

Hanse-Wissenschaftskolleg
Institute for Advanced Study

Fiction ∫ *Science*
MEETS

‘WRITER – SCHOLARS – SCIENTISTS’ WORKSHOP

EXPERIMENTAL ENCOUNTERS AROUND
LITERARY DEPICTIONS OF SCIENCE

DELMENHORST, FEBRUARY 14, 2020

ON CHRISSY KOLAYA’S *CHARMED PARTICLES* (2015)

Organizers:

Anton Kirchhofer (University of Oldenburg)

Anna Auguscik (University of Oldenburg)

Susan M. Gaines (University of Bremen)

Karsten Levihn-Kutzler (University of Oldenburg)

Venue:

Hanse-Wissenschaftskolleg
Institute for Advanced Study

Lehmkuhlenbusch 4

27753 Delmenhorst

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Program

Information

ON *CHARMED PARTICLES* (2015)

Set in a rural Illinois community transformed both by encroaching urban sprawl and by the presence of a particle accelerator lab, *Charmed Particles* is centred around two families: Abhijat Mital is an ambitious scientist at the lab, his wife Sarala, recently arrived from India, is eager to fit in with her new small-town surroundings. Their daughter Meena strikes up a friendship with Lily, daughter of Rose Winchester, an enterprising local politician and Randolph, a globe-trotting freelance 'explorer'. When plans for a new, bigger particle accelerator expose the tensions between scientists at the lab and the community surrounding it, the two families find themselves in the middle of it. Through the emerging conflicts, Kolaya explores questions of science communication, risk perception, expertise and elitism as well notions of home, belonging, and cultural identity.

CHRISSEY KOLAYA has described herself as a 'fiction writer, poet, regular person'. She is currently an FMS writer in Residence at the HWK.

ABOUT FICTION MEETS SCIENCE AND THE WORKSHOP SERIES

This event is part of an ongoing 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 allow new angles to emerge from these experimental encounters between the diverse perspectives of writers, scholars and scientists.

FMS is a research and writers' fellowship program that brings together sociologists, 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. FMS is about to embark on its second three-year research phase, starting in 2018.

For more information see www.fictionmeetsscience.org

Friday, February 14, 2020

MODERATOR: ANTON KIRCHHOFER

12:30 – 13:30 *LIGHT LUNCH*

13:30 – 13:45 **Welcome, Introduction**

13:45 – 14:40 **Session 1 – The Writer and her Various Readers**

(Initial Input: Petra Groß)

- Responses to the text, observations, questions by readers from different backgrounds.
- Scientists and scholars in dialogue with the author and 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 – Textual Structures, Character Constellations, Transcultural Perspectives: Science, Culture, Mobility, Modernity**

(Initial Input: Anton Kirchhofer, Anna Auguscik, Karsten Levihn-Kutzler)

15:45 – 16:15 *COFFEE BREAK*

16:15 – 17:10 **Session 3 – The Text in Context: Science and the Public**

(Initial Input: Uwe Schimank)

17:20 – 18:00 **Session 4 – Angles on Reception**

(Initial Input: Anna Auguscik, Rebecca Käpernick)

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 various project groups in FMS) followed by a concluding round table discussion. The opening 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). All 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 multiperspectival 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.