

## Editorial Note

Felix Brinker & Kathleen Lookock

It is finally here: the first issue of *In Progress: A Graduate Journal of North American Studies*! We are thrilled to launch our brand-new, peer-reviewed online journal, which provides a platform for graduate students in Anglophone literary, cultural, and media studies to showcase their academic work and creative endeavors. *In Progress* is based at the English Department at Leibniz University Hannover, Germany, and our focus is primarily on the field of North American Studies. Our journal aims to publish academic writing that exemplifies the excellence of graduate scholarship and showcases diverse perspectives as well as experimental and creative approaches to specific topics. Therefore, the issue is divided into three different parts: an Academic Section that features five articles written by students, an Independent Studies Section with student projects on autofiction and the intersection of love, power, and academia, and an Open Section, in which students engage creatively with the theme of love & joy. We believe that graduate students have unique and important contributions to make to their respective fields, and *In Progress* offers a space for them to share their ideas and research with a wider audience. We hope to foster a community of scholars who are passionate about North American Studies and committed to advancing knowledge in this field.

In our Academic Section, we publish peer-reviewed articles that present original research and critical insights into various aspects of North American Studies. These articles are rigorously evaluated by the editorial board and team, ensuring that our readers have access to high-quality scholarship. We encourage submissions on a rolling basis that engage with a wide range of topics, including but not limited to literature, film, television, digital media, popular culture, history, politics, and social issues. Our goal is to promote interdisciplinary scholarship and encourage innovative approaches to the study of North America. This first issue features five academic articles that engage with a range of different topics. First, Marielle Tomasic explores autotheory and how the artistic expression of theoretical thought in works like Saidiya Hartman's *Wayward Lives, Beautiful Experiments* and Rebecca Hall and Hugo Martínez' comic *Wake: The Hidden History of Women-Led Slave Revolts* produce affect that makes personal experiences palpable. Then, Nathalie Rennhack examines how the Netflix series *Sex Education* (2019-) destabilizes the heteronormative matrix that Judith Butler describes in her book *Gender Trouble* (1990) – by presenting and simultaneously subverting gendered stereotypes and by focusing on queer identities that do not fit into the restricted realm of heteronormativity. In the third academic paper, Theresa Maria Forche puts Octavia Butler's novel *Wild Seed* (1980) and her trilogy *Lilith's Brood* (1987-1989) into conversation with Judith Butler's *Gender Trouble* in order to probe the alternatives to capitalist notions of gender and to the capitalist systems these two Butlers have to offer. Celina Plaß is concerned with retellings of Greek myths, more precisely the feminist change in perspective that Margaret Atwood offers in her novel *The Penelopiad* (2007). By shifting the focus from the male point of view to Penelope's



version of the *Odyssey*, the book raises questions about the endurance of myths as well as literary canons and the power of feminist revisions. Finally, Setareh Ghasemireza analyzes Martin Luther King, Jr.'s "Letter from Birmingham Jail" (1963) and its call for non-violent direct action in the U.S.-American civil rights movement. Taken together, these articles engage with questions of gender and race, with capitalism and violence, with the pasts, presents, and futures. They tackle different media and theories and work all to advance our knowledge.

In addition to our Academic Section, *In Progress* also offers a space for the documentation of student projects and other creative endeavors that originate from Leibniz University's international master program North American Studies. Our Independent Studies Section publishes creative writing, reports of events organized by students, and other outcomes of seminars offered in the master program's "Independent Studies" module, such as video essays, podcast episodes, and book reviews, for example. This section serves as a testament to the creativity and originality of our graduate students, showcasing their ability to push the boundaries of traditional academic research. This issue features student work from the advanced seminar "Autofiction," taught by Lujain Youssef in the summer term of 2022. Jia Shen Lim ("Lady Bird and Firebird"), Tina Pahnke ("In Theory"), and Sahar Al Kharsa ("The Story Untold") have submitted creative writing that they produced in the context of this course. Their contributions are preceded by a short introductory text, written by Eiman Alkhatib, Lukas Fender, and Michelle Pitson from the editorial team. We also highlight the student project that came out of the advanced seminar "Love, Power, Academia," taught by Anna-Lena Oldehus in the summer term of 2022. Here, students organized an exhibition with a variety of creative and interactive student projects that was part of the *WortLaut* festival program in October 2022. This issue presents a report of this event, written by Elisa Bongartz, Evelyn Dossa, Mruga Kelkar, and Celina Plaß from the editorial team, and an interview with porn scholar Madita Oeming that was also part of the event (transcribed and translated from German by Elisa Bongartz and Evelyn Dossa).

Finally, our Open Section is dedicated to a wide range of themes, forms, and contents that graduate students produce specifically for each issue. This section reflects the innovative spirit of our journal, inviting students to experiment with new modes of writing and expression and to explore topics that might not fit neatly within the confines of our other sections. The contributions showcase creativity, critical thinking, and a willingness to push boundaries. In this issue, the students have decided to work on the topic of love & joy. Jessica Hille, Jia Shen Lim, Nathalie Rennhack, Ahmet Servet, Harishnavi Sriskanthan, and Marielle Tomasic from the editorial team first provide a brief discussion of the relationship between love and joy. This joint introductory text is then followed by seven contributions that include essays, creative writing, and poetry. Each contribution finds a different angle on the topic and all together offer a varied and diverse panorama of how love and joy intersect in our lives.

*In Progress* thrives on the submissions we receive from graduate students. But it is also a journal that is *made* by graduate students. At the heart of *In Progress* is the advanced seminar "Editing a Scholarly Journal," which is integral to its production. Graduate students form an editorial team as they learn the basics of academic journals, the peer-review process, formatting, editing, and proofreading in this course, followed by the opportunity to put theory into practice. Under our guidance and that of the associate editors, for instance, the students conduct a blind peer-review process to evaluate submissions for publication. This hands-on experience enables them to learn about the intricacies of the publication process, including the editing and production of a journal, and to acquire valuable skills for future careers inside or outside of academia.

*In Progress* thus serves multiple purposes: Our journal provides graduate students with an avenue to publish their scholarly work, offers them valuable experience in editorial and publication processes, and highlights the impressive work being done at the English Department in Hannover. As general editors of *In Progress*, we are committed to creating a supportive and collaborative community of graduate students, faculty, and scholars. We hope that *In Progress* will serve as a platform for building connections and initiating dialogues among graduate students and scholars in the field of North American Studies. As a literal work *in progress*, each issue of our journal relies heavily on the dedication, creativity, and cooperation of all involved. We would like to take this opportunity to thank everyone who has worked on this inaugural issue. Our team of associate editors has been indispensable for this project from its inception: Gülçin Dogan, Alissa Lienhard, Hanna Masslich, Shayan Rahmanian, and Harishnavi Sriskanthan have played a pivotal role in the conceptualization of *In Progress* and worked tirelessly over the past year to make not only this inaugural issue but the journal as whole, a reality. To bring *In Progress* into existence, the associate editors collaborated on various tasks such as managing the journal's workflow, writing and promoting the Call for Papers, setting up the website, communicating with authors, participating in the blind peer review process, and carrying out numerous other crucial tasks. We are also deeply grateful to this year's editorial team and the contributors for their dedication, enthusiasm, and hard work. We would also like to thank Katrien Stevens at Karavan Design for coming up with our wonderful logo, and the Faculty of Humanities and the English Department of Leibniz University Hannover for providing resources and support for the journal. And now we invite you to explore the fruits of our labor and engage with the exciting scholarship and creative work that make up this first issue of *In Progress*.

## Author Biographies

**Felix Brinker** is assistant professor (wissenschaftlicher Mitarbeiter) in the division of American Studies at Leibniz University Hannover, Germany. His research focuses on contemporary American film, television, and comics, 19<sup>th</sup>- and 20<sup>th</sup>-century periodical culture, media theory, and Marxist theory. His work has been published in the journals *American Periodicals*, *Participations*, and *Television & New Media*. Recent publications include the monograph *Superhero Blockbusters: Seriality and Politics* (Edinburgh UP, 2022) and the volume *Modernity and the Periodical Press: Transatlantic Mass Culture and the Avant-Gardes, 1880-1920* (co-edited with Ruth Mayer, Brill 2022).

**Kathleen Loock** is Professor of American Studies and Media Studies at Leibniz University Hannover, Germany, and director of the Emmy Noether Research Group "Hollywood Memories: Cinematic Remaking and the Construction of Global Movie Generations," funded by the German Research Foundation (DFG). Her research focuses on Hollywood's remaking practice, seriality, and the role memory and cultural repetition perform on the levels of identity formation and for the maintenance of imagined communities. She has published on remakes, sequels, reboots, and seriality in film and television and written, edited, or co-edited six books and special issues on these topics. She has also gained academic editing skills as a review editor for the journal *Historische Anthropologie*, as an editorial team member of *Kindlers Literatur Lexikon* (North American Literature Section), and as associate editor of the journal *Amerikastudien/American Studies*.