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ESSE 2016 Seminar: CFP Narrated Science / Scientific Storytelling

Our aim is to reflect on different modes of popularizing in science, covering a wide scope of representations ranging from science fantasy to heuristic models "narrated" in non-fiction. Principally, this approach reverses the often-trodden paths in the field of "literature and science," which usually inspires scholars to look at classical rhetorical devices in scientific accounts, or leitmotifs borrowed from the sciences in fiction (most popularly drawing on the discourses of biology, genetics, paleontology, and physics). There is, however, a far richer and ever fascinating variety of "telling" modern science to non-specialists, which deserves close analytical and theoretical attention.

We will discuss "narrated science" as a starting point for a more comprehensive theory of recent (i.e. post-WW II) and current scientific popularization. Of interest will be narrativizations of science in such "classics" as Hawking's *Brief History of Time* (¹1986) or Weinberg's *The First Three Minutes* (¹1977) on the "factual" end. Their "fictional" counterparts, such as Gilmore's *Alice in Quantumland* (1995) or Stewart's *Flatterland* (2001), work with adaptations of canonical 19th century *morally* didactic, usually allegorical texts. Furthermore, we invite approximations to 'novel' graphic representations, and similarly unconventional, experimental ways of explaining the cosmos that address children and adolescents. Finally, there are many other medial representations, including TV formats devoted to presenting "storified" science, and such a US series as *Big Bang Theory*.

Although the examples given above predominantly represent physics and cosmology, our project is open to contributions with different scientific foci (one may think of the "life sciences", or the disciplines behind the popular concept "chaos theory"). Media output in this still uncharted field of popular science abounds, and it is highly commendable to engage with it on a critical level. As a socio-cultural phenomenon it has been almost completely neglected by academic responses, because it is not taken seriously as a way of transmitting "hard" scientific knowledge – even if "authored" and "authorized" by the foremost representatives in a complex, impersonal "author network".

This panel tries to launch scholarly, comparative, interdisciplinary research on the subject. Ideally, we address both colleagues who are interested in experimental approaches to popularize scientific progress in literature and the media, as well as those colleagues teaching in one of the subjects popularized.

Papers dealing with (in alphabetical order) aesthetic, cognitive, comparatist, didactic, epistemological, gendered, generic, narratological, receptionist, or sociological approaches to popularizations of science are welcome. Potential topics include, but are not limited to the following list:

- Possibilities and Limitations of Popularizing Modern Science
- Appropriating/Assimilating the Sciences: Popular Science, (Hard) SciFi, and Science Fantasy
- Scientific Storifications / Storyfiable Science?
- Tropologies of Writing Science: Didactic, Esoteric, Exoteric, Ludic?
- Success, Sensation, Fraud, and Failure in 20th and 21st-Centuries Scientific Disciplines: Fast Neutrinos and Human Clones
- Formatting Popular Science in the Media (e.g., Texts, Images, Movies)
- Communicating Science Within and Without the Academy (incl. Actor-Network-Theory): Who popularizes, and for whom?
- Intercultural Approaches to Science Popularization: Storytelling as particularly Anglophone Phenomenon?

This CFP is an extended description of a seminar proposal accepted by the ESSE 2016 (Galway) conference board. According to the ESSE format, presentations should not exceed a brief introductory talk on a subject to prepare a fifteen min discussion, but more extensive paper will be circulated among the panelists ahead of the conference.

Please send your abstract in English as a pdf (250 words plus short bio) to juergen.meyer@anglistik.uni-halle.de and manuela.rossini@unibas.ch by **31st Mar 2016**. Finalized papers (8.000 words) must be sent in by **1st Aug 2016**.