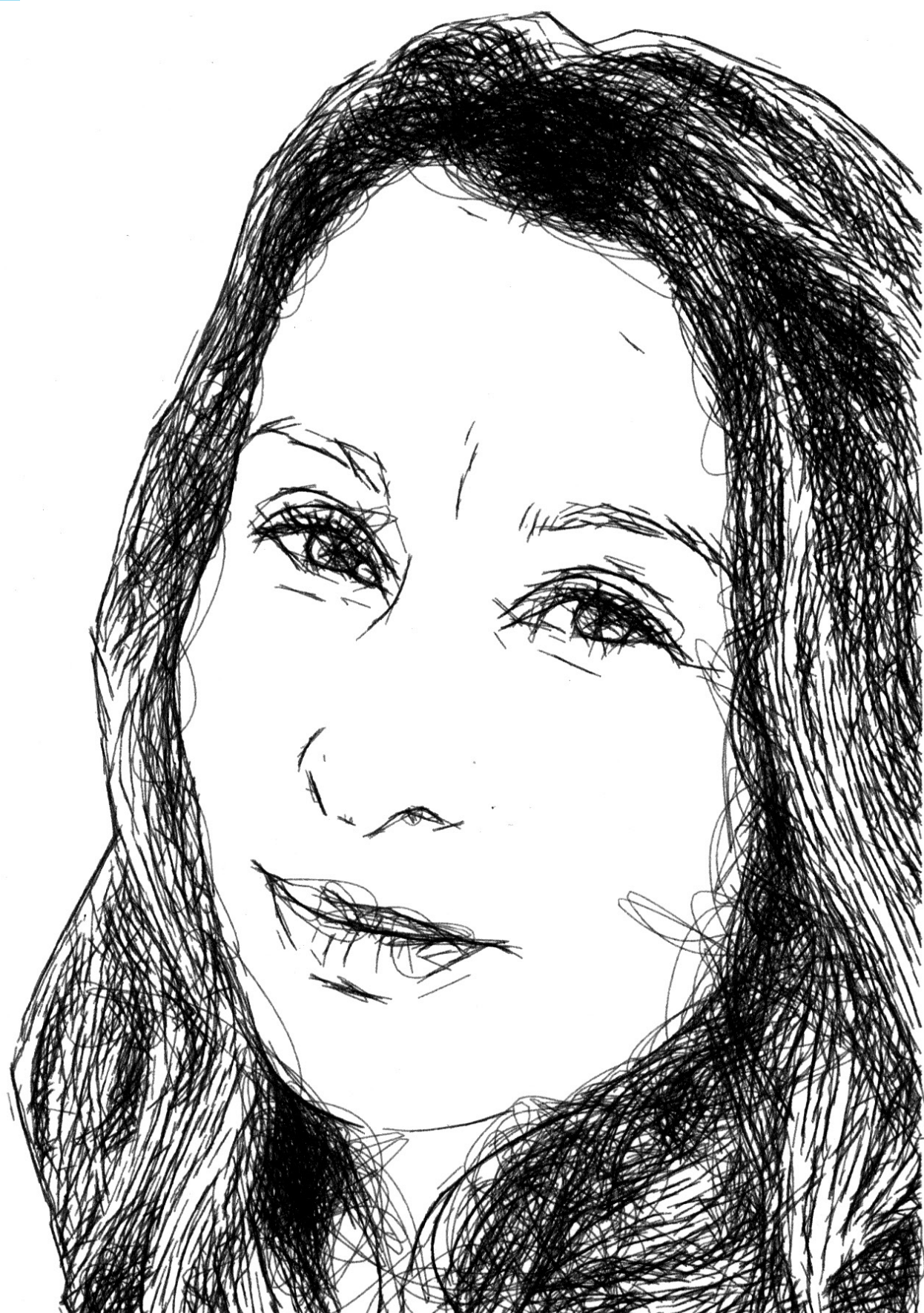


# Alumna Monika Class

## Alumni Portrait Nr. 09—2017

Junior Professor in English Literature  
and Culture, Department of English  
and Linguistics, Johannes Gutenberg  
University Mainz



# Monika Class



“Young researchers should be informed about what they can actually do to improve their future career opportunities.”

**“When I started at the Zukunftskolleg, I felt that this was probably going to be the best chance I could get to re-enter the German academic system after having studied and worked abroad for a decade.” Now a Junior Professor of English Literature and Culture at the Johannes Gutenberg University in Mainz, Monika Class reflects back on her education and working experience in Germany and England and believes that the means and methods of studying, researching and teaching depend a lot on the country and culture in which one lives.**

“Reading literature is something I have done from an early age onwards and it strongly influenced me and my decision to take a university course in the humanities. I had the desire to deepen my understanding of it.” Monika earned her Master in English and American Literature, as well as Modern and Medieval German Literature, at the University of Bamberg. Originally she had planned to become a teacher. It was a tough decision to leave that career path: “I didn’t know any strategies yet how to go about a career in academia.” The decision came about when she was offered the opportunity to give a talk at an international conference and realised that she was good at literary research and enjoyed it. Monika decided to concentrate on a Master of Arts, and started researching postgraduate programmes at international English Departments and funding possibilities. “It was certainly the international atmosphere at the conference that had inspired me to do so.” She applied for, and was accepted into, Balliol College, one of Oxford’s oldest and most renowned colleges, and received her title “Doctor of Philosophy” in 2009. Before she became a Fellow at the Zukunftskolleg, Monika worked at King’s College London first as a postdoctoral researcher with an EU-funded fellowship and then as a lecturer. She remembers the time she spent in Konstanz as

extremely valuable – not only in regard to her research, but also in terms of her career development: “I view the Zukunftskolleg as an institution that opened a door for me – and it gave me the chance to return to Germany.” After years abroad, Monika still had a German network, but in order to return and continue her career, she needed a bit more. “I had high hopes for my Zukunftskolleg application, as there is virtually no other programme like it.” She was awarded the Fellowship from 2014 until 2016 and is still impressed by the advantages it gave her. “First, it was a very stimulating time! There was this open and competitive atmosphere among the Fellows in the shared offices, lunch meetings at the dining hall, and the *Jour Fixe*, which stimulates interdisciplinary work and, in the best cases, provides lots of collegiality.” This led her to teaching a joint interdisciplinary seminar with the archaeologist Barbara Hausmair. Second, the financial support of the Zukunftskolleg helped Monika to maintain and expand her academic network: the *Mentorship Programme* provided the financial means to continue her collaboration with experts from King’s College London’s Centre for the Humanities and Health, while the Co-Funding Programme allowed her to organise an international conference in the field of “Literature and Medicine” together with leading experts in British Studies at the University of Konstanz. And third, Monika learnt more about systematic approaches to research proposals for third-party funding and job applications in German academia. Overall, Monika feels that the impetus both for creating new ideas and career development was strong.

As for her research, Monika has many interests. She has specialized in the 18th and 19th century. One of her special foci are the Anglo-German literary and cultural exchanges. The intercultural aspect of this field and the question of how foreign publications are received into the imagined communities of a nation fascinate her. For her doctorate, she wrote about the

early transmission of Immanuel Kant’s work in England. While at King’s, she then moved into a new research field: illness narrative and medical case histories. “I think that this new field makes an important intervention! To study narratives about the subjective experience of illness helps us to raise awareness that being ill has a social, psychological and political dimension. A person’s story means more than a case of disease.” During her time at the Zukunftskolleg, Monika combined her interest in medical narratives with that in readers’ responses: she examined how men of letters and physicians in 18th century joined forces to teach the raising number of literate people to separate body from mind, as well as fact from fiction, while reading. She investigates not only the history of literature, but also that of philosophy, and medicine.

Asked for her advice to students interested in an academic career, Monika emphasizes the importance of a systematic career path. “As a young researcher, you should be informed about what you can actually do to improve your future career opportunities. For example, if you want to go abroad: what would be the best time, the optimal duration and what would a seamless return, if any, look like?” She emphasizes that there are currently a lot of changes in the paths to become a university professor and that positions become highly competitive from the postdoctoral stage onwards; therefore, researchers should keep up with latest developments regarding their disciplines and university legislation in order to get a realistic sense of their chances to make it in academia. “This will help them to better determine their future path, consider alternatives and raise their independence.”

## Curriculum Vitae

### Education

- 2009** D. Phil (Doctor of Philosophy), Faculty of English, University of Oxford, UK  
“Coleridge and the Early Transmission of Critical Philosophy”
- 2003 – 2009** Doctoral researcher under the supervision of Professor Fiona Stafford, Balliol College, University of Oxford, UK
- 2003** Master’s thesis, Humanities Faculty, University of Bamberg  
“Self-consciousness in William Wordsworth’s *The Prelude*”

- 1999 – 2000** Studies abroad with the Erasmus programme, studying British and German Literature and Culture, University of Wales, Swansea, UK
- 1996 – 2003** British/American and German Studies with main focus on Literature, University of Bamberg

### Scientific Career

- since 2016** Junior Professor in English Literature and Culture, Department of English and Linguistics, Johannes Gutenberg University Mainz
- 2011 – 2013** Postdoctoral Researcher, English Department & Centre for the Humanities and Health, King’s College London, UK
- 2008 – 2010** Teacher of German and English as a foreign language, German school, Guadalajara, Mexico
- 2014 – 2016** Postdoctoral Researcher, Department of Literature, University of Konstanz
- 2013 – 2014** Lecturer in English and Medical Humanities, English Department, King’s College London, UK

### Distinctions, Awards and Honorary Posts

- 2016** EURIAS Junior Fellowship (offer not accepted)
- 2014 – 2016** Fellow of the Zukunftskolleg, University of Konstanz
- 2011 – 2013** EU Marie-Curie Intra-European Fellowship
- 2008** Vice-Chancellor’s Award, University of Oxford, UK
- 2004** Arts and Humanities Research Council Scholarship, UK
- 2004** Daimler-Benz Scholarship, Germany
- 1993 – 1994** Fulbright Scholarship for Parliamentary High School Student Exchange with USA