

Hanse-Wissenschaftskolleg  
Institute for Advanced Study

*Fiction* ∫ *Science*  
MEETS

Writers, Scholars, Scientists: Experimental  
Encounters with Literary Depictions of Science VII

*ACCIDENTALS* BY SUSAN M GAINES

21 JULY 2021, 14:00 – 17:30 (UTC+2)

Organizers:

Anton Kirchhofer (University of Oldenburg), Susan M. Gaines  
(University of Bremen)



VolkswagenStiftung



Universität Bremen



Program

**Venue:**

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

### **ABOUT *ACCIDENTALS***

When Gabriel's mother repatriates to her native Uruguay after thirty years in California, he takes a break from his uninspiring job to accompany her. A birdwatcher since childhood, Gabe is as intrigued by the unfamiliar birds on his squabbling family's ranch as he is by crumbling, politics-obsessed Montevideo. But as he gets caught up in the national election, falls in love with the wrong woman, and stumbles upon a new species of bird, Gabe finds himself transformed from observer to main character in his mother's transnational saga. A story of loss and discovery that challenges our notions of family and explores the way that science, with all its uncertainties, illuminates the natural world, *Accidentals* reveals the long generational shadows of political and environmental violence.

Susan M. Gaines (<http://susanmgaines.com>) is the author of the novel *Carbon Dreams* and the non-fiction book *Echoes of Life*, as well as numerous short stories and essays in literary journals and anthology. She came to Germany as a HWK Fellow in 2002 and has held a post as writer in residence and served on the FMS Directors Team at the University of Bremen since initiating the program in 2011.

### **FICTION MEETS SCIENCE (FMS) ([www.fictionmeetsscience.org](http://www.fictionmeetsscience.org))**

Inspired by the early 21st-century increase in mainstream and literary fiction about science, 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 contemporary narrative renditions of science in creative media.

### **EXPERIMENTAL ENCOUNTERS WORKSHOP SERIES**

Focusing on a mutual reading of individual science novels by the FMS writers in residence, Experimental Encounters Workshops are designed to generate an intensified cross-disciplinary dialogue and new perspectives on science in society and creative narratives. Participants include members of the FMS network of sociologists, literary and cultural studies scholars, scientists from various fields, creative writers, and invited guests.

## PROGRAM

Preparation: all participants read *Accidentals* in advance. In deference to the virtual format, we have shortened the program. We'll take immediate questions and comments after the inputs, but save our readers' responses and further questions—for the speakers or other participants, according to expertise—for the final discussion.

**Wednesday, July 21**

**Virtual platform hosted by Hanse-Wissenschaftskolleg**

Moderators: Anton Kirchhofer and Dorothe Poggel

**14:00 Introduction** (Anton Kirchhofer)

**14:10–14:45 Background: the writing process and the science**

Genesis, Research, and Challenges

(Susan Gaines, novelist and writer in residence, Universität Bremen)

Rare Birds and Citizen Science

(Mark Hauber, Professor of ornithology, University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign)

Questions & Comments

**14.45–15.20 Literary Perspectives: Scientist Characters, Plots and Narrative Strategies**

Knowing the Past, Imagining the Future

(Anna Auguscik, Lecturer in English & American Studies, Univ. of Oldenburg)

Species Extinction and the Novel in the Anthropocene: Northern, Southern, and Migrant Perspectives on Conservationism

(Karsten Levihn-Kutzler, Post-doctoral researcher in Anglophone literature & cultural studies, Universität Oldenburg)

Questions & Comments

**15:20-15:50 COFFEE BREAK**

**15:50–16:25 Societal Contexts**

The Narrator's Modes of Observation: Subjective, Objective, Introspective

(Sina Farzin, Professor of Sociology & Sociological Theory, Bundeswehr Universität München)

Interspecies Symbiosis and Reciprocity: a Sociological Perspective

(Fabian Hempel, PhD. candidate in sociology, Universität Bremen)

Questions & Comments

**16:25-17:30 Discussion: Readers' Responses & Other Perspectives: Author, Scientist, Scholar Exchanges**

(All Participants)