

Hanse-Wissenschaftskolleg
Institute for Advanced Study

Fiction ∫ *Science*
MEETS

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

BLAZE ISLAND by Catherine Bush

WEDNESDAY
8 DECEMBER 2021

14:00 – 17:30 (UTC+1)
VIRTUAL

Organizers:
Susan M. Gaines, Anton Kirchhofer



Venue:

Hanse-Wissenschaftskolleg
Institute for Advanced Study
Lehmkuhlenbusch 4
27753 Delmenhorst
Germany
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Program

ABOUT *BLAZE ISLAND*

The time is now or an alternate near now, the world close to our own. A Category Five hurricane sweeps up the eastern seaboard of North America, leaving devastation in its wake, its outer wings brushing over tiny Blaze Island off the coast of Newfoundland. During this wild night, a stranger washes up on the doorstep of the isolated house where Milan Wells lives with his daughter Miranda. A climate scientist whose career in the U.S. was destroyed by climate change deniers, Wells has fled to this remote island with his daughter years before, desperate to protect her from the world's worsening weather. Seemingly safe in her father's realm, Miranda walks the island's rocky shores, helping her father with his daily weather records. But the stranger's arrival breaks open Miranda's world, stirs up memories of events of long ago and compels her to wonder what her father is up to with his mysterious weather experiments. In the aftermath of the storm, she finds herself in a world altered so quickly that she hardly knows what has happened or what the unpredictable future will bring. (The novel is a contemporary reinvention of Shakespeare's *The Tempest*.)

ABOUT THE AUTHOR:

Catherine Bush is the author of five critically acclaimed novels, many of which deal with scientific subject matter and themes. She is an Associate Professor and the Coordinator of the Creative Writing MFA at the University of Guelph. Catherine was a Fiction Meets Science Fellow at the HWK in 2019.

<https://catherinebush.com/about/>

FICTION MEETS SCIENCE (FMS) (www.fictionmeetsscience.org)

Inspired by the early 21st-century increase in mainstream and literary fiction about science, FMS is a research and writers' fellowship program that brings together sociologists, literary scholars, novelists, and scientists to examine the literary and social ramifications of contemporary narrative renditions of science in creative media.

EXPERIMENTAL ENCOUNTERS WORKSHOP SERIES

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

PROGRAM

Workshop Format: All participants have read Blaze Island in advance and are active contributors to the discussion. A few brief “input statements” are intended to stimulate the dialogue.

Moderators: Susan M. Gaines and Anton Kirchhofer, with support from Dorothe Poggel

14:00 INTRODUCTION (Dorothe Poggel, Anton Kirchhofer)

14:10 – 14:35 SCIENTIFIC CONTEXTS

Scientists respond to their readings and discuss the book’s scientific underpinnings, elaborating on aspects they’re familiar with

Input: Stefanie Arndt

Questions & Comments

14:35 – 15:00 THE WRITING PROCESS

The author discusses the genesis of the novel.

Input:

Catherine Bush

Questions and comments

15:00–15:25 LITERARY PERSPECTIVES

Literary scholars point out the book’s textual structures, literary contexts, and character constellations

Input:

Kim Hofschröer

“Are you still a scientist?” Professionalism, Science and Gender in Catherine Bush’s *Blaze Island* (2021)

Questions & Comments

15:25 – 15:50 BREAK (off line and/or online social)

15:50 – 16:25 SOCIETAL CONTEXTS

Social and cultural studies scholars focus on the novel’s portrayal of science in society and its links to the economic and political spheres

Inputs:

Beatrice Dippel

Sean Low

Questions & Comments

16:25 – 17:30 OPEN DISCUSSION: SCIENCE, NARRATIVE, & SOCIETY IN *BLAZE ISLAND*

Workshop participants address the connections between the novel’s scientific, literary and social contexts; introduce new perspectives; and weigh in with their responses to the book and questions for participants with different expertise.

PARTICIPANT INTRODUCTIONS

Input statement speakers *in order of presentation*

[Stefanie Arndt](#) is a sea ice physicist in the Climate Sciences division of the Alfred Wegener Institute/Helmholtz Centre for Polar and Marine Research. She coordinates the sea ice monitoring program at the German Antarctic Station and has worked in both the Arctic and Southern Oceans.

[Catherine Bush](#) is the author of five critically acclaimed novels, many of which deal with scientific subject matter and themes. She coordinates the MFA program at Guelph University and was an FMS writer in residence at the HWK in 2019.

Kim Hofschröer is an FMS doctoral candidate in English Languages and Literatures at the University of Bremen. Her research interests include narratology, science on stage, gender studies, and the history of science.

Beatrice Dippel is an FMS doctoral candidate at the German Development Institute, where she is studying how popular narratives about sea level rise due to climate change interact with policy-making in at-risk regions.

[Sean Jiaming Low](#) is a social science researcher at Aarhus University. His work explores the politics of science in climate governance, with a focus on socio-technical propositions such as solar geoengineering and negative emissions. He is the co-editor of *Geoengineering Our Climate? Ethics, Politics and Governance*.

Guests *alphabetized by first name*

[Laura Otis](#) is Professor of English at Emory University. With advanced degrees in Biochemistry and Neuroscience, Comparative Literature, and Creative Writing, she has written numerous books on the history of science and the ways that scientific and literary thinking intersect, as well as several novels.

[Luisa Cristini](#) is a climate scientist at the Alfred Wegener Institute and coordinator of the EU-funded Arctic observations system "[Arctic PASSION](#)," designed to reduce uncertainty in predicting future system changes, support risk assessment, and inform and guide mitigation and adaptation measures in the Arctic and elsewhere around the world.

[Pierre A Lacourt](#) is a physicist with an interest in literature, creative writing, and Fiction Meets Science. He works at the FEMTO-ST Research Institute (Franch-Comté Electronics Mechanics Thermal Science and Optics – Sciences and Technologies) in France.

[Sabine Sielke](#) is Director of the North American Studies Program at the University of Bonn and a current Fellow at the HWK. Her research interests range across 19th- and 20th-century American literature and culture, and she has a long-standing interest in science in narrative and dialogues between cultural studies and the natural sciences.

FMS Network Members *alphabetized by first name*

[Anna Auguscik](#) is an FMS post-doctoral research fellow and lecturer in English literature at the University of Oldenburg. Her research has focused on the novel in the literary

marketplace, relationships between literature and science, media reception of science novels, scientist characters in fiction, and scientific expedition narratives.

[Anton Kirchhofer](#) is Professor of English literature at the University of Oldenburg and one of the founding directors of FMS. His research interests include the media and cultural settings of literature; literary theory and literary production; and connections between modernity, literature, secularity, and science.

[Chrissy Kolaya](#) is a fiction writer and poet, and an assistant professor in the creative writing MFA program at the University of Central Florida. She is the author of the science novel *Charmed Particles* and the 2020 FMS writer in residence at the HWK, where she worked on her second novel.

[Cora Övermann](#) is beginning doctoral research with FMS in the English-speaking Cultures department at the University of Bremen. Research interests include representations of female scientists and the competitive nature of modern science in contemporary science novels.

[Edward Schwarzschild](#)'s most recent novel is *In Security*. He's a fiction writer and essayist, Director of Creative Writing and Fellow of the New York State Writers Institute at the State University New York at Albany, and a past FMS-HWK writer in residence.

[Fabian Hempel](#) has been an FMS doctoral researcher at the University of Bremen and the Universität der Bundeswehr München. His dissertation focuses on cultural conceptions of the autonomy and social responsibility of science as manifested in science novels.

[Frederick Reiken](#) is a writer and professor of creative writing at Emerson College. The author of three award-winning novels—most recently *Day For Night*, which features a marine biologist and a desert ecologist among its lead characters—he will be the next FMS writer in residence at the HWK.

Galena Hashhozheva is a postdoctoral researcher working with the FMS group in English Literatures and Languages at the University of Oldenburg.

[Gema Martinez Mendez](#) is a marine scientist working in paleo-oceanography and paleoclimatology. She is a member of the FMS Book Club and has a long-standing interest in science communication.

[Karsten Levihn-Kutzler](#) is an FMS post-doctoral researcher in English Literatures and Languages at the University of Oldenburg. His research interests include Anglophone literatures from the 19th century to present, literature and globalization, postcolonial theory, and environmental criticism.

[Katalina Kopka](#) is a PhD candidate and lecturer in English-speaking Cultures at the University of Bremen, working on a dissertation about the ethics of Artificial Intelligence in contemporary science fiction films.

[Krutika Patri](#) is an FMS doctoral candidate in English-speaking Cultures at the University of Bremen, currently working on a project about representations of scientists on television.

[Martin Butler](#) is Professor of American literature and culture at the University of Oldenburg. His research focuses on American and Transatlantic popular culture in various

media. He is working on FMS projects on science in TV series and on cultural engagements with the COVID-19 pandemic.

Michael Fuchs is a postdoctoral FMS researcher in the Dept of English and American Studies at the University of Oldenburg. His interests include digitality, intermediality, media convergence and cult media, with a focus on video games, horror films, science fiction, and American television.

Mohammed Muharram is an FMS-affiliated postdoctoral researcher in the Faculty of Linguistics and Literary Studies at the University of Bremen. He has written on postcolonialism and representations of Islam in Anglophone literature.

Natalie Roxburgh is Lecturer for English at the University of Hamburg and a former FMS post-doctoral researcher. She has published on the nexus of economic and literary history, as well as science in literature, and her current project is a reexamination of the concept of aesthetic disinterestedness.

Norbert Schaffeld holds the Chair of English Literature at the University of Bremen and is a founding director of FMS. His research has focused on British literature, as well as Australian and Canadian culture, Shakespeare adaptations, film studies, the historical novel, and fictional representations of the natural sciences.

Petra Groß is a physics researcher at the University of Oldenburg with a background in optics, nonlinear microscopy, and ultrafast nano-optics. She enjoys working in interdisciplinary teams and is a member of the FMS Book Club.

Susan M. Gaines is the author of the science novels *Accidentals* and *Carbon Dreams*, as well as a work of non-fiction about geochemical biomarkers and earth history. She was one of the founding directors of FMS and currently serves as the authors' liaison for the FMS writers' program at the HWK.

Uwe Schimank is Professor of Sociological Theory at the University of Bremen and one of the founding directors of FMS. His research has encompassed theories of modern society, empirical studies in organizational sociology, governance research, science and higher education studies, and economic sociology.

Uwe Spörl is a Senior Lecturer in modern German literature and Dean of Studies at the University of Bremen. His research interests include narrative theory, hermeneutics and literary theory, metafiction, comparative contemporary literature, the crime novel, and science in fiction.

Wladyslaw Rudzinski is a Ph.D. student working with FMS in the English-speaking Cultures at the University of Bremen. He is interested in the film production process for films featuring scientific subject matter.