood’s *No One Is Talking About This* (2021), and Lauren Oyler’s *Fake Accounts* (2021) – while representing different literary genres – re-imagine fame and celebrity in the age of Web 2.0. They all include female characters concerned with the control of their public images that entangle their identities as mothers, partners, entrepreneurs, writers, or celebrity figures. This new kind of contemporary celebrity requires constant presence qua pictures. Photographs are manipulated and filtered, they become part of accelerated newsfeeds and viral social media posts, they are matched by a distinct language use and appear in contexts that falsify news or blur the distinction between sociability and commerce. This paper will survey the field of contemporary US-American literature in terms of its response to phenomena such as influencer culture and (faux) celebrity. It will then explore the specific role of photography in these representations given the proliferation of images owed to mobile technologies. It will examine the how notions of fame are changing in an age where the digital has become “banal” (Zara Dinnen) and to which extent photographs are complicit in the construction of such new, potentially hazardous forms of fame.

Short Bio: Julia Straub is Professor of Modern English Literature at the University of Fribourg, Switzerland. Among her research interests are text/image relationships, literature and media history, transatlantic literary relations, melodrama, theories and practices of canon formation and cultural memory, early American literature, and the Victorian period (especially the reception of Dante Alighieri).

Prof. Allan Taylor, Ph.D., Media Studies, De Montfort University Leicester

Title: “*Performance, Photography, Performativity: What Performance Does in the Still Image*”

Abstract: Using Auslander (2006) and Derrida (1988), this paper explores performativity as a social, political or cultural doing in the still image and discusses what, beyond performing, the still image 'does' when it captures an act of performance. Here, it is positioned as a mode of 'deferred performance' that transcends linear timeframes to be an act that occurs in the past, to be viewed at a future point in time and perceived as 'present' so it can affect a performative doing in the now it is viewed.

Short Bio:

Allan Taylor is an academic and practitioner working at the intersections of media practice, performance and cultural studies, specialising in the relationship between theory and practice and the cultural effects of performance in visual culture. Current publications centre on the new performativities of social media images and identity performance, including a debut monograph entitled *Authenticity and Performativity in Social Media* due to be published in 2022.

Manuel Vogelsang, M.A., American Studies, Ph.D.-candidate, University of Zurich

Title: “*John Dugdale: Embodied Cyanotypes*”

Abstract: At first glance, John Dugdale’s photography is a nostalgic celebration of classical beauty: Aesthetically pleasing bodies, flowers and pottery alike are shown in old farmhouses and Victorian mansions, bathed in the melancholy blues of cyanotype. But something is wrong with that past: Overt (homo)eroticism, models of different races, self-reflexive allusions to the pioneers of photography. This is not simply a past that has been staged, but one that would have been inconceivable at the time they evoke, and shows a late 20th-century desire at work. Dugdale’s photographs thus represent, to use an expression by Jonathan Goldberg, a productive contradiction (*Melodrama: An Aesthetics of Impossibility* 26): They are clearly not historical documents, and yet, at the same time, they negate and phantasmatically overcome that impossibility by staging the past revealed through a process invented in the 19th century.

Two aspects of John Dugdale’s make it particularly pertinent to a discussion of embodiment and its mediatization. The historical process of cyanotype foregrounds the materiality of photography. As Kaja Silverman (who concludes *The Miracle of Analogy* with a discussion of two of Dugdale’s photographs) argues, the transformations effected by the careful staging of the cyanotypes “reactivate chemical photography’s own presentational powers—its capacity to disclose the world, and to solicit a response.” (179) Instead of being a facile signifier of the past, an ethereal evocation of it, cyanotype foregrounds the crucial role of photography’s mediatization in its own effects. Crucially, Dugdale started using cyanotype after going almost completely blind due to an AIDS-related illness, since this process permitted him to continue working. Therefore, the use of cyanotype in Dugdale’s work creates an intimate link between its classical beauty and the way his photography is an *embodied* practice, conditioned by the devastation wrought by AIDS. Dugdale’s work appropriates an historical photographic process to inscribe the impact AIDS has had on his body, and thus on his capacity to perceive and navigate the world, into the materiality of his work.

Short Bio: Manuel Vogelsang holds a BA in English Literature and Linguistics, Comparative Literature and Latin Literature and an MA in English Literature and Linguistics and Gender Studies from the University of Zurich as well as an MA in Comparative Literature from Paris IV-Sorbonne. He is now a doctoral student in American Literature at the English Department of the University of Zurich (Supervisors: Prof. Dr. Elisabeth Bronfen and Prof. Dr. Heike Paul [FAU Erlangen]). His doctoral dissertation aims to enhance our understanding of melodrama’s central role in the American imaginary by arguing that the genre’s affective and creative possibilities originate in its attention to form and the way this allows for a specifically American way of producing an account of the past that transcends historical facts.

Prof. Hannah Wojciehowski, English Department, UT Austin

Title: *“Art Looks Back”*: *The Creative Vision of Jerry Uelsmann’s Photography*

Abstract: Jerry Uelsmann (June 11th, 1934 - April 4th, 2022) was a photographer renowned for his surrealistic photographic montages blending natural landscapes, human figures and found objects into unique composite images. In this presentation I will offer a formal analysis of Uelsmann’s darkroom techniques, together with an embodied cognitive account of viewers’ experiences of the photographer’s oneiric, uncanny, and sometimes disturbing photographs. In my talk, I will incorporate Uelsmann’s own accounts of his creative process, presenting video footage of interviews in which he explains his methods for developing, literally and figurally, each photographic work. In my analysis of Uelsmann’s photography, I will apply the concept of conceptual blending, proposed by linguists Giles Fauconnier and Mark Turner as a general framework for understanding human cognition.

I will consider the ways in which their theory of conceptual blending might shed light on Uelsmann’s visual oeuvre. In a similar vein, literary critic Lisa Zunshine’s analysis of what she calls “strange concepts” — scenarios or topoi that blur the boundaries between objects and living beings — provides another useful methodology for understanding Uelsmann’s photographic montages. Zunshine’s cognitive approach to literary works provides a useful set of analogies for understanding viewers’ range of responses to Uelsmann’s photographs, even though literary narratives differ from Uelsmann’s visual montages, which cannot easily be classified as stories. Art that “looks back” at the viewer might be considered the ultimate strange concept—an object seemingly imbued with agency and intelligence that confounds the viewer’s understanding of her place in the world and her role in the work of experiencing art. Art that looks back is thus a game that challenges our self-understanding and opens up new perceptions of the world around us. This is the game that Uelsmann invites us to join, as we shall see.

Short Bio: Hannah Wojciehowski is an early modernist and literary theorist who specializes in the history of subjectivity. She completed her Ph.D. at Yale University in the interdisciplinary Renaissance Studies Program (1984). She is currently the Arthur J. Thaman and Wilhelmina Doré Thaman Professor of English at the University of Texas, and an Affiliate of the Program in Comparative Literature and of the South Asia Institute. Her research interests are multiple. Her 2011 book *Group Identity in the Renaissance World* explores the history of what she calls “group subjectivity.” Drawing on the psychoanalytic theories of Freud and Anzieu, and the social network theory of Georg Simmel, this book analyzes the unconscious dynamics of group identity formation in a global context, offering a new paradigm for the study of early modernity. This study of collective fantasies as the organizing ‘containers’ of groups has applications for other historical periods, as well, including the recent past. Her current research on the life and writings of Michel Foucault during the late Sixties, and on his highly influential theories of power/knowledge, brings the study of group identity from the early modern world to the post-modern. New information about the nature of the human mind and about individual and collective identity is being generated at a rapid pace by the sciences, including cognitive and social neuroscience. A growing number of scholars in the humanities are drawing on this new research in order to rethink the theoretical models for subjectivity and intersubjectivity that held sway during the twentieth century — for example, psychoanalysis, phenomenology, structuralism and post-structuralism. The emergent field of Cognitive Cultural Studies holds

great promise for advancing the shared understanding of the human mind and the social world, and the nature of creativity. She has recently edited Shakespeare's *Cymbeline* for the New Kittredge Shakespeare Series, which will be published in 2015 by Focus, an imprint of Hackett Publishing. This edition of the play includes performance notes — one of the special features of the series — and relies on film and stage productions of *Cymbeline* to introduce the reader to one of Shakespeare's most engaging romances. Her other research interests include the history of gender and sexuality, early modern women's writing, Tudor and Jacobean theater, travel narratives and sixteenth-century colonialism, the impact of science and technology on literature, and vice versa, and the history and practice of literary criticism and theory.

Prof. Yuko Yamamoto, American Studies, Chiba University, Japan

Title: “*Regarding the Poverty of Others: Walker Evans, Fortune, and the Body Politics of the New Deal*”

Abstract: Portraits of farmers were prominently featured in books and periodicals during Franklin D. Roosevelt’s Second New Deal years, some becoming iconic images of the Great Depression. Walker Evans’s pictures of the three Alabama families taken in 1936, which eventually appeared in his collaborative work with James Agee, *Let Us Now Praise Famous Men* (1941), immediately come to mind as an example. Yet, sometimes misconstrued as a part of Roy Striker’s FSA documentary project, the purpose and use of Evans’ pictures of the Alabama families have not been given much serious consideration. I attempt to explore the complex negotiations involved in the production process of these photographs by situating them in their original context and background: the commission by *Fortune* magazine and the New Deal farm programs by the Roosevelt administration.

To this end, this essay takes up the Ur-text of *Let Us Now Praise Famous Men* (1941), namely Walker Evans’ two mock-up albums held in the Prints and Photographs Division, Library of Congress, which chronologically precede Agee’s rejected *Fortune* article. The photographs selected for the albums can be quintessentially considered as *embodied* texts, where Evans’ documentary aesthetics, Henry R. Luce’s editorial policy, and Roosevelt’s politics intersect over the embodied farmers. Some of the issues I would like to raise are Evans’ authorial intension, the political implications of *Fortune*’s featuring of workers, and the body politics seen in the New Deal’s farm programs. Last but not least, I would like to consider whether we can detect agency or subjecthood of the farmers themselves, in their acts of being seen/taken by the camera eye. Reading Evans’ albums as a nexus where the body politics of *Fortune* and the New Deal intersect, this study attempts to unravel how Evans negotiated with the authorities for his documentary aesthetics.

Short Bio: Yuko Yamamoto is Associate Professor of American literature at Chiba University, Japan. Her articles have appeared in Japanese and in English in a number of journals and books, including *Studies in English Literature*, *Studies in American Literature*, the *Faulkner Journal of Japan*, the *Journal of Modern Periodical Studies*, and *Faulkner and Hemingway* (Southeast Missouri State UP, 2018). Her most recent essay is forthcoming in *Faulkner’s Families* (UP of Mississippi). Her main research interest lies in the relations of literary modernism and popular culture, with particular emphasis on periodicals and photography.