

Postdigital Entanglements and Intermedial Critique: US-American Novels on the ‚Digital Banal‘

*Regina Schober, American Literary and Cultural Studies, Heinrich-Heine-University
Duesseldorf, Germany*

Abstract

As the digital revolution has evolved into a postdigital media ecology, the digital is less and less seen as a disruptive force but has rather become invisible and co-existing with analog media. The normalization of digital technologies in all areas of our lives, including artistic and academic practices, poses pertinent aesthetic, cultural, political, and methodological questions that can be productively approached through an intermedial perspective. While digital media itself may be restricted to systemic blind spots in reflecting the cultural implications of the seemingly seamless integration of digital media into our everyday experiences, other media and theorizations thereof have an increasingly important function in de-naturalizing, making visible, and providing critical „counter-attentional forms“ (Stiegler) to what Zara Dinnen has called the affective structure of the „digital banal“.

In my talk I will look at a selection of US-American contemporary novels that emphasize the historical contingencies, material conditions, and cultural costs of digital infrastructures through explicit intermedial interventions into the postdigital condition. At the same time, these novels themselves partake in the blending of digital and analog, as they experiment with, and inevitably position themselves within a digital economy. Thus, while explicitly fashioning themselves as digital media’s corrective ‚other‘, these novels simultaneously demonstrate the inescapability and reconfigurability of the network logic, dismantling what Ulf Stäheli has described as the myth of „de-networking“.

Keywords

Postdigital, digital banal, US-American fiction

Bio

Regina Schober is Professor for American Studies at Heinrich-Heine-University Duesseldorf. Her research interests include literary negotiations of networks and algorithmic selfhood, theories of failure, and the digital pharmakon. She is author of *Spiderweb, Labyrinth, Tigh trope Walk: Networks in US-American Literature and Culture* (De Gruyter, 2023), of *Data Fiction: Naturalism, Numbers, Narrative* (special issue of *Studies in American Naturalism*, with James Dorson, 2011), and of *Laboring Bodies and the Quantified Self* (Transcript, with Ulfried Reichardt). She is part of the DFG funded research networks *The Failure of Knowledge – Knowledges of Failure* and *Model Aesthetics: Between Literary and Economic Knowledge* as well as of the BMBF funded project *AI4All*.

ORCID-ID/Websites

ORCID: [0000-0002-1105-0922](https://orcid.org/0000-0002-1105-0922)

Web site: <https://www.anglistik2.hhu.de/faculty/staff/prof-dr-regina-schober>