

Zentrum für Theorie und Methodik
der Kulturwissenschaften



PODIUMSDISKUSSION



Race Discourses in the 21. Century

18. Juni 2009
16-18 Uhr

Diskutanten

Prof. Dr. Paula M. L. Moya, English, Stanford University

Prof. Dr. Ramón Saldívar, English and Comparative Literature, Stanford University

Dr. habil. Karen Schönwälder, Politikwissenschaft, Max-Planck-Institut zur
Erforschung multiethnischer und multireligiöser Gesellschaften

Prof. Dr. Frank Kelleter, Amerikanistik, Universität Göttingen

Moderation und Organisation

Dr. Barbara Buchenau, Amerikanistik



Ort der Veranstaltung

Tagungszentrum des
Lichtenbergkollegs
in der Historischen Sternwarte
der Universität Göttingen
Geismar Landstraße 11
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GEORG-AUGUST-UNIVERSITÄT GÖTTINGEN



Race Discourses in the 21. Century

A Panel Debate of the ZTMK, June 18th, 2009, 4-6 pm, Roter Saal, Lichtenberg-Kolleg
organized by Barbara Buchenau

This transatlantic panel debate will probe recent trends in the denaturalization of a shape-shifting ideological construct. Public events such as the election of U.S. president Barack Obama and the governmental redefinition of hitherto monistically defined societies such as Germany along multiethnic and multi-religious lines arguably indicate that we are moving into a postrace era. At the same time, however, multiple discursive and extra-discursive strategies of racial and ethnic profiling re-introduce and maintain the cultural encoding of (visible) difference, albeit on new grounds. This panel will tackle these contradictory new and old grounds from the vantage point of U.S. and German scholars who are situated in overlapping, yet distinctive traditions, but whose own critical stances do not run along a fault line established through language and history. German-language scholarship has taken the word “race” out of its vocabulary in order to better undo racism and its specific social, institutional, political, cultural, scholarly, and scientific dynamics. English-language scholarship has retained the word in order to better understand its pervasive impact on literally all spheres of human life. Each of these choices brings along its own blind spots. Taken together, these scholarly traditions open up critical perspectives on race discourses that are first and foremost informed by the material under review: Do the various formations of “race” disintegrate in the literary and medial world even as they are reinstated in social interactions?

Speakers:

Paula M. L. Moya:

Paula M. L. Moya is Associate Professor of English at Stanford University. Her research and teaching focus on race and ethnicity, feminist theory, multicultural pedagogy, and Latina/o and Chicana/o literature and identity. With the cultural psychologist Hazel Rose Markus she has recently edited an interdisciplinary volume on race entitled *Doing Race: 21 Essays for the 21st Century* (forthcoming from Norton in spring 2010). She is the author of *Learning from Experience: Minority Identities, Multicultural Struggles* (UC Press 2002), the co-editor with Michael Hames-García of *Reclaiming Identity: Realist Theory and the Predicament of Postmodernism* (UC Press 2000), and the co-editor with Linda Martín Alcoff, Michael Hames-García and Satya Mohanty of *Identity Politics Reconsidered* (Palgrave 2006). Her current book project is a scholarly study of literature written by women of color in the last three decades of the 20th century. Professor Moya is a founding organizer and coordinating team member of The Future of Minority Studies research project (FMS), an inter-institutional, interdisciplinary, and multigenerational research project facilitating focused and productive discussions about the democratizing role of minority identity and participation in a multicultural society. In 2000-01, Professor Moya received the Dean's Award for Distinguished Teaching, and in 2001-02 a Ford Foundation Postdoctoral Fellowship for Minorities. She served as Director of the Undergraduate Program of the Center for Comparative Studies in Race and Ethnicity (CCSRE), and Chair of the Comparative Studies in Race and Ethnicity (CSRE) major from 2002-2005, and was a Stanford Fellow from 2003-05. Professor Moya's recent work on race and ethnicity draws on the research of scholars from a wide range of disciplines to provide a new framing for an old and persistent problem. In her contribution, she will identify eight kinds of conversations U.S. Americans typically have about race, examine the assumptions on which the conversations are based, and suggest

some strategies for how citizens of a diverse democracy might be able to “do difference differently.”

Ramón Saldívar

Ramón Saldívar holds the Hoagland Family Chair in the School of Humanities and Sciences at Stanford University. He is the Milligan Family Fellow in Undergraduate Studies. His teaching and research focus on the areas of literary criticism and literary theory, the history of the novel, 19th and early 20th century literary studies, cultural studies, globalization and issues concerning transnationalism, and Chicano and Chicana studies. Apart from articles in *Modern Language Notes (MLN)*, *English Literary History (ELH)*, *Comparative Literature*, *Diacritics*, *Studies in the Novel*, *Narrative*, *American Literary History*, *The South Atlantic Quarterly*, *Modern Fiction Studies*, and other major journals, he is author of three books, including *Figural Language in the Novel: The Flowers of Speech from Cervantes to Joyce* (1984), a study of the authority of meaning in the novel, *Chicano Narrative: The Dialectics of Difference* (1990), a history of the development of Chicano narrative forms, and *The Borderlands of Culture: Américo Paredes and the Transnational Imaginary* (Duke University Press, 2006), a literary history of the aesthetics and epistemology of the borders as seen through the life and work of the poet, novelist, journalist, and ethnographer Américo Paredes. Professor Saldívar's new book in progress is entitled *The TransAmerican Novel: Form, Race, and Narrative Theory in the Americas*. His contribution is drawn from this work and will be concerned with the construction of a postrace debate in narrative texts: “Since the turn of the millennium, and especially since 9/11, a whole new generation of writers, born for the most part in the post-Civil Rights Era, have come to prominence. I use the works of these young new authors to illustrate the post-magical realism, post-postmodern, post-borderlands and neo-fantasy transnational turn in the postrace era of American literature. Outlining a paradigm that I term “historical fantasy,” I argue that in the twenty-first century, the relationship between race and social justice, race and identity, and indeed, race and history, has altered to such a degree that it requires of the new generation of writers to invent a new “imaginary” for thinking about the nature of a just society.”

Frank Kelleter:

Frank Kelleter is Chair of American Studies at Georg-August-Universität Göttingen. He is the editor of three collections on North American culture and has published articles in journals such as *Style*, *Journal of Literary Theory*, *Comparative Literature*, and *Early American Literature*. He is the author of three monographs: *Die Moderne und der Tod* (1997), a study of the death motif in modernist literature, focusing on Edgar Allan Poe, T. S. Eliot, and Samuel Beckett; *Con/Tradition: Louis Farrakhan's Nation of Islam, the Million Man March, and American Civil Religion* (2000); and *Amerikanische Aufklärung: Sprachen der Rationalität im Zeitalter der Revolution* (2002), a study of competing enlightenment discourses in eighteenth-century America. His research is conducted from a perspective of literary and American studies, investigating race and ethnicity markers as functional elements in the semantics of American self-description. In *Amerikanische Aufklärung*, he argues that enlightenment debates in the eighteenth century generate an autological discursive program, later defended by Jürgen Habermas as "non-compulsory compulsion of the better argument" ("der zwanglose Zwang des besseren Argumentes"). This communicative paradox was particularly consequential in the multicultural context of the British colonies; it endowed American culture with both a need for perpetual self-identification and a compelling sense of its own inevitability (or "self-evidence," in the words of the Declaration of Independence). With regard to race and other identity discourses in the United States, Kelleter traces the rhetorical and communicative practices that try to challenge, diversify, or transcend this historical construction, "America," while they tend to reproduce and expand its self-referential force.

Karen Schönwälder:

Karen Schönwälder is a Research Group Leader at the Max Planck Institute for the Study of Religious and Ethnic Diversity (Max-Planck-Institut zur Erforschung multireligiöser und multiethnischer Gesellschaften) in Göttingen, Germany. She previously worked at the Social Science Research Center (WZB) in Berlin where she was head of the “Arbeitsstelle Interkulturelle Konflikte und gesellschaftliche Integration”. Her current projects investigate issues of diversity and cohesion in European cities and the political incorporation of immigrants. She has published widely on migration and integration policies and processes, with a focus on Germany and Britain, e.g. “Immigrant Settlement Structures in Germany: General Patterns and Urban Levels of Concentration of Major Groups,” *Urban Studies* 46:7 (2009) (with Janina Söhn); “Reformprojekt Integration,” *Zukunftsfähigkeit Deutschlands. Sozialwissenschaftliche Essays*, ed. by Jürgen Kocka, Bonn, 2008, pp. 315-334; *European Encounters: Migrants, Migration and European Societies since 1945*, Aldershot: Ashgate 2003 (co-edited with Rainer Ohliger and Triadafilos Triadafilopoulos); *Einwanderung und ethnische Pluralität. Politische Entscheidungen und öffentliche Debatten in Großbritannien und der Bundesrepublik von den 1950er bis zu den 1970er Jahren*, Essen: Klartext, 2001; „Diversity und Antidiskriminierungspolitik,“ *Diversity Studies. Grundlagen und disziplinäre Ansätze*, ed. by Gertraude Krell, Barbara Riedmüller, Barbara Sieben, and Dagmar Vinz, Frankfurt/M.: Campus 2007, pp. 163-178. A detailed list of publications can be found at: www.mmg.mpg.de. In her contribution to the panel discussion, Karen Schönwälder will argue that a reintroduction of the term “race/Rasse” into the German (and European) vocabulary is not desirable. She will further illustrate how participants of the public debate in Germany refer to differences between population groups, drawing on her own research on debates in the guestworker period and on the political participation of immigrants in present-day Germany.

Moderation:

Barbara Buchenau

Barbara Buchenau is wissenschaftliche Assistentin / Assistant Professor of American Studies at Göttingen University. She is a fellow of the Dorothea-Erxleben-Program. Her teaching and research focus on Atlantic literary and cultural history, stereotyping, figurative language, and multicultural theories, practices, and pedagogies. She is the author of *Der frühe amerikanische historische Roman im transatlantischen Vergleich* (2002), an intertextual study of early nineteenth-century American historical fiction in the context of European and North American literature and history writing, the co-editor with Annette Paatz, Rolf Lohse, and Marietta Messmer of *Do the Americas Have a Common Literary History?* (2002), a volume of essays concerned with issues of literary decolonization in the Americas, and the co-editor with Marietta Messmer of *Intercultural Negotiations in the Americas and Beyond*, a special issue of the peer-reviewed electronic journal *CLCWeb* (2001) concerned with inter-American and transatlantic literary and cultural relations. Her book in progress analyzing the cultural, political, and aesthetic work of public Haudenosaunee figures is *Dreaming America, Ragging the Iroquois: Typecasting in the Atlantic World 1600-1930*.