



**45<sup>TH</sup>  
AUSTRIAN ASSOCIATION  
FOR AMERICAN STUDIES  
CONFERENCE 2018**

# **IM AMERICAN MOBILITIES**

## **KEYNOTES**

**Hester Blum**

**Penn State University**

**Heike Paul**

**FAU Erlangen-Nuremberg**

**Mimi Sheller**

**Drexel University**

**Nov. 16 - 18  
University of  
Vienna**

**[aas2018.univie.ac.at](http://aas2018.univie.ac.at)**

## Welcome

Vienna, November 2018

Dear conference participants, dear AAAS members and friends!

It is with great pleasure that we welcome you to the 45th annual conference of the Austrian Association for American Studies (AAAS) at the University of Vienna! Thank you for your valued participation, which we are sure will contribute to stimulating discussions and fruitful scholarly exchange.

This year's conference invites us to discuss the meanings of mobility and immobility in American cultural expression and history, from subnational to transnational angles and in diachronic depth. "To be an American is to go somewhere," sociologist John Urry, a founding scholar of the interdisciplinary field of mobility studies, once quipped. In line with this, American narratives and performances of mobility have often celebrated journeys of exploration and "discovery," from the Puritan "errand into the wilderness" to westward expansion, from the upward social mobility associated with the American Dream to space exploration. With the development of mobility studies into a critical endeavor that equally addresses immobilization, the quote now appears as essentialist and exclusionary; yet it captures the foundational, mythological dimension of the United States as a *Nation on the Move* (van Minnen/Hilton). Mobility studies have called into question this dominant script, as it obliterates immobilities and forced mobilities, from Atlantic slavery to internment, incarceration, and deportation. This is also one of the core perspectives explored by our co-sponsor, the University of Vienna's interdisciplinary Research Platform "Mobile Cultures and Societies" ([mobilecultures.univie.ac.at](http://mobilecultures.univie.ac.at)).

The massive national and international response to our Call for Papers and the wide range of topics our speakers are going to explore over the coming days speak to the importance of this critical endeavor. The papers and panels of this conference also reflect on the present moment, in which solidifying borders are again on the rise on both sides of the Atlantic. The disciplinary breadth of our esteemed keynote speakers' expertise and our workshop participants' presentations will take us from body studies and queer studies to game studies, from the im/mobilities of settler colonialism, expansionism, and American imperialism to African American im/mobilities (from the plantation to the Great Migration) and beyond. We will also discuss minor and everyday forms of mobility as well as the genres, performance, and aesthetics of American im/mobilities.

We would like to express our sincere gratitude to the many individuals and institutions that have contributed to making this conference possible. First and

foremost, we thank our main sponsors: the U.S. Embassy, the University of Vienna, the Austrian Academy of Sciences (ÖAW), the Research Platform “Mobile Cultures and Societies,” the City of Vienna, and the Student Union (ÖH). A special thanks to choreographer Esther Balfe and her MUK (Music and Arts University of the City of Vienna) students, whose dance performance *POLARIZE* we will experience on Saturday evening.

We are looking forward to an intellectually stimulating convention that will not only lead, we hope, to the recognition and advancement of (im)mobility and mobility studies in an American Studies context in Austria and beyond, but also foster international contacts and cooperation among students and more advanced researchers. In addition to enjoying our university campus, we hope that you will also have some opportunity to explore the city of Vienna, which has a particular charm in the cold and fog of November.

With very best wishes for a memorable event,

Alexandra Ganser, Leo Lippert, Helena Oberzaucher, Ranthild Salzer, Eva Maria Schörgenhuber, Eléonore Tarla (organizing committee)

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## Conference Program Overview

Friday, November 16		
Time	Place	Event
1:30 – 3:00	Café Engländer	JAAAS editorial meeting
4:00 – 6:00	Foyer ÖAW (Herbert-Hunger-Haus)	Registration
3:00 – 4:30	Alte Burse ÖAW (Herbert-Hunger-Haus)	Board Meeting
4:30 – 5:15	Theatersaal ÖAW (Herbert-Hunger-Haus)	Conference Opening <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Welcome Addresses</li> <li>Fulbright Prize 2018</li> <li>Honorary Membership Awards</li> </ul>
5:15 – 6:00	Theatersaal	Reception
6:00 – 7:30	Theatersaal	Opening Keynote by <b>Heike Paul</b> (FAU Erlangen-Nürnberg): “The Sensation of Rootedness: Mobility Studies Meets Affect Studies” Chair: <b>Alexandra Ganser</b>

Saturday, November 17		
Time	Place	Event
8:00 – 4:00	Department Ground Floor	Registration
9:00 – 10:30	Department	<b>Panel Session 1</b>
10:30 – 11:00	Department Ground Floor	Coffee Break
11:00 – 12:30	Department	<b>Panel Session 2</b>

12:30 – 2:30		Lunch
12:30 – 2:30	Küche 18	Austria's Young Americanists (AYA) Lunch for Early Career Researchers
2:30 – 4:30	Department	<b>Panel Session 3</b>
4:30 – 5:00	Department Ground Floor	Coffee Break
5:00 – 6:30	Department Unterrichtsraum	AAAS General Meeting
7:00 – 8:30	t.b.a.	Keynote Address by <b>Hester Blum</b> (Pennsylvania State University): “Arctic Dead Letters: Polar Circulation and Ecomedia” Chair: <b>Leopold Lippert</b>
8:30 – 10:30	t.b.a.	Reception and Party Dance Performance “POLARIZE” (MUK Vienna)

Sunday, November 18		
Time	Place	Event
8:00 – 11:00	Department Ground Floor	Registration
9:00 – 10:30	Department Unterrichtsraum	Keynote Address by <b>Mimi Sheller</b> (Drexel University): “American Im/Mobilities and Movements for Mobility Justice” Chair: <b>Roman Kabelik</b>
10:30 – 11:00	Department Ground Floor	Coffee Break
11:00 – 1:00	Department	<b>Panel Session 4</b>
1:00 – 2:00	Venue t.b.d.	Meeting of the New Board

## Timetable

Friday, November 16						
4:30-6	Conference Opening & Reception					
Keynote (6-7:30)	Heike Paul “The Sensation of Rootedness: Mobility Studies Meets Affect Studies”, Venue: Theatersaal (ÖAW Herbert-Hunger-Haus)					
Saturday, November 17						
	Seminar Room 1	Seminar Room 2	Seminar Room 3	Seminar Room 5	Seminar Room 6	Unterrichtsraum
Session 1 (9-10:30)	Panel 1: Aesthetic Mediation, Political Mobilization, and the Im/Mobilities of Gender	Panel 2: Im/Mobilities and Performance	Panel 3: Legacies of Cold War Im/Mobilities			Panel 4: Im/Mobilities and Empire
Coffee Break (10:30-11)						
Session 2 (11-12:30)	Panel 5: African American Im/Mobilities I	Panel 6: Im/Mobilities and the Environment	Panel 7: Disability and Im/Mobility	Panel 8: Homes on the Move	Panel 9: Interrogations of the American West	
Lunch (12:30-2:30)						
Session 3 (2:30-4:30)	Panel 10: African American Im/Mobilities II	Panel 11: Space, Gender, and Mobility in American Science Fiction	Panel 12: Maritime Crossings	Panel 14: Gendered Im/Mobilities	Panel 15: Minor Mobilities	Panel 13: Intersectional Approaches to Im/Mobilities on Screen
Coffee Break (4:30-5)						
5-6:30						AAAS General Meeting
Keynote (7-8:30)	Hester Blum “Arctic Dead Letters: Polar Circulation and Ecomedia”, Venue: t.b.a.					
8:30-10:30	Reception, Party, & Dance Performance “POLARIZE” (MUK Vienna), Venue: t.b.a.					
Sunday, November 18						
	Seminar Room 1	Seminar Room 2	Seminar Room 3	Seminar Room 5	Seminar Room 6	Unterrichtsraum
Keynote (9-10:30)	Mimi Sheller “American Im/Mobilities and Movements for Mobility Justice”, Venue: Unterrichtsraum (Department)					
Coffee Break (10:30-11)						
Session 4 (11-1)	Panel 16: Versifying Im/Mobility: Poetry as Dance	Panel 17: Intersectional Im/Mobilities of Gender and Race	Panel 18: Moving in/across/through America in Video Games (and Digital Culture)	Panel 20: Deportation and Detainment	Panel 21: Modern-Day Pilgrimages in the US and Beyond	Panel 19: Queer Im/Mobilities

## Panels

All panels will be held at the Department of English and American Studies.

### Session 1: Sat, 9-10:30

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#### **Panel 1: Angry. Crazy. Sad. Smileyface: Aesthetic Mediation, Political Mobilization, and the Im/Mobilities of Gender** *Seminar Room 1*

**Chairs:** Sophie Spieler (Leipzig University), Florian Sedlmeier (University of Hamburg)

**Elisabeth Krieber** (University of Salzburg): From Panel to Stage: Transmedial Mobilization of Queer Identities

**Ralph J. Poole** (University of Salzburg): Full Disclosure: Gender\* Mobilization and Affective Trans Male Publics

**Katja Kanzler** (Leipzig University): #NastyWoman: Vernacular Feminism and the Poetics of Resignification in 21st Century US Popular Culture

#### **Panel 2: Im/Mobilities and Performance** *Seminar Room 2*

**Chair:** Ingrid Gessner (Pädagogische Hochschule Vorarlberg)

**Martina Koegeler-Abdi** (University of Copenhagen): *Anna Ascends* (1920): Syrian Immigrants between Social Ascent and Racial Immobility

**Hannah Murray** (King's College London): "Almost a Citizen": Performance and Social Mobility in Robert Montgomery Bird's *The Adventures of Robin Day* (1839)

**Veronika Keller** (Leipzig University): "Here I am in my Mecca": The Transatlantic Migration of Music Students between 1843 and 1918

#### **Panel 3: Legacies of Cold War Im/Mobilities** *Seminar Room 3*

**Chair:** Christian Stenico (University of Innsbruck)

**Klaus Rieser** (University of Graz): "Going Native" in Bulgaria: Valeska Griesebach's Film Western

**Katharina Wiedlack** (Europa Universität Flensburg): "Arrested Development": Trapped in the "Time Loop" of American Cold War Cultures

**Barbara Maly-Bowie** (University of Vienna): Making Connections: Netflix, Cuba and Mobilization

#### **Panel 4: Im/Mobilities and Empire** *Unterrichtsraum*

**Chair:** Kevin Potter (University of Vienna)

**Steffi Wiggins** (University of Vienna): Herman Melville's Work and the Sea: The Experience of Mobility and the Literary Construction of a Place

**Mark Rice** (St. John Fisher College): The Curious Case of Louis Menage: Science, Law, and Imperialism in American Im/Mobilities

**Kevin Riordan** (Nanyang Technological University): American Circumnavigation; Or, Failure as Foreign Policy

### Session 2: Sat, 11-12:30

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#### **Panel 5: African American Im/Mobilities I** *Seminar Room 1*

**Chair:** Sigrid Thomsen (University of Vienna)

**Sunčica Klaas** (Potsdam University): The "Incommensurable Distance" between Freedom and Slavery: Displacement and Disenfranchisement in Solomon Northup's *Twelve Years a Slave*

**François d'Assise Khéyane Tine** (University of Liège): Forced Displacement and Its Traumatic Effects in Toni Morrison's *Home* and *A Mercy*

**Karin Hoepker** (FAU Erlangen-Nürnberg): "Black Cargo": Narratives of Im/Mobility in *Barracoon* and *The Underground Railroad*

#### **Panel 6: Im/Mobilities and the Environment** *Seminar Room 2*

**Chair:** Steffi Wiggins (University of Vienna)

**Timo Müller** (University of Konstanz): Natural Automobility? American Road Narratives and the Environment

**Tatiana Prorokova** (University of Vienna): Mobility, Car Culture, and the Environment in John Steinbeck's *The Grapes of Wrath*

**Leonardo Nolé** (Graduate Center, CUNY): Faulkner's *Go Down, Moses*: A Chronicle of Im/mobilities

**Panel 7: Disability and Im/Mobility***Seminar Room 3***Chair:** Judith Kohlenberger (Vienna University of Economics and Business)**Susanne Hamscha** (Fulbright Austria): Not Going Anywhere: Disability, Civil Rights, and Cultures of Im/mobility**Dorothee Schneider** (Kiel University): "But I'm Not Even in a Wheelchair": Dis/Ability, Im/Mobility and Social Class in Hanya Yanagihara's *A Little Life* (2015)**Juliane Strätz** (Mannheim University): Disabling Mobility: Cultures of Work and Ableism in Joshua Ferris' *The Unnamed***Panel 8: Homes on the Move***Seminar Room 5***Chair:** Elisabeth Lechner (University of Vienna)**Sarah Heinz** (University of Vienna): Mobilizing Homes: Representing Home Spaces in Yaa Gyasi's *Homegoing***Alina Stocklöv** (University of Konstanz): Urban Mobility in Post 9/11 Manhattan: The City as Liminal Space in Don DeLillo's *Cosmopolis* and Teju Cole's *Open City***Joshua Parker** (University of Salzburg): Austrian Refugees in New York**Panel 9: Interrogations of the American West***Seminar Room 6***Chair:** Ulrich Eschborn (University of Graz)**Burak Sezer** (University of Cologne): Slowing Down West: Diminishing Mobility in Thomas Pynchon's *Mason & Dixon***Stefan Rabitsch** (University of Graz): "I Wear My Hat as I Please, Indoors or Out": Western Hats: Wearable, Signifying, Mobile Shapes of Americanness**Session 3: Sat, 1:30-4:30****Panel 10: African American Im/Mobilities II***Seminar Room 1***Chair:** Hanna Wallinger (University of Salzburg)**Julia Velten** (Johannes Gutenberg Universität Mainz): Illusions of Mobility: Reading George Dawson's *Life Is So Good!* Against the Grain**Jiann-Chyng Tu** (Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin): "Arise! All who refuse to be slaves!": W.E.B. Du Bois and Paul Robeson in China**Isabel Kalous** (Justus Liebig University Giessen): Navigating Hostile Terrain with the *Green Book*: Race, Mobility and a Travel Guide for African Americans in the Era of Segregation**Marian Ofori-Amofo** (University of Bayreuth): Coffles, Swamps, Plantations: Im/Mobility and Identity Formation in *I Am Not Sidney Poitier* and *Blonde Roots***Panel 11: Where No (Wo)Man Has Gone Before: Space, Gender, and Mobility in American Science Fiction***Seminar Room 2***Chairs:** Stefan L. Brandt (University of Graz), Manuela Neuwirth (University of Graz)**Imola Bülgözdí** (University of Debrecen): Distorting Mirror? Gendered Segregation in Le Guin's "The Matter of Seggri"**Rocio Carrasco Carrasco** (University of Huelva): Becoming Digital: Posthuman Subjectivities in American Virtual Reality Films**Elisabeth Schneider** (University of Graz): "You Know I Can Take Whatever I Want": Toxic Masculinity, *Star Wars*, and the (Im-)Possibility of Change**Manuela Neuwirth** (University of Graz): Gender-Coding the Extraterrestrial: Asexual Aliens and Hypersexual Hybrids in *Star Trek* and *The X-Files***Panel 12: Maritime Crossings***Seminar Room 3***Chairs:** Roberta Hofer (University of Innsbruck)**David Fontanals** (Universitat de Barcelona): *Pandora* and *Patagonia*: Exploring Domesticity and Mobility in the Short Fiction of Henry James**Klara Stephanie Szlezák** (University of Passau): Negotiating Pasts and Futures: Transatlantic Crossings in Abraham Cahan's "The Imported Bridegroom" (1898)



**Arturo Corujo-Hernández** (Universitat de Barcelona): A Man-of-War in Labour: The Heterotopic Gestation of the Disorientated Self in Herman Melville's *White Jacket; or, The World in a Man-of-War*

**Panel 13: Moving Images: Intersectional Approaches to Im/Mobilities on Screen**

*Unterrichtsraum*

**Chair:** Alexandra Hauke (University of Passau)

**Judith Rauscher** (University of Bamberg): Interrogating Imperial Feminism: Border Crossing and the Politics of Race and Gender in *Star Trek: Discovery*

**Florian Zitzelsberger** (University of Passau): Coming to Terms, Touring America: Queer Mobilities in John Cameron Mitchell's *Hedwig and the Angry Inch*

**Alexandra Hauke** (University of Passau): Horrors of the Sunken Place: Critical Race Theory, Black Mobilization, and Jordan Peele's *Get Out*

**Panel 14: Gendered Im/Mobilities**

*Seminar Room 5*

**Chair:** Stefanie Schäfer (FAU Erlangen-Nürnberg)

**Züleyha Çetiner-Öktem** (Ege University): Ripley: A Woman's Journey

**Katharina Gerund** (FAU Erlangen-Nürnberg): The Im/Mobilities of Military Spouses in Post-9/11 America

**Grazia Micheli** (University of Nottingham): Im/Mobility and In-Betweenness in Contemporary Migrant Literature

**Ranthild Salzer** (University of Vienna): Superheroes as Fantasies of Mobility

**Panel 15: Minor Mobilities**

*Seminar Room 6*

**Chair:** Alexandra Ganser (University of Vienna)

**Astrid Fellner** (Saarland University): Running the Medicine Line: Minor Mobilities on the Canada/US Border

**Gabriele Pisarz-Ramirez** (Leipzig University): "Following the Path of Stanley": Mobilities and Immobilities in US Gulf Coast Tourism

**Steffen Wöll** (Leipzig University): Inertia and Movement: The Spatialization of the Native Northland in Jack London's Short Stories

**Marietta Messmer** (University of Groningen): Disadvantaged and Disenfranchised: The Current Challenges Faced by Under-Age Migrants in the U.S.

**Session 4: Sun, 11-1**

**Panel 16: Versifying Im/Mobility: Poetry as Dance**

*Seminar Room 1*

**Chair:** Nassim Balestrini (University of Graz)

**Nassim Balestrini** (University of Graz): The Delicate *pas de deux* of Dual Citizenship: Language as History's Violent Choreography in Layli Long Soldier's Poetry

**Margit Peterfy** (Heidelberg University): "Dancing out of Rhythm": Juan Felipe Herrera's Anthopoetry as Expressive Commentary

**Philipp Reisner** (Heinrich Heine University Düsseldorf): Trinity as Dance: Li-Young Lee's Poetry Cycle *The Undressing* (2018)

**Jennifer A. Reimer** (University of Graz): Towards a *Transa*-National Poetics: Mobilities within Difference and the Ethnic Avant-Garde

**Panel 17: Intersectional Im/Mobilities of Gender and Race**

*Seminar Room 2*

**Chair:** Martina Koegeler-Abdi (University of Copenhagen)

**Silvia Schultermandl** (University of Graz): Precarious Intimacies and the Im/Mobility of Transnational Care

**Nasrin Babakhani** (University of Göttingen): Mobility and the Re-Imaginations of Identity in Louise Erdrich's *Love Medicine*

**Isabel Treviño** (University of Zaragoza): Unlicensed Drivers: Gendered and Racialised Im/Mobilities in *Learning to Drive*

**Panel 18: Moving in/across/through America in Video Games (and Digital Culture)**

*Seminar Room 3*

**Chair:** Stefan Rabitsch (University of Graz)

**Emir Bektić** (University of Klagenfurt): A Virtual Walk on the American Frontier: Mapping a Native American Tribe's Experience through *Assassin's Creed III*

**Andreas Schuch** (University of Graz): More than just "a Pair of Hovering Eyes, Two Hands and a Big Gun": Examining (Anti-)Illusory Qualities of (Im)Mobility in First-person Shooters

**Michael Fuchs** (University of Graz): You, Too, Can Become a Star: Upward Mobility in Sports Video Games

**William Tate** (James Madison University): The Garage Phenomenon: The Start-up Revolution: A New Mobility



### Panel 19: Queer Im/Mobilities

Unterrichtsraum

**Chair:** Susanne Hamscha (Fulbright Austria)

**Simon Whybrew** (University of Graz): Disappearing into the Future? Reclaiming Transgender Experiences in Contemporary US Science Fiction

**Ben Robbins** (University of Innsbruck): Queer Exile and the Mobility of Narratives across the Modernist Writing of Djuna Barnes and Robert McAlmon

**Rodrigo Andrés** (Universitat de Barcelona): Coming out as a Threat to the Immobilities and Chrononormativities of Domestic Life in Herman Melville's "The Apple-Tree Table"

### Panel 20: Deportation and Detainment

Seminar Room 5

**Chair:** Barbara Maly-Bowie (University of Vienna)

**Louis J. Kern** (Hofstra University): "The Remnant of Barbarism ... [in] the Civil Code of the Country": "Freemmagammed in Queer Street" – Imprisonment for Debt in the United States

**Julia Lange** (University of Hamburg): "We Were Victims, Too": German American Internment Autobiographies and the (Re-)Construction of Citizenship

**Baltasar Jesús López Ruiz** (National Distance Education University): Enemy Aliens: Contributions of Refugees and Displaced Persons to Canada

### Panel 21: Modern-Day Pilgrimages in the US and Beyond

Seminar Room 6

**Chair:** Sabrina Mittermeier (Independent Scholar)

**Mareike Spychala** (University of Bamberg): Honor Flights, Veterans, and Military Pilgrimages in American Popular Culture

**Jennifer Volkmer** (Ludwig-Maximilians-Universität München): A Man Went Looking for America and Couldn't Find It Anywhere: Motorcycle Riding as Modern-Day Pilgrimage

**Sabrina Mittermeier** (Independent Scholar): (Un)Conventional Voyages: Fan Tourism as Pilgrimage?

**Clara Reiring** (University of Cologne): Blue Highways and Emersonian Circles: American Mobility from Transcendentalism to Travel Literature

### Keynote Speakers

**Heike Paul** (FAU Erlangen-Nürnberg, Professor and Chair of American Studies)

#### "The Sensation of Rootedness: Mobility Studies Meets Affect Studies"

Friday, November 16, 6 – 7:30 pm, Theatersaal (ÖAW Herbert-Hunger-Haus)

This talk outlines the history of mobility studies in the past decades and looks at some of its major developments. Presently, the range of phenomena addressed by mobility studies is widening immensely as "mobility" (as well as immobility) is/are used in literal as well as more overtly metaphorical ways. Revisiting the "Cultural Mobility Manifesto" (Greenblatt 2010), it seems that many of its propositions and the realities they refer to have received much scholarly attention – ranging from mobility in "contact zones" to "hidden as well as conspicuous movements of people, objects, images, texts, and ideas" – and the field is in the process of branching out still further. Yet, it is "the sensation of rootedness" that Greenblatt includes in his manifesto, which perhaps relates best to our present moment and to its retrotopian imaginaries of spatial immobility. The latter is at the center of various forms of political mobilization as part of "affective economies" (Ahmed) favoring closure and seems to contradict the American mobility narrative as we know it.

**Heike Paul** is chair of American Studies at FAU Erlangen-Nürnberg and director of the Bavarian American Academy. She is the author of *Kulturkontakt and Racial Presences: Afro-Amerikaner und die deutsche Amerikaliteratur, 1815-1914* (2005) and *The Myths That Made America* (2014). Among her (co-)edited volumes are *Pirates, Drifters Fugitives: Figures of Mobility in the US and Beyond* (2012, with Alexandra Ganzer and Katharina Gerund), *Amerikanische Fernsehserien der Gegenwart* (2015, with Christoph Ernst), and *Critical Regionalism* (2016, with Klaus Löscher). Her current research focuses on civil sentimentalism as well as comparative reeducation studies. She is also writing a monograph on Stewart O'Nan (forthcoming with U of South Carolina P).

**Hester Blum (Pennsylvania State University, Associate Professor of English)**

**“Arctic Dead Letters: Polar Circulation and Ecomedia”**

Saturday, November 17, 7 – 8:30 pm, Venue t.b.a.

What Blum calls “Arctic dead letters” are the cairn messages, notes in bottles, cached documents, mail, and other periodic circuits of delivery or connection in geophysical spaces that would seem otherwise to frustrate human exchange networks. Polar expeditions were required to leave messages in cairns at regular intervals, in multiple copies, often on pre-printed forms in six languages. Even though thousands of bits of paper were distributed throughout the Arctic in the nineteenth century, it was exceptionally rare for one of these messages to be found or received; most remained in circulation for an open-ended period of time, and may yet emerge today, as ice melts and permafrost thaws. In their risk of annihilating dispersion and their potential for ceaseless drift, Arctic dead letters exemplify the unboundedness of polar ecomedia in its attenuated temporality, randomness, and motility.

**Hester Blum** is an Associate Professor of English at Penn State University, where she teaches courses in nineteenth-century U.S. literature and culture. Her scholarship focuses on oceanic studies, book history and material text studies, Herman Melville, and the environmental humanities. Her first book, *The View from the Mast-Head: Maritime Imagination and Antebellum American Sea Narratives* (University of North Carolina Press, 2008), received the John Gardner Maritime Research Award. Her critical edition of *Horrors of Slavery*, William Ray’s 1808 Barbary captivity narrative, appeared from Rutgers University Press in 2008. Professor Blum edited a special issue of *Atlantic Studies* on “Oceanic Studies” and a volume of essays entitled *Turns of Event: American Literary Studies* (University of Pennsylvania Press, 2016). She also frequently contributes to *Avidly*, a channel of the *Los Angeles Review of Books*.

Professor Blum’s new book, *The News at the Ends of the Earth: The Print Culture of Polar Exploration*, is forthcoming from Duke University Press in 2019. In it, she examines polar expeditionary newspapers and other forms of knowledge that circulate geophysical and climatic extremity, both in the age of polar exploration and in our current moment of climate change and polar resource extraction.

Professor Blum is a founder of C19: The Society of Nineteenth-Century Americanists, and recently served as C19 President (2016-2018).

**Mimi Sheller (Drexel University, Director of the Center for Mobilities Research and Policy)**

**“American Im/Mobilities and Movements for Mobility Justice”**

Sunday, November 18, 9 – 10:30 am, Unterrichtsraum (Department)

Transatlantic slavery fundamentally shaped (and in many ways, continues to shape) American systems of uneven mobility, differentiated belonging, and unequal rights to dwell and to move freely. In this talk I will connect the history of American Im/Mobilities to the emergence of movements for mobility justice. The field of mobilities research draws on Doreen Massey’s work on “uneven geographies of oppression” to think through how power is “evident in people’s differential abilities to move.” Uneven mobilities operate at the scale of bodily relations, taking the form of differences in gender, race, class, sexuality, and ability within regimes of mobility control. These uneven capabilities for both movement and stillness must be situated explicitly within histories of slavery, colonialism, and patriarchy. Differential capacities for movement and dwelling affect what it means to be human. Yet such bodily relations also suggest counter-geographies of subversive corporeal movement. To understand these subversive moves and new spatial possibilities, we must reconnect the discussion of mobility justice to the corporeal struggles over gendered, sexualized, disabling, classed and racialized mobility regimes. Critical geographer Katherine McKittrick crucially calls attention to black women’s geographies not only as spaces of resistance and negotiation of these moves but also as “areas of working toward more just conceptualizations of space and place.” What would be required to arrive at more just mobilities in America?

**Mimi Sheller**, Ph.D., is Professor of Sociology and founding Director of the Center for Mobilities Research and Policy at Drexel University in Philadelphia. She is founding co-editor of the journal *Mobilities* and past President of the International Association for the History of Transport, Traffic and Mobility. She is author or co-editor of ten books, including *Mobility Justice: The Politics of Movement in an Age of Extremes* (Verso, 2018); *Aluminum Dreams: The Making of Light Modernity* (MIT Press, 2014); *Citizenship from Below: Erotic Agency and Caribbean Freedom* (Duke University Press, 2012); *Consuming the Caribbean: From Arawaks to Zombies* (Routledge, 2003); and *Democracy After Slavery: Black Publics and Peasant Radicalism in Haiti and Jamaica* (Macmillan Caribbean, 2000). As co-author with John Urry of the articles “The New Mobilities Paradigm” and “Mobilities, Immobilities, Moorings”, and co-editor of *Tourism Mobilities* (2004) and *Mobile Technologies of the City* (2006), she helped to establish the new interdisciplinary field of mobilities research.

## Artists

### “POLARIZE”; By Esther Balfe

Music by Francois Ceccaldi

Dancers: Katharina Alram, Sophie Borney, Flora Zsofia Boros, Milena Kapfer, Lea Karnutsch, Jeanna Helene Laktis, Yeaji Lim, Melina Papoulia, Shirin Rieser, Laura Safar, Nicholas Denzel Sambou.

This contemporary dance work takes a sharp and focused look at the state of constant flux in response to birth, migration, and death. We look at borders as a spatial notion where the performers use the architecture of the room to create imaginary borders, physically exploring construction, deconstruction, migration and mobility.

Dancers of the Music and Arts University of the City of Vienna are in their 2<sup>nd</sup> year of the BA in Classical and Contemporary Dance & the piece has been devised and choreographed by Esther Balfe.

**Esther Balfe** graduated from Brunel University London with a diploma from Ballet Rambert. She was employed at the State Theatre Saarbrücken, the Heidelberg Ballet, and the National Theater in Mannheim. In 1995 she was a refounding member of Tanztheater Wien, which later joined the Volksoper. Between 2003 and 2006, Esther began to teach and research movement on a more intensive basis, giving workshops for Tanztheater Wien, Salzburg Experimental Dance Academy, Anton Bruckner University Linz, and Tanzquartier Wien. She was a guest artist in residence at the University of New Mexico (2004) and performed at the Royal Opera House in Covent Garden, toured with the Fabulous Beast Dance Theater, and as part of The Forsythe Company. Esther is deeply involved in the processing and archiving of movement, researching on a daily basis movement modalities, systems and improvisation technology.



## Abstracts

### “Coming Out as a Threat to the Immobilities and Chrononormativities of Domestic Life in Herman Melville’s ‘The Apple-Tree Table’”

Rodrigo Andrés (Universitat de Barcelona)

Herman Melville’s domestic story “The Apple-Tree Table” is based on the historical incident of several bugs gnawing their way to freedom out of the dead wood of a table. In the story, this event, which takes place in the parlor of a mansion, is framed by parallel or anticipatory events that occur in the attic when the narrator suffers from a suffocating experience of death-in-life, breaks the skylight window and bursts through it into the outside air in an image of attempted rebirth. The text, however, ends in containment and closure, as the narrator comes down from the attic and resumes his life downstairs, and as his wife closes and seals the holes in the table with cement and wax. Both upstairs and downstairs, therefore, true latent natures that try to come out are immobilized and neutralized by swift procedures of domestication. This paper will use the notions of “orientation” (Sara Ahmed), “disorientation” (Michael Moon), “common sense” (Mark Rifkin), “genealogy” (Jack Halberstam) and “chrononormativity” (Elizabeth Freeman) to analyze this story as Melville’s indication of the subversive potentialities, inherent in the domestic space, which may disrupt the immobilities of the supposedly stable boundaries of family life in mid-nineteenth-century America.

### “Mobility and the Re-imaginings of Identity in Louise Erdrich’s *Love Medicine*”

Nasrin Babakhani (University of Goettingen)

In contemporary literature by Native American writers, we find characters whose identities are constantly changing in non-Indian environments. They either must conform to an identity imposed from the outside or resist it. Examples can be found in the construction of identity in *Love Medicine*. In this study, I would like to show how some of the characters in this novel try to borrow an identity from the colonizer’s culture, while the others try to reconstruct Native American cultural traditions and identity-formations, suppressed by Euro-American-centered narratives of North American history. In this paper, I will also try to examine how the Native American characters, belonging to an oppressed and exploited minority within America, experience displacement and identity discontinuity. *Love Medicine* depicts characters who were sent to boarding school, where they make sense of their Native American roots and themselves as Native Americans through the identity politics of colonial subjects. Put differently, they fashion their Native American identity in keeping with a differential model of identity formation where the self makes sense out of himself/herself in opposition to the other. This journey leads the characters to

reject the immobility of identities as they journey towards a sense of subjectivity and self-knowledge.

**“The Delicate *pas de deux* of Dual Citizenship: Language as History’s Violent Choreography in Layli Long Soldier’s Poetry”**

Nassim Balestrini (University of Graz)

Ever since the colonial period, language—poetic or otherwise—has been used to victimize indigenous peoples in the New World. European explorers used derogatory language to dehumanize native peoples and to write them out of existence. The so-called ‘Indian treaties’ homogenized Native American tribes as ‘Other.’ Even the 2009 resolution in which the United States Congress issued an ostensible apology for “official depredations and ill-conceived policies” concludes with a disclaimer that prevents Native peoples from filing claims based on this document. Taking this resolution and other misrepresented or neglected historical events as points of departure, Layli Long Soldier’s poetry dances around and through multiple forms of language-based violence. In this paper, I will explore how her reflections on diction, grammar, and other linguistic conventions evolve into a lyrical choreography that encourages readers to contemplate their own nearness to or distance from specific meanings by engaging in continuous oscillation between historical events and their representation in historiography and poetry. Furthermore, I will discuss how the visual features of her poems become stages for perceiving filled and void spaces, and for allowing and restricting im/mobility of body and mind.

**“A Virtual Walk on the American Frontier: Mapping a Native American Tribe’s Experience through *Assassin’s Creed III*”**

Emir Bektić (University of Klagenfurt)

Given the rapid rise and ever-growing prominence of video games in the past four decades, it is certainly not surprising that American geographical and social (im)mobilities are rendered “playable” by the medium. However, similar to their oppressed and marginalized existence in the socio-cultural mosaic of the United States, video game narratives centered on Native Americans have long been on the fringes of interest. Nonetheless, more contemporary titles have tried to rectify this scarcity, most notably *Assassin’s Creed III* (2012). Ubisoft’s flagship franchise mixes and meshes fictional characters with meticulously researched socio-historical settings.

The player character, half-British, half-Mohawk Ratonhnhaké:ton, is dropped into and subsequently moves in and across the (pre-)revolutionary geographies of Colonial America between 1754 and 1783. By portraying several well-researched native tribes, *Assassin’s Creed III* offers a rare glimpse into the geographical and social movement of indigenous groups. In fact, with an extensive portion of the game

taking place on the American Frontier, *Assassin’s Creed III* serves as an immersive tool for exploring the ramifications of settler colonialism and the Revolutionary War for Native peoples, especially concepts of (im)mobilities ascribed to them by the dominant invading cultures. An ideal counterpart to the largely static tribal presence in the game, Benjamin Franklin is narratively portrayed as a well-traveled, self-made man of the Enlightenment world. Scrutinizing his depiction and activities vis-à-vis Ratonhnhaké:ton offers a perfect starting point for an exploration of the Native American tribe’s (im)mobilities. Unlike Franklin, the player-character is denied access to a variety of colonial areas, thus forcing him to commit transgressive acts. (Im)mobility can further be mapped onto colonial incursions onto Native lands, which force the indigenous people into action, which is represented in the player-character’s involvement in the French and Indian War. As an immersive audio-visual media artifact of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, *Assassin’s Creed III*’s transgressive mobilities then also speak to contemporary realities of geographical and social movement of native peoples.

**“Distorting Mirror? Gendered Segregation in Le Guin’s ‘The Matter of Seggri’”**

Imola Bülgözdí (University of Debrecen)

Classified as “anthropological science fiction,” Ursula K. Le Guin’s short story is set on a planet where women vastly outnumber men, leading to the evolution of a socio-cultural system that has almost nothing in common with the patriarchal social structures prevalent on Earth. While at first sight the Seggrian system seems to be based on a somewhat exaggerated mirror image of ultra-conservative patriarchal gender roles, the five different perspectives used by the author to report on the social structure of the planet ingeniously question the reader’s assumptions and play with the ability of various discourses to construct what is regarded as truth.

My talk will focus on how gendered segregation, introduced in order to provide women with equal access to heterosexual sex and the possibility of reproduction, affects male and female subjectivities, as well as on the divergent power relations that define life in the two communities. By presenting both insider and outsider, that is, off-world, accounts of Seggri, Le Guin offers up for scrutiny biopolitics as the major organizing social force and deconstructs the discourses that naturalize certain formations, rendering this all the more apparent via the spatial representation of segregation.

**“Becoming Digital: Posthuman Subjectivities in American Virtual Reality Films”**

Rocío Carrasco Carrasco (University of Huelva)

It is commonly agreed that we are living in a time when technology is able to radically alter our bodies and affect our subjectivities. In this sense, one can affirm that we

have entered the posthuman era. The science fiction genre offers opportunities for understanding the complex relationship between the human and the latest computing technologies, particularly by proposing posthuman bodies in the shape of avatars, artificial intelligence(s), and/or digitalized characters who experience virtual spaces at different levels. The present paper reappropriates the ontology of “becoming” postulated by Deleuze and theorized by Rosi Braidotti and other critical thinkers to refer to different figurations of the posthuman body in popular science fiction depicting cyberspace, aiming at examining the implications these bodies evoke concerning sex, sexualities, and subjectivities. In order to carry out this study, two contemporary science fiction films dealing with the idea of mobility and virtual spaces will be analyzed: *Tron: Legacy* (2010) and *Ready Player One* (2018). From the analysis of these movies, I intend to bring light to the idea of “embodied virtuality” (as defined by N. Katherine Hayles) by focusing on how characters entering/entrapped/living in cyberspace become key to understanding contemporary posthuman subjectivities, while offering alternative ways of understanding the world we inhabit and opening more inclusive possibilities of living in it.

#### “Ripley: A Woman’s Journey”

Züleyha Çetiner-Öktem (Ege University)

Deemed to be the hero of her own story, *Alien* character Ellen Ripley’s role as an iconic female figure, specifically in the science fiction genre, has long been established. Is it possible, however, to read more into this role by correlating Ripley’s journey with the long and winding road the American Woman had to travel in order to secure her fundamental human rights? Can we read Ripley’s movement in and out of unsafe, hazardous spaces and unknown territories as a form of forced mobility or exploration? With the first movie *Alien* (1979), can we equate Ripley’s attempts to be heard and taken seriously rather than being overruled with the woman suffrage movement? In *Aliens* (1986), with its emphasis on the military, are we witnessing a futuristic reenactment of WWII where women began donning roles previously allocated for men leading to the Women’s Armed Service Integration Act of 1948? Does *Alien*<sup>3</sup> (1992) depict gender neutrality or the emergence of feminism? And finally, does *Alien Resurrection* (1997) deliver the fully independent, postmodern woman that defies categorization? With these questions in mind, I aim to analyze how Ripley’s gradual transformational journey throughout the *Alien* series may be correlated with the American Woman.

#### “A Man-of-War in Labor: The Heterotopic Gestation of the Disorientated Self in Herman Melville’s *White Jacket; or, The World in a Man-of-War*”

Arturo Corujo-Hernández (Universitat de Barcelona)

Herman Melville’s sea narrative *White-Jacket; or, The World in a Man-of-War* gives account of the life and labor routine aboard the *Neversink*, a frigate that provides a space for thought for the exploration of the troubled relationship between a working sailor and his self-made garment: a well-patched, padded, and porous white jacket. In mending his outer covering, the working sailor—then rebaptized as White Jacket—seeks to protect himself from the contact with otherness in the unfriendly realm of the United States Navy. However, his jacketed identity fails to provide a space for protection due to the spatial conditions of the warship. This paper draws attention to its subversive possibilities: subjects inhabit the ship in the same way as the ship inhabits the subjects, bringing about a spatial disorientation of their subjectivities that allows us to question heteronormativity. In the end, a fall off the ship forces the sailor to mutilate his garment in a desperate attempt to come to the surface and survive. In this context, there is an epistemological parallelism between the space of the body and the body of the ship that allows us to explore the heterotopic potentialities (Foucault) of (dis)orientation (Ahmed) as a new birth of queerness.

#### “Running the Medicine Line: Minor Mobilities on the Canada/US Border”

Astrid M. Fellner (Saarland University)

Where Turner’s 1893 “frontier thesis” claimed that the exceptionalism of the United States was attributable to the country’s history of “westering,” Canadian historian Innis explained the expansion of the West in terms of metropolitanism, according to which the desires and needs of metropolitan regions drove and defined the creation and development of the West and/or North in Canada. What both theories have in common is that they stress East-West connections, leaving little room for north-south exchanges. Crucially, they also ignore Indigenous perspectives, proclaiming each country’s national success and justifying the conquest and dispossession of Native peoples who lived in the borderlands. When the international border came, it bisected Indigenous territories and economic grounds like fisheries. In my paper, I want to examine Paul F. Sharp’s historical study *Whoop-Up Country: The Canadian-American West, 1865-1885* (1955), which explores the trans-border whiskey trade of the late 1860s and 1870. This north-south movement was, however, cut short when the new border came.

The running of the Medicine Line, I want to argue, must therefore also be viewed in terms of an enclosing of commons where the idea of commons, like that of virgin territories, already implied a theologico-legal expropriation of non-settler-colonial people. It is the enclosing and quantification of land (e.g. land surveying) which



initiated a process of commodification that marked a nodal point in the formation of territories and borders.

**“Pandora and Patagonia: Exploring Domesticity and Mobility in the Short Fiction of Henry James”**

David Fontanals (Universitat de Barcelona)

The aim of this paper is to explore the relationship between mobility and domesticity in two tales by Henry James: *Pandora* (1884) and *Patagonia* (1888). More specifically, I will focus on the role played by the sphere of the domestic and its (textual) materiality in the processes of social and personal transformation undergone by the main characters of these stories. On the one hand, in the case of *Pandora*, the meteoric rise of the “self-made woman” is seen through the eyes of a young “old” European man whose *Weltanschauung* and rigid values prevent him from understanding said process of social mobility when confronted with Pandora’s domestic/family background. On the other hand, in *Patagonia*, James sets the action in a moving and temporary “home”—a steamer heading to Europe—where the main character of the story, Grace Mavis, whose fate has been sealed well before getting on board, undergoes a radical transformation that ends with self-annihilation. During that process of change, the undermining of social norms allowed by the new (social and domestic) space in which the subject is placed—the ship becomes a heterotopia (Foucault)—sets in motion a double dialectical process; one that involves a projection, questioning and subversion of both the dominant social norms and the values involved in the formation of the American female self.

**“You, Too, Can Become a Star: Upward Mobility in Sports Video Games”**

Michael Fuchs (University of Graz)

The biography of basketball superstar LeBron James reads like the rags-to-riches myth come true: Born to sixteen-year-old Gloria James, LeBron never met his father and spent his early years bouncing around between relatives and his mother’s friends, as she worked and pursued her high school diploma. When she finished high school, she and LeBron moved to Elizabeth Park in Akron, Ohio. LeBron later commented that “[y]ou had gunshots flying and cop cars driving around there all the time.” LeBron soon discovered basketball and led his high school team to state championships in his first two years at the school. In his third year, he became the first high school junior to be featured on the cover of *Sports Illustrated*, and a year later, Nike signed the young man to a ninety-million-dollar deal before he had even played a professional game. Fifteen years later, LeBron has not only won three NBA championships (including ending a 52-year title drought for the city of Cleveland across all professional sports) and four Most Valuable Player awards, but at the tender age of 33 (and probably a handful of seasons to go), he is already one of the greatest to ever play the game of basketball, (and) who might still break a few

records that have been deemed unbreakable. While LeBron’s life story seems exceptional (and it is, to a degree), professional sports has offered numerous athletes a way out of poverty.

Since 2016, the best-selling sports video games have increasingly implemented “story modes” into their offerings. In my presentation, I will demonstrate that these story modes perpetuate not only the American Dream, but also the idea that sports is one of the last (if not *the* last) bastions of the (American) meritocratic ideal: If you work hard enough, you will make it (an idea that easily transports to the emerging eSports industry, where players who just play enough will make it). While all of these story modes draw on the American Dream, the stories industry giant Electronic Arts tells are different from its competitors’. To be sure, in sports games, EA’s sub-division EA Sports has been combatting smaller developers who often publish better games, with *FIFA* vs. *Pro Evolution Soccer* and *NBA Live* vs. *NBA2k* being the most prominent current examples. This opposition between EA Sports and the rest of the sports gaming world also plays out in the story modes, as EA’s story modes constantly relate the story of a black youth (not exclusively African American, as *FIFA*’s story is set in the UK) from a poor (at least working-class) background who goes on to become a superstar, while the offerings of 2k Sports, in particular, allow players to shape their athletes. I will suggest that although the black-kid-rises-from-the-hood narrative, as indicated above, mirrors the experiences of several real-life athletes, it functions as a kind of opium for the masses. As I will argue, these story modes allow players to live out their dreams in the virtual domain, while, in the real world, they are turned into pawns of the video game industry, which churns out new renditions of effectively the same game every year, which players are happy to buy again and again and again.

**“The Im/Mobilities of Military Spouses in Post-9/11 America”**

Katharina Gerund (FAU Erlangen-Nürnberg)

From camp-following to the quasi-nomadic life of military families and, more recently, to women’s participation in US warfare as soldiers, the military has always mobilized (and immobilized) women in various functions. Dominant narratives of the so-called New Wars of the 21<sup>st</sup> century tend to revolve around the highly mobile figure of the soldier and hardly account for the im/mobilities of military spouses—as domestic caretakers, as “unofficial ambassadors” (Donna Alvah), or as suffering heroines affectively moving a nation on the home front. Yet, in the post-9/11 era, a growing number of popular cultural texts – from TV shows like *Army Wives* to self-help books and country songs—center on the iconic figure of the military wife. The magazine *Military Spouse* (founded in 2004), for example, is written by, for, and about military spouses, and according to its mission statement, strives to “empower and connect [its readers] by giving spouses a voice to share the challenges and joys of this crazy military life” (cf. <http://militaryspouse.com/neighborhood>). My talk will

use this magazine as a case study to examine the negotiations of geographical, social, and cultural im/mobilities of military spouses beyond the trope of the 'waiting wife' and explore which explicit and tacit norms shape these highly gendered and racialized military im/mobilities.

**“Not Going Anywhere: Disability, Civil Rights, and Cultures of Im/Mobility”**

Susanne Hamscha (Fulbright Austria)

When John Urry notes that “all the world seems to be on the move” and that this holds particularly true for Americans (as “to be an American is to go somewhere”), he underscores the ableist nature of hegemonic notions of Americanness. Narratives and performances of mobility that have been part and parcel of dominant myths of nation building since the first encounters not only imply but even presuppose a non-disabled body that can move freely at its own will. The American body politic has always been imagined as able-bodied and the construction of US citizenship intimately tied to ownership of one's body, on the one hand, and one's ability to labor, on the other.

My paper will explore the close and all too often invisible relation between compulsory able-bodiedness, citizenship and American narratives and performances of mobility. Its starting point will be the passage of the Americans with Disabilities Act in 1990, a watershed moment in the political history of disability. The ADA demanded foundational civil rights for individuals with disabilities and – perhaps more important – fundamentally questioned the construction of US citizenship along the axis of able-bodiedness and mobility.

**“Horrors of the Sunken Place: Critical Race Theory, Black Mobilization, and Jordan Peele's *Get Out*”**

Alexandra Hauke (University of Passau)

Critical race theorist Elizabeth Iglesias has observed that, in the United States, “patterns of mobility and immobility [are] organized around the logic and historical practices of white supremacy” (311)—a logic in which people of color are not allowed to move around freely in spatial or social terms. Confronted with the everyday horrors of racial segregation, discrimination, and the legacy of slavery, African Americans in particular continue to be excluded from opportunities of upward mobility and experience cultural displacement “through the political apparatuses and economic structures of neo-colonial dependency” (311). On-screen representations of black individuals mirror this racial(ized) ideology: while only few horror films have provided black protagonists who survive beyond the text's ending, the majority of texts marks them as ferocious monsters who must be immobilized and imprisoned.

Jordan Peele's 2017 horror film *Get Out* employs ‘the sunken place’—a forced state of physical paralysis and psychological blackout—as a spatial metaphor of the prison-industrial complex to imagine such conscious practices of black entrapment. Read against the “monstrification of race” (Pinedo 110) in dominant narratives and through critical race theory as an “emancipatory movement” (Iglesias 311) and a strategy of “counter-mobilization” (Crenshaw et al. xxxii), *Get Out* emerges as an example of critical race horror that subverts essentialist strategies of silencing by mobilizing its protagonist to get out of the sunken place and its viewers to get out of the movie theater and confront the “monster of racism” (Peele qtd. in Yamato).

**“Mobilizing Homes: Representing Home Spaces in Yaa Gyasi's *Homegoing*”**

Sarah Heinz (University of Vienna)

Home is an auratic term connected to warmth or safety. However, it is tricky to define because home is a multidimensional term that may refer to physical structures, social units, a place of origins, or affective ties. In such associations, the stability and boundedness, i.e. the *immobility*, of home are central. Morley describes such an understanding of home as part of a sedentary discourse that sees mobility as a threat. However, ideas of home have been ‘mobilized’. Research has focused on how home is a process and a practice that includes leaving home, re-establishing homes, and challenging nostalgic ideas about home.

I will concentrate on such discourses of mobilizing home in Yaa Gyasi's novel *Homegoing* (2016), a family story that follows two sisters and their descendants in both America and Africa. I claim that Gyasi acknowledges her protagonists' yearning for home, specifically in the context of slavery and its aftermath in America, while also showing that home can be a conflicted space that people desire to leave behind, specifically in the context of her African protagonists. The novel shows that ideas of home have to remain mobile enough to accommodate individual needs that exceed the bounded spaces of sedentary cultures.

**“‘Black Cargo’: Narratives of Im/Mobility in *Barracoon* and *The Underground Railroad*”**

Karin Hoepker (FAU Erlangen-Nürnberg)

Colson Whitehead's *The Underground Railroad* (2016) both enthralled and irritated readers by letting its narrative unfold around a central, somewhat surprising supposition: the novel imagines the underground railroad not as a metaphorical network for fugitive slaves but as an actual system of rails and stations, running underground. This strange element of literal-mindedness underlines the novel's overall insistence on detail and tangibility of material and practice. Through its focus on material detail and at times the grotesqueness of extreme physical violence, the novel's elements of the seemingly fantastic coincide with its realism, when it



exposes violence not as an aberration, but as a systematic part of a biopolitical regime of enslavement.

I propose to read Whitehead's fictional text against the 2018 publication of Zora Neale Hurston's *Barracoon: The Story of the Last "Black Cargo,"* based on interviews with Oluale Kossola/Cudjo Lewis in 1931, to investigate narrative tropes of "cargo" and "transportation" central to the American cultural imagination of slavery. My reading seeks to foreground how an African American struggle for agency and freedom seems to culminate in such tropes and how they function to negotiate resistance and a biopolitical regulation of black bodies through their im/mobilization and through constructions of "moving" and "being moved."

**"Navigating Hostile Terrain with the Green Book: Race, Mobility and a Travel Guide for African Americans in the Era of Segregation"**

Isabel Kalous (Justus Liebig University Giessen)

In the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the open road promised the pleasure of free and unbound spatial mobility for individuals. This mobility, however, was limited for African American travelers whose paths and safety was determined by the color of their skin. *The Negro Motorist Green Book*, a travel guide published annually from 1936 to 1967, sought to facilitate travels throughout the United States by listing hotels, service stations and restaurants that served black customers and by providing advice on how to circumvent violence, discrimination and humiliation on the road. In my talk, I bring literary, cultural and mobility studies together and interrogate the *Green Book's* narrative patterns and visual rhetoric to uncover its agenda for countering discrimination and conveying hope for social change and racial equality. Designating sites and establishments as "black" or "African-American friendly," the guide encouraged black travelers to claim public spaces and thus became an important means of protesting the circumscription of black mobility. I conclude with a look at how black immobilities have historically been produced through oppression and confinement; and how they continue to be produced by drawing on the 2017 publication *The Post-racial Negro Motorist Green Book*—an inversion of the original *Green Book* that lists sites of racial violence and harassment.

**"#NastyWoman: Vernacular Feminism and the Poetics of Resignification in 21<sup>st</sup> Century US Popular Culture"**

Katja Kanzler (Leipzig University)

Taking its cue from the pro-Clinton hashtag-drive "#NastyWoman" during the 2016 run for the presidency, my paper proposes to explore the poetics and politics of resignification in recent projects of feminist mobilization. The paper's aim is twofold. For one, it wants to explore how such practices of resignification use misogynist

disparagement as an affective resource, what dynamics of recoding they employ in the process, and on what transmedial traditions they draw. In addition, the paper asks about the contemporary currency of resignification, what might account for its proliferation as a strategy of mobilization, and what implications it holds for a 21<sup>st</sup>-century vernacular feminist politics.

**"'Here I Am in My Mecca': The Transatlantic Migration of Music Students between 1843 and 1918"**

Veronika Keller (Leipzig University)

While the importance of German-speaking music and musicians in the 19<sup>th</sup> century United States is a well-researched subject, one part of this phenomenon has been neglected: US-Americans who went to German-speaking countries to study music at conservatories. After returning, these men and women became important ambassadors of German music, working as musicians or teachers. With over 5,000 US-Americans coming to Germany between 1843 and 1918 one can speak of a veritable music student migration, which thus represents a remarkable case of people's mobilities across the globe. Thanks to the fact that women were allowed to study music in Germany from the beginning, it is also an example of the increasing mobility of women in the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

In my finished dissertation, I researched these US-Americans beyond their individual biographies. I analyzed some general tendencies of this migration, like chain migrations to certain conservatories, the importance of renowned teachers, and, especially for women, the chance to study music on a high professional level. In my paper, I will present these results and put the focus on female students, using the case study of US-American students at the *Konservatorium der Gesellschaft der Musikfreunde* in Vienna.

**"'The Remnant of Barbarism . . . [in] the Civil Code of the Country': 'Freemmagammed in Queer Street' – Imprisonment for Debt in the United States"**

Louis J. Kern (Hofstra University)

Related to debt bondage or debt slavery from indentured servitude to the annual sale of the poor to avoid the expense of public relief, imprisonment for debt was an inheritance of the British legal system widely practiced from the colonial period to the early nineteenth century in America. Its most virulent and racially-based manifestation was the convict leasing system that flourished from the 1870s to 1960, predominantly in the South. Abolished in the federal code in 1833, it was rescinded in twelve states between 1821 and 1849. Bankruptcy laws of the post-Civil War era mitigated its practice, and rulings of the Supreme Court in the 1970s and 1980s significantly restricted its practice.

And yet, imprisonment for debt persisted and then dramatically flourished in the twenty-first century. This paper will focus on the largely unconstitutional practice of incarceration of debtors – the conditions for its emergence as a routine juridical procedure, its forms, its economic and social rationales, and its class and racial dimensions. It will be considered as an integral component of the rise of the mass carceral state and a means of managing the indigent through an anti-welfare program. The perils of unfreedom for the impoverished have not lessened under late capitalism but have rather become more brutally efficient.

**“The ‘Incommensurable Distance’ between Freedom and Slavery: Displacement and Disenfranchisement in Solomon Northup’s *Twelve Years a Slave*”**

Sunčica Klaas (Potsdam University)

In 1807, the British parliament passed the Act for the Abolition of the Slave Trade, and in the same year, the United States banned the slave trade under the American flag and into American ports. According to David Fiske, one unfortunate side effect of the federal ban of the transatlantic slave trade was the increase in the number of kidnappings of both free and enslaved African Americans. Namely, the reduced number of imported labor force made slaves even more valuable, making the legal hazards fade in comparison to the lucrativeness of kidnapping African Americans and selling them in the South.

In this paper, I will read Solomon Northup’s *Twelve Years a Slave* as an early narrative attempt of prefiguring the criminalization of slavery and domestic slave trade by means of an emerging human rights framework. My argument concerning the criminalization will develop in three steps. Firstly, I will claim that Northup’s narrative produces an alternative mental map of the United States, imagining the North and the South as two radically different countries, separated by the Atlantic Ocean that takes Northup to bondage. Northup’s autobiography, I will secondly claim, describes the experience of disenfranchisement and enslavement in terms of an abrupt loss of rights following dislocation, with the alternative Atlantic route into slavery figuring as a vehicle for inscribing his travails within the history of the transatlantic slave trade. And, thirdly, I will address the normative idea of Americanness as (the right to) mobility by questioning the relation between the legal persona and territory. *Twelve Years a Slave*, I will thus claim, associates the right to freedom that the protagonist enjoys in the North with territorial presence, while imagining its loss as resulting from displacement.

**“*Anna Ascends* (1920): Syrian Immigrants between Social Ascent and Racial Immobility”**

Martina Koegeler-Abdi (University of Copenhagen)

Henry Chapman Ford’s musical *Anna Ascends* presents the tale of the Syrian waitress Anna: As a newly arrived immigrant she resists the dangers of the downtown New York underworld, betters herself through education, and ascends in class by becoming a best-selling author who marries an uptown gentleman. Ford, a self-described Anglo “admirer of the great Syrian race,” saw Syrians as a model minority that could successfully assimilate into Americanness. The musical was enthusiastically endorsed by the Syrian American community and also lauded by Arab American scholarship as one of the rare, positive US pop-cultural representations of “Arabness” in the entire 20<sup>th</sup> century. The few critical comments on the musical, for example by Sarah Gualtieri, focus on how Anna’s assimilation merges social with racial mobility, leaving Syrianness behind in her assimilation. In this paper, I argue that despite the musical’s emphasis on assimilation, *Anna Ascends* actually maintains Syrian American ‘not-quite’ whiteness in Anna’s ascent. The actress Alice Brady embodies Anna as a “Syrian” character through ethnic stereotypes with nods to minstrelsy, and the focal point of the national reception rested on Anna’s near rape on stage at the end of the first act. The question whether she has managed her social ascent “unscathed” follows her throughout, linking Syrian American womanhood to the figure of the vulnerable newly arriving immigrant women and to the racialized specters of “downtown” prostitution. *Anna Ascends* and its contemporaneous reception thus offer insights beyond the Arab American assimilation paradigm, reflecting how ambivalent racial im/mobilities shaped early Syrian American community formation in the 1920s.

**“From Panel to Stage: Transmedial Mobilization of Queer Identities”**

Elisabeth Kriebler (University of Salzburg)

Alison Bechdel’s critically acclaimed graphic memoir *Fun Home* presents a complex coming-of-age and coming out narrative. Throughout her autobiographical comic, Bechdel places an emphasis on the conflicted relationship with her father, and traces the parallels between his closeted homosexuality, his mysterious death and the discovery of her own lesbian identity. By outlining an intergenerational account of homosexual identity, the author processes her past in an intricate graphic narrative composed of densely layered caption boxes and visually detailed panels.

In 2013, Lisa Kron (book and lyrics) and Janine Tesori (music) staged a musical version of Bechdel’s memoir. The adaptation has subsequently become a major Broadway hit and won numerous Tony Awards. Its success with mainstream Broadway audiences affirms the question that, according to *Slate* journalist June Thomas, has been troubling the producers from the start: “Is America ready for a

musical about a middle-aged, butch lesbian?" Even though neither book nor musical push an explicitly political agenda, marginalized identities take center stage in both realizations of Bechdel's past. *Fun Home* prominently outlines the individual struggles of queer identity formation and contributes to the destabilizing of common stereotypes – especially regarding the representation of butch women.

In my talk, I am going to discuss the representational strategies used to portray queer subjectivities in Bechdel's graphic memoir and their transmedial adaptation to the musical stage. By focusing on the formal, narrative, and performative features that characterize these identities, I am examining their mobility across different medialities.

**“‘We Were Victims, Too’: German American Internment Autobiographies and the (Re-)Construction of Citizenship”**

Julia Lange (University of Hamburg)

Whereas the internment of Japanese Americans during the Second World War and the commemoration of their experience via media, ranging from memorials to digital museums and (fictional) written accounts, have been a topic in public and scholarly discourse for several decades, the German American internment experience has so far received only scant public and critical attention. In 2001, Senators Russell Feingold (D-WI) and Charles Grassley (R-IA) introduced S. 1356, The European Americans and Refugees Wartime Treatment Study Act in the US Senate so as to promote the creation of an independent commission to review U.S. government policies directed against European “enemy” ethnic groups during WWII in the United States and Latin America. The action taken on the political front by German American activists can be viewed in the context of two larger trends: first, an increasingly ambitious and quite successful German American identity politics since the late 1980s and, second, a general trend towards a culture of victimization in American society after the end of the Cold War. The shift in emphasis in German American recognition politics from a focus on German contributions to the United States to claims for a German American victim status is reflected in the emergence of various life narratives written by Americans of German descent since the 1990s that specifically address their WWII internment experience.

In my paper, I explore the construction of citizenship and its violation in two autobiographies: Arthur D. Jacobs' *The Prison Called Hohenasperg: An American Boy Betrayed by His Government During World War II* (1999) and Anneliese Lee Krauter's *From the Heart's Closet: A Young Girl's World War II Story* (2005). The aim of my paper is to investigate the different narrative strategies employed by the authors to reclaim a German American victim status based on the infringement of their rights as American citizens. I am particularly interested in the tensions that emerge from the fact that these victim narratives challenge a long-standing taboo

which forbids comparing crimes committed *against* Germans with crimes committed *by* Germans. What function do German American internment autobiographies fulfill in a post-Cold War era, i.e. at a time when the memory of the Holocaust has been freed from its fixed locus in a setting defined by an ideological conflict between the political systems of capitalism and communism and reframed in the discourse of (ethnic) identity? What role are these autobiographies assigned in the context of a German American politics of memory? How are Jewish Americans and the Holocaust represented in these texts, especially in comparison with citizenship violations committed against Americans of German descent on US territory? And, finally, how do German American writers cater to the demands of a 21<sup>st</sup>-century readership and update their accounts of wrongs committed over seventy years ago by the American government by drawing analogies between their histories of violated citizenship rights with contemporary US homeland security politics and the erosion of Constitutional rights during crisis?

**“Enemy Aliens: Contributions of Refugees and Displaced Persons to Canada”**

Baltasar Jesús López Ruiz (National Distance Education University)

A well-settled and integrated part of British society that encompassed Italians, Germans, Ukrainians and Jews came under suspicion on account of the policies towards enemy nationals during the Second World War. As a consequence, some of these civilians were deported to Canada as internees.

The Canadian government hosted many of these displaced persons in camps scattered across the country, which also served to house captured enemy soldiers. While there have been many waves of migration to the Canadian shores, none were officially “refugees” by immigration status until Canada ratified the 1951 Geneva convention in 1969. Most Canadians understand that after the Second World War many of these “enemy aliens” returned as landed immigrants and remained in the country, and it is commonly accepted that this fact contributed to the expansion of immigration to the country. Nonetheless, these internees have largely stayed in the shadows.

The scope of this paper is to analyse the shifts in Canadian policy responses to refugees after the Second World War and the consideration of humanitarian criteria for entry to the country, in order to shed light on the contribution of these displaced persons to the economic development and cultural fabric of the nation.

**“Making Connections: Netflix, Cuba and Mobilization”**

Barbara Maly-Bowie (University of Vienna)

Every Monday, *el paquete semanal*—the weekly package—grants millions of Cubans illegal access to the latest US movies, TV-shows and YouTube clips, among other content. Over the last 10 years, it has become a vibrant informal sharing

economy relying on human networks. Enacting an offline broadband internet, it renders “mobile data” in very physical terms: Terabytes of data are pirated and downloaded (presumably) in Florida or via hidden satellite dishes in Cuba; on hard drives and USB sticks, the packages travel on planes, buses and motorcycles to intermediaries and individual subscribers. Curated, hand-delivered and widely shared, this cross-border, peer-to-peer system operates under the official radar to compensate for the effects of Cuba’s restrictive communist government and the US embargo, both seeking to control the flow of goods, people and information on their terms.

In particular, I will address “Cuba’s Netflix,” as Anglophone commentators like to frame *el paquete semanal*, against the backdrop of Netflix’ actual launch in Cuba in 2015: As one of the first US tech-companies to act on the softening of the embargo under President Obama, Netflix’s expansion adds more to the symbolic geopolitics and dominant US scripts of democratization than presenting an actual economic opportunity or alternative to *el paquete*, considering the state of payment, pricing and broadband infrastructure at this point.

Bringing a multi-scalar notion of *mobilization* and *mediated mobilities* into dialogue, I will suggest a critical perspective that goes beyond a simplified binary of mobility vs immobility: How can *el paquete semanal* and Netflix be understood in terms of *mediated mobilizations* that negotiate material and symbolic dimensions of power?

#### **“Disadvantaged and Disenfranchised: The Current Challenges Faced by Under-Age Migrants in the U.S.”**

Marietta Messmer (University of Groningen)

Since 2014, approximately 138,000 families and unaccompanied minors have fled from El Salvador, Guatemala and Honduras and sought refuge in the US in order to escape extreme violence and attempted gang recruitment in their home countries. In response, DHS significantly expanded their family detention facilities by more than 4,000 percent, and even though most of these families and children have to fear for their lives when returning to their home countries—which is a first step for qualifying for asylum in the US—they often face deportation. The reason for this is that detention and deportation are regarded as part of what former Homeland Security Secretary Jeh Johnson called an “aggressive deterrence strategy” aimed at Central American unauthorized border crossers. While this emphasis on deterrence and deportation was initiated under the Obama administration, it is currently continued and expanded by President Trump, who has announced to end DACA, the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals program. Such a decision could lead to the deportation of hundreds of young people who arrived in the US illegally as children.

Drawing on concrete case studies on the basis of migrant and refugee narratives and interviews (e.g. Tanya Maria Golash-Boza’s collection *Forced Out and Fenced In: Immigration Tales from the Field*, Oxford UP, 2018), this paper aims to explore the situation that under-age migrants and asylum seekers currently face in the US. While in the past, child migrants have often been seen as appendages to migrating adults, their specific situation and their heightened degree of vulnerability raise many legal, social, and ethical questions that differ substantially from those raised by adult migrants and throw into striking relief some of the contradictions inherent in the US’s current immigration and refugee regime. I will focus in particular on the contradictory nature of family-related immigration policies that seemingly privilege family reunification while at the same time tearing apart mixed-status families.

#### **“Im/mobility and In-betweenness in Contemporary Migrant Literature”**

Grazia Micheli (University of Nottingham)

Ours is a century of increased mobility: travelling has become available to many people, a clichéd idea that evokes images of freedom and self-realisation. From *Heart of Darkness* to *On the Road*, Western narratives of mobility have variously celebrated this concept. Yet immigrants’ tales can uncover the dark, alienating side of mobility. To them, mobility can represent a form of oppression and, therefore, paradoxical immobility. In *Mulberry and Peach: Two Women of China* (1998) by the Chinese American writer Hualing Nieh and in *Manhattan Music* (1997) by the Indian American writer Meena Alexander, mobility and transnationalism are depicted as negative. Transnationalism has been defined as “the process by which immigrants forge and sustain ... social relations that link together their societies of origin and settlement” (Glick Schiller et al. 48). Yet the protagonists of these novels, Mulberry and Sandhya, two Asian immigrants to America in search of a better future, refuse to attach themselves to any nation as they experience violence in both Asia and America. They are therefore doomed to wander perpetually and they are trapped in a state of in-betweenness that will have devastating effects on their lives.

#### **“(Un)Conventional Voyages: Fan Tourism as Pilgrimage?”**

Sabrina Mittermeier (Independent Scholar)

Fan or pop culture tourism is an increasingly growing industry. Whether it is fans of *Game of Thrones* traveling to the real-world locations that are turned into the fictional Westeros on screen, Trekkers convening on a *Star Trek* Cruise in the Caribbean, or Potterheads visiting the *Wizarding World of Harry Potter* in the *Universal Studios* theme parks in Florida, California or Japan, the love for fictional worlds has a very real impact on people’s movements across the globe. Engaging with these sites and with other fans can be viewed as an act of meaning-making, turning travel into a pseudo-religious experience—and thus, as Cher Krause Knight has argued, “we must consider the possibility that tourism ‘becomes for some the



new pilgrimage” (Cher 27). In my presentation, I want to take a closer look at the intersection of fandom and travel, highlighting the role of tourism in general and the impetus of emotional investment in pop culture in particular for the study of mobilities. Building on existing academic analysis of film location tourism and my own work in theme park studies, I want to place particular focus on the less-studied aspects of fan cruises and convention travel and what role fandom communities play for these modern-day pilgrimages.

**“Natural Automobility? American Road Narratives and the Environment”**

Timo Müller (University of Konstanz)

While mobility studies has done important work revealing the social and political implications of dominant mobility paradigms, the environmental dimension of mobility has remained on the margins of the field. Where it is addressed at all, it is usually associated with premodern forms of mobility such as walking and set in opposition to the ‘hypermobility’ of the global age, on which most researchers focus. The fascination with hypermobility is often accompanied by the claim that Western societies since the late twentieth century have seen an unprecedented increase in the degree and variety of mobility. Bringing an environmental perspective into mobility studies, my paper argues that the more fundamental shift took place some decades earlier, toward the mid-twentieth century: the transformation of motorized travel from an activity embedded in the natural environment to one divested from that environment. The paper traces this shift in American road narratives from the first half of the twentieth century. While road travel is often regarded as a prototypical manifestation of modern technologized mobility, the paper shows that road travel actually has a long history of ecological interconnectedness and was perceived as a means of exploring the environment far into the twentieth century.

**“‘Almost a Citizen’: Performance and Social Mobility in Robert Montgomery Bird’s *The Adventures of Robin Day* (1839)”**

Hannah Lauren Murray (King’s College London)

Robert Montgomery Bird’s social comedies *Sheppard Lee* (1836) and *The Adventures of Robin Day* (1839) both chart the picaresque adventures of downwardly mobile young men in the early republic. While there is a growing body of criticism just on *Sheppard Lee*’s supernatural body-hopping, this paper instead examines race and class masquerade in *Robin Day* as a more disruptive expression of social movement. Moving through Philadelphia, Southern plantations, the frontier, and the Gulf Coast, Robin repeatedly appears in a number of guises across profession, class and race. Accidentally enslaved for several months while performing as a “Hindoo” mystic, Robin experiences life on the margins of society. His transformation into a slave poses the threat of white subjugation in the new nation. Furthermore, as Robin lives as “almost a citizen” for much of the novel—

transitioning between indentured servant, press-ganged soldier, and pirate—the fear of white degradation is palpable throughout the text. Against the dominant bootstrap narrative of the self-made self-contained citizen, this paper demonstrates that Bird shows the citizen as a precarious and composite figure constantly un-made and re-made by turbulent social conditions.

**“Gender-Coding the Extraterrestrial: Asexual Aliens and Hypersexual Hybrids in *Star Trek* and *The X-Files*”**

Manuela Neuwirth (University of Graz)

With its narratives set in the realm of the fantastic, sf is perfectly suited to challenge the dominant gender code by presenting beings that defy gender biases, even offering a utopian vision of post-gender and third sex. However, even in its subversion of dominant ideologies and its most radical representations of alterity, the ubiquity of gender and sexuality in sf is obvious and the attempt to represent an existence without it ultimately (being) doomed to fail. This failure is pinpointed by contemporary TV representations of the extraterrestrial ‘other’ oscillating between what I will call ‘asexual aliens’ and ‘hypersexualized hybrids.’ It is striking that, while struggling with the depiction of asexual humanoid species (such as the J’naii in *Star Trek: The Next Generation*) and hypersexualizing human(oid)-other hybrids (such as the alien bounty hunters in *The X-Files* and the cybernetic Borg in *Star Trek*), stereotypical portrayals of gray aliens consistently feature these extraterrestrials as genderless and asexual.

The present paper interprets this paradox as gender-coding falling short of ‘proper’ extraterrestrials while humanoid ‘others’ and hybrids are made subject to human conceptions of gender and sexuality. It thus argues that a lack of gender results in a lack of identity in gray aliens, leaving them contemporary sf’s ultimate ‘other.’

**“Faulkner’s *Go Down, Moses*: A Chronicle of Im/Mobilities”**

Leonardo Nolé (Graduate Center, CUNY)

William Faulkner’s *Go Down, Moses* (1942) is focused on what the author calls the “earth’s long chronicle,” a century-long story about an imaginary and truthful land of the American South, the famous Yoknapatawpha County. In my presentation, I will show how much this chronicle is built on the idea of im/mobility, considered from different perspectives. First, the seven stories that form *Go Down, Moses* depict the earth’s changes, the effects induced by time and human movements on fields, woods, and animals, underlying the contrast between an “immobile” wilderness and a “mobile” (tamed, exploited) plantation. Second, these stories follow the destiny of the im/mobile people who inhabit the land – like Ike McCaslin, the most recurrent character, who is blamed at the end precisely for his immobility, i.e. his inability to take action and change the *status quo*. Finally, the literary form of *Go Down, Moses*

contains the idea of im/mobility in its hybrid and fragmented structure, halfway between the novel and the collection of short stories. Encouraged to order the events and fill in the gaps between the stories, the readers of Faulkner cannot stay immobile, but they must engage and actively participate in the narrative.

**“Coffles, Swamps, Plantations: Im/Mobility and Identity Formation in *I Am Not Sidney Poitier* and *Blonde Roots*”**

Marian Ofori-Amofo (University of Bayreuth)

This paper examines how spaces of slavery such as the slave coffles, swamplands and the slave plantation and the im/mobilities of slavery in the two novels, Percival Everett's *I Am Not Sidney Poitier* and Bernardine Evaristo's *Blonde Roots*, become formational for the identities of characters. Additionally, I examine how these socially formed identities in turn become avenues for inclusion and/or *Othering* in their spatio-mobile encounters. In my analysis of the texts, I follow Paul C. Taylor's philosophical and “Anglo-American model” (9) to examine racial identity formation during slavery. In so doing, I argue that the historical discourses about space and the mobility of slavery map specific identities for slaves which are problematic. Scholars Benwell and Stokoe have reiterated R. Barnes's contention that, “who we are is inextricably linked to where we are, have been or are going” (10). This ubiquitousness of space and its perpetual influence on identity formation, they argue, make identity “fundamentally spatial” (211) and perhaps mobile. This is true for the protagonists of the two novels. Furthermore, I argue that these identities produced from the spaces and im/mobilities of slavery become stereotypical, transgenerational and a basis for treating people of African descent as *Others* in the narratives.

**“Austrian Refugees in New York”**

Joshua Parker (University of Salzburg)

It was striking, Laura Mulvey noted a quarter of a century ago, “that no Hollywood genre and extremely few individual films deal with migration across the Atlantic. It is almost,” she wrote, “as if this passage was a taboo subject in American popular culture.” This proposed paper opens with a look at Tracey Moffatt's 2017 short film “Vigil,” which splices iconic Hollywood film stills into scenes of what contemporary viewers will all-too-easily recognize as now-familiar scenes of refugees seeking asylum by boat, underlining the horror of the passive observer's view of recent refugee disasters.

The paper moves from this brief introduction to present a specific genre of mid-twentieth-century immigrant American literature: that of the poetry published by Austrian refugees seeking refuge in Manhattan in the 1930s, 1940s and 1950s. These texts, previously uncollected, untranslated and largely unavailable to English-

speaking readers, are reminders of voices who found a home, temporary or permanent, in America, when they might otherwise have been extinguished.

Drawing on a current translation project, the paper presents Ulrich Becher's “The Black Sailor,” Maria Berl-Lee's “I Travel Through the World,” and Mimi Grossberg's “American Customs Control,” Austrian-American poems highlighting the uncertainty of mobility, forced or desperately sought, in times of crisis.

**“‘Dancing out of Rhythm’: Juan Felipe Herrera's Anthropoetry as Expressive Commentary”**

Margit Peterfy (Heidelberg University)

As the son of migrant farm workers, former federal poet laureate Juan Felipe Herrera has a keen awareness of the impact of mobility, especially forced mobility, on an individual's life. He is often described also as a metaphorical border-crosser: as an artist whose poetical oeuvre is not just expressed in different genres, but also in different artistic disciplines.

In my presentation, I discuss Herrera's use of the elements of dance and ritual movement, primarily in his collections *Notes on the Assemblage* (2015), *Half the World in Light* (2015), and *Undocuments 1971–2007* (2007). Whereas recent scholarship has often emphasized Herrera's contribution to creating an awareness of socio-cultural spaces, both real and imaginary, with reference to his Chicano identity, I will concentrate on the formal and linguistic aspects of expression and performance in his work. At the same time, the term “anthropoetry,” coined by Herrera himself, is discussed as the other pole of his poetics, which combines the highly individual stance of “self-expression” with a commitment to communicable experience.

**“Following the Path of Stanley’: Mobilities and Immobilities in US Gulf Coast Tourism”**

Gabriele Pisarz-Ramirez (Leipzig University)

My paper will explore late 19<sup>th</sup>- and 20<sup>th</sup>- century tourist discourses about the US Gulf Coast – specifically about Florida. I will argue that many of these discourses work with images of tropicality in which references to Africa play an important part and in which the mobility of tourists is set against an “immobile” or static image of Africa (and “Africans”) on the peninsula. Florida's topography, its peripheral position on the margins of the United States and its closeness to the tropical Caribbean have invited comparisons to the “dark continent” ever since Florida's acquisition by the United States. Magazine writers in the 1870s framed Florida as a kind of “domestic Africa,” referencing colonial ventures as they highlighted its jungle rivers and its tropical vegetation that needed to be “penetrated” by adventurous travelers. Later tourist discourses have recreated Florida as a playground for hunting, alligator-

watching, “jungle” and safari tours. Many of these discourses privilege an active and mobile tourist who revitalizes his masculinity by exploring tropical regions, setting this figure against a timeless and immobile construction of “Africanness” that is framed as part of the tropical wilderness and that included black Floridians. My paper will explore in particular how these images of mobility and immobility became manifest at the Century of Progress world’s fair in Chicago in 1933 where Florida marketed itself as a tourist attraction, as well as in advertisements for Busch Gardens, Tampa.

**“Full Disclosure: Gender\*Mobilization and Affective Trans Male Publics”**

Ralph Poole (University of Salzburg)

The politics of feminism have traditionally sat uncomfortable with transgender agendas, and yet recent cross-boundary LGBTIQ\* theory has succeeded to overcome some of those obstacles. Trans activism has used many of the same venues as feminism to articulate matters of collective as well as individual concern, to share common experiences and to mobilize support. In particular, the paper looks at online and print cultures which offer multimedia platforms for trans males to disclose personal histories of transition, to envision different bodies and sexualities, and ultimately to create an emotional communal bond with likewise concerned persons on the move.

**“Mobility, Car Culture, and the Environment in John Steinbeck’s *The Grapes of Wrath*”**

Tatiana Prorokova (University of Vienna)

Set during the Great Depression, John Steinbeck’s *The Grapes of Wrath* focuses on an American family who is forced to leave their home in Oklahoma and travels to California in search of a better life. Apart from its authentic representations of the economic instability in the US in the 1930s, industrial transformations that took place throughout the country, as well as the severe draught—all being the major reasons for poverty among thousands of families—the novel also largely comments on the issue of (auto)mobility that this paper will analyze from an eco-critical perspective. The major part of the novel takes place on the road, as the reader witnesses the family traveling west on Route 66. While the road turns into a symbol of freedom and, in a way, a means to pursue the American Dream, the truck which the family travels by makes one ponder over the meaning of US mobility and the nation’s fascination with and dependence on cars – the phenomenon that is now commonly described as American “car culture.” Through its focus on the highway and car, *The Grapes of Wrath* inevitably touches upon the issue of environment. Providing meticulous descriptions of the transport, commenting on its enormous size and the large amount of smoke that it exhausts, the novel introduces the problem of automobility that can and should be studied in light of environmentalism. The paper

will focus on the concepts of the American highway, car culture, and mobility, as they are represented in Steinbeck’s novel, and examine them as focal issues in current environmental debates. The paper’s main aim is to discuss the literary imagining of transport and car traveling as menacing to ecology and the environment.

**“‘I Wear My Hat as I Please, Indoors or Out’: Western Hats: Wearable, Signifying, Mobile Shapes of Americanness”**

Stefan Rabitsch (University of Graz)

In season six, episode one of *Doctor Who* (2011), the Doctor (Matt Smith) touts his newly acquired headgear: “I wear a Stetson now. Stetsons are cool!” Stetson is but a brand of a piece of clothing which, albeit coming in many forms, shades, and sizes, speaks to a quintessential *shape* that makes it unique and instantly recognizable. Western hats have a long and varied history, which is inextricably tied to the mythos of the American West. Their history ranges from their origins as a practical everyday item, representing the American entrepreneurial spirit, to their global dissemination as an icon of American culture. Colloquially often referred to as “cowboy hats,” western hats are significant, signifying, wearable, and thus nomadic cultural shapes. Their materiality is embossed with an inescapable mobility. After all, hats are meant to be worn and thus travel. Consequently, they are carriers of multilayered cultural meanings which engender instant recognition not only in the United States, but also in transnational, global contexts.

While the “twenty-first century is a relatively hat-less age, with the exception of the baseball cap and modern hoods,” (Hopkins, 177) western hats, unlike other headwear, have retained their potency and recognizability as wearable signifiers of Americanness. In the early summer of 2017, the current administration proclaimed and celebrated “Made in America” week. In the vein of the administration’s “America First” platform, they welcomed manufacturers and business leaders from all over the country to showcase products that are made solely in America, using only American labor. Chief among them was the Stetson Company which used the occasion to present the president with a personalized “El Presidente 100x” hat. This just goes to show the degree of Americanness that is ascribed to this particular fashion item.

Applying the toolbox of “fashion-ology” (Kawamura, 2005) and merging it with Stuart Hall’s “circuit of culture,” (1997) my paper seeks to 1) identify the most pertinent historical and media nodes which facilitated the compression of Americanness into the shape of western hats, and 2) tentatively map their transnational trails. For example, sizable communities in Germany and Japan have developed a particular affinity for the mythos of the American West—hats and all—and the president of South Sudan, Salva Kiir, always wears a Stetson which President George W. Bush



gave him as a gift during a state visit in 2006. Yet, as I will argue, western hats cannot escape the latent imprint of America's imperial narrative of conquering the West.

**"Interrogating Imperial Feminism: Border Crossing and the Politics of Race and Gender in *Star Trek: Discovery*"**

Judith Rauscher (University of Bamberg)

Both Chicana feminism and transnational feminism have discussed border crossing as means of challenging structures of oppression and raising questions about the ways in which discourses surrounding gender and race in the United States are shaped by colonial ideologies and imperialist practices (e.g. Anzaldúa, Grewal and Kaplan, Mohanty). As I will show, contemporary representations of border crossing on screen engage with a specifically 21<sup>st</sup>-century US-American manifestation of what Lora Wildenthal calls "imperial feminism" (53). In my paper, I will examine how the TV series *Star Trek: Discovery* (2017–) interrogates the legacies of US-American imperialism and, less overtly so, of US-American imperial feminism. In my analysis, I will focus on the geographical as well as the metaphorical border crossings that occur in the series when the crew of the starship *Discovery* travels to an alternative universe dominated by the fascist "Terran Empire." I will argue that *Star Trek: Discovery* can be read as a feminist text that exposes the limits of two very different post-sexist futures: one, the mirror universe, in which the empowerment of women depends on openly imperialist and racist ideologies and another, the prime universe, in which these ideologies make a comeback in the context of violent conflict. By connecting these two future scenarios through instances of border crossing, I posit, *Star Trek: Discovery* not only speaks to issues of intersectional feminist critique, it also responds to the political, social, and cultural changes in the United States leading up to and associated with the Trump administration.

**"Towards a *Transa*-National Poetics: Mobilities within Difference and the Ethnic Avant-Garde"**

Jennifer A. Reimer (University of Graz)

Transa is US-Mexico borderlands slang for "agreement, bribery, business, intention, reflection and project." Transa refers to the illegitimate and what happens on the verge; not only of illegality but also of any non-conventional initiative. It is derived from "transaction" (Montezemolo, Peralta, Yépez 2008). In transa, we hear the echo not only of transaction but also of transnational, transboundary, and many other concepts that have become increasingly popular in cultural studies of the Americas. Transa describes alternate forms that are "transa-national" and "transa-genre." Drawing on Montezemolo, Peralta and Yépez's use of transa, this presentation explores the varied potential of transa as an alternative poetics—an approach that

theorizes the transactions between innovative poetic form and the transnational material realities of im/migration, diaspora, and U.S. imperialism. Through a critical reading of a select collection of 21<sup>st</sup>-century American poets, I identify interventions in confessional or lyric poetry, as well as to a mid-century tradition of poetry that gave voice to oppressed communities, which emerge out of a "mobility within difference," theorized by Chela Sandoval as "differential consciousness." Difference operates both on the level of racial/ethnic/gender/sexual identity as well literary/aesthetic community. What makes the work of these poets "innovative" is not a complete break with established poetic traditions, but the ways in which they draw on and revise a 20<sup>th</sup>-century avant-garde tradition, the movement poetries of the 1960s/70s, and the Language poetry of the late 20<sup>th</sup> century. Transa offers a lens of interpretation that embraces the postmodern and experimental, but can never be delinked from lived experiences. I propose transa as metaphor, not to immobilize these new kinds of poetry within neat theoretical concepts, but to more fully inhabit them and mobilize the potentially radicalizing diversity so evident in their experimental aesthetic qualities.

**"Blue Highways and Emersonian Circles: American Mobility from Transcendentalism to Travel Literature"**

Clara Reiring (University of Cologne)

As travel narratives often help the author-narrator (re)discover his or her own identity along the journey, this also holds true for William Least Heat-Moon's 1982 bestseller *Blue Highways*. According to Ronald Primeau's definition of American road literature, *Blue Highways* depicts a typical journey of self-discovery as the archetypal American endeavor of traveling into unknown territory gives the narrator the "freedom to explore or redefine [himself]" (15). Moreover, *Blue Highways* also follows the traditional travel narrative structure of departure – journey – return. However, Heat-Moon follows this structure in a specific way in that he pursues the form of a circle, a leitmotif represented on all levels of the book (visually, formally and conceptually).

In many ways, Heat-Moon's insights in *Blue Highways* and his statements about the book in interviews are strikingly reminiscent of transcendentalist ideas, especially those of Ralph Waldo Emerson. Particularly Emerson's 1841 essay "Circles" contains many passages that resemble Heat-Moon's acting and thinking on his journey, and it is not surprising that he has been called a "modern-day Transcendentalist" (Nuwer) and his writing a "transcendental argument" (Lackey). Departing from these previously unexplored parallels, I will compare the two works in the context of the myth of American mobility and its mediation in literature, taking into account aspects of self-redefinition, change and identity by drawing new "circles" on both an individual and a collective level.

**“Trinity as Dance: Li-Young Lee’s Poetry Cycle *The Undressing* (2018)”**

Philipp Reisner (Heinrich Heine University Düsseldorf)

After a traumatic childhood, emigrating from his native Jakarta via Hong Kong to the United States, the contemporary poet Li-Young Lee (\*1957) eventually settled in Chicago. Following this geographical transition, his family changed religion and political allegiances. Lee’s fifth and most recent collection of poetry, *The Undressing* (2018), continues his practice of transforming biographical vignettes into sacred poetry. Its opening title poem of an erotic encounter with a female goddess of wisdom (Sophia) sets the tone for the collection as a whole. Themes such as the mystical encounter with the divine, spiritual marriage, and religious praise form the context for Lee’s exploration of the Trinity.

Lee views his family’s migration and especially his complex relationship to his father from a theological perspective, creating a *double entendre* that views the Trinity as dance. Here, the Greek *perichoresis* is given new poetic form in terms of the dynamic interpenetration of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. And yet his poems are not explicitly religious or pious. Instead, biblical references form the implicit backdrop and are intertwined with his family history. His poems are an excellent example of the sacralization at work in contemporary literature, while raising intercultural questions of exile and migration.

**“The Curious Case of Louis Menage: Science, Law, and Imperialism in American Im/Mobilities”**

Mark Rice (St. John Fisher College)

In American slang, to be “on the lam” means to be in flight from the law, to have run off in order to avoid prosecution. The phrase, which emerged in the 1890s, has a notion of mobility built into it. However, there are conditions of being on the lam that also have immobility as a defining feature, such as crossing international borders and becoming a fugitive in a country with no extradition treaty to the United States. That the phrase “on the lam” emerged when it did is not surprising; it is a reflection of the late nineteenth-century “crisis of mobility” (15) that Katherine Unterman writes about in *Uncle Sam’s Policemen: The Pursuit of Fugitives Across Borders*.

This paper will examine the case of Louis F. Menage, an American embezzler who fled to Guatemala in 1893, where he was stuck for six years, and the efforts by officials to either have him extradited or to kidnap him and return him by force. Menage was one of many fugitives in that decade but he has historical significance for his sponsorship of an 1890-93 zoological expedition to the Philippines, the members of which later became administrators of the US colonial regime there.

**“‘Going Native’ in Bulgaria: Valeska Griesebach’s Film Western”**

Klaus Rieser (University of Graz)

The Western is a quintessential film genre for understanding im/mobility. Firstly, its treatment of mobility has deeply affected US ideologemes of geographic expansion and national character. Secondly, its images and motives have themselves proven to be highly adaptable and mobile, having traveled into other genres and other geographical areas. And thirdly, the Western is as much about stasis as it is about dynamics: classic icons of immobility are the numerous appearances of death, the stoicism of its heroes, the silent stares exchanged with adversaries, as well as the monumentality of its landscapes.

In this talk, I want to analyze how Valeska Griesebach’s 2017 film *Western* appropriates and subverts the genre conventions in terms of the im/mobility paradigm. Above all, the film turns the traditional trajectory on its head: The migrant workers are Germans, recruited to travel eastwards in order to build a power station in the remote Bulgarian countryside. From their “fort” (the temporary construction camp) they are “going into the territory” (to the local village pub). At the same time, Griesebach highlights moments of immobility. Significantly, the actual story starts to unfold only after the construction project has been stalled. It is this standstill which mobilizes a range of social relations from conflict to concordance.

**“American Circumnavigation; Or, Failure as Foreign Policy”**

Kevin Riordan (Nanyang Technological University)

In 1924, when the United States sought to be the first nation to successfully circumnavigate by airplane, the fleet of four planes crash-landed in Alaska, in French Indochina, in Karachi, and in the North Atlantic. Still, these “Magellans of the Air” were hailed as heroes, their voyage a symbolic success. When the US sent the first submarine around the world in 1960, this trip too was a triumph for Cold War statecraft, despite the vessel’s falling short of its stated goal. But this reframing of failed journeys as national successes is neither new nor uniquely American. The Portuguese explorer Ferdinand Magellan is credited with leading the first circumnavigation, but he died in the Philippines; he is best remembered for something he failed to do. Circling the world, and writing about it, has remained a creative contest of personal and national one-upmanship ever since. The geographical feat continually has proven far less important than the subsequent circulations in print. This paper considers the ongoing relationship between these trips and the stories that governments tell about them. While circumnavigation would seem to be a feat from the age of exploration, the United States mounted several twentieth-century projects—in the air, underwater, and in space—to assert its international position. While each of these projects failed, the US government

followed Magellan's heroic example, sublimating shortcomings as successes in the stories they told.

**“Queer Exile and the Mobility of Narratives across the Modernist Writing of Djuna Barnes and Robert McAlmon”**

Ben Robbins (University of Innsbruck)

Djuna Barnes and Robert McAlmon were both well-connected American figures in the inter-war cultural scenes of Paris and Berlin. In the 1920s, they met regularly in Parisian bars and cafés, lived next door to each other in Berlin, and promoted and critiqued each other's work. As well as both being literary modernists, they also shared the experience of transnational dislocation from the US and had queer sexualities/identities. Their relocation from the US to Europe was, however, enforced, due to the criminalization of same-sex relationships in the US and the relative tolerance that prevailed in Paris and Berlin at the time. In fact, both would produce works on the theme of queer exile in France and Germany in McAlmon's *Distinguished Air* (1925) and *Nightinghousls of Paris* (2007 [1940]), and Barnes's novel *Nightwood* (1936). In this paper, I wish to show how the authors' mobility is manifested in these texts in the following two ways: first, they examine the coerced mobility of marginalized figures and how this is differently influenced by sexuality, gender, and class; and, second, narratological units of symbolism, style, and setting circulate across both writers' work. This suggests that queer exile networks across Europe led to the production of narratives whose components are themselves mobile.

**“Superheroes as Fantasies of Mobility”**

Ranithild Salzer (University of Vienna)

Replace the word “American” in John Urry's memorable phrase “To be an American is to go somewhere” with “superhero” and the sentence would hardly lose any of its impact. Superheroes are mobile to the extreme: they go everywhere, even back and forth in time, defending cities, even entire universes and realities. They appear—at least today—unobstructed by gender, sex or ethnicity in their mobility and impact. When the genre started out in 1936, it was a different story: back then, superheroes were only white, straight and mostly male, meeting all the WASP requirements of racist mainstream US culture. Only in the 1960s did superhero comics become more diverse, turning superhero narratives into an ever more inclusive genre. Today's superhero narratives allow for fluidity between categories like nationality, gender, sex, class and ethnicity, depicting social, transnational and transcultural mobilities.

My paper will illustrate how superhero narratives are seductive fantasies of extreme mobility, playing on long-standing themes in American popular cultures like vigilantism, hard-boiled fiction, the myth of Self-Made Men and hegemonic gender

identity. While the superheroes themselves are figures of extreme mobility, the genre itself attests to the mobility of cultural narratives and normative structures.

**“‘But I’m Not Even in a Wheelchair:’ Dis/ability, Im/Mobility and Social Class in Hanya Yanagihara’s *A Little Life* (2015)”**

Dorothee Schneider (Kiel University)

Even after decades of disability rights activism, Americans with disabilities are still overwhelmingly restricted in both their geographical and social mobility. 18 years after the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA, 1990), many public spaces are still not easily accessible, restricting people with disabilities to their homes, or to the immobilizing environment of care homes—effectively removing disabled people from the public. Access to mobility still depends overwhelmingly on monetary factors, thus linking disability, poverty, and restricted mobility, both in terms of education and employment, and everyday mobility. In my paper, I examine the implications of this connection by discussing the representation of disability and mobility in Hanya Yanagihara's 2015 novel. An analysis of Yanagihara's novel shows that even though the main protagonist's geographical mobility becomes limited by his disability that worsens in the course of the narrative, he is able to counteract it through his financial means. However, the novel also shows how his social class cannot protect him from the forced immobility of psychiatric intervention that is brought on by his childhood trauma. Additionally, Yanagihara's novel offers the possibility to discuss how American individualism obliterates stories of disability and poverty from its narratives of social and geographical mobility.

**“‘You Know I Can Take Whatever I Want’: Toxic Masculinity, *Star Wars*, and (Im-)Possibility of Change”**

Elisabeth Schneider (University of Graz)

Since its inception, the *Star Wars* saga has been an American success story and an important indicator of the cultural zeitgeist. It seems only fitting then that the newest trilogy has focused its narrative on a particular villain: toxic masculinity. Deeply intertwined with the concept of hegemonic masculinity, toxic masculinity addresses the ways in which patriarchal structures actually hurt the ones that they raise up – by prescribing norms to men that celebrate violence or emotional unavailability, for instance. These norms are often replicated in mass-media portrayals of male characters, and presented as desirable, universal, and superior to femininely connoted traits. Accordingly, popular science fiction demonstrates an (im-)mobility to break with and move beyond such conceptions of masculinity. Even though humanity has spread to infinity and beyond at light speed, its socio-cultural norms seem to be frozen in time. Only very few media products dare to move beyond such norms and even fewer present their viewers with alternatives - the *Star Wars* saga being one of them. Kylo Ren, the poster boy of toxic masculinity, is not

only depicted as a villain, he is also positioned as the diametric opposite of the male hero characters.

**“More Than Just ‘a Pair of Hovering Eyes, Two Hands and a Big Gun’: Examining (Anti-)illusory Qualities of (Im)Mobility in First-Person Shooters”**  
Andreas Schuch (University of Graz)

Movement is a key component of any first-person shooter. In first-person shooters, players can usually make their avatars run, sprint, jump, and crouch. However, more and more games, especially in recent years, have endowed player avatars with additional and increasingly complex moves, ranging from crawling and dashing to vaulting and leaning to double jumping, wall running and more. In addition to avatar mobility, many games also offer a plethora of vehicular-based movement—either under water, on land, in the air and/or in space—as well as afford players a certain mobility space in the given game world within which they can roam around more or less freely. These added mobility options certainly provide players with more potential agency, but do they also increase immersion? To answer this question, this talk will explore the relationship between the presence or absence of (different kinds of) in-game mobilities in first-person shooters set in the US (e.g. various *Call of Duty* games, *Fallout 4*, *Far Cry 5*, *Left 4 Dead 2*) and how this contributes to the eliciting or breaking of aesthetic illusion. Ultimately, the paper aims to showcase a model which succinctly summarizes the relationship between (im)mobilities in video games and aesthetic illusion.

**“Precarious Intimacies and the Im/Mobility of Transnational Care”**  
Silvia Schulterlandl (University of Graz)

The emergence of new notions of family and kinship in the context of the care economy offers a productive field of inquiry for mobility studies. In particular, the power asymmetries at the center of transnational mobility materialize in ideas about kinship that subsume domestic workers into the nuclear family through discourses of “emotional imperialism” (Hochschild); at the same time, the separation from their own nuclear families occasions a shift in domestic workers’ participation in national care economies where affective labor and economic support coalesce in interesting ways. On both ends of the transnational care economy (in the families where they perform domestic labor and in the families where their absence from affective labor generates new family constellations), the emergent kinship ties are built on what I want to call “precarious intimacies” (cf. Weber).

With the help of Jamaica Kincaid’s novel *Lucy* (1990), I want to analyze the complex dynamics within the private-intimate sphere and their fictional representation in American literature. My use of the concept of precarious intimacies unites Lisa Lowe’s ideas about intimacy as a framework through which to theorize the legacy

of colonial power asymmetries and Judith Butler’s notion of precarity as a synonym for the politically induced vulnerabilities of certain populations, including domestic workers. Through Lowe and Butler, I want to think about past and present conditions of unfreedom and their manifestation in the gender performativity of female domestic servants in American literature. The precarious intimacies I am interested in epitomizing the ambivalent relationship between employer and employee in domestic care economies, especially between host mother and au-pair, and the ways in which notions of kinship can enable and foreclose possible feminist alliances. Kincaid’s novel will be central to my discussion, but I hope to sketch a larger context in which transnational feminism and American literature intersect in topics of affective labor, women’s agency and female solidarity within the care economy.

**“Slowing Down West: Diminishing Mobility in Thomas Pynchon’s *Mason & Dixon*”**  
Burak Sezer (University of Cologne)

Thomas Pynchon’s novel *Mason & Dixon* (1997) discusses the pre-revolutionary zeitgeist of colonial America during the sojourn of the British astronomer Charles Mason and the geodesist Jeremiah Dixon, hired by the Royal Society to settle a territorial dispute between Pennsylvania and Maryland by drawing a mathematically calculated line, most commonly referred to as the Mason-Dixon-Line. While they cover, at the outset, circa ten miles a day in their journey west (cf. 330; 341), the voyage seems to have slowed down extremely after three months, “[by] this time, making a mile or two per day” (658).

This paper claims that this deceleration of the survey squad stems from the unjustified geometrization of the American ‘virgin soil’ by a high number of opposed parties. The Mason-Dixon-Line is drawn ‘speedily’ on a map, but in America, this undertaking is relentlessly sabotaged by the squad’s conflicting interests, the pre-existing territories of the Native Indians and the growing skepticism of Mason and Dixon as regards the legitimacy of their project. In other words, the impossibility of speed mirrors the fragmentation of America’s surface, its schizophrenic self.

Deceleration is then at least partly remedied by the emergence of ‘one’ America ‘out of many’ (“E pluribus unum”) during the revolution of 1776. In the terminology of Paul Virilio, pre-revolutionary America, a “cog in the technical machine” (29), transformed through its revolution into a “motor, [...] a *producer of speed*” (ibid., original emphasis), a transformation of deceleration to acceleration, which Thomas Pynchon poetically envisions as “a Mobility that is to be” (*Mason & Dixon*: 759).



### **“Honor Flights, Veterans, and Military Pilgrimages in American Popular Culture”**

Mareike Spychala (University of Bamberg)

The Honor Flight Network is a US-American non-profit organization that has dedicated itself to organizing trips to Washington D.C. for American veterans, especially those that fought in WWII. These trips, and how they are represented in cultural products can be seen as modern-day pilgrimages that not only benefit these veterans, but also do cultural work that shapes the public's understanding of war memorials, of what it means to be a veteran, and of the wars these veterans fought in.

This cultural work is most obvious in the documentary *Honor Flight* (2012) and the 2017 *NCIS* episode “The Wall.” Both of these texts work with established presentations of veterans, for example as members of “the Greatest Generation,” or, in the case of the *NCIS* episode, as disillusioned Vietnam veterans. I argue that the veterans' trips to D.C. are figured as modern pilgrimages in the documentary and the *NCIS* episode. These pilgrimages ultimately not only serve to venerate the fallen of these wars, but also the surviving veterans. At the same time, how they are represented proscribes not only a certain way of how WWII and the Vietnam War should be remembered, but also who counts as a veteran.

### **“Urban Mobility in Post 9/11 Manhattan: The City as Liminal Space in Don DeLillo's *Cosmopolis* and Teju Cole's *Open City*”**

Alina Stocklöv (University of Konstanz)

This paper explores the trope of urban mobility in contemporary New York fiction. Examining canonic literary examples, I argue that the city functions as a liminal space in post 9/11 literature and, moreover, that this spatiotemporal condition of liminality is depicted by a restless form of moving in and through the city. In Teju Cole's *Open City*, the protagonist Julius spends much of his time walking the streets of New York City, motivated by what seems to be an agitated discontent and attempt to heal his emotional setbacks from the past. In an equally aimless manner, Wall Street billionaire Eric Packer, in Don DeLillo's *Cosmopolis*, moves through Manhattan in a stretch limo, deliberately ignoring the fact that, due to the visit of the president, traffic mobility is restricted. Being rooted in the acute liminality of New York's post-disaster experiences, forms of uncertainty as well as the questioning of identity, interaction, and the boundaries of community are reflected in the protagonists' restless wandering through the city, inhabiting a disorienting, liminal state. Through an interdisciplinary approach, considering Victor Turner's definition of liminality and Walter Benjamin's study of the *flâneur*, this paper discusses whether mobility as exemplified in the two works connotes being trapped in the in-

between and echoes the dissolution of a clear delimitation of time and space in the present.

### **“Disabling Mobility: Cultures of Work and Ableism in Joshua Ferris' *The Unnamed*”**

Juliane Strätz (University of Mannheim)

Labor is increasingly based on general ideas of speed, productivity, efficiency, and mobility. Laborers, especially those employed in digitalized working environments, are expected to react, produce, and invent ever faster. Those who cannot keep up with the accelerated requirements are oftentimes depicted as being deficient and lazy in general discourse.

Joshua Ferris' novel *The Unnamed* criticizes these assumptions which connect speed and mobility to American narratives of success. Its main protagonist is a highly successful lawyer whose work life is disrupted as he experiences a condition that causes him to walk without stopping. Though his mind protests against the uncontrollable walks, his body seems to react to stress with walking. While he literally becomes more physically mobile than ever before, he also removes himself increasingly from his previous stable, efficient, and ordered life and is no longer able to work. Depicting a protagonist whose pace cannot be controlled in a world that is becoming ever faster and who derives neither a sense of self nor meaning from it, ultimately distorts American narratives of mobility. Thus, the novel emphasizes that a recognition of disability shifts the critical attention toward the precarious nature of what is oftentimes considered 'normal' in contemporary working environments.

Based on Ferris' novel, this talk will analyze the relationship between contemporary cultures of work and ableism and argue that the inclusion of disability narratives enriches and complicates our understanding of the normalization of laboring bodies.

### **“Negotiating Pasts and Futures: Transatlantic Crossings in Abraham Cahan's 'The Imported Bridegroom' (1898)”**

Klara Stephanie Szlezák (University of Passau)

When Asriel Stroon, 35 years after having immigrated to the United States, travels back to his native Poland, he is not only haunted by his own past but also set on shaping his daughter Flora's future. Asriel's migration from and his travel to his place of birth leave him torn between the worlds, a feeling that he attempts to overcome by the act of matchmaking. As Asriel “imports” the Talmudic scholar Shaya as a bridegroom for his American-born daughter, he tries to unite his past with his future, Jewish tradition with American spiritedness, the ‘old’ world with the ‘new.’

Abraham Cahan's 1898 short story “The Imported Bridegroom” tells of paths across the Atlantic—or, in the case of Flora, the lack thereof—that ultimately reveal

marginalized aspects of the immigration master narrative, which is so firmly anchored in a geographical westward migration and the ideal of social upward mobility. Asriel's motive to return, if only temporarily, to the "old country," Shaya's purpose in coming to the United States, as well as Flora's immobility throughout the story, this paper argues, challenge the ideology of successful assimilation, the notion of America as the land of the free, and the promise of a new beginning.

### **"The Garage Phenomenon: the Start-up Revolution: a New Mobility"**

William Tate (James Madison University)

*Once the habit is ingrained and you become the starter, the center of the circle, you will find more and more things to notice, to instigate, and to initiate. Momentum builds and you get better at generating it.*  
--Seth Godin

In the movie *JOBS*, there is a scene of Steve Jobs and Steve Wozniak working out of Jobs' parents' garage. They are taking a lunch break. These two and their teenage recruits are lounging in beach chairs under an umbrella eating tacos and drinking beer. Up drives an unknown car. Out steps a venture capitalist looking for Apple Computers. This was literally the beginning of Apple. They were flying by the seat of their pants. Thus, the miraculous is born.

It seems to be a new way of life in the USA. Everyone is blogging about, writing about, conferencing about, doing a start-up. Which is not limited to a Silicon Valley technical savvy digital invention, but it can be anything from fashion to humanitarian work to education to electric planes. The belief is: If you have a dream, you can do it. Rule 1: start small. Rule 2: but start.

This paper is an investigation into the means, the new ways, the funding sources, the unconventional thinking, and the sheer audacity of the start-up world. Looking at everything from Seth Godin to #GIRLBOSS to crowdfunding to known success stories. Jeff Bezos was interested in online selling. To realize the dream, he quit a lucrative position, packed his wife and dog in an Uhaul, started driving from New York to Seattle. In considering twenty potential products, he settled on books. While his wife drove, he jotted down the business plan and started calling prospective investors. They started Amazon out of the garage of a house they were renting. Such stories are very contagious. This paper is to spread the disease.

### **"Forced Displacement and Its Traumatic Effects in Toni Morrison's *Home* and *A Mercy*"**

François d'Assise Khéyane Tine (University of Liège-Belgium)

In my talk, I explore how Morrison's *A Mercy* and *Home* revisit the theme of mother-daughter relationship as well as issues of homelessness and traumatic displacements. I will begin my talk by demonstrating how Morrison underscores

African Americans' objectification and addresses the legacies of traumatic displacements because of racist practices and slavery. In *Home*, I explore how Morrison portrays the difficulties experienced by African Americans as they attempt to re-envision and reconstruct the concept of home in a land of deep racial animus. Because of Jim Crow practices in the American South that give rise to everyday indignities, brutal violence, and traumatic displacements, the correlation with home and the South is only a vague promise for many black Americans. Using postcolonial and trauma theories (Homi K. Bhabha, Kelly Oliver, J. Brooks Bouson, and Evelyn Jaffe Schreiber), I attempt to show how mobility is used to address issues of family dislocations, motherlessness, ruptured communities, and socioeconomic marginalization. By featuring Frank Money's and Florens' displacements, I argue that home must be regarded as an imagined ideal that enables healing and self-validation. Central to this is the deconstruction of idealized notions of manhood and feminine subjectivity that impede self-awareness and true spiritual growth.

### **"Unlicensed Drivers: Gendered and Racialised Im/Mobilities in *Learning to Drive*"**

Isabel Treviño (University of Zaragoza)

*Learning to Drive*, directed by Isabel Coixet, is a 2014 film about the friendship between Wendy, a middle-aged New Yorker who decides to learn to drive after her husband leaves her, and Darwan, her Indian driving instructor. As will be argued, the film presents mobility from the perspective of those usually considered to be "mobility-poor," thus pointing out that contemporary mobility systems create substantial inequalities in terms of gender, race, religion, class and wealth. On the one hand, the film explores women's restricted mobility and their "traditional" attachment to the home. It portrays mobility as a gendered issue by drawing attention to the fact that women have traditionally had less access to cars than men. Through the story of Wendy, the film addresses the importance of the car, which in *Learning to Drive* becomes a symbol of women's independence, in US culture. On the other hand, the film also looks into the struggles of immigrants and refugees with immobility and friction in post 9/11 America, as well as issues such as racism, Islamophobia, illegal immigration, and culture shock. Combining contemporary critical theories on mobility with close textual analysis, this paper analyses *Learning to Drive* to explore women's and immigrants' im/mobilities in the U.S.

### **"'Arise! All Who Refuse to Be Slaves!': W.E.B. Du Bois and Paul Robeson in China"**

Giann-Chyng Tu (Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin)

This paper seeks to trace and to examine W.E.B. Du Bois' and Paul Robeson's engagement and support for China's emergence as a Communist state. As a cosmopolitan nationalist (Appiah), much of Du Bois' works follows a continuum of

leftist African American intellectuals' engagement and efforts in anti-European colonialism, decolonialism, nonalignment movements, and Internationalism. This genealogy not only suggests that Du Bois' axiomatic claim that "the problem of the twentieth century is the problem of the color-line" is not merely a national (American) issue but a global one; it also highlights Du Bois' and Robeson's interest in African American radical solidarity with the "oppressed people of the world," world revolution, and anti-imperialism. Through a close examination of Paul Robeson's interactions with Liu Liang-Mo, a Chinese seminary student that led and promoted patriotic mass singing movements with whom Robeson collaborated with and recorded an album of songs, and Du Bois' writings on China after his visit in 1958, I want to highlight the different geographic locations, political contexts, cultural ends, and mobilities of African American solidarity with "the relation of the darker to the lighter races of men in Asia and Africa, in America and the islands of the sea" (DuBois *Souls*, 17).

**"Illusions of Mobility: Reading George Dawson's *Life Is So Good! Against the Grain*"**

Julia Velten (Johannes Gutenberg Universität Mainz)

"[T]he proliferation of places, technologies and 'gates,'" as John Urry claims, "enhance the mobilities of some while reinforcing the immobilities of others" (11). This interplay of mobilities and immobilities becomes visible in George Dawson's co-authored (auto)biography *Life Is So Good!.* The life narrative of African American centenarian George Dawson focuses on his travels through the US, Canada, and Mexico, and propagates the message that despite his upbringing in the Jim Crow South, Dawson managed to have a good life through hard work and positive thinking. Read against the grain, however, the book reveals mechanisms of African American immobilities throughout the last century. These patterns of immobility are not only revealed within the narrative itself but also in the production process of the book, which leaves Dawson as the "vulnerable subject" (cf. Couser) of his Caucasian co-author Richard Glaubman. In my paper, I will trace these implicit immobilities and discuss the impacts race, class, and age have on an individual's abilities to move within US society throughout the last century.

**"'A Man Went Looking for America and Couldn't Find It Anywhere': Motorcycle Riding as Modern-Day Pilgrimage"**

Jennifer Volkmer (Ludwig-Maximilians-Universität München)

Motorcycles in American pop culture are a symbol for freedom, for breaking out from social structures, and for escaping daily life. The motorcyclist can hence be seen as a modern vagabond, "a pilgrim without a destination, a nomad without an itinerary," as John Urry has so aptly put it (33). However, this kind of mobility is mainly open to white, able-bodied men who are affluent enough to afford owning and riding a

motorcycle, in turn creating immobility for everybody else. This has been the dominant depiction of motorcyclists in American pop culture for over sixty years.

The official tag line for what is probably the most popular image of the motorcyclist on screen, *Easy Rider* (1969), is that "a man went looking for America and couldn't find it anywhere." As actor Peter Fonda has noted (*Ride with Norman Reedus*), riding a motorcycle is a less mediated way than cars to experience the road, the country, and oneself, bringing the components of immediate travel experience and austerity from the traditional pilgrimage into the motorized modern world defined by comfort and abundance. *Easy Rider* thus perfectly encapsulates the idea that motorcycle riding is a kind of modern-day pilgrimage.

**"Disappearing into the Future? Reclaiming Transgender Experiences in Contemporary US Science Fiction"**

Simon Whybrew (University of Graz)

Science fiction (sf) has long been fascinated with transgender phenomena. Nevertheless, the genre's authors have been reluctant to acknowledge humanity's inherent transness. Rather, sf stories have largely viewed trans potentialities exclusively through the lens of medical and technological advancement. Thus, trans identities have often been transposed onto alien societies or dissolved into futuristic, cisnormative fantasies of perfect gender transformation. As a result, transgender histories, identities, and becoming have largely been absent from these texts. Instead, the focus has been on the promise of temporary, cisnormative gender mobility. The recent publication of four anthologies of sf short stories by trans authors provides a significant challenge to this legacy of trans erasure. In this paper, I will explore how the authors of these stories employ the genre's conventions to subvert its normative tendencies and write trans identities into the future. To do this, I will compare John Varley's 1992 novel *Steel Beach* with K.M. Szpara's "Nothing is Pixels Here" and Keyan Bowes' "Spoiling Veena."

**"'Arrested Development': Trapped in the 'Time Loop' of American Cold War Cultures"**

Katharina Wiedlack (Europa Universität Flensburg)

My presentation addresses the mobilization of the cultural trope of "Arrested Development," to signify Russianness within American popular culture. On the example of the horror movie *Orphan* (2009), I will read cultural representations of Russian migrant women through a *cripistemological* (McRuer) lens. Using concepts of heteronormativity and compulsory ablebodiedness I argue that Russian heritage and embodiment are signified through tropes of "arrested development" on a geographical, temporal and medicalized/racialized scale. As such, the female figures represent US-American cultural myths about Russia as embodiment of



delayed or arrested development as such. These myths go back to the time of the enlightenment, yet appear preferably within current New Cold War discourses. In addition to my critical reading of female figurations of Russian “Arrested Development,” and in referring playfully to the TV-show with the same name, I highlight the American romanticism around Russian immigrants that locate them culturally in an earlier decade of the turn of the 19<sup>th</sup>-century migration. Referring to Claudia Sadowski-Smith’s 2018 study on cultural conceptualizations of Russian migrants, I show how the film *Orphan* speaks to the hierarchical location of Russian whiteness within discourses on un/wanted immigration and the Russian geopolitical threat.

**“Herman Melville’s Work and the Sea: The Experience of Mobility and the Literary Construction of a Place”**

Steffi Wiggins (University of Vienna)

As America underwent westward expansion in the course of the nineteenth century, the complex dynamics of global mobility became a central topic of American literature. The experience of territorial expansion often revolves around the figure of the sea as a geographical space and a symbol of territorial desire and imperialism. The sea, however, also functions as a transformative space which impacts the fate of those traveling on it. The Sea seems to find a particular potent symbol in three select novels by Herman Melville: *Typee* (1847), *Redburn* (1849), and *Moby-Dick* (1851). The sea is presented as a force that enabled global expansion and became an arena for transformation and imperial progress. Maritime experiences and representations of mobility within these novels condense to form crucial components of Melville’s work. The ship’s mobility is exciting yet dangerous, and the travellers are at the mercy of a borderless, open space—a sort of dislocated space—which puts the travellers far from safety. This paper addresses the sea as a geographical space and as a place of danger and hardship. The personal, cultural, and social development of travellers at sea and American expansion within the larger context of mobility form the main interest of this paper.

**“Inertia and Movement: The Spatialization of the Native Northland in Jack London’s Short Stories”**

Steffen Wöll (Leipzig University)

As an epistemic part of the American West, the Yukon Territory or “Northland” is often depicted as a monolithic region: a “last frontier” integrated in a stable national framework attained through the manifest destiny of Anglo-Saxon culture to enlighten a supposedly uncivilized space of cultural and racial otherness. In this article, I argue that Jack London’s short stories “An Odyssey of the North” and “The Law of Life” demonstrate the elusiveness of such unequivocal interpretations of the North as a European-American space. In London’s diverse and often contradictory oeuvre, one

finds not one master narrative transplanted into uncultivated or “exotic” spaces, but in fact manifold variants of both actual and fictional geographies that energize alternative spatial understandings and practices. Although the issues and challenges brought to light in London’s fiction have surfaced during the Progressive Era, they still constitute crucial aspects of ongoing processes of coexistence, reconciliation, and conflict among different narratives and voices that claim to represent or know what “makes” the American West. The significance of space for native cultures and the role of Anglo-Saxon “blond beasts” in the Yukon together constitute a variegated discursive pattern, the frictions and interactions of which are at the heart of popular and scholarly discourses that affect not only American self-conceptions but also ongoing efforts to understand spatiality as a matter of interdisciplinary significance in the humanities.

**“Coming to Terms, Touring America: Queer Mobilities in John Cameron Mitchell’s *Hedwig and the Angry Inch*”**

Florian Zitzelsberger (University of Passau)

*Hedwig and the Angry Inch*, John Cameron Mitchell’s 2001 adaptation of the eponymous off-Broadway musical production, constitutes a milestone of American queer cinema and has been read as a “multiple generic hybrid” (Benshoff and Griffin 12). However, the film has not yet been contextualized within the framework of mobility studies, even though it is, at its heart, a road movie. Despite queer studies’ inclination to conceive of “queer” as “move(ment)s” (Warhol and Lanser 8), research on queer mobilities surprisingly still remains rather deficient (Oswin 85). My exploration of *Hedwig* thus aims at demonstrating how queer studies can contribute to a reconceptualization of notions of linearity and mobility in the road movie. In *Hedwig*, the “ability to cross borders” and the departure from the “familiarity of home” (Laderman 14) are results of the inability to fit into heteronormative society (cf. Ahmed). If home loses its familiarity, mobility becomes a way of making sense of the world and of regaining intelligibility beyond the perimeters of formerly familiar places: Hedwig not only uses her tour through the US to map out inclusive spaces where queerness is possible but also, as the discourses of im/mobility are relocated into Hedwig’s interiority, to come to terms with her identity. Screening queer mobilities, *Hedwig* both foregrounds the importance of representation in media and serves as a means of empowerment.

General Conference Information

Registration Desk

On Friday, November 16, registration for the conference will take place at the ÖAW (Herbert-Hunger-Haus, Sonnenfelsgasse 19, 1010 Vienna). On the following two days, the registration desk will be located on the ground floor at the University of Vienna's Department of English and American Studies (see floor plans). Please note that there will be no registration at the Saturday evening keynote event.

Friday, November 16, 2018, between 4 pm and 6 pm;  
Saturday, November 17, 2018, between 8 am and 4 pm;  
Sunday, November 18, 2018, between 8 am and 11 am.

Coffee Breaks

The coffee breaks will be held on the ground floor at the Department of English and American Studies in front of seminar room 3 and 4 (ground floor).

ATM

There are two ATMs in walking distance (circa 3-5 minutes) from the Department of English and American Studies. Please check the map for the exact locations.

Internet Access

Eduroam is accessible at the University of Vienna as well as the Austrian Academy of Sciences (ÖAW). Furthermore, there is a Wi-Fi code in your conference folder which will give you access to the university's Wi-Fi network.

Emergency Numbers

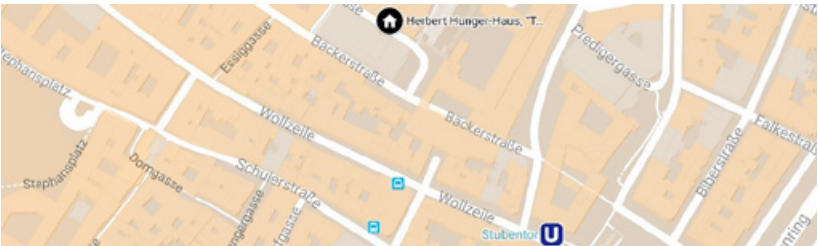
Service	Phone Number
Fire Department	122
Police	133
Ambulance	144
Emergency Doctor	141
European Emergency Number	112
University of Vienna Security	12700

Should you have any further questions,  
please look for student helpers or the organizing team.

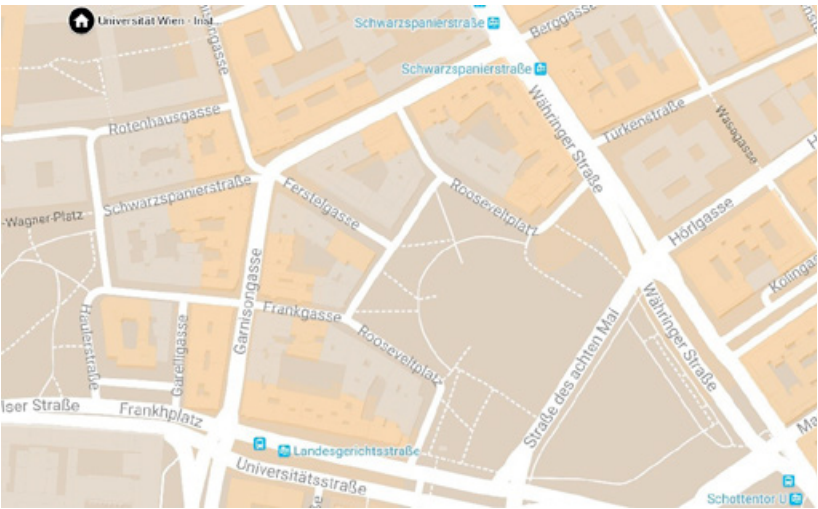
Getting to the Conference Venues

Please check the enclosed slip of paper in your conference folder for the Saturday evening event.

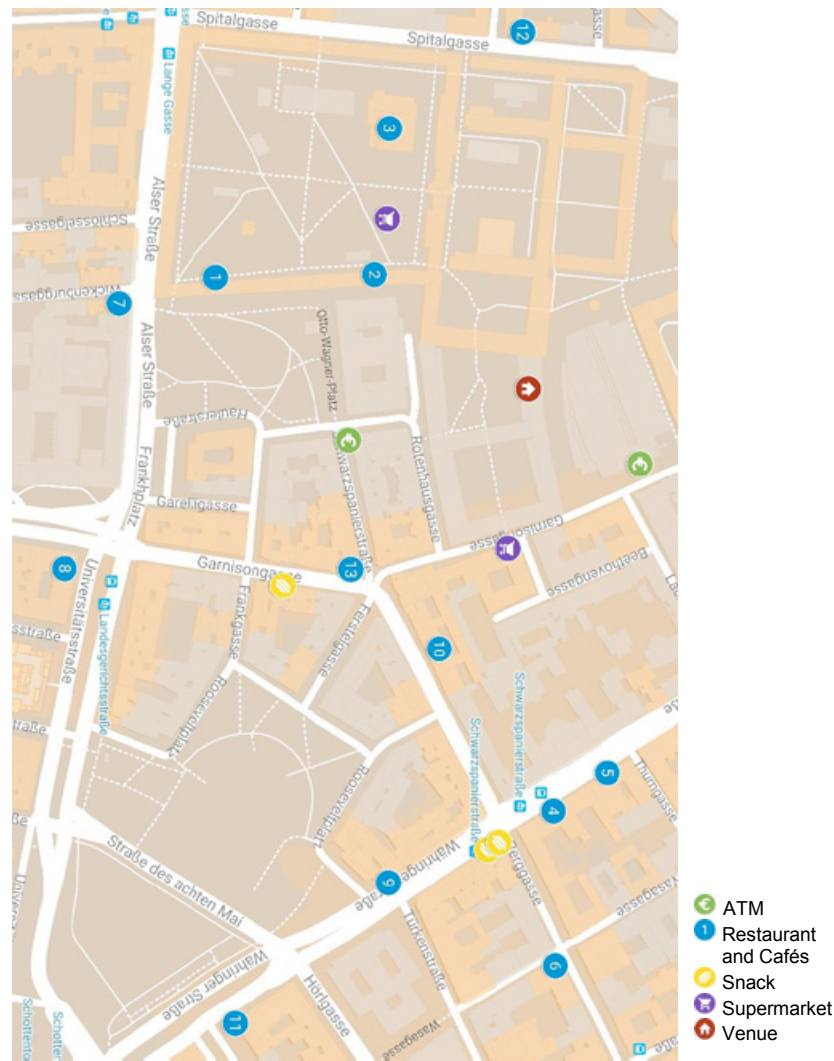
**Austrian Academy of Sciences ÖAW (Herbert-Hunger-Haus, Sonnenfelsgasse 19, 1010 Vienna):** The ÖAW/Herbert-Hunger-Haus is located in the 1<sup>st</sup> district, and the closest subway stop is Stubentor (U3). Schwedenplatz (U1/U4) is not too far away either.



**Department of English and American Studies (Spitalgasse 2-4, Hof 8.3, 1090 Vienna):** The department is located in the 9<sup>th</sup> district, and the closest subway stops are Schottenring (U2), Schwarzspanierstraße (trams 37/38/40/41/42) or Landesgerichtsstraße (trams 43/44).



Campus Map



Restaurants and Cafés

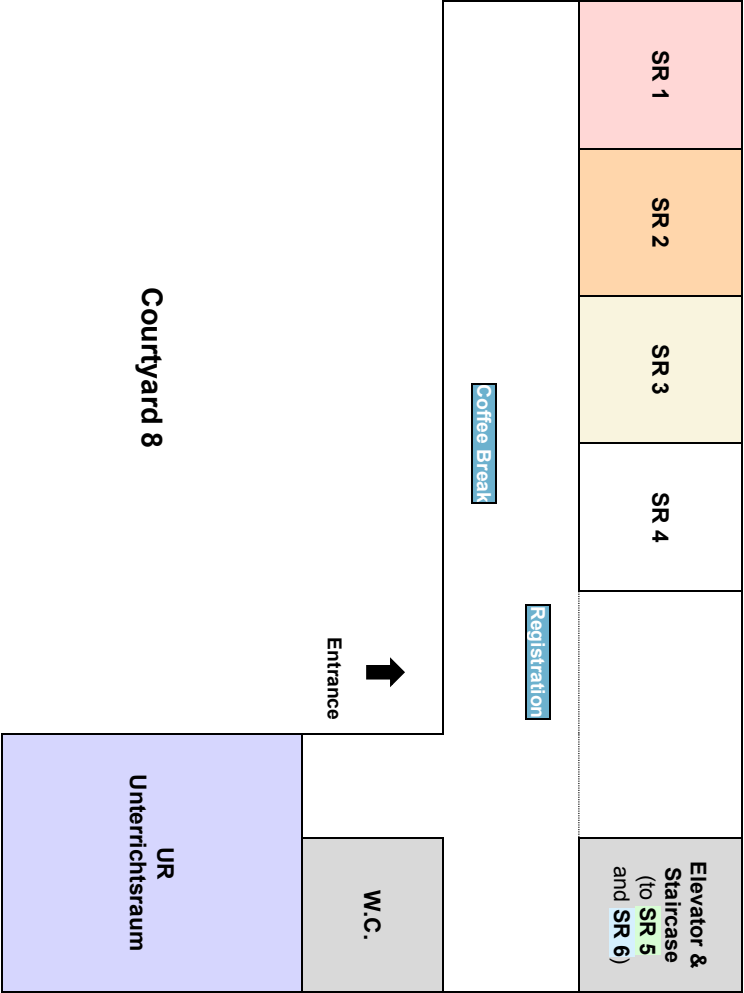
RESTAURANTS	
On Campus	
<b>(1) BIERHEURIGER GANGL:</b> traditional Viennese cuisine Alserstraße 4, Hof 1 Friday: 9am - midnight Saturday & Sunday: 11am - midnight	<b>(3) STIEGL AMBULANZ:</b> Austrian cuisine; casual Alser Straße 4, Hof 1 Friday & Saturday: 8:30am - 1am Sunday: 8:30am - midnight
<b>(2) UNIVERSITÄTSBRÄUHAUS:</b> traditional Viennese cuisine Alser Straße 4, Hof 1 Friday - Sunday: 11am - midnight	
Close to Campus	
<b>(4) KÜCHE 18:</b> Asian cuisine Währinger Straße 18 Friday - Sunday: noon - 11pm	<b>(7) EDISON:</b> restaurant, café & bar; Austrian and international cuisine Alser Straße 9 Friday: 8am - midnight Saturday: 9am - 1am Sunday: 10am - 10pm
<b>(5) PIZZA ANGOLO:</b> Währinger Straße 22 Friday & Saturday: 11:30am - 11pm Sunday: 4pm - 10pm	<b>(8) STADTKIND:</b> Viennese coffeehouse & Parisian bistro Universitätsstraße 11 Friday: 8am - midnight Saturday: 9am - midnight Sunday: 9am - 11pm
<b>(6) FLORENTIN:</b> Mediterranean & Viennese cuisine Berggasse 8 Friday: 8am - 11pm Saturday: 8am - 11:30pm Sunday: 8am - 11pm	<b>(9) RESTAURANT ROTH:</b> Austrian cuisine; elegant ambiance Währinger Straße 1 Friday - Sunday: 11am - midnight

CAFÉS	
<b>(10) WELTCAFÉ:</b> 100% organic & fair-trade; snacks; all day breakfast Schwarzspanierstraße 15 Friday: 8:30am - midnight Saturday and Sunday: 9am - midnight	<b>(12) COFFEE PIRATES:</b> Spitalgasse 17 Friday: 8am - 6pm Saturday & Sunday: 9am - 3pm
<b>(11) CAFÉ STEIN:</b> menu of the day; breakfast; traditional Austrian & international cuisine Währingerstrasse 6-8 Friday and Saturday: 8am - 1am Sunday: 9am - 1am	<b>(13) CAFÉ TELEGRAPH:</b> international cuisine; all day breakfast Garnisongasse 7 Friday - Sunday: 9am - 5pm

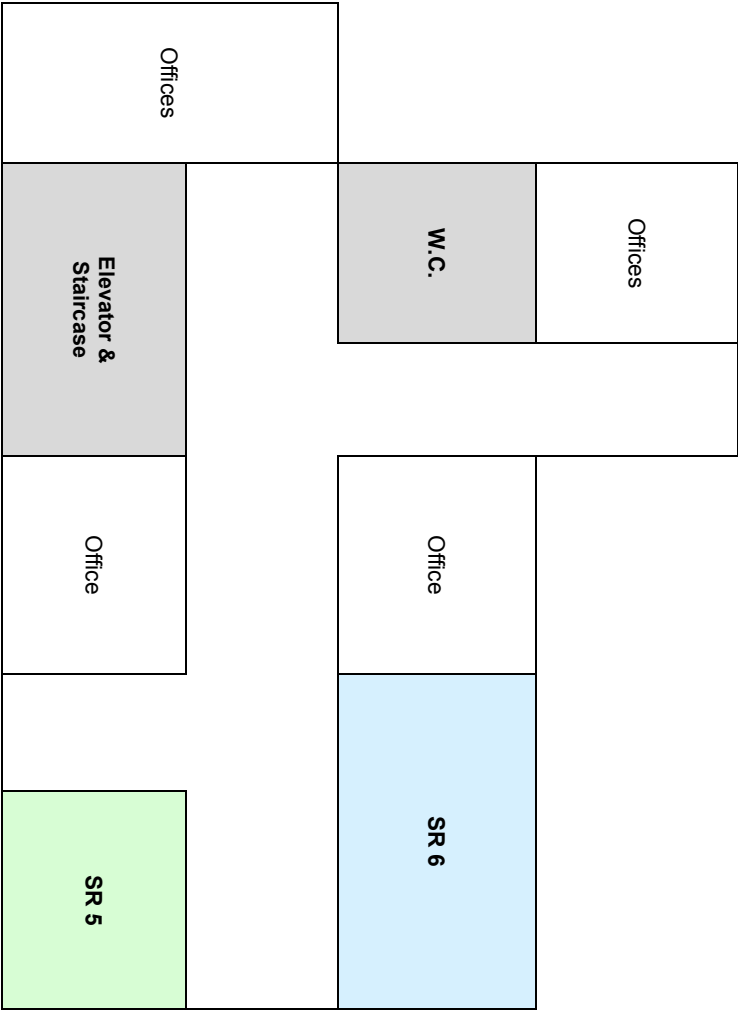
Austrian/Viennese cuisine is traditionally meat-based, but virtually every restaurant offers vegetarian options!

Floor Plans

Department of English and American Studies, Spitalgasse 2-4, Courtyard 8.3  
Ground Floor



Department of English and American Studies, Spitalgasse 2-4, Courtyard 8.3  
First Floor



## Imprint

### Conference Team

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Vienna, November 2018





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