

43<sup>rd</sup> International Conference  
of the Austrian Association for American Studies

# AMERICA THROUGH THE SMALL SCREEN

Television  
and Its  
Transformations

## KEYNOTE SPEAKERS

**Christopher Bigsby**  
University of East Anglia

**Amanda D. Lotz**  
University of Michigan

**Diane Negra**  
University College Dublin



## ABSTRACTS

**November 11 – 13, 2016, Innsbruck**

Organized by the Department of American Studies,  
University of Innsbruck.

# KEYNOTE LECTURES

Friday, November 11, 15:00–16:30

## Christopher Bigsby, "America on Television: Television on America" (Kaiser-Leopold-Saal)

**Christopher Bigsby** is Professor of American Studies at the School of Art, Media and American Studies at the University of East Anglia. He is a Fellow of the Royal Society of Arts and the Royal Society of Literature and has won many prestigious prizes, among them the Barnard Hewitt Award for Outstanding Research in Theatre History and the American Studies Network Prize. Prof. Bigsby has published about fifty books, including eight novels, and has also worked extensively on BBC television and radio programs. He is best known for his work on American theater, especially his groundbreaking publications on Arthur Miller, such as his two-volume biography *Arthur Miller: 1915-1962* (2008) and *Arthur Miller: 1962-2005* (2011). He most recently published *Viewing America: Twenty-First-Century Television Drama* (2013) and the novel *Flint* (2015).

Saturday, November 12, 09:00–10:30

## Diane Negra, "Animality, Domesticity and Enterprise in *My Cat From Hell*" (HS 3)

In this talk I analyze a reality TV series for the way it reflects two coinciding phenomena: the elevation of animals to a new domestic status in which their needs and interests demand significant time, care and money, and the rise of male-fronted instructional lifestyle television. The commercial dimensions of what has been characterized as "America's hyper-profitable obsession with its dogs and cats" (Hartwell, "PetSmart's Goldmine") are apparent in dramatic sales rises of premium pet food, the dramatic growth of pet care and grooming industries and the expansion of care animals in the public sphere. Considering the ways in which we are now called upon to cultivate and monitor the emotional wellbeing of our pets and to take part in an animal-centered economy on their behalf, I turn to the example of Animal Planet's *My Cat From Hell* (2011-). This series emphatically re-positions cat care and empathy as congruent with masculinity while demonstrating, as I will argue, the relevance of hipster entrepreneurialism to the vastly expanded pet economy.

A program like *My Cat From Hell* falls into the capacious category of "lifestyle television" enumerated by Laurie Ouellette. She notes that "[t]he lifestyling of television has occurred alongside a rising impulse to attach celebrity to occupations that have not historically been part of the entertainment complex" (Ouellette, *Lifestyle TV*, 41). In this series and others we may take note of instructional lifestyle television's foregrounding of an expert (here animal behaviorist Jackson Galaxy) whose prowess may not have qualified for recognition in previous eras. Alongside somewhat comparable figures such as Guy Fieri of *Diners, Drive-Ins and Dives*, Galaxy performs a new mode of masculinity that staves off the threat of dispossession by monetizing skills that previously had little to no marketplace value. These aging hipsters present as former slackers reconciling themselves to the economic imperatives of the market economy at midlife.

**Diane Negra** is Professor of Film Studies and Screen Culture and Head of Film Studies at University College Dublin. She is the author of *Off-White Hollywood: American Culture and Ethnic Female Stardom* (2001) and *What a Girl Wants?: Fantasizing the Reclamation of Self in Postfeminism* (2008), co-editor of *Interrogating Postfeminism: Gender and the Politics of Popular Culture* (2007), *In the Limelight and Under the Microscope: Forms and Functions of Female Celebrity* (2011), *Gendering the Recession: Media and Culture in an Age of Austerity* (2014), *Extreme Weather and Global Media* (2015), editor of *Old and New Media after Katrina* (2015), and most recently co-edited *The Aesthetics and Affects of Cuteness*, which will be published later this year. She is co-editor-in-chief of the journal *Television and New Media* and also serves on the Board of Console-ing Passions – International Conference on Television, Video, Audio, New Media, and Feminism.

**Saturday, November 12, 17:00–18:30**

**Amanda D. Lotz, “Understanding Creative Change: Why the ‘Distinction’ of 21<sup>st</sup> Century US Television?” (HS 3)**

The television series produced in the US in the early 21<sup>st</sup> century drew uncommon attention and prompted even those who had never deigned to acknowledge television to gush enthusiastically about its storytelling. Scholars have produced rich examinations of the cultural dimensions of the series of this era and encouraged formalist analyses of their “complexity.” But how and why did scripted US television series evolve so profoundly at the dawn of the 21<sup>st</sup> century? The talk identifies the industrial practices that propelled and challenged this change and examines how the conditions of creative workers adjusted alongside textual possibilities. Drawn from new research based on interviews and archival research, the talk mines the production histories of milestone series in this evolution to explain how shifting competitive norms produced textual innovation to provide a context for understanding the profound change of early 21<sup>st</sup> century US television.

**Amanda D. Lotz** is Professor of Communication Studies and Screen Arts and Cultures at the University of Michigan. Besides numerous journal articles, she is the author of *Redesigning Women: Television after the Network Era* (2006), *Cable Guys: Television and Masculinities in the Twenty-First Century* (2014), and co-authored *Television Studies* (2011) and *Understanding Media Industries* (2012). A revised second edition of her CHOICE Outstanding Academic Title award-winning book *The Television Will Be Revolutionized* was published in 2014. She is also the co-host of the Media Business Matters Podcast and serves on the editorial board of *Popular Communication: International Journal of Media and Culture*, *Media Industries Journal*, *Cinema Journal*, and *Feminist Media Histories*. From 2013 to 2015 she received the Associate Professor Support Fund Award at the University of Michigan.

## PANELS

Saturday, November 12, 11:00–12:30

### Panel I: Animals in American Television I (Room 50101)

#### **Stefan Brandt (University of Graz), "Political Animals: *Mister Ed* and the American Civil Rights Movement"**

Animal TV shows may influence and transform viewers' attitudes regarding social issues. While *Flipper* (NBC, 1964–1967) politicized a whole generation of young consumers, laying the ground for the 'dolphin-safe tuna' movement of the 1990s, other TV shows, such as *Daktari* (CBS, 1966–1969), have directed our attention to the need for protection of wildlife. These shows use anthropomorphized animals in order to not simply tell their stories, but to engage audiences.

Since animals are "good to think," as anthropologist Claude Lévi-Strauss has provocatively suggested, they also constitute an important device in many television shows to convey ideas relevant to the human world. My paper will focus on one of the pioneering sitcoms of American television, the CBS-produced *Mister Ed* (1961–1966), and discuss its aesthetic strategies of politicization. Characterized as slightly misanthropic and often cynical, the show's talking horse Ed continually rejects established norms and frequently embarrasses his caretaker. In the course of the series, Mister Ed not only emulates Abe Lincoln in an attempt to free the disenfranchised, but also joins a group of beatniks to protest conformist tendencies in US society. Following a long tradition in animal fiction, the show thus exposes hierarchies and injustices in the human world by employing an animal as its chief focalizer.

When confronting the gaze of animals, historian John Berger maintains, we are looking "at something that has been rendered absolutely marginal." In various episodes of *Mister Ed*, the marginal looks back, inviting us to share this outside perspective, if only for the duration of 28 minutes.

#### **Brett Mills (University of East Anglia), "The Death and Resurrection of Brian Griffin"**

In November 2013, *Family Guy's* (Fox, since 1999) animated dog Brian was killed when he was run over by a car. The episode was received with outrage by fans, leading to a *change.org* petition with more than 95,000 signatures. Even though Brian was initially replaced by another dog, Vinny, he was brought back to life only two episodes later, returning the program to its established character dynamics. After the incident, *Family Guy's* creator, Seth MacFarlane, posted on Twitter, "Never take those you love for granted," adding, "I mean, you didn't really think we'd kill off Brian[,] did you? Jesus, we'd have to be fucking high."

My paper will explore the responses to the death and resurrection of Brian Griffin to examine the ways in which animal representations on popular American television are enmeshed within broader cultural understandings of nonhumans. In particular, it will argue that animal representation functions as an exemplar of, and contributor to, the work animals are required to carry out in American culture. As a character represented as an animal with human characteristics, Brian occupies a blurred position within representation, and the show's comedy often draws on assumptions about the differences between humans and animals for comic effect. This paper will explore this blurred categorization, arguing that such hybridity can be seen as evidence of both the porousness of species categories as well as their rigidity. Why, of all the characters, did the family's dog die; and what necessitated the eventual resurrection?

#### **Manuela Neuwirth (University of Graz), "The Alien Animal and the Human Alien: Anthropomorphizing the Extraterrestrial in *ALF* and *Star Trek*"**

Making meaning of human existence generally relies on the construction of binary opposites, defining what is through what it is not. The unstable distinction between animals and humans is a case in point, for "the generic notion of 'the animal' has provided modernity with a term against which to define its most crucial categories: 'humanity', 'culture', 'reason', and so on," as Philip Armstrong explains in *What Animals Mean in the Fiction of Modernity* (2008). It is this dependence on the establishment of an Other in the construction of the Self that binds the nonhuman animal and the human animal together at the same time as it sets them apart.

The answer to the question "what is 'human'?" therefore is "that which is not animal." In this rhetoric of definition by exclusion, "what is 'alien'?" could likewise be countered with "that which is not human." This reasoning establishes an intimate connection between aliens and animals, both representing the Other.

As an anthropocentric view governs both, an interesting complication of the issue arises when one considers the representation of alien-animal relations. American television of the recent past provides numerous examples of these interactions: *ALF's* (NBC, 1986–1990) culinary preference for cats and his exaggerated, stylized threats of the family cat Lucky became the established running joke of the show, disguising the fact that the likable alien is never shown eating a feline and actually grows to like the cat enough to question his alien instincts. *Star Trek: The Next Generation* (Paramount, 1987–1994) presents another, more unambiguously positive, emotional “alien”-cat relationship in the android Data and his pet Spot, while human-Vulcan hybrid Spock has fond memories of his pet *sehlat* – the Vulcan version of a sabertooth – named I-Chaya in the original *Star Trek* series (NBC, 1966–1969).

The present paper thus argues that the interaction with the nonhuman animal turns alien into human, adding another dimension to, and perpetuating the aforementioned separation of, animal and human through televisual texts.

## **Panel II: Remapping Crime Television in the Post-Network Era I (Room 50105)**

### **Brigitte Georgi-Findlay (TU Dresden), “The Marshal and the Sheriff: Western Crime Fighters in *Justified* and *Longmire*”**

The Western has returned to television screens in many guises, whether as a period drama (*Deadwood*, *Hell on Wheels*) or as a reference guide for scripting contemporary or post-apocalyptic masculinities (*Breaking Bad*, *The Walking Dead*).

This paper explores how *Justified* (FX, 2010-2015) and *Longmire* (A&E et al., 2012-present) create a contemporary, character-driven variation of the Western genre by blending it with the crime drama. With their protagonists, Marshal Raylan Givens and Sheriff Walter Longmire, they construct complex, troubled cowboy detectives burdened with emotional baggage and opting for unconventional ways of detecting crime: They both may bend the rules in the service of justice, and they both rely on local knowledge in particular regional contexts (Kentucky and Wyoming). The main focus of the paper will be laid on these constructions of cowboy masculinity in their engagements with particular variations of regional culture and regionally defined crime.

### **Jesus A. Gonzalez (Universidad de Cantabria, Spain), “‘Wiring’ *The Wire*: Transtextuality and Generic Affiliation in *The Wire*”**

*The Wire's* creator David Simon has repeatedly insisted that *The Wire* is neither a “cop” nor a “crime show” and has called it a “visual novel” and associated it with Greek tragedy instead: “We’ve basically taken the idea of Greek tragedy, and applied it to the modern city-state.” These associations have been contested by critics like Amanda Ann Klein and Linda Williams, who, while praising *The Wire* as an exceptional TV serial, reject its consideration as Greek tragedy and propose its analysis as television melodrama.

This paper will deal with the different transtextual layers in *The Wire*, from its obvious connections with cop shows, police procedurals or the hard-boiled detective novel, to its deeper associations with melodrama, going through the more or less veiled references to Dickens, the Greek tragedy, gangster films, western films and Edgar Allan Poe. Genette’s concept of transtextuality as “all that which puts one text in relation, whether obvious or concealed, with other texts” will be used, as well as the subtypes he developed (intertextuality, hypertextuality, metatextuality, paratextuality, and architextuality).

The analysis of transtextual references will also help us to reconsider the show’s features and its generic affiliation. I intend to engage in the debate initiated by Williams contrasting tragedy and melodrama in *The Wire*, and apply Jonathan Franzen’s concept of “tragic realism” (that he developed for authors like O’Connor or Fitzgerald, authors of fiction that “preserves access to the dirt behind the dream of Chosenness”). Ironically, this concept, which had been developed by Franzen in his essay “Perchance to Dream” trying to find “a reason to write novels” “in the age of images”, has been taken over by the small screen to offer one of the best analyses of contemporary life in urban America.

### **Evelyne Keitel (TU Chemnitz), “The Strange Case of Transforming *Fargo* (1996) into *Fargo* (2014)”**

This paper discusses the media changes between the big screen and the small by focusing on how a cult movie is adapted to fit the demands of serialization. In the case of *Fargo*, the 1996 cult movie (written and directed by the Coen Brothers) and *Fargo* the FX-TV series (created and directed by Noah Hawley, produced by the Coen Brothers), serialization transforms the crime genre (Nordic Noir), its setting, plot, black humor, and protagonists.

## **Panel III: Television Heroines (Room 50109)**

### **Theresa Trimmel (University of Sussex), “Women, Serial Television Drama and *Homeland*”**

This paper explores the representation of women in contemporary US serial drama. The depiction of female characters on popular US serial television has changed throughout the recent years and has moved further away from stereotypical representations of women often linked to the domestic space or their passive role in the narrative. Females now frequently play key roles in current serial drama narratives. The format centers not only on emancipated and independent women, but also increasingly on complex and morally questionable female characters in productions such as *Weeds*, *Damages*, or *Orange Is the New Black*. Often, these women's character complexity is the result of an identity crisis and the constant search for the (re)definition of women's roles in a still ostensibly patriarchal society. Therefore, the complex female protagonists of these serial dramas challenge traditional gender stereotypes. Given that current US serial productions are mainly associated with complex male characters, the majority of academic discussion (as well as the popular media) focuses on male protagonists. Character analysis undertaken by scholars such as Amanda Lotz, Margrethe Bruun Vaage, and Jason Mittell concentrates primarily on morally ambiguous characters. This paper, however, is going to focus on the complex female in order to explore which function female characters have in their narratives, and how these women participate in the cultural representation of female identity, femininity, and gender roles. This paper will use Carrie Mathison, the protagonist of the Showtime production *Homeland* (2011- ), as an example in order to investigate women in contemporary US serial drama. Due to her position as a female CIA agent in a working environment that is generally dominated by men, Carrie's character represents feminist concepts, but also challenges socially constructed and gender-based stereotypes as well as the traditional conceptualization of female identity, femininity, and gender roles.

### **Lea Gerhards (Saarland University), “Desiring the ‘Eternal Stud’: The Straight Female Gaze in *The Vampire Diaries*”**

In her influential essay “Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema,” Laura Mulvey posits that “[i]n a world ordered by sexual imbalance, pleasure in looking has been split between active/male and passive/female” (19). Thus, according to Mulvey, in Hollywood film, the woman presents an “element of spectacle” (ibid.) and “connote[s] to-be-looked-at-ness” (ibid.), while the man is the “bearer of the look” (ibid. 20). This paper argues that the American TV serial *The Vampire Diaries* (The CW, 2009–present) instead stages instances of a heterosexual female gaze, thereby addressing a female (teen) viewer and complicating, maybe even subverting, patriarchal power structures. Instead of presenting its female protagonists as visual spectacle, the serial frequently puts male characters on display for the desiring female gaze. In this way, the show not only turns gender dynamics upside down but also participates in the construction of female subjectivity by placing viewers inside a female character's viewpoint. This active female gaze in *The Vampire Diaries* presents a challenge to the dominant patriarchal culture that frequently dismisses women's and girls' desire and sexual expression, and can be tied back to contemporary postfeminist culture in which women, according to Rosalind Gill, are “presented as active, desiring sexual subjects” (258). Thus, the paper will demonstrate how television narratives can be used to shed light on changing gender roles in American culture.

## Panel IV: Slavery (Un)shackled on/to American Television (40130)

### **Esther Košutnik-Striedner (University of Klagenfurt), “I seem to have trouble dying’: A Critical Examination of the TV Miniseries *The Book of Negroes* and Its Adaptation Process from the Novel to the Screen”**

The miniseries *The Book of Negroes* (2015) protrudes from other North American television formats dealing with the issue of slavery in that a black woman slave, Aminata Diallo, played by Aunjanue Ellis, is given the opportunity to tell her life story not only from a black, but also female point of view. She reverses the popular image that 'negroes' were and are unintelligent by speaking several languages and being capable of reading and writing. The miniseries, which is based on the novel of the same title (2007) by Lawrence Hill, manages to keep the tone of the novel and thus captures the deep emotions which are stirred during the process of reading this engaging novel. However, like any other adaptation of a novel, also the miniseries *The Book of Negroes* has resulted in a new cinematic creation, which, while based on the original novel, ultimately deviates significantly from it. The miniseries follows the plot of the novel; however, new twists and turns were incorporated in order to make the television format more appealing to the TV audience. Despite the claim that the series is entirely different in its representation of enslaved African Americans in the late 18th/early 19th century, there are shortcomings, in particular with regard to the original novel. Many changes made exclusively for the miniseries appear unnecessary because they eventually distort the original and heroic character of Aminata. Additionally, *The Book of Negroes* does not classify as a realistic depiction of the institution of slavery. Rather, it falls into step with so many other Hollywood representations which are tantamount to the visual sanitation of slavery. Instead of portraying chattel slavery with all its atrocities, many scenes suggest a rather pleasant life on the plantation. Furthermore, the producers of the miniseries elaborated on the white savior theme by foregrounding the character of the white Jew, Solomon Lindo, played by Allan Hawco.

My paper examines the results of the televisual adaptation of the miniseries *The Book of Negroes* in order to prove that the producers of the series adapted the television format to the parameters of the North American entertainment industry, and, what is more, succumbed to the standards of the Hollywood machinery for the sake of higher ratings.

### **Verena Sucher (University of Klagenfurt), “The White Savior on Television: What You See Is Sometimes Not What You Get - The Hidden Whiteness in *The Book of Negroes* (2015)”**

TV and film have become popular mediums to portray historical events as well as current social issues. Slavery and its aftermaths, such as segregation and racism in the US, have been regularly depicted in both, film and TV. A fairly recent example is the television miniseries *The Book of Negroes* (2015), directed by Clement Virgo. While shows like *The Book of Negroes* and similar examples address crucial historical events and certainly contribute to depicting partially unknown historical matters, these artifacts have another feature in common: the white savior narrative/complex. It is a trope that, while often associated with Hollywood and other mainstream productions, goes beyond the film industry. In a white savior narrative a white savior character has the function to save a lower-class, unprivileged character from oppression or slavery. As a final result, the emphasis in such narratives is on the white character and how this character contributes to saving the day, redeeming themselves and their society in the process. While movies about slavery should focus on the individual stories of slaves, their misery, and eventually their strength of survival and resistance, these movies regularly glorify and celebrate white superiority. However, it is noteworthy that the white savior character can be found across any film genre and is not restricted to films concerned with slavery.

In the miniseries *The Book of Negroes*, which tells the story of former slave Aminata Diallo (Aunjanue Ellis), a white savior character can be identified. While the series notably depicts an important historical moment, which has been neglected so far by both the US-American and Canadian entertainment industry, it is overshadowed by the white savior complex. However, a white savior narrative is frequently well disguised, for viewers need to pay close attention to notice it. Due to the genre's ubiquity it is of utmost importance to be able to identify the narrative and critically assess it. Therefore, with the example of *The Book of Negroes*, my paper aims at explaining and identifying the white savior narrative and its functions.

## **László Bernáth (University of Klagenfurt), “Not in My Backyard’: The Denial of Slavery as a Canadian Institution”**

In national as well as international terms, Canada holds the image of a liberator of African slaves. The country's relation to slavery is almost exclusively represented by the Underground Railroad, which aided fugitive slaves along their way to freedom, and by the subsequent enjoyment of apparent safety and equal opportunity in the “True North, Strong and Free.” It is much less widely known that Canada has its own history of slavery, that it in fact participated in and profited from the enslavement of Africans as well as First Nations people.

*The Book of Negroes* (2015) represents a significant improvement in depicting the harsh realities awaiting freed slaves in Canada. In contrast to productions in the past, Canadian and U.S. American alike, which show the country as a land of opportunity for ex-slaves and their descendants, *The Book of Negroes* has a more critical approach concerning the quality of the “freedom” offered. Yet, despite admitting to racism, discrimination and even racist violence as everyday experiences, the miniseries still fails to question the myth of Africans having come to Canada by choice, and thus it reinforces the popular notion of Canada as being solely the liberator of black slaves by conveniently placing the practice of slavery itself at the southern side of the border.

In my paper, I attempt to show that *The Book of Negroes* represents an important step towards deconstructing the myth of Canada as the provider of security and opportunity for fugitive slaves. At the same time, however, such an accomplishment by no means indicates that the darker aspect of Canada's relationship with the institution of slavery – its involvement in it – is now addressed either nationally or internationally. The overall goal of my argument is to show that stories of slavery still fail to acknowledge, let alone discuss, Canada's slaving past by focusing exclusively on the significantly larger contribution of the United States to the practice, thereby adding yet another layer to the ever-present “white savior narrative”: that of the “Canadian savior.”

**Saturday, November 12, 15:00-16:30**

## **Panel V: #ViewerEngagement (Room 50101)**

### **Barbora Orlická (University of Graz), “Immerse Yourself! Exploring Narrative Strategies for Audience Engagement in *Mr. Robot*”**

In the light of recent television productions, it seems that we have entered a new era on the small screen. There is a shift towards more elaborate visual and narrative techniques in TV series. Those create ever more unique viewer experiences. Some postmodern narrative experiments are particularly intriguing and deserve scholarly attention.

*Mr. Robot*, first aired in 2015 on USA Network, is one such example. The viewers are met with a story both visually and narratively complex. The focalization through the protagonist provides an ideal environment for both metanarrative play and intricate viewer engagement. The mental landscape of Elliot Alderson, the protagonist, constitutes an unstable and unreliable source of information that warrants constant re-evaluation of the depicted events. The show opens a debate on the relationship between reality and fiction whenever Elliot is confronted with temporal or factual discrepancies. These discrepancies force the viewer to question both Elliot's and their own interpretation of events.

As Marie-Laure Ryan claims, contemporary media are very much concerned with immersion and interactivity and *Mr. Robot* aims at facilitating this kind of experience as it invites viewers to actively participate in the construction of meaning. The increasing complexity and detail-oriented storytelling, as studied by Henry Jenkins, manifest themselves in *Mr. Robot* with striking intensity as it constantly tests viewers' attention to detail. The visual techniques, embedded firmly in the narrative structure, offer attentive viewers ever so subtle clues which in turn often make them question the protagonist's reliability.

Through a close narratological analysis of *Mr. Robot*, I investigate the possible impact of narrative techniques on the viewer, which in turn foster a better understanding of contemporary American television and culture.



## **Silke Jandl (University of Graz), "Beyond America's Small Screen: Web Series, Viewer Participation and Social Media"**

Television series and serials are undoubtedly becoming increasingly more complex. However, this development is not restricted to the story level. In fact, the numerous possibilities of expanding, enhancing, and playfully engaging with stories and their "epitexts" or extensions online have not only added to content and characterization but also enabled audience participation and immersion.

While John Oliver's *Last Week Tonight* provides additional show segments on YouTube, for example, Canadian historical crime fiction adaptation series *Murdoch Mysteries* has been much more experimental with the four web series that have been produced in addition to the series so far. The web content was met with high critical acclaim and garnered numerous prestigious nominations. While the *Murdoch Mysteries* web series all remain in the fictional realm, the *Veronica Mars* web spin-off series is fictionalized and highly meta-referential, playing with the fiction-reality dichotomy as well as with the DIY aesthetic of amateur-produced videos.

One of the most popular ways for American audiences to participate in the content they consume is via Twitter. Onscreen hashtags have been superimposed on televised programs since 2011 and have become a way for audiences to discuss key issues or plot points with one another and to foster online communities. Hashtags, and by implication audience participation, have found their way into late night talk shows as well.

Henry Jenkins's work on participatory culture and transmedia storytelling, Marie-Laure Ryan's publications on narratology and immersion, as well as Intermediality studies (Rajewski, Wolf, Elleström), will be particularly helpful in gaining a better understanding of the intricate relationships between the core stories broadcast on TV and their web-based expansions and what their cultural and medial impact might be.

## **Panel VI: Politics and Politicians on Contemporary US Television (Room 50105)**

### **Gregory Frame (Bangor University, UK), "The Leader of the Free World?: The Decline of the Presidency in *House of Cards* and *Scandal*"**

Since his first election in 2008, Barack Obama has battled to maintain control over his vision for the United States. He has encountered dogged opposition from a hostile Republican Congress, and has faced numerous geopolitical crises, each one more intractable and complex than the last. While his failures to exert power in this environment are explicable, it has led many to ask what the US presidency is for in an increasingly multipolar world and in a context of scarcer resources.

*House of Cards* (Netflix, 2012-present) and *Scandal* (ABC, 2012-present), two episodic dramas that take as their setting the corrupt world of American politics, speak to this decline in the presidency's influence. Unlike earlier fictional visions of the office, "The Leader of the Free World" is shown to be incapable of securing or exercising power without the intervention of others, and he is frequently manipulated by others more ruthless, calculating and intelligent than him.

Through analysis of visual style and narrative structure, this chapter will explore both shows as indicative of a decline in the US presidency in the contemporary period. Where *The West Wing* (1999-2006) defined the presidency in the 2000s as a necessary and measured influence in an uncertain world, *House of Cards* and *Scandal* suggest that while the office retains a symbolic centrality, it is suffering a crisis of identity and purpose. Both programs operate in a wider cultural context in which the president is no longer the conventionally heroic presence of the past, but a vulnerable figure often in need of rescue, as seen in television dramas like *24* (2001-10) and films such as *Olympus Has Fallen* (2013) and *White House Down* (2013).

This paper will demonstrate how *House of Cards* and *Scandal* provide the most vivid contemporary examples of the presidency as an isolated, powerless position, dependent on the work of others to cling onto the remaining vestiges of its influence.

## **Ian Scott (University of Manchester), “The Last Hurrah’: *The West Wing* and the Future of American Politics after 9/11”**

Over seven seasons beginning in the late 1990s, the NBC show *The West Wing* became a phenomenal critical and commercial success. Often perceived as influencing and predicting real-life events in the 2000s as well as the progressions in TV culture – and doing both at the same time on occasion – this paper argues that the show actually moved beyond its historical and cultural timeframe. *The West Wing* did in fact transport the US political system to the place where it found itself in 2016. Increasingly exposed to any number of brickbats for a decade and a half while the show aired, *The West Wing*, in short, led a discredited American political establishment, in differing ways, towards the candidacies of Donald Trump and Bernie Sanders.

In his book, *Inventing the People: The Rise of Popular Sovereignty in England and America* Edmund Morgan reminds us of David Hume’s maxim in the “first principles on government” that consent obtained by the governors derives almost entirely from opinion. It doesn’t matter what you do in order to maintain power as long as the governed believe the opinion you are offering is valid and achievable. “Government requires make-believe,” says Morgan. “Make believe that the people have a voice or make believe that the representatives of the people are the people. Make believe that the governors are the servants of the people” (Morgan 13).

*The West Wing* thus spent seven years reaffirming Morgan’s make-believe and instilling in an upcoming generation a passionate attachment to ideals and high-minded governance, however naïve that might appear. It spent five of those years readjusting Americans and the world to a different order in the post-9/11 context. But, as this paper details, the show also fed a need for causes and principles among the political class all the while laying bare the limitations of the real elite seen as increasingly out of touch with the people and their needs. The result was a revolt by both left and right against perceived Washington intransigence, exploitation and unaccountability and the backlash reached its zenith in the 2016 presidential election. So how did a television show such as *The West Wing* come to represent, ten years after its last airing in the US, both the apotheosis of fictional political drama and the antithesis of real-world political sensibilities? How did the post-9/11 era and all the events that tumbled out from that day make *The West Wing* not just redemptive viewing for the Washington elite, but also predictive watching for an emergent political generation as well? This paper suggests how and why that occurred.

## **Betty Kaklamanidou (Aristotle University, Greece), “The Cold War Re-visited or How Russia Helps Promote American Exceptionalism in *House of Cards* and *The Americans*”**

The majority of political shows on millennial American television share a dystopian view of politics, one fraught with scandal, incompetence, fraud and exploitation, irrespective of their satirical/comedic or dramatic narrative modes. Despite the fact that the dark side of politics is always present in every fictional representation to create the necessary narrative conflict between good and evil, in the past it was usually reserved for secondary characters. The 2010s, however, introduced a narrative, which dared question the integrity of the American political protagonist. Shows of the second decade of the 2000s went as far as to depict the President as a murderer (*House of Cards* and *Scandal*), creating a fictional political cosmos that is populated by astonishingly flawed individuals, with the possible exception of *Madam Secretary*, whose protagonist has not yet made her dark side apparent – if she even has one. Yet, despite the overwhelming darkness of both characters and plot, and the questions they raise in both the media and academia, I find that all the shows share a narrative parameter; the idea of the USA as the only political system that can save the world from evil powers and bring prosperity to humanity.

In this paper, I therefore argue that despite the obvious and oftentimes unforgivable transgressions of the majority of these shows’ main characters, and the representation of the unseen illicit workings of the political arena, the narratives still promote American exceptionalism, interventionism, and capitalist ideology. Thus, I see contemporary political shows as the continuation of classic films and TV shows of the past in that they safeguard the core of American ideology, despite having assimilated the fact that modern viewers are more sophisticated and certainly more informed and could not easily accept a simple good vs. evil dichotomy. Yet, even in the present television landscape with its multi-faceted and complicated characters that operate in-between good and evil – usually leaning towards the second pole – Russia or the ex-USSR has re-emerged as a major antagonist. Interestingly, this narrative choice enforces not only the cultural verisimilitude of the shows, bringing fiction one step closer to real life, but it enforces these shows’ nuanced underlining of American uniqueness and superiority.

In this paper, I concentrate on the relationship between Russia/ex-USSR in *House of Cards* and *The Americans*, two shows I view as exemplary of contemporary political narratives and also promoters of American exceptionalism. My methodology includes a macro-narrative analysis of the shows’ seasons in

order to extract the main narrative arcs. I aim to show that despite the corruption, darkness and perversion that reign in the representation of US political tactics in these two fictional universes, a parallel narrative maintains if not empowers American exceptionalism. I argue that this narrative insistence, a trope repeated in a great number of film and television narratives, irrespective of genre, perpetuates a type of political theory that finds the structure of the USA as exceptional and unflinching.

## **Panel VII: Transforming Media (Room 50109)**

### **David Spurr (University of Geneva), "Nam June Paik's American Television"**

The Korean-American artist Nam June Paik was the first to make use of the television set and the images it produces as objects of art in themselves. In Paik's gallery installations, which he produced into the first decade of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, switched-on television sets are stacked into variously assembled structures, constituting a strange hybrid of video, sculpture and small-scale architecture, while transforming the materials of popular culture and mass consumption into original and provocative work. They often do so in such a way as to reflect consciously on American culture, as in *Video Flag* (1985-1996), a series of installations in which the assemblage of television sets and the colors they produce take the shape of the American flag, and which gives new meaning to the notion of a television "series." Paik's *Electronic Superhighway* (1995) takes the form of the continental United States, with sets tuned to different images according to what a person passing through a given state would see, according to the artist. This paper will serve both to introduce Paik's work to an audience which may not know it well, and to consider his work in the light of current questions concerning the role of television in American culture, such as the dominance of the image, the relation between television and ideology, and the saturation of reality by electronic media. Paik's claim that technology has become "the body's new membrane of existence," with the implicit corollary that television is the substance of contemporary social existence, offers an alternative way of understanding the concept of "reality TV."

### **Liliane Weissberg (University of Pennsylvania), "Interviewing the Victim: Changing Media and the Documentation of the Holocaust from the American Liberators' Accounts to Wire and Video Tapes, TV Series, and Beyond"**

My presentation will focus on the notion of witnessing, and the role of witnesses in regard to the documentation of the Holocaust since the liberation of concentration camps in 1945. I will focus on examples of visual documentation, oral interviews, and combined media, and discuss both historical and fictional "evidence" that was produced for documentation, research, and entertainment before the rise of television, and with television in mind.

## **Panel VIII: Issues of Gender, Quality, and Genre in Dramedy Television (Room 40130)**

### **Julia Havas (University of East Anglia), "'Binge for Love': Gender and the Netflix Dramedy"**

This paper examines the ways in which Netflix positions its dramedies in the cultural hierarchy of scripted programming through discursively progressive ("iconoclastic") identity politics, while at the same time mobilizing gendered notions of genre, theme, audience target, and promoting viewing practices in the technological context of online content distribution. The programs discussed will include *Orange Is the New Black*, *Master of None* (2015-) and *Grace and Frankie* (2015-).

### **Maria Sulimma (Freie Universität Berlin), "More Cringe than Comedy? The Complicated Humor of HBO's *Girls*"**

This paper explores humor in the dramedy *Girls* by specifically focusing on how female characters – as well as the extra-textual star image of creator/showrunner/actress Lena Dunham – violate social and cultural scripts. These violations make the characters (and Dunham) appear at different times self-involved and entitled, endearing and relatable, or plain cringe-worthy, thereby, raising issues surrounding portrayals of femininity, professionalism, and feminism both in the show and its paratextual negotiations.

### **Bettina Soller (University of Hannover), "Fatherhood as Dramedy"**

This paper argues that dramedies like *Louie* and *Happyish* juxtapose the representation of their male protagonists as tragic heroes and "difficult men" with the portrayal of successful and compassionate fatherhood. The interrelation of comedic and tragic narrative arcs allows for a re-investigation of established gendered characterizations of parenthood. These shows challenge the established archetype of father figures in traditional comedic formats (e.g. sitcom) by introducing morally ambiguous masculinities as struggling and ridiculed in their adult lives, and yet consistently committed caregivers for their children. The roles these men then take on in family structures also have strong effects on the representation of motherhood in these shows.

**Sunday, November 13, 09:00–11:00**

### **Panel IX: Mediating Current Issues (HS 3)**

#### **Julia Leyda (IASS Potsdam and NTNU, Trondheim), "'Winter is coming': Contemporary QTV and Climate Change"**

Eleven years ago, noted environmental writer-activist Robert Macfarlane decried "the deficiency of a creative response to climate change." Since then, several writers – from literary elites to reliable bestselling genre authors – have contributed to the new, contested genre of "cli-fi." However, despite the release of climate-related disaster films and documentaries, American television, in the midst of a new "golden age," remains unresponsive. This dearth of programming leads me to seek explanations. As literary critics debate the concept of the "energy unconscious," proposed by Patricia Yaeger in 2011 in her critical thought-experiment about naming the literary eras in the Anthropocene after their dominant fuels (Coal, Oil, etc.), I suggest television studies could productively seek out textual and visual traces of climate change in popular "quality" series.

The attention to weather in HBO's blockbuster series *Game of Thrones*, with its opening episode entitled "Winter Is Coming," points to American audiences' readiness to consider extreme weather as a threat. Even though the approaching ice age in *GoT* is not anthropogenic, its juxtaposition with the utter lack of political will to prepare for it builds tension. This series, renowned for its innovative willingness to kill off major characters in acts of politically-motivated violence, portrays the banality of ruling classes scabbling for power instead of preparing for war with the White Walkers.

AMC's horror dystopia series *The Walking Dead* portrays the steamy American Deep South in the post-air-conditioning era and reanimates conventional metaphorical interpretations of the zombie genre that although zombies are terrifying, the real enemies are other humans. The ostensibly human-created virus that produces the zombies and the continual threat of attack by hostile non-zombie people point to human culpability for their own demise. Furthermore, it alludes to our responsibility for the warming planet and the dire consequences awaiting future generations.

#### **Elif Özdemir (University of Leipzig), "Gentrification in *Shameless*: Working Class Revisited in the Neighborhood"**

*Shameless*, a Showtime remake of a British TV show with the same name, tells the story of the Gallaghers, often described as a "dysfunctional family" living in extreme poverty. Portraying the struggles of a certain strata of American society, it challenges conceptions of class and thus opens up space for new insights into this long-standing pillar of American Studies. This paper examines the route that *Shameless* took with its fifth and (the first half of its) sixth seasons regarding the transformation the neighborhood undergoes, and discusses class-based confrontations produced by gentrification as rendered within the show. The underlying motivation behind such an approach is grounded in three central concerns. First, gentrification by definition implies confrontations of different classes, thus analyzing it will help to develop a relational understanding of class as an analytical category. Second, while it is a long-debated phenomenon affecting underprivileged people in society, it is uncommon to see gentrification addressed on a TV show as part of a story arc. Finally, class possesses an instructive relation to space and spatial limitations (whether a "dangerous" neighborhood or a classy restaurant), and neighborhoods in the process of gentrification become interim spaces of interclass confrontation. Focusing on two

gentrification processes in a neoliberal context, namely displacement and social mixing, this paper provides an analysis of the discourses around the economics of the neighborhood and representations of the “gentry” and “old dwellers” in relation to one another.

### **Astrid Fellner (Saarland University), “Screening Transamerica”**

For decades, trans people have hardly been represented in American popular culture. And when they were depicted on screen, they were grossly misrepresented. But recent years have brought about changes and trans people have, to a certain degree, assumed center stage in popular culture. Transgender characters are increasingly gaining more visibility on TV, from Alex Newell as Wade “Unique” Adams on Fox’s *Glee* to Laverne Cox as Sophia Burset on Netflix’s *Orange Is the New Black*, for which she made history as the first openly transgender Emmy acting awards nominee. In the past two years then, TV shows have shown an increasing presence of trans people after Cox became a breakout star and after Amazon Studios has placed a transgender character center stage with the 2014 premiere of *Transparent*.

In this paper, I will analyze how queer politics and identity are negotiated in recent TV series, looking into the possibilities for resistant queer performances via the politics of trans feminism, that is transgender perspectives on feminism, or feminist perspectives on transgender issues. I will argue that recent TV series like *Orange Is the New Black* and *Transparent*, which feature queer and transgender characters, can be seen not only as instruments for global consumer capitalism but also forums for feminism, queer, and trans activism. The characters depicted in these shows not only help push the boundaries of acceptance in film and television but also contribute to the cultural politics of television, the way in which the content of these shows themselves engages with the politics of their time. Relying on Queer Theory as well as Trans Theory, I will read these recent TV shows for their queer and trans politics, showing that popular culture, especially recent Quality TV shows, constitute important political interventions into sexual politics.

### **Verena Bernardi (Saarland University), “Southern Fangs: Vampires and Their Regional Attachment”**

American television shows have long surpassed the simple notion that they are entertainment. Television series have always been highly influenced by recent and/or historical events and discuss many different aspects of American culture. Storylines (television series, movies, etc.) about supernatural characters have experienced a huge rise in popularity with vampires at the forefront. In series and movies such as *Buffy*, *Twilight* and *Being Human* the vampire inhabits alternate spaces and displays varying characteristics such as sparkling skin, mind reading abilities, extraordinary speed, etc. It can be argued that what they all have in common is the underlying evolution of vampires from solitary, geoliberal, vile creatures to social or even domesticated members of society. *True Blood* and *The Originals*, for example, show different sides to vampire socialization, which I assert is linked to their historical/personal/social attachment to the region they are depicted in: in this instance the American South. As the geographies of vampire fiction have not received much attention in academic research, my paper seeks to illuminate the interrelation between vampires and the concept of Southern regionalism. Through an analysis of what I see as these series’ efforts to connect the South’s tumultuous past with present-day issues, I seek to reveal the cultural work the two television shows *True Blood* and *The Originals* accomplish in their discussion of Southern traditions and values, prevailing discrimination, as well as religious and racial bigotry, which all lead to a certain type of societal setup and nation-building the supernatural population finds itself in.

## **Panel X: The Nostalgic Gaze (Room 50101)**

### **Tobias Steiner (University of Hamburg), “Nazi Flags on Times Square! The Sixties, Twisted Nostalgia, and the Renegotiation of Cultural Memory in Recent U.S. Alternate History Television Drama”**

Beginning with television’s popularization and mass availability in the 1950s, TV has extensively been employed to transport and mediate history. From early televisual experiments of *The Twilight Zone* and *Star Trek* to the more recent examples of *Quantum Leap*, *The X-Files* and *Continuum*, Science Fiction television and its subgenre of Alternate History drama have played an important role, using historical events as a foil upon which a variety of uchronic “What if”-scenarios has been played out.

Incurring Jason Mittell's call for historical situatedness in regards to genre analysis (xiv), my proposed presentation will briefly outline the genre's evolution, and then introduce two of its most recent specimens: *The Man in the High Castle* (Amazon, 2015-) and *11.22.63* (Hulu, 2016-). With two of the US' major cultural traumata of the 20th century – WWII and its aftermath, and the assassination of John F. Kennedy – at the core of their stories, these series construct uncanny “What if?”-narratives of daily life during the 1960s in the United (or in one case: Divided) States of America.

Building on Alison Landsberg's notion of “historically-conscious drama” (2015), and via short analyses of the shows and their peritexts – trailers and opening sequences, I will identify strategies in these alternate (hi)story drama series that consciously play with, and transcend, notions of retro and nostalgia.

Through creative remediation and modulation of US cultural memory, I argue, these recent cases of Alternate History TV persuade us into re-considering our received conception of US popular history, thus making us see the past with new eyes. Or in the words of historian Gavriel Rosenfeld: “By examining accounts of what never happened, we can better understand the memory of what did” (90).

### **Maria Katharina Wiedlack (University of Vienna), “The Americans: Cold War Nostalgia and the New Cold War”**

US-Russian relations have once again cooled down to a “New Cold War” (Lucas); US TV shows from *House of Cards* to *The Good Wife* have started devoting single episodes or entire story lines to the most recent conflicts, focusing on human rights (Pussy Riot, gay rights) and military interference (Ukraine, Syria). The most exhaustive discussion of US-Russian relations inspired through a true story is FX TV-drama *The Americans*, prompted by the discovery of “10 Russian spies [...] living undercover in suburbs nationwide for more than a decade” (Waxman) in 2010. Considering the discomfort this story caused, producer Joe Weisberg thought that “a modern day [setting] didn't seem like a good idea. People were both shocked and simultaneously shrugged at the scandal because it didn't seem like we were really enemies with Russia anymore” (Waxman). Accordingly, he transferred his interest and the story to the 70s/80s.

In my presentation I will investigate the spy drama that evolves around the two undercover KGB agents Elizabeth (Keri Russell), who is most likely inspired through the real-life spy, Anna Chapman, a beautiful 28 year old “‘bombshell,’ ‘femme fatale,’ or the ‘red under the bed’” (Hemment), and Philip Jennings (Matthew Rhys). Interested in the series' psychological drama, the inner conflict of Elizabeth and Philip between the loyalty to their country of origin and the American way of life, I attempt to get a good understanding of the show's imagination of the historic Soviet Russia, the US and the Cold War's psychology. Relating my findings to the contemporary negotiation of values and neoliberal conceptualizations of democracy, I wonder how the show's historic focus on “the '80s with Ronald Reagan yelling about the evil empire” (Waxman) corresponds with the recent (New) Cold War Culture.

### **Roberta Maierhofer (University of Graz), “There's No Such Thing as a Simple Life: Experiencing Time in the HBO Miniseries *Olive Kitteridge* (2014)”**

Since the 1980s, scholars in the field of cultural gerontology have turned to cultural manifestations to investigate ideas about the meaning of identity within the life course and discuss models of aging presented in literature, art, and film. Within the interplay between the fields of science and the humanities, textual representations are important sources that contribute towards understanding “identity in movement,” the matrix of time and experience within the many contexts in which a person moves over the duration of a life. Serialized storytelling has recently provided a new take and interesting insights into the experience of time, and thus of age and aging. TV series have proven a powerful cultural medium to present narratives of what it means to live in time by both constructing and deconstructing stereotypical notions of the matrix of time and experience.

In my paper, I will talk about cultural representations of time in the HBO miniseries *Olive Kitteridge* (2014) based on Elizabeth Strout's Pulitzer Prize-winning novel, in which a 25-year period is presented through the eyes of a woman living in a small town in Maine. Offering an anocritical interpretation of the TV miniseries, I will analyze the aspect of time in terms of a fluidity of identity that opens possibilities to move beyond the defined position of self, and makes it not only possible but necessary to view familiar structures and relationships in new ways. If identity is defined by both continuity and change over a life course, the importance is to not only narrate one's life, but also interpret these narrations in an ongoing process of dialogue – not only between cultural representations and the interpretations of these and between generations to establish an intergenerational discourse, but also between the various disciplines to charter an interdisciplinary approach to time and experience.

## **Robert Spindler (University of Innsbruck), "'The Last Male-Driven Show?' Gender Stereotypes in *The A-Team* (1983-1987)"**

*The A-Team* was a tremendously popular American action adventure television show that aired from 1983 to 1987. It told of the adventures of four Vietnam War veterans who teamed up to help upright citizens in vigilante fashion against all sorts of crimes. The 45-minute episodes were hardly interconnected and structured in a rigid, predictable, and simplistic manner. The leitmotifs represented a flamboyant world of nonchalant machismo: guns, fisticuffs, car chases, one-liners, inventive craftsmanship, short-lived romances, war aesthetics, and lessons on leadership and teambuilding. All of this was combined with a boyish naïveté to create a recursive recipe that bestowed an enthusiastic viewership upon the series.

In 2006, the actor Dirk Benedict boldly declared this action series, in which he had starred, as the "last truly masculine show," referring to the Reaganite displays of hypermasculinity that ran through the episodes. He added that since then, the "feminization of television" has been completed. This paper will scrutinize this statement in the light of the changes that occurred in the American television landscape between the Reagan Era and the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, but also in consideration of the developments since the interview with Benedict was recorded. It will investigate gender stereotypes in *The A-Team* and put them into context in order to examine the question of how and why the representation of masculinity in American television series changed from the 1980s onwards.

## **Panel XI: Polarizing Protagonists (Room 50105)**

### **Bryonie Carter (Saint Charles Community College, USA), "Masculinities and the Politics of Horror in NBC's *Hannibal*"**

In the 1982 article "Why We Crave Horror Movies," Stephen King notes that "the mythic horror movie, like the sick joke, has a dirty job to do. It deliberately appeals to all that is worst in us. It is morbidity unchained, our most base instincts let free, our nastiest fears realized." According to King, to view a horror film is a cathartic exercise; each human being is a "potential lyncher," merely acting on prescribed social mores that barely keep him or her from "[letting] loose to scream and roll around in the grass." Almost 35 years since the publication of King's article, the horror genre has witnessed a significant evolution in both film and television, as well as in criticism. While horror still imparts fear and encourages adrenaline and release, horror also tends to be overtly political and even critical of the culture in which it is created. As scholar Gina Wisker states, "Horror explores the fissures that open in our everyday lives and destabilizes our complacency about norms and rules."

This paradigm shift is remarkably realized in the recently-cancelled NBC series *Hannibal*. The titular character, Dr. Hannibal Lecter (Mads Mikkelsen), is no stranger to the gold or silver screens; however, *Hannibal* showrunner Bryan Fuller's version of Thomas Harris' novels foregoes the common horror tropes originally assigned to prior characterizations of Dr. Lecter and the characters who inhabit his world. By positioning Hannibal Lecter as a likeable character, the audience is forced to consider the question "who is the real monster?" Furthermore, the intimate, albeit gruesome, nature of Hannibal's relationship with Will Graham destabilizes traditional expectations of heteronormative male relationships. *Hannibal* is a dramatic, lush, and sensory experience that, through the lens of horror, subverts cultural expectations of its characters' identity politics, particularly with respect to expectations of hegemonic masculinity.

### **Alexandra Hauke (University of Vienna), "'We're not bad people. But we did a bad thing': (Im)Morality and Dramatic Villainy in *Bloodline*"**

American TV series have seen an abundance of fictional heroes turned into morally corrupt, questionable, untrustworthy, and even criminal antiheroes or antagonists. As such, the antihero or villain in television is certainly not a new trend or phenomenon, but the spectator's attraction towards and identification with such immoral characters remains uncontested and is based, in part, on our basic realization that we are *all*, to a certain extent, morally flawed, and enjoy the occasional "grim and thought-provoking subject matter" of TV dramas which "clashes with the simple and happy world presented" in sitcoms and comedies (Thompson, *Television's Second Golden Age* 35).

Netflix's thriller-drama *Bloodline* plays with these notions of moral psychology within a dramatic negotiation of family dynamics: the show challenges its protagonists, brothers John and Danny Rayburn, and their (initial) respective roles as the poster boy and black sheep of the family, and thereby demands the spectator's continuous reevaluation not only of the Rayburns but also of the concepts of family and

morality at large. This paper will discuss how *Bloodline* explores and exploits the allure of the dramatic villain, whose state of flux between noble and sinful complicates the viewer's ability to predict his/her character, and comments on the social and narrative significance as well as the functionality of morality and immortality.

### **Marleen Knipping (University of Göttingen), "'Another beautiful Miami day. Mutilated corpses with the chance of afternoon showers': The Narrative Negotiation of Normalcy in *Dexter*"**

Contemporary American "quality television" helps to display an omnipresent threat to and loss of normalcy characteristic for the early twenty-first century. In presenting at its outset immediate transgressions from potentially sanctioned social orders as well as violations of legal normativity, the television show *Dexter* (Showtime, 2006-2013) can be perceived as seismographic for society's alleged status quo. Yet, the show complements the portrayal of "abnormalcy" with the concurrent desire for naturalization and normalization. Whereas the series, as part and parcel of socio-cultural practices, makes an effort to determine social in- and exclusion and thus unremittingly (re)produces, distributes, and implicitly legitimizes the constructed hegemonic discourses, it simultaneously exposes the clear-cut demarcations of era-specific self-manifestations as arbitrary constructs. In focusing on an ambiguous serial killer, the show confronts the discursive construction of "normalcy" with "deviation" as a dichotomous counter position that subtends the purported ideal and its derivative norms. As a result, *Dexter* contributes to the extradiegetic flexibilization of the normal/abnormal dichotomy and the widening of the "normal range."

Against this backdrop, I will interrogate the conflicting discourses of normalcy and deviation in reviewing *Dexter* as a highly complex interplay of various audio-visual and lingual narrative agents. Along these lines, I will explore the effects of cumulative narration in exploring the mechanisms of different narrative layers, amongst them extradiegetic devices such as *mise-en-scène* and editing, intradiegetic metalepses, and voice-over narration. I will argue that the display of formal coherency on these levels helps to foster processes of normalization and legitimization, which are further enhanced by the serial form. I will claim that the stable, intra-serially preset, and reiterative elements offer orientating schemes for the audience. As a result, I will posit that the intra-serial portrayal of normalcy permeates to the level of reception due to the evocations of intimacy, identification, and inclusion.

### **Alexandra Ganser (University of Vienna), "The Power Play of Piracy: *Black Sails*"**

*Black Sails* (2014-, Starz) is an American adventure series set on New Providence Island (i.e., the Bahamas) that was designed as a TV prequel to Robert Louis Stevenson's *Treasure Island*. It debuted online on YouTube and other streaming platforms in early 2014 (season 2 premiered a year later; season 3 is currently on air while season 4 is now being filmed). The series is set roughly two decades before the events of Stevenson's novel during the so-called "Golden Age of Piracy" in the early 1700s. It revolves around the career of Captain Flint and his fight for the survival of New Providence as a pirate h(e)aven.

The first episode, set in 1715, introduces the pirates as "threaten[ing] maritime trade in the region" and explains that the "laws of every civilized nation declare them *hostis humani generis*, enemies of all mankind. In response, the pirates adhere to a doctrine of their own ... war against the world." While the series starts out by showcasing a host of pirate stereotypes such as their being at war with the entire world and their greed (featured in the hunt for the Spanish treasure galleon *Urca de Lima*), the second season challenges these stereotypes with regard to gender, race, ethnicity, and class. Turning to the question of how and why Flint – formerly a navy officer and London gentleman – turned to piracy, it presents a counterpoint to season one by complicating the storyline and shifting its focus to colonial power play and precarious alliances (e.g. with Maroon communities). In my paper, I will argue that this structure follows a long tradition of narrating/screening piracy as a phenomenon that swerves between legitimate resistance to oppressive regimes and discourses and the condemnation of pirates as illegitimate outlaws. I will examine the show's visual politics as well as its significance in a contemporary context in a critical reading of its first two seasons.



## Panel XII: Stories, Well-Seasoned (Room 50109)

### **Sandra Danneil (TU Dortmund), “The Rhetorics of Animated Seriality: Framing Comic Transgression”**

Frames provide symbolic structures helping people to make sense of their realities and to deal with life's inequities through a dramaturgical perspective (cf. Smith/Voth 2002: 111) This insight was first brought up by Kenneth Burke in 1937 to apply a rhetorical concept as a means of ethical construction to the study of popular culture. Liberated from its literary antecedent, popcultural rhetorical analysis claims both the comic frame and the tragic frame not to be interpreted as oppositional but essential in the examination of popular texts like TV sitcoms and – in my case most specifically – of *The Simpsons*. As organizing principles, frames give structure to the vast amount of the show's narrative discourses. *The Simpsons* uses these frames not only to visualize the permanent violation of hierarchies to mirror social flaws but also to provide symbolic strategies to expand the functions of seriality. The ambivalence of the framing – by switching between comic and tragic mode – only becomes possible through the show's long-lasting episodic and serial structure. In contrast to drama series, for instance, the seriality in *The Simpsons* thereby allows for getting yourself into its absurdist breaches to get its comedy across. With regard to the concept of masculinity in Homer, viewers' can either reject or accept it along the show's 25 minutes; in the end, his misbehavior and comic fractures may end its absurdity but are reset in each following episode.

In my talk I would like to discuss the approach of tragic/comic framing as a cornerstone of my analysis of *The Simpsons'* discourses. By the use of rhetorical theory in popular seriality, it is my aim to prove evidence of the existence of comic transgression and transgressive comedy. Burke and his followers create the theoretical ground on which the basic argument of my dissertation will be built.

### **Marcin Cichocki (University of Paderborn), “Anthology Series: A New Season, a New Beginning”**

The first episode of a serial sets the blueprint for the episodes to come. As Jason Mittell points out, it has to be *educational* and *inspirational*. Its role is to teach viewers how to watch the serial, and at the same time to capture their curiosity. Through the first episode, viewers become acquainted with the narrative strategies employed by the series. Enough exposition has to be provided for viewers to learn about the newly encountered storyworld and its characters. In establishing these fundamental features, the episode has to strike the right balance between viewers' expectations with regard to a particular genre, and innovation, so that they are hooked by a narrative that avoids conventionality and stereotyping.

The opening chapter of a serial narrative is of particular importance in relation to the anthology series where every season comprises a new story and set of characters, or even new narrative strategies. In light of the recent popularity of anthology series, such as *American Horror Story*, *True Detective*, and *Fargo*, this proposal uses Jason Mittell's concept of *The Educational and Inspirational Poetics of Pilots* to examine the multiple beginnings of anthology series. Anthology series face the challenge of ensuring a sense of familiarity for fans of the original season while at the same time they employ a new story and characters. The new beginning has to feature storytelling elements that will recall the *inspirational* elements of the previous season, but at the same time this resemblance should avoid falling into the trap of predictability and repetitiveness. Viewers need to be convinced that despite the new characters and setting, the serial still belongs to that same title. Using *Fargo* and *True Detective* as primary examples, this paper examines how this balance between familiarity and originality is struck in the context of anthology series.

### **Christian Stenico (University of Innsbruck), “Observing the Narrator in Her Natural Habitat: Narration and the Pseudo-Documentary Genre”**

Increased sophistication and complexity have recently boosted critical as well as popular interest in the medium of television. One very successful and productive trend is the move towards a strong narrative voice. The variations of this device are manifold and range from frame narration as in *How I Met Your Mother* to theatre-like asides in *House of Cards*. One especially innovative use of narration occurs in the pseudo-documentary format where genre-conventions dictate some form of audience direction and instruction, be it implicit or explicit. This paper will focus on two examples at either end of this spectrum, namely *Arrested Development*, with its dedicated voice-over narrator, and *Modern Family*, which uses staged interview-like sequences for its thematic guidance. I will discuss the ways in which the two shows

make use of documentary conventions in their own unique ways, while at the same time approaching both the narrative and genre-related requirements of the pseudo-documentary format. The analysis will be based on theories of textual and filmic narrative theory as well as genre theory from film and television studies.

### **Johannes Mahlknecht (University of Innsbruck), "The New Golden Age of Television: Origins"**

Much has been said about how filmic storytelling has developed as a combination of the older media of the theater and the novel. Film as a medium capable of producing quality art on the same level as its more elite counterparts has had to struggle for decades to gain something of an artistic reputation. Television, although much more closely related to its "bigger brother" than the cinema is to its predecessors (as well as contemporaries, of course), has long suffered a similar fate. Only in the past decade, it seems, has it come to be vindicated as a medium capable of producing, chiefly in the form of serials, content on a par with the rest.

In giving a brief history of the format of serial storytelling in various media – oral narration, print, stage, big and small screen – this talk observes how circumstances of technology, as well as the dramatic potential of the serial format, have come together to favor the now ubiquitous phenomenon of so-called quality television. In analyzing remediation processes throughout the centuries the paper will show how the current television landscape of serial storytelling is one that has been long in the making.

## **Panel XIII: Remapping Crime Television in the Post-Network Era II (Room 40130)**

### **Stefan Meier (TU Chemnitz), "Beyond Baker Street: Sherlock Holmes in the Age of Media Convergence"**

When in 1886 Arthur Conan Doyle was brooding over the protagonist for *A Study in Scarlet* he could not have had the slightest idea of what he was about to create. Not only does Sherlock Holmes represent by far the most famous detective figure ever to be conceived, persistently entertaining an incredibly large and ever growing audience, but he has also evolved into a popular icon beyond comparison, transgressing the boundaries of literature in manifold ways.

Since its inception, I argue in this paper, the Sherlock Holmes figure has been perpetually updated and reinvented in various media, simultaneously engendering a whole economy to feed upon the enormous degree of familiarity and popularity it enjoys. Today the archetypal detective has overcome the limitations of the medium he originated from as well as a number of key characteristics associated with his original narrative. By a deliberate use of extension, synergy, and franchising strategies the cultural and economic agents who perpetuate Holmes in the media convergence age have made him retain and even expand his popularity in the 21st century. Shedding light on the BBC series *Sherlock* (2010-) and CBS's *Elementary* (2012-) as the two televisual texts currently providing the basis for his sustained proliferation this paper will follow the trace of the serial detective as being part and parcel of an effective modern media franchise.

### **Melanie Graichen (TU Chemnitz), "'Tweet 'em to DEATH!': Social Media, Fan Cultures, and the Period Crime Drama"**

According to the journalist Simon Reynolds we are living in an age that is addicted "to its own past" (2011). Popular culture's preoccupation with bygone eras is nowhere more visible than in TV schedules on both sides of the Atlantic. Series negotiating historical periods or re-inventing long-established literary figures attract huge, global audiences. Simultaneously, there is a significant change in how we watch TV or, to be more precise, how we experience television content. To a great extent both the reception of and the communication about media texts shifted toward the digital – to video-on-demand platforms, social networks, and content-sharing communities.

In this paper, I will take the period crime drama as a case study in order to reveal recent developments in contemporary television culture. I will focus primarily on the growing influence of fandom on the small screen. As a participating audience, fans are not only recipients but also "transform the experience of media consumption into the production of new texts, indeed a new culture and a new community" (Jenkins 1992, 46). Series like *Ripper Street* – cancelled by the BBC after two seasons but later revived by Amazon Prime due to fans' protests on social media – exemplify the interconnectedness of fan and

media cultures in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. I argue that fan cultures, while establishing formerly marginalized audience groups as influential actors within the media system, are shaping contemporary TV series both as a cultural product and as a narrative.

### **Stefanie Jahn (TU Chemnitz), "Listening (to) Detectives: TV Series Narration and Participatory Culture in the Podcast *Serial*"**

The first season of *Serial*, produced in 2014, tells the story of the 1999 murder of high school student Hae Min Lee, allegedly by her ex-boyfriend Adnan Syed, who has been imprisoned ever since. It tells its story in the form of 12 episodes, taking an old genre, true crime, to a new medium, podcasting.

This paper argues that it does so by employing narrative strategies of serial storytelling perfected in TV series during the last two decades. As a weekly series aiming to solve a murder case, *Serial* typically relies on cliffhangers, surprises, and gaps in the narrative to keep its listeners in suspense. However, since it is also providing key documents on its website, and is consumed within an online environment that holds all the case's court transcripts, these traditional narrative strategies have to be adapted. *Serial* has been able to engage its listeners over the course of 12 weeks, regardless of hints at no conclusion early on in the narrative. It has become the most successful podcast ever produced, generating discussion boards, Internet memes and even other podcasts about itself. I argue that this reception and the specific forms of participatory culture it has spawned are linked to its narrative strategies and the engaging, personal tone of the narrator Sarah Koenig. Thereby, she transforms herself and her listeners into a new kind of audio-digital detective.

**Sunday, November 13, 11:30–13:00**

### **Panel XIV: Animals in American Television II (Room 50101)**

#### **Dawn Keetley (Lehigh University, USA), "Sacrificial Animals and the Vanishing 'Human' in *The Walking Dead* Franchise"**

Although they are apparently not affected by the zombie infection decimating the human population, animals are conspicuously scarce in the worlds of *The Walking Dead* (AMC, 2010-) and *Fear the Walking Dead* (AMC, 2015-). The absence of animals is particularly striking because in a post-apocalyptic narrative, we would expect that nature would be taking back some of the ground lost to humans; we would expect more scenes like in the season five episode "Them," in which the human survivors run across a pack of feral dogs.

Why the relative absence of animals? My paper will suggest, first, that the dearth of animal life reminds us of the current near-dystopic state of our own world, which is teetering on the brink of a sixth mass extinction. As Akira Mizuta Lippit puts it in *Electric Animal* (2000), animals are perpetually "vanishing," inspiring "a sense of panic for the earth's dwindling resources." The rapid loss of animal species is not only an evil in itself but also jeopardizes human survival, a fact represented in *The Walking Dead* universe by the chronic scarcity of food.

Despite the relative absence of animals, *The Walking Dead* has featured at least four horses, a deer, pigs, rabbits, a turtle, wild dogs, a snake, and a goat. And the first season of *Fear the Walking Dead* includes an episode titled "The Dog." Yet when animals appear in *The Walking Dead* franchise, I will argue, they are represented in distinctly ritualistic fashion. Nonhuman animals have long been used to define the boundaries of the human, a practice that, as Lippit writes, often requires "a rhetorical animal sacrifice." In *The Walking Dead*, as the "human" has become increasingly tenuous, there is, I will suggest, an increased need to exclude the "animal," a need manifest in an increasingly literal and ritualized practice of animal sacrifice in the series, all of which serves to exorcise the animal in the human. Animal sacrifice in *The Walking Dead* franchise, then, highlights both animal and human vanishing.

## **Michael Fuchs (University of Graz), "'I have no taste for animal cruelty': Human Cannibalism and/as Animal Politics in *Hannibal*"**

In *Hannibal's* (NBC, 2013–2015) season two episode "Kō No Mono" (2014), the titular character serves "a rare but debauched delicacy" to his significant other Will Graham. In line with the show's spectacularization of food preparation, Hannibal explains the process of preparing the ortolon bunting in detail (albeit only verbally): Catch a specific species of the bunting family of birds. Blind the six-inch-long animal using pincers. Put it in a small box and feed it until it has reached at least twice its normal weight. Drown it in Armagnac. Roast it. Eat it, "bones and all." The degradation of the animal-turned-food leaves an especially sour aftertaste when considering that Hannibal had proclaimed to "have no taste for animal cruelty" in the season one episode "Coquilles" (2013).

My paper will use this apparent contradiction as a launching pad for an exploration of the animal in *Hannibal*. While the show, true to its roots in the traditions of horror and the Gothic, employs animal imagery as a means to representing "the monster within," its titular anthropophagic serial killer transcends any easy binary constructions between the wild beast and the cultured human, thus highlighting the constructedness of such binaries. As I will argue, the randomness with which Western civilization draws lines in order to systematize the world becomes especially meaningful in relation to Hannibal's eating habits. While the show's eponymous character clearly eats meat, the implications of his food choices seem more powerful than a vegan diet could ever be: Hannibal's explicit rejection of accepting the line separating the edible animal from the inedible human truly raises the question of why we eat one and not the other.

## **Panel XV: Small-Screen Frontiers (Room 50105)**

### **Bärbel Schlimbach (Saarland University), "Re-Framing the Western: HBO's *Deadwood*"**

The genre of the Western is nearly as old as film itself, and after the Westerns' heyday during the 1940s and 1950s, probably no genre has more frequently been proclaimed as dead and no longer productive than the Western. Especially since Clint Eastwood's award-winning *Unforgiven* (1992), some recent Western movies have achieved popularity with audiences and sparked scholarly interest. Nevertheless, the success of HBO's *Deadwood* (2004-2006) has surprised most critics. The action is a fictionalized retelling of events set in the 1870s in the Black Hills in South Dakota and depicts *Deadwood's* development from an unorganized gold mining camp to a booming town. Although *Deadwood* on the surface can be read as yet another revisionist Western, I would like to argue that the series falls into the category of what Neil Campbell calls "Post-Western." This series tells the origin story of the emerging United States first and foremost by looking at the "gaps" and "secrets" in the myth-making national narrative. For Campbell some Post-Westerns refuse to "dwell in the 19<sup>th</sup> century," and I would like to show how *Deadwood* is able to situate the action in the past but nevertheless opens new dialogues with the present and the future of the West. The series uses the frame provided by traditional Westerns, at the same time deconstructing and enlarging this frame. Drawing on Campbell's notions from his books *Post-Western: Cinema, Region, West* (2013) and *The Rhizomatic West: Representing the West in a Transnational, Global, Media Age* (2008), I want to show why the series is attractive for today's audiences. For my analysis, I will focus on the representations of race/ethnicities and sex/gender, arguing that the series gives voice and (more) visibility to formerly silenced groups outside the hegemonic, dominantly male, white, heteronormative discourse of traditional Westerns, for example by analyzing how the replacement of Native Americans is represented in the series and how sex/gender are constructed.

### **Julia Möseneder (University of Innsbruck), "Killing on the Frontier: The Enforcer Archetype in US Western Television Shows"**

The Enforcer. We may know them under different names, as the sidekick or the trusted Lancer on the good side, or as the Dragon on the villain's side – or maybe as the only guy aside from Chuck Norris who can do karate in an episode of *Walker, Texas Ranger*. We are familiar with this particular archetype and decades of storytelling allow us to easily recognize them by their traits, skills, and problems. Labeling them should be easy, much like labeling the hero and protagonist of a story. Yet, as storytelling has become more complex and the protagonists have become more flawed, so have other archetypal characters undergone a change. The small and specialized Western genre is one of the most formulaic, built on archetypes created in the 1920s. From a loyal, steadfast, comic-relief character, the typical Western

sidekick has now turned into a capable killer or a smart, selfless tactician – often to offset a raging and flawed protagonist.

This paper will look at side characters of the enforcer type in recent Western television shows, that is AMC's *Hell on Wheels* (2011-2016) and the two History Channel mini-series *Hatfields & McCoy*s (2012) and *Texas Rising* (2015). By doing so, it will analyze the enforcer archetype in this narrow genre and examine how these characters have evolved from the way they were originally written to what they are now.

### **William Lee Tate (James Madison University, USA), "Zorro and Paladin: Lessons from the Wild West"**

I have had a long love affair with two heroes from 1957 Westerns: Zorro and Paladin. Zorro was a classic series of a masked hero clandestinely working to help the poor and underprivileged set in colonial Los Angeles. The 1957-59 Disney series was about overcoming political oppression and standing up for the right thing. In *Have Gun – Will Travel*, Paladin is a mercenary given to guns for hire, but from a gentleman class. Carrying themes akin to Robin Hood, superheroes, and even later, Jack Bauer of the series 24, Zorro and Paladin were inspiration for cleverness, martial arts, athletic prowess, and nobility of ideals.

I wish to extrapolate life lessons these series offered via the character types, sets, mask, sword craft, political intrigue, bad guys, the opposition of good and evil, horses, speed, cunning, as well as the casting, literature, and echoes of the masked and gun-toting hero in later films and shows. Zorro is also a uniquely Latino cult figure set in colonial California. The hidden lessons have spoken across time and genre, and I will articulate the hidden layers that portray the universality of the hero. I hope to revive the beauty and simplicity of Zorro and of Paladin as historical models for radical transformation and a revolutionary avant-garde mindset.

### **Panel XVI: "Infinite Diversity in Infinite Combinations": Unusual Perspectives in Celebration of Star Trek's 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary (Room 50109)**

#### **Stefan Rabitsch (University of Klagenfurt), "'A [Starfleet] star is a soaring soul': Navigating Star Trek's Transatlantic Double Consciousness"**

While pitched and sold to television executives as being a Space Western – which of course it was not – the world of *Star Trek* was intentionally and systematically modeled on the British Golden Age of Sail as found in Napoleonic sea fiction. This paper offers a synoptic and decidedly transatlantic critique of *Star Trek*, exposing a hidden British maritime world embedded beneath a veneer of "Americanness." When seen as "Hornblower in space" – the second intertextual reference point used to pitch the series – *Star Trek* does not easily fit into the contexts usually used at its conception: President Kennedy's New Frontier ideology, the 1960s Space Race with the Soviets, and the first Golden Age of science fiction on American TV (1959-69). While of course not incorrect, I contend that this is often done simplistically and haphazardly, drawing on presumed knowledge and shared cultural assumptions. Consequently, this paper re-addresses and offers a corrective to the question of why *Star-Trek-as-space-western* has guided most *Star Trek* scholarship. It will show why it makes sense to re-historicize *Star Trek* not only as a product of the 1960s, but also as a distillate of impulses that originated in the late 1940s and 1950s. Remapping the origins of *Star Trek* along these lines reveals how and why it was only logical that the worldbuilding of *Star Trek* was intentionally and continuously modeled on the 18<sup>th</sup> century British naval world. This maritime endowment is embedded in five maritime dimensions that shape the ontology of *Star Trek*'s future world in space. They encompass operational discourses, nomenclature, visual and conceptual aesthetics, and character archetypes as well as rituals, traditions and an entire maritime milieu.

### **Martin Gabriel (University of Klagenfurt), “Let’s make sure history never forgets ...’: Starfleet Ships and the Continuation of Anglo-American Cultural Domination in the *Star Trek* Universe”**

The *Star Trek* series and movies have often been mentioned as examples of popular culture that promote the values of humanism, democracy, and equality. While many of the main characters, in fact, can be seen as humanistic, and while the United Federation of Planets features many (though not only) characteristics of a democratic organization, there is clearly an area in which *Star Trek* fell short of its aims: the naming of Starfleet ships.

Although it has been quite obvious to interested viewers that names deriving from European and/or Anglo-American cultures dominate Starfleet, there has been no systematic review of the naming traditions for Starfleet ships.

A statistical approach shows that more than three quarters of 162 “canonized” starship names from the five series (*TOS*, *TNG*, *DS9*, *VOY*, *ENT*) and movies *ST:I* to *ST:X* are rooted in European cultural traditions; Anglo-American backgrounds can be found in at least 57% of the sample. While the Federation’s nature as an intergalactic alliance that is based on equality for all planets (which would include equality for all those planets’ regions) is often mentioned, it becomes clear that not only non-human species are being marginalized when it comes to the naming of starships; we can also say the same for certain regions of our planet (e.g. Arabia, Southeast and Central Asia, Africa). Most starship names can be traced back to what are now the United States, with Europe (including Russia), Latin America, and Japan trailing; thus, it becomes obvious that, while placating equality, *Star Trek* – via the most important assets of Starfleet, the starships – further solidified the master narrative of “Western” or, more specifically, Anglo-American cultural dominance.

### **Christian Domenig (University of Klagenfurt), “Bajoran Religion and Christian Middle Ages”**

The Bajoran civilization is said to be one of the oldest in the universe. It is stretching back nearly half a million years and reached its zenith at about 25,000 to 20,000 years ago. In this time Bajoran scholars evolved knowledge in science, mathematics, philosophy, and the arts. In the 16th century (Earth calendar), when the First Republic was established, they undertook their first interstellar flight. At the beginning of the 24th century the oppression by the Cardassians began.

My aim is to compare the Bajoran religion with the medieval Christian church. In focus will be the constitution of these religions and the political scope of their representatives. What does authority mean? How intertwined is religion with policy, polity, and politics? What about heresies and inter-religious conflicts? Hence, typical historical questions will be discussed. Theological doctrines will only be mentioned if necessary.

## **Panel XVII: Challenging (American) TV as It Is: Contingency, Coherence and Changing Technologies in Contemporary US-American Television (Room 40130)**

### **Kathrin Rothmund (University of Bayreuth), “Televised Contingency: Narrative Complexity in Streamed Serials”**

Narrative complexity is often used to describe contemporary serial narratives but there are only few analytic concepts elaborated that enable media scholars to investigate levels of complexity in television narratives. I want to present my approach to narrative complexity that significantly differs from, for example, Jason Mittell’s approach. Instead of using a rather neo-formal tool-set my concept of narrative complexity is derived from continental complexity theory and aims at the variability, openness and contingency of serialized narrative worlds. With my paper I want to apply this concept to serial narratives exclusively or primarily produced for streaming services. Looking at *Sense8* and *Narcos* (both Netflix) my concept of narrative complexity will be used to challenge the “Americanness” of complex TV serials by focusing on the globalized narrative schemes of streaming services.

**Mareike Jenner (Anglia Ruskin University, UK), "The Changing Face of Television: Contemporary Television as TV IV"**

The increasing move of television to Video-on-Demand services like Netflix or Amazon Instant Video challenges ideas of what television is in a variety of ways. Video-on-Demand poses significant challenges to industrial and technological infrastructures of television as well as shifts in viewing behavior (binge-watching). This paper conceptualizes these shifts as a new stage in the development of what television is. Following television studies' conceptualizations of TV I, II and III, this paper explores the possibility of viewing current stages of television as TV IV. In this, it will specifically focus on American television history as a market where many of these shifts occur first. This paper focuses specifically on the industrial and socio-technological discourses that drive the current shifts. As such, it considers different phases in television as driven by the adaptation of new technologies, such as the television set itself, the VCR and later the DVR, DVD or game consoles. All these technologies forced shifts within the television industry. Thus, together, these discourses significantly shaped contemporary ideas of what television is. Consequently, current challenges Video-on-Demand poses to the technological and industrial infrastructures of television are, at least in some ways, similar to the shifts that occurred in the 1980s or the late 1990s.

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