

**Brandt, Stefan, PD Dr. (John-F.-Kennedy-Institut, Freie Universität Berlin), "Fist Fights, Open Throats, and Vomity Cabs: J. D. Salinger's Visceral Language and the Postwar Rhetoric of Rebellion"**

The American 1950s were a time of outspoken rhetoric regarding the issues of "juvenile rebellion" and "alienation." In some cases, these topics were treated with contempt and almost hysteria like in Norman Podhoretz's pamphlets. In other cases, scholars found more sympathy and understanding for the youthful rebels.

Among other texts, Robert Lindner's study *Rebel Without a Cause* became a source for myths and narratives concerning the estranged young generation. J. D. Salinger's groundbreaking novel, *The Catcher in the Rye* (1951), can be seen as the archetypical expression of this discourse, representing the rebellious teenager as a mentally disturbed and yet actively nonconformist individual. Holden's rebellion is not so much a psychological rebellion, but rather a "gut rebellion," one that is deeply rooted in the character's body and instinctual reflexes. In its emphasis upon the teenager's visceral responses to his environment, Salinger's novel is symptomatic of a whole wave of cultural texts on the "New Lost Generation" in which the topics of alienation and dislocation are mediated through references to physical acts of rebellion. PD Dr. Stefan Brandt (John-F.-Kennedy-Institut, Freie Universität Berlin)

**Bio Sketch**

Stefan Brandt teaches American Literature and Culture at the John F. Kennedy Institute for North American Studies of the Freie Universität Berlin. From April 2004 to March 2005 he was Guest Professor of North American Culture at the John F. Kennedy Institute. He studied at the University of London, Cornell University, Ithaca, and the University of California, Berkeley, and was a fellow at the University of California, Irvine (UCI), the University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA), and the University of Southern California (USC). He has written two books, the first being on the construction of masculinity in fin de siècle American literature, the second being on the aesthetics of the body in 1950s American literature and film and edited an anthology of articles on Douglas Sirk's *Imitation of Life*. He has published widely in English and German language publications on gender, cinema, literary theory, and American cultural history.

**Dannenberg, Hilary, Prof. Dr.(University of Leipzig), "Images of American Society and Culture in Science-Fiction Movies of the 1950s"**

The 1950s not only saw the beginnings of real-world space flight, they also pioneered the development of the American science-fiction movie. Despite their recurrent themes – alien invaders and other threats from outer space – these movies project a range of contrasting images of American society (and sometimes, by extension, of human civilization as a whole).

Thus in the context of the rising threat of the cold war, *The Day the Earth Stood Still* (1951) presents a politically undifferentiated image of global humankind as a dangerous and underdeveloped species in need of dictatorial overseeing by a more advanced extra-terrestrial culture. By contrast, the American film version of *The War of the Worlds* (1953), rewriting H.G. Wells's original text, represents the American nation as at the apex of a chosen race which is preserved by God from the threat of subjugation to aggressive and inhuman Martians.

*The Invasion of the Body Snatchers* (1956) creates a more subtly sinister narrative of the alien infiltration of small-town America through the transformation of human beings into soulless replicas, and has been interpreted as an expression of cold-war paranoia about the communist infiltration of American society. *When Worlds Collide* (1951), one of the first natural disaster movies, optimistically

depicts American society as capable of renewal and of creating a new utopia, but significantly, those selected to board the space ark and escape from Earth to found this new society are all white Americans who submit to firm military discipline.

The paper will explore the different directions and implications of these texts, also making comparative reference to more recent American movies in the same genre in order to highlight parallels and differences in images of American society and culture in the middle and at the close of the twentieth century.

### **Bio Sketch**

Hilary P. Dannenberg is currently substitute professor of English literature and anglophone African literatures at the University of Bayreuth; she also holds the position of associate professor of British literature and new English literatures at the University of Leipzig. She has a PhD in German Literature from the University of Cardiff and a Habilitation in English Literature from the University of Freiburg. Her published articles include papers on: the nineteenth-century English novel; nationality and gender in the Indian novel in English; the reconstruction of identity in American science-fiction and fantasy movies; the noble savage in the colonial novel and in contemporary science fiction; politics and class in British drama in the 1990s; the BBC brand of situation comedy. Her Habilitationsschrift, "Plotting Coincidence and Counterfactuality in Narrative Fiction," is in preparation for publication. She is currently working on projects on postcolonial narrative strategies and British television.

### **Elzer, Bernd, M.A., M.A. (University of Trier), "Alternative Masculinities in 1950s Hollywood Melodrama"**

In retrospect, the American 1950s may seem like an idyllic era characterized more by conformism than by rebellion, but, as David Halberstam puts it: "Social ferment [...] was beginning just beneath this placid surface" (The Fifties, 1994). Nor did the social changes of the time leave the American film industry unaffected. As one answer to television's growing competition, Hollywood increasingly dealt with controversial issues, such as questions of gender, race or sexuality. This is particularly true for 1950s melodramas, which, though often labeled as reactionary, negotiate a whole range of (alternative) masculinities – from patriarchal manhood to queer masculinities.

### **Bio Sketch**

Bernd Elzer is a Ph.D. student in Media Studies and English at the University of Trier. He studied English, Media Studies and Political Science at Trier, where he received his M.A. in 2002. He also holds a M.A. in English from Clark University in Worcester, Massachusetts, which he earned in 2003 after completing his Master's thesis "Out of the Shadow, into the Light: Exploring the Male Audience of American Daytime Soaps". He currently (since April 2003) holds a scholarship from the DFG (German Research Foundation) to work on his Ph.D. thesis about constructions of masculinity and alterity in American popular genres of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. His areas of research and writing include cultural studies, film and television studies, nineteenth-century American literature, questions of gender and genre as well as studies in masculinities and queer studies.

### **Prof. Ph.D. Ann Marie Fallon (Portland State University, USA), "Rebels Out (and In) Academe: The Making of American Literature 1950-1955"**

In many ways, the 1950s gave shape to the American academy we know today. Following World War II, with the introduction of the G.I. bill, the development of American Studies, the Cold War and in literary studies especially the work of the New Critics, the idea of a uniquely American system of arts and letters was institutionalized.

This critical culture transformed contemporary ideas about the value of knowledge, the intellectual in society, and the meaning of American literature. But the rise of an institutionalized professorial class of literary critics did not occur quietly or in a vacuum. This paper examines novelistic critiques of the Academy by Mary McCarthy, Ralph Ellison and Vladimir Nabokov and suggests ways in which these critiques shaped, and sometimes failed to shape, the study of the American novel.

### **Bio Sketch**

Ann Marie Fallon, Ph.D. (University of Virginia 2003) is currently a Fulbright Junior Lecturer at the Trier Center for American Studies and an Assistant Professor at Portland State University in Portland, Oregon. She writes and teaches about postcolonial literature, transnational aesthetics, feminist theory, twentieth-century American and British literature and community-based learning.

### **Goetsch, Paul, Prof. Dr. (Albert-Ludwigs-University of Freiburg), "Reinhold Niebuhr's The Irony of American History: A Cold Warrior's Critique of Cold War Rhetoric"**

In the 1940s and 1950s, the Protestant theologian and moralist Reinhold Niebuhr published numerous articles and several books on American foreign policy. He regarded the struggle with communism as inevitable. At the same time, however, he was painfully aware of the simplifications of contemporary rhetoric and the self-righteousness of the American position. So he became a cold warrior who thought it necessary to criticize Cold War rhetoric.

In *The Irony of American History* (1952) he adopts irony as a critical instrument to expose incongruities in the American and communist positions. He calls some of the basic oppositions of the Cold War discourse into question, for instance, the distinction between good and bad nations, the Christian West and the atheistic communist world, American individualism and communist collectivism.

As an interpretation of the Cold War, *The Irony of American History* would have to be revised today. Niebuhr's approach, however, remains largely persuasive. It has been applied by Richard Reinitz to works about American history. It also lends itself to an analysis of the situation after 9/11. Niebuhr in many ways anticipates the "liberal ironist" described by Richard Rorty in *Contingency, Irony, and Solidarity* (1989): He was committed to the community and its values, but faced up "to the contingency of his [...] own most central beliefs and desires."

### **Bio Sketch**

Paul Goetsch is emeritus Professor of English and American Literature at the University of Freiburg. He published books on Canadian literary nationalism, Dickens, Hardy, the English novel in transition (1880-1910), modern drama, the short story, and the monster in English literature. He is the author of a number of articles on American rhetoric as well as the annotated bibliography *Presidential Rhetoric and Communication since F. D. Roosevelt*. He co-edited *The Fourth of July: Political Orator and Literary Reactions, 1776-1876* and two books dealing with presidential rhetoric.

### **Hallet, Wolfgang, Prof. Dr. (Justus-Liebig-University of Giessen), "'But think, for a moment, about the system'. Discourses of the 1950s in Philip K. Dick's 'Minority Report'(1956)"**

This paper will explore how a rather inconspicuous literary text written and published in the 1950s negotiates political, legal and ethical discourses and values of the time. On a more abstract level, Dick's story "Minority Report" (1956) can also be read as a parable on the individual's place in a system and 'the system in the individual'. Thus, Dick's story does not only partake in the American civic and political discourses of the 1950s but also in the broad historical discourse on American constitutional values which can be read as the cultural macro-text that establishes a link to the present.

A short excursus will look into Stephen Spielberg's film adaptation to describe how, in the immediate wake of 9/11, he revives discourses of the 1950s. The paper will also include a pedagogical dimension asking how the complex and plural cultural text that is woven into the story may be represented in the foreign language classroom.

### **Bio Sketch**

Wolfgang Hallet is Professor of Teaching English as a Foreign Language and English Literature at the University of Giessen. Before his academic career he worked as a high school teacher (Gymnasium) and a teacher trainer. For seven years he was the head of the Auguste-Viktoria-Gymnasium in Trier, a UNESCO Associated Projects School with a bilingual branch. His research in cognitive processes

and the acquisition of competences in content and language integrated learning originates from this background.

His main research areas are the implications of theories of culture, literature and the text as well as of literary and cultural history for the teaching of literature. In his book *Fremdsprachenunterricht als Spiel der Texte und Kulturen. Intertextualität als Paradigma einer kulturwissenschaftlichen Didaktik* (2002) he integrates these theoretical concepts into a pedagogical and methodological approach based on the concepts of intertextuality and intermediality. He is a member of the editorial board of *Der fremdsprachliche Unterricht Englisch*.

### **Hornung, Alfred, Prof. Dr. (Johannes-Gutenberg-University of Mainz), "I Married a Communist: Philip Roth's Return to the 1950s"**

In the 1990s, the Jewish-American writer Philip Roth published an amazing series of novels concerned with the analysis of the American system. The familiar interplay of private and public life of his Jewish-American protagonist is expanded onto the larger context of the United States. In analogy to the feminist slogan, he exemplifies that the personal is the political.

In *I Married a Communist* (1998), Roth turns to the postwar years and the 1950s for an analysis of personal relations between two radio actors, a former spy for the Soviet Union and his wife, in the McCarthy era. The story of cruelty, humiliation and betrayal in the private sphere reverberates in the public domain of investigations before the House of Un-American Activities Committee.

In my paper I will try to locate Roth's personal and fictional intentions connected with this return to the 1950s from the perspective of his fictional alter ego Nathan Zuckerman in the 1990s. The postwar years and the 1950s were his formative years and the beginning of his career as a writer. At this time he also must have seen the film *I Married a Communist*, directed by Robert Stevenson and released in 1949, renamed *The Woman on Pier 13* in 1950, which also addresses the political situation of the McCarthy era.

Last but not least, the novel can also be seen as a reaction to Roth's own married life in the 1990s. The analysis will show to what extent the different strands of this novelistic endeavor contribute to an analysis of a new post-communist age after the fall of the wall in the 1990s.

#### **Bio Sketch**

Alfred Hornung is Professor and Chair of American Studies at the Johannes Gutenberg University in Mainz. His publications include studies on the Muckraking Movement, autobiography, postmodern literature and culture, postcolonialism and intercultural America. From 1990 to 2002, he was General Editor of the journal *Amerikastudien / American Studies*, and he is one of the editors of *American Studies: A Monograph Series*. He is the President of the German Association for American Studies and the director of the Center for Intercultural Studies at Mainz.

### **Hurm, Gerd, Prof. Dr. (University of Trier), "Rebellion as Affirmation: Allen Ginsberg's American Poetics"**

It may have been a strategic, tongue-in-cheek assertion in 1957 when Allen Ginsberg told his father that "People keep seeing destruction or rebellion in [...] *Howl*, but that is a very minor element, actually," yet his announcement in the same letter to reform American materialism with "some kind of spiritual infusion" in the tradition of Walt Whitman seems to confirm the claim to a more affirmative poetic agenda. Starting from this and similar assertions, the paper intends to re-examine the uses, functions, and negotiations of mainstream discourses in Ginsberg's avant-garde writings in order to reassess the relationship between affirmation and rebellion for this crucial figure in the American Fifties.

#### **Bio Sketch**

Gerd Hurm is Professor of American Literature and Culture at the University of Trier and director of the Trier Center for American Studies. His publications include the monographs *Fragmented Urban Images: The American City in Modern Fiction from Stephen Crane to Thomas Pynchon* and *Rewriting the Vernacular Mark Twain. The Aesthetics and Politics of Orality in Samuel Clemens's Fictions*. He

has co-edited volumes on American cultural identity and American political rhetoric: *The Fourth of July: Political Oratory and Literary Reactions, 1776-1876* and *Important Speeches by American Presidents after 1945*.

**Lindenmeyer, Kriste, Prof. Ph.D. (University of Maryland, USA), "Meet the Parents: Embracing an Ideal of Modern American Childhood"**

The 1950s marked the first decade when a majority of American young people seemed to have access to the middle-class ideal of modern childhood and adolescence that had long been advocated by child welfare experts. Why were adults in the 1950s more open to adopting this model for their own children than earlier generations? Examining the childhood and adolescent experiences of the generation of parents who embraced this ideal during the 1950s helps to shed light on why this decade marked such an important shift in public attitudes and policies.

**Bio Sketch**

Kriste Lindenmeyer is Associate Professor of History at the University of Maryland, Baltimore County. Her research and teaching focus is on U.S. Social History with an emphasis on public policy, the history of childhood, and women and gender during the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. She is also the coordinator for the UMBC History Department's Public History Track in the Masters in Historical Studies Program. Her publications include *A Right to Childhood: The U.S. Children's Bureau and Child Welfare, 1912-1946*, *Ordinary Women, Extraordinary Lives: Women in American History*, and *Politics and Progress: American Society and the State since 1865* (with Andrew Kersten), "The Federal Government and Child Health" in *Children and Youth in Sicknes and in Health: A Historical Handbook and Guide*, and an article on integrating women's history into the U.S. history survey in the March 2003 *Journal of American History*. Her forthcoming book is entitled, *The Greatest Generation Grows Up: Childhood in 1930s America* (Ivan Dee Publishing). She held a faculty position at Tennessee Technological University, and has also taught American history at the University of Cincinnati and Vanderbilt University. She is the recipient of several fellowships and awards including a Fulbright Senior Fellowship at the Martin-Luther-University of Halle-Wittenberg located in Halle.

**Potter, Rebecca, Prof. Ph.D. (University of Dayton, USA), "Jeremiah's Decade: Apocalyptic Environmentalism from The Martian Chronicles to Silent Spring"**

The Fifties saw a dramatic shift in perceptions of the environment, largely due to the imagined implications of nuclear holocaust. While conservation movements of previous decades had emphasized the need to protect wilderness areas from human development, only in the 1950s did American culture become haunted by the image of an entire planet that is no longer able to sustain human life. Whereas fear of environmental apocalypse is imaginatively expressed in science fiction writing of the decade, science begins to provide substance to the science fiction writer's jeremiad.

This growing concern for environmental degradation, and the fear of a dying planet culminates in the publication of Rachel Carson's *Silent Spring*, which effectively launches a public awareness campaign that many consider the birth of the American environmental movement. But until Carson's highly popular jeremiad against the use of pesticides and herbicides, the environmental movement in the United States existed in a diverse, pre-formative state, creating many rebels without a single cause. What finally unites these disparate voices is the emergence of a shared rhetoric familiar to American culture, the jeremiad.

**Bio Sketch**

Rebecca C. Potter is Assistant Professor of English and American Literature at the University of Dayton, Dayton, Ohio, since 2001, and currently the Fulbright Guest Professor for American Literature at the Ludwig-Maximilian University, Munich. Her interests include, eighteenth-century literature and Romanticism, and she is currently working on a book that examines images of the apocalypse in American depictions of nature.

**Raussert, Wilfried, PD Dr. (National University of Ireland, Cork, Ireland), "American Avant-Garde: Allan Kaprow's 18 Happenings in 6 Parts: A Search for New Communities?"**

As pioneer force among the American avant-garde artists in the 1950s Allan Kaprow launched a new phase of radical experimental performance theatre through his production of 18 Happenings in 6 Parts in 1959. This paper will explore in which ways Kaprow's happenings break through boundaries between art and life, in which ways they attempt to fuse ritual and technology, and in which ways they intend to develop the dialogue between performer and audience. By investigating into responses from the audience (Samuel Delaney) in particular, I want to explore whether Kaprow's happenings actually express an aesthetic critique of mainstream America and whether they provide aesthetic models for new community-building processes at the end of the 1950s.

**Bio Sketch**

Wilfried Raussert is currently Associate Professor for American Literature and Culture at the National University of Ireland, University College Cork. He received his Ph.D. from the University of Mississippi (1995) and completed the Habilitation at the Humboldt University of Berlin in 2001. He has taught at the John F. Kennedy Institute for North American Studies in Berlin, at the Humboldt-University of Berlin and the Technological University of Berlin. In 2003 he was Visiting Professor for American Literature at the University of Mississippi, Oxford. Among his publications are *Negotiating Temporal Differences. Blues, Jazz and Narrativity in African American Culture* (Heidelberg: Winter, 2000) and *Avantgarden in den USA 1940-70: Zwischen Mainstream und kritischer Erneuerung* (Frankfurt am Main: Campus, 2003).

**Reed, Maureen, Prof. Ph.D. (Minnesota State University, USA), "Performing Traditional Womanhood: Fabiola Cabeza de Baca and Hispanic Civil Rights in the 1950s"**

The simultaneously nostalgic and resistant narrative voice of Fabiola Cabeza de Baca's 1954 memoir, *We Fed Them Cactus*, resulted from her sense that, as a woman of color, she could best command respect for Hispanic New Mexican culture if she spoke from a traditional, and conventionally feminine, perspective.

This paper uses biographical research to explore how her home economics career and her attempts to become involved with the male-dominated League of United Latin American Citizens allowed her to develop what was ultimately an innovative feminist strategy for envisioning how Hispanics could assert ethnic identity while also demanding civic equality.

**Bio Sketch**

Maureen Reed was born in Detroit, Michigan, and received her Bachelor's Degree in English and Art History from Rice University in Houston, Texas. After earning Master's and Ph.D. degrees in American Studies at the University of Texas at Austin, she began teaching at Minnesota State University Moorhead, where she is an Assistant Professor in American Studies. For the 2004-2005 academic year, she is a Fulbright Lecturer in American Studies at the University of Regensburg. Her book, *A Woman's Place: Women Writing New Mexico*, will be published by University of New Mexico Press in April 2005. She is currently working on a new project about women writers of the Midwest.

**Schowalter, Lutz, M.A. (University of Trier), "Rebels With a Cause? Evangelical Christian Fundamentalism in US Society and Literature of the 1950s"**

In 1977, a representative of the National Association of Evangelicals announced, "[t]wenty to forty years ago [evangelical Christianity] was on the edge of things. Now it has moved to the center." Today, this trend seems to have solidified. Many contemporary evangelical Christian fundamentalists typically take a position outside of (rebel against) modern society, and affirm it at the same time.

Is this comparable to their position in the 1950s? Were evangelical Christians then really only a marginal group of rebels with a cause? Was this in some way reflected in the country's culture, and if so, how? These are the questions my paper will address by looking at 'mainstream' and Christian (sub-)cultural production of the 1950s.

**Bio Sketch**

Lutz Schowalter studied English, German, and Canadian Studies at the Universities of Mannheim, Manitoba (Winnipeg, Canada), and Trier. He is currently finishing his Ph.D. dissertation, in which he looks at contemporary North American urban fiction and analyzes literary and cultural developments within and after the movement of postmodernism. He teaches classes on American and Canadian culture and literature at Trier University, is one of two coordinators of the young scholars' forum of the Gesellschaft für Kanada-Studien (GKS), and is preparing for his Habilitation, which will discuss interrelations between religion, literature, and society in North America.

**Walsh, Patrick, Prof. Ph.D. (Minnesota State University, USA), "Grandma Moses, Thomas Kinkade, and the Production of Nostalgia"**

My paper examines the work of painters Grandma Moses and Thomas Kinkade in terms of its rejection of modern America. I will suggest that Moses, who often painted from memory, offered her audience an escape to a pre-modern America, one that was still tangible in the 1950s. Kinkade, on the other hand, raised in California in the 1970s, enters the realm of fantasy to create an idealized world without automobiles and malls. I will analyze this difference and ask what we can learn from it in terms of anti-modernism in popular American culture. What does Kinkade's success suggest about how popular nostalgia has changed since the 1950s?

**Bio Sketch**

Patrick J. Walsh is spending the 2004-2005 academic year as a Fulbright Junior Lecturer in American Studies at the University of Passau in Bavaria. He is an Assistant Professor in Multidisciplinary Studies at Minnesota State University Moorhead, where he teaches courses on American culture. His areas of research center on American responses to modern life, especially countercultural movements. He is currently completing a manuscript on the Bohemian colony at Carmel-by-the-Sea, California. His next project will be a survey of American Bohemianism.