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Abstract: German Poets Playing in the Dark: Lyric Portrayals of Racialized Others

In this presentation, I attempt to think alongside the insights of Toni Morrison's *Playing in the Dark: Whiteness in the Literary Imagination* to examine German-language lyric poets' depictions of racialized others/otherness in their poetry on intertwined thematic and formal levels.

Considering Johann Wolfgang von Goethe's "Nachbildung" ("Emulation") in his *West-östlicher Diwan* (*West-eastern Divan*, 1819) and Ernst Jandl's „zertretener mann blues“ („trampled man blues“, written 1962, pub. 1974), I probe the dual complicity and utopianism of lyric for thinking about race. On one hand, white German poets instrumentalize racial others for their own poetics, cultural investigations, and subjectivity; on the other, the affordances of lyric form and language offer the possibility of reaching towards more open, less hegemonic, and more particularized forms of subjectivity that counteract the false universalism of whiteness. I envision a brief formal presentation with the bulk of time dedicated to collaborative brainstorming with participants about how to undertake such work in our fields and from our various subject positions—in my particular case, the limited perspective of my white positionality coupled with the white frame of German Studies as a whole.

Biographical Information: Hannah Vandegrift Eldridge is Associate Professor of German in the Department of German, Nordic, and Slavic+ at the University of Wisconsin – Madison; she is a white, queer, cisgender, settler academic and also a daughter, sister, wife, and sister-in-law working on unceded Ho-Chunk territory. A scholar of lyric poetry, she is currently working on a book project titled *Lyric Whiteness: The Creation of an Invisible Category in Germany*.