Panel 1:

Abstract 1  Mita Banerjee (University of Mainz, Germany)

„Ein Rahmen, aus dem du fällst“: Framing Diversity in German Studies

Looking at the poetry of May Ayim and the prose writing of Yoko Tawada, this paper explores the framing of questions of diversity in German Studies. It also discusses the ways in which this framing has been markedly different in German Studies as opposed to Germanistik. I argue that the field of Germanistik has chiefly been concerned with German national identity formation, from the concept of Nachkriegsliteratur to issues of Vergangenheitsbewältigung and the role of the former GDR. Questions of ethnic diversity, by contrast, have been addressed within the framework of migrant literature (Migrantenliteratur, formerly Gastarbeiterliteratur), interculturality, and Fremdverstehen. This paper argues that compared to Germanistik, German Studies has been a fruitful ground in which to explore notions of diversity. The fields of Black German Studies (Ayim et al. 1992) and Asian German Studies in particular have emerged as specific contexts in which questions of race, language, gender and class can be addressed in complex intersectional detail. Looking at the practices of canonizing, anthologizing, reading and teaching ethnic German literature, I suggest that the formation of sub-fields such as Black German Studies or Asian German Studies may be especially promising in terms of institutionalizing diversity within German Studies. They may constitute a framework in which issues of racial and linguistic exclusion as well as cultural belonging and diasporic identity formation can be explored. In the creation of the fields or sub-fields of Black German Studies (Lennox 2016) and Asian German Studies (Banerjee 2006; Zhang 2020), transnational alliances have been key. May Ayim's concept of Black German identity emerged from a workshop taught by African American feminist poet Audre Lorde. Similarly, the concept of Asian German Studies was based on the vibrant field of Asian American Studies, which, since the late 1970s, has been increasingly established in English departments at universities in the US. Such a transnationalizing of German Studies may hence also be a fruitful strategy to firmly establish Black German Studies and Asian German Studies within the discipline of German Studies as such. Both May Ayim (1995, 1997) and Yoko Tawada (2010, 2014 [1991]) explore the ways in which “ethnic” subjects can be made to feel outsiders to the German nation and the German cultural imaginary. They use their poetry and prose to describe how language can be used to exclude people of color, and how language is itself highly racialized (Goertz 2003). Ayim writes, “Ich male dir ein dunkles Gedicht / für dein weißes / Gesicht / mit einem Rahmen / aus dem du fällst.” In line with Ayim's concern, this paper attempts to turn the tables on German debates on the question of canon formation: If Germanistik has argued for too long that “migrant literature” does not fit the frame of Germanistik as a discipline, we simply have to invent new frames in order to accommodate diversity in a manner that is both fruitful and sustainable.

Abstract 2  Jeff Bowersox (University College London, UK)

Black Germany as Provocation: Race, Resources, and the German Studies Curriculum

In this paper I would like to use my experiences teaching and researching the Black diaspora in Germany to address a few of the thresholds mentioned in the CfP, specifically those of canon, classroom, and resources. My talk will focus around a collaborative teaching project on histories of blackness in the German lands from the Middle Ages to the present. The project starts from the premise that
attention to shifting ideas and experiences of blackness in German history sheds new light on the way we teach German history more generally, countering teleological narratives of national development and homogeneity and the various myths—racialized, gendered, classed, heteronormative, and more—they are founded on. Exploring histories of blackness problematizes the very construction of national narratives and myths by re-introducing instability, contestation, and diversity. It also opens space for critical perspectives from outside the canon, encouraging students to interrogate the very construction of that canon and the power to define legitimate knowledge. The subject material itself and the international/inter-university collaboration that is at the heart of the project offer ways to open up the canon and the classroom to a wider range of experiences and forms of expertise. In addition to this, I will also discuss one of the most important challenges for crossing the curricular threshold, namely the need to produce materials for teachers and researchers and to make them generally accessible. I will use the example of blackcentraleurope.com, the collaborative, public-facing website that has grown out of this project, to illustrate the opportunities that we in the ivory tower have to engage communities outside academia as well as the barriers that continue to limit that engagement.

Abstract 3  Azziza Malanda (Independent Researcher, Germany)

Growing up in Care in Post-War West Germany – (In)visible Black German Experiences

The presentation is based on my PhD thesis, entitled “Ich habe nie verstanden, warum sie mich ins Heim gegeben hat”: Erfahrungen und Lebenswege Schwarzer Deutscher der Jahrgänge 1946 und 1949 in der Bundesrepublik. (The thesis will not yet be published by the time of the conference.) Aside from archival sources and scientific publications from the 1950s and 1960s, the study is based on six life history interviews with Black Germans born in 1946 and 1949.

In 1956, the Federal Statistical Office of West Germany published a survey on illegitimate German children fathered by Allied soldiers in Germany after 1945. Amongst these children approximately 5000 were labeled “farbiger Abstammung”. 25 percent of these Black German children lived with foster families or in institutional care and 13 percent were put up for adoption. Within historical research and Germany’s public remembrance the experiences of Black Germans who grew up in institutional care after 1945 is mostly invisible. Therefore the presentation will give an introductory overview of the historical context. Further I will give insight on Black German experiences which are invisible in archival sources, but became visible in the interviews: a) Black Germans who grew up in care as acting, resisting and resilient subjects, b) contemporary social patterns that led to a placement in care, c) concepts of race and racism and their intersection with class and gender. With this contribution, I would like to give my input on the importance of Black German experience within German Studies.

Abstract 4  Silke Hackenesch (University of Cologne, Germany)

The Adoption of Afro-German Children to Postwar America

The history of Black German children born to white German women and Black military service men after 1945 has been uncovered in Yara Collette Lemke Muniz de Faria’s groundbreaking study Zwischen Fürsorge und Ausgrenzung, that looks at the many ways in which German officials, welfare organizations, the church and politicians tried to either integrate these children into a nation they imagined to be white, or to get rid of them through emigration and international adoption; similarly, Heide
Fehrenbach's *Race after Hitler* has analyzed the perception and representation of Black American men and their white German partners, as well as the discourses and practices the existence of their dual heritage offspring triggered in the immediate aftermath of the Nazi regime. In my own research project, I aim to add to this existing scholarship by focusing on the U.S. discourses on those Black German children who have been adopted by (mostly African) American families between the mid-1940s and the end of the 1950s. I am interested in the contentious debates their adoption provoked among social welfare workers, non-professional adoption activists like Pearl Buck and Mabel Grammer, and civil rights advocates. One aim of my project is to get a better understanding of what prompted African American couples to adopt a Black child from abroad, and to understand the nuanced, sometimes ambivalent responses to these adoptions from civil rights groups. What I would like to stress is that lobbying for the adoption of Black German children must be analyzed with regard to the civil rights movement of the 1950s, the integrationist discourse of a colorblind society as well as the domestic adoption landscape in the United States. Significantly, Afro-German children represent the first organized transnational adoption primarily on the basis of race, yet the historiography on intercountry adoption is largely dominated by studies focusing on Korean children. Including Black German adoptees’ histories into this scholarship thus adds to our understanding of the emergence of transnational and transracial adoption. While adoption activists and non-professionals were in favor of these intercountry adoptions, social welfare agents and, what might be surprising to some, civil rights leaders, were less enthused. Exploring the contested debates reveals, I argue, that discourses on civil rights, on racial identities and national belonging as well as on idealized notions of “the American family” intersected in the social practice that became transnational and transracial adoption.

**Abstract 5  Rosemarie Peña (Rutgers University, USA)**

**Transcultural Reunification in the Context of Postwar Black German Transnational Adoption**

Many belonging to the post-WWII cohort of dual-heritage, Black German transnational adoptees who grew up in African American families in the United States are concomitantly reuniting with their first families, and in discourse and actuality with other Black Germans having diverse cultural roots, family constellations, and migration histories. My paper will discuss the ways that language, culture, race, class, and transnational politics impact adoptees’ identity (re)negotiations as they strive to reculturate and reconstruct first family and community bonds across national borders.

**Panel 2:**

**Abstract 6  Julia Alcamo (Independent Filmmaker, Germany)**

**Who Gets to Tell the Story?**

There is an inherent pressure in documentary filmmaking to work authentically. Understanding what this entails can aid us in crossing thresholds of diversity & inclusivity (D&I) in German Studies. I will show this by drawing parallels between authorship, collaboration and form in documentary filmmaking and tools such as interdisciplinarity, intertextuality and participatory curation in German Studies, leading us to the most authentic version of any story. I begin with a definition of authentic authorship drawn from documentary filmmaking, which is not limited to markers of difference (e.g. skin colour, religion, geography) but includes shared human experience, a “moral contract” between storyteller and subject, and a sense of “empowerment”. Understanding authentic authorship helps
define D&I frameworks in Higher Education and these frameworks, in turn, allow us to be “intentional” when it comes to authorship; we must always ask: “Who is telling whose story?” I follow by asking what an authentic German Studies canon might look like, drawing from my experience as co-author of “Black Central Europe” (BCE) and as a student and Research Fellow at King’s College London, including my work with the project “Things We Keep: Curators of our own History.” I argue that tools such as interdisciplinarity, intertextuality and participatory curation have allowed these platforms to tackle canon as well as resource thresholds. Finally, I discuss changes in visitor interest in the BCE website over the past year, which highlights the importance of the format of our work and the power of the digital space. “Who gets to tell the story?” is a vital question worth asking if we want to establish a more diverse and inclusive German Studies.

Abstract 7  Adrienne Merrit (St. Olaf College, USA)

Wake Work in German Studies: Reimagining and Disrupting the White Imaginary

Historically and contemporaneously, German Studies has been conceptualized as a space that celebrates white cultural production, often at the expense of marginalized voices and their contributions. From the hyphenated and supplemented descriptors of Turkish and Black to German / Studies to elective courses and lessons on the “Other Germans”, the oft-unexplained assumption is that whiteness is synonymous with Germanness and the study of “their” cultural products. Drawing upon Christina Sharpe’s In the Wake (2016), I outline the ways in which German Studies can be re-envisioned through elements of Sharpe’s “wake work”, that is “a theory and praxis of Black being in diaspora”, as well as developing forms of language that “will articulate care...we formations” (Sharpe 19). In particular, I address the symbiotic relationship between the limitations of canonical representation and the classroom community, the perception of the global in said community, and how the white imaginary infiltrates German Studies, (re-)figuring marginalized bodies and their words/works through a veil of whiteness and for white consumption. By embodying wake work, “the knowledge of this positioning avails us particular ways of re/seeing, re/inhabiting, and re/imagining the word” (Sharpe 22), as well as the structural disruption needed to decolonize German Studies and foster inclusion. I propose that a rejection of so-called traditional German Studies curriculum conceptualization is crucial and fundamental to any potential moves toward inclusion and decolonization (to evoke Sara Ahmed, to approach German Studies “slantwise”). Throughout the paper I provide examples of the ways in which I have integrated wake work into my courses, all of which have taken place at PWIs (predominantly white institutions), as well as the personal impact. I conclude my paper reflecting upon the significance of being personally shrouded in the white imaginary as a Black, German Studies scholar and how this has informed my approach.

Abstract 8  Yejun Zou (King’s College London/Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin, UK and Germany)

Theoretical and Pedagogical Thresholds in the Decolonisation of German Studies

Although considerable attempts have been made to decolonise German Studies curricula in UK universities through an inclusion of German-language cultural artefacts of authors and artists from ethnic minority backgrounds, I argue that this kind of expansionist method – the endeavour to merely expand the canon of German Studies – does not suffice. While the diversification of the canon of German Studies immensely increases visibilities and representations of BAME writers and artists who create in German languages, the theoretical methods through which these cultural artefacts are
examined remain predominantly within the Euro-American academe. The combination of diversified German texts with Eurocentric theoretical tools, I argue, creates a theoretical and pedagogical threshold in German Studies, which risks resuscitating the kind of power imbalance between German/European cultures and other cultures, against which initiatives of decolonising German Studies seek to counteract. In this regard, I propose to address the issue of diversity and inclusivity both from the outside – the continuous effort to foreground German-language cultural artefacts created by BAME writers and artists – and from within – the re-evaluation and decolonisation of the daily use of academic language and theoretical tools. This paper begins with a reflection on my personal experience of teaching German literature as an Asian woman. In particular, I recall the ways in which I attempt to diversify the epistemological mode of studying German literature while teaching a short story written by the Japanese-German female writer Yoko Tawada. In the next part, I explore theoretical discussions of the decolonisation of Comparative Literature as a discipline (Mangalagiri 2014, Mignolo 2013 and Zhang, 2015), from which, I argue, attempts to diversify German Studies curricula could benefit. In the final part, I seek to identify aspects revolving the content, theory and pedagogy of German Studies, particularly in the UK, that could be worked on in the future.

Abstract 9  Helen Finch (University of Leeds, UK)

The Queer Art of Failing to Cross Thresholds: Queer and Trans German Studies

In a feminist organisation such as WIGS, it might seem as though queer studies does not suffer from the same institutional barriers as other minoritised fields of study. However, the rise in hostility towards queer, trans* and non-binary subjects in the UK, and the legacy of criminalisation of queer sexuality in Ireland, demonstrates that queer practitioners work in a legal and social atmosphere of fear. Queer researchers bring into the academy histories of shame and victimisation, and must negotiate institutional thresholds of fear and exclusion to be able to create meaningful work in a university setting. The practice of individual mobility, so central to area studies research, is fraught with danger and discrimination for the queer researcher whose official gender may not match their chosen name, or whose family loses its legal protections once they cross a national border. Beyond these legal and institutional thresholds, I argue, lies a canon threshold. While the history of German queer studies is a rich field, at the same time, as J J Halberstam (2011) argues, queer research and teaching is often at odds with practices of academic legibility, disciplinarity and legitimation. Queer German studies may be at odds with the boundaries of the discipline itself, as its objects, methods and communities cross and confuse linguistic, disciplinary, national and cultural boundaries. At the same time, queer research in German studies needs to be mindful of the challenges posed by queer of colour scholarship. I will attempt to present some theoretical and practical strategies to avoid replicating an imagined white, queer German lineage in closed networks around white, able-bodied, middle class, European scholars in the academy, from strategies for participating in Athena SWAN, to collectivising research, to the importance of seriously engaging queer theory that refuses racist, individualized and heteropatriarchal ideas of success.

Abstract 10  I. M. Nick (Germanic Society for Forensic Linguistics, Germany)

A Bridge Too Far? An Investigation of the Systemic Thresholds Thwarting the Successful Integration of Disability Studies and German Studies

According to governmental statistics, there are approximately 10.2 million German residents who are classified as having an officially recognized disability. Of these people, ca 7.9 million are registered as
having a severe disability. This proportion is roughly the equivalent of one in every ten people living in Germany. Despite the prevalence of this population segment, comparatively few German universities offer a formal degree program in “Disability Studies” and fewer still have more than a handful of severely disabled academics in their teaching staff. Given these bleak statistics, it comes as little surprise that the history, language, and culture of disabled peoples continues to be a marginalized subject within German Studies. The negative repercussions of perpetually overlooking this vibrant minority are both serious and significant. Just as the active recruitment and promotion of other minorities have historically been key to establishing the academic study of women, LGBTTIQ, and BAMEs in German Studies, the continued failure to hire Disabled academicians has essentially paralyzed the successful integration of Disability Studies into German Studies. After providing a concise introduction to Disabled Peoples (DP) in modern-day Germany, the presentation will present some of the leading institutional, career, and organizational thresholds that have not only undermined the integration of Disabled scholars into German academia, but also thwarted the study of DP history, culture, language, and literature within German Studies. The presentation will be augmented by interview data gathered from scholars in the German Disability Studies Movement. Using a tripartite methodological approach, the proposed talk will offer attendees information gathered from analyzing survey, documentary, and statistical data. The talk will conclude by offering concrete suggestions for bridging the gap that has historically existed between German Studies and Disability Studies in German Higher Education.