

INTERCOUNTRY LECTURESHIP QUESTIONNAIRE 2009

NAME: Jane Feuer

GRANT PERIOD: 2009-10

EMAIL ADDRESS: scorpio@pitt.edu

BORN: 1951

PRESENT POSITION US: Professor of English, University of Pittsburgh

LANGUAGES: English

GERMAN HOST INSTITUTION

University of Tuebingen

ACADEMIC DISCIPLINE

American Studies, Film Studies, Television Studies

AREAS OF RESEARCH

American Film Musical, American Television

POSSIBLE LECTURE TOPICS

Town Meetings in *Northern Exposure* and *The Gilmore Girls*
In Treatment: Psychoanalysis In/Of American Quality Television Dramas
How Real is American Reality Television?
Are the new ballroom dancing films/TV shows musicals?
Quality drama on American television
Melodrama and American television today

ACADEMIC TRAINING AND DEGREES

Ph.D. University of Iowa, Communication Studies

PUBLICATIONS (selected)

Books

Seeing Through the Eighties: Television and Reaganism. Durham and London: Duke University Press, 1995.
The Hollywood Musical, Second Edition (revised). London: The Macmillan Press, 1993.

Articles

"Town Meetings in *Northern Exposure* and *The Gilmore Girls*", forthcoming in *Screwball Television: Gilmore Girls*, David Scott Diffrient and David Lavery (eds.), Syracuse University Press [in press].

"HBO and the Concept of Quality TV" in Kim Akass, and Janet McCabe (eds.), *Quality TV: Contemporary American Television and Beyond*. (London: I.B. Tauris, , 2007).

"The Lack of Influence of *thirtysomething*" in Michael Hammond and Lucy Mazdon (eds.) *The Contemporary Television Series* (Edinburgh University Press, July 2005), pp. 27-36.

Psychoanalysis on TV

This lecture theorizes the "fit" between psychoanalysis as a praxis and television as a medium by means of an analysis of recent quality dramas on US TV that use psychoanalysis as part of their serialized storylines. The lecture is intended for a more specialized film and television studies audience. The programs include *The Sopranos*, *Huff*, *Tell Me You Love Me* and *In Treatment*. Clips from these programs will accompany the lecture.

Town Meetings of the Imagination: *Gilmore Girls* and *Northern Exposure*

A mythology of the idyllic American small town has long permeated American literature, film and television, most recently in the "whimsical" U.S. television series *Northern Exposure* and *The Gilmore Girls*. Through historical and ideological references to the New England town meeting, long a symbol of American participatory democracy at its best, the Connecticut town takes on a link to Benedict Anderson's (imagined) primordial villages. *The Gilmore Girls* is treated as an extended text that encompasses and works through a number of significant ideological oppositions in relation to town meetings in many senses of the term, referring to the New England Town Meeting in particular; to places where citizens and ideas truly meet each other; and to the intermingling of certain binaries that structure the show thematically. Just as the town meeting represents an alternative to the corporate state, so too do *Northern Exposure* and *Gilmore Girls* offer alternatives to the brutal contemporary society portrayed on other television series. Includes clips from both programs.

The International Art Musical and the Periodization of a Genre

With a long-lived film genre such as the musical, the question of periodizing becomes crucial. In the 1990s a different kind of small-scale musical emerged as part of an international cycle of films. They were not called "musicals", but I am going to argue that they can be construed as a new "period" or "cycle" in the historical development of the musical. This cycle includes

- Strictly Ballroom--Australia --1992
- Everyone Says I Love You--Woody Allen--US --1996
- Shall We Dance--Japan—1996—remake US (2004)
- Little Voice--GB—1998
- [Dancer in the Dark—Denmark co-production (2000)]
- Billy Elliot—GB—2000

These films-- released during a single decade-- could be considered a cycle of independent art films, but I am going to argue for them as a subgenre of the long-lived Hollywood musical genre. For me the self-reflexive nature of the musical genre has always been definitional. As a quasi-modernist form of popular entertainment, this genre can easily move from popular cinema to art cinema. This lecture uses clips from the above films to show their relationship to the musical genre as a whole.

Why Popular Culture Matters

Given as the Fulbright Inaugural Lecture at the University of Tuebingen, this talk is suited for a more general audience. After explaining the history of negative attitudes towards mass culture in the US and Germany, it goes on to explain the more positive view taken by British Cultural Studies. The rest of the lecture gives the author's personal views on the political and aesthetic importance of certain popular culture texts. Popular culture is viewed as difficult to define and impossible to separate from both high culture and folk culture. Clips from *Written on the Wind*, *The Band Wagon* and *Six Feet Under* accompany the text.
