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International Workshop | December 3-4, 2025
**Reading between Ruptures:
Literature and Reading
Cultures in the 21st Century**

Book of Abstracts

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Book of Abstracts

Reading between Ruptures: Literature and Reading Cultures in the 21st Century | Zwischen Zäsuren lesen: Literatur und Lesekulturen im 21. Jahrhundert

December 3-4, 2025, University of Giessen

Location: International Graduate Centre for the Study of Culture (GCSC)
Otto-Behaghel-Straße 12, 35394 Giessen (Germany)

Organised by: [Prof. Dr. Kirsten von Hagen](#), [Dr. Elena Hamidy](#), [Marie-Theres Stickel](#)

Key Note Lecture:

Making Meaning from Extreme Experiences: New Reading Practices and Their Mediatization in Russophone Communities, 2022–2025

Ilya Kukulín (Stanford University)

Throughout the 2000s and 2020s, two contradictory processes unfolded simultaneously in Russia, demonstrating shifting attitudes toward reading. The first involved the intensifying efforts of various elites—both pro-government and opposition—to influence adolescent and youth reading practices. This manifested in the proliferation of curated or anonymous book lists circulated through media outlets, featuring works deemed "essential" childhood reading. The most radical iteration of this approach has been the political instrumentalization of the Russian literary canon by the Kremlin regime, which has prompted counter-accusations from Western authors characterizing Russian classics as vehicles of "imperialism." In this framework, literature functions as a crucial instrument for ensuring reliable intergenerational transmission of "correct" emotional and cultural values within specific communities—the Russian political nation, the intelligentsia, and others.

The second process involved the rapid proliferation of voluntary reading groups (albeit within a relatively narrow social sector of educated urban youth), where selected works undergo critical interrogation and problematization. These groups frequently engage with texts that fall outside established school curricula or intelligentsia reading canons. Film adaptations of classic works and biopics of renowned writers that emerged during this period sometimes align with one of these polarities—either glorification or problematization and modernization—but more often they eclectically combine both types of perception.

Following the onset of the second phase of the invasion of Ukraine in 2022 (the first phase began in 2014) and the definitive transformation of the Russian regime into a repressive autocracy, a phenomenon emerged within both Russian society and the new émigré community—particularly among educated circles with humanities interests—that I propose to term "Aesopian reading." This practice, observable through social media responses, involves intensive reading and rereading of works about Nazi Germany, including diaries of German nonconformists (ranging from Victor Klemperer to Friedrich Reck-Malleczewen), journalistic accounts of postwar Germany, and contemporary Western scholarship—most notably Nicholas Stargardt's *The German War*, which has generated particular interest. The analogy between Nazi Germany and contemporary Russia enables publishers targeting intellectuals (Ivan Limbakh Publishing House and Corpus) to publish such works without explicitly drawing historical parallels—these connections are made by readers themselves.

Overall, intellectual reading during the 2000s–2020s—that is, reading not oriented solely toward escapism and leisure—has been perceived either as a form of civic obligation to the political community or as an existentially "charged" activity enabling individuals to reconceptualize themselves within historical context.

This work draws on several theoretical approaches—receptive aesthetics (especially Hans Robert Jauss's concept of the horizon of expectations) and the sociology and anthropology of reading, including Stanley Fish's notion of interpretive communities and Michel de Certeau's idea of "reading as poaching." It also engages with ethical and existential hermeneutics, treating reading as an ethical encounter and a mode of self-understanding under conditions of political and moral extremity.

Ilya Kukulín is a literary critic, cultural historian, and sociologist of culture. Currently, he is a visiting faculty at Stanford University (Autumn 2025). He authored a book *Machines of the Noisy Time: How the Soviet Montage Became an Aesthetic Method of the Unofficial Culture* (2015) and co-authored a monograph *A Guerilla Logos: The Project of Dmitry Aleksandrovich Prigov* (2022, with Mark Lipovetsky). His research interests include the sociology of contemporary culture, contemporary Ukrainian, Belarusian, and Russian poetry, cultural processes in post-Soviet Russia, the social psychology of the Soviet intelligentsia, the history of Soviet literatures, and the history of unofficial poetry in the USSR.

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Paper Presentations:

Reading Post-Postmodernist Fictions of the Digital: Narrative, Technology, and Cognition in the 21st Century

Jan Alber (Justus-Liebig-Universität Giessen)

Alice Bell (Sheffield Hallam University)

Nadia Georgiou (Sheffield Hallam University)

Denise Wong (Justus-Liebig-Universität Giessen)

Within the first decades of the 21st century, technological developments across media have proliferated. This shift has begun to register in a host of contemporary novels that self-reflexively engage with, represent, and/or exploit digital media semiotically, structurally, ontologically, and/or thematically and which we call PPFs (Post-Postmodernist Fictions of the Digital). Our panel, comprised of members of the project team on the AHRC/DFGfunded project ‘Reading Post-Postmodernist Fictions of the Digital: Narrative, Technology, and Cognition in the 21st Century’, aims to present three papers to introduce the project and report on the quantitative and qualitative studies that have taken place over the past two years. This panel aims to shed light on how contemporary readers respond to the representation of digital media in print fiction.

Multimodality and Transmediality in Post-Postmodernist Fictions

Alice Bell and Jan Alber will present our typology for analysing the emergence of this new literary genre using a medium-specific framework. While our research on PPFs is informed by existing scholarship on ‘fictions of the internet’ (Weigel-Heller 2018), ‘quasi-hybrids’ (Nünning and Schwanecke 2013: 136), and ‘media novels’ (Punday 2012), we deviate from and contribute to scholarship by developing a 6-category typology from an extensive corpus of 94 works of fiction spanning from 2000-2025. To elucidate the distinctive textual features within our typology, Bell and Alber will discuss two case studies incorporating digital technology via multimodality and transmediality: Maria Semple’s *Where’d You Go, Bernadette* (2012) and Caleb Azumah Nelson’s *Open Water* (2021). This paper is based on our first co-authored article, forthcoming in *Narrative*.

Insights from Reader Reviews and Reading Group Discussions of Post-Postmodernist Fictions of the Digital

In the second phase of the project undertaking empirical studies of reader responses to PPFs, we used data collected from reader reviews on Goodreads and reading group discussions of representative texts in our corpus in the qualitative study. **Nadia Georgiou** will present an overview of the qualitative study, focusing on data collection methods, data analysis and the main themes observed across the datasets.

An Experimental Study of Post-Postmodernist Fictions of the Digital

Denise Wong will present the quantitative study designed and undertaken between February and April 2025 as well as the results. Building upon scholarship that investigates the way self-reflexive literary devices are cognitively processed by real readers, this study aims to address a gap in empirical research examining the relationship between modality and the experientiality of reading (Mangen and Spjeldnaes 2025) by measuring how various degrees of multimodality and transmediality impact readers’ self-reported experience of immersion, absorption, and awareness of such features being symptomatic of what we call ‘awareness of the text’s constructedness’. In the quantitative study, the data used comprises self-report questionnaires on readers’ subjectively perceived experiences of transportation vis-à-vis this awareness of text’s constructedness in relation to degrees of visual modality and transmediality in contemporary fiction.

Jan Alber is Professor of New English and American Literature and Head of the English Department at JLU Giessen University (Germany) and Past President of the ISSN. He is the author of *Narrating the Prison* (Cambria Press, 2007) and *Unnatural Narrative: Impossible Worlds in Fiction and Drama* (University of Nebraska Press, 2016). Alber received fellowships and research grants from the British

Academy, the Exploratory Research Space at RWTH Aachen University, the German Research Foundation, the Humboldt Foundation, and the Ministry for Culture and Science of Northrhine-Westphalia. From 2014 to 2016, he was a Marie-Curie Fellow at the Aarhus Institute of Advanced Studies (Denmark). Alber is currently working on a UKRI project on the processing of post-postmodernist fictions of the digital with Alice Bell.

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Alice Bell is Professor of English Language and Literature at Sheffield Hallam University in the UK. Her research specialisms are stylistics, narratology, empirical literary methods, and digital fiction. Her publications include *The Possible Worlds of Hypertext Fiction* (Palgrave 2010), *Digital Fiction and the Unnatural* (OSUP 2021), and *Reading Digital Fiction: Narrative, Cognition, Mediality* (with Astrid Ensslin, Routledge 2024). a.bell@shu.ac.uk

Nadia Georgiou works as an AHRC-funded postdoctoral researcher at Sheffield Hallam University and a postgraduate research supervisor at the University of Wales, Trinity Saint David. Her research interests include reader responses to (translated/multilingual) literary texts, and the sociology of literature. Her publications have appeared in *Cultus*, the *AALITRA Review* and *JoSTrans*. She is an active freelance translator. N.Georgiou@shu.ac.uk

Denise Wong is postdoctoral researcher at Justus Liebig University Giessen (Germany). She is Reviews Co-Editor of *C21: Journal of 21st-century Writings* and her work has been published in *Textual Practice*, the *Journal of Asian American Studies*, *DIEGESIS* and *The Problems of Literary Genres*. She has contributed chapters to the forthcoming *Edinburgh Companion to the Millennial Novel*, *Narrative Intersubjectivity and Storyworld Possible Selves*, and *The Routledge Companion to Literature and Cognitive Studies*. Her first monograph, *Shame in Contemporary You-Narration: Time, Gender, and Race*, will be published in October 2025.

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Plenitude and sustenance. Reparative reading practices of the present (Zambreno, Nelson, Geißler)

Barbara Bausch (Freie Universität Berlin)

The term 'readers' usually refers to people who read authors' works in their spare time, or who work as literary critics or scholars. But also, of course, authors themselves are readers of literature. In the literary production of recent years, it is striking that many authors present themselves as such. This is particularly true of political authors in German- and English-speaking countries. Maggie Nelson, Enis Maci, Dorothee Elmiger, Kate Zambreno, Heike Geißler, Ilija Matusko and Paula Fürstenberg, for example, ostentatiously identify their own writing as stemming from the practice of reading – in their books and, in some cases, on social media. What functions does this emphasis on reading fulfil, and what effect does it have on the form of the resulting texts?

Drawing on exemplary readings from Zambreno's *Heroines* (2012), Nelson's *The Argonauts* (2015) and Geißler's *Liegen. Eine Übung* (2022) I would first like to demonstrate the own reading practice is presented in experience-based (autofictional or autotheoretical) texts as a particular form of self-help, as outlined by Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick. In a present characterised by a sense of urgency for social change on the one hand and individual powerlessness on the other, reading is presented as a practice that can nurture positive emotions and provide resources. By selecting readings that are not only referenced in the texts themselves, but also quoted and referenced in the appendix or marginalia, the authors position themselves within the literary field, inscribing themselves in literary, theoretical, and political discourses (in this case, queer-feminist and anti-racist). They use these as backing and at the same time help them to achieve greater visibility: Reading communities with their own evaluation

criteria and canons are established. The writing processes supported by reparative readings produce texts that, at a higher level, present writing not only, but also as a form of *care*. The analysis aims to show that and how reading in a social context is a practice that always *simultaneously* promotes social integration and social distinction or singularisation of individuals and communities.

The staging of writers as readers also has an impact on writing styles and form – and thus, in turn, on the modes of reading that the texts demand. The constant assertion that the texts are not original creations but are based on readings elevates the practice of reading itself and highlights it as a fundamental component of writing. The resulting texts are loosely assembled textual structures, both semantically and typographically, which are able to integrate what has been read into their ensemble of elements and, above all, offer readers spaces for thought and reflection. They can be fruitfully described using the metaphor of constellation, which makes it possible to focus on the writing process, the form of the texts, and the constellating mode of reading that this necessitates. A mode of reading that requires to read between ruptures, but also to activate these texts as places of ‘plenitude’ and ‘sustenance’ while reading.

Select Literature: Amlinger, „Lesekrisen“ (2023); Bertram, *Kunst als menschliche Praxis* (2014); Bieger, „Literatur als Infrastruktur von Öffentlichkeit“ (Manuskript, 2025); Heidenreich, „Literarische und politische Öffentlichkeit“ (2022); Foucault, „L’écriture de soi“ (1983); Le Guin, „The Carrier Bag Theory of Fiction“ (1988); Krauß, „Constellations: A Brief Introduction“ (2011); Reckwitz, *Kreativität und soziale Praxis* (2016); Lauer, „Die neue literarische Öffentlichkeit“ (2025); Spoerhase/Vogel, „Gegenwarts-literatur als Herausforderung des Literarischen“ (2023); Sedgwick, *Touching Feeling* (2003).

Barbara Bausch is a literary scholar at the Cluster of Excellence 2020 *Temporal Communities. Doing Literature in a Global Perspective* at Freie Universität Berlin. After completing her PhD at the Friedrich Schlegel Graduate School of Literary Studies in 2022 she held postdoc positions at the Institute for German and Dutch Philology at the FU Berlin and was a Junior Fellow at the DFG-Centre for Advanced Studies *Imaginary of Force* at the University of Hamburg. Her research interests include forms of literary engagement, prose theory, and reading as an aesthetic and social practice.

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Recent Publications: *Spielformen der Störung. Ror Wolfs radikaler Realismus im Kontext experimenteller Prosa der 1950er-1980er Jahre* (2024), *Illegibilities Reflecting Reading* (2025) and *Standortbestimmungen. Literarische Positionierung in der Gegenwart* (2025, ed. with Julia Weber).

Reading (with) the Readers: Research Ethics and Informed Consent in a Shared Reading Project for War-Affected Youth in Ukraine

Birgitte Beck Pristed (Aarhus University)

Nadiia Pavlyk (Zhytomyr Ivan Franko State U.; Aarhus University)

Whenever reading studies involve an experimental or participatory research design, the process of data collection comes with a set of ethical challenges, and inevitably, the research itself contributes to a normative construction of the participating readers as informed data subjects. Particularly when a study involves vulnerable young readers, and data gathering is taking place outside EU in a war-affected reading environment in Ukraine, it requires that we think beyond the procedural formalities of obtaining ethical approvals from our institutions and informed consent from parents.

In this paper, we discuss our ethical considerations and practical experiences from the preparatory phase of the research project “Dialogues and Reading: Shared Reading for Ukrainian Young People.” Through a survey and a series of shared reading sessions with young participants in the Ukrainian-Danish Youth Houses in Kyiv and Mykolaiv, the research project explores how shared reading, a well-established concept and practice within Western social and educational studies, may translate into a new methodology for child and youth work in Ukraine. The project further investigates how young Ukrainian

readers' responses to war-themed youth poetry and short stories may widen existing understandings of shared reading, now being tested as a tool for peer-to-peer dialogues in war-affected contexts of non-formal education.

First, the paper will address ethical questions related to the participating readers' age. What does informed consent mean when researchers are collecting data among young readers? Beyond informed consent, understood as a formal agreement between researchers and parents, we must tailor information about the project to meet young readers' communication needs and to facilitate young readers' assent, a less formal agreement to participate or withdraw from survey and the shared reading sessions. Can we do so without paternalizing the young readers? Can we ever avoid constructing an "implied reader" as an ideal, actively involved, self-conscious, and well-informed data subject?

Second, the paper will address the societal-political and cultural context of the research and reading environment in Ukraine. Existing research (Sherwood and Parsons, 2021) has shown that English scholars collecting data in so-called "post-communist" countries found that written consent was "not appropriate". However, currently Ukrainian GDPR legislation is developing fast as part of the EU-Ukraine Association Agreement, which stipulates that Ukrainian national legislation must ensure to comply to the EU regulations. Our research is EU-funded and with our Ukrainian and Danish institutional backgrounds, we cannot maintain a neutral position of observation, since we become agents in this 'EUkranization' process. Does our facilitation of young Ukrainian readers' informed assent contribute to the 'normative upbringing' of future EU citizens, becoming self-aware as mature data subjects?

Third, and most difficult, in a war context, when even basic educational needs and human rights of young people are not sufficiently met, we cannot assume that informed consent is a priority concern for parents and their children. In the Ukrainian-Danish Youth Houses, we can expect to work with young people with unequal social backgrounds, who have different war experiences of loss. These underlying challenges can re-surface when reading war-themed youth literature, and readers' emotional responses cannot be fully anticipated in the formal agreements of informed consent, but is silence a good alternative?

Birgitte Beck Pristed is associate professor at the department of Global studies, Aarhus University and PI of the research project "PUBLISH: Children's Books in the Russia-Ukraine War" <https://projects.au.dk/publish>. She is a specialist in book history, publishing and reading studies with a second strand in Soviet children's literature. She received her Ph.D. from University of Mainz. birgitte.pristed@cas.au.dk

Nadiia Pavlyk is a professor at Zhytomyr Ivan Franko State University (Ukraine) and PI of the MSCA4Ukraine project DaR:ua "Dialogues and Reading: Shared Reading for Ukrainian Young People" (Aarhus University). Her research focuses on non-formal education for excluded groups, youth work and youth policy based on Council of Europe standards and approaches, shared reading and children's books in the Russia-Ukraine war. pavnad@cas.au.dk

"Reading Against the Reader: Witold Gombrowicz and the Performative Breakdown of Literary Expectations"

Charles Garatynski (French writer/ independent scholar)

This paper explores the radical challenge posed by Witold Gombrowicz to dominant reading cultures, from mid-twentieth-century modernism to today's digitally accelerated literary public spheres. Far from accommodating the reader's expectations, Gombrowicz's prose and essays deliberately sabotage

interpretive habits, producing a mode of reading rooted not in consensus or critical satisfaction, but in discomfort, provocation, and affective estrangement.

Focusing on *Ferdydurke*, *Diary*, and *Trans-Atlantyk*, I argue that Gombrowicz performs a double subversion: first, of literary form and genre, and second, of the reader's interpretive posture. His writing enacts a performative anti-reading, a refusal of symbolic closure or ideological alignment. Rather than stabilizing meaning, his texts create a theatrical "literary awkwardness" that confronts the reader with their own desire to extract meaning and assign value.

Situating Gombrowicz within broader transformations of reading cultures – from solitary reading to public performance, from elite criticism to participatory digital modes – I ask how his work anticipates today's fractured, polyphonic, and often contentious literary publics. Can we read Gombrowicz postcritically, not as a writer to be deciphered, but as a performative force that exposes the fragility of our interpretive systems? What does his resistance to interpretation reveal about the social practices of reading in times of cultural redefinition?

By destabilizing the very conditions of readability, Gombrowicz invites us to rethink not only how we read, but what reading does — to literature, to readers, and to the shared symbolic orders we cling to.

Charles Garatynski (b. 1998, Bordeaux) is a French writer working across fiction, poetry, theatre, and literary criticism. His work has appeared or is forthcoming in *Marginales*, *Traversées*, *Lichen*, and with Papier Bulle Editions. In parallel, he is developing a personal research project on modern and contemporary Polish literature, to which he is currently dedicating several critical essays. He will speak at the upcoming conference organized by the University of Franche-Comté in Autun (December 2–3, 2025), where he will present on the theatre of Stanisław Ignacy Witkiewicz.

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Select Publications:

- *Revue des Deux Mondes* (December 2025), Gombrowicz, l'intraitable
- *Marginales*, n°313 (Summer 2025), Patho-intelligentsia (short story)
- *e-eleWator*, no 20 (2025), Business Plan (prose in polish)
- *Caminando*, vol. 39, no. 2 (November 2025), Witkacy ou la noyade du sens: penser l'eau entre grotesque et survie
- *Lichen*, nos 110, 111, 112 (2025), Poems in French

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Attention in the Age of Media Competition – Rereading Proust with Clara

Kirsten von Hagen (Justus-Liebig-Universität Giessen)

In his novel *Clara lit Proust* (2022), French author Stéphane Carlier focuses on a rare phenomenon: a young hairdresser from a small French town changes her life thanks to her reading of Proust. Other authors have already noted the life-changing nature of reading Proust, and its ability to provide comfort in difficult times, as Joseph Czapski did. In his essay *Proust contre la déchéance*, he explained how Proust helped save 400 Polish officers during World War II while they were interned in a Russian camp. What is new in Carlier's work, however, is the background of the study: he deliberately chooses a young woman from an uneducated family in the French periphery who not only discovers Proust for herself, but also encourages others to give their lives a new direction by reading to them aloud. What the novel does not address, however, is that Proust himself developed an aesthetic in his novel cycle that was directed against the transience of modernity. Drawing on Asian forms of mindfulness, he developed narrative forms that bring the smallest phenomena into focus. Proust also concentrates the reading speed

through very long sentences, while, at the same time, distracting attention through associations. Notable are his meticulous observations of details and tiny phenomena, brought to the fore like Ariadne's thread.

The lecture aims to contribute to research on the economies of attention in modernity and the 21st century (Cf. Baumbach) by re-reading Proust's novel in the light of Asian philosophies, popularised by Japonism in France at the turn of the century. Not only does Proust's novel repeatedly address the question of attention in an age of transience on a meta-level, it also develops narrative strategies for how literature can counteract this: by making everyone their own reader. This exploration departs from the idea that dominant story models and narrative forms constrain and make possible not only what we envisage as possible futures, but also how literature can change our lives (Alain de Botton). This is especially true since literature, through its exploration of new forms, has an inherent regenerative power that provides new answers to changing reading modes, reading cultures and attention economies. Empirical findings in cognitive sciences have affirmed Marcel Proust's intuition. They include the assertion that the more fiction people read, the better their ability to understand others; this concerns the empathy whereby one person's emotions can become similar to those of another (Oatley, 2016). Narrative is not just a medium of communication, as Proust and Carlier show, but a constitutive force that shapes ontologies, ethics, and new modes to cope with the future. The forms we use to tell stories about the world shape the futures we can envision. As a cultural and cognitive structure, narrative plays a crucial role in shaping what is imaginable. Focussing on reading scenarios such as those reflected on by Proust and Carlier enables us to rethink the power of literature and its inherent ability to constantly renew itself.

Select Literature:

Baumbach, Sibylle 2019. 'Mind the Narratives: Towards a Cultural Narratology of Attention', in Astrid Erll, Roy Sommer eds, *Narrative in Culture*, Berlin/Boston: De Gruyter, p. 37-57.

Botton, de, Alain 2006. *How Proust can change your Life*, London: Macmillan.

Czapski, Joseph. *Proust contre la déchéance. Conférences au camp de Giazowitz*, Lausann: Les éditions Noir sur Blanc, 2011.

Oatley, Keith (2016). Fiction: Simulation of social worlds. *Trends in Cognitive Sciences*, 20, 618-628.

Kirsten von Hagen is professor of Romance Literature and Romance Cultural Studies at the University of Giessen. Her research interests include French and Spanish literature and culture from the 17th to the 21st century, intermedial storytelling, postcolonial aesthetics, literature and economics, inter- and transcultural dynamics. She is the author of *Inszenierte Alterität: Zigeunerfiguren in Literatur, Oper und Film (Staged Alterity: Gypsy Figures in Literature, Opera and Film)*, Munich: Wilhelm Fink, 2009) and *Intermediale Liebschaften: Mehrfachadaptationen von Choderlos de Laclos' Les Liaisons dangereuses (Intermedial Liaisons: Multiple Adaptations of Choderlos de Laclos' Les Liaisons dangereuses)*, Tuebingen 2002). Other research interests of her include ecocriticism and the (re-)writing of stereotypes, transmedia storytelling, European Modernism, and canon-revision. Kirsten.v.Hagen@romanistik.uni-giessen.de

Select Publications:

- 2025. 'Les nouvelles tendances boursières peuvent déjà remettre en question l'existence même. Time, Fashion, and Social Change in the Mirror of Three French Novels of the 19th Century', in Deborah de Muijnck ed, *Troubling Time(s). Questioning Prevailing Notions of Time in the Study of Literature and Culture*. Trier: WVT, pp. 199-217.
- 2024. 'Vorwort: Kurzformen des Erzählens', in Kirsten von Hagen & Nirina Ralantoaritsimba eds, *Kreatives Schreiben und Kulturelle Praxis: Kurzformen des Erzählens*, Frankfurt/M.: Frankfurt Academic Press, pp. 9–18.
- 2024, with Andreas Langenohl. 'Literatur und Soziologie als Genres der Reflexion monetären Wissens', in: Christine Magerski & Christian Steuerwald eds, „Die drei Kulturen“ reloaded, Wiesbaden: Springer, pp. 151 -170.
- 2023. 'Le secret des livres refusés: la Bretagne comme espace imaginaire culturel chez Bannalec et Foenkinos', in Marina Hertrampf & Christoph Mayer eds, *Populäre Heimat: Spielarten des Heimat- und Regionalromans in der französischen und frankophonen Gegenwartsliteratur/La*

petite Partie populaire: Variations du Roman régionaliste et régional dans la littérature française et francophone d'aujourd'hui, München: AVM Edition, pp. 191–210.

- 2021. 'De Temps en temps' – von der Zeit zum Wetter. Gemeinplätze ‚guten Lebens‘ in Flauberts ‚Bouvard et Pécuchet‘ (1881)“, in: *Comparatio* 2021/2, Jahrgang 13, S. 257 - 273.
- 2018. 'Les affaires d'argent – Zum Verhältnis von Ökonomie und Affekt in Flauberts Madame Bovary', in Gesine Hindemith & Dagmar Stöferle eds, *Der Affekt der Ökonomie: Speklatives Erzählen in der Moderne*, Berlin: De Gruyter, pp. 105–120.
- 2015. 'Comment transformer l'autoréflexivité à l'écran: Don Quichotte au miroir des adaptations cinématographiques', in Caroline Fischer ed., *Intermédialités*, Paris: Lucie éditions, pp. 101–118.

Digital Literary Battlegrounds: Russian-Ukrainian Communities Clash Over the Dar 2025 Award on Facebook

Elena Hamidy (Justus-Liebig-Universität Giessen)

In May 2025, Ukrainian writer Galina Rymbu accused Denis Beznosov, who was shortlisted by anti-war DAR literary prize, of past involvement in multiple events involving displaced Ukrainian children. These events were organized by the Russian State Children's Library where Beznosov worked as deputy director until the end of 2022. The scandal sparked intense debate about whether Russian culture can be meaningfully separated from the crimes of the Russian state during an ongoing war. During the debate, Ukrainian author Maria Galina won the award for her wartime chronicle of Odesa but declined to accept it.

Interestingly, a big part of the debate took place on Facebook: Rymbu published details and links supporting her arguments as Facebook posts, which prompted many immediate responses on the same platform and spread to different media. The present paper analyzes the development and the structure of the Facebook-debate as well as the inclusion of various user groups. First of all, different arguments reveal different positions towards literature, readers and literary prize in the context of attention economy under the conditions of war – the range of what is possible to say about the war and who is authorized to write and to speak about it. Second, the analysis of the interaction between users on various levels (reactions, distribution of individual posts, and participation in the form of comments) is useful for understanding the relative importance and the impact of different lines of argument on user groups. How can user communities be empirically defined based on the analysis of Facebook interaction data? How do these communities position themselves in the debate about the literary prize? Is there an overarching level that affects all communities, or does the discussion split into sub-aspects and groups that communicate less with each other? Are there any middle-ground positions between groups?

Dr. Elena Hamidy works at the chair of East and West Slavic Literatures and has a disciplinary background in Slavonic and German literature and narratology. In her postdoctoral research, she focuses on the sociology of literature and culture, especially on social media, and the promotion of DH methods in higher education and philological research. She has published papers on literary awards, Russian BookTube, and the presentation of Krymnash on YouTube. Since 2022, she has worked on the collection and analysis of Facebook data related to the cultural dimension of the Russian-Ukrainian war, representing not only the perspective of content creators, but content consumers as well.

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Selected Publications:

- (2024) Why Culture and Philosophy Matter for the Studies of Algorithmic Recommender Systems. An Example from the Time Prior to the Outbreak of the Russian–Ukrainian War in 2022. In: *Human-Centric Intelligent Systems*. DOI: 10.1007/s44230-023-00053-z

- (2022) Russian BookTube: Literary Reviews on YouTube. *Apparatus. Film, Media and Digital Cultures of Central and Eastern Europe*, 14. DOI: 10.17892/app.2022.00014.314
- (2020) Historische Zeit im Narrativ: Maxim Gor'kij's „Das Leben des Klim Samgin“ und Robert Musil's „Der Mann ohne Eigenschaften“. Transcript.
- (2020) Osteuropäische Literaturpreise im Spannungsfeld zwischen Ästhetik und Politik. Ein Plädoyer für eine transnationale Betrachtungsweise. In: *Literaturkritik.de*, Ausgabe Sep. 2020, herausgegeben von der Redaktion Gegenwartskulturen der Universität Duisburg-Essen.

Mediality, Digitality, and Literariness: Literary Reading as Practice and Process

Lukas Kosch (Universität Wien)

The lecture investigates the transformation of literary reading within the interrelation of mediality, digitality, and literariness. Drawing on literary-theoretical concepts, literary reading is understood not as a mere act of reception but as a complex process of cultural and cognitive negotiation. Empirical studies demonstrate that differences between print and digital reading concern less the comprehension of literary texts than the situational and habitual practices of reading. While digital media tend to show disadvantages in the processing of complex informational texts, literary reading remains largely unaffected, as it activates specific mechanisms of control and imagination. What proves decisive, therefore, are reading attitudes and practices rather than the materiality of the medium. The proposed model of transdisciplinary reading research integrates cognitive, media-philosophical, and praxeological perspectives, and argues for a differentiation that recognizes print and digital reading as distinct cultural techniques. In the digital age, literary reading appears less as an obsolete competence than as an adaptive process productively interweaving traditional and digital practices.

[German: **Medialität, Digitalität und Literarizität: Literarisches Lesen als Praktik und Prozess**

Der Vortrag untersucht die Transformation literarischen Lesens im Spannungsfeld von Medialität, Digitalität und Literarizität. Ausgehend von literaturtheoretischen Konzepten wird literarisches Lesen nicht als bloßer Rezeptionsvorgang, sondern als komplexer Prozess kultureller und kognitiver Aushandlung verstanden. Empirische Studien zeigen, dass Unterschiede zwischen gedrucktem und digitalem Lesen weniger im Textverstehen literarischer Texte als vielmehr in situativen und habituellen Lesepraktiken liegen. Während digitale Lesemedien bei komplexen Informationstexten tendenziell Nachteile aufweisen, bleibt das literarische Lesen weitgehend unbeeinträchtigt, da es spezifische Kontroll- und Imaginationstechniken aktiviert. Entscheidend sind somit Lesehaltungen und Praktiken, nicht die Materialität des Mediums. Das vorgestellte Modell einer transdisziplinären Leseforschung integriert kognitive, medienphilosophische und praxeologische Perspektiven und plädiert für eine Differenzierung, die gedrucktes und digitales Lesen als eigenständige Kulturtechniken anerkennt. Im digitalen Zeitalter erscheint literarisches Lesen weniger als obsolete Kompetenz, sondern vielmehr als adaptiver Prozess, der traditionelle und digitale Praktiken produktiv miteinander verschränkt.]

Mag. Dr. Lukas Kosch is a research assistant and lecturer at the Department of German Studies at the University of Vienna, currently working on the project “Listening to Literature: Experiencing Literary Audiobooks”. After studying German language and literature and history, he focused on post-war philosophy, the consequences of the digitalization of literature and the processes of literary reading from a reception theory perspective.

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Recent Publications

- Kosch, Lukas (2025). *Literarisches Lesen: Von der literaturwissenschaftlichen Lesetheorie zur transdisziplinären Leseforschung*. Göttingen: Wallstein. <https://doi.org/10.46500/83535854>

- Kosch, L., Stocker, G., Ahrens-Schwabe, A., & Boomgaarden, H. (2025). Media, modality, and motivation in literary-aesthetic experience: exploring auditory and visual reception of literature. In: *Poetics* 111. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.poetic.2025.102021>
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- Kosch, Lukas (2025). Als die Texte das Laufen lernten – Über die Medialität des Lesens und digitale Lesemedien. In: Michael Staiger (Hg.): *Schrift / Bild – Lesen. Interdisziplinäre Perspektiven für die Leseforschung*. Berlin/Heidelberg: J.B. Metzler, S. 99–110. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-662-69717-7_6
- Kosch, L., Schwabe, A., Boomgaarden, H. & Stocker, G. (2024). Experiencing Literary Audiobooks: A Framework for Theoretical and Empirical Investigations of the Auditory Reception of Literature. In: *Journal of Literary Theory* 18/1, 67-88. <https://doi.org/10.1515/jlt-2024-2005>

A Gentle Madness. The social role of the young female reader

Gerhard Lauer (Johannes Gutenberg-Universität Mainz)

Contrary to the widespread belief that declining numbers of young readers are a cause for concern, reading has become the new must-have. Specifically, young female readers have entered the book business and literary criticism on a scale that established players did not expect. There is a lot of harsh criticism around, with arguments about bad books rotting the brain, and so on. My talk will analyse the shifting roles and power dynamics in the literary field, and will assess whether this is a pivotal moment in the relationship between society and literature, or just another passing trend.

[German: Das Lesen verändert gegenwärtig seinen Status und seine Praktiken in einer vielfach irritierenden Weise. Am einen Ende der Leseskala ist das Lesen zum Erliegen gekommen. Mehr als 6 Millionen Menschen im Deutschland sind gering literarisiert; ein Viertel der Grundschüler erreicht am Ende der vierten Klasse nur das Niveau I oder II. Am anderen Ende der Leseskala wird das Lesen kultiviert und zu einer Fankultur der Bookishness gesteigert. Etablierte Institutionen und Rollen des Literaturbetriebs werden überrannt und reagieren mit einer scharfen Kulturkritik auf die neuen Akteure. Diese Akteure sind überwiegend junge Frauen ohne Mandat und doch bestimmen sie längst auch den Buchmarkt mit. Ihre ästhetischen Vorlieben, ihre Formate und ihre Genres zählen und verschieben das Buchlesen hin zu einem neuen erlebnisgesellschaftlichen Lebensstil. Der Vortrag geht dieser neuen Sozialfigur der jungen Leserin und deren Folgen nach. Er zeigt den noch tentativen Status einer erst im Entstehen begriffenen, nicht mehr bildungsbürgerlich bestimmten Lesekultur auf, identifiziert die neuen Rollen und Reaktionen der Institutionen auf einen Wandel, der von der Seite der Kultur und der Volatilität von Cores bestimmt wird und untersucht die Reaktionen der Akteure auf eine unverhoffte Buchwelt, wenn alles anders wird.]

Gerhard Lauer is the Gutenberg Professor of Book and Reading Studies at the University of Mainz. His current research focuses on the cultural sociology of changing reading behaviour.

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Recent Publications:

- Lauer, G. (2025). Literatursoziologie als Sozialwissenschaft. *Internationales Archiv für die Sozialgeschichte der deutschen Literatur* 50 (1), 190-198. <https://doi.org/10.1515/iasl-2025-0008>
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- Lauer, G. (2025). Die Demokratisierung des Lesens. Über die Lektürepraktiken der neuen Bookaholics. *Wespennest* 188, 50-58. https://wespennest.at/w_zeitschrift.php?id=MTg4

Reading, Evaluation and Valorization as Social Practices in (Academic) Teaching and the Literary World

Alexandra Pontzen (Universität Duisburg-Essen)

The enjoyment of expressing values and evaluations is reflected in the practices of modern sales platforms, service providers, and self-promoters—such as those found on Amazon, YouTube, Instagram, and many others. This enjoyment is also utilized in reading and literature didactics, both in schools and universities. The presentation will showcase an exemplary university teaching and learning project on literary criticism and report on the results of a DFG-funded project on the function and effects of literary prizes in Germany. The increasing importance of audience awards and lay juries points to the connection between reading and values as a social practice within a changing landscape of literary prizes.

[German: **Lesen und Werten als soziale Praxis in (akademischer) Lehre und Literaturbetrieb**

Die Freude daran, Wertungen und Bewertungen auszusprechen, spiegelt sich in der Praxis moderner Verkaufsportale, Dienstleistungsanbieter und Selbstdarsteller – wie sie auf Amazon, YouTube, Instagram und vielen anderen zu finden sind. Diese Freude nutzt auch die Lese- und Literaturdidaktik, an Schulen wie Hochschulen. Der Vortrag stellt exemplarisch ein universitäres Lehr-Lern-Projekt zur Literaturkritik vor und berichtet aus den Ergebnissen eines DFG-Forschungsprojekts zu Funktionen und Wirkungen von Literaturpreisen in Deutschland. Die zunehmende Bedeutung von Publikumspreisen und Laien-Jurys verweist dort auf die Verknüpfung von Lesen und Werten als soziale Praxis in einer sich wandelnden Literaturpreislandschaft.

Alexandra Pontzen is Professor of German Literature of the 18th-21st Centuries, with a focus on contemporary literature, and Media Cultural Studies at the University of Duisburg-Essen; she is also head of a DFG project researching the functions and effects of literary prizes. She studied German, Romance languages, philosophy and education in Bonn and Toulouse.
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Transmedial Reading Cultures — Reflections on Reading Practices and Delightful Reading in the Context of Contemporary Media Evolution

Annette Simonis (Justus-Liebig-Universität Giessen)

In recent years, discussions about transmedia storytelling and, more generally, about the category of “transmedia” have become well established in academic discourse in media studies and narrative theory alike, giving rise to multiple and controversial scholarly perspectives. My talk will focus on a specific aspect of “transmedial reading” within the broad interdisciplinary field of research, which I would like to define as new reading practices in the context of diverse media presenting nearly the same narratives or narrative material.

Given the simultaneous presence of stories in different media, the question increasingly arises as to how and to what extent our current reading performances are being changed or modified by this awareness

of media diversity and whether the latter can have a lasting impact on our reading habits. What repercussions does the growing transmedial availability of literary produce between the readings and other media experiences. In which ways do these impact the way we interact with texts or specific readings? How is our perception of text, our current approach to books, further developing as a result of the simultaneous reception of film series, films, audiobooks, etc., and are there any traces of a co-evolution of the media be identified on the basis of these observations? These questions will be examined by using selected examples from contemporary literature and culture.

Annette Simonis holds the Chair in Comparative Literature and German Literature at Giessen University (since 2005). Her current research interest are the relationship between literature and ecology, ecocriticism, the human-animal relationship in world literature, transmediality, mythology, aesthetic modernity, and forms of the good life.

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Recent publications in English:

- “Intermediality in Twentieth Century Animal Poetry: Guillaume Apollinaire - Ted Hughes - Durs Grünbein”, in: *Taking Stock - Twenty-Five Years of Comparative Literary Research*, Leiden: Brill 2019, S. 372-396.
- “Literature in the Context of Transmedia Storytelling“, in: Raul Calzoni, Francesca Di Blasio, Greta Perletti (Hg.): *Translation and Interpretation: Practicing the Knowledge of Literature*, Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht 2022, S. 59-70.
- “Web Novels as Vehicles of Cultural Transfer across the Globe. Re-negotiations of Cultural Values and Aesthetics between East and West“, in: *Komparatistik* (2023), S. 69-81.
- “Forms of the Good Life in Times of Crisis – The Rise of an Ecological Awareness and the Depiction of Biodiversity Loss in 21st-Century European Narratives“, in: Deborah de Muijnck (Hg.): *Troubling Time(s). Questioning Prevailing Notions of Time in the Study of Literature and Culture*, Trier: wvt 2025, S. 167-184.

A ‘Reparative Rupture’ in 21st-Century Literary Reading Cultures: Martina Hefter’s Novel *Hey guten Morgen, wie geht es dir?* and its Book Prize

Marie-Theres Stickel (Justus-Liebig-Universität Giessen)

This paper identifies and examines a form of ‘reparative rupture’ emerging from the literary event of the 2024 German Book Prize, awarded to Martina Hefter for her short auto-fictional novel *Hey guten Morgen, wie geht es dir?* (*Hey, good morning, how are you?*, 2024). By ‘reparative rupture’, I refer to a moment that both reflects and refracts shifting modes of *caring* engagement in 21st-century literary reading cultures, interrupting dominant critical and market logics while opening up spaces for more caring, relational modes of reading and writing. Drawing on post-critical approaches to reading practices (Sedgwick 2003; Felski 2015, 2017) and care ethics (Tronto 1998; Puig de la Bellacasa 2012), the paper argues that this rupture addresses the entanglements of an attention economy (cf. Baumbach 2019), debates on literary value, and the economic situation of authors within the contemporary literary field (cf. Bourdieu 1992), as well as its media-driven reading cultures.

The rupture this paper refers to unfolded shortly after the 2024 award ceremony, when media attention quickly shifted from Hefter to Clemens Meyer, who, shortlisted for his novel *Die Projektoren* (*The Projectors*, 2024), publicly expressed his disappointment at not winning the prize. When newspaper headlines read ‘Need to finance divorce: Clemens Meyer rants at book prize jury’ (der Standard), considerable (social) media debates were sparked – on (fe)male-coded authorship, literary aesthetic value, and the (potentially) market-driving effects of literary awards, as well as on outdated author egos and notions of genius. Rather than merely tracing the contours of this éclat, the paper reads it as a (reparative) rupture in our contemporary reading cultures, reflecting evolving notions of literary *care* and relationality with regard to gendered reading cultures.

Driven by a literary-sociological and post-critical approach, this paper argues that not only the literary event but also Hefter's novel, both formally and by its plot, foreground shifting modes of writing and reading *care*. The story of Juno, an artist from Leipzig who takes care of her husband, Jupiter, a writer with multiple sclerosis, unfolds between nightly chats with love scammers, literary and dancing work, financial precarities, and reflections on love and ageing. By focusing on a reparative reading mode that addresses "a stance that looks to a work of art for solace and replenishment rather than viewing it as something to be interrogated and indicted" (Felski 2015: 151), this paper suggests that not only Hefter's novel is a crucial text on *care*, but also that its medial, socio-economic and cultural entanglements at the 2024 German Book Prize reveal a 'reparative rupture' within the literary field; in contrast, Meyer's novel and his role in the Book Prize *éclat* adhere more to dominant critical and market logics, encouraging a more suspicious mode of reading.

Select Literature: BAUMBACH (2019): "Mind the Narratives. Towards a Cultural Narratology of Attention." (In: ERLI/SOMMER (eds.): *Narrative in Culture*, 37-56); BOURDIEU (1992): *Les règles de l'art. Genèse et structure du champ littéraire*; FELSKI (2015): *The Limits of Critique*; FELSKI (2017): "Postcritical Reading". (In: *American Book Review* 38.5: 4-5); HEFTER (2024): *Hey guten Morgen, wie geht es dir?*; MEYER (2024): *Die Projektoren*; PUIG DE LA BELLACASA (2012): "'Nothing Comes Without Its World': Thinking with Care." (In: *The Sociological Review* 60.2: 197-216); SEDGWICK, (2003): *Touching Feeling. Affect, Pedagogy, Performativity*; TRONTO (1998): "An Ethics of Care." (In: *Generations* 22.3: 15-20).

Marie-Theres Stickel is a PhD student and research assistant at Justus Liebig University, Giessen, for the Chair of French Literature and Cultural Studies (Prof Dr Kirsten von Hagen). Her research interests include literature and economics, the study of reading with a focus on the 21st century, and feminist literary and cultural theory. After working for a publishing house in Frankfurt am Main, she returned to Giessen in 2024 as a member of the research project 'Economic Agnosticism: Doubting Economic Knowledge in 19th Century Literature and Sociology' (Kirsten von Hagen/Andreas Langenohl, JLU), funded by the German Research Foundation (DFG). In her doctoral thesis, she is examining the literary mediation of a female-coded economic agnosticism in French literary texts of the long nineteenth century. In 2025, she was appointed a member of the International Graduate Center of the Study of Culture (GCSC) and IPP (International PhD Programme Literary and Cultural Studies) at JLU Giessen. Marie-Theres.Stickel@romanistik.uni-giessen.de

Select Publications/Papers:

- "What 'Matters' in 'Laboratories of Literacies': Reading Literary Works Between Page and Screen." Paper presented at the International PhDnet Conference "Reading Well. Reading and Forms of the Good Life", 10-12 September 2025, University of Bergamo. (*Publication forthcoming*)
- "'Messieurs, je ne puis pas écrire autrement qu'une femme, puisque j'ai l'honneur d'être femme.' – Jenny P. d'Héricourt's 'Reparative' Dialogic Act of Writing in *La femme affranchie* (1860)." Paper presented at the International IPP/GCSC Symposium "Acts of Writing: Cultural Practices, Knowledge Construction, Authorship", 4-6 June 2025, IPP/GCSC, JLU Giessen. (*Publication forthcoming*)
- "'Le salut social est à ce prix': Daniel-Lesueur's Female-Coded Doubt in Economic Knowledge at the 1900 Paris Universal Exposition." Paper presented at the International Conference "Money Talks: Futures for the Economic Humanities", 28-29 May 2025, University of Edinburgh. (*Publication forthcoming*)
- "The Literary System: An Institutionalised Form of Speculative Literary Economic Gambling? On Adrienne Monnier's *Gazette des Amis des Livres* (1938)." Paper presented at the Congress of the European Society of Comparative Literature (ESCL) "Le jeu: Gambling, Gaming and Play in Literature", 2-6 September 2024, Sorbonne Université, Paris. (*Publication forthcoming*)
- "How Publishing Houses Are Defying the Highly Digitalised Twenty-First Century: Strategies of Branding and Designing Classic Books Series". In: *Literature and Literary Studies in the Twenty-First Century: Cultural Concerns – Concepts – Case Studies*, Ansgar Nünning, Vera Nünning, and Alexander Scherr (Eds.). Trier: WVT 2021. 261-277.

Gender, Genre, and the Global: Transcultural Reading Practices in Chinese *Baihe* (Girls' Love) Fandoms

Xiaofei Tu (Appalachian State University)

This paper investigates how young readers in Chinese digital fandoms engage with *baihe* (百合)/Girls' Love (GL) fiction through hybrid reading practices shaped by feminist, queer, and nationalist discourses. Situated at the intersection of gender, genre, and global digital culture, the paper explores how fan-readers reinterpret these texts not only for affective pleasure or identification, but also as vehicles for ideological critique and community formation.

Drawing on ethnographic observation of platforms such as *Jinjiang*, *Baidu* and Bilibili, as well as cross-border forums like Facebook and Twitter/X, the study maps a new digital literary public in which transcultural texts are recontextualized through readerly labor. Chinese fans often consume and reframe Japanese GL, Western queer literature, and domestic *baihe* fiction within a dense network of fan paratexts—*doujin* (amateur) visual tributes, and translation projects. These grassroots reading communities not only blur the line between consumption and production, but also shape collective interpretations of queerness, gender norms, and social critique.

A key focus is the tension between affective and political reading modes. On one hand, some fan-readers embrace what Eve Sedgwick calls “reparative reading,” finding solace and identity affirmation in romantic intimacy between women—especially amid dominant patriarchal and heteronormative values. On the other, some communities adopt critical or even “paranoid” reading practices, interpreting story arcs, character dynamics, and platform censorship as reflections of broader sociopolitical constraints. The paper explores how *baihe* fandoms navigate state discourses on “correct” gender roles, platform regulation of “sissy culture,” and global feminist debates, often remixing these tensions into genre-savvy reading performances.

Crucially, these practices signal a broader transformation of what it means to read fiction in 21st-century China. Within digital reading spaces, posts tagged with “女性向阅读” (female-oriented reading) mark acts of interpretive resistance—where romance plots are queered, normative endings rewritten, and minor characters reimagined as queer protagonists. These emergent micro-practices challenge both mainstream publishing logics and top-down cultural directives, fostering what Jessica Pressman calls “bookishness” in a digital key.

This paper aims to contribute to a deeper understanding of contemporary reading cultures by offering a transnational and intersectional account of how genre fiction, gender identity, and political imagination intersect in online fandoms. It addresses several core questions of the workshop: How do digital readers negotiate genre conventions across cultural boundaries? In what ways do social reading practices trouble the line between affect and critique, entertainment and ideology? And how might transcultural fandoms reshape the contours of literary publics in a time of increasing political rupture?

Xiaofei Tu is Associate Professor of Chinese Studies at Appalachian State University, where he researches contemporary East Asian pop culture and media. His recent book is *Japanese Idols Go to China: Cultural Adaptation and Nationalism*.

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