GEGENWART / LITERATUR

DFG-GRADUIERTENKOLLEG 2291

'RE-PRESENTING' THE PAST: HISTORICAL NARRATION FROM AN INTER-DISCIPLINARY PERSPECTIVE

Laborgespräch

mit Jennifer Walshe (Oxford) und Beth Piatote (Berkeley)

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How can pasts be narrated or re-actualised? What aesthetic and ethical challenges affect historical narration? And how do these historical narrations function within contemporary discourses? These and other questions are relevant not only for literature, but also for image and sound. Research on (fictional) re-presentations of the past, hence, needs to move beyond a literary bias. This *Laborgespräch* aims at bringing together different artistic and disciplinary perspectives for a discussion of the aesthetic and praxeological aspects of historical fiction. Through a conversation with Nez Perce author and scholar Beth Piatote and Irish vocalist, composer, and artist Jennifer Walshe we hope to shed light on what unites and separates the creative engagement with history in text, image, and sound. In many of Jennifer Walshe's works – most recently in *A Late Anthology of Early Music* (2020) – the composer engages the past through the exploration and re-writing of (musical) history. Similarly, Beth Piatote's short story collection *The Beadworkers: Stories* (2020), challenges classical conceptions of the forms and functions of historical fiction. Our conversation with the two artists will center on a broad range of questions regarding their works within the context of their navigation and adaptation of history: We are interested in the narrative strategies involved in the 'presencing' of the past, the role of generic conventions, and the situatedness of the works in a contemporary moment characterized both by a culture of nostalgia and political conflict. As both artists use multiple languages in their works, we also want to discuss questions of intended audience and the function of linguistic heterogeneity. By bringing together different disciplinary and artistic perspectives on questions relating to notions of past and present, we hope to open up rooms for fruitful discussions and gather productive insights for a broader understanding of historical fiction.

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