

CANONIZATION IN TIMES OF GLOBALIZATION AND DIGITIZATION

PD DR KAI WIEGANDT TÜBINGEN
JUN-PROF DR JENS ELZE GÖTTINGEN

TIME Monday 1:15–3 pm
Monday 3:30–5 pm
Tuesday 3–4:30 pm

ROOM S 125, Seminargebäude, 1st Floor

The section addresses canonization as a historical practice changing in the wake of globalization and digitization. Central issues are the following:

1. National canons have been giving way to transnational canons for quite some time. At the same time, in the globalized book market the dominance of English is becoming increasingly evident. Literary prizes such as the Nobel Prize and Man Booker Prize follow the trend towards globalization of the book market and reinforce it, but also express specific political agendas (Engdahl). For example, from the 1980s to the 2000s the Booker Prize arguably had a revisionist effect on canon formation. Which canons have emerged in the academy and beyond it? How do we interpret convergences and divergences between academic and non-academic canons? Can we identify tendencies of homogenization or pluralisation of canons in a global perspective?

2. The current debate about world literature can be interpreted as an attempt to rethink canonization (Damrosch; Casanova; Thomsen, *Mapping World Literature*; Emerich; Mufti). Approaches informed by the sociology of literature define world literature via dissemination and translation of texts, text-immanent approaches define it via textual properties. With a view to canonization, it remains an open question whether both aspects can be dealt with in isolation. How can the interplay of immanent and social factors in the constitution of recent canons be conceptualized? Are there literary strategies and subjects that make texts canonical at certain times? Which historical discourses on literature refer to these characteristics?

3. The internet has helped to break the monopoly of professional book reviewing in the established media. In addition to a particularization of critical value judgments, this has led to a valorization of the quantitative side of critical value judgments. The online book trade already uses quantifications to make purchase proposals. On the consumer side, quantitative criteria arguably tend to become qualita-

tive criteria of their own right. The question arises as to whether automated preselection counteracts or contributes to canonization. How much scope remains for canon criticism when quantity becomes a central criterion for canonicity?

4. Quantification also characterizes the methods of the digital humanities. On the one hand, distant reading enables a critique of the academic canon by tracing tendencies in literary production beyond the established corpora (Moretti; Jockers; Thomsen, *World Famous*). At the same time, the method has so far rather confirmed the special status of “great texts.” Further, the digital humanities’ markup techniques are particularly well-suited to the analysis of style, a category closely linked to the traditional values of literary criticism. How can the digital humanities contribute to academic canon formation?

We call for papers that engage with these and related questions.

Casanova, Pascale. *The World Republic of Letters*. Harvard UP, 2004.

Damrosch, David. *What Is World Literature?* Princeton UP, 2003.

Emmerich, Michael. *The Tale of Genji: Translation, Canonization, and World Literature*. Columbia UP, 2015.

Engdahl, Horace. “Canonization and World Literature: the Nobel Experience.” *World Literature, World Culture*, edited by Karen-Margarethe Simonsen and Jakob Stougaard-Nielsen, Aarhus UP, 2008, pp. 195–214.

Helgesson, Stefan, and Pieter Vermeulen. *Institutions of World Literature: Writing, Translation, Markets*. Routledge, 2016.

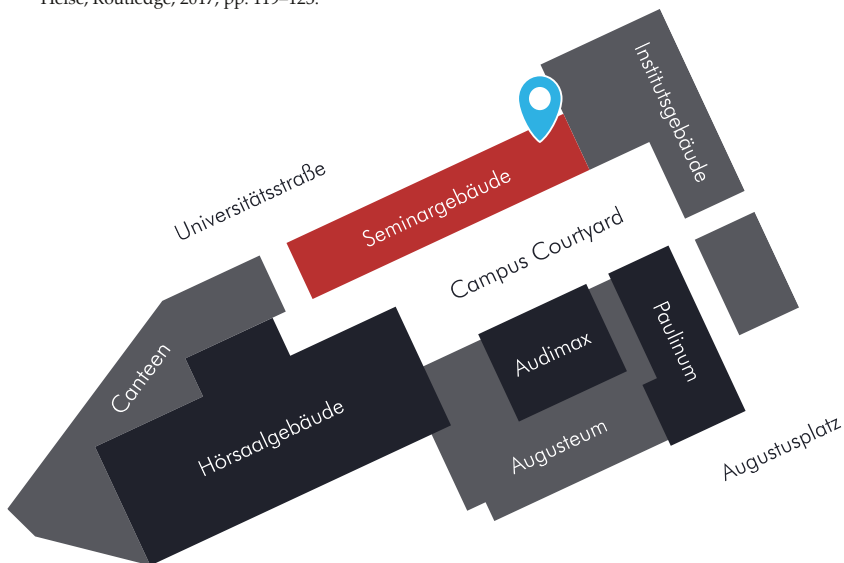
Jockers, Matthew. *Macroanalysis: Digital Methods and Literary History*. U of Illinois P, 2013.

Moretti, Franco. *Distant Reading*. Verso, 2013.

Mufti, Aamir. *Forget English! Orientalisms and World Literatures*. Harvard UP, 2016.

Thomsen, Mads Rosendahl. *Mapping World Literature: International Canonization and Transnational Literatures*. Continuum, 2008.

Thomsen, Mads Rosendahl. “World Famous, Locally. Insights from the Study of International Canonization.” *Futures of Comparative Literature: ACLA State of the Discipline Report*, edited by Ursula K. Heise, Routledge, 2017, pp. 119–123.



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PD Dr Kai Wiegandt, Jun-Prof Dr Jens Elze

WORLD LITERATURE AND THE NATIONAL FRAME: REROUTING MULTICULTURAL CANONS

PD DR JAN RUPP HEIDELBERG

SLOT Monday 1:15–3 pm

ROOM S 125, Seminargebäude, 1st Floor

The canon has taken an unlikely career turn in critical debates over Anglophone writing. While it tended to be synonymous with the Western canon or English classics, talk about a “black British canon” (Low and Wynne-Davies) or “multicultural canon” (Marx 85) has appropriated the concept to credit the transformation English-language writing has seen on a global scale. Concomitantly, this development is construed as ushering in a new transcultural world literature, requiring transnational and diasporic paradigms to attend to the production and circulation of English literatures across the globe. Yet the canons of Anglophone world writing are far from inclusive, assigning world-literary capital to a few hypercanonized authors while relegating much other work to shadow canons. Moreover, domestic concerns and traditions are often glossed over in the global celebration of particularly mobile and cosmopolitan bodies of writing.

Against this backdrop, the proposed paper will discuss recent trends in refugee writing, an area memorably counted among the novel themes and “terrains of world literature” (Bhabha 12) today. In Europe’s current refugee situation, asylum narratives (cf. Woolley) and collaborative projects like *Refugee Tales* (Herd and Pincus) have highlighted the significance of dwelling and domestic territory, trying to carve out a multicultural canon within while documenting traumatic experiences. Modelled on Chaucer’s *The Canterbury Tales*, the present-day stories reinterpret the canonical text and lay claim to English lands. As a combination of oral history and fiction, *Refugee Tales* has involved retracing the old pilgrim’s way, inhabiting a public space otherwise denied to many refugees. Simultaneously, some of the stories recall itineraries that already link some of Chaucer’s pilgrims to places elsewhere in the world.

As I shall argue, new writing like *Refugee Tales* constitutes an alternative form of canonmaking from below, set apart from transnational circuits of world literature and the global book market. Ostensibly conceived to counter resurgent nationalisms and xenophobia, it possibly reveals a dialectics of canonization in times of globalization, inviting us to reread the canon within and against the national frame.

Bhabha, Homi K. *The Location of Culture*. Routledge, 1994.

Herd, David, and Anna Pincus, eds. *Refugee Tales*. 2 vols., Comma, 2016–2018.

Low, Gail, and Marion Wynne-Davies, eds. *A Black British Canon?* Palgrave, 2006.

Woolley, Agnes. *Contemporary Asylum Narratives*. Palgrave, 2014.

Marx, John. “Postcolonial Literature and the Western Literary Canon.” *The Cambridge Companion to Postcolonial Literary Studies*, edited by Neil Lazarus, Cambridge UP, 2004, pp. 83–96.

CONSTRUCTING THE LITERARY CANON: THE CASE OF CONTEMPORARY IRISH FICTION

PD DR RALF HAEKEL GIESSEN/GÖTTINGEN

SLOT Monday 1:15–3 pm

ROOM S 125, Seminargebäude, 1st Floor

Within the field of contemporary literature written in English, Irish literature occupies a special place. On the one hand, Irish literature, and particularly Irish fiction, is discussed in terms that also apply to the wider field of literatures in English in general – world literature, literature after postmodernism, new realism, etc. On the other hand, there are aspects that are particularly ‘Irish,’ – such as the fact that authors like Éilís Ní Dhuibhne write both in Irish and in English. In my proposed talk I want to disentangle the interplay of international and local aspects that lead to the formation of the contemporary canon of Irish fiction.

On the one hand, Irish fiction is particularly successful on the international book market, and many Irish authors from John Banville and Anne Enright to Anna Burns have won international awards such as the Booker Prize – which in turn plays a key role in contemporary canon formation. Furthermore, many Irish authors living and writing abroad – such as Emma Donoghue in Canada or Colm McCann in the US – are discussed in the context of Irish literature as well – which has a long tradition linked to emigration setting in in the 19th century. On the other hand, typically Irish traits distinguish this as a form either obsessed with, or struggling with the burden of, a national literature. It is particularly this last aspect I want to focus on. In 1999 Colm Tóibín wrote: “The purpose of much Irish fiction, it seems, is to become involved in the Irish argument, and the purpose of much Irish criticism has been to relate the fiction to the argument.” Much has changed since the turn of the Millennium, however, but the focus on the national, social, and particularly economic context still fundamentally influences Irish canon formation. For instance, periodization is not primarily following the international tags of ‘postmodern’ or ‘metamodern’ but rather key local economic events: the novels are described as Celtic Tiger or, after 2008, Post Celtic Tiger works of fiction. In a case study I want to read three contemporary works and discuss the way they treat Irish matters – and how this influences their inclusion in, and indeed the cultural construction of, the canon of contemporary Irish fiction: Anne Enright’s *The Green Road*, Sally Rooney’s *Normal People*, and Anna Burns’s *Milkman*.

CANON, CORPUS, ARCHIVE: DISCOURSES AND PRACTICES OF SELECTION FROM ROMANTIC CRITICISM TO THE DIGITAL HUMANITIES

TIM SOMMER HEIDELBERG

SLOT Monday 3:30–5 pm

ROOM S 125, Seminargebäude, 1st Floor

The late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries witnessed the establishment of national canons as well as the emergence of a language of valuation that tended to distinguish between mass popularity and rarefied literary excellence. If this normative selectivity is openly on display in the literary criticism of Coleridge, Wordsworth, or Hazlitt, its premises survive largely intact in Victorian sage writing (Carlyle's critical essays, or Arnold's notion of culture as "the best that has been thought and said") and beyond (as in Leavisite "great tradition" criticism). Twentieth-century critical professionalization entailed a shift to the consecrating dynamics of the academic "culture of the school" that John Guillory has described as the key factor in the debating and credentialing of contemporary literary canons (41). Where Romantic and post-Romantic criticism had tended to read canonicity as quasi-transcendental, ahistorical textual property, academic discourse moved the social constructedness of canons centre stage. More recently, it has seemed that new digital methodologies would do away with canonization altogether and instead allow us, in Franco Moretti's words, to "look at all of literary history: canonical and non-canonical: together" (208).

Proceeding from a *longue durée* approach to discourses and practices of selection from the early nineteenth century to the present, my paper will probe such epistemological optimism through tracing the afterlife of the logic of canonization in digitally informed scholarship. As a case study for the latter, I will use several of the "pamphlets" launched by the Stanford Literary Lab since 2011. My reading of these will suggest that the digital humanities champion a new rhetoric of selection that does not, however, entirely dispense with the necessity of selecting. For some historical contexts, only a fraction of "everything" has been digitized (Algee-Hewitt et al.), and that which is available for digital analysis often privileges the Anglophone archive at the expense of non-Anglophone writers and writing (Porter). For other contexts, "all of literary history" is simply too large a corpus to allow for meaningful analysis (McGurl and Algee-Hewitt). If in literary criticism digitization has resulted in shifting discourses of canonization, there are also striking continuities in terms of practices of selection (between 'good' and 'bad' texts or 'good' and 'bad' data). Seen against this background, the development from qualitative to quantitative

tive methods—the difference between the ‘subjective’ canons of the Romantics and the ‘objective’ corpora of the digital humanists—appears far less straightforward than is commonly assumed.

- Algee-Hewitt, Mark, Sarah Allison, Marissa Gemma, Ryan Heuser, Franco Moretti, and Hannah Walser. “Canon/Archive: Large-Scale Dynamics in the Literary Field.” *Pamphlets of the Stanford Literary Lab* 11, 2016, pp. 1–13.
- Guillory, John. *Cultural Capital: The Problem of Literary Canon Formation*. U of Chicago P, 1993.
- McGurl, Mark, and Mark Algee-Hewitt. “Between Canon and Corpus: Six Perspectives on 20th-Century Novels.” *Pamphlets of the Stanford Literary Lab* 8, 2015, pp. 1–22.
- Moretti, Franco. “The Slaughterhouse of Literature.” *Modern Language Quarterly*, vol. 61, no. 1, 2000, pp. 207–227.
- Porter, J. D. “Popularity/Prestige.” *Pamphlets of the Stanford Literary Lab* 17, 2018, pp. 1–22.

COMP TITLES AND PRODUCT SUGGESTIONS: THE ALGORITHMS OF CANON FORMATION

PROF DR SEBASTIAN DOMSCH GREIFSWALD

SLOT Monday 3:30–5 pm

ROOM S 125, Seminargebäude, 1st Floor

One of the mechanisms of canon formation that has so far received not enough critical attention, even though it has always been strongly influential at one end of the chain of cultural production, and, through digitalization, is gearing up to become of the most important and influential factors, is comparison. We tend to often think of the canon in terms of exceptionality (the great masterpieces that tower above the rest), but in a broader sense, understanding texts through comparisons with others establishes the canon as a whole much more firmly. This is reflected, on the one side, in the publishing industry’s strong reliance on the use of “comp titles” for acquisition and marketing decisions, an aspect that is starting to come under scrutiny (McGrath) But digitalization has turned this mechanism into a central factor for a book’s success by turning it into an algorithm that suggests comparable titles to customers. This paper wants to start investigating the types of effect that (particularly algorithmic) comparison has on canon formation, for example considering generic evaluation, the sociology of authors, or notions of innovation versus convention/expectation.

McGrath, Laura B. “Comping White.” *Los Angeles Review of Books*, 21 Jan. 2019.

“A TRUTH UNIVERSALLY ACKNOWLEDGED”? JANE AUSTEN, FAN FICTION AND THE CANON

PROF DR ANGELIKA ZIRKER TÜBINGEN

SLOT Tuesday 3–4:30 pm

ROOM S 125, Seminargebäude, 1st Floor

The Jane Austen fanfiction corpus has its beginning with Sybil Brinton’s 1913 novel *Old Friends and New Fancies*; since then, almost every year a number of fanfiction novels has been appearing, and the advent of the Internet, with its much lower threshold, has sparked an increasing number of fanfiction published online. While Jane Austen’s works are undoubtedly part of the (Western) canon of literature, her fanfiction is not; and yet, there is something like a Jane Austen “fanon” (cf. Thomas) that is fluid and flexible but still expressive of some sort of agreement within the community. It is also something that begins to spread in that Jane Austen fandom has become a global community (see Yaffe). What is more, academics have recently become more and more interested in this fanon and begun to reflect on its status within the field of literary studies. Hence, apparently, not only the fanon is fluid and flexible but so is academia in its increasing recognition of fanfiction (e.g. van Steenhuyse). At the same time, however, it becomes, because of the internet and online publications, increasingly difficult to keep track of the Jane Austen fanon. Moreover, the quality of the texts is often not very high, which makes it, so it may seem, hardly worthwhile to consider fanfiction more deeply from an academic point of view.

In my paper, I would like to address these difficulties when it comes to canonization of fanfiction in a global and a digital context and will offer a different perspective on fanfiction and its uses in literary studies. The digital corpus of online fanfiction gives us new opportunities to make sensible use of the digital humanities, for instance, by using distant reading techniques. Thus we may learn something of the different approaches chosen by writers of fanfiction, which allows us to draw inferences about style and plot, character portrayal etc. These findings, in turn, may lead to close readings, and they may tell us something about processes of understanding as readers of Jane Austen’s works become writers themselves. To conclude, I will present a few first results as to literary style based on distant reading methods and what they may tell us about fanfiction writers.

Thomas, Bronwen. “Canons and Fanons: Literary Fanfiction Online.” *Dichtung Digital*, vol. 37, 2007.

Van Steenhuyse, Veerle. “Jane Austen Fan Fiction and the Situated Fantext: The Example of Pamela

Aidan’s Fitzwilliam Darcy, Gentleman.” *English Text Construction*, vol. 4, no. 2, 2011, pp. 165–85.

Yaffe, Deborah. *Among the Janeites: A Journey Through the World of Jane Austen Fandom*. Mariner, 2013.

THE VALUE OF HASHTAGS AND GOODREADS: THEORIZING THE CANON IN DIGITAL CULTURE

PD DR JULIA STRAUB BERN

SLOT Tuesday 3–4:30 pm

ROOM S 125, Seminargebäude, 1st Floor

The publication of Kristen Roupenian’s short story “Cat Person” in a 2017 issue of *The New Yorker* magazine drew wide circles, a global readership opening up to the hitherto little-known writer. “Cat Person,” a story of a date gone sour, resounded with on- and offline communities, particularly because it fed directly into the #MeToo debate.

In terms of canon theory, “Cat Person” is an interesting case. In a rather traditional vein, *The New Yorker* once more served as a stepping stone, or canonizing authority, for a short fiction writer, having promoted the genre of the short story and its practitioners since its early days. But there were further implications with regard to canon formation in today’s digital literary culture given the virulence with which Roupenian’s story sprawled, the velocity of critical responses it elicited, and the agents involved in all this. While in today’s academic discourse – prone to diversity, hyphenation and multiplicity – the fierce canon wars of preceding decades have subsided by and large, the canon debate might well reignite given the impact of digital culture on literary production and reception processes.

Thus, drawing upon contemporary examples, this paper aims to scrutinize selected aspects of canon theory which digitization has convoluted or rendered obsolete. Could “Cat Person”’s going viral be regarded as an “invisible hand” phenomenon (Simone Winko), i.e. a masked process of canon formation, and are there other such processes specific to digital media whose formative impact on the canon still needs to be acknowledged? Which relevance does e.g. Barbara Herrnstein Smith’s notion of the contingency of value, dating from the late 1980s, have if applied to online activities that blur the line between professional and lay criticism? Or put differently: are established terminologies from canon theory still adequate for a discussion of literature within the digital sphere?

PHOTO: MUSEUM OF BOOKS AND WRITING AT THE NATIONAL LIBRARY

