

**Transatlantic Cinema**  
**"Production – Genres – Encounters – Negotiations"**  
**27 – 29 October 2016**

**Conference Report**

The "Call for Papers" had invited contributions to four areas of academic inquiry, i.e. the production of movies (incl. financing, directing, casting etc.), the various cinematic genres (e.g. World War II movies, romantic comedies, action movies etc.), encounters (including contact zones where characters from both sides of the Atlantic meet and, especially, their various motifs of crossing the ocean), and, finally, aspects of negotiating difference (including questions of national identity and, possibly, transnational/transatlantic identities).

The papers read at the conference fit this matrix perfectly. Melvyn Stokes (University College London) opened the conference with a challenging keynote lecture on "Transatlantic Cinema and the Character of Cultural Exchange". His lecture admirably set the tune for the following section on "Cinematic Productions" in which Jürgen Kramer (TU Dortmund University) analyzed several films by Fred Zinnemann, while Richard Kilborn (University of Stirling) addressed the cinematic work of Wim Wenders in its post-war context. The section on "Cinematic Genres" was broached by Klaus-Peter Walter (University of Passau, Romance Studies) who gave a lecture on Hollywood remakes of classic French nouvelle-vague movies by Truffaut, Godard, Rohmer and Chabrol. The argument was intensified by Andreas Etges' (LMU Munich) report on "National Narratives and Myths about World War II" by looking at a fairly large corpus of relevant films, while Richard King (Washington State University, Pullman) offered a somewhat disturbing insight into "Racists, Hooligans, and Fascists: Depictions of Skinheads in Transatlantic Cinema". Further genres under review were the revival of the Italian Western by Quentin Tarantino, presented by Angela Fabris and Jörg Helbig (University of Klagenfurt, Austria), and West Coast Independent movies represented by filmmaker Miranda July as presented by Nassim Balestrini (University of Graz). In Section 3 "Encounters" Stephanie Szlezák (University of Passau, American Studies) introduced the audience to parallels between Henry James' "International Theme" and the post-millennial films of Woody Allen while Lutz Koepnick (Vanderbilt University, Nashville) delivered a fascinating second keynote lecture on "Transatlantic Passages: Cinema and the Figure of the Migrant". Although this was a conference of scholars well-versed in the aesthetics of the cinema, Lutz Koepnick amazed us all by his entirely new "reading" of a classic film like Casablanca. The final section on "Negotiation Difference: Nation and Gender" brought together Dorothea Löbbermann's (Humboldt University Berlin) stimulating paper on "Misrepresenting Nation" by reference to a classic movie like A Foreign Affair, a study of "Gender Negotiations and Hollywood Sex Comedies in Cold-War West Germany" delivered by Anne-Marie Scholz (University of Bremen), and Wieland Schwanebeck's (TU Dresden) lecture on "Tom Ripley: International Man of Mystery".

While the wealth of new and stimulating insights accumulated during the three-day conference is beyond the scope of a short report, it was fascinating to see how actresses like Marlene Dietrich and Doris Day and actors like Peter Lorre and Humphrey Bogart performed as embodiments of transatlantic relations. Moreover, it was extremely exciting to watch so many cinematic "waves" rolling across the Atlantic as film noir was washed from its (debated) origins in German expressionism to the shores of Hollywood, only to be flooding back to Europe and infusing the nouvelle vague in France until, again, returning as a further inspiration to Hollywood cinema. The conference thus was another vivid example of how Transnational American Studies can cast new light on old and new cultural products generated as part of transatlantic cultural exchange.

The papers read at the conference plus a number of further contributions to be commissioned will be published in a conference volume published by Lang (in the book series "Interamericana" in 2018). The conference organizers and editors are confident that this volume will be an important addition to both, Transnational American Studies and transatlantic relations at a politically difficult time.