

Acknowledgements

The present volume is based on a hybrid conference held at the University of Würzburg in August 2023. The conference was a high-risk project for the chair of European Ethnology/Cultural Analysis as the organizer of the conference. This was because of the COVID-19 pandemic, which had limited social exchange worldwide since 2020 and was still virulent in 2022 when the call for papers was distributed. It was also precarious because of the ongoing construction site that had been accompanying our work at the university for more than three years. Moreover, the conference was particularly tricky because of its open approach in a field in which we had only started to work since the end of 2017. The call for papers combined the established field of doing research within folklore or narrative culture studies with that of multispecies studies that had just been newly established in Würzburg. The call for papers, distributed in spring 2022, invited international colleagues in the humanities and social sciences to contribute to a conference dealing with the topic of “narrating the multispecies world”. We were interested in answers for and responses to questions such as: What are the stories of, in and about our multispecies world today? What is the role of the past – which parts of our narrative heritage do we maintain? What are the powerful new stories developing possibilities for a peaceful cohabitation in the multispecies world? Given the scope of the projected conference, we wondered whether we would receive a substantial number of submissions and if these would fulfil our expectations.

Our expectations were exceeded by far. Flourishing forbs and figures of wolves, mantes and wild bees narrating today’s multispecies world transformed the old-fashioned auditorium into a multispecies arena that became a place of vibrant exchange. Scholars originating from almost every continent participated by exchanging their ideas, discussing forms and ways of understanding and narrating the current multispecies world. After the first day of the conference, one of the participants expressed the common sentiment by saying, “I do not know any of the speakers personally, but for me, it is like coming home.” Even weeks after the event, our students were still enthusiastic about the experience.

Conferences and conference volumes are the result of many people’s efforts. The University of Würzburg sponsored the conference with budget resources. The Philosophical Faculty supported the conference with rooms and helpful advice. Special thanks go

to Manuela Ohlmann for her space management and to Co-Dean Jürgen Rauh for his charming welcome to the participants. Architect Isabell Bauer from the building authority halted the construction activities site during the conference ensuring peace and quiet. The refectory crew served drinks and snacks in the breaks. The team of the Botanical Garden invited the conference attendees and organizers to a wonderful summer evening meeting in the garden. Special thanks go to Markus Riederer and Gerd Vogg for introducing us to the history of this magic place in Würzburg and giving tours through its different areas. Colleagues, mainly from Würzburg, introduced keynote speakers and moderated panels; special thanks go to Catrin Gersdorf, Lisa Herrmann-Fertig, Marlis Heyer, Ulrich Marzolph, Christine Ott and Laura Otto.

This conference would not have been possible without the teamwork of the chair of European Ethnology/Cultural Analysis. From the beginning of the idea to the dismantling of the last posters of the conference, the team worked closely together, and as the head of this team, I cannot be thankful enough for its members' constant professionalism. The head of the conference office, Pearl-Sue Carper, took care of just about everything of importance for the conference participants. Student members of her team – consisting of Sherin-Michelle Grabenstein, Lenka Lalovic, Victoria Porcu, Tukina Sebastiao, Anna-Lena Seitz and Lyric Stott – had already supported the conference preparations as early as spring 2023. Pearl-Sue Carper also checked the first proofs of the present volume. Susanne Dinkl, although already burdened with her regular teaching responsibilities, offered herself as extra help for the conference team. Felix Linzner organized everything that had to be arranged at the last minute. Our secretary, Monika Schäfer, helped to solve all the questions of administration, organization and fluttering nerves before, during and after the conference. Luise Stark started to narrate the multispecies world from a Franconian perspective in early 2023: As our master of communication, she organized the conference website, the posters and the figurines of species inhabiting the auditorium during the conference together with the live forbs. She also designed the picture on the cover of the present book. Krister Steffens was the leader of the technical team. Together with his student colleagues, Maximilian Krug and Nils Waldmann, and the support of the computer centre of our university, he managed a variety of technical challenges to make intercontinental digital exchange possible.

Luisa Bott at *transcript* was especially extremely helpful in preparing the volume. The White Rabbit Gallery, Chippendale generously permitted to reproduce one of the wonderful Multispecies Portraits of Ren Hang. Various colleagues kindly accepted the task of peer-reviewing the contributions submitted, devoting their time and effort to coach the contributors. Thank you all very much! Sherin-Michel Grabenstein and Lenka Lalovic assisted in managing the formal aspects of the contributions. Without Philip Saunders, our engaged proofreader, this book would not have been possible: His patience, professionalism and devotion to the multispecies world made all the difference!

Finally, the editor and Pearl-Sue Carper thank the contributors for their willingness to invest the time, effort and passion in this project. Not all of the papers presented at the conference could be published here for various reasons. On behalf of the organizers, I thank all of the conference participants for their engaged and critical presentations. Regarding the present collection, we hope to contribute to the worldwide search for new stories to narrate the lively multispecies world and its flourishing.