

DIAS Lecture

Wednesday, December 13, 11:15–12:15

DIAS Auditorium, Fioniavej 34

From Filtering to Imaging – MediaNatures of Plankton (1889–2019)

Prof. Dr. Bernhard Siegert, Bauhaus-Universität Weimar

The concept of “enviroming technologies” (Sørlin and Wormbs) is based on the assumption that “environment is the result of human intervention.” In this sense, technology serves as a terraforming practice. This talk gives this concept a media theoretical twist through re-perspectivizing the history of plankton research in the North Atlantic from the angle of a praxeology of media. How do media and media practices create the „medianatures“ and our understanding of plankton?

The talk will be divided into four sections: First, the concept of “enviroming media” is explained. The remaining sections will be devoted to three historical epochs of plankton research in the North Atlantic, or more precisely to the media practices (or “Kulturtechniken”), by which we can distinguish these epochs, and which gave rise to three different “medianatures” of plankton.

Thus, it can be shown that the media history of microbiological oceanography proceeds through unstable distinctions between medium and message. By conclusion one could argue that plankton as such never existed, but only the "effective range" of the media systems used in each case.

About:

Bernhard Siegert is Gerd Bucerius Professor for the History and Theory of Cultural Techniques at Bauhaus Universität Weimar. From 2008 to 2020 he was co-director of the International Research Center for Cultural Techniques and Media Philosophy at Weimar (IKKM). Since 2021 he leads the project “The New Real – Past, Present, and Future of Computation and the Ecologization of Cultural Techniques” funded by the NOMIS Foundation.



Beyond the Sea: Literature, Media and Cultural Techniques of the Maritime

Workshop

Wednesday, December 13, 13:15–17:00

Tobias Nanz & Anders Engberg-Pedersen

Host: DIAS in cooperation with the Department of Culture and Language (SDU), the Center for War Studies (SDU) and the Marie Skłodowska-Curie Actions

Venue: DIAS seminar room

Topic:

The sea is an unknown smooth space. It is a space from which natural forces emanate, it is loaded with fictions that are meant to make it comprehensible. It is a space of trading and communication, but also a space of battles, war, and disruption. Since ancient times people such as coast dwellers, government officials, or military thinkers have sought to control the sea with ships and submarines and with specific media and cultural techniques. This workshop brings together perspectives from literature, media and culture studies to discuss the challenges of the sea and people's struggle to transform the smooth space into a striated and thus controllable space.

13:15 – 13:30: Introduction

13:30 – 15:00: Panel 1 / Chair: Tobias Nanz

Bernhard Siegert (BU Weimar): Trafalgar: Victory through Love and Hermeneutics

Søren Frank (SDU): Coastal havoc in Peder Frederik Jensen's *Rans vilje* (2023) and Holger Drachmann's 'Efter Orkanen' (1881)

15:00 – 15:30: Coffee and Cookies

15:30 – 17:00: Panel 2 / Chair: Anders Engberg-Pedersen

Lieven Raymaekers (KU Leuven): War and the Ocean: Man, Media and Submarine Fiction

Tobias Nanz (SDU): Noisy Shores. Communicating (after) the Apocalypse

Abstracts and CVs

Trafalgar: Victory through Love and Hermeneutics

Bernhard Siegert (BU Weimar)

Nelson's unconventional naval tactics, especially at the Battle of Trafalgar, were made possible by what was called the "Nelson touch" during his lifetime. Nelson's leadership style did not rely on blind obedience, but was based on what Novalis called "faith and love". Nelson's "brothers" were led by their love and by hermeneutics, not by orders. Nelson transferred naval warfare into the "Discourse Network of 1800" (Kittler): That is, he could rely on a dialectic of freedom and law, in which the law of the sovereign is spontaneously produced at every moment by each individual, from captain to sailor.

CV: Bernhard Siegert is Gerd Bucerius Professor for the History and Theory of Cultural Techniques at Bauhaus Universität Weimar. From 2008 to 2020 he was co-director of the International Research Center for Cultural Techniques and Media Philosophy at Weimar (IKKM). Since 2021 he leads the project "The New Real – Past, Present, and Future of Computation and the Ecologization of Cultural Techniques" funded by the NOMIS Foundation.

Coastal havoc in Peder Frederik Jensen's Rans vilje (2023) and Holger Drachmann's 'Efter Orkanen' (1881)

Søren Frank (SDU)

In this presentation, I will discuss two Danish texts on the storm surge that on November 12-14, 1872, hit the south-eastern parts of Zealand and the smaller islands belonging to the archipelago off the coast of Zealand. One text is a recently published novel, the other a contemporary 'nature study.' My focus will be on the different representational strategies employed by the authors in their efforts to describe the storm surge and its aftermath. I will also explore different conceptions of nature and coastal practices articulated by the two texts.

CV: Søren Frank is Professor of Comparative Literature at SDU and leads the research project "The Coastal Anthropocene". It explores how literature can provide insights into how people have lived and adapted to the coast in the past and what life will be like in the future.

War and the Ocean: Man, Media and Submarine Fiction

Lieven Raymaekers (KU Leuven)

In this presentation, I argue that submarine narratives depicting war at sea do not consist of merely 'exciting', adventurous war narratives, but also critically reflect on the complex intertwining of media, human agency, and the ocean. After all, the particular spatiotemporal setting of the closed submarine space obstructs an external perspective and compels

characters to rely solely on information passed through high-tech acoustic media. Crew members, in other words, are compelled to perceive the underwater world by constructing mediating sign systems that influence and can even block the representation of submarine warfare. Auditory technologies functioning as interface between the human and the oceanic environment thus not only determine the complexity of the sensorial dimension in these narratives but also influence actantial relationships between man, media, and the submarine environment.

Bringing together insights from the emerging fields of war and culture studies, and blue humanities, this presentation analyzes submarine fiction as a critical discourse that integrates and homogenizes diverse forms of knowledge and experience to shed light on the technological preconditions of perception in the subaquatic world. In particular, an analysis of sonar technology as indispensable characteristic of submarine narratives (cf. Koldau 2010) will show how the subaqueous world is comprehended through sign systems on the basis of media that reconceptualize quintessential conditions of wartime perception. This will also allow to distinguish submarine fiction as a (sub-)genre of war fiction with its own recognizable set of features.

CV: Lieven Raymaekers is a PhD candidate in literary studies at KU Leuven, Belgium. He is currently working on a research project in which he focuses on the medial, myth-critical, and socio-political dimensions of postwar German and Anglophone submarine novels, movies, and video games.

Noisy Shores. Communicating (after) the Apocalypse

Tobias Nanz (SDU)

“Getting the message through”, the slogan of the U.S. Army Signal Corps, referred to the effort to establish channels that enable clear and unmistakable communication. This was important both for communications on continental battlefields and for communications across the sea, for example to transmit orders from America to Europe. In this presentation, I want to show how communications engineers developed communication systems that bridged continents to allow political and military agreements; in particular during WW2, protected and reliable communication across the sea was a sign for hope and life. During the Cold War, post-apocalyptic novels and movies changed this: Whereas before nuclear war clear signals were evidence of successful communication, in the post-apocalyptic world noise became proof of life and survivors. The destructiveness of nuclear war reversed the signal-to-noise ratio.

CV: Tobias Nanz is Associate Professor at the Department of Culture and Language at SDU, an affiliate of DIAS, and a Lecturer for European Media Studies at Europa-Universität Flensburg. He is currently working as a Marie Skłodowska-Curie Fellow on his research project *Crisis Communication and Deterrence: The Interaction of Facts and Fictions (CODE)* at SDU.