

RUHRCENTER of American Studies presents

2014 Ruhr PhD Forum in American Studies

TU Dortmund, Universität Duisburg-Essen
24 - 25 January 2014



2014 Ruhr PhD Forum Schedule

Friday, 24 January 2014

**TU Dortmund University, IBZ,
Emil-Figge-Str. 59, 44227 Dortmund**

12:00-12:15 Welcome_Randi Gunzenhäuser

12:15-14:15 **Panel 1_American Culture and History**

12:15-12:55 Insa Neumann_Language(s) in *Klein-Deutschland*: Perspectives from the Fifth Floor of a Tenement Building in 1886

12:55-13:35 G.H. Joost Baarssen_Defining/ Refining 'Anti-Europeanism': What's in a Name?

13:35-14:15 Jan Hildenhausen_Andrew Jackson and the Classical Discourse in the Early Republic

14:15-14:45 Coffee Break

14:45-16:05 **Panel 2_Postwar Transatlantic Memories**

14:45-15:25 Erika Mikó_American Popular Cultural Influences in Hungarian Travel Writing During the Cold War

15:25-16:05 Debarchana Baruah_Memories of the Postwar Period in Contemporary American Popular Cultures

16:05-16:35 Coffee Break

16:35-18:35 **Panel 3_Gendered Media**

16:35-17:15 Talel Ben Jemia_Trades and Hustlers: The Queer Aesthetics of Disorientation in American Cinema

17:15-17:55 Marta Twardowska_It is a (Wo)Man's World: Sexual Assault and Abuse of Female War Correspondents

17:55-18:35 Nina Schnieder_"Too Old for that Sh**?": The Aging Hero in Hollywood Action Cinema

19:00 Dinner at *La Gazzetta*, An der Palmweide 56, 44227 Dortmund

Saturday, 25 January 2014

**University Duisburg-Essen, Casino - Campus Essen,
Reckhammerweg 3, 45141 Essen**

9:15-9:30 Welcome_Barbara Buchenau

9:30-11:30 **Panel 1_Fictional Spaces**

9:30-10:10 Utku Mogultay_"...This Clouded Realm of Pedestrian Mazes and Municipal Stillness": Venice in Thomas Pynchon's *Against the Day*

10:10-10:50 Georg Drennig_The Other *City of Glass*: Douglas Coupland's Urban Imaginary Across Texts and Media

10:50-11:30 Alexia Schemien_A Cosmos of Its Own: Salvador Plascencia's *The People of Paper*

11:30 -12:30 Lunch at Unit Café, Reckhammerweg 2, 45141 Essen

12:30-14:30 **Panel 2_Media in Transgression**

12:30-13:10 Sandra Danneil_Never-Ending Laughter: *The Simpsons* and Transgressive Surpassing

13:10-13:50 Iris Kemmer_Facing the Unknown

13:50-14:30 Svetlana Makeyeva_Minor Narratives of Digital Nomadism: The Case of 'Nomadic Crusader'

14:30-15:00 Coffee | Wine

15:00-17:00 **Panel 3_Race and EthniCity**

15:00-15:40 Terence Kumpf_(Trans-)Cultural Passing: The Limits of Transethnic Aesthetics in Jim Jarmusch's *Ghost Dog*

15:40-16:20 Selma Siew Li Bidlingmaier_Re-inhabiting the Emptied 'Ghettos': The Everyday Spaces in Fæ Myenne Ng's *Bone*

16:20-17:00 Tazalika M. te Reh_Under Construction – Architecture, Space, and the Racial in Manhattan, New York City

12:00-12:15 Welcome_Randi Gunzenhäuser

12:15-14:15 Panel 1_American Culture and History

14:15-14:45 Coffee Break

Insa Neumann: Language(s) in *Klein-Deutschland*: Perspectives from the Fifth Floor of a Tenement Building in 1886

The 1886 ‘inside report’ *Klein-Deutschland: Bilder aus dem New Yorker Alltagsleben* by Caspar Stürenburg draws a vivid picture of Little Germany’s people and their stories in the 1890s. The narrator associates himself with this German part of New York City, with its cultural traditions, quirks, and also with its oftentimes prevailing poverty. Written from the fifth floor of a dingy tenement building, Stürenburg recounts the events of ‘his’ house, which he claims to be the representative average of the whole city of New York. Separately published in the widely available *New Yorker Staats-Zeitung* at first, the different chapters and stories were available to a large number of German-speakers.

Language is a relevant detail in many of the accounts collected in the book: German, German dialects, as well as English, fluency or a lack thereof. The variety of linguistic representations greatly adds to the reading experience, but also serves to develop the plotlines of Stürenburg’s portrayal of his neighborhood. This talk will investigate the relevance of the different languages and dialects in the context in which they are presented in *Klein-Deutschland*. Furthermore, it is going to establish why these linguistic differences constitute an important aspect in the process of identity construction – both for the author and the reader.

Insa Neumann studied English, French, and Economics at the University of Duisburg-Essen, Germany, and the University of Joensuu, Finland. She received her M.A. from the University of Duisburg-Essen in 2011. Her M.A. thesis, “Nazis in Lederhosen – German Stereotypes in U.S. American Popular Culture since 1980,” focused on the construction of national stereotypes in U.S. American television series and films. Since April 2012, Insa has been part of the research program “Spaces – Communities – Representations: Urban Transformations in the United States.” Her doctoral thesis deals with the changing self-representation of German immigrant and German American communities in New York City before and after the World Wars.

G.H. Joost Baarssen_Defining/Refining ‘Anti-Europeanism’: What’s in a Name?

Does anti-Europeanism in the United States merely amount to the French Fries-Freedom Fries kerfuffle? Why have some scholars argued thus? Why is it almost impossible to explain the phenomenon of anti-Europeanism without referring to anti-Americanism? What does that imply? Does anti-Europeanism need to be defined, and what does it mean to define it? Why have some scholars writing about anti-Europeanism not felt the need to provide a working definition?

In this paper, I wish to explore these questions. I wish to excavate what is, in essence, a highly unsatisfying endeavor. I will examine whether the term anti-Europeanism needs defining, and by screening the literature on both definitions of anti-Americanism and anti-Europeanism (in the U.S.), I will attempt to provide a working definition.

The very fact that anti-Europeanism supposedly needs defining, and is, therefore, not self-evident and self-explanatory, is, to a certain extent, a frustrating experience. Defining, by definition, collapses the self-evidence, restricts the elusive and will render its organic qualities void. It limits the imagination, yet, simultaneously; narrowing down the focus can very well be a constructive aspect of academic conversation.

In separating the anti-European a person whom I do not believe to exist from the anti-Europeanism(s) both the greater phenomenon itself and individual statements I wish to contribute a novel approach, which may be of benefit to scholars of anti-Europeanism and anti-Americanism alike.

G.H. Joost Baarssen is a PhD student in the program "Transatlantic and Transnational American Studies" at the RuhrCenter of American Studies and an instructor at TU Dortmund University. He is a DAAD scholarship recipient and currently working on a dissertation about anti-Europeanism in the United States. Before this, he studied American Studies with minors in Peace and Safety Studies and Political Science at the University of Groningen and Radboud University Nijmegen in the Netherlands, and Saint Louis University in St. Louis, Missouri. His research interests include transatlantic imagology, travel literature, and, more generally, religion and politics in the United States.

Jan Hildenhagen...Andrew Jackson and the Classical Discourse in the Early Republic

From their very beginning, and especially in the 19th century, the United States of America was exposed to tremendous political, economic, and geographic changes. Nevertheless, a generally accepted system of values, spanning generations of Americans, can be ascertained and is recognizable in the rhetorical tradition. One of these narratives is the comparison of America with ancient Greece and Rome. The classical discourse during the American Revolution and the fight for the American Constitution have been well researched. But until now, most scholars have assumed that this discourse peters out after the beginning of the 19th century. By focusing on newspaper articles, pamphlets, congressional debates, and private letters all centering around the person of Andrew Jackson, this paper argues that the classical discourse was indeed quite vivid during the first half of the 19th century.

Jan Hildenhagen is a PhD candidate at the History Department of the Ruhr University Bochum (RUB). His doctoral thesis, which deals with the classical discourse in the United States particularly centering on Andrew Jackson, is partly funded by the RUB Research School. Jan has taught classes at the RUB, the TU Dortmund, and the University of Siegen. His research interests include the Roman Republic (509-27 B.C.) and the Early American Republic (1776 – 1861).

Piled Higher and Deeper by Jorge Cham

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title: "How your Conference Presentation Goes" - originally published 1/21/2013

14:45-16:05 Panel 2_Postwar Transatlantic Memories
16:05-16:35 Coffee Break

Erika Mikó_American Popular Cultural Influences in Hungarian Travel Writing During the Cold War

American popular culture has been present in Hungary since the inter-war period and continued to be consumed in various forms during the Cold War. After the 1950s, the period when the attempts to Sovietize the country had reached their peak, the 1960s brought about the easing of the official rhetoric and the improvement of cultural relations between the two countries. They manifested themselves in the growing number of travel books on the United States. Popular culture and travel literature served as the chief sources of America's image in Hungary, mutually influencing each other.

My presentation attempts to trace the presence and influence of American popular culture as well as its use and misuse in Hungarian travel writing. The analyzed travelogues were officially published and followed from visits to the United States. They show that the vision of the West has not been a coherent and static construct throughout the four decades of the socialist regime. Certain segments of American culture were useful and desirable while others needed to be isolated and their transmissions to the socialist homeland needed to be blocked and stopped altogether. The communist authorities, interested in displaying an image of a democratic country abroad, allowed showing some socially critical American movies. These movies often highlighted social issues that were treated as general truths behind the Iron Curtain. Various stereotypes and film clichés employed by such movies served as manuals to write 'safe texts' containing a 'correct,' socialist-friendly version of American society that could freely be offered to socialist readers. The gradual disappearance of these recycled stereotypical representations show the communist system's loss of control over printed media and contribute to our general knowledge on the narrative and ideological parameters of the travelogues written during the Cold War.

Erika Mikó is currently working on her dissertation dealing with New York's urban transformation in Hungarian travel writing at the TU Dortmund University. She graduated from the University of Debrecen in 2010 and worked as an English teacher. Her research interests include travel writing, soundscape studies, the literature of minorities, ethnic stereotypes, and the history of the twentieth century. Since April of 2012, Erika has been part of the research program "Spaces-Communities-Representations: Urban Transformations in the USA" in Dortmund.

Debarchana Baruah_Memories of the Postwar Period in Contemporary American Popular Cultures

Since the 1990s an unprecedented rise in memory practices has been observed in the world specifically within America's contemporary popular cultures. Globalization and the internet age are the primary factors responsible for this rise in cultures of memory. Along with these factors, memory theorists have also cited historical factors such as the end of the Cold War, and the fiftieth anniversaries of events of the Second World War to have triggered commemorative practices across the Atlantic. This new discourse around memories of the war and the decades following the war has also found resonance in various media such as films, television, and internet. They continually revisit postwar memories with the desire to shed new light on the experiences of the period aided by presentist insights and temporal distance and at times to inhabit the period rife with conflicts and paradoxes as a backdrop for fiction to unfold. These representations through repeated performativity substantially energize and add to memories of the period and perform specific functions in society such as contributing to national narratives and politics of identity formation.

My research focuses on negotiations between the multiple layers of postwar memories consolidated over the years reaching new heights at the turn of the century within literary and cultural practices of representations. I explore desires to participate in the postwar past, the significance and usability of the period in contemporary America. I examine television and film as important sites of memory and the trajectories of these televisual memories as they constitute popular conceptions of American identity. I develop the framework of the retro to understand the dialogic temporal relationship of these representations with the postwar past and engage with the ways in which recalled memories of the period configure and interpret the postwar period in the present.

Deberchana Baruah was born in Guwahati in North-East India. In 2005 she moved to Delhi and later completed her B.A. (2008), M.A. (2010), and M.Phil. (2012) in English Literature at the Department of English, University of Delhi. Ever since her graduate days she gravitated towards studies in American literature, and, in July 2012, Debarchana submitted her M.Phil. dissertation entitled "Elusive Dreams: Suburbia in Post World War II American Literature." She began her doctoral program at the Heidelberg Center for American Studies in October 2012. The working title of her dissertation is "Memories of the Postwar Period in Contemporary American Popular Cultures." Her dissertation will examine the factors that create and circulate the contemporary desire to rememorialize and return to the period following World War II and the significance of the period in the construction of American identities.

16:35–18:35 Panel 3_Gendered Media

19:00 Dinner at LA GAZZETTA,
An der Palmweide 56, 44227 Dortmund

Talel Ben Jemia_Trades and Hustlers: The Queer Aesthetics of Disorientation in American Cinema

This dissertation project is an examination of the fictional and specifically cinematic representations of male prostitution in American culture. The figure of the 'hustler' has been and continues to be a recurring protagonist in U.S. Queer Cinema. Commonly identified as a trope, he is either read as an epitomization of the liminal status of the homosexual male in American society or has been romanticized as a sexually liberated, polymorphous 'agent of desire.' I want to dissolve this reductionist binary in my analysis by exploring the narratives and aesthetics that are yielded by the hustler figure. A central theme that emerges in analyzing his cinematic portrayals is the loss of stable meanings that produces an identity marked by being both spatially and existentially adrift: a state of obliquity that in my research I denote as 'disorientation.'

To explore this notion of disorientation, I will deploy a phenomenological approach in my readings of films such as *Midnight Cowboy* (1969), *My Own Private Idaho* (1991), and the most recent *Strapped* (2010), among others. By doing so I am not only interrogating the level of individual experience and subjective consciousness that is at play in these movies, but I further want to inquire upon the question of what constitutes a 'queer art' to begin with. Is there a 'queerness effect,' or as Leo Bersani has called it, a "homo-esthetic" characteristic to these literary and cinematic works that goes beyond elements such as topicality and authorship? In devising a queer film phenomenology and tracing the development of the hustler figure from the 1960s to the present, I seek to both historicize representations of queer experience in American culture as well as the distinct aesthetics of these narratives. The main objective of my project is to commensurate perspectives from the fields of American Studies and queer and film theory to digest histories and strategies of narrating queer identities in America.

Talel Ben Jemia was an undergraduate student at the John F. Kennedy Institute (JFKI) of the Free University Berlin from 2008 until 2011 when he received his B.A. in North American Studies with a focus on Cultural Studies and History and a minor in History. From 2011 and 2013 he received his M.A. at the JFKI, focusing on Cultural Studies and Sociology. His M.A. thesis was entitled "This Actual Body I Call Mine – A Phenomenological Analysis of Gus Van Sant's *My Own Private Idaho*". Since October 2013, Talel has been a doctoral candidate at Graduate School of North American Studies, funded a DFG scholarship. The working title of his dissertation is "Trades and Hustlers – The Queer Aesthetics of Disorientation in American Film."

Marta Twardowska_It is a (Wo)Man's World: Sexual Assault and Abuse of Female War Correspondents

War becomes gendered by epitomizing the 'either-or' discourse. Either one is 'in' or 'out'. The out invariably signifies exclusion, marginalization or turning one into the invisible. Through such classifying mechanisms war makes women vanish, become transparent, practically nonexistent. War thus remains a men's club – a heavily guarded territory inhabited solely by one species, namely one hundred percent masculinity. The power to define and impose meaning rests entirely in the hands of men, since the 'logic is in the eye of the logician.' What is then the most convenient tool to execute such control?

The answer is simple – female sexuality – the most universal weapon of oppression ever invented. A female body functions ironically as both the object of repression and a means to control a woman's social position. The military world is no exception. As war gets gendered, sexuality gets highly politicized. Although women war reporters have shaken up the iron-fisted norms and demonstrated that the term 'woman war reporter' is not intrinsically contradictory, their stigmatized sexuality haunts every step they take. They are often sexually harassed, yet much afraid to reveal this heinous truth. Sexual violation of women reporters, claims Judith Matloff of the Columbia Graduate School of Journalism, a board member of the International News Safety Institute and a former correspondent for Reuters, "is far more common than most news editors realize, and many women fear it more than death. Yet few of them have ever talked about it openly. It is the last remaining taboo in the profession, like trauma used to be." The compulsion to belong to the 'macho club' or be at least given an opportunity to enter the circles is so fierce that women often do not tell their employers about the incidents. Groping hands, vulgar remarks or suggestive come-ons are unprotestingly accepted as part of the gendered reality. But some voices can be heard – the ones resounding with hope for change.

Marta Twardowska graduated with honors from the American Studies Center of the University of Warsaw, Poland, with an M.A. thesis entitled "Gambling with the Myth: Villainous Heroes and Heroic Villains of the 9/11 Narrative." During her M.A. studies she spent one semester as an exchange student at the TU Dortmund University. She is currently pursuing a PhD in American Studies at the TU Dortmund, working on a thesis entitled "Unsilenced: Female War Reporters in the Contested Gender Arena." Her major research interest is the interface between war, gender, and power.

Nina Schnieder_ "Too Old for that Sh**?": The Aging Hero in Hollywood Action Cinema

When we think about Hollywood action film, the most prevalent picture that comes to mind is of the muscle stars – or "hard bodies" (Susan Jeffords) – of the 1980s: young, agile men in their 'muscle suits' expressing physical prowess that sometimes appear superhuman. Today the stars – famously represented by Sylvester Stallone, Arnold Schwarzenegger, and Bruce Willis – and the well-known heroes they embody are 'coming of (old) age,' increasingly to be seen in sequels or new editions of their most successful characters and hero types.

In accordance with that trend, film scholars and critics are currently debating the recent birth of a new film genre: the 'geezer' film. What made me interested in the subject of my thesis was the impression that those 'geezer films' were mainly melancholic, sad, and rather depressing in tone. Looking for narratives that dealt with age and aging more positively, I turned to the Hollywood action film and its active and never failing heroes representing Hollywood-American valor that has become an ultimate representation of heroic masculinity worldwide.

Some critics have pronounced their reservations towards the numerous comebacks of these action heroes, viewing their reappearances as pure Hollywood marketing and as an attempt to live up to earlier successes. In her article on the subject, Philippa Gates raises the question if these heroes are actually 'acting their age' since the exhibition of their potent bodies seem to contradict their/the actors' chronological age. Of all possible genres, however, the Hollywood action film that is so often blamed for putting 'spectacular before narrative' deals with and debates male age and aging by presenting credible heroic age narratives, and puts the aspect right to the core of the narrative.

I claim the Hollywood action film embraces age as another obstacle the male protagonist has to face in order to become heroic. In addition, age is used as a signifier alluding to other issues that also allow reading several action films as age narratives. My presentation gives an exemplary insight into my analysis by addressing the difficult issue of violence and the aging hero in Clint Eastwood's *Unforgiven* (1992) and Sylvester Stallone's *Rambo* (2008).

Nina Schnieder is a PhD candidate of American Studies at the University of Potsdam. In 2009 she received her M.A. in American Studies and Modern History, and Sociology/Gender Studies from the University of Potsdam and the Humboldt University Berlin. She wrote her M.A. thesis on the representation of the female cowboy in 1990s Hollywood western, and she is now working on her doctoral thesis on the aging hero in Hollywood action cinema. Prior and during her studies she has lived in the United States, studying at Ohio Wesleyan University and Ohio State University as well as at Radboud University in Nijmegen, Netherlands.

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AFTER I GRADUATE."



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ALTERNATIVES.



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PLAN

: BECOME A
BAKER/ROCKSTAR/WRITER.

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9:15-9:30 Welcome_Barbara Buchenau
 9:30-11:30 Panel 1_Fictional Spaces
 11:30-12:30 Lunch at Unit Café,
 Reckhammerweg 3, 45141 Essen

Utku Mogultay_“...This Clouded Realm of Pedestrian Mazes and Municipal Stillness”: Venice in Thomas Pynchon's *Against the Day*

Venice is a city full of contrasts and contradictions, both mundane and mythic, both lucid and labyrinthine, both real and dreamlike. Historically, a utopian ideal has been at the heart of the myth surrounding the island-city. Geographically exceptional, sacredly legitimized and politically independent for more than a thousand years, the city-republic came to pride itself as a perfect union of society and place, as “a moral-æsthetic state” (Tuan), where spatial form signified inner virtue. As a social space, however, Venice was equally characterized by licentiousness, a thriving underworld of vice and an urban policy imposing restrictions on personal freedom by means of scrupulous social control, zoning and socio-spatial segregation. But even in the wake of economic decline and political demise, the myth never ceased to exist; instead it gained a nostalgic and often morbid edge, which exerted a particular pull on artists. While many visited Venice to commemorate the lost grandeur of the city-republic, others venerated its picturesque cityscape, which – for all its architectural diversity and lack of urban planning – has developed an organic quality and a strong visual coherence. With its increasing popularity as a tourist destination in the 20th century, however, Venice has often been denounced as “a merely lifeless stage-set,” offering no more than “the mendacious beauty of the mask” (Simmel). This paper deals with the literary Venice in *Against the Day*, putting special emphasis on how the novel relates the city’s visibility and thus outlines a moral geography of urban space by drawing on some traditions of Venetian art and related visual tropes. Although the paper addresses how the novel engages with the tension between myth and social space, it will eventually develop a materialist reading in order to reveal a political subtext that raises more general questions on the production of space.

Utku Mogultay studied English and Social Sciences at the University of Cologne and the University of Duisburg-Essen and received his M.A. in 2009. He is a doctoral candidate in the international PhD program “Advanced Research in Urban Systems” (ARUS) of the University of Duisburg-Essen and a member of the research project “Spaces - Representations - Communities: Urban Transformations in the USA” of the RuhrCenter for American Studies. In his dissertation he deals with Thomas Pynchon's *Against the Day* and develops a reading which treats the novel as a spatial history of modernity. His research interests include modern and postmodern American literature, literary and cultural theory, film and media studies, critical spatial theory, urban studies, and visual culture.

Georg Drennig_The Other *City of Glass*: Douglas Coupland's Urban Imaginary Across Texts and Media

Douglas Coupland, primarily known for the novel *Generation X*, has put his home city of Vancouver into numerous works over the last three decades. The city features in his journalism and visual art, several novels, a work of creative non-fiction that he named *City of Glass*, and a film for which he wrote the script. An analysis of the urban imaginary that he has created in this body of work raises several questions that shall be the subject of this presentation. In several interviews and forewords, Coupland has explicitly stated his desire to showcase the ‘true’ city to audiences. Especially with his creative-non-fiction work *City of Glass*, the question of a genre's claim to truth and interpretive hegemony becomes prominent. Yet, important parts of that particular work’s representation of Vancouver can be found in his novels or on film, thus creating an inter-textual and inter-medial body of work that challenges a clean separation between fiction and, albeit creative, non-fiction. Through both his truth claims and the repetitive dissemination of constituent parts of his Vancouver imaginaries, Coupland asserts something of a hegemony over interpreting and disseminating what he claims to be the city’s essence. Additionally, the prominence of his work in Vancouver – both within the literary landscape and in regards to book sales and media attention – complicates readings of the work and its role in shaping and disseminating imaginaries.

Georg Drennig studied North American Studies at the University of Vienna, Austria, and Georgetown University, USA, and is now a PhD candidate in the “Advanced Research in Urban Systems” program at the University of Duisburg-Essen. There, he works on Environmental Imaginaries of Vancouver and the cultural production of space. His main interests are spatially-turned Cultural Studies, “stone-kicking-realist” Ecocriticism, and discourses of urbanity in popular culture, including comics. He has published essays on topics ranging from Poison Ivy and urbanity in *Batman* comics and films, Joy Kogawa’s *Obasan*, Eminem's rejection of ruin porn to Spike Lee's *Do the Right Thing* and the WTO riots in Seattle.

Alexia Schemien_A Cosmos of Its Own: Salvador Plascencia's *The People of Paper*

Latin American literature has often been associated directly with ethnic literature. This immediate connection of Latin American and 'ethnic' has led to a differentiation of 'mainstream' American literature on the one hand and 'Latin American' or 'ethnic' literature on the other. In recent years, however, scholarly criticism has become broader and more divergent (e.g. Ramón and José Saldívar). Authors and works that in the past were only visible from an ethnic point of view are today visible in a wider literary context and therefore discussed from various new perspectives. Additionally, (post-)postmodern as well as other genre-specific characteristics can increasingly be detected in contemporary Latin American literature.

The Mexican American author Salvador Plascencia for example, with his mixture of magical realist elements and postmodern writing, reflects contemporary literature by transcending genre-specific delineations and involves the reader in critically engaging with notions of self-determination and identity construction. The literary antecedents of his debut novel *The People of Paper* are not only Jorge Luis Borges and Latin American magical realist writers, but the experimental writing style also has its origins in postmodernism as well as the Beat Generation. Additionally, the novel is often linked to Jonathan Safran Foer's novels *Tree of Codes* and *Extremely Loud and Incredibly Close*. This highly complex novel conflates various influences and creates a cosmos of its own. It transcends literary borders and intends to overcome essentializing perceptions of cultural productions. By doing so, it challenges homogenization, questions and subverts power relations, and thus adds to a new definition of Americanness.

Alexia Schemien is a faculty member of the North American Studies at the University of Duisburg-Essen. She holds an M.A. in English, Spanish, and Anthropology from the University of Münster. Her M.A. thesis was concerned with the representation of the Mexican American revolutionary Pancho Villa in literature and film. She is currently working on her dissertation with the working title "The Politics of Spirituality in Contemporary Mexican American Literature." Her research interests include Inter-American studies, Mexican American literature, indigenous identities, gender studies, race and ethnicity, as well as religion and spirituality.



The early bird
ate too many worms
and died

12:30-14:30 Panel 2_Media in Transgression**14:30-15:00 Coffee and Wine****Sandra Danneil_Never-Ending Laughter: The Simpsons and Transgressive Surpassing**

»TV-Unterhaltung scheint endlich zu den Medien bildungsbürgerlicher Kunst aufzuschließen,« anticipate media scholars Andreas Jahn-Sudmann and Frank Kelleter in their most recent publication related to the DFG project on popular seriality (*Populäre Serialität* 2012, 206). Unfortunately, this once again is not true for the entirety of television entertainment.

In this presentation I analyze humor phenomena of transgression and the popular. By means of the animated primetime sitcom *The Simpsons*, I approach the undertheorized status of situation comedies within the interdisciplinary liminal space of cultural anthropology, television studies, and of contemporary humor research. In my paper I deal with the question of to what extent comedy and/or animation programs like *The Simpsons* fit the category of Quality TV. Against all generalizing conjectures, which especially bracket out mass phenomena such as soaps, reality TV, and even comedy from the quality-debate, I consider *The Simpsons* as an essential precursor of our contemporary understanding of Quality TV.

Prominent arguments on the subject attest a considerable growth of serial complexity in contemporary American television since the 1990s (see Mittell 2006). But in what ways have humor-based commercial series managed to let narrative complexity become their crucial mode of storytelling? In how far does an often transgressive humor and at the same time culture-context-related comedy allow for inferences on the most recent academic debate on Quality TV? Ultimately, by what means has an allegedly infantile medium of animation benefited from its own suspected innocuousness? Within this complex apparatus of post-television, I claim, animated comedies like *The Simpsons* open new spaces to a global audience, in which subversion and revolt work with a smile. In my talk I will therefore problematize the meaning of terms like narrative surpassing, metaserial intelligence as well as hybridity and intertextuality to meet the standards set up by the phenomenon of the animated sitcom as a pioneering example of Quality TV.

Sandra Danneil has an M.A. in Cinema and Television Studies from the Ruhr University Bochum and a B.A. in Education. She is a PhD candidate and a faculty member of Cultural Studies and the Media at the Institute of British and American Studies at TU Dortmund University. She worked in the film and television industry for several years and dedicated much of her time to writing about gender issues such as new masculinities, pornography, or female serial killers. Besides teaching courses in Cultural and Media Studies, she is also involved in the extensive Dortmund - U.S. exchange program and organizes an interdisciplinary lecture series on media literacy.

Iris Kemmer_Facing the Unknown

Interculturality and, hence, dealing with otherness are central elements of *Star Trek*. Far away from home, the crew of the Voyager is facing problems, which no Starfleet officer ever had to overcome before. The successful contact with other species is therefore essential. Not always does a first contact work well as the encounter with the so-called Tak Tak in the episode "Macrocosm" from the third season of the series *Star Trek: Voyager* (1995-2001) shows: Captain Kathryn Janeway's gestures were unintentionally offensive to the Tak Tak. However, there is a greater problem: Janeway, who is the first female Captain of a *Star Trek* series, has to fight a dangerous 'macrovirus' that came on board of the ship and is threatening her crew. Will Janeway be able to fight off this virus and rescue her crew and ship? This presentation will give a close reading of communication practices and their medial translation but will also look at how facing the unknown – the alien virus – is narrated.

Iris Kemmer studied Applied Linguistics with Applied Literary and Cultural Studies and Philosophy and then graduated with an M.A. in Applied Linguistics at TU Dortmund University. Her dissertation project deals with intercultural communication in *Star Trek*.

Svetlana Makeyeva_Minor Narratives of Digital Nomadism: The Case of 'Nomadic Crusader'

Prominent digital nomads offer a controversial narrative of technological and socio-cultural progress: digital nomadism is conceptualized as a lifestyle improving workers' quality of life, arguably, a better alternative to what digital nomads refer to as "life in a cubicle." Self-proclaimed digital nomads are often web savvy and location independent knowledge workers/entrepreneurs. These nomads usually carry a minimum of equipment with them; instead of sitting in a designated office, they are working remotely from home, cafes, public libraries, hotels, beaches, trains, airplanes, and other locations/spaces that offer (preferably free) access to the internet. This lifestyle is often described as digital nomadism, or digital nomad movement.

Representations of successful digital nomads – either personified by entrepreneurs or politicians – morally prevail over a variety of minor representations. What I define as minor narratives are often negatively referred to as the cases of "identity fraud," "digital terrorism," or "mental sickness." The Internet users who are involved in activities described as deviant and immoral are perceived as criminals disrupting the American people's well-being on the web and in "real" life.

In Chapter V of my dissertation, titled "Transgressing Identity and Gender: Minor Narratives of Digital Nomadism," I gathered the cases of identity fraud that were widely discussed on the web. All of these controversial cases involved social networks. In my textual analysis I approached these cases as minor narratives of digital nomadism. In my presentation I will share my interpretation of the narrative by self-named 'Nomadic Crusader' (a young man aged 22-25, an avid Facebook App gamer), and elaborate on how similar stories of identity fraud contribute to our understanding of digital nomadism.

Svetlana Makeyeva has been an American Studies PhD student and instructor at the TU Dortmund University since 2008. Svetlana obtained her B.A. from the American University-Central Asia in 2006, and her M.A. from the Heidelberg Center for American Studies in 2007. Her dissertation is about digital nomads in the U.S.

15:00–17:00 Panel 3_Race and Ethnicity

Terence Kumpf_ (Trans-)Cultural Passing: The Limits of Transethnic Aesthetics in Jim Jarmusch's *Ghost Dog*

In terms of hip-hop films of the 1990s, Jim Jarmusch's *Ghost Dog: The Way of the Samurai* (1999) offers a uniquely rich cinematic experience. Mixing urban American gangsta rap, Japanese Samurai, and Italian American Mafioso tropes to spin a hybrid, postmodern crime drama at the dawn of the 21st century, Jarmusch's film, which features original music by The RZA from hip-hop collective Wu-Tang Clan, creates an immersive, (trans-)cultural space the audience is required to negotiate visually, aurally, and psychologically. Characters like Ghost Dog (Forest Whitaker), Sonny Valerio (Cliff Gorman), and Louis (John Tormey) actively pass in and out of socio-cultural spaces, and the film invites the viewer to pass with them. As a result, *Ghost Dog: The Way of the Samurai* possesses considerable potential to initiate a transethnic aesthetic experience in the viewer. But given the film's tragic ending, how far is the audience actually encouraged to move outside its own cultural sphere(s)? Does the film constitute a plausible argument for the benefits of multi-polar cultural identification, or does it issue a dire warning about the limits of social and cultural passing, especially when read against hip-hop's aesthetic of authenticity? Drawing upon the theoretical notions of trans-locational positionality (Anthias), aesthetic experience (Fluck), ethnicity as constituting shared cultural practices (Cornell and Hartmann), transculturation (Hörder and Schmitt), and hip-hop as predicated upon the active, ongoing renegotiation of identity (Dimitriadis), this paper will offer a new interpretation of one of Jim Jarmusch's more intriguing films. Should we, the audience, emulate Ghost Dog as he navigates a transcultural terrain or is he a tragic anti-hero whose cultural passing foretells his (and our) own transcultural demise?

Terence Kumpf is a PhD candidate in American Studies at TU Dortmund University. His research interests include hip-hop, aesthetic experience, post-colonialism, post-racial theory, transculturation, bi- and multilingualism, and critiques of nationalism and multiculturalism. His most recent article "Beyond Multiculturalism: The Transculturating Potential of Hip-Hop in Germany" was published in *Hip-Hop in Europe: Cultural Identities and Transnational Flows* in November 2013.

Selma Siew Li Bidlingmaier_Re-Inhabiting the Emptied 'Ghettos:' The Everyday Spaces in Fæ Myenne Ng's *Bone*

North American Chinatowns are fiercely contested spaces, symbolically as well as physically. Since their 'emergence' within the burgeoning cityscapes of metropolitans like San Francisco and New York in the late 19th Century to the mid-20th Century, these enclaves have been designated as distinct spaces of difference, delineating social, religious, cultural norms from those of 'American-town.' Various discourses ranging from health to labor politics created an imaginary space that had real and oftentimes detrimental effects on the enclave. These constructed spatial codes that developed over time, reduced the complex, lived spaces to what Lefebvre likens to an "empty seashell" in which the inhabitants, the users of these spaces and their everyday life "disappeared."

Various attempts have been made over the decades to document and study the development of Chinatowns and their inhabitants. However, these efforts have often contributed unwittingly to a greater schism between the discursive space, spatial practice, and everyday life of the enclave, serving ideological motives and perpetuating the 'disappearance' of everyday life. This paper will discuss the role of literature in the production of space, focusing on the dialectics of everyday-lived, spaces in the 're-habilitation' of Chinatown. With a theoretical foundation based on works by Lefebvre, Soja, and Foucault, this paper analyzes Fæ Myenne Ng's masterwork *Bone* (1993). I argue that her work provides us with an alternate literary topography that resists the mythicization of the enclave and provides new avenues for the emancipation of the spaces that have long been deemed as peripheral, one-dimensional, and flat. The literary Chinatown in *Bone* allows the readers to explore the Aleph, the one space in which personal and national histories, narratives, real and imaginary, historical, social, material, discursive, everyday spaces conjoin, seep into one another, and form a multi-dimensional platform where the everyday life of Chinatown is once again prioritized and finds expression beyond the confines of ideological, institutional, and political structures.

Selma Siew Li Bidlingmaier graduated from the University of Nebraska-Lincoln in May 2000 majoring in Clinical Psychology and minoring in Literature. She continued her graduate studies at the University of Bayreuth attaining her M.A. in Anglophone Studies with a focus on the function of memory in literature in 2003. While holding the position as teaching assistant and subsequently senior lecturer in American Literature and Cultural Studies at the Ruhr University Bochum, she began developing an interest in Asian American literature and spatial theory. In April 2012, she received the MERCATOR research grant and is currently working on her PhD dissertation focusing on the confluence of literature and the production of spaces in her study of literary North American Chinatowns.

Tazalika M. te Reh_Architecture, Space, and the Racial in Manhattan, N.Y.

In my dissertation project I will analyze how three particular sites can be put into context with turning points in American history, such as the Great Migration and the Harlem Renaissance (The Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture from 1905/1926), the Civil Rights Movement (The Studio Museum Harlem, founded 1968), and the present that I call the Era of Postcolonial Consciousness (African Burial Ground National Monument from 2006). Located in Manhattan and problematizing an urban transformation, these architectural sites respond differently to their respective historical framings, constituting and claiming space.

This dissertation is located at the interface of cultural studies and architectural theory. Bringing together these two disciplines, renders possible realizing a project that examines an urban transformation in Manhattan, New York City, from different perspectives. Critical of architecture and its history, and of society and its representation of diversity, my education as an architect and my continuing education in the humanities at TU Dortmund University's Institute of English and American Studies jointly and interdisciplinary lead me to challenging the issues of architecture, space, and the racial.

Tazalika M. te Reh has been a member of the "Spaces – Communities – Representations: Urban Transformations in the United States" PhD program, since April 2012 funded by the Mercator foundation scholarship. Her dissertation deals with architecture, space, and the racial. Before joining the American Studies section, Tazalika worked as an architect as well as a curator and consultant of the board at the DKM foundation and at the museum DKM in Duisburg. In 2013, she was fellow at the Salzburg Global Seminar in American Studies.



Venues

TU Dortmund University International Meeting Center (IBZ) Emil-Figge-Str. 59 44227 Dortmund	University Duisburg-Essen Casino – Campus Essen Reckhammerweg 3 45141 Dortmund
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How To Get There

Dortmund by local public transport (recommended):
Take the S1 (every twenty minutes, either from Düsseldorf or Dortmund main station) and get off at the stop "Dortmund Universität". Get out of the station, walk up the stairs and keep left. Walk to the bridge, go down the stairs, turn right and continue towards the traffic light on Emil-Figge-Str./ Vogelpothsweg. Take the left in the junction and walk about 200m along Emil-Figge-Str. until you see a big red building on the right-hand side of the street. This is the Internationales Begegnungszentrum (IBZ).

Dortmund by car:
The campus of the TU Dortmund is situated between to the motorway exits "Dorstfeld" and "Barop/ Universität," close to intersection where the Sauerlandlinie A 45 (Frankfurt-Dortmund) crosses the Ruhrschnellweg B 1 / A 40. The best motorway exit you find on the B 1 / A 40 is "Dortmund-Barop." There are signs at both exits leading you to the university. There are several parking options either at Vogelpothsweg underneath the Mensa, on the opposite side of Emil-Figge-Str. 50, or directly in front of the IBZ at the roadside (limited).

Essen by local public transport (recommended):
Once you arrive to the Essen train station, walk down to the lower floor, where you'll find the subway and tramline tracks. Take the tramline 101 or 105 from track 1, direction Borbeck or Frintrop. Get off at Rheinische Platz, which is the second stop.
When you get off the tram, you'll see an escalator on your left side. At the end of the escalator turn left again into Rheinische Platz and walk a couple of minutes along Gladbecker Str. (the large road with possibly a lot of traffic). You will cross Universitätsstraße and pass the main University building to your left. Continue for one minute until you find Reckhammerweg – the next street on your left-hand side. Turn left into Reckhammerweg and then left again into the university area. You'll find yourself in a little internal "square." The Casino is right there.

Organizing Team (in alphabetical order)

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Senior Experts

Julia Leyda | Sophia University, Tokyo

Julia Leyda teaches North American literature (20th- and 21st-century), culture, and cinema to British and American literature majors at Sophia University in Tokyo. For her sabbatical year from April 2013 - March 2014, in Berlin, she is working on a monograph on representations of financialization, debt, and the home in the US real estate bubble, under the working title "'A Huge Mistake': At Home with Financialization in Recessionary US Screen Culture." Other current projects include three edited collections now in preparation: one with Diane Negra called "Extreme Weather and Global Media"; another, tentatively entitled "An Indelible Mark: Women in the Work of Todd Haynes", with Theresa Geller; and one with Shane Denson on the post-cinematic. Her edited collection of interviews with Todd Haynes for the University Press of Mississippi's *Conversations with Filmmakers* series is in press now.

Mita Banerjee | Johannes Gutenberg University, Mainz

Mita Banerjee is Professor and Chair of American Studies (19th to 21st century) with an emphasis on contemporary American literature and culture as well as transnational American studies at Johannes Gutenberg University, Mainz. In 2013, Mita Banerjee published *Color Me White: Naturalism/Naturalization in American Literature* which explores the intersections between naturalism and naturalization at the turn of the 20th century. Among her recent publications are *Ethnic Ventriloquism: Literary Minstrelsy in Nineteenth-Century American Literature* (2008) and the edited volume *Virtually American? Denationalizing North American Studies* (2009). Her main areas of research are the American renaissance, naturalism, ethnic American literatures, life writing, critical race theory, whiteness studies, South Asian diasporic film, and Bollywood cinema.

Notes

Mita Banerjee

Barbara Buchenau

Torben Danneil

Kornelia Freitag

Walter Grünzweig

Randi Gunzenhäuser

Jens Gurr

Julia Leyda

Martin-Schmeißer-Stiftung

Dietmar Meinel

Josef Raab

and all the other

helping hands...



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Thanks (in alphabetical order)...