

Hanse-Wissenschaftskolleg  
Institute for Advanced Study

# *Fiction* ∫ *Science* MEETS

‘WRITER – SCHOLARS – SCIENTISTS’ WORKSHOPS

EXPERIMENTAL ENCOUNTERS AROUND  
LITERARY DEPICTIONS OF SCIENCE

INAUGURAL WORKSHOP

MAY 13, 2016, 13.30 – 19.00 H

ON SUSAN GAINES’S *CARBON DREAMS* (2001)

Organizer:  
Anton Kirchhofer (University of Oldenburg)



Program

**Venue:**

Hanse-Wissenschaftskolleg  
Institute for Advanced Study  
Lehmkuhlenbusch 4  
27753 Delmenhorst  
Germany  
[www.h-w-k.de](http://www.h-w-k.de)

## **INFORMATION**

### **ON *CARBON DREAMS* (2001) AND THE INAUGURAL WORKSHOP:**

This is the opening event in a projected series of workshops, focusing on one literary author at a time, which aims to bring the scholarly projects in *Fiction Meets Science* (FMS) into a dialogue with the FMS writers as well as with scientists potentially concerned or interested in the writers' projects. Its goal is to promote or intensify exchange across the different groups, disciplines and projects in FMS, and to develop new perspectives emerging from these experimental encounters between the diverse perspectives of writers, scholars, and scientists.

All who know FMS know how much the realisation of the project owes to the commitment, energy and enthusiasm of Susan Gaines. Susan has been the driving force in the conception and development of the project – assembling the FMS corpus, continually picking up and ingesting the scholars' perspectives, relating and relaying them to the viewpoints of writers, scientists as well as general readers – and she continues to play a pivotal role in her various roles as novelist, scientist, director, coordinator and public face of FMS. The kind of dialogue, which these 'experimental encounters' are aiming for, has many forerunners in the various events organised by Susan during the first two years of FMS: book clubs in Bremen and Oldenburg, a number of public author's readings, these have all been places of exchange, in various forms between readers and writers, scholars and scientists. Moreover, *Carbon Dreams* is the natural choice as the first novel on which to try out this workshop format – even though in some sense it represents a reversal of a hope we hold for future workshops, which is to include fiction which has actually grown out of FMS (and the FMS writer fellowships at the HWK). Uniquely, *Carbon Dreams* is the opposite case: the novel out of which FMS has grown.

### **ABOUT FICTION MEETS SCIENCE**

FMS is a research and writers' fellowship program that brings together socio/logists, literary scholars, novelists, and scientists to examine the literary and social ramifications of a recent trend: an overall increase in the quantity of mainstream and literary fiction about science, and a shift in the ways that science is addressed in fiction.

For more information see [www.fictionmeetsscience.org](http://www.fictionmeetsscience.org)

# SCHEDULE

Preparation: *Carbon Dreams* by Susan Gaines, read in preparation by all participants.

**Friday, May 13**

**Hanse-Wissenschaftskolleg, Delmenhorst**

Moderator: Anton Kirchhofer

**13.30 Welcome, Introduction**

**13.45 – 14.40 Session 1 – Writing and Reading, Writers and their Various Readers (initial input ? / book club summary?)**

Includes: Responses to the text, observations, questions by different readers, scientists, but also scholars in dialogue with the author and with each other.

Author's comments (particularly on processes of researching and writing, encounters with scientific practice, changes of plans and perspective etc.)

**14.50 – 15.45 Session 2 – Focus on Textual Structures: Scientist Characters, Plots and Narrative Strategies (initial input NN)**

(Scholarly analysis of textual structures, in dialogue with writer's and [scientist] readers' responses)

COFFEE BREAK

**16.15 – 17.10 Session 3 – The Text in Context: Science and Society (initial input NN)**

(Scholar-author-scientist dialogue with focus on the representation of science and society, of their complex relationship and mutual impact)

**17.20 – 18.00 Session 4 – The Published Text: Analysing Reception, Anticipating Attention (initial input Anna Auguscik)**

(Reviewing data on reception in different media, comparing notes between authors', scholars' and scientists' expectations about the potential audiences and their interests)

**18.00 – 18.45 Concluding Round Table: Emerging Perspectives**

(Recap of insights and look ahead at the new perspectives that have emerged)

**19.00 DINNER**

## **GENERAL WORKSHOP FORMAT**

- Each workshop is centred on one literary text, whose author will be present.
- The format includes four thematic slots (roughly aligned in focus with the four FMS project groups) followed by a concluding round table discussion. The initial slot will focus on responses to the text itself and a dialogue between the author and different kinds of readers (scientists, literary scholars, sociologists). It should reflect the reading experience of all present (and might include a longer or shorter reading, as well as the author's comments and remarks on experiences, decisions, motives, on interactions with scientists, on the process of researching the topic, conceptualising and writing the story).
- Participants of the workshop will have (re)read the literary text in preparation.

The workshops seek to create an experimental space where the particular research angles of the scholars (and of their various projects) are presented for direct engagement, discussion and exchange of perspectives, to the writers whose works form the objects of research, as well as to the scientists, whose respective disciplines, practices and (in some cases) whose fictional counterparts, in turn form the objects of representation.

## **BACKGROUND AND OBJECTIVES WITHIN THE *FICTION MEETS SCIENCE* RESEARCH PROJECT**

This workshop format makes use of the particular feature that makes FMS stand out from other, partly related projects. FMS is unique among the projects conceived across the traditional two cultures divide in that it brings together four distinct groups: novelists, scientists, literary scholars and social scientists (most similar projects involve only two or three of these groups).

The primary goal of the workshops is to promote the networking of the projects and of FMS participants. They are in no way intended to take the place of any individual FMS project. They are designed to intensify the exchange among the scholarly projects, but above all they create an experimental setting. While writers, scholars and scientists mostly tend to operate in the absence of each other, the workshops will bring them into direct exchange. By 'exposing' them to the presence of each other, the workshops extend an invitation to engage in a direct and differentiated multi-perspective dialogue, where each may observe and participate in the 'reactions' that occur when they come together, and where the various groups join an experiment in the hope that new insights and interchanges may emerge from the encounter.

The workshops are not designed as a "public outreach" format. Their focus is on FMS internal exchange and networking between the various FMS components. A more public dimension might possibly evolve at some later point. If the workshops are successful, they might not only be opened to a wider circle, they might also be productive of a type of publication with contributions involving all four 'components' of FMS: authors, scientists, literary scholars and social scientists.