Serality Serality Serality

The Many Lives of the Field That Isn’t One

On June 22-24, 2016,

the Popular Seriality Research Unit

(DFG Forschergruppe 1091 “Ästhetik und Praxis populärer Serialität”)

will hold its final conference in Berlin, Germany.

After six years, thirteen subprojects, nine associated projects, numerous conferences, workshops, and publications it is time to reach some kind of conclusion.

Together with our international collaborators over the years, we would like to explore future possibilities and alternative visions of a “field” that we always claimed existed. Thus, the focus of our final conference will be on the histories, conceptualizations, and methodologies of seriality studies itself.

Trying to sidestep the formats of the project pitch, the case study, the “reading” of individual series according to pre-existing theoretical models or their translation into philosophical master vocabularies, we invite scholarly practices—including those just mentioned—to reflect on the challenges and limits of (their contributions to) seriality studies as an ongoing, perhaps fantastical, project that traverses disciplinary and methodological paradigms.

Each of the Research Unit’s current subprojects will organize a section. Section formats will vary but they will always stress discussion and exchange. Hence, workshops and panel discussions will provide at least 40 minutes for Q&A. Time limits for papers (20 minutes) and panel statements (5 minutes) will be strictly enforced.
Section 1: Panel Discussion

**After Television**

What does it mean for the study of popular serialities that its most visible research paradigm is (American) television? How can television studies be re-imagined as part of seriality studies? Should it be? Is there serial life after television?

Chair: Frank Kelleter (FU Berlin)
Format: Five 5-minute statements followed by a moderated discussion.

**Panelists:**
Jason Mittell (Middlebury)
Sean O’Sullivan (Ohio State)
Jeffrey Sconce (Northwestern)
Robyn Warhol (Ohio State)
Daniela Wentz (Weimar)
Section 2: Workshop

Digital Serialities

Today, series of all sorts are encoded in digital formats and circulated in digital media, but has seriality perhaps always been digital—or never yet completely? This workshop explores the genealogies that connect computational and analog forms of seriality. Investigating the meaning of seriality at the level of code and hardware, we ask how one can think of digital serialities not only in terms of forms and operations but also with regard to our broader media environments.

Chairs: Shane Denson (Duke/Hannover) and Andreas Sudmann (FU Berlin)
Format: Three 20-minute papers.

Papers:
Stephanie Boluk (UC Davis): Networked Necronomics: The Serial Virality of Valve’s Zombies
Shane Denson (Duke/Hannover) & Andreas Sudmann (FU Berlin): Infra-Ludic Serialities
Till Heilmann (Bonn): 3D Printing: (Un)Making Seriality
Section 3: Workshop

Detection & Concealment

Since its beginnings in the 19th century, modern serial storytelling has shown a strong affinity for plots of crime and detection. This workshop aims to consider the conflation of detective stories and seriality as more than a historical coincidence or a matter of genre. Looking beyond individual case studies, it investigates how series and serials, even outside the crime and detective genres, engage in practices of detection and concealment.

Chair: Ilka Brasch (Hannover)
Format: Three 20-minute papers.

Papers:
Monica Dall’Asta (Bologna) & Federico Pagello (Queen’s University Belfast): The Puzzling Subject: Detective Series, Crime Serials and Narrative Desire

Helen Hanson (Exeter): ‘B’ for Blane and ‘B’ for Budget: The Productivity (and Narrativity) of Detection and Concealment in the studio era Hollywood series film

Rieke Jordan (FU Berlin): Surveillance on a Broken Screen: Glitches and Gaps in Serialized Narratives
Section 4: Workshop

**Gender. The Series**

Gender studies, feminist media studies, queer studies, and critical race studies have long labored toward an understanding of gender as an intersectional, ongoing, and negotiated process of performance. This conception would seem to be particularly germane to the analysis of serialized media texts, but questions of gender and its intersections are still being treated as specialized concerns. Must feminist scholars “console their passions” for popular culture? Might the prevalence of representationalist readings be part of the problem? How is the “seriality of gender” related to the serialities of popular storytelling?

Chair: Maria Sulimma (FU Berlin)
Format: Three 20-minute papers.

**Papers:**

Julia Leyda (FU Berlin): Resilience, Race, and Feminism in Female-Centered Serial TV

Amanda Lotz (University of Michigan): What Can Seriality Do for Constructions of Gender In Television Storytelling?

Maria Sulimma (FU Berlin): Will this Gender ever be Televised? On the Challenges of Seriality and Gender Studies
Section 5: Workshop

Seriality between Fictionality and Factuality

This workshop is concerned with the relationship between fictionality and factuality in popular serial formats. Examining examples from different media—including magazines, newspapers, web series, (reality) TV series and their coverage—it investigates the characteristics of factual and fictional types of seriality and traces various modes of their interaction. Workshop presentations will be held in German; discussions of papers can be conducted both in German and English.

Chairs: Stefan Scherer (Karlsruhe) and Claudia Stockinger (Göttingen)
Format: Five 12-minute papers [in German].

Papers:

Fabian Grumbrecht (Göttingen): Serialität im Spannungsfeld von Fiktionalität und Faktualität in der "Kölner Zeitung" (1850-1890)

Christian Hißnauer (Göttingen): Spannungsverhältnisse von Fiktionalität, Faktualität und Serialität im Reality TV. Zur dreifachen Formstruktur nicht-fiktionaler Serien

Thomas Klein (Independent Scholar): Serialität als Form der Nachhaltigkeitskommunikation

Madleen Podewski (FU Berlin): Medienspezifische Kooperationen: Bild- und Textserien in illustrierten Magazinen der Weimarer Republik ("Uhu", "Die Dame", "Der Querschnitt").

Stefan Scherer (Karlsruhe) & Claudia Stockinger (Göttingen): Berichterstattung in Serie. Re-Entries zwischen faktualer und fiktionaler Serialität am Beispiel der ARD-Reihe "Tatort"
Section 6: Panel Discussion

Dimensions of ‘Produsing’: Writing, Producing, and Consuming the Serial in a Globalized World

Producing serials and consuming them are clearly interrelated practices, though one is coded more as work, the other more as leisure. Media anthropology has generated focused, site- and country-specific methods to understand series’ ecologies and economies; media studies has preferred to cast a wider analytic net. Both fields are trying to make sense of the transnational (often digitally-based) circulation of genres and plots on the one hand and of nation-specific modes of production and consumption on the other. This panel discussion brings together media scholars and cultural anthropologists who consider how their methodologies might address issues of “produsing” that are at once global and deeply local.

Chair: Regina Bendix (Göttingen)
Format: Five 5-minute statements followed by a moderated discussion.

Panelists:
John Caldwell (UCLA)
Christine Hämmerling (Zürich)
Nathalie Knöhr (Göttingen)
Britta Lesniak (Göttingen)
Annemarie Navar-Gill (University of Michigan)
Investigating commercial storytelling one quickly learns to think of seriality not in terms of sequentiality but spread and sprawl. Popular series, with their feedback loops of production and reception, are force fields of connection; they activate practices and mobilize practitioners far beyond their textual bounds. This workshop attends to the institutions and non-personal agencies of serial storytelling. But rather than searching for representations of non-human actors or network-figures in serial texts—as if series were allegories of ANT—it asks: what would it mean to study (textual/narrative) structure as (consolidated, habituated, institutionalized) practice, or (networked) practice as (improbable) structure?

Chair: Babette B. Tischleder (Göttingen)
Format: Three 20-minute papers.

Papers:
Sven Grampp (Erlangen): A Network as an Actor: The Making of Teen TV
Sabine Sielke (Bonn): Seriality and Network(ing): Conceptualizing (Their) Connection
Michaela Wünsch (ICI Berlin): Singularity in Times of Seriality
Section 8: Workshop

**Seriality High ‘n’ Low**

We’ve heard about popular seriality but what about its more respectable counterpart: the seriality of avantgarde music, abstract poetry, experimental art, or other “serious” areas of expression? When the low is related to the high, this often happens in the guise of the legitimating simile (“a TV series *like* a novel”), while post/modernist seriality is typically aligned with universal philosophies of repetition & difference but rarely with the variation practices of commercial culture (how often do we hear, “a Gertrude Stein novel as inventive and complex as a *Seinfeld* episode”?). Is seriality a genuinely popular principle invading other fields or should we approach it as a formal-aesthetic principle that is *also* exploited by commercial cultures? (How) does seriality allow us to rechart the cultural landscape between high ‘n’ low?

Chair: Ruth Mayer (Hannover)
Format: Three 20-minute papers.

**Papers:**

Eva Geulen (ZfL Berlin): Seriality as Form

Julika Griem (Frankfurt): Machine and Game: Metaphors Seriality Lives By

Ulla Haselstein (FU Berlin): Modernist Reality as a Modeling Device
Section 9: Panel Discussion

**Textbooks, Handbooks, Anthologies: Are We Legitimating Comics to Death?**

It’s a truism that academic approaches to comics have finally gained a seat at the table of established disciplines. But it remains unclear which methods and perspectives are best suited for the serial sprawl and the proliferating diversity that have characterized comics ever since their inception. The recent wave of textbooks, handbooks, and anthologies on graphic storytelling raises questions about the role of legitimating discourses of the artwork and streamlined, teachable accounts of comics history in the study of popular serialities.

**Chair:** Daniel Stein (Siegen)
**Format:** Five 5-minute statements followed by a moderated discussion.

**Panelists:**
Will Brooker (Kingston)

Michael Chaney (Dartmouth)

Lukas Etter (Siegen)

Jared Gardner (Ohio State)

Christina Meyer (Hannover)
Section 10: Workshop

Other Speeds and Segmentations: Seriality and the Feature Film

When we think of popular series, we typically think of recurring characters and evolving plot patterns in regular and relatively frequent installments. But cinematic serialities in the form of short-lived film cycles, long-term sequelizations, or cross-generational remakes complicate the standard view of serial narratives as fast-paced episodic formats. This workshop explores how feature-film seriality challenges our understanding of seriality in newspapers, comics, radio, or television.

Chair: Kathleen Loock (FU Berlin)
Format: Three 20-minute papers.

Papers:
Kathleen Loock (FU Berlin): Beyond the Formula? Hollywood Seriality and the Sequel Paradox
Con Verevis (Monash): Another Green World: The “Mad Max” series
Section 11: Workshop

**Seriality Porn**

It’s good for more than just reproduction. The most *popular* seriality of them all shows every trait of commercial continuation but exists neither as narrative nor play. The massive modular hook-up of human bodies and technological media that defines capitalist cultures of seriality is all but unmentionable, by users or scholars, when encountered in its bluntest form. This workshop addresses the exploitations of pleasure and the pleasures of exploitation that are typical of commodified serial storytelling in general (where every ‘again’ is always also a ‘more’) but regularly neglected in their pornographic manifestation. What does it mean that here, as in seriality studies itself, final satisfactions remain ever unlikely?

Chair: Linda Williams (UC Berkeley)
Format: Four 20-minute papers.

Sarah Schaschek (Independent Scholar): Beats of the Body: Why Seriality Studies Should Look Beyond the Analysis of Pornographic Images and Towards the Conceptualization of its Sound

Phyll Smith (University of East Anglia) & Ellen Wright (De Montfort University): Tijuana Bibles and the Pornographic Iteration of Hollywood.


Madita Oeming (Independent Scholar): (S)exploiting Television – Porn Parodies of Popular US TV-Series
Section 12: Panel Discussion

To End Yet Again

Let’s do a recap of what just happened for an imagined next episode. Five observers (readers, viewers, consumers) of the conference and a chairing wrapper-upper will be asked to summarize their impressions and ideas in short closing—or opening—statements.

Chair: John Durham Peters (University of Iowa)
Format: Five 7-minute statements followed by a moderated panel discussion.

Panelists:
Dan Hassler-Forest (Utrecht)
Scott Higgins (Wesleyan)
Amanda A. Klein (East Carolina)
Peter Stanfield (Kent)
Harald Wenzel (FU Berlin)
Website: