Contents
Issues Published in 2011

ABSTRACT: This essay solicits the interest of the American studies community for 'old age' as a field of investigation. It identifies a number of areas where 'old age' as a name for 'human life in time,' as a cultural script, a biomedical condition, and a social-political status can enter into a conversation with American studies. The cultural normativities of later life, the corpo-realities of the 'old age' experience, as well as the civic meaning and political agency of aged people in the public sphere of modern democracies are investigated. The essay concludes with a brief reflection on how the biopolitical structures through which populations are managed, the economic structures through which material benefits are granted or withheld, and the cultural structures which define identities are all organized around differentially positioned generational cohorts. This would make 'generation' a useful critical tool for any investigation of the forces that shape life courses in U.S.-American society and culture.

ABSTRACT: Human time entered the genre of the *Bildungsroman* in the nineteenth-century novel, relating the categories of youth and age to concepts of individual development. I will trace the shifts in emphasis from an initial focus on youth and growing up to the later stages of life in the European and American novel. I argue that the lengthening of the average human life span in the late twentieth century provides a new focus for representing possibilities to grow up and grow old. In their inversion of the developmental model of the *Bildungsroman*, Siri Hustvedt's *What I Loved* (2003) and Kazuo Ishiguro's *Never Let Me Go* (2005) address this question of possibility by depicting children who grow up to 'never' grow old. Both show in different cultural settings the implications of an endless enlargement of possibility and its limits with reference to cultural pathology and to biomedical progress, respectively. Turning from *Bildungsroman* rewritings to the question of the functions of narrating dementia,

a further consequence of longevity for developmental models is addressed in the narrative connection between memory, aging, and narrating the self. This connection will be traced in a comparison of the metaphoric functions of dementia in Ian McEwan's *Atonement* (2001) and Don DeLillo's *Falling Man* (2007).

| Christoph Ribbat | "Out of It"? Old Age and Photographic Portraiture |

ABSTRACT: The essay examines representations of old age in photographic portraiture, focusing on works by such prominent American photographers of the last few decades as Nicholas Nixon, Richard Avedon, and Fazal Sheikh. It shows how the new aging studies, in conjunction with critical photo-history, critique American images of aging as narratives of mere decline. Visual culture, these scholars point out, conflates self and appearance, makes youth a fetish, marginalizes the old, and thus plays an important role in a much larger social and cultural devaluation of old age. This essay questions this assumption, arguing that the camera's gaze doesn't necessarily identify the old as confused and in decline. Close readings of photographic images and series demonstrate how photographers like Avedon or Sheikh have created less constricting, more flexible representations of the old that transcend the problematic nature of the normative gaze.

| Nathan Carlin and Thomas R. Cole | The Aging Bodies of Mickey Rourke and Marisa Tomei in *The Wrestler* |

ABSTRACT: This article examines the Golden Globe-winning film *The Wrestler* (2008), which starred Mickey Rourke and Marisa Tomei, in light of aging research. We focus on the roles of Rourke, who plays a wrestler, and Tomei, who plays a stripper, both of whom are represented as past their prime. We read the movie as a commentary on aging celebrities and performers, a commentary that functions on two levels: 1) internal to the movie, in which Rourke and Tomei are presented, to some extent, as common persons who have rather uncommon jobs, and 2) external to the movie, where Rourke and Tomei are members of the Hollywood elite, both of whom have functioned as sex symbols, sex symbols who are now past or moving past their prime. The bulk of our article focuses on the first level, but in our conclusion we address the second level. We argue that cultural representations of aging bodies, such as those found in *The Wrestler*, are ambiguous: They are, to some extent, both liberating and dehumanizing. This ambiguity, however, also reflects the ambiguities of aging itself.

| Kate de Medeiros | Self Stories in Older Age: Crafting Identities Using Small Moments from the Past |

ABSTRACT: Questions of selfhood and identity in older age are often explored through life stories, where individuals select various experiences and events from which to form a cohesive

narrative. The concept of 'self stories' describes an approach whereby instead of creating a single grand life narrative, participants bring together small, sometimes divergent and unrelated moments from their past to craft and re-craft their individual identities and expressions of self. To illustrate the potential of self stories in work on selfhood and identity in later life, I will present excerpts from several older adults who participated in a series of structured writing workshops. Story content and context as well as individuals' written descriptions of themselves point to the dynamic, complicated interplay among self, identity, and story as they are negotiated, expressed, and interpreted.

Giovanna Micconi

Forum: Ghosts of History: An Interview with William Demby

ABSTRACT: In this interview, William Demby retraces the steps that brought him from childhood in segregated America to his present life, chronicling his experiences as an African American GI in World War II and, later, from the late forties to the mid-sixties, as an expatriate in Italy. Stories from Demby's life are here interwoven with a discussion of his literary works. The interview highlights how his wartime experiences and his years spent in Italy—an Italy marked by intense cultural production, lively political debate, and profound social change—influenced his literary decisions and shaped his views on race, politics, and art.

Amst 56.2 (2011)

Oliver Scheiding   Mission Statement

Mischa Honeck

Abolitionists from the Other Shore: Radical German Immigrants and the Transnational Struggle to End American Slavery

ABSTRACT: The 1850s in the United States are commonly remembered as a time of fierce controversy over the westward expansion of slavery; yet they were also a period of mass immigration. Simultaneous to the escalating sectional conflict, emigration from Europe soared to record numbers, further exacerbating debates over race, nationality, and citizenship in the young republic. In a climate of increased worries about the nation's future, the arrival of German-speaking Forty-Eighters, refugees of the failed European Revolutions of 1848/49, fueled existing apprehensions among the older settlers. The following article offers a fresh appraisal of these exiled democrats during the run-up to the Civil War and beyond by probing their relationship to another group of beleaguered agitators, America's abolitionists. It outlines how individuals from both camps joined

forces in the long, often dangerous battle to eliminate slavery and argues that cooperation shaped the activists' social and political identities in a society steeped in racist and nativist thought. Adding the experience of radical German émigrés to the abolitionist struggle, it elucidates how immigration affected American conversations over slavery, race, and emancipation. Most significantly, the article gauges the extent to which the alliance between Forty-Eighters and abolitionists challenged prevailing concepts of freedom and equality in a transatlantic age of racial construction and nation-making.

Michael Boyden	Singing *Hail Columbia* in German and English: Carl Schurz's Sequential Bilingualism

ABSTRACT: This article focuses on the bicultural and bilingual legacy of the German-born Senator, diplomat, Civil War General, and man of letters Carl Schurz (1829-1906). Particular attention is devoted to Schurz's autobiography, the first part of which, dealing with his youth in Germany up to the 1848 revolution and his exile, was written in his mother tongue, while the second part about his American career was composed in English. The aim of the article is to draw renewed attention to the bilingual dimension of Schurz's *Lebenserinnerungen—Reminiscences* in order to rethink accepted notions on migration and assimilation. I argue that while on a surface level, through its narration of Schurz's impressive rise to fame as an American orator and writer, the memoir bespeaks an integrationist perspective on immigration, this interpretation is in need of revision if we take into consideration the divergences between the German and English versions of the book.

Alexandra Ganser	*Lap Dancing for Mommy*: Queer Intermediality, Chick Lit, and Trans-Generational Feminist Mediation in Erika Lopez's Illustrated Narratives

ABSTRACT: Erika Lopez has been active as a performance artist, writer, and graphic novelist since the 1990s. Lopez's work is emblematic of a transition from second-wave feminism and identity-based lesbian activism to a third-wave, queer approach to gender, sexual, and other difference categories, using humor and a creative politics of the in-between which disturbs generational, sexual, gendered, and ethnic binarisms alike. This essay examines how, through the use of intermedial spaces and gaps, such work accomplishes a mediation between two generations of feminists that are often set in opposition in contemporary debates, and argues for the importance of a verbal and visual bridging of the feminist generation gap. Texts like Lopez's, this article argues, critically negotiate a collective feminist memory, acknowledging difference but not division.

Michael Dellwing	Pragmatismus und die Hoffnung auf Solidarität

Michael Dellwing   Pragmatismus und die Hoffnung auf Solidarität

ABSTRACT: Durkheim's and Horkheimer's critiques of pragmatism have often been portrayed as misunderstandings. However, a pragmatist perspective contradicts itself if it claims that its opponents missed the 'true meaning of a text.' Reorienting the discussion towards ideas of truth is equally uninteresting for the pragmatist. The present paper wishes to frame the discussion around the concept of hope instead. For this purpose, the critiques of pragmatism are seen as 'foundationalist theory hope' and 'anti-foundationalist theory hope.' The paper offers a pragmatic concern with hope as a rebuttal.

Susanne Leikam and Klara Stephanie Szlezák   Publications in American Studies from German-Speaking Countries, 2010

Amst 56.3 (2011)

Horst Dippel   Die Lincoln-Rezeption in Deutschland

ABSTRACT: The stereotype of Abraham Lincoln as the ideal statesman has appealed not only to Americans, but to Germans and many others whose nations have experienced the violence of long-lasting and bloody war. German appreciation of Lincoln is particularly reflected in the various intellectual currents that span the ups and downs of modern German history. Consistent with the different stages of this history, Lincoln's noble resolution to save the Union can be seen in German political themes such as national unity, democracy, and reconciliation. Beside these notions, which were conditioned by the spirit of the respective epoch, an appreciation of a more timeless character prevails in the admiration of Lincoln's humanity, balancing his role as President and commander-in-chief. This article examines one hundred fifty years of German comments on Lincoln. It analyzes features that remain common over time as well as those that express the spirit of the historical era in which they were written, in particular the decades from 1865 through 1918, the Weimar Republic and the Nazi years, and the more recent period since 1945.

Andrea Franzius   Forging Music into Ideology: Charles Seeger and the Politics of Cultural Pluralism in American Domestic and Foreign Policy

ABSTRACT: This article analyzes the ways in which a group of American leftwing composers and intellectuals, most notably

Charles Seeger and Henry Cowell, as well as anthropologist Melville Herskovits, turned music into a political and policy tool during the New Deal years and World War II, thereby helping to create the cultural, intellectual, and institutional foundations for the cultural Cold War. It explores how under diverse national and international cultural influences the composers tried to find a new national idiom, and finally explored notions of cultural pluralism tied to humanist universalism as a bond between America's different population groups. When the war shifted the focus toward countering what the government perceived as a threatening German and Italian cultural infiltration of its Latin American neighbors, the composers were marshaled to serve the U.S. government's first official cultural foreign policy. Now headlined under the notion of an internationalist cultural pluralism, music seemed especially well suited to function as a universal lingua franca to counter Axis claims to it and provide the needed cultural bond for the creation of a defensive hemispheric ecumene. At stake here was nothing less than the definition of American national identity and its role in the world. However, the effort to use American music to build and consolidate hemispheric and global alliances by projecting an image of U.S. pluralist, i.e., anti-racist and egalitarian, intentions also revived and extended hegemonic claims.

Christoph Schaub

Brooklyn Cosmopolitanisms: Situated Imaginations of Metropolitan Cultures in Paul Auster's *The Brooklyn Follies* and Mos Def's *Black on Both Sides*

ABSTRACT: The article starts from the premise that studies of literature and rap music should be combined in order to investigate the complexities of contemporary aesthetic experiences of metropolitan cultures. Therefore, it puts into conversation the works of rap artist Mos Def and of novelist Paul Auster by way of a comparative close reading. Focusing on how social and cultural diversity and division, social fragmentation, and cosmopolitanism are staged, it explores the ways these works are characterized by tensions between foregrounded narratives of cosmopolitan inclusion and unspoken exclusions. Employing an intersectional approach and drawing on feminist standpoint theory, the article delineates the "limited location[s]" (Haraway 583) from which these artists imagine metropolitan cultures. Arguing that their imaginations of Brooklyn, NY, are respectively informed by a 'black subaltern cosmopolitanism' (Mos Def) and a '(white, middle-class) cosmopolitanism of the American Dream' (Auster), the article calls for an analytical understanding and a political construction of cosmopolitanism as fundamentally situated.

Andrew Christopher West

Metaphor in Rae Armantrout's *Veil*

ABSTRACT: Rae Armantrout sees language as an intermediary that intervenes in the individual's relationship with the world. It

is an intervention that invariably adulterates the individual's experience of that world. Though she understands that this intervention may be irremediable, Armantrout remains bothered by language's obfuscations and impositions. Unable to rid herself of this perturbation, she finds herself with an unflagging need to make her reader aware of language's so often unproductive work. Armantrout seeks to deconstruct metaphor as a figure of speech, turning it into what, in an interview with Daniel Kane, she calls "anti-metaphor." In so doing, Armantrout aims to prevent the reader from moving through metaphor, and so through language, to the world, leaving the reader nothing to be aware of but metaphor, but language. Yet the cognitive linguist George Lakoff has mounted a compelling argument for an understanding of the individual, language, and the world not as discrete things whose interdependence makes impossible any seeing of the world as it is, but as one continuous thing whose enactment presupposes a seeing of the world as it is. As he understands it, metaphor is not a figure of speech but a way of thinking that societies, communities, individuals, as loci of thought, use to frame a construal of the world that will motivate the language that shapes that world into something in and with which they can act. Lakoff's re-formulation suggests that Armantrout's project is problematic in three ways: First, only by making language (and metaphor) that to which her anti-metaphors refer can she focus the reader's attention on the intermediary itself; second, Armantrout's anti-metaphors, when successful as deconstructions of metaphor, still do not prevent the reader from moving through them to the concepts evoked by them and so the world entwined in those concepts; third, Armantrout's anti-metaphors cannot escape the troublesome irony that they rely on any number of basic conceptual metaphors in order to communicate the stance that they take against metaphor.

Dorothea Buehler

Below the Surface: Female Sexuality in Gloria Naylor's *Bailey's Café*

ABSTRACT: Scriptural portrayals of women, such as the biblical narrative of Hagar, the Egyptian slave girl, have for centuries served as a point of reference for negotiating the complex system of sexual exploitation and victimization of black American women. Placing a shattered whore—virgin dichotomy at the center of her work, the African American novelist Gloria Naylor offers an ambivalent portrayal of a black community that challenges the prevalent cultural location of female sexuality within a white patriarchal society. This article attempts to throw light on Naylor's liberationist and revisionist writing as an African American novelist, and to closer identify her endeavor to arrive at an image of black womanhood that is 'whole' rather than fractured due to centuries of stigmatization by misogynist Judeo-Christian traditions as well as sexual and spiritual enslavement.

Christa

Forum "We need Martin more than ever": Interview

Buschendorf

with Cornel West on Martin Luther King, Jr., August 2011

ABSTRACT: This interview is part of a larger project on the African American intellectual tradition and its impact on today's ongoing struggle for justice and equality. In two earlier, as yet unpublished, conversations that were recorded in 2009 and 2010, Cornel West and I discussed Frederick Douglass and W. E. B. Du Bois. We are concerned with the special challenges of black public intellectuals and activists, e.g., with the impediments deriving from their position as outsiders in society; we consider the philosophical and political voices that helped form their own thinking as well as the social conditions that shaped them; and we reflect on the role of religion in their lives and its specific function in the black community. While Cornel West has written extensively on the black intellectual tradition in the past, his current emphasis is on the radical nature of African American political thought and its universal suppression in collective memory. As a public intellectual and activist who builds upon this very tradition, he attempts to lay bare and revitalize its revolutionary core for the sake of the radicalization of contemporary debates.

Amst 56.4 (2011)	American Comic Books and Graphic Novels
	Daniel Stein, Christina Meyer, Micha Edich (guest editors)
Daniel Stein, Christina Meyer, Micha Edlich	Introduction: American Comic Books and Graphic Novels

Shane Denson

Marvel Comics' Frankenstein: A Case Study in the Media of Serial Figures

ABSTRACT: This essay argues that Marvel's Frankenstein comics of the 1960s and 1970s offer a useful case study in the dynamics of serial narration, both as it pertains to comics in particular and to the larger plurimedial domain of popular culture in general. Distinguishing between linear and non-linear forms of narrative seriality—each of which correlates with two distinct types of series-inhabiting characters—I argue that Marvel's staging of the Frankenstein monster mixes the two modes, resulting in a self-reflexive exploration and interrogation of the comics' storytelling techniques. Furthermore, I contend that this process sheds light on the medial dynamics of serial figures—that is, characters such as the monster (but also superheroes like Batman and Superman or other figures like Tarzan and Sherlock Holmes) that are adapted again and again in a wide variety of forms, contexts, and media. Though narrative continuity may be lacking between the repeated stagings of serial figures, non-diegetic traces of previous incarnations accumulate on such characters, allowing them to move between and reflect upon medial forms, never

wholly contained in a given diegetic world. Accordingly, Marvel's depiction of the Frankenstein monster leads to a self-reflexive probing of comic books' forms of narrative and visual mediality, ultimately problematizing the very building blocks of comics as a medium—the textual and graphic framings that, together, narrate comics' serialized stories.

James F. Wurtz

"Out there in the Asylum": Physical, Mental, and Structural Space in Grant Morrison and Dave McKean's *Arkham Asylum: A Serious House on Serious Earth*

ABSTRACT: In Grant Morrison and Dave McKean's *Arkham Asylum: A Serious House on Serious Earth* (1989), Batman travels through Gotham City's most famous residence, where his encounters with its inmates force him to reexamine his own psyche. The house itself has a story to tell, and the history of the Asylum is interwoven with the tale of Batman's dark night of the soul. Underpinning the narrative is a complex examination of the nature of space and the spatial in the graphic novel, and *Arkham Asylum* uses this examination to self-reflexively interrogate the nature of comic form. *Arkham Asylum* structures its narrative according to both the layout of the house and to sacred architecture, and it also spatializes sanity and insanity. At the same time, the form of the comic (itself reliant on the readers' negotiation of the arranged spaces on the page in front of them) allows Morrison and McKean to reimagine the potential of the superhero genre and inquire into the nature of the relationship between reader and text.

Fredrik Strömberg

"Yo, rag-head!": Arab and Muslim Superheroes in American Comic Books after 9/11

ABSTRACT: The relationship between the United States and the Arab/Muslim world has been problematic, to say the least, and has left its mark on American popular culture in general and on comics in particular. A small number of studies conducted in the 1980s and 1990s about the portrayal of Arabs and Muslims in American comics have shown a profusion of negative stereotypes and a conspicuous absence of Arab and/or Muslim heroes. This essay revisits this discourse and examines the ways in which Arabs and Muslims have been portrayed in the most American of all genres—the superhero comic book—since the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001. In order to understand how these comics communicate ideas and representations of the 'Arab/Middle Eastern/Muslim' to American readers, this essay conducts a critical discourse analysis based on the idea of the 'Oriental Other.' After 9/11, the number of characters who are portrayed as Arab Muslims, Arab Americans, and American Muslims, both male and female, from the openly devout and zealous to the privately and nominally religious, has increased

noticeably. Although such characters seem to have been created to resist stereotypical or racist configurations of Arabs and/or Muslims as terrorists, they nonetheless partake in the 'Othering' of these groups in American public discourse through stereotypes in both visual and verbal communication, and thus often unintentionally reinforce rather than counteract stereotypes of the Oriental Other.

Astrid Böger

Conquering Silence: David Small's *Stitches* and the Art of Getting Better

ABSTRACT: When David Small's graphic narrative *Stitches: A Memoir* appeared in September 2009, it met instantly with great critical enthusiasm. Moreover, it was selected as a finalist for the 2009 National Book Award and it received no fewer than two Will Eisner Comic Industry Awards in 2010. Critical praise was duly expressed by Rachel Cooke, who reviewed the book for the *Guardian* following its European release in May 2010, and who went so far as to call *Stitches* "a triumphant testament of survival." Moving beyond such efforts at labeling a compelling representative of the growing field of graphic narrative, this essay explores the ways in which Small's memoir about his difficult experience of growing up in a repressive family in 1950s Detroit, makes use of and expands the currently budding genre of graphic life writing in order to create a unique aesthetic of traumatic memory recovered in the graphic mode, thereby productively contributing to the overlapping discourses on trauma and memory studies. Arguably, the genre of the graphic memoir proves particularly suitable for negotiating the pressures of the personal environment of the 'autographic I' by presenting a form of 'graphic cure,' even as it exposes a painfully pathological side of life in postwar America.

Simon Dickel

"Can't Leave Me Behind": Racism, Gay Politics, and Coming of Age in Howard Cruse's *Stuck Rubber Baby*

ABSTRACT: On three different narrative levels, Howard Cruse's *Stuck Rubber Baby* portrays the coming of age and coming out of its white narrator, Toland Polk, in the American South in the 1950s and 1960s. This graphic novel shows that Toland's personal developments are closely and necessarily linked to racist violence and the politics of the Civil Rights Movement. Analyzing the narrative functions of music, the translinear leitmotif of a crushed head, and Cruse's manipulation of panel frames and gutters, I argue that *Stuck Rubber Baby* uses these three aspects to connect Toland's biography to black history. The three devices allow Cruse to explore and interrogate the interrelated politics of black and gay liberation. Cruse is careful not to equate racism and homophobia. Picturing the black gay and lesbian characters Les, Esmeraldus, Marge, and Effie as being rooted within the black community, he circumvents the fallacy of stating that both forms of oppressions are analogous

and effectively counters common stereotypical assumptions about the prevalence of homophobia in black communities.

Kai Mikkonen

Graphic Narratives as a Challenge to Transmedial Narratology: The Question of Focalization

ABSTRACT: This essay discusses three premises of focalization theory and narrative perspective that bear particular relevance to the question of narrative mediation in visual storytelling, specifically in regard to graphic narratives. These questions include the fundamental distinctions between 'who speaks' and 'who sees,' between the source and the degree of focalization and the entity focalized, and between personal and impersonal vantage points. Inspired by recent developments in focalization theory and transmedial narratology, the essay emphasizes the importance of medium-specific features in graphic storytelling and perspective-taking and ponders the narratological problems that these features create. Designating the degree of deixis in graphic images on the visual level is exceedingly difficult; moreover, many types of focalization in graphic narratives do not fall as easily within the external/internal divide as in literary narratives. In order to develop a truly transmedial concept of focalization, it is important for narrative theory not only to find common ground between different narrative media in respect to their techniques and processes of perspective-taking, but also to develop ways to explain the fundamental differences between verbal and visual focalization or among different varieties of pictorial narration. Graphic narratives present a specific challenge to transmedial narratology, as the medium requires that the reader integrate perceptual information from different semiotic channels in ways that are both similar to, and different from, other forms of multimodal narration.

Carola Hecke

Graphic Novels as a Teaching Tool in High School and University English as a Foreign Language (EFL) Classrooms

ABSTRACT: The didactic potential and pedagogical value of graphic novels have caught the attention of American Studies and EFL teaching methodologists, who have realized that graphic novels can, as teaching and learning tools, foster creative communication and intercultural learning. While such advantages of graphic novels have been highlighted repeatedly, these texts have not yet become an integral part of high school and university curricula. Against the backdrop of these reflections, this essay explains how graphic novels can be used to achieve major institutional objectives of foreign language education, facilitate the teaching of intercultural communicative competence (ICC), and increase reading motivation in EFL classes from grade 7 to grades 12 or 13. Since understanding images is a prerequisite for interpreting graphic novels, this essay further emphasizes the importance of developing students' and future

teachers' visual literacy, and offers an innovative teaching methodology for courses in the new MA curricula, the 'learning through teaching' approach, according to which students learn matters of relevance—declarative knowledge and procedural skills—by teaching other students.

Henry Jenkins

Forum Comics as Poetry: An Interview with David Mack

ABSTRACT: In this interview, comics book artist-author David Mack (Kabuki: The Alchemy) describes his creative process, discusses his influences, and maps his relationship to his readers, his publishers, and his medium.