

Home
Programme
CfP
Registration
How to get there
Accommodation
Google Maps

Programme

23-25 November 2017, TU Dortmund University

IBZ (Internationales Begegnungszentrum)

Thursday, 23 November 2017

from 12 noon **Registration**

13.00 – 15.00 **Meeting of the Board and Advisory Council of the German Association for the Study of British Cultures**

15.00 – 17:30 **Postgraduate Forum** (seminar room 2/3, International Meeting Centre)

- 15:00 Anna Schoon (Berlin): "European Literature in the Context of European Cultural Policy - The European Union Prize for Literature in the UK, Ireland and Germany"
- 15:30 Victoria Allen (Kiel): "North(East)ern Narratives: Forms of Northernness in the North-East of England Today"
- 16:00 Coffee Break
- 16:30 Susanne Köller (Konstanz): "Seriality, Event, (Post-?)Heritage - *Peaky Blinders* and Contemporary British Period Drama"
- 17:00 Jonathan A. Rose (Passau): "Trans*Narrative Interventions: Representation of Marginalised Genders Through Fan Narratives"

Opening: Welcome Addresses and Britcult Award

- 18.00 – 18.45
- Prof. Dr. Gabriele Sadowski, Vice-Rector for Research
 - Prof. Dr. Gerold Sedlmayr
 - Prof. Dr. Christian Huck, Chair of the German Association for the Study of British Cultures
 - Britcult Award

Keynote I: Grant Farred (Cornell University): "The Terror of Trump: Through the Body of the Child"

18.45 – 19.45

- *Chair: Cyprian Piskurek*
- Abstract

20.30 – 22.00

Conference Warming (Kumpel Erich, Kreuzstr. 87, 44137 Dortmund, www.kumpel-erich.de)

Friday, 24 November 2017

Panel 1: The Body Politic, Economy, History

9.30 – 10.30

- *Chair: Gerold Sedlmayr*

- Anne Enderwitz (FU Berlin): "Mercantilist Bodies: Consumption, Commerce and the Body Politic"
 - Abstract

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Anne Enderwitz (FU Berlin): "Mercantilist Bodies: Consumption, Commerce and the Body Politic "

Abstract

Early modern mercantilist discourses about the value of money and the balance of trade constructed an English body politic. Its health relied fundamentally on the government of the individual bodies, which constituted it. By the early seventeenth century, the time of the early mercantilist works, the unruly body in need of government and discipline was a pervasive topos in writings on the economy and politics. The body's destructive potential had to be contained by a patriarchal matrix of authority and subjection, which was effective at the level of the individual household and the commonwealth. In early mercantilist discourses, the connection between the body politic and individual bodies hinges on the problem of consumption: excessive bodies with an unquenchable thirst for luxury goods were seen as a threat to the body politic – they impoverished England's coffers. The excessive appetite for luxury wares was gendered: as women are subject to their desires for costly apparel and food, they pose the greatest risk to the domestic economy. Yet the problem of immoderate consumption was also entangled with xenophobic discourses, which opposed healthy and necessary domestic products with superfluous and degenerate foreign goods. "

Engaged in the project of nation-building, mercantilist and other writers of the early modern period attended to the individual body as a political

problem and they subjected its appetites and desires to intense scrutiny. The paper wants to interrogate the emerging (early) modern subject in relation to mercantilist discourses and their construction of political bodies and of an English body politic. It seeks to show that this subject is, even in its very beginnings, marked by discourses on gender, desire and Englishness.

Close

- Natalie Roxburgh (Siegen): "Depoliticizing the Body Politic: Form, Disinterestedness, and Latour's 'Constitution'"
 - Abstract

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Natalie Roxburgh (Siegen): " Depoliticizing the Body Politic: Form, Distinterestedness, and Latour's 'Constitution' "

Abstract

A recent scholarly trend is that literary historians and critics of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries who once identified as historicist have turned to some version of formal criticism. Caroline Levine's *Forms* (2015) and Clifford Siskin's *Systems* (2016) are among the main works that have argued that it behooves the scholar who is interested in the social-historical moment to pay attention to form, not for its own sake but for political reasons. For Levine, this is because within her Foucauldian framework, forms provide an ordering principle or structure that is tied to political power. The same is true for Siskin insofar as his interest in early modern or Enlightenment technology led him from talking to a cultural concept of "encirclement" in his book with William Warner to writing a book on the structure of systems, literary and cultural. As historicist critics seem to have discovered power as a function of form, they have also turned to form in their study of culture. This turn has also produced new insights for understanding the concept of the body, whose form simultaneously constitutes and encloses, operating as a node in a network of power as well as containing networks.

This paper will look at one concept of the body in particular, the body politic, and argue that, unlike other bodies, modern discourses require this one to be depoliticized. This paper will use the body politic to contextualize this turn to form in scholarly discourses on the Enlightenment through Bruno Latour's concept of the "Constitution" in *We Have Never Been Modern* (1991) and *An Inquiry into Modes of Existence: An Anthropology of the Moderns* (2013). In particular, this paper will examine Hobbes's famous bodily personification of the Leviathan, an aggregation of individual interests that add up to a disinterested whole that is rendered as a body. This depoliticized body, I will suggest, is a foundational myth tied to the social part of Latour's "Constitution." This theoretical frame will then be used to contextualize

the formal force of disinterested representation, literary and otherwise.

Close

10.30 – 11.15 **Coffee Break, incl. launch of student poster presentations**

Panel 2: Skin and Tactility in the 19th Century

11.15 – 12.15

■ *Chair: Sophia Möllers*

■ Ariane de Waal (Innsbruck): "'Skin-Tight Politics': Bodily Boundaries in 19th-Century Britain"

■ Abstract

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Ariane de Waal (Innsbruck): "'Skin-Tight Politics': Bodily Boundaries in 19th-Century Britain"

Abstract

It is impossible to determine where a body begins and ends without touching (on) the skin. As the fragile and at least partially permeable boundary between 'inside' and 'outside', the skin has attracted much attention in the field of cultural studies since Claudia Benthien's seminal work on the topic (1999). In spite of the growing number of publications that interrogate the semantic, symbolic, and ontological status of skin in Western cultures (and sometimes beyond), the rich interrelations between dermatological discourse and cultural understandings as well as literary representations of skin in concrete historical and social settings still remain somewhat under-researched.

This paper probes the potential of "a skin-tight politics" by mobilising an approach to Victorian corporeality "that takes as its orientation not the body as such, but the fleshy interface between bodies and worlds" (Ahmed and Stacey 2001, 1). Departing from the rapid proliferation of dermatological knowledge starting around 1845, I will trace the cross-fertilisation between medical, popular, and literary conceptions of skin. Taking up the conference convenors' suggestion to historicise the becoming of the body, the paper will enquire how Victorian subjects came to inhabit and mediate a body whose outer tissue became the subject of scrutiny: how does the newly formed notion of skin as a cleansing agent correlate with collective notions of purity and transparency? To what extent do the widely disseminated instructions on cosmetics and skin care translate into an ethical imperative of the care of the self (cf. Foucault 1997)?

Besides drawing on dermatological and newspaper sources, this paper will use George Eliot's *Middlemarch* (1871-72) as a case study in order to begin addressing these larger questions. The novel aptly illustrates the centrality of figurations of the human skin as a porous bodily boundary and reflective surface for cultural constructions of embodied (inter-)subjectivity. As my reading will suggest, it is primarily on and through the skin that Victorian bodies 'emit' gendered, racial, classed, and age-specific meanings.

Close

- Monika Class (Mainz): "George Eliot's Tactile Encounters in *Felix Holt, the Radical*"
 - Abstract

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Abstract

The skin is one of the sensory organs capable of double sensation. Troubling the distinction between inside and outside, subject and object, the skin is profoundly relational. This paper proposes a contribution to the conference discussion of *gendered bodies* in 19th-century British literary and scientific culture. The analysis of the metaphoric and psychic function of skin will draw on Didier Anzieu's psychoanalytical theory of the 'skin ego', which distinguishes between eight psychic functions (maintenance, containment, protection, individuation, intersensoriality, sexualisation, recharging and inscription). Focusing on various forms of the cutaneous function of protection, the paper examines the sensory role of skin in the decline and renewal of female bodies in one of George Eliot's novels in the context of contemporary physiology of touch as well as gender segregation. The paper contends that the interiorisation of touch plays a crucial role in George Eliot's *Felix Holt, the Radical* (1866). The tactile perspective introduces the reader to Mrs Transome's tragic decline at the beginning of the novel. When she clasps her son Harold after years of separation, the embrace solicits the 'presentiment of powerlessness ... to be gently thrust aside as a harmless elderly woman' (Ch. I, *Felix Holt*). The novel compares Mrs Transome's infantilisation with the degeneration of a tall woman into a crouching mammal and then an eel that cannot escape skinning. Even the climax of the novel transmits a psychic function of the skin: the heroine's renunciation of wealth and social status is achieved when Esther undresses and caresses Mrs Transome. The act of removing the matron's attire makes Esther decide to save her own skin. This reading of Eliot's novel suggests that cutaneous perceptions can be part of female renewal and self-affirmation.

Close

Lunch Break

12.15 – 13.45 **Meeting of the Editors, Editorial Committee and Advisory Board of the *Journal for the Study of British Cultures***

Panel 3: Utopian Versus Monstrous Bodies

13.45 – 15.15

■ *Chair: Sarah Neef*

■ Robert Troschitz (Dresden): "Perfect Worlds Need Perfect Bodies"

■ Abstract

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Robert Troschitz (Dresden): "Perfect Worlds Need Perfect Bodies"

Abstract

If asked what a perfect world might look like, one would probably not think of a world full of impaired, sick, old or indeed ugly people. Instead, one would most likely imagine a world occupied by able, healthy, youthful and beautiful bodies. Such a link between the ideal society and bodily perfection is nothing that is particular to our own age and culture. For centuries, writings such as Thomas More's *Utopia* (1516) or William Morris's *News from Nowhere* (1890) have envisioned utopias in which not only economic, social and political misery would be overcome but in which the human body could reach perfection.

As utopias present alternative societies and provide a critical view upon existing ones, they can offer valuable insights into shifting social desires and struggles. Focusing on the works of Thomas More, Francis Bacon, Edward Bellamy, William Morris, Ernest Callenbach and others, my paper investigates the role and function of the human body within this utopian tradition. Thus, I examine the status and the value that the body has been assigned within these utopias and ask what kind of body has been regarded as desirable. In a second step, I analyse the different means that have been suggested for producing and policing the utopian body as well as the measures that have been proposed to cope with the 'failing', that is the imperfect, ageing, ill and eventually dying body. By doing so, I not only show how understandings and ideals of the body have altered over time, but I argue that questions of the body are central to the politics of utopia and constitute one of utopia's fundamental problems.

Close

■ Gero Guttzeit (Gießen): "Invisible Monsters: Political Recognition, Monstrous Bodies, and Processes of Invisibilisation"

■ Abstract

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Gero Guttzeit (Gießen): " Invisible Monsters: Political Recognition, Monstrous Bodies, and Processes of Invisibilisation"

Abstract

This paper deals with the body of the invisible monster and its politics. In the wake of Ralph Ellison's novel *Invisible Man* (1952), discourses of invisibility have gained an enormous political momentum when it comes to the (self-)description of social minorities and their subjects' bodies. In literary and cultural theory, the figure of invisibility is increasingly being employed to understand the disenfranchisement of certain groups of subjects (Král 2014, Pietrzak-Franger 2017). Invisibility is used by Axel Honneth to define social recognition "because it indirectly reveals what must be added to the perception of a person [...] in order to make it into an act of recognition" (2001: 111). As such, invisibility matters for what Judith Butler suggests we call political "recognizability": "the general terms, conventions, and norms [which craft] a living being into a recognizable subject" (2009: 4-5). Based on such concepts, I argue, we should construct a general theory of the invisibilisation of the subject: of unseeing (China Miéville) certain bodies.

In this paper, I will confront theories of political invisibilisation with the cultural figure of the monster, focusing specifically on the (paradoxical) invisible monster. Invisible monsters such as H. G. Wells's *Invisible Man*, Bram Stoker's *Invisible Giant*, or the Hollywood versions of the *Invisible Woman*, *Hollow Man* and *Predator* are paradoxical, because monstrosity normally depends on visualising abject, uncanny, or grotesque bodies, on visibilising otherness. A similar paradox applies to ideas about such figures as the psychopathic killer and the terrorist sleeper, whose outward appearances do not show their monstrosity. I will discuss the tension between the ideological strategies of invisibilising and visibilising the body, as they define the invisible monster in both fictional and factual discourses, to draw out some of the uses of invisibility for thinking the politics of the body.

Close

- Anna Berger (Tübingen): "Guilty Desire: The Male Sexual Body in the Ghost Stories of the Victorian Period"
 - Abstract

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Abstract

In the golden age of the ghost story, which began in the early Victorian period and ran until World War I, the ghost story often served as a means to address uncomfortable topics more directly than could have been done in more realistic fiction. Women writers used the genre in order to criticise their gender role restrictions. For this reason, critics have often associated the ghost story with the feminine. However, only little attention has been paid to how the genre deals with contemporary gender role restrictions confronting men. In the proposed paper, I will argue that the ghost story genre was not only used in order to question and blur female gender boundaries but also dealt with the male sexual body. One of the issues apparent in the ghost stories published in the Victorian and Edwardian periods is the fin-de-siècle homosexual panic.

The male homosexual body became a political issue in 1885 when the Labouchère Amendment to the Criminal Law Amendment Act made gross indecency a crime in the United Kingdom. Michel Foucault has argued in his *History of Sexuality* that the appearance of the homosexual panic in the late-nineteenth century inevitably invoked the reverse discourse and thus helped rather than hindered the articulation of the male homosexual body. In the proposed paper, I will illustrate that the ghost story, which was an immensely popular genre in the nineteenth century, was part of this discourse.

However, it is not only same-sex desire that comes to light in these tales. Some stories also reveal men's longing for the sexually transgressive, "forbidden" woman. Thus, the moment of haunting provides a space for expressing a more ambiguous sexuality which had to be repressed in the patriarchal society.

Close

15.15 – 15.45

Coffee Break

Keynote 2: Imogen Tyler (Lancaster University): "Deportable and Disposable Lives: Brexit and the Expulsive Power of the Illiberal State"

- *Chair: Mark Schmitt*
- Abstract

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15.45 – 16.45

Imogen Tyler (Lancaster University): "Deportable and Disposable Lives: Brexit and the Expulsive Power of the Illiberal State"

Abstract

"If you believe you're a citizen of the world, you're a citizen of nowhere. You don't understand what the very word "citizenship" means." (Theresa May, 15th October 2016)

Since the Brexit referendum result on June 23rd 2016, British newspapers have been filled with stories about EU nationals who are long-term residents of the UK, often married to and parents of UK citizens, and who, on application for citizenship, have been told to leave the country. These newspaper stories have tended to feature middle-class EU nationals and are often written from a position of unchecked privilege, in seeming disbelief that (white) Europeans might be (or become) subject to Britain's deeply illiberal immigration regime; the same racist "detention and deportation factory", that is, which has terrorized, incarcerated and ejected black, brown, non-European bodies for decades. Nevertheless, the extension of these punitive regimes to EU residents vividly illustrates the extent to which, 'Brexit means Brexit means go home' (Piacentini 2016). If the fate of the estimated 800,000 EU citizens in Britain remains uncertain, what we can say with certainty is that Brexit marks the emergence of a more authoritarian, nationalistic form of government in Britain. One of the central characteristics of post-Brexit Britain is the 'ever-intensifying magnitude of deportation' as a practice of sovereign power (Peutz and De Genova, 2010: 7). As a mechanism of government, deportation functions symbolically as a "tough" demonstration of sovereignty, and is used in policy as a means of crafting politically useful divisions between citizens and non-citizens. Crucially, deportation doesn't seek only to redistribute people along the lines of citizenship to allotted national spaces; indeed, its primary aim has been to *make people deportable* in order, for example, to better incorporate them within the state as placid, exploitable and precarious labour (see De Genova 2010). Deportation also functions to demarcate the limits of state protection, and is employed as a threat and warning in order to manage citizens "at home". Indeed, as this paper details, deportation regimes are as involved in the production of "disposable subjects" *within* the state as with the policing of migrant lives.

This paper develops and extends insights from the critical literature on deportation regimes to consider the emerging landscape of post-Brexit British Society. It focuses throughout on Theresa May, and what her promotion from deportation-enthusiast Home Secretary to 'Protectionist' Brexit Prime-Minister signals, in terms of the increasing centrality of deportability as a mode of government and mechanism of social control over both citizen and non-citizen populations. It is the argument of this paper that thinking with and through deportation can further understandings of the relationship between the precarity of migrant lives and the intensification of 'legalised expulsions' "at home" (Walters, 2002). To this end, it tracks the relationship between deportability and 'disposability' (see Khanna, 2009) by examining how 'post-welfare' policies increasingly involve internal displacements and expulsions: from state-led practices of gentrification which expel social housing tenants from affluent cities, to punitive welfare-regimes which immobilise disabled peoples within their homes (Peck, 2009). By emphasizing the dual axis of deportability and disposability this paper seeks to address the intertwined classed and racialized character of emergent authoritarian neoliberal state forms in Europe and beyond.

Close

17.00 – 19.00 **General Meeting**

20.00 – 22.00 **Conference Dinner** (Marples in der Alten Mühle, Roßbachstr. 34, 44369 Dortmund, marples-dortmund.de)

Saturday, 25 November 2017

Panel 4: Food and Consumption

9.30 – 10.30

■ *Chair: Marie Hologa*

- Christian Huck (Kiel): "Eating Bodies and the Question of Control"
 - Abstract

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Christian Huck (Kiel): "Eating Bodies and the Question of Control"

Abstract

Who eats? Every-body, one is tempted to answer, as food consumption is surely one of the most common, and popular human activities. By eating, especially by eating other, non-human bodies, humans demonstrate their final “dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over every living thing that moveth upon the earth.” (Genesis, 1.28) However, on closer view, it might not be us who eat, but every body. When it comes to eating, that is, the closest connection “between the mouth and the anus”, we might be nothing but “mouth machines” (Noëlle Châtelet): while we might still imagine ourselves to be, at least to a certain degree, in control both of what and when we eat, and also of the moment digestion comes to an end, the procession/processing between mouth and anus is quite literally taken out of our hands. Eating, in this sense, makes obvious that ‘we’ are not only ourselves, but complex assemblages of various agencies, of desires, needs, drives, organs, bacteria, chemicals etc. Most importantly, in the context of the political body, “that basic ingestion forces us to think of our bodies as complex assemblages connected to a wide range of other assemblages.” (Elspeth Probyn) By the most common activity of eating, we, and our bodies, become part of economic, bio-political, discursive and other networks, “alimentary assemblages”. How we make sense of eating, thus, structures our relation to the world that surrounds us. Interestingly, in all of today’s media’s obsession with food, the act of eating is conspicuously absent, and not only the abject parts of ingestion and digestion. Representations of food generally concentrate on the process of food preparation, its presentation and economic consumption: hardly ever, we see food entering a mouth. In my presentation, I want to demonstrate how the repression of the act of eating is transformed into an articulation of control (of the other, of a gendered, sexualised, racialized body) in an episode of the TV-show

Jamie's *Great Britain*. This will then be contrasted with the YouTube show "My Drunk Kitchen" where the loss of control vis-à-vis food leads to a different conception of human corporeality, and different politics.

Close

- Pia Balsmeier(Köln): "Parasites, Cannibals, Predators: The Exploitation and Consumption of Bodies in David Mitchell's *Cloud Atlas*"
 - Abstract

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Pia Balsmeier(Köln): "Parasites, Cannibals, Predators: The Exploitation and Consumption of Bodies in David Mitchell's *Cloud Atlas*"

Abstract

In David Mitchell's speculative novel *Cloud Atlas*, bodies are presented as a site of exploitation and oppression – atrocities which are expressed in their figural as well as partly literal treatment as consumer products in the novel's six stories. There are bodies which are parasitically consumed by alleged friends, whose only aim is their personal enrichment; there are the servile bodies of underpaid workers who run the wheels in the underbelly of Western capitalism; the senile bodies of the elderly who are figuratively cannibalized by the welfare system and greedy relatives; and the future bodies of female clone workers, who are produced to serve food as well as ultimately serve as food for upper-class consumers. In his tour de force through the world's ages and places, from east to west and from the past to the far future, *Cloud Atlas* detects the human drive towards exploitation and consumption of weaker bodies as the manifestation of an anthropocentric universal in our ways of interacting with the world. In establishing a connection to the matters of producing and consuming food in the moments of inter-species relations, the human appears in Mitchell's novel as the insatiable predator, whose own sustenance is the highest priority, requiring the commodification and consumption of other bodies in turn. By analysing the recurrence of exploitative motifs in the depiction of societies and political systems in *Cloud Atlas*, this paper aims at demonstrating that the novel establishes these traits as fundamental elements of human nature, and that their negotiation in the stories raises the awareness for the necessity of ethical frameworks, especially with regard to the human ways of relating to (other) bodies. It is going to be shown that the novel displays a counter-movement to this Western epistemology of rapacity and greed in the stories themselves as well as in the structure that determines them – a counter-movement which plays out as a form of symbolic regurgitation, contrasting the iterative acts of predation that underlie each of the stories. It is by means of this specific structure, I argue, that Mitchell's novel raises our awareness for a transformation in our ways of conceptualizing bodies – not as a site to

exploit and consume, but as equally legitimized 'other' selves in this world.

Close

10.30 – 11.00

Coffee Break

Panel 5: Automata and Cloned Bodies

11.00 – 12.00

■ *Chair: Mark Schmitt*

■ Philip Jacobi (Passau): "Dreaming of Electric Women: The Politics of the Gynoid Body"

■ Abstract

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Philip Jacobi (Passau): "Dreaming of Electric Women: The Politics of the Gynoid Body"

Abstract

Depictions of robots in both early nineteenth and twentieth century media serve as striking metaphors for the sweeping changes during these periods: Olimpia, Spallanzani's mechanical ersatz daughter in E.T.A. Hoffman's short story *Der Sandmann* (1816), passively laughs at those who have not yet realised the end of the Romantic Age and the beginning of the Machine Age. Fritz Lang's *Maria*, the first mechanical human ever to be depicted on screen in the film *Metropolis* (1927), signifies how the Mechanical Age will slowly turn us into hollow, automatized bodies detached from all spirit by way of the conveyor belt. In fact, the idea of mechanical women is much deeper: Ancient Greece already had Pygmalion's Galatea and the mechanical handmaids of smithing god Hephaestus. A common thread in these depictions, however, is the gendered framing of these creations as female: as such, they are mostly passive bodies, made to be looked at and to be controlled by men. This ascription is still valid today: most instances of female automata, whether they are clockwork dolls, robot nannies, or cyborg assassins, cannot shake the aspect of eroticisation of a physically gendered passivity.

Yet, several contemporary depictions of female robots (or gynoids) break with this inherent fetishisation: Ava, from Alex Garland's directorial debut *Ex_Machina* (2016), singer Janelle Monáe's gynoid persona Cindi Mayweather, which she explores in her album suite *Metropolis: Suite I (The Chase)* (2007), *The ArchAndroid* (2010), and *The Electric Lady* (2013), and B2, protagonist of the videogame *NiER: Automata* (2017) by Yoko Taro – they all aim to subvert 'traditional' conceptions of the female robot. The gynoid body, as I want to argue in my paper, fathoms the uncanny valley in-between the human and inhuman, visualises the strategies of the hyperreal and, when viewed against the backdrop of its

historical formation, is at once a powerful signifier of performative gender inscription, an ambiguous marker of subject-object relations, a canvas for desire, and a reminder of technology's performative potential as part of what Donna Haraway calls the "needed political work" ("A Cyborg Manifesto") of cyborg mythologisation.

Close

- Sabrina Sontheimer (LMU München): "The Representation of Cloned Bodies in Contemporary Films"
 - Abstract

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Abstract

In the twenty years since the successful cloning of the domestic sheep Dolly in 1996, the topic of cloned human bodies has been negotiated in contemporary cinema and TV in several ways. Questions of morality, identity, individuality, natural law, free will and the right to genetic exceptionalism as well as to control one's own body are central themes, works like *The 6th Day* (2000), *Star Wars Episode II: Attack of the Clones* (2002), *Blueprint* (2003), *The Island* (2005), *Moon* (2009), *Never Let Me Go* (2010), *Oblivion* (2013), *Orphan Black* (2013), or *The Reconstruction of William Zero* (2014) raise and discuss. These films do not only open up an imaginative space in which human cloning can be acted out and 'tested' on safe fictional grounds, but thematise moral issues which are not as remote from today's Western societies as it seems, when in these interpretations the cloned body is considered as a cipher of other, everyday matters. On the surface, in these films the clones usually serve as a result and implication of a society's wealth that are exploited to ensure people's health, prosperity and well-being. The clones are utilised as suppliers of spare organs, surrogates for dead people, or expendable soldiers serving as 'cannon fodder'. On a symbolic level however, the clones stand in for any other kind of 'bodies' which are commonly preyed upon to secure the affluence of Western civilisation: analogies can be drawn to current practices of large-scale livestock farming, the economic exploitation of third world countries, the commercial utilisation of the environment. The dystopian fictions hold up a mirror to contemporary audiences to raise a moral debate about where the limits of taking advantage of the 'other' are when it comes to secure one's own well-being. In doing this, the films gain political significance as they participate in topical discourses on identity, morality, us vs. them, as well as social, economic or cultural power relations. This paper explores the representation of the cloned body in a selection of these films from the 21st century to uncover symbolic implications relevant to current political and cultural discourses.

Close

12.00 – 13.00 **Lunch Break**

Panel 6: Sexualised, Violated, and Ascetic Bodies

13.00 – 14.30

■ *Chair: Cyprian Piskurek*

■ Katharina Engel and Andreas Büchler (Bonn): "'Not Everybody's Doing It': Representations of Asexuality in Contemporary Performance Poetry"

■ Abstract

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Katharina Engel and Andreas Büchler (Bonn): "'Not Everybody's Doing It': Representing Asexuality in Contemporary Performance Poetry"

Abstract

In a reading of her poem “asexual,” British poet-performer Lucy challenges her YouTube channel audience: “I am not ‘a-typical’, I am a typical human being.” Highlighting the marginalisation and oppression, mostly by means of pathologisation, that “a person who does not experience sexual attraction” (AVEN) experiences in our (hyper)sexualised society, Lucy’s poem will be the starting point for a brief introduction to asexuality, including the most common misconceptions about this sexual orientation. While research has mostly been done by psychologists and sociologists (cf. for example Bogaert 2004, Brotto & Yule 2011, and Scherrer 2008), “asexuality has yet to receive sustained scholarly interest in the humanities, particularly in literary studies” (Hanson 2014, 344). In an attempt to move into that direction, our talk is taking the discourse about asexual identities and how asexual voices help to “identify the mechanisms of compulsory sexuality” (Cerankowski & Milks 2014, 13) into the field of contemporary spoken word, and more particularly into videos of poetry performances that are distributed online. This focus on the virtual ‘stage’ reflects the importance of the internet as a safe space for asexual communities, especially since self-identified asexuals often experience marginalisation even within queer communities.

Besides Lucy’s reading of “asexual,” we will analyse Kit Tempo’s recorded Vancouver Poetry Slam performance of “Solve for (a)sexual” to compare themes and contrast communication strategies used by the performers to make their audiences “think anew about what is so radical (or not) about having sex (or not)” (Cerankowski & Milks 2014, 3). Both performances can be seen to work towards the political goals of “creating public acceptance and discussion of asexuality and facilitating the growth of an asexual community,” as formulated by the Asexual Visibility & Education Network (AVEN), one of the largest Web communities for asexuals and

non-asexual allies. However, we will also ask, in line with Cerankowski, whether these performances may be regarded as spectacles, “mak[ing] the [asexual] subject available as a fetish object,” “provid[ing] the illusion of knowing and understanding” (Cerankowski 2014, 154). Drawing on Przybylo’s work who conceptualises asexuality as a strategy of resistance against the ‘sexual world,’ we aim to spark a discussion about these poetic representations of asexual identities and whether they “transform sexusociety from within, through suggesting that alternative repetitions are possible and through destabilizing those repetitions that have become normalized” (Przybylo 2011, 14).

Close

- Christian Lenz (Dortmund): "Darkness in Pornotopia: The Raped Body at the Contested Threshold between Fantasy and Reality"
 - Abstract

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Christian Lenz (Dortmund): "Darkness in Pornotopia: The Raped Body at the Contested Threshold between Fantasy and Reality"

Abstract

When watching pornography, one enters a world that has its own rules: pornotopia. This sexual land of Cockaigne grants the best, the longest, the most fulfilling sex with the most perfect bodies that are always at hand and willing. Pornotopia is clearly a utopian world. However, reality always looks different, rendering pornotopia a Foucauldian heterotopia of illusion as well as compensation that has repercussions for (political) realities.

My talk will focus on an example from the realm of pornography that places the body on the dividing line between fantasy and reality. In India, videos of gang rapes of women are on the rise and have become a testament to a misogynist ideology. The Indian government is constantly under pressure – from both Indians and other countries – to go against this form of pornography and, indeed, Modi’s government has already a track record of battling pornographic internet pages. Yet ‘rape’ is a famous trope in consensual pornography and it is debatable whether a ban such as the UK’s in 2016 can help to prevent the exploitation of bodies. The aim of the talk is to prove that the otherworldly properties of pornography help to disguise sexual acts which are considered shameful or erroneous in geopolitical reality by recurring back to the heterotopic qualities of this threshold. Yet, what happens when the rape filmed is not an acted consensual performance but an act of violence? The question remains: where is this threshold and how much political influence needs to be exercised to construct it?

Rape pornography is a prime example for frictions and transgressions

that question the construction of bodies and agency. The body in pornography has to be understood as a political battlefield since it becomes the space where discourses of power and identity are challenged and negotiated.

Close

- Johannes Schlegel (Würzburg): "Ascetic Bodies and the Care of the Self in Contemporary Culture"
 - Abstract

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As cultural technique, asceticism seems to provoke ambivalent reactions in contemporary culture. On the one hand, it is denounced as a historically outdated and potentially hypocritical exercise. At the same time, it is celebrated as an adequate reaction to contemporary problems including overstimulation, cultural acceleration, and ubiquitous (material) affluence. One of the possible reasons for this ambivalence can be seen in different genealogies of the concept. In addition to an understanding of abstinence that has been predominantly shaped by the Christian church, a different tradition stemming from antiquity can be identified as well. Here, asceticism is positively described as an aesthetic practice that aims at the creation and the development of a self – a practice, that is, which Foucault famously and influentially describes as ‘technology of the self’.

According to Foucault, the body becomes the preeminent site where the ‘care of the self’ is acted out and exercised. Therefore, ascetic bodies are political bodies par excellence, because the subject's pursuit of perfectibility aims at establishing political responsibility for both ‘oikos’ and ‘polis’ by means of its self-control. This paper, however, seeks to argue that our contemporary culture not only witnesses a renaissance of ascetic practices in the form of varied bodily regimes from dietary disciplines for the purpose of health and beauty (‘clean eating’) to physical training and even our relation to everyday objects, but appropriates it according to a neoliberal zeitgeist and its ethics. Here, the ascetic body becomes the medium of an economic mode that organises production/productivity by means of negation.

Moreover, this paper is interested in performances of precarious ascetic bodies that not so much resist or subvert said logic, but, in a way, seem to ‘queer’ it. Illustrating this rationale, the paper investigates notions and strategies of the queer ascetic body in Roxane Gay's autobiographical *Hunger: A Memoir of (My) Body*. By writing about her own “super morbidly obese” body (p. 12), her queer desire, and their entanglement, Gay

further complicates the relation between asceticism and ethics.

Close

14.30

End of Conference

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