

Disrespected Neighbo(u)rs

Disrespected Neighbo(u)rs:

*Cultural Stereotypes
in Literature and Film*

Edited by

Caroline Rosenthal, Laurenz Volkmann
and Uwe Zagratzki

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INTRODUCTION

The present volume probes the liminal spaces of the construction and perception of stereotypes in literary and media representations and also investigates the interplay between both. The collected essays shed light on how such representations both react to and impinge on the spheres of cultural, political, and economic practice. This is the third volume in a series focussing on constructions of the Other in cultural stereotypes. While the two previous volumes dealt with common features of stereotyping as seen from different academic disciplines (2009) and with shifts in literary and media representations of the Other after 9/11 (2011)¹, this collection specifically focuses on *the textual mechanisms* employed to pit a self against an Other in neighbourly relations. Neighbourly relations here refers to relations between nations or within various cultural groups of a nation. Our racial, ethnic, social, or gender identities are created in demarcating ourselves from others who differ from us in culturally significant ways. These processes of identity formation are often spurred by stereotyping the Other. Sometimes these stereotypes take the form of humorous teasing or satirizing critique. Often, however, stereotypes turn into petrified value judgements of others and lead to discriminatory acts, violence, and sometimes culminate in warfare and genocide.

Disrespect for the immediate neighbour based on stereotypical pre-conceptions and cultural bias may lie dormant for a long time and then, activated by changes in the economic and political macrocosm, surface instantly and fuel economic exploitation, political suppression, destructive propaganda and, ultimately, pogroms. What had up to this point been recognised as a familiar neighbour, who was defined through linguistic, cultural, and religious distinctions, now not only transmutes into the unfamiliar, but the disrespected and, finally, hateful, Other.

This volume comprises contributions reflecting on these processes and thus shares its particular research focus with numerous publications in recent years of global crisis. Among them are George Tzogopoulos' study *The Greek Crisis in the Media. Stereotyping in the International Press*

¹ Two conference-related volumes – *Us and Them-Them and Us: Constructions of the Other in Cultural Stereotypes and Ideological Battlegrounds – Constructions of Us and Them Before and After 9/11* – came out in 2011 and 2014 respectively.

(2013) and Perry Hinton, *The Perception of People: Integrating Cognition and Culture* (2016), which unquestioningly raised issues instrumental in shaping the concept of the conference. Since then Claude Fields' volume *Stereotype and Stereotyping: Misperceptions, Perspectives and the Role of Social Media* (2016) has shifted the research emphasis to a new specialisation in accordance with the present study.

A more detailed look at the rhetoric of recent conflicts around the globe related to religious fanaticism, economic crises, racism, or sexism reveals deeply entrenched pre-conceptions of the gendered, ethnic, or social Other. Gendered stereotyping has been an object of analysis in Sara Mills and A.S. Mustapha, *Gender Relation in Learning Material: International Perspectives* (2015), and Linda Seidel, *Mediated Maternity: Contemporary American Portrayals of Bad Mothers: Literature and Popular Culture* (2013), while Jesper Svartvik, *Religious Stereotyping and Interreligious Relations* (2013), has emphasized another significant source of Othering. Such stereotypes are shaped and disseminated through fictional and non-fictional texts, television, and the Internet as well as in everyday cultural practices. As the contributions to this volume show, stereotypical representations of the Other in texts and media products such as films and TV series feature prominently in producing, disseminating, and maintaining cultural difference in ideologically effective ways.² Degrees of covert or overt forms of disrespect range from conventional hetero-stereotypes (e.g., Southern laziness, African inertia, Polish cunning, Greek economy, Scottish meanness, Irish drunkenness) in everyday encounters to open de-humanisation (axis of the evil, unbelievers, terrorists) in times of heightened ideological or military tensions.

The present volume³ conceptualizes and contextualizes the uses and effects of stereotypes in literary and filmic representation within various theoretical discourses, among them critical discourse analysis (Fairclough 1995), ideology-critique (Althusser 1976, Eagleton 1990), critical theories of representation (Hall 1997), discursive practices of power/knowledge (Foucault 1981), and practices of exclusion (Macherey 1978, Foucault 1981) as well as theories of Othering (Said 1995). All of these theories share the assumption that discourses are the product of certain notions about reality and simultaneously produce versions of reality. Discourse

² On TV studies see also: Kathleen M. Ryan, *Television and the Self: Knowledge, Identity and the Media Representation* (2013).

³ The editors would like to cordially thank Florian A. Wagner for his diligent, conscientious, and efficient proof-reading and formatting of this volume.

never is an isolated collection of statements or utterances, but consists of groupings of words, sentences, and statements which are always shaped by and enacted within a social context. Crucially, this seemingly natural order of the world is created through its linguistic description, and humans understand – as discourse analysis argues (Foucault 1981, Fairclough 1995, Macherey 1978) – objects through the way they are constructed linguistically.

For the theoretical framing of our undertaking in this essay collection, it seems essential to take into account the insight gleaned from Stuart Hall (1997: 5) about the nature of cultural representations: “Representation is [...] defined as [the] production of meaning through language, signs or images.” In the very process of creating representations, the meaning of cultural concepts is generated in the minds of readers through three interrelated strategies: first, the projected assumption that what the recipient reads represents an authentic, mimetic representation of reality; second, the strategy of working with binary oppositions in creating meaning; and, third, the strategy of Othering, that is establishing asymmetrical relationships between culturally different representatives.

One objective of this volume is to investigate how the dichotomies of Self and Other are constructed in and through representational practices. As to the strategy of creating a sense of authenticity, it is, according to Roland Barthes (1957), not so much the degree to which a character’s ethnic or racial background corresponds to real-life scenarios, but rather the impression generated by textual strategies such as genre modelling (in a fictional autobiography, for example). In other words, the seeming authenticity of a text has little to do with whether a text actually offers a one-to-one representation of reality, but rather whether it succeeds in convincing its readers that it offers an accurate rendition of, for example, a character’s racial or ethnic characteristics and traits. To create this mimetic effect, a text on the one hand needs to present its authentic “raw material” in a manner that it appears as authentic; on the other hand, it needs to offer concepts of reality that readers can integrate into their own cognitive needs, prior knowledge, understanding and expectations concerning the text.

How, then, is meaning structured in a text? Structuralists since de Saussure’s *Cours de Linguistique Generale* (1916) have explained the essential contribution of difference to the creation of meaning. This insight into the role of binary oppositions is shared by Stuart Hall, who argues that meaning is only perceived in terms of relational differences, since we can only know what constitutes “black” if we can contrast it with “white” (cf. Hall 1997: 234). As Hall continues to argue, meaning is always dialogic and evolves through contrasting opposites, which means that we can only

define “us” if there is a “them” or “not-us.” As a result of these binarisms, Stuart Hall (1997) and critics like Mikhail Bakhtin (1982) state that we can only learn what “us” means if we engage in a dialogue with the “other” in an effort to know the “other,” for only if we know the “other” do we know the “us.”

However, the plea for “dialogism” (*sensu* Bakhtin) or a dissolution of binary oppositions as simplifications has often been neglected in favour of practices of Othering and exclusion. Discourses are organized around dichotomies, with clear-cut hierarchies and asymmetries. Here two strategies exist: one magnifies differences to the benefit of “us” and the detriment of “them” through stereotypical or even prejudicial representations; the other, less obvious and more oblique strategy being that of exclusion, which also comprises linguistic exclusion. As to the first strategy of Othering, stereotypes appear as an exaggerated way of representation; as Hall (1997: 258) explains, they “take hold of the memorable characteristics, reduce them, exaggerate them, and simplify them without change or development to eternity. So stereotyping reduces, essentializes, naturalizes, and fixes differences.” Such discourses are essentially organized around practices of exclusion. These mechanisms of exclusion have a tendency to make the act of exclusion appear as self-evident and natural, something which is almost unsayable. Michel Foucault (1981: 56) has famously described this as a “prodigious machinery designed to exclude.” In his ground-breaking study *A Theory of Literary Production*, Pierre Macherey elaborated on the concept of literary texts as not just containing multiple gaps and indeterminacies which the reader has to fill with their imagination (as reader-response theories describe). Macherey (1978: 154) also admonishes literary critics and asks them to look for what a text does not say or cannot say. A literary text

[...] exists above all by its determinate absences, by what it does not say, in its relation to what it is not. Not that it can conceal anything; this meaning is not buried in its depths, masked or disguised; it is not a question of hunting it down with interpretations. It is not in the work but by its side; on its margins, at that limit where it ceases to be what it claims to be because it has reached to the very conditions of its possibility. It is then no longer constituted by a factitious necessity, the product of a conscious or unconscious intention.

To sum up, what is essential to all critical approaches to analysing and interpreting literary texts is the assumption that there is no neutral use of language but that all linguistic expression is socio-culturally formed. Dominant ideologies, such as those about race, ethnicity, and gender define the hierarchical and asymmetrical modes of encoding and decoding

culturally shaped textual signs. Detecting and exposing those textual strategies of creating binary oppositions, of Othering, through what is said in a text or not said in a text (*sensu* Macherey) implies reflecting on frames and silent presuppositions which are rooted in certain ideologies. Such suppressive ideologies consist of “a falsifying collectively held system of ideas and beliefs that interpret the world [...] in the interest of those who are in power, covers up contradictions and conflicts in society” (Meyer 2011: 182) in order to maintain and legitimize the status quo. In our context, intersectional differences such as race, ethnicity, gender, class, and nation should each and all be regarded as a “significant social and cultural construction, which has been used to classify others as subordinate and legitimize social, economic and political practices, such as segregation, exploitation and disenfranchisement” (ibid.: 196). Therefore, the critical approach adopted in this volume is aligned to critical studies of race, class, gender, and nation and aims at uncovering the ideological underpinnings of these concepts and the role literary and filmic representation play in these processes.

*

This volume looks at various instances of Othering across different media, times, and spaces. Dealing with ethnic groups and neighbourhoods from three world areas as well as genres and media instrumental to their respective cultural stereotyping, it includes chapters on the production of stereotypes in US literature, theatre plays, and films; Canadian ethnic writing and theatre; on strategies of “Othering” in Anglo-Norman, Irish, and Scottish texts; and on stereotyping in the literatures and cultures of India. Moreover, this volume presents an array of reflections on European cultures, ranging from Polish and German literatures, Polish wartime recollections, Slovene minority literature to Turkish German feminist films.

In the US literature and media section **Christoph Schubert** and **Jutta Zimmermann** analyse strategies of Othering in telecinematic discourses. Whereas Schubert, supported by critical discourse analysis, focuses on a US American crime drama series and drug-cartel films featuring the stereotypical Mexican villain “to raise an awareness of how mainstream media discursively construct stereotypes by means of specific communicative patterns,” Zimmermann scrutinizes representations of the historical battle of Alamo in US literature and films “as manifestations of cultural memory whose function it has been to express the American nation’s self-image.” Her line of analysis proceeds from the making of the myth to recent challenges of its inherent binarisms with respect to American and Mexican

cultures and the Texan Mexican borderland. Despite challenges and revision, Zimmermann argues, the stereotypes constituting the myth remain unchanged at heart. **Frank Obenland** in his contribution tackles a new turn in contemporary African American drama. “Post-blackness,” according to Obenland, “seeks to revisit the complex relationship between theatrical representation of blackness and the long-standing discussion of what constitutes a ‘black play’.” For him, Branden Jacobs-Jenkins’s *Neighbors* serves as an example to reveal the limitations of post-black concepts, since disconnecting the staged racial Other from the assumptions and notions underlying the ideologies required for the creation of the stage characters entails the continuation of cultural and racial stereotyping. He thus reads the drama as a “satire on the performative construction of ‘post-blackness’.” In her contribution, **Brygida Gasztold** centres on the idea of difference in Celeste Ng’s novel *Everything I Never Told You* (2014) as it appears on the levels of race, gender, and sexuality. On the surface depicting a Chinese American mixed family drama, the text encapsulates the overarching complexity of identity construction for interracial marriages in 1950s America.

Albert Rau in the section dealing with cultural stereotyping in Canadian literature expands the notion of the disrespected neighbo(u)r when he discusses *Nathans Plays* by the Jewish Canadian playwright Jason Sherman. Not only does Sherman respond to the Arab-Jewish conflict in Palestine as a conflict between neighbours, but he also puts his diasporic Jewish Canadian protagonist, who eagerly seeks to construct his Jewish identity, in a “disrespected” relation to the Israeli/Zionist mainstream. Probing into the literary representations of Chinese Canadian relations on the basis of three disparate ethnic texts, **Eva Gruber** points out moments in the texts under consideration when the disrespected Chinese neighbours “seem to turn into enemies within.” From here, she argues, revealing the hidden violent essence of stereotypes about disrespect, it is just a little step to where they actually “hurt in the most literal of senses: physical violence.”

Great Britain and Ireland are represented by three contributions. On the basis of a selection of works **Katarzyna Jaworska-Biskup** delineates xenophobic views in early Anglo-Norman prose describing not only strategies of Othering the Welsh, Scottish, and Irish counterparts evolved for the implementation of power structures, but also when the concept of “Englishness” was initiated. **Eva-Maria Orth** highlights the role of short stories in the depiction of sectarian divisions during the Irish Troubles. Exemplified by two stories from both religious sides of the Troubles she illustrates “the significance of the private” for both authors. By merging

the political and the private in the stories, “neighbours” and “neighbourhoods” come to have a metaphorical power and “serve as signifiers of division and social exclusion.” **Alan Riach** makes a plea for a re-negotiation of established binary oppositions via the ambiguous arts originating in the “national” and disseminating beyond: “national identity is strengthened and enriched by the recognition of difference. And the creative arts are the best ways in which that foreignness may be mediated internationally.” Thus binarisms of “nation” and “foreignness” – us vs. them – tend to lose their dichotomous, rather antagonistic character and are replaced by a recognition of their creative potential. Consequently, foreignness turns into “a matter of curiosity, of optimistic enquiry.”

The section on India commences with **Nandini Saha**’s study of the generation of cultural stereotypes in Indian literature caused by the 1947 Partition and the 1971 War of Liberation in Bangladesh. Her main focus is “how in several ways the construction of the ‘other’ is gendered and how such social constructions then get reflected in literature.” She illustrates her thesis by references to two novels which, though differing in their feminist and post-colonial modes of narration/representation, draw identical conclusions with respect to the gendering of the “Other.” **Christoph Singer** looks into contemporary Partition of India narratives in popular culture and demonstrates how they construct and deconstruct stereotypes, intersect with cultural memory and finally misuse an “existing trauma” for other – political and commercial – ends.

The concluding section on Europe covers literatures and films from different European cultures. Conceptual metaphors theory lies at the centre of **Paula Wojcik**’s considerations. She argues that “literature can violate the common way we use conceptual metaphors or disturb the seemingly evident connection between a particular metaphor and specific social groups.” Four examples from U.S. American, German, and Polish literatures are taken to prove that metaphorical concepts are related to cultural stereotypes and to what extent literary language can interfere with the habitual use of conceptual metaphors. **Joanna Witkowska** deals with Polish World War II recollections of the Polish-British war alliance. She reads them as evidence that though the British were allies of the Poles the habits towards their junior partner “bore the traces of a colonial discourse” close to orientalisation as stated in Edward Said’s seminal study of 1978.⁴ British, that is Western, Othering of the Poles, that is the entire Eastern Europe, in consequence rests on familiar binary oppositions like civilisation vs. savagery/barbarity. Polish counter-narratives strove to

⁴ See also Laetitia Nanquette, *Orientalism versus Occidentalism* (2013).

subvert the binarisms in the process of constructing new ones in order “to reclaim dignity” and “to protect their (Western) identity.” **Ana Toroš** puts her emphasis on the existence of national stereotypes in contemporary Slovene Triestine literature compared to Italian Triestine literature. Her primary concern is with “the reasons for their conception, longevity and unrecognisability of their construction.” She concludes that “symbolic dialogues” between various regional Triestine literatures contribute to collective “Triestine memories” which may result in understanding the cultural Other. **Funda Bilgen Steinberg** sets the films of Fatih Akin against stereotypical Hollywood representations of women to retain male power relations. Deconstructing Gustav Jung’s theory of archetypes, Akin creates counter-archetypes that “display anima and animus [...] but in a subversive manner, thus creating images of femininity which disturb the patriarchal order and are opposed to the male (cult) hero.” This becomes most visible when challenging the mother-archetype, as shown in two of his films under consideration in the article, where not only the mechanisms of male power structures are exposed, but are also replaced with feminist counter discourses.

As stated above, for better use this essay collection is primarily organised around world areas and specific regions within which diverse approaches reflect upon specific practices and productions of cultural stereotypes. However, the individual essays also form various transverse structures. Beyond a specific area or socio-cultural group they share a concern for political questions of representation and participation, of colonialism, repression, and dominance, of racism, sexism, and nationalism. Next to their subject matter, the essays may also be read according to how they deal with the means and manner of representing stereotypes and cultural differences in the differing genres of films, short stories, dramas, poems, memoirs or music. All of them show that what we need in today’s increasingly globalized world is an awareness for the mechanisms and processes of how cultural difference is not only reflected but made in daily conversation and textual representation.

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USA

CHAPTER ONE

MEXICANS ON THE AMERICAN SCREEN: THE DISCURSIVE CONSTRUCTION OF ETHNIC STEREOTYPES IN CONTEMPORARY FILM AND TELEVISION

CHRISTOPH SCHUBERT

1. Discursive Othering in Media Representation

“You make us immigrants look bad!” With these words, Arizona Sheriff Ray Owens, played by former California governor Arnold Schwarzenegger, accuses and arrests the fiendish Mexican cartel boss Gabriel Cortez in the 2013 action film *The Last Stand* (1:26:02). This critical statement can be decoded at the meta-fictional level as well, since it may aptly be applied to the often one-sided representation of Mexicans in American film and television at large. Although Sheriff Owens, who is marked as a foreigner by his distinct Austrian German accent, puts himself in the same category of “immigrants” as the Mexican citizen, Schwarzenegger’s character is the brave and well integrated law-enforcer, while the Latino is the ruthless and criminal Other. Owing to such discriminatory practices, the representation of ethnic groups or nationalities in the US entertainment industry is a crucial topic for Critical Discourse Analysis (Fairclough 2001; Wodak et al. 2009), since TV series and films not only reflect existing categorisations but also support and perpetuate biased perceptions in the collective memory of a given culture. Accordingly, through an investigation of linguistic Othering, this article intends to raise an awareness of how mainstream media discursively construct stereotypes by means of specific communicative patterns.

In accordance with well-known conflicts on the common border, Mexico and Mexicans play a notorious role in contemporary US-American television series and feature films. One central ingredient of stereotyping is the affiliation of Mexico with drug trafficking through tightly organised

cartels, continuing the common *bandido* image of numerous Western and adventure films of the 20th century (Berg 2002). In order to deconstruct this persistent stereotype in detail, this paper focuses on the portrayal of Mexicans in AMC's crime drama series *Breaking Bad* (Vince Gilligan 2008-2013) as well as in the contemporary drug-cartel films *Traffic* (Steven Soderbergh 2000), *Savages* (Oliver Stone 2012), *The Counselor* (Ridley Scott 2013), *The Last Stand* (Kim Jee-woon 2013), and *Sicario* (Denis Villeneuve 2015).

For an in-depth investigation of stereotypes, cognitive-linguistic prototype theory provides a fruitful theoretical foundation (Taylor 2003; Geeraerts 2007). In order to make sense of everyday experience, human beings generally rely on the construction of cognitive categories, which are marked by a prototype as the most typical representative. While prototypes are principally neutral and non-judgemental, stereotypes, which can be triggered by mass media or other sociocultural factors (Schneider 2004), convey a biased and disparaging image of ethnic groups, potentially fostering social exclusion. Hence, through a comparative analysis of the popular films and the TV series, characteristic attributes of the stereotypical Mexican villain will be identified.

As regards characterisation strategies, Jonathan Culpeper's cognitive model (2001) will be employed, which combines bottom-up effects of discursive clues with top-down inference processes based on the recipients' prior world knowledge. Owing to the multimodal quality of telecinematic discourse (Piazza, Bednarek and Rossi 2011; Wildfeuer 2014), the study will occasionally also consider visual aspects of representation, whenever they enhance or contribute to the one-sided verbal depiction. A qualitative and exemplary analysis of key scenes involving Mexicans or Mexican Americans will demonstrate that the Other, typically represented by vicious drug lords and their henchmen, ultimately serves the function of highlighting various facets of the US protagonists' personalities. Moreover, it will be shown that the series and films employ ideological stereotypes in order to meet the cultural expectations and preconceptions of a mainstream audience for the sake of economic success.

2. Characterisation in Telecinematic Discourse

Television and film can be subsumed under the heading of *telecinematic discourse* and are thus defined as "integrated multimodal (verbal and visual) fictional narratives" (Piazza, Bednarek and Rossi 2011: 1). As regards the communicative situation, these genres belong to the category of "screen-to-face" discourse (Bubel 2008: 64) at the level of producers

and viewers. Within the fictional plot, this level is complemented by verbal interaction between the different characters (Bednarek 2010: 16). The inter-character dialogues are closely intertwined with the multimodal features of cinematography, music, and the audio track of sound effects (Wildfeuer 2014: 22-31). As Claudia Bubel argues, the film and TV production team will carry out an “overhearer design” (2008: 68), anticipating expectations and knowledge resources of their target group in order to create an appealing narrative. With respect to stereotyping, this means that scriptwriters and directors will to some extent choose well-established and preconceived ideas and images that overlap and harmonise with their audience’s world knowledge.

In order to examine the construction of stereotypes, it is essential to take into account telecinematic characterisation strategies. Jonathan Culpeper (2001) has developed a suitable cognitive model of characterisation, explaining how “a representation of character [is] constructed in the mind during the process of reading” (2001: 34) or watching a film respectively. Accordingly, comprehension is regarded as a combination of two processes, which are (a) top-down inferencing based on the recipients’ prior world knowledge stored in their long-term memory and (b) bottom-up effects of clues in the film discourse, including verbal and nonverbal communication of the characters as well as cinematographic devices. The two sides dynamically affect and correct each other, for “what you see influences what you know, and what you know influences what you see” (Culpeper 2001: 36), so that stereotypes are continuously reinforced. According to Norman Fairclough, *Critical Discourse Analysis* assumes a similar procedure of interpretation through viewers, arguing that textual cues cognitively activate so-called “members’ resources” (2001: 118), which comprise ideological and culture-dependent preconceptions. As a result, characterisation processes are closely linked to the construction of biased images among audiences.

As far as discursive clues are concerned, it is useful to refer to the well-established distinction between direct and indirect characterisation. While “direct” or explicit characterisation manifests itself in traits attributed to characters by other characters or by the narrator, “indirect” or implicit characterisation relies on the characters’ own linguistic choices and discursive strategies (Baldick 2008: 52). In the present telecinematic data, Mexicans and Mexican Americans are occasionally described by other persons, but they are chiefly characterised through their own utterances. Stereotypes, however, are ultimately constructed not on the inter-character plane but at the screen-to-face level of communication.

While the series *Breaking Bad* consists of five seasons that comprise 62 episodes with an average length of about 45 minutes (Thomson 2015: 84-91), the running times of the five feature films *Sicario*, *Traffic*, *The Last Stand*, *Savages*, and *The Counselor* range between 102 and 141 minutes. Hence, the series and films in total add up to over 56 hours of telecinematic discourse, allowing for valid observations on ethnic stereotyping. They all deal with drug-related crime at the Mexican-American border, featuring a variety of American protagonists with different professions. *Breaking Bad* tells the story of a high school chemistry teacher who is diagnosed with lung cancer and seizes the opportunity to financially provide for his family by producing and selling crystal meth to drug lords operating in New Mexico. In *The Last Stand*, an upright and tough small-town sheriff, who formerly worked for the Los Angeles narcotics department, arrests a notorious Mexican cartel boss that has just escaped from a federal prison. In *Traffic*, the head of the Office of National Drug Control Policy fights the war on drugs at the national level, so that high-ranking Mexican officials are involved in the plot as well. In *The Counselor*, a shady American drug-cartel lawyer unwittingly becomes the target of his former Mexican clients, who suspect him of embezzling their money. In *Savages*, the two young Californian drug dealers Ben and Chon decline the Baja Cartel's offer of cooperation, which leads to a violent conflict across the border. The protagonist of the film *Sicario* ("hitman") is the idealistic FBI agent Kate Mercer, who belongs to a task force fighting the Mexican Sonora cartel. Towards the end of this film, the cartel boss is assassinated by the Mexican killer Alejandro, who has been hired by the American authorities. With the help of numerous relevant examples, it will be shown that the Mexican antagonists are constructed as stereotypical villains through the recurrence of characteristic features.

3. Categorisation, Prototypes and Stereotypes

From a cognitive-linguistic perspective, the centre of a mental category is realised by a prototype, which serves as the most representative example, so that prototypes function as "reference points" (Taylor 2003: 45) for other potential members of the same category. Accordingly, less typical members are located in the periphery of a category, which implies that the boundaries between different categories are principally fuzzy. Conceptual categorisation fulfils significant functions for human beings, such as linguistic economy through the use of superordinate concepts which cover a wide range of entities. Moreover, prototypicality supports language users

in their perception of the world and the recognition and classification of newly experienced phenomena (Croft and Cruse 2004: 74).

If a specific category contains visually perceptible physical objects, the respective prototype can be determined by the “similarity approach” to prototype theory (Croft and Cruse 2004: 82). With regard to the visual representation of ethnic groups in telecinematic discourse, this approach could focus on the prototypical outer appearance of a Mexican, including aspects such as clothing, hair style, and skin colour. Alternatively, a prototype can be defined by a list of attributes, so that “[t]he centrality of an item in the category depends on how many of the relevant set of features it possesses: the more it possesses, the better an example of the category it will be” (Croft and Cruse 2004: 81). As a result, this approach is highly relevant whenever the prototype is more abstract, as in the case of characteristic Mexican discursive behaviour. Along these lines, the present study compares the verbal behaviour and communicative strategies of fictional Mexicans in the data in order to isolate salient attributes. Although such a list of attributes is always changeable, open and expandable (Ungerer and Schmid 2006: 26-27), the identification of recurrent attributes allows revealing insights into current conceptualisations. It is important to note that a prototype is not regarded here as a specific individual but as a “mental representation” (Taylor 2003: 64) that is discursively constructed.

Although social stereotypes also locate persons and entities in conceptual categories, they differ from prototypes in two main ways. First, while prototypes are basically neutral and unprejudiced, stereotypes are “typically associated with evaluative features” (Croft and Cruse 2004: 81). Hence, they may result in derogatory labels for social or ethnic groups, which construct social actors in a discriminatory way, as disclosed by Critical Discourse Analysis (Reisigl and Wodak 2009: 94). Second, while the cognitive construction of prototypes takes place in an unobtrusive and unconscious manner, social stereotypes are often used consciously and strategically for the sake of ideological argumentation. Accordingly, since stereotypes are closely intertwined with “cultural expectations, they tend to be exploited in advertising and in most forms of popular entertainment” (Lakoff 1987: 85). In particular, thus, fictional film and television may employ well-known stereotypes in order to meet preconceptualisations and beliefs of their target audiences. Stereotypes can be established in life through personal experience or through culture-specific socialisation processes, as conveyed by education, parents and peers (Schneider 2004: 23), yet the influence of the mass media has continuously grown over the past decades.

4. Conventional Stereotypes of Mexicans as Cognitive Cultural Models

Stereotyping of Latin Americans has a long tradition in the USA, as corroborated by the monographs by Arthur G. Pettit (1980), Frank Javier Garcia Berumen (1995), Oscar J. Martínez (2001) and Charles Ramírez Berg (2002) as well as by an extensive chapter in Benshoff and Griffin (2009). In particular, as regards the representation of Latinos in Hollywood movies, Berg (2002) identifies six main stereotypes, which are defined according to both gender and dramaturgic roles in the movie plots. The criminal and illegal agenda is realised by the images of “*el bandido*” and “the harlot,” while the comic roles are the “male buffoon” as well as the “female clown,” and romantic or erotic functions are fulfilled by the “Latin lover” and the “dark lady” (Berg 2002: 66). Since the present dataset exclusively consists of examples from the crime drama and thriller genres, this study concentrates on the first of these three categories, the depiction of Mexican outlaws. In the conceptual category of Latino villains, their stereotypical outer appearance has changed in the second half of the twentieth century from the dishevelled, gap-toothed and begrimed bandit of Western movies to the elegant and well-groomed drug dealer in an expensive suit, displaying status symbols such as a luxurious hacienda, a private yacht or stylish prostitutes. In sum, however, until today the outwardly transformed gangsters remain “the same inarticulate, violent, and pathologically dangerous *bandidos*” (Berg 2002: 69).

In contrast to other ethnic minorities in the US, Mexicans on the American screen are associated with a relatively restricted geographical area, located “in the Southwest, in Texas and the states carved from the territory ceded in the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo” (Pettit 1980: xv), through which California became a part of the United States in 1848. Due to the regional proximity of these states to Mexico, there is a tendency in films to place Latinos from other countries such as Colombia or Cuba, which are also frequently associated with crime, in the same category as Mexicans. Moreover, almost needless to say, Mexicans and Mexican Americans are hardly kept apart in American mainstream movies. In addition, Mexicans are not only subject to geographical restrictions but also to limitations with regard to film genre. In particular, the Mexican Other looms large mainly in “Westerns, social problem films, and the more recent urban violence films” (Noriega 1992: xv), among which the latter type is alternatively labelled the “gangster movie” (List 1996: 22). Such genres are marked by recurring conventions in the design of plot and characters, so that “by limiting the representation of Chicano identity to

specific genres, Hollywood perpetually reproduces the stereotypes” (List 1996: 22).

On a historical note, the nineteenth century already saw American reporters, explorers and historians constructing pejorative images of the Catholic Mexican Other (Martínez 2001: 56). The ethnocentric American idea of Mexican inferiority was significantly fostered by the dominant ideology of Manifest Destiny (Benshoff and Griffin 2009: 143). With the establishment of silent films in the early 20th century, Mexicans appeared in cinemas mainly in the form of the so-called “greaser” character, which referred to the disrespected profession of greasing the axles of vehicles. With the help of an attribute list, a stereotypical greaser can be paraphrased as “a swarthy, dishonest, corrupt, conniving, incompetent, and sleazy individual” (Martínez 2001: 58). A few decades later, in the 1960s, atrocious Mexican bandits gradually replaced bloodthirsty Native Americans as the hostile Other in mainstream Western movies (Benshoff and Griffin 2009: 153). As the analysis of contemporary film and television will underline, such denigrating images have survived until today.

Since such stereotypical conceptualisations have been persistent over decades and even centuries in the USA, they constitute “cultural models,” seminally defined by Dorothy Holland and Naomi Quinn as “presupposed, taken-for-granted models of the world that are widely shared [...] by the members of a society” (1987: 4). In other words, such models are culture-dependent “stored cognitive representations” (Ungerer and Schmid 2006: 49), referring to social beliefs, norms and categorisations. Cultural models form the foundation of common perspectives on social and discursive practices in ethnic groups (Kristiansen and Dirven 2008: 9), distinguishing the in-group from the out-group represented by the Other. As such, they have a decisive influence on audiences’ top-down inferencing and interpretative processes (Stockwell 2002: 33). Hence, the perpetuation and enhancement of cultural models in the mass media may have significant sociopolitical consequences:

Nightly news reports about violence and drugs along the border, as well as films like *Traffic* (2000) and *Bordertown* that center on such issues, may also be contributing to anti-Hispanic sentiments among some Americans. (Benshoff and Griffin 2009: 160)

Thus, as Critical Discourse Analysis argues, different types of mass communication constitute alternative forms of “social practice” and are therefore likely to construct biased images in an interdiscursive and mutually reinforcing manner (Wodak et al. 2009: 8). Along these lines, Donald Trump’s xenophobic election campaign in 2015 and 2016 could

also benefit from enduring and firmly established Mexican stereotypes (Schubert 2017a: 49-53). Metaphorically speaking, popular movies and television series can be regarded as a “powerful public textbook” (Cortés 1992: 91), since they subliminally convey attitudes and ideologies that may have actual effects on the everyday behaviour of individuals. In consideration of these premises, it is crucial to create an awareness of these mechanisms and to deconstruct prejudiced conceptualisations. This goal can be achieved by identifying their basic building blocks, as they manifest themselves in the form of specific characteristics.

5. Contemporary Attributes of Mexicans in American Film and Television

Through an analytical comparison of Mexican and Mexican American villains in the present telecinematic data, it is possible to isolate a number of distinctive attributes typical of this ethnic Other. Correspondingly, the more of these features an individual character in the series or films possesses, the closer he or she is to the *Stereotypical Mexican Villain*, henceforth abbreviated as *SMV*. Along these lines, the fundamental fuzziness of categories, as commonly highlighted by varying degrees of “birdiness” in the category *bird* (Ungerer and Schmid 2006: 27), applies to the *SMV* as well. As the distribution of distinctive attributes will demonstrate, different characters may show diverse degrees of *villainy*.

(a) *The SMV is greedy and corrupt.* When the series or films feature shady individuals belonging to the Mexican administration or police force, these officials are usually depicted as corrupt, neglecting their duties in favour of an additional illegal income. In this way, crime is associated not only with the obvious drug dealers on the street but also with civil servants supposed to uphold and enforce the law, which makes the situation in the country even more threatening. In *Traffic*, for instance, the Mexican general Arturo Salazar informs the US politician Wakefield, played by Michael Douglas, that the fight against drug trafficking is “a very difficult task because of the corruption in the police force [...]” (1:25:41). This is a case of direct characterisation of Mexican police officers, but in contrast to the general’s American conversational partner, the film viewers are informed that Salazar himself works for the Juárez Cartel. Hence, this statement also indirectly characterises the general not only as criminal but also as hypocritical, with the consequence of dramatic irony at the producer-audience level. An earlier scene in this film confirms Salazar’s bleak assessment, when in Tijuana two anonymous American tourists report their car stolen. After they have addressed police officer Javier

Rodriguez, he gives them the phone number of an enigmatic man and advises them to call him:

FEMALE TOURIST. How is this guy gonna know who has our car?
 JAVIER RODRIGUEZ. The police will tell him.
 MALE TOURIST. (*Scoffs.*) Why will they tell him, and they won't tell us?
 FEMALE TOURIST. (*To her husband.*) Because we pay him, stupid. (*To Rodriguez.*) Right? And he pays the police, and suddenly our car appears.
 JAVIER RODRIGUEZ. (*Nods and smiles.*) Es – es – es correct. Es correct.
 (*Traffic, 0:20:06*)

The police officer, here embodied by Benicio del Toro, is linguistically marked as the Other by a distinct Spanish accent as well as by interlingual code-switching (“es correct”). As far as corruption is concerned, the police have obviously found a treacherous way to hide their illegal activities through the introduction of a mysterious middleman. The attribution of corruption is here less direct than in the words of Salazar, but the female tourist’s paraphrase and Rodriguez’s confirmation leave no doubt about the police’s lawlessness.

In *Sicario*, the Mexican-born hitman Alejandro Gillick, who works for the US authorities and is also played by Benicio del Toro, warns the FBI agent Kate Mercer of the Mexican police when they arrive in Juárez, advising her to “keep an eye out for the state police. They’re not always the good guys” (0:30:44). In this direct form of characterisation, the Mexican officers are vaguely labelled as criminals, which not only entails corruption but also other felonies. Throughout the film, the truth of this assessment is corroborated by the corrupt Mexican police officer Silvio, who secretly works as a drug courier for the Sonora Cartel. Similarly, in *The Last Stand*, the Mexican drug boss Gabriel Cortez comments that “in my country the police say *gracias* after being paid off” (0:36:25). Thus, here the Mexican antagonist directly characterises Mexican police officers as corrupt and at the same time indirectly frames himself as a villain who habitually bribes officials. However, when Cortez eventually offers money to the principled sheriff Owens, this paragon of virtue declines with the words “my honor is not for sale” (*The Last Stand, 1:29:46*), foregrounding American moral superiority.

(b) *The SMV is aggressive and brutal.* In addition to corrupt and fraudulent behaviour, the Mexican Other is very frequently marked by both physical and psychological brutality, commonly used by villains to gain material wealth or to exercise power. In *Breaking Bad*, for example, the drug distributor Tuco Salamanca serves as the epitome of irrational and unpredictable violence. After killing his own bodyguard No-Doze at a

junkyard with his bare hands under the influence of crystal meth, he frantically shouts “damn, man! Look at that! Look! Whoo! That’s messed up” (*Breaking Bad*, episode 1.07, 0:43:52). His actions and words thus reveal a complete neglect for human life and imply a threat towards his new business partners Walter White and Jesse Pinkman, so that he is indirectly characterised as a dangerous and narcissistic psychopath. When Walter and Jesse are abducted by Tuco but finally manage to overpower and kill him, Walter directly characterises the Mexican as an “insane, degenerate piece of filth” (*Breaking Bad*, episode 2.02, 0:40:10). Such bottom-up clues of characterisation by Walter and Jesse mutually reinforce each other and can easily be integrated in viewers’ preconceptualisations of Mexican violence, as acquired through news media or other fictional representations.

In *Savages*, the enforcer Lado, again impersonated by Benicio del Toro, is a similarly sociopathic personality, mercilessly murdering enemies of the Mexican Baja Cartel. In one scene, before he kills a disloyal American lawyer, he sadistically shoots his victim in both kneecaps and informs a fellow criminal on the phone: “Oh, we’re just making gringo-lawyer soup here in the kitchen” (*Savages*, 0:18:38). Like in the case of Tuco, Lado’s lexical choice shows a cynical disrespect for human beings, since he uses the racist label “gringo” and figuratively equates the American with “soup.” The mapping of the two domains implies that through the blood loss the victim’s body is being liquefied to resemble soup, and since this dish is usually a starter, the metaphor foreshadows further killings. Accordingly, the physical activity of murder and the verbal utterance jointly characterise Lado as a barbarous killer in an indirect way. Since the actor Benicio del Toro is a ubiquitous face in drug-cartel thrillers, experienced viewers of such films will add this fact to their genre knowledge. As a consequence, such audience members may use this information in the process of top-down inferencing, so that the image of the shady Mexican killer is also supported through the strategy of typecasting, associating individual actors with specific roles.

In *Savages*, the attribute of brutality manifests itself not only in male characters but also in the posh cartel boss Elena Sánchez, who in one scene has dinner with her American hostage Ophelia. While eating, Sánchez threatens to murder her two friends with the words “I like talking to you, Ophelia. But let me remind you that if I had to, I wouldn’t have a problem cutting both their throats” (*Savages*, 1:30:28). This utterance, which exemplifies verbal and psychological violence and hints at physical butchery, has a shocking effect, since it stands in stark contrast to the otherwise civil and polite dinner table conversation. Correspondingly,

negative stereotyping here is immanent to the ethnic group of Mexicans but transcends the borders of gender, thus expanding the stereotype of the Mexican criminal.

In *The Counselor*, cartel members do not frequently appear on the screen, so that their cruelty is voiced mainly in explicit utterances by Americans. For instance, the dubious American businessman Westray informs the eponymous counsellor about cartel atrocities including decapitation, snuff films, and necrophilia, drawing the following bleak conclusion: “the point, Counselor, is that you may think there are things that these people are simply incapable of. There are not” (*The Counselor*, 1:04:41). This type of inverse characterisation, based on the negative prefix *in-* and the particle *not*, opens room for unlimited speculation about further abominations by the Mexican cartel gangsters. This expansion of the perspective from Mexican individuals to larger groups is also present in *Sicario*, when a convoy of American DEA and FBI agents arrives in the city of Juárez. One American officer looks out of the car window and provides his colleagues with a gloomy historical flashback, accompanied by eerie and threatening music:

AMERICAN FEDERAL AGENT. There she is. The beast, Juárez. You know, nineteen hundreds, president Taft went to visit president Díaz. Took 4,000 men with him. And it was almost called off, 'cause some guy had a pistol. Wanted to walk right up to Taft and blow his brains out. But it was avoided. 4,000 troops. Think he felt safe? (*Sicario*, 0:25:00)

This brief narrative sequence dominantly foregrounds the diachronic dimension of stereotyping. In addition to the personification through the feminine personal pronoun *she*, the city is metaphorically labelled a “beast,” which highlights the dangerous and savage character of its inhabitants. Moreover, the juxtaposition of “4,000 men” on the American side with “some guy” on the Mexican underlines the tremendous potential for violence represented even by single members of the Other. This impression is further enhanced when the federal agents see mutilated bodies hanging from a railway bridge, upon which the Mexican-origin CIA official Alejandro sarcastically comments to Kate Mercer: “welcome to Juárez” (*Sicario*, 0:27:40). This expressive speech act of ironic welcoming implies that such inhumanity is characteristic of Ciudad Juárez. As far as the imagery of *beasts* is concerned, drug kingpin Gabriel Cortez in *The Last Stand* drives a tuned Corvette, which is labelled by an American police officer a “monster on wheels” (0:24:25), so that the Mexican driver is placed in the same menacing category.