

## Lecture abstracts

**Nasjonalt forskerutdanningskurs "Grenser og rammer",  
Sommarøy og Tromsø, 2004**

**Lectures held at the international symposium Border poetics? - A  
Comparative Perspective, Tromsø and Sommarøy, November 11-  
13, 2004.**

**Jane Aaron**

**Border Blues: Representing the Welsh borders in twentieth-century Anglophone literature** From early medieval laments to contemporary pop songs, Welsh-language culture generally represents the Anglo-Welsh border as a place of woe. The border is so strongly associated with loss - of language, recognition, identity - that it comes as a shock to encounter it in contemporary postcolonial and poststructuralist theory as an energising threshold on which vital hybridities flourish and the new and emergent is launched. Of course it is linguistic difference, and the lack of parity in terms of numbers of speakers and the degree of their bilingualism, which makes the border so traumatic a space for Welsh-language users. Welsh writers in English are very differently situated, however; not immediately confronted with linguistic difference, they may choose whether or not they identify with the Welsh language and its struggles. However, if they opt not to identify with it, then in order to develop that heterogeneity which will mark out their voices as distinctive, they must construct a 'Welshness' independent of linguistic difference. Given that from the Act of Union on, Welsh difference has been largely defined in terms of linguistic difference, the identities such writers produce are likely to be more self-consciously fabricated than most, but that does not of course mean that they are less creative or less informative of the power relations between nations and cultures and their effects on individuals. This lecture will refer to a number of twentieth-century English-language texts on the Welsh border, for example, Raymond Williams' Border Country trilogy, some of R. S. Thomas's Manafon poems, and Margiad Evans's Country Dance, in developing the above argument.

**Debra A Castillo**

**Disney Calcutta: Maria Novaro and Cheech Marin do Tijuana** This talk is based upon excerpts from what I see as a stand-alone 30 minute video that I created as a riff on the final chapter of my recent book, *Border Women*, cowritten with Socorro Tabuenca Córdoba. This is essentially a visual meditation on the images of crossing and cruising both North-South and South-North centered on Tijuana/San Diego, the busiest of the world's borders. The video is framed by these crossings both seen from a geopolitical perspective and in terms of gender, and in its central section by a movement that is both purposeful and performative. It is in no way intended to serve as a complete or objective representation of the border or its very real and complex problems; for example, there is no reference to two of the most salient industries associated with borderlife-the maquiladoras and the narcotraficantes-both of which also involve border crossing narratives. I refer to three "travel" narratives as a way to begin

this discussion-Montalvo, Michel de Certeau, and Richard Rodríguez. Through a brief discussion of their texts, I suggest that the constant movement associated with this border tends to bias analysis toward a somewhat attenuated conceptualization of a utopic home/land (paradise), always locatable just on the other side of a visible barrier, but without ever anchoring itself concretely. The fence that separates the US from Mexico, in this imaginary projection, is perversely parallel to the gated entry to Walt Disney's fantasy world. While Walt's Disneyland lies just to the north of the US/Mexico border, Disney Calcutta occupies the south, and both sites serve as metaphoric, retrofuturistic playgrounds for the postmodern imagination. Traditional fictional and filmic representations of Tijuana echo these themes obsessively as well, and in the final section of this lecture I complement my three travelers' narratives with a look at Tijuana through two representative films: Cheech Marín's *Born in East L.A.* (1987); and Maria Novaro's *Jardin del Eden* (1994).

### **Claudio Egerer**

**Crossings** This talk is going back to an old preoccupation with borders, in particular their vexing doubling as limit and bridge, and inspired by the art exhibition *Territories*, first staged at KW Berlin in 2003, then brought to Malmö Konsthall in 2004. Focusing on multidisciplinary aspects of spatial issues, *Territories* examines the relations between space, politics, and power, the exhibition raised questions that have stayed with me. Thinking about borders, I am left with questions about space: what do we mean by space, how do cultures experience space differently, what is the relationship between space and power. I will trace these questions by paying close attention to two seemingly unrelated events in the fields of architecture and literature, Segal and Weizman's project *A Civilian Occupation* and a phrase from a talk by Australian author Nicholas Jose about "two people walking in relation country." The wording is Alexis Wright's, and offers a way of relating to the country in stark contrast to the one forwarded by *A Civilian Occupation*. The focus of my talk is thus on two very different visualizations of space and the function of borders in thinking about space.

### **Reinhold Görling**

**Topology of Borders in Turkish-German Cinema** Borders are places that are determined by two different logics of the place: on the one hand there is the dialectic of limit and transgression, separation and connection. There is no border that could be established and maintained without any relation to the outside. On the other hand there is the topology of the in-between space, the threshold, the gap. This is the place, where the chains of association split, where latitude, contingency arises. Both logics work side by side, often in an contradictory relation. Film probably is the art with the strongest relation between inner and outer spaces. Whereas the classical action movie constructs the outer space often as metaphor for the inner space, in (what Gilles Deleuze calls) the time picture we can observe a direct relation: the landscape becomes a mental situation, as the mental situation becomes cartographic. Fatih Akin's last movie *Gegen die Wand* intensifies this contradiction in a more radical manner than all the earlier works of the new Turkish-German Cinema. The talk will give a reading of some recent examples of Turkish-German visual art and

will then go back from Akins new film to the claustrophobic spaces of Tefcik Baser's 40 qm Deutschland at the beginning of this accented cinema in Germany.

### **Rüdiger Görner**

**Notes on the Culture of Borders** Drawing a line is a border experience. Definitions and differentiations constitute borders. Respecting borders is an ethical and political necessity; transgressing borders can be an act of violation but also of self-liberation. The existence of borders involve us in reflecting on ambiguities. Borders seem clear cut but, in most cases, represent obstacles. At the same time they provide useful frameworks and make us aware of our own limitations. This lecture attempts to examine the virtue and challenge of borders. It draws on Karl Jaspers's conception of existential border experience and looks at the historical understanding of borders and its development since the early 1800s. It attempts to define 'culture' in terms of a permanent interplay between limitations and transgressions and aims at defining the 'culture of borders' as the sine qua non of civilized behaviour. It will make the point that the degree of civility in a society depends on the way in which the manifold 'border questions' - from social interaction, regional and national identification to cultural innovation - are negotiated. The lecture will make the point that the quality of the discourse on border issues of almost any kind is an indicator for a community's level of sensitivity towards itself and, perhaps more importantly, other communities.

### **Malene Vest Hansen**

**Public Places - Private Spaces: Site-specific Blurring of Boundaries** Site-specific strategies are common in contemporary visual art practices. Site-specific art contests - as many other contemporary art practices - the notion of the modern, original "object of art" by shifting notions of authenticity in different ways. In the last decade, moreover, sites have been addressed in new discursive or "debate-specific" modes. This lecture will discuss recent strategies in site-specific art with special focus on French conceptual artist Sophie Calle's projects from Jerusalem. In Eruv and the Stations from 1996, Sophie Calle represents Jerusalem in a kind of "social archaeology", depicting the city in seemingly common documenting modes using photos, texts, and maps. However, these documenting "objective" inscriptions of the cultural sites are contested by personal stories and private spaces. I will discuss the problematization of the production of space, the blurring of public/private spaces and the blurring of culturally stated borders in the public/private in these investigations. Furthermore, I will discuss how such site-specific strategies perform a spatial politics, and, maybe, even can be defined as a new kind of "public art".

### **Lene Johannessen**

**Border Figurations** "[E]ven a "reformed" exile will continue to practice the one thing exiles do almost as a matter of instinct: compulsive retrospection" (André Aciman 1999, 13). As the experiential reference frames for cultural and individual practises are increasingly entangled in various manifestations of human mobility, literature, too, abounds in narratives of homelessness, dislocation and disruption. At the centre of these tales we invariably find a border, constituting and constituted by the same idea, namely the possibility or

impossibility of its crossing. The aesthetical representation of the border finds many expressions, and among them the refraction of the border's shadow, that is, its memory. In this sense the anatomy of the border becomes inseparable from the anatomy of the moment it is constituted, in consciousness and in art. Aesthetically speaking, border poetics is also the poetics of memory. In this lecture I want to explore the ways the border figures in literary works wherein the border casts its long shadows. What figures does memory of the border generate? To read (for) its figures and figurations may bring out the contours of 'compulsive retrospection,' illuminating the intractability of the border gestalt and offering a possible organizing principle for aesthetic refraction. The literary text(s) I have chosen for this 'fieldwork' is a short story collection titled *In Cuba I Was a German Shepherd* (2001) by Ana Menéndez and/or Cristina Garcia's novel *Dreaming in Cuban* (1992).

### **Svend Erik Larsen**

**Boundaries - ontology, methods and analysis** My lecture addresses the problem of boundaries in two turns. First, I will approach the problem theoretically in a discussion of the difference between an ontological perspective and a methodological perspective. Following the first one, we assume that certain phenomena are boundaries by nature and therefore call for certain methodological steps to be taken. According to the other perspective, boundaries are constructed on the basis of methodological considerations, assuming that any phenomenon may be analyzed as a boundary phenomenon if we find it relevant. The aim of the theoretical reflection is to discuss the relationship between the two perspectives in the field of aesthetics. - The second turn of my investigation is analytical. How do boundaries emerge or manifest themselves in literary texts, and how do we categorize them in order to define the scope and limits of an analysis? In a reading of Allan Ginsberg's *Howl* I'll show how we may apply the two perspectives to answer those questions, and how we can evaluate the outcome.

### **Lena Liepe**

**The "word vomiter" of Rómverjasaga: transgressing the text/image-division in an Icelandic medieval manuscript** The subject of the lecture is a marginal drawing in an Icelandic illuminated manuscript from the second quarter of the 14th century: AM 595 a-b 4to. *Rómverjasaga* ("The History of the Romans"), today in the Arnarnagnæan collection, University of Copenhagen. The codex contains translations to Icelandic of three Roman texts: *Bellum Iugurthinum* ("The Jugurthine War") and *Catilinae coniuratio* ("The Conspiracy of Catiline") by Sallust, and *Pharsalia* by Lucan. The figure referred to in the title of the lecture is a man on fol. 2r, bending his head backwards and spewing forth the elongated staple of an -s- while at the same time pointing at the word, and also indicating another word on the same line with his other hand. The drawings of the codex are of the most unpretentious kind: simple sketches in the margins, seemingly not integrated in the layout of the page, and in several cases not even contemporary with the text. As regards the 'original' 14th century drawings, even if they are not integrated in the layout of the pages, they are not entirely arbitrary. At least three refer directly to things told in the text, and in general the motifs are well suited to the character of *Rómverjasaga*, dealing with martial

exploits: among other things they show a knight, a castle and a horse. The lecture will focus on: 1) The image vs. the word and the text in medieval thought; 2) The "word vomiter" as a representation of the 'aurality' of medieval literacy. The former theme deals with the medieval hierarchy between oral and written communication and between seeing and reading, where the true Word, Logos, was spoken, while the written text and the image were mistrusted as secondary, conventional representations of the truth inherent in the spoken Word. The latter theme deals with the specific character of medieval literature as an intermediary between orality and literacy, where the text is something that is spoken out loud or performed by a reader, acting as a mediating agent between the text and the audience.