

Essays in World Languages and Cultures

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Stereotypes and the Challenges of Representation

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Edited by

Yves-Antoine Clemmen, Margit Grieb,
and Will Lehman



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*Essays in World Languages and Cultures:
Stereotypes and the Challenges of Representation*

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Table of Contents

Preface.....	v
Part I: Using Stereotypes	1
Stereotypically Heimat? Reinvisioning the Robinsonade and Heimatfilm as Ecocinema	
<i>Margit Grieb</i>	3
Impossible Visions. Transpositions of Holocaust Cinema in <i>Hotel Rwanda</i> and <i>S-21, the Khmer Rouge Killing Machine</i>	
<i>Tommaso Pepe</i>	13
<i>Heritage Speaker Online Processing of Passive Sentences in Spanish</i>	
<i>Estrella Rodriguez</i>	27
<i>Lexical Acquisition and Intercultural Development through Italian Popular Song</i>	
<i>Vanessa Natale Rukholm</i>	39
<i>Adolfo Pirelli dans Sweeney Todd: Le plus italien des Irlandais</i>	
<i>Alice Defacq</i>	51
<i>Stéréotype littéraire et coïncidence : l'assassinat spectacle en littérature belge</i>	
<i>Yves-Antoine Clemmen</i>	65
Part II: Deconstructing Stereotypes.....	73
The Stepmother: Dispelling the Myth in Laudomina Bonanni's <i>Le droghe</i>	
<i>Joanne Lyon</i>	75
Contre le monde moderne : le cas de <i>Soumission de Houellebecq</i>	
<i>Patricia Reynaud</i>	83
Gogol' on Rome: I Want Nothing	
<i>Andrea Sartori</i>	93

Confounding Stereotypes: Constructing (Trans)Gender Identity in <i>Ma Vie en rose</i> and <i>Tomboy</i> <i>Beth Gale</i>	103
The Coldness of Desire: Isabelle’s Masochistic Flight in François Ozon’s <i>Jeune et Jolie</i> <i>Todd Hoffman</i>	113
Pelo Rebelde: Race, Dominicanidad, and the Contested History of Natural Hair <i>Pamela Cappas-Toro</i>	123
Part III: Displacing Stereotypes.....	135
Mano Khalil’s <i>The Beekeeper</i>: an Ecosophical Perspective on Refugees in Europe <i>Heike Scharm</i>	137
„Ist das deine ganze Männlichkeit?“ Family Honor and Othering in Feo Aladağ’s film <i>Die Fremde</i> <i>Elisabeth Poeter</i>	145
Local, National, Global? Migration and Identities in German Soccer <i>Stephan Schindler</i>	157
Stereotypes in <i>Türkisch für Anfänger</i>: Challenging or Confirming Essentialist Notions of Culture and Identity? <i>Viktoria Gabriel</i>	169
Part IV: Poetry.....	181
not your typical hares ! <i>Poetic performance by Susanne Eules</i>	183

Preface

This volume consists of 16 papers selected from the 22nd Southeast Conference on Foreign Languages, Literatures and Films held on February 25-27, 2016 on the campus of Stetson University in Celebration, Florida. The shared focus of the essays is to examine how writers, filmmakers and language educators address stereotypes in their representations of diverse cultural paradigms by using, deconstructing or displacing these stereotypes. The fourth section of this publication includes 4 experimental poems by the artist Susanne Eules.

Part I: Using Stereotypes

In her essay “Stereotypically Heimat? Reinvisioning the Robinsonade and Heimatfilm as Ecocinema,” Margit Grieb examines *The Wall* (2012), directed by Julian Pölsler a film that tells the story of a woman marooned in a picturesque Alpine environment who survives the destruction of the world behind an invisible, but impervious wall. According to Grieb, Pölsler’s film reworks the *Robinsonade* as well as the *Heimatfilm* genres and reimagines the genres’ narrative and visual conventions that have staged the relationship between man and nature and the tension between progress and preservation. Her paper explores Pölsler’s employment of camera techniques and setting in order to undermine the colonization and mastery of nature narrative endemic to the *Robinsonade* as well as the *Heimatfilm*’s exploitation of the natural environment as ornamental kitsch. *The Wall* frames the protagonist’s position in and her effect on the “natural” environment as non-hierarchical and interactive and therefore challenges contemporary discourses concerned with sustainability but that are too anthropocentric.

In “Impossible Visions. Transpositions of Holocaust Cinema in *Hotel Rwanda* and *S-21*, the Khmer Rouge Killing Machine” Tommaso Pepe ponders to what extent films and documentaries about the Holocaust have been used as implicit reference models for the elaboration of cinematic representations of other genocides, and what have been the outcomes of such visual and cultural intertextuality. In the lack of a comprehensive theorization concerning the relations between Holocaust and genocide cinema, this essay intends to

investigate the critical re-appropriation of visual and narrative elements of Holocaust films and documentaries by cinematic representations of genocidal violence in Cambodia and Rwanda. Specific attention is devoted to the appropriation, in Terry George's *Hotel Rwanda*, of narrative patterns derived from the well-known Holocaust film *Schindler's List* and, on the other hand, to the influence that the documentary style of Claude Lanzmann's *Sobibor* has had on the work of the Cambodian filmmaker Rithy Pahn. The re-employment of visual and conceptual elements derived from films and documentaries about the Jewish genocide posits however issues of cultural and representational autonomy, relative to the extent in which the superimposition of themes and forms derived from Holocaust cinema risks entailing a "deculturation" of other genocides or, on the other hand, can be fruitfully appropriated to articulate and differentiate other histories of suffering and victimization.

Estrella Rodríguez's essay "Heritage Speaker On-line Processing of Passive Sentences in Spanish," contributes to on-line processing literature on how Heritage Speakers (HSs) comprehend structures of their first language (L1) in real time (Foote, 2010; Bolger & Zapata, 2011; Montrul et al., 2014). It contrasts heritage processing (n = 21) of passive sentences in Spanish with a control group of traditional native speakers (n = 24) while undertaking a self-paced reading. It was hypothesized heritage and native processing would be different for passive structures, since passives are late-acquired in the L1 (Chomsky, 1981; Kirby, 2010; Marinis, 2007; Pinker et al., 1987). However, results indicated the HSs did not differ significantly from native processing in the time it took to read passives at regions of interest. Results from non-experimental active sentences showed the HSs took longer to read them post-verbally when compared to the native group (Rodríguez & Reglero, 2015). These findings confirm the grammatical uniqueness of HSs. Results also debunk the stereotype that HSs have deficient grammars due to L1 insufficient literacy. This study supports the literature on the advantages of early bilingualism for L1 grammatical representations (Cuza & Frank, 2015; Montrul & Perpiñán, 2011; Pascual y Cabo & Gómez Soler, 2015). Pedagogical commentary on heritage Spanish instruction is offered.

In her essay "Lexical Acquisition and Intercultural Development through Italian Popular Song," Vanessa Rukholm examines the use of popular songs in L2 classes. There has been considerable research examining the important role the teaching of culture plays in the L2 language classroom, particularly as it relates to language acquisition

and the development of intercultural competence (Damen, 2003; Kohler, 2015; Kramsch, 1993 & 2003). There has also been a growing body of research examining the facilitative role of song in the L2 acquisition process (Rukholm, 2015; Salcedo, 2002; Wallace, 1994). However, there has been little research examining the utilization of song in the L2 classroom as a means of facilitating both second language acquisition and intercultural competence in tandem. This paper argues that popular songs can and should be used in the L2 classroom as a tool to both promote effective lexical acquisition as well as to address, analyze, and assess cultural stereotypes so as to promote greater intercultural competence among L2 learners. Specifically, the use of Italian popular songs to these ends is examined in the context of the intermediate and advanced Italian classrooms. Implications of the use of song in the Italian L2 classroom are provided as they pertain to the development of pedagogical tools as well as to the implementation of intercultural competence evaluation tools.

In “Adolfo Pirelli dans *Sweeney Todd* : Le plus italien des Irlandais,” Alice Defacq focuses on Adolfo Pirelli, an Irish barber with an Italian accent. He appears in the thriller musical *Sweeney Todd, the Demon Barber of Fleet Street* (1979). When the libretto comes to France, the adapter Alain Perroux faces several difficulties: he has to translate the lines into French while keeping the two accents, Irish and Italian, and avoiding clichés. He also needs to respect the music, the rhythm and the rhymes to offer lyrics that are comprehensible and convincing to the French audience. His choices are made to help the public enjoy the adaptation of the musical.

In his essay “Stéréotype littéraire et coïncidence: l’assassinat spectacle en littérature belge.” Yves-Antoine Clemmen examines the confirmation of Belgian literary stereotypes through uncanny literary coincidences. In 2002, Amélie Nothomb, by then already a literary diva, and Laurent de Graeve probably on the same literary destiny if he had not died of Aids the same year, both publish a novel, *Robert des noms propres* and *Je suis un assassin* respectively, in which they staged their own death at the hand of one of their characters. Playing with literary clichés and expectations they use the stereotype of the death of the author and at the same time reconfirm the surrealist and absurdist stereotype of the Belgian zeitgeist.

Part II: Deconstructing Stereotypes

“The Stepmother: Dispelling the Myth in Laudomia Bonanni’s *Le Droghe*,” by Joanne Frallicciardi Lyon, examines the various myths and constructs regarding the stepmother or the non-biological mother. Lyon argues that Laudomia Bonanni challenges another of the prevailing patriarchal constructs regarding women and in particular mothers. In this novel Bonanni presents a portrait of a stepmother Giulia that defies the stereotypical image of the evil and much-maligned stepmother. Her paper also examines the mother-son bond and the long and painful journey of a stepmother who desperately wants to save her son from self-destruction. Lyon’s research sought answers to questions regarding the maternal instincts, biological versus emotional ties between mother and child, and the legal aspects of biological versus non-biological parental rights. Lyon also examines the role of the father, Giulio, presented as a weak and ineffective character. Finally, Lyon argues that the stepmother, although not biologically linked to her step-child, can be a successful and loving parent.

In her essay “Contre le monde moderne: le cas de *Soumission* de Houellebecq Patricia Reynaud reevaluates islamophobia in Michel Houellebecq’s novel *Soumission* which has triggered intense controversies upon its publication in 2015. The book has been interpreted as an anti-Muslim pamphlet and the author stigmatized as an Islamophobe. This article offers an alternative reading grid which stresses a dimension missed by most reviewers: Houellebecq’s criticism of western civilization and the modern world. This article also reveals the discreet yet real presence of the French metaphysician René Guénon (1886-1951) throughout the novel. The author of *The Crisis of the Modern World* (*La crise du monde moderne*) and *The Reign of Quantity and the Signs of Times* (*Le règne de la quantité et les signes des temps*), Guénon contributed to renew the Counter-Enlightenment discourse in France in the first-half of the 20th century and ended his life in Cairo as a Muslim and a Sufi.

In her essay “Gogol’ on Rome: I Want Nothing,” Andrea Sartori provides an interpretation of Nikolai Gogol’s short story *Rim* (*Moskvitanin*, 1842), which has never been translated into English, from the perspective of Jacques Lacan’s psychoanalysis. The story, centered on the sublimation of the desire for a woman, narrates something different from both the psychotic world of *The Overcoat*, and the neurosis of desire depicted in *Evening on a Farm near Dikanka*.

Gogol' seems to maintain that Rome is not the place where desire is directed towards specific objects. Rome is rather the site for a radical interrogation about desire as such. Within Lacan's theoretical framework, in *Rim* the object of desire could be said to be raised to the dignity of the Thing, that is to say, to the level of a nothingness that language (the symbolic) cannot express. The article argues that Gogol's unfinished (and fragmented) short story precisely is the attempt to say that impossibility. In this light, the story could be seen as an example of what the Italian philosopher Giorgio Agamben would term an experiment on (the limits of) language, performed through language (therefore an experiment of language, in the simultaneously objective and subjective acceptance of the genitive).

In her essay "Confounding Stereotypes: Constructing (Trans)Gender Identity in *Ma vie en rose* and *Tomboy*," Beth Gale explores the two films' handling of matters of sexuality and gender identity and the differences, in social and political terms, between a masculine-presenting girl (or trans boy) and a feminine-presenting boy (or trans girl). The treatment of gender stereotypes in the films, both through acknowledgment and avoidance, enhances our understanding of ambiguous gender identity construction during childhood. Though the concept of transgender identity has become more mainstream in recent years, widely released films exploring the origins of possible trans identity are still few. This may be partly because sexuality and gender identity can be fluid concepts even in adulthood. For children, whose identity and sexuality are still inchoate, things may be still be blurrier.

In his essay "The Coldness of Desire: Isabelle's Masochistic Flight in François Ozon's *Jeune et Jolie*," Todd Hoffman argues that the film *Jeunes et Jolie* which follows its emotionless protagonist, Isabelle, through the heroine's double-life as an underage prostitute and student, offers a subtle commentary on contemporary ways in which female desire is impeded and territorialized. The film critiques the fetishization of young women as commodities of exchange through the dehumanizing power of scopophilic tele-technologies. Isabelle's stoicism and the repetition of her meaningless sexual encounters, the continual doubling of her image as a symbolic flattening of her character, and the desexualizing of the spectacle of her nudity, all suggest the film's concern with the mediation of erotic spectacle via the Internet into the intimacy of erotic relations as well as a rebuke of the still lingering expectations of youthful romantic idealism. Furthermore, rather than being a passive victim of such forces,

Isabella seeks a means of asserting freedom through the liberation of desire via the masochistic potential of each encounter. I argue, via Deleuze, Mansfield and Beckman, that Ozon's film is both a critique of the impinging of women's desire in the contemporary bourgeois order and an expression of resistance against such structures.

In her essay "Pelo Rebelde: Race, *Dominicanidad*, and the Contested History of Natural Hair," Pamela Cappas-Toro explores historical legacies of blackness, beauty, and national belonging through the contested meanings of hair in the Dominican Republic. She contends that hair has been a central element in the historical construction of anti-black aesthetics and ideologies that continue to inform Dominican national identity. In the 1930s, state-run newspapers such as *El Caribe* began advertising hair relaxers manufactured and distributed by U.S. companies that depicted black curly hair as producing "rebellious and terrible" subjects. Overlapping with Rafael Trujillo's violent whitening campaigns, these advertisements articulated hegemonic state discourses that sought to erase African heritage in the nation. This paper traces the transnational trajectory of racialized hair politics to the present, explaining how contemporary Afro-Latina activists such as Carolina Contreras, challenge the legacies of anti-blackness by articulating new racial discourses encoded through the politics of hair. Her work provides an important public affirmation of Dominican blackness by redefining the value and the aesthetics of curly hair.

Part III: Displacing Stereotypes

In her essay "Mano Khalil's *The Beekeeper*: an Ecosophical Perspective on Refugees in Europe," Heike Scharm offers an ecocritical analysis of the Kurdish-Syrian director Mano Khalil's film *The Beekeeper* (2013). By pointing to the interrelation between language, identity, and belonging, her essay elaborates on how Khalil turns cinematographic language into what Raymond Williams would call a green language. The main character "speaks" to the viewer through close-ups and by moving through the landscapes of his host and home country. This rhetoric of movement illustrates not only his fundamental and singular way of being in the world. *The Beekeeper* visually interconnects the destiny of man—his displacement, losses, and consequent struggle to regain his humanity—with the silent plight of a threatened worldnature, to borrow Jhan Hochman's term, and therefore interweaves the tragedy of displacement with the

dehumanizing effects of a civilization alienated —or displaced— from nature. As the personal narration of displacement blends the superimposed imagery of Kurdish and Swiss landscapes into one unified place of nature, the anthropocentric aesthetic consumption of landscape gives way to an ecocentric silence that seems to “speak” for nature, in order to communicate that the question of sustainability of nature —or worldnature— is inseparable from the sustainability of humanity.

In her essay “„Ist das deine ganze Männlichkeit?“ Family Honor and Othering in Feo Aladağ’s film *Die Fremde*,” Elisabeth Poeter argues that Feo Aladağ’s debut film *Die Fremde* (*When We Leave*, 2010) moves beyond the traditional ‘cinema of duty’ and its tendency to recreate racial and gender stereotypes by illuminating the failure on both sides of the cultural divide to support successful integration of Turkish-Muslim migrants into German society. The film raises questions about the validity of the concept of hybridity that implies a successful integration of migrants into the dominant host culture. It investigates the conflicts that arise from attempts to uphold gendered power relations by foregrounding how the protagonists manage inconsistency through a variety of cultural and psychological strategies that generate multiple and contextualized identities. Despite contrasting portrayals of Turkish and German identities that seem to reiterate or reify old stereotypes, particularly of Muslim masculinity, the male protagonists’ ability to exercise patriarchal control is represented as compromised and points to a re-articulation of ethnic masculinity.

In his essay “Local, National, Global? Migration and Identities in German Soccer” Stephan Schindler focuses on a major contradiction in post-national societies: the construction of identities in soccer that circulate between the local (club level), the national (national team), and the global (player migration, multi-ethnic national teams, multi-national club teams) using mainly Germany as a case study. While traditional local rivalries, the so-called “derby,” such as the battles between Borussia Dortmund and Schalke 04, are rooted in local and at times provincial histories, participation in the national team is supposed to eradicate local identities in the promotion of national unity. Starting in 2006, however, the multi-ethnic composition of the German national team also questions a concept of national identity when many players from migrant families can now choose which national team they want to represent. This development in sports which seems to mirror broader political and socio-economic changes

in post-1989 Europe has created fascinating paradoxes: the Muslim player in Glasgow who has to play as a Catholic (Celtics) or Protestant (Rangers), the non-German player in Hamburg who now stands for either left-wing local identity (FC St. Pauli) or the French-speaking player in Munich who now poses as a Bavarian in *Lederhosen*.

In her essay “Stereotypes in *Türkisch für Anfänger*: Challenging or Confirming Essentialist Notions of Culture and Identity?” Viktoria Gabriel argues that mediatized ethnic humor can be a powerful discursive tool. Against the backdrop of the many controversies surrounding immigration, such as the ongoing debates about Germany’s status as a country of immigration, not least in light of the current refugee situation and rising right-wing populism, the humorous treatment of immigration and postmigration can significantly contribute to the acceptance of an increasingly diverse and pluralistic German society. On the one hand, comedy can break up the common association of immigration as problematic, which is conveyed in part by the media, thereby creating positive impulses for the perception of ethnic minorities and those who ostensibly fall under the label “mit Migrationshintergrund” (“with an immigrant background”). On the other hand, humor can function as a means of subversion and thus potentially change certain views. Broadly speaking, this paper examines the subversive potential of mediatized ethnic humor. More specifically, it examines whether the critically acclaimed television sitcom *Türkisch für Anfänger* (*Turkish for Beginners*, 2006-08, ARD), which relies heavily on ethnic stereotypes about the Turkish German minority, challenges still prevalent notions of homogenous cultures with clearly demarcated boundaries, and contributes to the acceptance of a heterogeneous German society.

Part IV: Poetry: not your stereotypical hares !

Poetic performance by Susanne Eules

sueb fun combines her multilingual, lyrical, conceptual & experimental poetic writing with her other artistic practices as a musician and visual artist. The poems are part of her book-length poetry project herding the queens’ hares, alluding to the ironic concept of a female pastoralist, minding poetic strategies and poems, that is to say hares, known for their infinite procreation under “queen Mayröcker’s reign.” The idea of her manuscript is inspired by the works of the most prolific contemporary lyrical writer, the experimental Austrian poet Friederike Mayröcker, by the French

feminist writer Hélène Cixous, by the concept of “bait” by Brazilian writer Clarice Lispector and by Josephs Beuys’ concept of art as social sculpture, claiming a creative, participatory role in shaping society and politics. Friederike Mayröcker’s book title *dieses Jäckchen (nämlich) des Vogel Greif* (that little jacket [namely] of the bird Griffin) refers to the Brothers Grimm fairytale of the “Bird Griffin” KHM 165 in which another type of fairy tales AT 570 : “Herding the King’s hares” is included.

The hare is an apt figure for speed of thought & for associative thinking. For Dr. Eules, the hare is the ideal metaphor for poetry. Language follows the hare’s strategies to unpredicted territories; moves through investigations, citations, ruptures and allusions into non-semantic and homophone fields. It employs playful creations of neologism and hypertext that lead into spheres of surreal and dreamlike states.

DISCLAIMER: no hares were injured, abused or killed in writing and composing these poems and compositions.

Yves-Antoine Clemmen, Stetson University

Part I: Using Stereotypes

Stereotypically Heimat? Reinvisioning the Robinsonade and Heimatfilm as Ecocinema

Margit Grieb

When Austrian writer Marlen Haushofer published the novel *The Wall* (*Die Wand*) in 1963 it was not an immediate success in the German-language literary scene. However, it was rediscovered in the 1970s in the context of German and Austrian 2nd wave feminism and hailed as a masterpiece feminist novel (Lorenz). Not only did the novel feature a woman as the main protagonist and reworks a traditionally male genre, the *Robinsonade*, but it was also written in diary format, then considered a prime vehicle for *écriture féminine*. Many considered the novel unadaptable to film because the story is told from a single perspective, lacking any dialogue, featuring a solitary protagonist, and few compelling action scenes. However, in 2004, the novel was featured on a German television segment¹ similar to “Oprah’s Book Club” and climbed high on German Bestseller lists. In the wake of this new-found notoriety, Austrian director Julian Pöslner decided to purchase the rights and adapt the novel to the screen regardless of any perceived resistance of the source material to a cinematic treatment (Schiefer).

The film, which premiered in 2012, begins with a sequence in which we see the female protagonist writing on pieces of paper and a voice-over reading this “diary” out loud. The story is told in a series of flashbacks and the film returns at regular intervals to the protagonist’s contemporary situation. The voice-over narrator tells a Crusoesque story, of being marooned in a picturesque Alpine environment, isolated from the rest of the world, and possibly its only survivor. Her predicament begins when she decides to accompany her cousin and his wife to a hunting lodge in the Austrian Alps for the weekend. However, when she wakes up the morning after her arrival, she discovers that her relatives have not returned from a trip into the nearby village the night before. When she goes out to explore their whereabouts, she comes upon an invisible, but impervious wall (the origin of which is never explained). This glass-like barrier divides her

¹ The TV Show “Lesen! Mit Elke Heidenreich” (2003-8) appeared on the public TV station ZDF.

4 Using Stereotypes

space, in which the biosphere is seemingly intact, from a landscape where the non-human world looks unchanged, but the people appear petrified, immobilized without warning in the middle of their daily routines by some unknown apocalyptic event. *The Wall's* narrator, i.e. the protagonist, who remains nameless throughout the film, describes how she manages to survive in this isolated, enclosed space with the companionship and aid of a dog, named Lynx, and later joined by a cat and cow which both, in turn, give birth to offspring during the course of the film. It is a story of human isolation but also one of human-animal companionship.

In his adaptation, the director Julian Pölsler reimagines Haushofer's female-centered *Robinsonade* as an eco-cinematic text, a film that eschews an anthropocentric perspective integral to this genre, in which, conventionally, the dominating and colonizing relationship of its protagonist to the land is celebrated.² As James Joyce famously proclaimed, Robinson Crusoe, who gives the genre its name, is the true prototype of the British colonist. Whereas the novel is confined to relate the setting solely through the description of the narrator, the film as a visual medium is able to present images unmediated by the protagonist's language, or, as existing side-by-side with the voice-over narration, to give the audience a sense of experiencing the landscape in a more "natural" or unfiltered way. Pölsler also taps into another well-known cinematic genre, the *Heimatfilm*, and, by subverting its generic conventions allows viewers to examine the Alpine landscape through an eco-critical lens.

The *Heimatfilm*, a genre particularly popular in Germany and Austria in the 1950s, has been described by film scholars as a genre that allowed Germans, in particular, in the decade after WWII to retreat to a safe space of non-engagement with the uncomfortable recent history (von Moltke 18). As Johannes von Moltke explains, in these films "lengthy inserts of Alpine flora and fauna, often on the whimsiest motivation" featuring "morally upstanding men and girlish women clad in traditional dress (*Trachten*)" eventually unite in traditional romantic unions. *Heimatfilms* offered post-War German society opportunities to go on a "holiday from history" by escaping into "pre-modern idylls" (18). Scholars initially saw the *Heimatfilm* as

² Johann Gottfried Schnabel first mentions the genre descriptor "Robinsonade" in the "Vorrede" of his novel *Die Insel Felsenburg* (1739), where he makes a point to distinguish his literary work, which is itself a representation of the genre, from other "zusammen geraspelte Robinsonaden-Späne" (5).

anti-global, parochial and not concerned with sustainability issues as the environment seems whole and unthreatened by modernity. However, following more recent scholarly examinations of the genre, the *Heimatfilm* has emerged as a much more complicated medium, albeit still with a conservative and reactionary message. Von Moltke points out that *Heimatfilms* do not avoid, but showcase modernism as a non-threatening development to the environment; they feature a setting where the industrial and the pastoral meet without damage to the latter,³ where the local and the global interact smoothly, and the traditional and the modern do not threaten each other. Moreover, von Moltke also explains that it is a “‘spatial genre’ [...] with its persistent foregrounding of regional and provincial spaces, of recurrent landscapes, and of an ideologically loaded notion of the local” (19). He argues that “the *Heimatfilm* has served to imagine, if not facilitate, various processes of social, technological and spatial modernization *within* the ostensibly bound realm of the local” (19) and thereby nurtured an uncritical view and “mythologisation of modernization as a process that ultimately does not threaten” (24) the local environment or its inhabitant’s way of life.

Considering these *Heimatfilm* genre constituents, it seems counterproductive for *The Wall* to use this genre in order to present a progressive and ecologically-centered perspective of a space which is so film-historically and ideologically encumbered. However, it is precisely *because* Pölsler transforms the *Heimatfilm*’s well-known landscape and the genre’s nostalgic attitude toward modernism into an eco-centered space that allows the filmmaker to reevaluate current and historical perspectives of the role of setting, in particular the Alpine mountains, in German-language cinema. Thus, *The Wall* engages critically with the *Robinsonade* and the *Heimatfilm* genre and transforms both from anthropocentric into eco-centric conduits for fictional tales concerned with the interaction between humans and the non-human world. To achieve this challenging transformation the director strategically makes use of genre, setting, sound, framing, camera

³ A good example of this is *The Woman of My Dreams* (1944) which seamlessly merges the (quite literally) explosive world of the industrial engineer and the city-flair of the revue star with the rural *Gemütlichkeit* of the local alpine setting. *Sissi* (1955) uses the emerging technological invention of the telegraph to set off the old-fashioned military officer from the forward-thinking Sissi, the former a representation of bygone aristocratic and military luster and the latter aligned with modern ideals of love and emancipation.

6 Using Stereotypes

perspective and narrative structure, in short he employs the whole gambit of media-specific devices available to allow the film to probe into areas which were left untapped by the literary source material. Pölsler, in short, creates an adaptation that yields a new perspective, what Elizabeth Henry describes as an ecocritical perspective: “Rather than carrying our old stories with us and imposing them onto the landscape with our imaginations, we might instead allow the landscape itself to form our imaginations [...] one in which humans and nature are both subjects and participants in a relationship” (Henry 171).

The director’s specific use of setting plays an important role, not just as a *Heimatfilm* marker, but also as a space that signals to the viewer that the protagonist, in a gradual character development over the course of the film, radically changes her relationship with her habitat. The lodge in which she lives is a case in point. At the beginning of the film, when it still functions as a retreat from the protagonist’s busy city life, the camera shows it in a long shot, as a picturesque abode set in the midst of the Alps. Furthermore, in a series of indoor shots, the camera presents the lodge as a cozy, albeit plain, domestic space, simple but still adorned with all of the conveniences of modern life. As the film progresses, and after the protagonist discovers the wall, the lodge is transformed into a claustrophobic, dark, uninviting space, challenging the *Heimatfilm* cliché of *Gemütlichkeit*. In several close-up and medium shots we see the protagonist framed by the bars in the window as if to signal that the lodge, the domesticated and constructed space that usually functions as refuge, has become a prison, and is not the space where she feels most comfortable. On the contrary, it is the outdoors that is presented as the space where she finds contentment. The camera only shows the inside of the cabin from a limited perspective, focused on the protagonist as she writes into her diary or lies sleepless in bed and never gives the viewer a sense of the remaining space, thereby creating a claustrophobic atmosphere. The film’s title also alludes to the fact that her living space, her home, extends beyond the walls of the lodge to the wall that cuts her off from the rest of the world. Although not preserved in the English translation of the title, i.e. *The Wall*, a barrier found in external and indoor spaces, in German the term *Wand* is confined to the interior whereas exterior barriers are identified as *Mauer*. Hence, using the term *die Wand* to refer to the mysterious exterior obstruction in the woman’s narrative and as title is a linguistic signal; on the one hand it is a constraint on the protagonist but at the same time it also represents an expansion of her domestic sphere. Moreover, when the film depicts the enclosure in

which the animals live, the atmospheric approach is reversed; while the lodge is always depicted as an oppressive, dark, cold, and lonely space, the barn is bright, open, airy, lacking a door and full of crevices which allow the interior to be bathed in a warm light. The protagonist is not the central character in the barn shots but, amid her animals, evidently a member of a well-functioning, harmonious team.

The Wall develops the protagonist's integration into her surroundings and her change of perception of the nonhuman world gradually in the film. She is aware of her own transformation over time and recounts near the end of the film:

Sometimes my thoughts get tangled and it is as if the forest is growing roots in me and is thinking, with my brain, its eternal thoughts. [...] In those [early] days, this hadn't happened to me yet, the boundaries were still firmly in place. [...] I am not sure that my new self isn't being slowly absorbed into some greater whole, but even [back] then, the transformation was starting.[...] It was impossible [...] to remain a single, separate self, a small, blind, independent life, that didn't want to integrate into a greater community.

For the protagonist, the *Robinsonesque* setting is not a site in which to overcome peril or subdue natural forces, classic elements of mastery in the Robinsonade genre, but represent an opportunity for her to develop an "ecological consciousness of interconnectedness" (Willoquet-Maricondi 20).

One of the flashbacks early in the film allows the viewer a glimpse of the protagonist's former self, before she adopts a biocentric worldview. Julian Pölsler uses the diegetic sound in these scenes cleverly to underscore the immense transformation of the woman as she slowly adapts to her setting and situation. In this scene she is driving to the hunting lodge with her relatives and Lynx, her cousin's dog, who later becomes her closest companion. The occupants of the car are framed in alternating close-ups listening to loud, upbeat music, driving very fast in a convertible. Everyone in the car is visibly enjoying the air and good weather. The camera then cuts to a long shot showing the car approaching the cabin, but now the sound is muffled, creating an ominous atmosphere that foreshadows a sinister future. The visitors arrive at the lodge, and now the music, coded earlier as an upbeat element, appears as an intrusive noise pollutant penetrating and corrupting the stillness and peace emanating from the natural setting; the visitors suddenly appear out of place and

inconsiderate. Later, the film presents this same road again as the site where the protagonist first discovers the wall. Soon after their arrival at the lodge, her companions depart for the near-by town, and leave her as well as Lynx behind at the lodge. In this flashback, she appears utterly out of place with her surroundings in her white dress and high heels and acts clumsily around Lynx. She is shown carefully and fearfully approaching the dog and trying without success, to pet him. The diegetic sound accompanying this scene is composed of noise emanating from nature, with birds and insects chirping loudly, but, as if to reinforce her estranged attitude toward the natural setting, there is also human-based sound audible, a chain saw cutting down a tree or splitting firewood. Her appearance in this scene is in stark opposition to the way the film introduces her in the beginning scenes of *The Wall*, before the film turns to this flashback, with a short, masculine hairstyle, without make-up, slightly dirty, and dressed in practical, but drab, men's clothing.

But even more compelling than the use of diegetic sound is Julian Pölsler's use of framing as an attempt at cinematically displacing an anthropocentric perspective as the only point of view with which to represent the natural world. The film avoids using an abundance of panoramic nature shots solely featuring the landscape, a convention found in most films containing pastoral scenery and also a hallmark of the *Heimatfilm* and *Robinsonade*. When the film focuses on the Alpine setting the shots usually feature the protagonist or her animal companions amid the natural location. However, the composition of the mise-en-scène in these shots is obviously constructed in such a way that the protagonist never inhabits the center of the frame or otherwise dominates the composition. There exists an abundance of shots in which she is shown as a small spec, off to the side, or captured from behind. Or, in other scenes, the camera is stationary focusing on the landscape while the protagonist walks in and out of the frame. Although she is an active player in the latter, entering and immediately exiting the space, the natural landscape remains unchanged and still, and her impact on her surrounding appears negligible.

Pölsler also presents the audience with a series of shots that clearly allude to the well-known painting "*Wanderer über dem Wolkenmeer*" by Casper David Friedrich, arguably the most famous of the 19th-century German Romantic landscape painters. In the original, the central figure dominates the landscape, standing upright and confident suggesting mastery over the expanse of mountains and clouds before him. The canvas is painted in portrait rather than landscape format,

shifting the emphasis from the landscape to accommodating the upright eponymous wanderer in the center. Pölsler pays homage to this iconic painting in several shots throughout the film, but removes the human-centered focus of the original. In *The Wall* we see a series of variations on the original theme, for example with the protagonist and her dog sitting down, standing off to the side, or Lynx looking into the camera, in other words, always including elements that in some way temper the woman's position with regard to the landscape. She is never shown as a dominating agent but rather as one of many elements that interact within the space. As Laurie Ruth Johnson has observed:

The romantic wanderer, who chooses displacement (as opposed to a displaced person, an involuntary member of a diaspora), immerses himself deeply in the present moment and in his surroundings—immerses himself in time and space in order to transcend them, which can mean transcending the troublesome demands of real history. (149)

The wanderer in Casper David Friedrich's painting clearly displays this kind of agency in his voluntary displacement, whereas *The Wall*'s involuntarily displaced protagonist has no such agency over her environment nor appears to lament this lack. She simply exists, in the same way that her animal companions and the alpine landscape do; a hierarchy of being is not imposed on the natural world, neither in the visual nor in the narrative world of the film.

With *The Wall* Julian Pölsler has not only successfully adapted Marlen Haushofer's novel to the screen but also updated the source material to include an ecological focus and "offer an alternative model for how to represent and engage with the natural world" (Willoquet-Maricondi 44). Films are important cultural expressions that add an additional voice to movements and activism concerned with preserving the environment, because, as scholars of ecocriticism have noted: "[...] it is not that representations directly shape nature but that they shape our perceptions of nature, perceptions that in turn inform and pattern our actions in relation to nature; our actions, in turn, shape nature by preserving ecosystems or by despoiling them." (quoted in Willoquet-Maricondi 7). *The Wall* compels us "to reflect upon what it means to inhabit this planet [...] to understand the value of this community in a systematic and nonhierarchical way" (Willoquet-Maricondi 10).