

International Conference »MEDIA AESTHETICS OF OCCIDENTALISM«



26 – 28 January 2022
University of Marburg, Germany

Book of Abstracts

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Philipps



Universität
Marburg

Institut für Medienwissenschaft

in cooperation with

Centrum für Nah- und Mittelost-Studien

The Cultural Meanings of Asian Aesthetics and Shakespeare Today

Prof. Dr. Alexa Alice Joubin, *George Washington University*

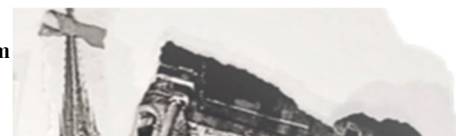


Photo: <https://ajoubin.org>

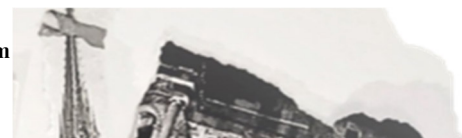
Friday 28th January, 5.00 pm - 5.30 pm

Asian performance aesthetics have a symbiotic but uncomfortable relationship to Western epistemologies. This paper addresses the role of the Western canon, represented by Shakespeare, in East Asian cinema. Since the nineteenth century, stage and film directors have mounted hundreds of adaptations of Shakespeare drawn on East Asian motifs, and by the late twentieth century, Shakespeare had become one of the most frequently performed playwrights in East Asia.

Drawing on case studies of post 1980s Japanese, Korean, and Hong Kong film and stage adaptations of Shakespeare's tragedies, this paper expands the purview of postcolonial studies which tends to focus on British colonialism and Anglophone colonies. Countries that do not fully align with the narrowly defined colonial experience, such as Korea and Japan, have been neglected. In the context of critical whiteness studies, It is racist to regard non-Western films as merely footnotes to the white canon. I seek to de-colonize the study of non-Western cultures and of the Western canon.



How do Anglophone directors such as Kenneth Branagh use imaginaries of Asia differently from directors based in Asia, such as the larger-than-life cherry tree in the widely toured production of *Macbeth* (1980) directed by Yukio Ninagawa? Conversely, what cultural logic governs the circulation and reception of works by East Asian directors, such as *Throne of Blood* by Akira Kurosawa? The artists' racial identities can sometimes incriminate them in ethnic selling out or cultural imperialism. In other contexts, however, their cultural origins and locations exonerate them from cultural appropriation. Directors—regardless of their cultural affiliations—working with Asian motifs often have to contend with their regionally marked cultural identity. Their works are compelled to respond to the competing demands to inhabit simultaneously the local and the global, to be innovative but conservative enough to be palatable, to represent Asia on the world market, and to be the conveyor of an Anglophone West to Asian audiences and vice versa.



CONFERENCE TOPICS

Due to the immense hostile geopolitical dynamics all over the world, an interrogation of the dichotomies of West/East, Occident/Orient, or North/South seems still very necessary. It is with regard to this observation that scholars have been discussing the concept of Occidentalism for more than thirty years now.

The closeness and affinity of Occidentalism to the concept of Orientalism (Said 1978) cannot be denied nor over emphasized, however, it is now possible to identify a strand of discourse on the concept that has become very heterogeneous. It shows at least four manifestations (Alkin 2019):

- a) the patriarchal epistemological pervasion of the world by the West (Armstrong 1990; Müller 1998)
- b) the stabilization of the self-images of the non-West that is the result of its devaluating constructions of the West (writings of Hassan Hanafi, Buruma & Margalit 2005; Bauhn & Tepe 2017)
- c) self-images of the West based on its constructions of the non-West (Coronil 1996, Carrier 2003, Brunner & Dietze 2009)
- d) a meta-reflective perspective that considers the multiple directions and dynamics of the discourses between West and non-West ("Critical Occidentalism", Ahiska 2003; "Strategic Occidentalism", Sánchez Prado 2018)

Even if there is this variety of definitions of the concept of Occidentalism, most of the research analyzes the dichotomic relationship between the Orient and the Occident, and the complex discursive and historical entanglements in different regional and national contexts (b and c).

Again, due to the discourse analytical approach of most of these investigations, which are oriented towards textuality, the media aesthetic features of the discourses have often been neglected. Although the investigations focus on films, photographs or other types of media, the non-textual media-aesthetic qualities (image, sound) are hardly considered.

The consequence is that the aesthetic dimension of discourses remains analytically untouched. In order to understand the role of media-aesthetic features of discourses (Mitchell 2015) in the context of the constitution of Occidentalism, the conference pursues the following central question:

"How do media aesthetic qualities contribute to the constitution of Occidental discourses?"

The goal of the conference is threefold:

Firstly (Theory), the significance of the concept of Occidentalism will be theoretically rediscussed. Secondly (Topical Cases of Occidentalism), the concept will be explored in regard to its usefulness in describing contemporary problems (since the 2000s onwards; also genealogically based). Thirdly (Media Aesthetics), the role of media aesthetic qualities for the effectiveness of occidental discourses will be discussed theoretically and empirically.

The conference explores these three foci through a global spectrum of presentations and a variety of media configurations. The conference language is English.

FOR MORE INFORMATION SEE THE
CONFERENCE WEBSITE

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INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE MEDIA AESTHETICS OF OCCIDENTALISM

JANUARY
26—28, 2022

UNIVERSITY OF
MARBURG, GERMANY

İndim seyran ettim Firengistan'ı
İlleri var, bizim ile benzemez
Levin tutmuş goncaları açılmış
Gülleri var, bizim güle benzemez

*I landed and watched Firengistan**
It has provinces, not resembling ours
The buds caught color and are open
It has roses, they are not like ours

[...]

KARACAOĞLAN

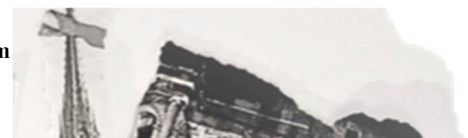
from the poem *İlleri var bizim ile benzemez*; some time in the 17th century

*Europe



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Organization



Dr. Ömer Alkin
(Project Manager)
Philipps University of Marburg



M.A. Hayriye Kapusuz
Philipps University of Marburg



Gökçe Saatçi
Philipps University of Marburg



Scientific Committee



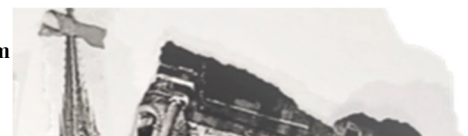
Prof. Dr. Malte Hagener, *Philipps University of Marburg*



Dr. Alena Strohmaier, *Philipps University of Marburg*



Dr. Pierre Hecker, *Philipps University of Marburg*



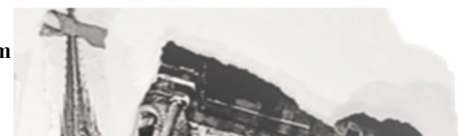
Research Program

Due to the immense hostile geopolitical dynamics all over the world, an interrogation of the dichotomies of West/East, Occident/Orient, or North/South seems still very necessary. It is with regard to this observation that scholars have been discussing the concept of Occidentalism for more than thirty years now.

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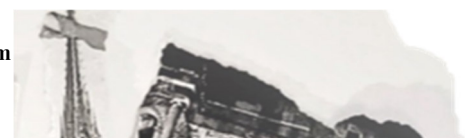
Again, due to the discourse analytical approach of most of these investigations, which are oriented towards textuality, the media aesthetic features of the discourses have often been neglected. Although the investigations focus on films, photographs or other types of media, the non-textual media-aesthetic qualities (image, sound) are hardly considered.

The consequence is that the aesthetic dimension of discourses remains analytically untouched. In order to understand the role of media-aesthetic features of discourses (Mitchell 2015) in the context of the constitution of Occidentalism, the conference pursues the following central question:

“How do media aesthetic qualities contribute to the constitution of Occidental discourses?”

The goal of the conference is threefold:

Firstly (SECTION A: Theory), the significance of the concept of Occidentalism will be theoretically re-discussed. Secondly (SECTION B: Topical Cases of Occidentalism), the concept will be explored in regard to its usefulness in describing contemporary problems (since the 2000s onwards; also genealogically based). Thirdly (SECTION C: Media Aesthetics), the role of media aesthetic qualities for the effectiveness of occidental discourses will be discussed theoretically and empirically.



Conference Program

DAY 1 – Wednesday 26th January 2022

(The conference will be held ONLINE))

13:00 – 13:45 Opening

13:45 – 14:15 **Media Aesthetics of Occidentalism** (Introduction)
Dr. Ömer Alkin, *Philipps University of Marburg*

14:15 – 14:45 Discussion 1

14:45 – 15:00 Coffee break

Session 1, Chair: Dr. Ömer Alkin

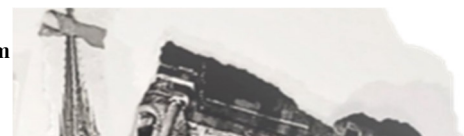
15:00 – 15:30 Lecture 1:
We Didn't Start the Fire – Eurocentrism & Occidentalism in Ancient Visual Art
Dr. Lilian Adlung-Schönheit, *Hamburg University*

15:30 – 16:00 Lecture 2:
The Aesthetics of Occidentalism and Ecology as Interconnected Dimensions
M.A. Hauke Ohls, *University of Duisburg-Essen*

16:00 – 16:30 Discussion 2

16:30 – 16:45 Coffee break

16:45 – 17:45 **Keynote: Orienting Media**
Prof. Dr. W.J.T. Mitchell, *University of Chicago*



DAY 2 – Thursday 27th January 2022

Session 2, Chair: Prof. Dr. Malte Hagener

09:00 – 09:30 Lecture 3:

Searching for the West in the East. The Visual and Performative Construction of Occidentalism Around 1940

Dr. Juliane Hornung, *University of Cologne*

09:30 – 10:00 Lecture 4:

Not the whore, but the soldier: On the limited utility of the notion of Occidentalism

Prof. Dr. Gabriele Werner, *weißensee academy of art Berlin*

10:00 – 10:15 Coffee break

10:15 – 10:45 Lecture 5:

Between Utopia and Disillusion – Images of the ‘West’ in New Romanian Cinema

M.A. Anne Pirwitz, *University of Potsdam*

10:45 – 11:30 Discussion 1

11:30 – 11:45 Coffee break

Session 3, Chair: Dr. Alena Strohmaier

11:45 – 12:15 Lecture 6:

Moods of Occidentalism: Political Commitments of Women’s Movements

Dr. Demet Gülçiçek, *University of Warwick*

12:15 – 12:45 Lecture 7:

Neo-Ottomanism and Occidentalism in Turkish Agitprop Videos

Dr. Pierre Hecker, *Philipps University of Marburg*

12:45 – 13:15 Discussion 2

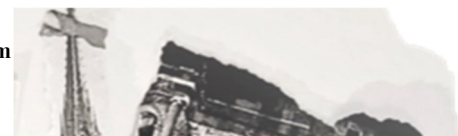
13:15 – 14:45 Lunch

14:45 – 15:45 **Keynote:**

Occidentalism in Turkey: The Impasse Between the Past and the Future

Prof. Dr. Meltem Ahıska, *Boğaziçi University Istanbul*

19:30 Filmscreening: **“Memleketim”** (1974, TR), Turkish with English subtitles, (Capitol Kino, Marburg, Biegenstr. 8)



DAY 3 – Friday 28th January 2022

Session 4, Chair: Dr. Pierre Hecker

14:00 – 15:00 **Keynote:**

The construction of the irreconcilable Other: The Islamic State, Social Media and Masculinity

Prof. Dr. Jiré Emine Gözen, *University of Europe for Applied Sciences*

15:00 – 15:15 Coffee break

15:15 – 15:45 Lecture 8:

Lost in Westernization: A Cross-reading of Walter Benjamin's "On the Concept of History" and Jia Zhangke's Mountains May Depart

M.A. Jialu Zhu, *University of Zürich*

15:45 – 16:15 Lecture 9:

Re-currency of Japanese Occidentalism – Aesthetics Discourse in Film

M.A. Mia Nakayama, *Heidelberg University / Università Ca'Foscari*

16:15 – 16:45 Discussion 1

16:45 – 17:00 Coffee break

Session 5, Chair: M.A. Marie Krämer

17:00 – 17:30 Lecture 10:

The Cultural Meanings of Asian Aesthetics and Shakespeare Today

Prof. Dr. Alexa Alice Joubin, *George Washington University*

17:30 – 18:00 Lecture 11:

The West as Imperialists: Aesthetics of Chinese Occidentalism in Another Hong Kong

M.A. Teng Jason Xu, *University of California*

18:00 – 18:15 Break

18:15 – 18:45 Lecture 12:

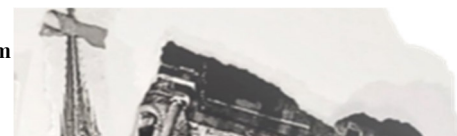
Occidentalism in the Post-revolutionary Cinema of Iran

Dr. Akram Jamshidi, *Tehran University of Art*

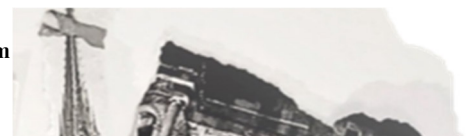
18:45 – 19:30 Discussion 2

19:30 – 19:45 Break

19:45 – 20:45 Panel discussion & Open Discussion, Closing Remarks



Keynote Speakers



Prof. Dr. W.J.T. Mitchell

University of Chicago

Professor of English Language and Literature, Art
History, and the College Theory and Criticism



Photo: <https://arthistory.uchicago.edu/faculty/profiles/mitchell>

W.J.T. Mitchell is editor of the interdisciplinary journal, *Critical Inquiry*, a quarterly devoted to critical theory in the arts and human sciences. A scholar and theorist of media, visual art, and literature, Mitchell is associated with the emergent fields of visual culture and iconology (the study of images across the media). He is known especially for his work on the relations of visual and verbal representations in the context of social and political issues. Under his editorship, *Critical Inquiry* has published special issues on public art, psychoanalysis, pluralism, feminism, the sociology of literature, canons, race and identity, narrative, the politics of interpretation, postcolonial theory, and many other topics. He has been the recipient of numerous awards including the Guggenheim Fellowship and the Morey Prize in art history given by the College Art Association of America. In 2003, he received the University of Chicago's prestigious Faculty Award for Excellence in Graduate Teaching.



Prof. Dr. Meltem Ahıska

Boğaziçi University, İstanbul
Professor of Sociology



Photo: <http://sociology.boun.edu.tr/people.php?id=10>

Meltem Ahıska is professor of sociology at Boğaziçi University. She has written and edited a number of books among which *Occidentalism in Turkey: Questions of Modernity and National Identity in Turkish Radio Broadcasting* (2010) is the most recent. Her articles and essays on Occidentalism, social memory, national identity, and gender have appeared in various journals and edited volumes.

She has been in the editorial collectives of *Akıntıya Karşı*, *Zemin*, *Deftir*, *Pazartesi* journals. She is a member of the editorial board of the e-journal *Red Thread*.

Prof. Dr. Jiré Emine Gözen

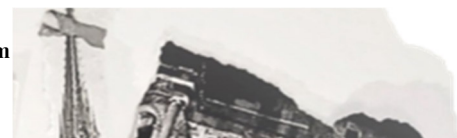
University of Applied Sciences Europe, Hamburg
Professor of Media and Cultural Theory



Photo: Jiré Emine Gözen

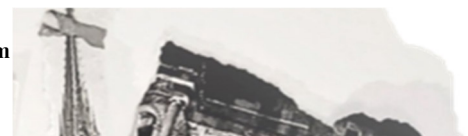
Jiré Emine Gözen is professor of Media and Cultural Theory at the University of Europe for Applied Sciences, Hamburg. Her research interests include discourses and speculations about the future in literature, film and art, ideas of posthumanism and singularity, representation and mimicry in popular culture and politics, and practices of cultural remembrance.

Since 2006 Prof. Dr. Jiré Emine Gözen is lecturer at Heinrich-Heine University Düsseldorf, Alpen-Adria University Klagenfurt, International University Bad Honeff, University of Fine Arts Braunschweig, University of Cologne, Evangelical University Berlin. Between 2012 and 2018 she the academic manager for “Interculturality” at the Berlin University of Media, Communication and Economics. In addition to her academic teaching activities, she worked in the curatorial department of the Mori Art Museum Tokyo as well as in the supervision and conception of the artist in residence program of the artist and exhibition house 3331 Arts Chidoya Tokyo.



Book of Abstracts

Keynote Speakers Abstracts

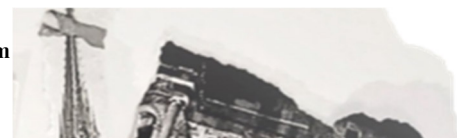


Orienting Media

Prof. Dr. W.J.T. Mitchell, *University of Chicago*

Wednesday 26th January, 4.45 pm – 5.45 pm

To what extent do media theories situate themselves with imaginary geographies of east-west, north-south, past-present, and us-them? Distinctions of media are not merely technical descriptions, but rest upon cultural stereotypes and models. Thus, cultures of writing and literacy are contrasted with oral cultures that are presumed to be more primitive, ancient, and backward, while imperial civilizations rely on writing systems. Within writing systems, pictographic writing systems are presumed to be more ancient than alphabetic systems. The most “advanced” sign systems reduce all language to binary codes. Histories of pictorial representation tend to track images as evolving from simple marks, iconic signs, and abstract forms into realist perspectival renderings that claim to simulate the natural process of visual perception. Western music, similarly, rests on a tonal system that presumes equivalent intervals among notes manifested in keyboard technologies, in contrast to “oriental” musics that routinely violate the rules of tonality. My keynote address will look at these foundational distinctions in “occidental” aesthetics across the basic media types of image, sound, and text.



Occidentalism in Turkey: The Impasse Between the Past and the Future

Prof. Dr. Meltem Ahıska, *Boğaziçi University*

Thursday 27th January, 2.45 pm – 3.45 pm

The historicity of the non-Western other is eclipsed by the hegemonic conception of Western modernity. The performative tropes of Occidentalism have been shaped in response to this conception primarily represented in Orientalism. A mythical time is construed within a binary of East and West, and consequently of the dynamic time of capitalism and the essentialized space of nationalism, or movement and stasis. This creates an equally mythical present without historicity conceived either as a point of departure for the future or as a resurgence of the past. In my talk I will focus on two different modes of mythical time that have generated and sustained Occidentalism in Turkey. Drawing on a number of visual examples e.g. posters, artworks and monuments, I will examine these two modes of mythical time that shed light on the interconnected histories of temporality, political imagination and Occidentalism in Turkey. First, I will discuss the mode of linear time that in principle moves from the past to the future, and yet produces a belated present. The second mode is a vision of non-linear time that juxtaposes past and future, and thus produces an endless present. In the final part of my talk I will dwell on the possibilities of resisting mythical time through a conception of lateness, which constitutes an exilic time and could enable the mourning of the past as well as imagining the future.



The construction of the irreconcilable Other: The Islamic State, Social Media and Masculinity

Prof. Dr. Jiré Emine Gözen, *University of Europe for Applied Sciences*

Friday 28th January, 2.00 pm - 3.00 pm

There is a close feedback relationship between modern terrorism and mass media: media images and their dissemination are needed to achieve terror's effect. The Islamic State has made use of this knowledge and created images that show violence and terror but also community, care, and martyrdom. In doing so, the Islamic State constructed masculinities, which, by accessing and playing with the recontextualization of aesthetics and codes assigned to the West, can be understood as the irreconcilable, non-Western Other.



Introduction

Media Aesthetics of Occidentalism

Dr. Ömer Alkin (*Philipps University of Marburg*)

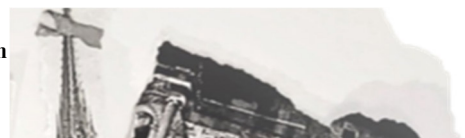


Wednesday 26th January, 1.45 pm - 2.15 pm

The lecture will present Occidentalism research in its basic directions and argue the necessity of a media-aesthetic methodological orientation of the same. The subject of the lecture will be the cinematic work of the founder of the Islamic-national "Millî Sinema" ("National Cinema", 1964-2006): Yücel Çakmaklı. His films often work through a discourse dynamic that chooses constructions that devalue the West in order to valorize one's own.



Session 1



“We didn’t start the fire” – Eurocentrism & Occidentalism in Ancient visual Art

Dr. Lilian Adlung-Schönheit (*Hamburg University*)



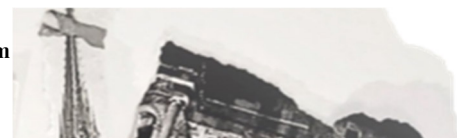
Photo: Lilian Adlung-Schönheit

Wednesday 26th January, 3.00 pm – 3.30 pm

Kwame Anthony Appiah wrote "...we are living with the legacies of ways of thinking that took their modern shape in the nineteenth century." (Appiah 2019, XIV) I agree, but add, that nineteenth century thinking was strongly influenced by classical antiquity. The western dichotomy of West and East is no phenomenon of modern times, but goes back to ancient Greeks and Romans. Even though there was no strict distinction between East and West in classical antiquity, 18th centuries concepts rely on ancient thoughts and sources.

At least since the Greco-Persian encounters in the 5th century BCE a European self-consciousness began to be visualized. These aesthetics were taken on in classicistic traditions especially since the enlightenment.

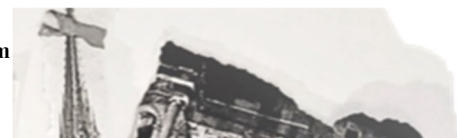
Persians as a direct counterpart were stereotyped as despotic, feminine, luxurious antagonists but on the same time as brave, powerful, pious archetypes. The images of India derived due to a lack of direct contacts, scarce information and huge distance, mainly as allegories for Greco-Roman understanding of periphery.



In Antiquity India was seen as the most eastern inhabited land and therefore paralleled with the end of the world. In Greek description it appears as a place of marvels, fantastic vegetation, fertile weather, huge animals and peculiar humans. This fascination is passed on. But in Roman depictions India more often is used to illustrate the superiority of western – that is Roman – civilization above all other. Indians were depicted – in contrast to historic reality – as captives and India as a personification comparable to Roman provinces. Moreover, Roman art makes no difference between Indians and Ethiopians, even though descriptions of different physical appearance existed.

In modern Occidentalism one might recognize a tendency to mix reflections of ancient ideas on Persians and Indians. Greek and Roman visual representations of Persians, Indians and Ethiopians shaped a European view of Occidentals vs Orientals in a significant, still lasting way. While most people aren't familiar with Greek vase paintings of generic fights between Greeks and Persians or Roman sarcophagi reliefs with the god of wine, Dionysos, conquering India, almost all are familiar with their persistent connotations of occidental democracy, oriental despotism– western enlightenment and rationality, eastern uneducation and decadence: the idea of European identity as a superior one. (Said 2019, 7).

Hence this contribution aims to line out the initial assignments made in constituting an Occident and their (mis-)use in modern times.



The Aesthetics of Occidentalism and Ecology as Inter-connected Dimensions

M.A. Hauke Ohls, *University of Duisburg-Essen*



Photo: Hauke Ohls

Wednesday 26th January, 3.30 pm - 4.00 pm

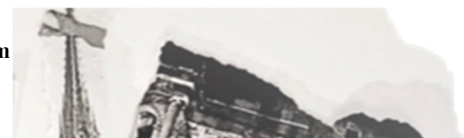
The term Occidentalism has a broad spectrum. It is used as a construction of a binary opposition to incorporate the allegedly “other” into an occidental hegemony; or, through the (critical) reflection of western imperialism, it is possible that differences will be unintentionally reproduced. Another part of the spectrum is a destabilization of the self through the “other” which can lead to hegemonial self-criticism. Furthermore, Occidentalism is used as a term from a non-western perspective to challenge or criticize the imaginary western constructs and colonial strategies. This variety is an advantage and disadvantage at the same time, because with the term Occidentalism it is possible to cover a broad range of processes, but the concept needs a specific limitation every time it is used. The aesthetic dimensions of artworks which are dealing with these subjects bring far more clarifications than a theoretical approach alone.

In this lecture two projects of the visual arts will be discussed, both of which combine a certain perspective of Occidentalism with ecological questions. The first is the photo series *One Ton II* by Simon Starling from 2005 who took five shots of the Anglo American Platinum Corporation Mine at Potgieterus, South Africa, and the platinum group metal salt that is needed to produce the five prints

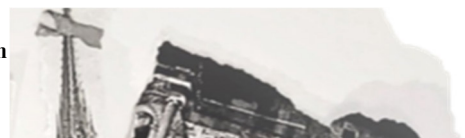


requires one ton of ore out of a mine like this. The second artwork is the research project *Be Damned* by Carolina Caycedo. It started in 2012 and deals with dam projects in the Americas and their influence on human and non-human entities.

The two artworks contribute to an occidental discourse in a different way: Starlings photographs have a self-criticism because his works depend on the pictured extractivism; whereby Caycedo works out of an occidental perspective and shows the influences of Occidentalism on native people and nature. Both works show that ecological problems are closely connected with certain aspects of Occidentalism and that occidental theories can contribute to our understanding of the climate crises.



Session 2



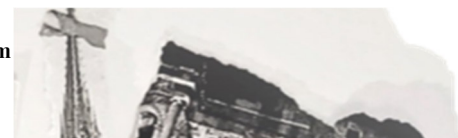
Searching for the West in the East. The visual and performative construction of Occidentalism around 1940

Dr. Juliane Hornung, *University of Cologne*

Thursday 27th January, 9.00 am - 9.30 am

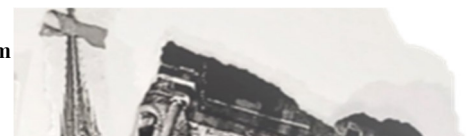
In June 1939 New York millionaires Margaret (1902–1983) and Lawrence Thaw (1899–1965) set out for an eleven-month long journey to pursue an extraordinary project. Accompanied by a professional cameraman, they travelled across the Balkans, Turkey, and Iraq to the Indian ‘Princely States’ to produce an ethnographic travelogue. While the Thaws moved east, surprisingly, the plot follows a narrative of increasing progress and modernization: The movie paints the Balkans as picturesque but backward, Ankara and Teheran, on the contrary, shine with modern architecture and infrastructure, while the movie reaches its peak in Mysore and Hyderabad. Here, the couple visited a gigantic dam with an electricity plant, a newly built hospital, and maharajas living in splendid Bauhaus villas. Moreover, this message is reenforced on the textual, the musical, and the aesthetic level: The narrator describes everything as “new” and “modern”, the sound is lively and optimistic, and the low angle camera shots present the buildings as large and impressive.

The presentation explores the media construction of Occidentalism from a historical perspective by addressing two interwoven aspects: First, it analyses American notions of the West before the Second World War that were linked to ‘modernity’, progress, and technological advancement. Remarkably however, the Thaws disconnected this representation from democratic values – after all, Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, Reza Shah Pahlavi, and the maharajas were autocratic rulers. Second, the presentation not only focusses on the movie’s media-aesthetic qualities but also draws attention to its performative dimension: The maharajas were only too eager to pose for the Thaws to present themselves as modern rulers and to strengthen their position within the British Empire.



In doing so, they adopted contemporary notions of Western civilization without passively imitating them. They rather merged these ideas with their local cultures and enacted their own hybrid form of Occidentalism.

By looking at the media-aesthetic and performative dimensions the presentation offers an analytical approach on cinematic constructions of the West that goes beyond the media representation itself and addresses the connection between Occidentalism, media, and agency. Summary The presentation explores the cinematic construction of Occidentalism from a historical perspective and offers an analytical approach that addresses its media- aesthetic as well as its performative dimension.



Not the whore, but the soldier: On the limited utility of the notion of Occidentalism

Prof. Dr. Gabriele Werner, *weißensee academy of art Berlin*



Photo: Heike Overberg

Thursday 27th January, 9.30 am - 10.00 am

In a Manichean worldview, the allegory of Occidentalism is the whore. While “the West” often regards brothels as heterotopias, they become hotbeds of capitalist decadence and venal, or cash-rules-the-world, behavior in this dualistic perspective. Though there are other theoretical approaches to Occidentalism, I choose to take venality and capitalist power as my lens. But in wielding this perspective, it’s not the female whore, but the male soldier whose image I want to decode.

For an analysis of bellicose constructions of masculinity and ‘masculine’ images depicting positively connotated attitudes toward violence and acts of violence, which as an effect have produced political structures and institutions worldwide that exist solely to make war and profit from it, I argue that macrostructural terms such as “Occidentalism”, but also “Westernization” or “capitalism”, leave too little room for globally conceived anti-bellicose alternatives.

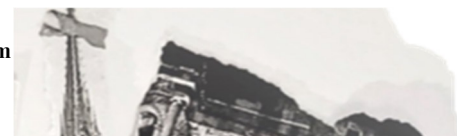


The starting point for my inquiry is recent US war films that depict the War in Afghanistan and (indirectly) refer to Barack Obama's first announcement (2011) of a pullback in US troops. Engaging with these fictional, pop-cultural portrayals of the War in Afghanistan can be productive for examining forms of bias towards the 'other' (which often reinforces the self) since once-radical differences seem to be obscured whenever constructions of masculinity and their public image are at stake.

On the one hand, in these representations of 'the' Afghan population, we can find the racist patterns of orientalizing described by Edward Said: civilians are corrupt and devious, Afghan security forces cowardly, political representatives lazy and money-hungry. These films are in many ways very similar to their predecessors that showed us the Iraq war. On the other hand, certain things have changed: we now see NATO partners represented as a ridiculous, amateurish bunch, while Western political and military leaders are incompetent or criminal. Here, it bears mentioning that relations of power and domination are not constructed along the axes East-West, Orient-Occident, and not at all along diverging ideas of sexuality.

I therefore want to explore the consequences of this cinematic juxtaposition of the Afghan state and the communal rules of society and the soldiers dispatched to defend (US) national and 'Western values'. Looking at these visual representations, we can identify an overlap between real events and the feature-film soldiers and images of the military. What we see as a result is the heroization of violent 'manospheres' in which distinctions between Taliban, IS and other terrorist groups, special forces, and gun-toting white supremacists become highly blurred.

Of course, the Taliban's recapture of Afghanistan cannot be ignored in this discussion. Never in recent times have there been more images of men with guns in the press than during the capture and after the fall of Kabul, images that make it extremely difficult not to be deceived by the Manichean worldviews they trigger.



Between Utopia and Disillusion – Images of the ‘West’ in New Romanian Cinema

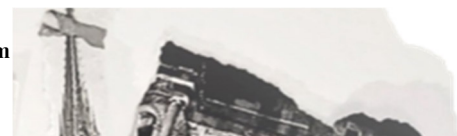
M.A. Anne Pirwitz, *University of Potsdam*



Thursday 27th January, 10.15 am – 10.45 am

In 2018 Romania recorded the second highest increase of the emigration rate in the world over the last decade. About one fifth of the population lives abroad. Most of them in Western countries such as Western and Southwestern Europe or the United States. Labour migration to the ‘West’ is one of the biggest social and economic challenges of the Romanian society. In the last two decades many films dealing with the topic of migration appeared.

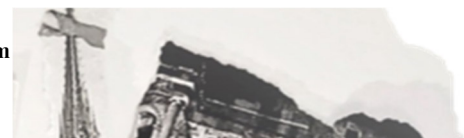
The ‘West’ has always played a significant role in Romanian Cinema, which is today one of the most successful cinemas in the world. Formerly being presented as ‘decadent’ and ‘dangerous’ space in propaganda films of the communist era, in the New Romanian Cinema the ‘West’ has become a utopian space where everyone wants to work and live and where everything is better than in Romania. But the ‘West’ is also the place of failure and disillusion, as dreams of migrants generally don’t come true. Newer films focus on the perspectives of those left behind, children or parents of migrants, and represent the ‘West’ as a place where the beloved ones live and where the money, telephone calls, letters and presents come from. The left-behinds live in a trans-national space where East and West are dependent from each other.



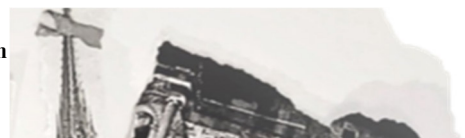
Nearly all films have in common that the 'West' is an 'absent space', which is not constructed visually but only by certain symbols, characters and discourses about it.

As 'absent space' which has a connection to the visually constructed space of the Romanian homeland, the 'West' can be described as important 'off-space' in New Romanian Cinema.

In this presentation I want to have a closer look at the role of the 'West' and its (changing) image in the new Romanian migration films. The 'West' is analysed as semantic off-space which stands in contrast to the semantic on-space of the Romanian homeland and penetrates it all the time.



Session 3



Moods of Occidentalism: Political commitments of women's movements

Dr. Demet Gülçiçek, *University of Warwick*



Photo: <https://warwick.ac.uk/fac/soc/sociology/staff/gulcicek/>

Thursday 27th January, 11.45 am - 12.15 pm

This presentation is an attempt to think Occidentalism and affect theories together through a feminist genealogical approach in the case of women's movements in the early 20th century Ottoman Empire. My research argues that Meltem Ahıska's conceptualisation of Occidentalism provides great potential to critically understand Ottoman Muslim women's movements for analysing both women's struggle and resistance, and also complicities with nationalism and modernist violence. I will be focusing on the discourses on aesthetics of national clothing in an Ottoman Muslim women's rights magazine, *Kadınlar Dünyası*, published in 1913, based on an archival research. The writers of the magazine, suggesting Ottoman Muslims should develop a modern *yet* national clothing for Muslim women, heavily talked about aesthetics through a negotiation between Western gaze and 'nation's essence'. I argue the relationship between aesthetics and Occidentalism was produced in a mood of 'political commitment' towards modernisation process and 'their' nation. Inspired by Sara Ahmed's and Carolyn Pedwell's conceptualisation of mood, that was built upon Heidegger's concept of attunement, I suggest an original concept 'mood of commitment'.



The concept 'mood of commitment' analyses the object of desires produced in Occidentalism that allows women's commitment to be persuasive, the attunement of women's movement with nationalist movements through their legitimation with women's commitment, and the production of hegemonic positions through the negotiation of 'who is in the right mood'.

This presentation will firstly discuss the possibilities of thinking aesthetics of Occidentalism and affect theories together with a specific focus on the mood-work. Secondly, it will zoom into some notions such as 'nation's happiness', women's altruism, and self-blaming occurred in the discussions of aesthetics. It will conclude by discussing what emotions do in the production of Occidentalism within women's movements in the mood of commitment. The questioning of this presentation is a genealogical one as I am occupied with contemporary questionings of thinking about the politics of location of women's movements, with a critical approach to feminist historiography.



Neo-Ottomanism and Occidentalism in Turkish Agitprop Videos

Dr. Pierre Hecker, *Philipps University of Marburg*

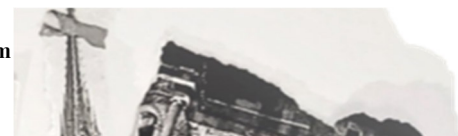


Photo: <https://www.uni-marburg.de/de/cnms/islamwissenschaft/fachgebiet/team/pierre-hecker>

Thursday 27th January, 12.15 pm – 12.45 pm

State-produced agitprop videos have become an important instrument of political mobilization and identity politics in Recep Tayyip Erdoğan's 'New Turkey'. Similar to popular TV series – such as *Diriliş Ertuğrul* or *Payitaht: Abdülhamid* – agitprop videos have been used to manipulate the Turkish public into consenting to the ruling elite's claim to power. What these propaganda videos have in common is the attempt to establish a meaningful connection between the Ottoman Empire's glorious past and President Erdoğan's political vision for the future. The historical continuity and neo-Ottomanist identity politics suggested in these videos work in close conjunction with an inherent Occidentalist bias. The recital of popular myths, such as the victimization of the Turkish nation at the hands of 'the West', or the nation's resurrection in the face of sinister enemies secretly guided by Western, or respectively, Zionist powers form the backbone of these agitprop narratives.

In August 2020, for instance, the Republic of Turkey's Directorate of Communications released a professionally produced agitprop video replete with

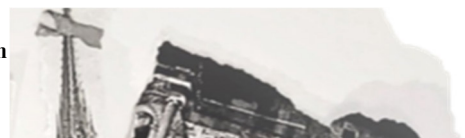


references to the military victories of the past and the visual iconographies of Turkish nationalism and modern Islamism. This symbolism was complemented with a heroic background tune in fulsome praise of the ‘red apple’ (kırmızı elma). The red apple holds a firm place in Turkic mythology and modern Turkish nationalism. It is, in fact, a polysemic symbol used in literature and poetry, where it often functions as a metaphor for an imaginary place of longing. However, it also signifies the Ottoman Empire’s urge to expansionism and its ultimate claim to world domination. During the Ottoman age of conquest, the red apple was inevitably equated with European cities such as Rome, Budapest or Vienna.

Erdoğanist state propaganda seeks to frame present-day political conflict within the context of an imaginary eternal struggle of the nation; a struggle that is guided by the quest for freedom, power, justice, and piety under the leadership of one strong man, who is Erdoğan himself. The adversaries in this struggle are being identified as the nation’s treacherous enemies from within and the imperialist ‘West’ from the outside. Against this backdrop, this talk seeks to analyze the metaphoric implications of Turkish agitprop videos with a particular focus on the dialectic between neo-Ottomanism and Occidentalism. On a related note, it also intends to address the mythical nature of authoritarian populism through the lens of Turkish agitprop videos.



Session 4



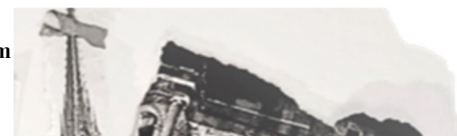
Lost in Westernization: A Cross-reading of Walter Benjamin's 'On the Concept of History' and Jia Zhangke's Mountains 'May Depart'

M.A. Jialu Zhu, *University of Zürich*

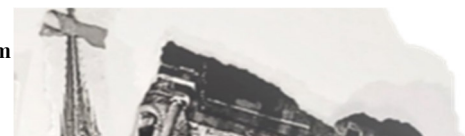


Friday 28th January, 3.15 pm – 3.45 pm

In the past 50 years, the world has witnessed China transforming from a rural, agricultural country to the world's second biggest economic power. Nevertheless, in China's pursuit of capital, what results from China's fetishization of the West's wealth and technology is the country's disconnection from its history, which haunts Chinese society and inflicts its punishment onto Chinese people. These realities, I claim, were partly predicted by Walter Benjamin in "On the Concept of History". His angel of history and the angel's struggle with history's unstoppable progress provide us with a theory to comprehend contemporary China. Meanwhile, China's special position between tradition and modernity also opens up perspectives for us to understand the Benjaminian view of history. This paper offers a cross-reading of Benjamin's essay and the Chinese film *Mountains May Depart* by Jia Zhangke to illustrate China's struggle of maintaining its own identity in the face of westernization. This analysis first contextualizes the film in its timespan between 1999 and 2025, covering the past, present, and future to elaborate the aftereffect of China's Open-Door policy, which initiated China's connection with Western capitalism.



The focus then shifts to the family represented in the film, in which three people from two generations illustrate the expansion of mobility in globalized China, as they settle in three different areas, including Fenyang, their rural hometown, Shanghai, the city that represents China's modernity, and Australia, a country with a large number of Chinese immigrants. It turns out that no matter how far away one is from one's hometown where one's history and cultural tradition are rooted, there is always a compulsion to return, though the journey to reconnect with the past is much more complex than disconnecting from it. This paper focuses on three aspects of the Benjaminian history, namely progress, the angel of history, and the materials of history, to explain the film protagonists' departure from home and will to return in different geosocial contexts.



Re-currency of Japanese Occidentalism – Aesthetics Discourse in Film

M.A. Mia Nakayama, *Heidelberg University/Università Ca'Foscari*

Friday 28th January, 3.45 pm – 4.15 pm

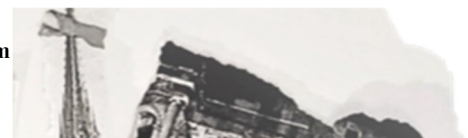
Japanese Occidentalism has been often revisionary and less often descriptive after the Portuguese sailors landed in Japan in 1543. “Japanischer Geist – westliche Technik” is a production of both intrinsically admirable and enduring occidental utility. This articulation has also readily displayed itself in film, a modern European invention, used to recurrent aesthetic sentiments.

After Theodor Lipps first introduced the concept of *Einfühlung*, it has been primarily considered as one of the key episodes in the Western philosophy, and very often lies submerged in the conceptual work of European aesthetic ideology. But this merit has her own Japanese inheritances. It first appeared in Japanese popular literature, then extended to the arts and music. During the sixteenth century, a Japanese national scholar, Motoori Norinaga sublimated this ancient literalistic concept to a patriotic conviction. For many centuries, this aesthetics concept was not explicit in letters, but it was eloquent in its political insertion. It prescribed Japan a distinctive national identity to rescue her from the compulsion of China's cultural influence, and over the centuries fascinated the men of letters and arts for many generations.

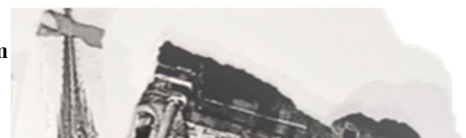
‘Feel into’ is *Einfühlung*’s direct translation, while the English associated word Empathy derives from the Greek *Empatheia* as a sentiment or emotion. Empathy is defined as the ability to understand and share the feelings of another. Watsuji Tetsurō has reinsured Motoori Norinaga’s interpretation, as the moment of experiencing or feeling into an emotion, the aesthetics is occurred. *China Nights* (1940) is a wartime propaganda film and best known as one of the Japanese Continental Trilogy productions. The film was merely a romantic story set in Shanghai about a Japanese sailor rescuing a grieving young Chinese girl who had lost everything to the Sino-Japanese War, and subsequently obtaining her genuine appreciation and affection on which course to marry. However, the desolation in this romantic story



has been considered as the notion for *Einfühlung*. In this paper, on my method of treatment of the visual and emotional justifications, I wish to re-exam Japanese Occidentalism through the silver screen in its own contemporary terms within the aesthetics features of discourse.



Session 5



The Cultural Meanings of Asian Aesthetics and Shakespeare Today

Prof. Dr. Alexa Alice Joubin, *George Washington University*

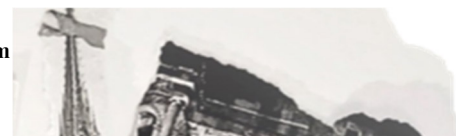


Photo: <https://ajoubin.org>

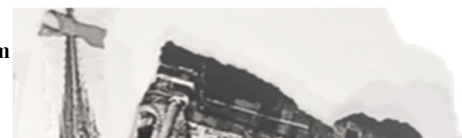
Friday 28th January, 5.00 pm - 5.30 pm

Asian performance aesthetics have a symbiotic but uncomfortable relationship to Western epistemologies. This paper addresses the role of the Western canon, represented by Shakespeare, in East Asian cinema. Since the nineteenth century, stage and film directors have mounted hundreds of adaptations of Shakespeare drawn on East Asian motifs, and by the late twentieth century, Shakespeare had become one of the most frequently performed playwrights in East Asia.

Drawing on case studies of post 1980s Japanese, Korean, and Hong Kong film and stage adaptations of Shakespeare's tragedies, this paper expands the purview of postcolonial studies which tends to focus on British colonialism and Anglophone colonies. Countries that do not fully align with the narrowly defined colonial experience, such as Korea and Japan, have been neglected. In the context of critical whiteness studies, It is racist to regard non-Western films as merely footnotes to the white canon. I seek to de-colonize the study of non-Western cultures and of the Western canon.



How do Anglophone directors such as Kenneth Branagh use imaginaries of Asia differently from directors based in Asia, such as the larger-than-life cherry tree in the widely toured production of *Macbeth* (1980) directed by Yukio Ninagawa? Conversely, what cultural logic governs the circulation and reception of works by East Asian directors, such as *Throne of Blood* by Akira Kurosawa? The artists' racial identities can sometimes incriminate them in ethnic selling out or cultural imperialism. In other contexts, however, their cultural origins and locations exonerate them from cultural appropriation. Directors—regardless of their cultural affiliations—working with Asian motifs often have to contend with their regionally marked cultural identity. Their works are compelled to respond to the competing demands to inhabit simultaneously the local and the global, to be innovative but conservative enough to be palatable, to represent Asia on the world market, and to be the conveyor of an Anglophone West to Asian audiences and vice versa.



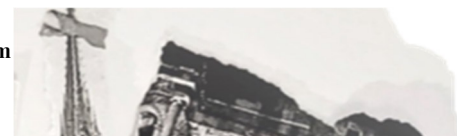
The West as Imperialists: Aesthetics of Chinese Occidentalism in Another Hong Kong

M.A. Teng (Jason) Xu, *University of California*

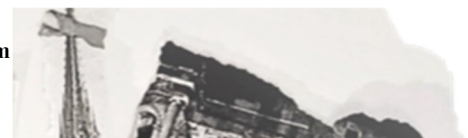
Friday 28th January, 5.30 pm - 6.00 pm

Scholars have shown that Occidentalism has important impacts on the (trans)formations of Chinese regimes in history. My paper considers an instance of Occidentalist imaginations in contemporary China and, in particular, the relations between this imagination and authoritarianism. Adopting an aesthetic approach, this paper examines what I call the “styles” of the documentary film titled *Another Hong Kong* made by China Central Television, which gives a narrative of Beijing’s view on the Anti-Extradition Movement (AEM) in Hong Kong in 2019. This paper argues that a Marxist aesthetic underpins the film’s narrative in a way that translates the AEM’s demand for democracy and freedom into illusional ideologies that are mere products of economic competitions between the Chinese nation and the West. Thus, the film justifies the need for an authoritarian state by conveying the premise that the nation will be endangered should regime critics and protesters, manipulated by Western powers, be allowed free expressions and associations. Focusing on the film’s aesthetic details, such as the narrator’s self-positioning, the selection of interviewees, and the use of pop music, leads me to conclude that the film inherits three prominent styles from the Marxist tradition of Chinese journalism, namely objectivism, collectivism, and materialism.

Thus, this paper highlights aesthetics as an integral part of Chinese Occidentalist, and nationalist, narratives. Following Kant through Rancière, I define aesthetic “as the system of a priori forms determining what presents itself to sense experience” and try to highlight precisely this aesthetic, or non-linguistic, aspect of the above-mentioned narratives. The film under discussion, which appropriates AEM vocabulary such as “democracy,” “freedom,” “truth,” and “love,” manages to narrate the AEM in a way that is at odds with the latter’s self-narrative thanks precisely to the film’s aesthetics.



To extrapolate from my case study, then, the aesthetics of contemporary Chinese Occidentalism (and nationalism) might have shaped the general public's perceptions of pro-democracy movements like the AEM, causing radical disagreement (or what Rancière calls *mésentente*) between the public and protesters, and thereby played a decisive role in the perpetuation of authoritarianism among the public.



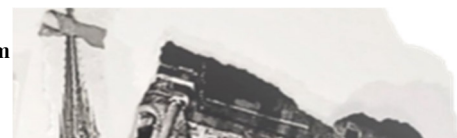
Occidentalism in the Post-revolutionary Cinema of Iran

Dr. Akram Jamshidi, *Tehran University of Art*

Friday 28th January, 6.15 pm – 6.45 pm

Iranian Art Cinema has been awarded many prizes in the western festivals. However, the honor reveals the stereotype of Orientalism against Occidentalism. Many Iranian film critics believe that these films are acclaimed due to the illustration of a naive culture which is highly welcomed by the western gaze as the Other. This essay seeks to present the aesthetic features of the Iranian Art Cinema to contradict the dominant dichotomy of West / East in the analysis of the Iranian acclaimed festival films. The main hypothesis is that these movies have gained the achievement as a result of the compatibility with the ontological reception of the audience. In other words, the elements such as the poetry and mundane experience of everyday life, for instance, have been emerged due to a cosmopolitan perspective about the human's existence. In this regard, the representation of reality by Abbas Kiarostami and the concept of women and motherhood by Rakhshan Bani – Etemad could be considered as the aesthetic features of the unbiased consciousness. In his post – digital works, Abbas Kiarostami blurs the distinct between subjectivity and objectivity. Long shots from a moving car and the Brechtian detachment to reveal the truth behind the production of the moving image have created the uncertainty which led into a shift from reality to reflexivity.

The main discussion of this study focuses on the significance of the stillness in the Iranian films. The film stilled, long shots and episodic or metaphorical narration are namely the most important forms of the Aesthetic of Stillness in the cinema of Iran. In *The Salesman* (2016), the narration consists of Farhadi's Cinematic style which confronts the individual ethics in contrast with the social morals and merits. From a Lacanian psychoanalytic perspective, the confrontation of the interior and the exterior for Rana (Taraneh Alidoosti) is identical with the formation of the ego in the process of identification. The conflict which is unspeakable as the Real, delineates the global existence of the individual in the contemporary era.





Internationale Konferenz: „Media Aesthetics of Occidentalism“

<https://www.online.uni-marburg.de/okzidentalismus/index.php/worum-gehts>

Research program



Due to the immense hostile geopolitical dynamics all over the world, an interrogation of the dichotomies of West/East, Occident/Orient, or North/South seems still very necessary. It is with regard to this observation that scholars have been discussing the concept of Occidentalism for more than thirty years now.

The closeness and affinity of Occidentalism to the concept of Orientalism (Said 1978) cannot be denied nor over emphasized, however, it is now possible to identify a strand of discourse on the concept that has become very heterogeneous. It shows at least four manifestations (Alkin 2019):

- a) the patriarchal epistemological pervasion of the world by the West (Armstrong 1990; Müller 1998)
- b) the stabilization of the self-images of the non-West that is the result of its devaluating constructions of the West (writings of Hassan Hanafi, Buruma & Margalit 2005; Bauhn & Tepe 2017)
- c) self-images of the West based on its constructions of the non-West (Coronil 1996, Carrier 2003, Brunner & Dietze 2009)
- d) a meta-reflective perspective that considers the multiple directions and dynamics of the discourses between West and non-West (“Critical Occidentalism”, Ahiska 2003; “Strategic Occidentalism”, Sánchez Prado 2018)

Even if there is this variety of definitions of the concept of Occidentalism, most of the research analyzes the dichotomic relationship between the Orient and the Occident, and the complex discursive and historical entanglements in different regional and national contexts (b and c).

Again, due to the discourse analytical approach of most of these investigations, which are oriented towards textuality, the media aesthetic features of the discourses have often been neglected. Although the investigations focus on films, photographs or other types of media, the non-textual media-aesthetic qualities (image, sound) are hardly considered.

The consequence is that the aesthetic dimension of discourses remains analytically untouched. In order to understand the role of media-aesthetic features of discourses (Mitchell 2015) in the context of the constitution of Occidentalism, the conference pursues the following central question:

“How do media aesthetic qualities contribute to the constitution of Occidentalist discourses?”

The goal of the conference is threefold:

Firstly (SECTION A: Theory), the significance of the concept of Occidentalism will be theoretically re-discussed.

Secondly (SECTION B: Topical Cases of Occidentalism), the concept will be explored in regard to its usefulness in describing contemporary problems (since the 2000s onwards; also genealogically based).

Thirdly (SECTION C: Media Aesthetics), the role of media aesthetic qualities for the effectiveness of occidentalist discourses will be discussed theoretically and empirically.

The threefold objective of the conference results in the following possible topics:

- Theories and philosophical debates on Occidentalism
 - Case studies on occidentalist discourses in new (also digital) media and media-aesthetically complex settings
 - Media or film cultures that address the role of the West relating to the non-West in its various manifestation
 - Contributions from Critical Whiteness studies that reflect on the role of the West in relation to the rest of the world (and the problems of this reproductive dichotomy)
 - Current Western/non-Western propaganda strategies that function in an occidentalist manner (strategies of valorization and devaluation of the Other, e.g., jihadism and the media).
 - Non-Western aesthetics from all over the world (Africa, Asia, the Global South) and their relationship to the epistemology from the West
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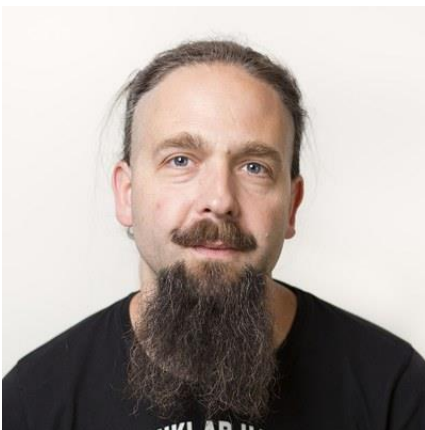
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Location

Attention: Due to the COVID-19 Situation the conference will be held online!

[Please register for the Online-Link](#)

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