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### **‘Sensing’ Affect: Voice and Tone in US Literature**

While literary studies has traditionally analyzed its objects in terms of specific genres, forms, or modes, this panel taps into more recent impulses to center sensory and affective experience in literature by scholars such as Erica Fretwell, Hsuan L. Hsu, Sianne Ngai, or Michael Dango. Often, such approaches work with more ambiguous, fuzzy, and mobile categories, including moods, vibes, or specific ‘aesthetics.’ This panel builds on these current debates by spotlighting voice and tone as expressions of the auditory and as, arguably, the primary ways in which literature creates and regulates sonic and affective environments. In order to probe such dynamics, we understand narrative or poetic voice and tone not only as narratological or formal concepts but as expressions of sound: as imagining and creating distinct soundscapes, atmospheres, and moods, and in turn inflecting how a text sounds and ‘feels.’

While voice and tone shape the poetics and politics of literary artifacts in myriad ways, we are especially interested in how they are tied to sound and the senses through the affective regimes that they form: how they negotiate intimacy and distance, how they orient readers or audiences toward a text, or how they encourage or resist specific feelings and emotions. Presentations may focus on historical or contemporary examples of how voice, tone, and affect convergence in US literature. We welcome case studies analyzing individual works or more theoretically driven presentations, which could tackle questions including but not limited to:

- The relation between certain text types/genres/media and a specific (literary, poetic, musical, auditory, etc.) tone, voice, or mood (*Stimmung*)
- Literary traditions (e.g. sentimentalism, melodrama) and their sensory and affective regimes as reflected through voice and tone
- Dissonances, e.g. via multiple voices vying for narrative authority or in terms of how the tone of a text might (not) fit its presumed affective appeal (e.g., outrage expressed via anger vs. lamentation vs. resignation etc.)
- Involved vs. distanced (or even silenced) literary voices; collective voices (e.g. in first-person plural fiction)
- Impersonal voices vs. historically situated concepts of voice and tone in terms of gendered, racialized, or disabled bodies or in specifically politicized environments (e.g. in times of war, late capitalism, or the climate crisis)
- Oral literary cultures and oral performances of literature
- Literary-studies approaches to voice, tone, and affect in media like film, TV, games, and other forms of popular culture that produce voice(s) on multiple acoustic levels

Please send your paper proposal (300 words) and a short bio to [stefan.schubert@uni-leipzig.de](mailto:stefan.schubert@uni-leipzig.de).

### **Confirmed speaker:**

Silvia Schultermandl (Münster), “Tone and Autotheoretical Affect in Billy-Ray Belcourt and Alexis Pauline Gumbs”