



CENTER FOR THE STUDY OF

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Edward Ashbee American Studies @ CBS	3
Birgitte Madelung Cinematic Images and the National Mall	4
Dale Carter Over a Barrel: When Uncle Sam Went Calypsonic	6
Jan Gustafsson Big Brother, politikere og virkelighed i dagens Brasilien	8
Fernando Andacht The Lure of the Real in Contemporary Brazilian Media	8
Niels Bjerre-Poulsen Magt og afmagt i Det Hvide Hus	10
Center for the Study of the Americas Annual report 2005	13
Om Center for the Study of the Americas	15
Autumn programme 2006	16

Typisk amerikansk?

Det er en fornøjelse at kunne præsentere endnu et newsletter fra Center for the Study of the Americas på CBS! Vi vil i det følgende byde på smagsprøver på nogle af de emner vi til daglig beskæftiger os med i vores forskning og undervisning. Forhåbentlig vil det give endnu flere lyst til at overvære de mange spændende foredrag og seminarer i vores program for det kommende år.

I vores forrige newsletter udtrykte vi et særligt ønske om at appellere til danske virksomheder med en interesse i "the Americas". Det vil vi også meget gerne denne gang, men det er os ligeledes magtpåliggende at henvende os til gymnasier, handelsskoler og seminarier. Herfra har vi siden oprettelsen af vore studier i 2001 haft fornøjelsen af et støt stigende antal studerende med en brændende interesse for kultur, politik, sociale forhold og økonomi på de amerikanske kontinenter. Vi vil meget gerne bistå med vores viden på disse områder, og vi hører meget gerne fra undervisere og uddannelsesinstitutioner, der måtte have særlige forslag til fremtidige seminarer eller andre arrangementer.

Vi har denne gang valgt at udvide sideantallet for at gøre plads til vores årsrapport for 2005. Den giver nemlig et godt billede af spændvidden i vores interesser og aktiviteter. Blandt vores større arrangementer i det forgangne år var konferencen *Popularizing the Americas – Music, Media and Movies*, som forløb over to dage i september. Tre af konferencens mange spændende talere - Professor Fernando Andacht fra Universidade Federal do Rio Grande so Sul i Brasilien, Lektor Dale Carter fra Aarhus Universitet, og

adjunkt Birgitte Madelung fra vores eget center – har til dette newsletter indvilliget i at skrive korte artikler med udspring i deres foredrag.

Vi kommer vidt omkring: Fra sammenligninger mellem det politiske liv og TV-serien "Big Brother" i Brasilien, over Calypsoens indtog i 1950ernes USA, til Hollywoods udspekulerede brug af de mange nationale symboler på "the Mall" i Washington, D.C.

Udover disse tre udforskninger af forbindelser mellem populærkultur og politik, giver Lektor Edward Ashbee en kort introduktion til vores nye 3-årige BA-uddannelse i Amerikanske Studier. Jeg selv har bidraget med en kort introduktion til studiet af det amerikanske præsidentembede – et forskningsfelt som danner rammen for et af de kurser som vore studerende tilbydes på overbygningsuddannelsen (profilen) i amerikanske studier på CBS.

At dømme ud fra programmet på bagsiden, går vi en særdeles spændende sæson i møde. Demokratisering, immigration, multikulturalisme, midtvejsvalg, menneskerettigheder, moral, kulturkamp, samhandel, diplomati og forfatningsret er blot nogle af stikordene til efterårets seminarer og foredrag. Vi håber som altid, at vi kan rykke ved indgroede opfattelser af, hvad der er typisk amerikansk.

Som i det forrige newsletter, har vi også denne gang valgt at blande artikler på to af de tre sprog, som dagligt anvendes på centeret – engelsk og dansk. Det tredje sprog, spansk, nøjes vi af praktiske årsager med at anvende her: ¡Que disfruten la lectura!

American Studies @ CBS

CBS's American Studies program has gone from strength to strength. Although first established as a two year course, it has now been extended so that it is offered on a three year basis. At the same time, more and more students are being enrolled.

The course provides an interdisciplinary understanding of the United States, the countries of Latin America, and the relationship between them. In their first year, students consider the history and development of the continents. Patterns of initial colonialization, the revolutions against imperial rule, and the evolution of ordered societies are assessed in depth. Landmark events, including the US civil war (1861-65), the Wall Street crash, and the US's entry into the Second World War (1941) are charted against this background. Important questions are asked. Has the US developed in a way that is markedly different to the 'Old World' nations so that it is, as writers have traditionally suggested, *exceptional*? Why did the US establish itself as an economic and military *hyperpower* while many countries in Latin America seemed to languish? How should the relationship between the US and Latin American nations be categorized? Are they partners or should we talk about 'master and servant'?

The first year establishes a basis for further study. In their second year, students examine the government and politics of the Americas and then, in the fourth semester, consider the character of the US and Latin American economies. The government and politics module surveys principles, institutions and issues. It looks at the concepts underpinning the US system of government such as the separation of powers and federalism, the structures of government (most notably the presidency, Congress, and the Supreme Court), and contemporary concerns. How, for example, are foreign and defence policy decisions made? To what extent is the president constrained by Congress? How can a candidate win a presidential election despite securing fewer votes than his principal chal-

lenger? Why is the US Supreme Court so important? What variables affect election outcomes? The government and politics of Latin America are also studied in detail. What forms of government have been adopted? How stable are these political systems? To what extent does 'anti-Americanism' influence the political process?

In the fourth semester of the programme, the course turns to survey economic issues. After providing a short introduction to economic terms and concepts, it looks at the economic development of the continents and the different forms of economic strategy that have been adopted over the past century. The course also considers the character of the economic relationship between the US and Latin America. Have the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) and subsequent trade liberalization measures encouraged growth and development or opened up Latin America to ruthless forms of exploitation?

In their final year, students move on to consider society and culture. Instead of offering an overall survey, the programme looks at selected topics on an in-depth basis. In the fifth semester, they examine and assess issues associated with socioeconomic class, race and gender. To what extent, for example, are the US and the Latin American countries still racially divided? Do women still hit a 'glass ceiling' limiting the opportunities open to them in the labour market? Is there mobility or must the poor always remain poor? Then, in the sixth semester, popular culture comes under scrutiny. The US is often said by European observers to offer too much 'junk culture'. Is this fair? What does film and literature say about Latin American society?

The expansion of the American Studies program has been tied to another change. There is now more of an emphasis upon the development of written skills so that students are better equipped when they come to write a major project or dissertation. While oral examinations remain, there are

also mid-semester assignments and tests. These may seem challenging at the time but they ensure that students are in a strong position when they sit the examination at the end of each semester.

American Studies @ CBS is not confined to the classroom. Many students gain 'real life' experience by spending a semester at a university in the US or Latin America. These exchange program placements are arranged by CBS's international office. There is also a thriving American Studies Student Association that has organised social evenings and other events. We also hope, within the next few years, to offer student placements with Danish companies that have ties with the US or Latin America.

At the moment, students take the American Studies program in conjunction with either English or Spanish. Although it may be possible to take American Studies together with other subjects in the years to come, a full understanding of the US and the countries of central and south America requires the development of language skills. We therefore believe that American Studies and the study of English or Spanish complement each other.

We hope that you will want to know more about American Studies @ CBS. Staff members at the Center for the Study of the Americas would be happy to speak to school / gymnasium groups about current developments in the Americas and the CBS program. Please contact the program coordinator, Birgitte Madelung, (3815 3157 or bn.eng@cbs.dk) for further information.



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Cinematic Images and the National Mall

In Philip Roth's latest book *The Plot Against America*, the narrator recalls a visit with his family to Washington DC. In brief the novel is about a Jewish family set in the contra factual history of a Charles A. Lindbergh presidency in the early 1940s. Lindbergh's strong ties to the German Nazi regime and his poorly hidden anti-Semitic policies cause great concern for the story's main characters — the Roth family. Yet, in the midst of their worries they travel to the Nation's capital for a short vacation:

Immediately upon entering Washington, we made a wrong turn in the heavy traffic, and while my mother was trying to read the road map and direct my father to our hotel, there appeared before us the biggest white thing I had ever seen. Atop an incline at the end of the street stood the U.S. Capitol, the broad stairs sweeping upward to the colonnade and capped by the elaborate three-tiered dome. Inadvertently, we had driven right to the very heart of American history, and whether we knew it in so many words, it was American history, delineated in its most inspirational form, that we were counting on to protect us against Lindbergh. 'Look, my mother said, turning to Sandy [the narrator's older brother] and me in the back seat. 'Isn't it thrilling?' The answer, of course, was yes, but Sandy appeared to have fallen into a patriotic stupor, and I took my cue from him and let silence register my awe as well.

Having arrived safely at their hotel, the family ventures out into Washington to see the city's various sites, among them the Lincoln Memorial from which they emerge in the following passage:

We came back into the daylight and

gathered together on the top step. The tall shaft of the Washington Monument was half a mile away, at the other end of the reflecting pool that lay at the base of the terraced approach to the Lincoln Memorial. There were elm trees planted all around. It was the most beautiful panorama I'd ever seen, a patriotic paradise, the American Garden of Eden spread before us... [The father then says]: 'This is something every American should see. Turn around boys. Take one last look at Lincoln.'

The Capitol Dome, the Washington Monument and the Lincoln Memorial are all sites at the National Mall in Washington DC. It is a place of commemoration and celebration of national historic figures and events, framed by museums and government buildings. The Roth family's awe over the sites confirms established perceptions about the nation as symbolized by the monuments, memorials and statues.

The sites at the Mall and their intangible meanings would only be material objects or undefined words if members of the community did not make use of them. Millions of tourists visit the Mall each year; touring the area they move from one monument to the next—just as the Roth family. Their presence materializes the existence of the American nation, confirming the imagined bonds about what it means to be an American.

And the images of the Mall are popular symbols that are often used as recognizable backdrops in various movies and television shows. It is the repetition and recurrence of these images that popularize the Mall. When people go to Washington DC they recognize the sites, and in turn they

recognize them in movies evoking the monuments' symbolism.

Frank Capra made evident use of the Mall's symbolism in his *Mr. Smith Goes to Washington* (1939). Smith is a Boy Scout leader in a rural area somewhere out west; that is far away from the political game in Washington DC. Smith is supposed to temporarily replace a deceased senator. He is hand-picked by a group of corrupt politicians who have their minds set on building a dam in a nature reserve. They believe they can monitor the naïve Smith in order to ensure the implementation of their plans. Smith is rather surprised by his nomination, but his fascination takes over as he reaches Washington DC. Arriving at Union Station he eyes the Dome of the Capitol. Drawn by the site he leaves the welcoming committee and ends up boarding a tour bus.

The scene establishes a discourse on the nation. It evokes the values fixed to the many sites he visits and highlights certain historical events. These sites symbolize the United States' distribution of power, its constitutional basis, its founding fathers, its survival, the soldier's willingness to die for his country; and as the all incorporating symbol — the flag. It merges all the other markers. The contents of these symbols are always under debate — there is no definite exactness about the meaning of the American nation, but in *Mr. Smith* we are presented to an explicit and almost non-negotiable discourse on the nation.

The young Boy Scout leader arrives in Washington DC directing the attention to the country's basic values by his fascination of the many sites in the city. Sites everyone else seems to overlook. Their ignorance of the



Aliens attack the White House in the movie "Independence Day."

PHOTO: AP/WIDEWORLD

monuments is reflected in the corrupted politics. The politicians and the Washington establishment have forgotten the country's strong basic values and ideals, disregarding the citizens they are representing. Generally speaking the movie is about the relationship between the ordinary man (the citizen) and 'the system', which is corrupted when basic ideals and values are set aside.

These are likewise under attack in *Independence Day* (1996), but from a 'foreign' aggressor. Earth is invaded by some slimy creatures flying in extremely large shielded spaceships, attacking major cities throughout the globe. As one of the flying saucers reaches the United States it casts a long shadow over sites on the Mall in Washington DC. The nation is under threat and the images of the Mall are used symbolically to emphasize the hostile takeover and the jeopardy of the American nation.

In general the sites at the Mall are used as backdrops for discussions about the state of the nation or values pertaining to ideals and morality. Oliver Stone's *JFK* (1991) situates the meeting between district attorney

Garrison, who seeks to uncover the conspiracy surrounding the assassination of John F. Kennedy and the secret Mr. X on the Mall. Walking down the stairs of the Lincoln Memorial they engage in an exchange of information, and as they pace the gravelled paths data is revealed which supposedly will lead to the revelation of corrupted statesmen and politicians. The Washington Monument and the Capitol Dome function as backcloth for the continuation of their conversation, implicitly emphasizing the values of the American nation.

In a similar style Rob Reiner's *A Few Good Men* (1992) uses images from the Mall to bracket the scenes and the storyline. The image of the Iwo Jima Memorial also known as the Marine Corps Memorial establishes the societal position of the soldier in American memory, reminding the viewer of his honorable role. Impressions of the Washington Monument, the Jefferson Memorial and the Lincoln Memorial appear as the injustices of a military cover-up gradually are revealed.

All four movies celebrate the American ideals and values symbolized by the monuments on the Mall. The films

use popular known symbols, further popularizing them. They celebrate a system of values and ideals that are so strong that it resists and wins over corruption and those who are seeking to misuse the system. The monuments are present in the landscape emanating intangible notions about nationhood. But it is not an explicit conscious process; exactly because the sites appear in movies as described in the examples, they function like music in a department store — creating a notion of intangible emotions.

The Washington the Roth family and Mr. Smith were awed by 65 years ago is the same we encounter today. Several monuments have been added, but the discourse is the same. It is a discourse that constructs, confirms and popularizes the American nation.



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Over a Barrel: When Uncle Sam Went Calypsonic

Popular music is something the United States has exported in vast quantities, particularly since World War Two: just think of such familiar international icons as Elvis Presley, Michael Jackson and Madonna; or such ubiquitous genres as hip-hop and grunge. In the era of globalization, when Tower Records markets 'world music' and Sony owns Columbia Records, the statistics may not be quite so self-explanatory. But for decades the balance sheets have shown an enormous American trade surplus in popular music. At the same time, though, the United States has also long been an *importer* of popular music, while from time to time some of its biggest names have had to play second fiddle to foreign acts – and not just The Beatles, either.

No sooner had Elvis Presley first hit the big time in 1956, for example, than he was temporarily upstaged by an imported musical craze that would briefly out-sell even rock'n'roll itself – calypso. Associated with the tiny Caribbean islands of Trinidad and Tobago and with their carnival traditions, calypso is a hybrid music whose rhythms, melodies, instrumentation and lyrical traditions are the result of complex ethnic, national and cultural interactions between African and European, New World and Old. But if its roots are tangled, calypso's popularity and influence in the United States at this time were plain to see. One market analyst later calculated that a quarter of all American record sales in 1956 and 1957 showed some calypso influence; and if Elvis was fast becoming the king of rock'n'roll, then the newly-crowned king of calypso, Brooklyn-born Caribbean-American singer Harry Belafonte, offered an appealing alternative. Though neither of his best-known songs of the period – 'Jamaica Farewell' and 'The Banana Boat Song (Day-O)' – were truly generic, Belafonte's 1956 *Calypso* album became the first long player in history to sell over a million copies and topped the *Billboard* album charts for 31 weeks. Not only did his popularity prompt talents as varied as actor

Robert Mitchum and writer Maya Angelou to record their own calypso albums. It also helped promote a range of popular culture spin-offs: from glossy calypso fan magazines via successful stage shows (such as the Broadway musical *Jamaica*) to Hollywood movies (including Belafonte's own *Island in the Sun*).

In spite of such sensationalist reverberations, some observers have suggested that the mid- to late-1950s 'calypso craze' was in part orchestrated by conservative American political and cultural elites, keen to redirect juvenile attention and energies away from the then-novel spectre of rock'n'roll. Where songs like 'Heartbreak Hotel' and 'Blue Suede Shoes' were being condemned for encouraging juvenile delinquency and racial 'mixing,' calypso seemed to speak of relaxation, vacations, and sun-kissed beaches, not to challenge established social orders. However justified such claims were, though, the high profile of musicians such as Harry Belafonte probably owed as much to the post-war growth in mass market tourism. During the 1950s, in particular, airlines such as Pan Am opened up the continent's far-flung island periphery to the American public as never before. Where US forces had once seen naval action across the Caribbean, they could now return as civilian holiday-makers to sample some of the tropical delights they had missed a decade and more beforehand. In more ways than one, 'Jamaica Farewell' was the sound of a prosperous nation at ease.

Yet while the popularity of calypso music in the US cast the relationship between the American people and their Caribbean island neighbours in a positive light at this time, the very appearance of that music on the American market was in part a sign of tensions – military and otherwise – over the preceding years. Thus calypso saw its profile in the US raised by the GIs who had heard it during wartime service on bases established in Trinidad. But if their military pres-

ence was welcomed, then resulting power imbalances also created problems between islanders and servicemen. One popular local calypso about the impact of GIs with money on Trinidadian life, 'Rum and Coca-Cola,' spoke directly to the drawbacks of the US armed presence; when the song was plagiarized by a visiting American bandleader into a hugely profitable release for the Andrews Sisters vocal group in 1944, the spectre of cultural imperialism was added to established anxieties about US military domination (in 1956 Harry Belafonte's 'Banana Boat Song' would also top the American charts while earning nothing for its Caribbean composer).

Another set of concerns that marked calypso's migration were political. The object of Trinidadian anxieties in this case, though, was not the United States, and the nature of these anxieties probably *eased* whatever other tensions marked the relationship between island and mainland. Thus, if American commercial interests had periodic designs upon Trinidadian music, then many of the island's inhabitants welcomed and contributed to the relationship. In one popular 1935 song, for example, a calypsonian visiting New York expressed his delight at being treated as 'an artist and a gentleman' and invited to perform on well-known vocalist Rudy Vallée's NBC radio show. His pleasure at such cultural recognition was in part political, and was motivated by concerns about imperialism – but it was British domination, not American, that rankled. That Trinidad remained subject to London's formal political control until 1962 would for decades make the United States seem less a threat to the island's identity than a potential instrument of political progress. With the British Empire clearly in a state of decline and its colonial establishment mostly suspicious or contemptuous of calypso, to many Trinidadians – whether or not musicians – Uncle Sam also seemed to offer the best hopes of economic prosperity as well as cultural and social liberation.



THE DUKE OF IRON, A WELL-KNOWN CALYPSOIAN, PERFORMING IN NEW YORK CITY, 1957

In the immediate aftermath of World War Two that faith appeared justified. Growing numbers of American tourists brought money to the island but seemed less of a threat to local social practices than had wartime GIs. Meanwhile, the purchase of Trinidadian oil exploration leases by Texan business interests in 1956 brought hopes of prosperity and a further erosion of British influence. And when inventive local musicians began turning the 55-gallon oil drums discarded by the US military into musical instruments, thus fostering the development of the now world-famous steel band, whatever resentments were felt over the inequalities highlighted by 'Rum and Coca-Cola' appeared minor. That the US Navy had by 1957 set up its own steel band even as calypso (briefly) rivalled the rock'n'roll kingdom seemed to mark the music's international

coming of age. Metaphorically at least, when Trinidad and Tobago gained independence a few years later, its citizens were calling their own tune.

Beyond that, however, they would not be free to make their own arrangements. In part because hopes for petroleum-driven prosperity went unrealized, over the next forty years a growing number of Trinidadians and other Caribbean islanders would follow in calypso's wake, migrating to the New York area in particular in search of work, and turning parts of the city into homes from home. As a result, while neither calypso nor steel band would make much impact on the *Billboard* charts after the 'boom' era of the mid- to late-1950s, their grass-roots social and cultural presence would remain. Steel bands to this day are both widespread and popular across



the American public school system, while every September Brooklyn's well-established Caribbean diaspora community hosts an enormous Labor Day carnival, complete with steel bands, calypso contests, street parades and much more.

For all the popular songs that flooded outwards beyond American shores during the 20th century, then, some overseas music did swim against the tide – and for good reason. 'Sung through the prism of whimsy and tropical topicality,' calypso may have appealed in part as exotic local colour for the casual musical tourist. Yet, as the distinguished American musician, composer, arranger (and long-time calypso promoter) Van Dyke Parks notes, it also continues to 'speak to a universal human condition – often wide awake, looking in all directions, for social gain.' Through the machinery of the steel band, meanwhile, these two small Caribbean islands have also made 'the most significant acoustical music invention of the twentieth century, uniquely pan-American.' Ebbing and flowing with the passage of time, Trinidad and Tobago's musical currents surge across – and beyond – the western hemisphere to this day.



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Big Brother, politikere og virkelighed i dagens Brasilien

EN SEMIOTISK ANALYSE

Kommunikationsforskeren, semiotikeren og sociologen Fernando Andacht (Uruguay 1954) er en internationalt kendt akademiker, der har gæstet CBS ved flere lejligheder, senest til Center for the Study of the Americas' konference i september.

Ved denne lejlighed holdt han et fascinerende foredrag om 'repræsentationer af det virkelige' i de brasilianske medier med hovedvægt på Big Brothers betydning set i relation til fremstillingen af kendte politikere (et resumé bringes i dette nummer). Et centralt begreb i Andachts artikel er *index appeal*, der går på at reality shows og deres popularitet kan ses som udtryk for at 'indeksikale tegn' nyder en særlig popularitet i nutidens globaliserede medie-

verden. Indeksikale tegn er tegn, der ikke altid er skabt med bevidst kommunikationsformål som skrift og tale, men som alligevel fortæller en masse og som relateres umiddelbart til en idé om virkelighed og sandhed. Sådanne tegn kan være sveden på en krop, et smil eller et raserianfald, som i Big Brother og andre reality shows bliver aflæst og fortolket af millioner af seere, der siden bruger dem som grundlag for at stemme nogle deltagere ud og lade andre blive. Samtidig bliver disse audiovisuelle *bodyprints* også set som en adgang til at forstå hvordan vi "virkelig er" på individuelt og kollektivt plan.

Andacht drager en interessant parallel til den politiske medieverden, hvor han ser at nogle tilsva-

rende tendenser begynder at gøre sig gældende. I medieverdenen er afstanden mellem de ledende politikere og stjernerne fra Big Brother overraskende lille. Vinderen af femte udgave af BB, den sorte, homoseksuelle Jean Wyllis og Brasiliens præsident, Lula da Silva, har begge kæmpet sig op fra fattigdommen og stammer begge fra landets fattige nordøstlige del.

Andachts analyse af medierne er kritisk, men indebærer ikke en 'akademisk' nedgørelse af reality shows. Tværtimod analyserer han hvordan disse shows og andre repræsentationer af 'ordinary reality' på TV er en form for 'popular culture', der bidrager til at skabe nye måder at forstå verden på.

Lektor Jan Gustafsson, CSA.

The Lure of the Real in Contemporary Brazilian Media

A representation of the real is haunting the globalized world, the indexical representation of everyday life. My paraphrase of the *Communist Manifesto* alludes to the unsettling emotional impact which is brought about by the kind of media representation which has a physical link with what it represents. To account for the meaning of a global phenomenon which is already part of the 21st. century popular culture, namely, Endemol's reality show of filmed enclosure, I propose the notion of **index appeal**. I draw my example from the Brazilian production, *Big Brother Brasil* (BBB). The core of the meaning effect of this media representation of the real consists of the "mesmerizing" (Peirce) signs which

do not depend on anyone's intention, but which are simply given off by the bodies of those who must live together in BBB's transparent abode. Correspondingly, the audience turns into a group of index hunters during three months of tenacious pursuit of what is most common in life, as a reliable access to our true self. The relevance of such indexes has grown so that they are even supposed or feared to represent Brazilian identity, the nation's soul. I reformulate the classical query of sociology, 'how is the real constructed?' thus: how is ordinary reality represented on TV? The indexical representation is made of the semiotic transpiration of the broadcast bodies brought along by the carefully chosen

anonymous Brazilians, who come from all regions of the huge Latin American nation to crowd themselves and overexpose their deeds more than words in the beautiful house, at the Rede Globo's filming lot, in Rio de Janeiro. As wind vanes whose function one day became forgotten or ignored footprints, the televised events of BBB do not have as their primary function to communicate anything; they could even go unperceived insofar as they are something accidental or peripheral to verbal production. Trite as they seem, such audiovisual **bodyprints** are used by the public as the royal road to the self, which is the Holy Grail of our postmodern times. These traces are the kernel of a folk method to detect



Left to right: Severino Cavalcanti crowned, participants from "Big Brother Brazil" and President Lula crying.

mere self enactments, the feared fabrication of identity. Gestures, gazes, kisses, sweat, rage outbursts and tears inevitably occur, they are given off by the body that engages in communication as its material, tenacious shadow. An inevitable paradox arises: what is expected of these media-produced indexes is that ordinary existence represented at its most private will be both enacted and the real thing.

What could be the point of comparing the obscure lives and indexes of the 24/7 observed and gradually less anonymous crowd of BBB with the deeds of the illustrious men (almost no women!) who are in charge of Brazil's *res publica*? At first sight, nothing seems more ludicrous, but that is exactly what happened in the Brazilian print media when Severino Cavalcanti, a.k.a "king of the low clergy" was elected President of the House of Representatives in spite, or to spite, Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva, the man who climbed to the highest office of the republic in 2002, from such a humble, northeastern origin, as soap operas are made on. Both influential public figures come from the poorest region of the country, just like Jean, the winner of BBB's fifth edition, in 2005, who climbed from rags to writings, as he left his shanty town in the interior of Bahia to become professor of communication in the state's capital, Salvador. A columnist of the prestigious *Folha de São Paulo* criticized fiercely the lowly politician Severino by pitting his image against the rising star of self-made (in BBB) man Jean.

The indexical representations of the thousands of anonymous candidates who seek the main prize of BBB and of the few politicians who aspire to the presidential Office of the nation where this TV reality format is produced are consumed by the audience in its capacity as elector, with a single, obsessive concern: are those people what they appear to be on the screen, or are they just authentically false, the ultimate fabrication of sophisticated media engineering? This particular

involvement is central to popular culture and to the democratic system, in our heavily mediated societies. To ignore the tenacious quest for indexes which are used to infer the truth, on the basis of televised mundane behaviors that are judged to be more or less authentic, carries a considerable risk, that of being oblivious to a growing cultural tendency in our everyday world, and also in the more specialized realm of politics. It is hard not to share the puzzlement of a Brazilian philosopher whose blogged essay on BBB received a number of harsh rebuttals for its frivolous subject: "Are we to believe that the fact that 30% of the Brazilian electorate expresses its opinion on an eviction which occurred in BBB is of minor relevance? I teach and do research on political philosophy, and I say that the electorate of BBB deserves to be studied" (Renato Janine, AOL Notícias, 02/20/05). I find that this is a sound advice.

From 2003 to 2005, in a series of columns, the *Folha's* TV critic Bia Abramo picks on BBB as one touches a sore tooth with the tip of the tongue: trying to forget it is there, but not being quite able to do so. What bothers her most is a **representational** issue: who do these discardable celebrities truly represent? Are they Brazil's Every(wo)man? Or do they lack any sign status whatsoever, as she once wrote in despair? In Abramo's wavering intellectual judgment, from shock to hesitant acknowledgment, we can find the same concern that political scientists evince about the nation's leader. Do the popular indexes brought by Lula's physical self to the presidency, together with the everlasting persona of the country's democratic ruler, in the image of Kantorowicz's medieval two-bodied sovereign, really signal the beginning of a new era, of a secular *parousia*? Do the flaws in formal education and the humble upbringing of Lula tell the true story of a young Latin American nation which has finally found its soul? Is the triumph of the learned though adventurous black, homosexual Jean Wyllis in BBB the telltale

sign that an organic intellectual has finally filled in the gap between us and them, between the people and the thinking elite? Is the monstrous coming to power of that obscure strategist Severino the sign of apocalypse, of the frightening fact that Brazilians "can do nothing about it, folks, we will never be different", as humorist Fernando Veríssimo self-mockingly wrote about this sad reversal of politics.

Whatever our prediction or favored reading of these media-produced indexical representations, what is certain is that lowly body matters are winning the rhetorical battle over elegant, abstract symbols of past political agoras. On reality TV, both entertaining and serious, media amplified sign transpiration at its best is reaching out and furnishing evidence to public opinion, in its role of audience and of electorate body, so the people can find out if they are facing a sincere and valuable human being, be it to vote him for BBB winner or for president. As a sturdy though not fully reliable semiotic bulwark of popular culture against the treacherous staging of TV-fabricated interaction and pseudo-revelations of the self, or the Hollywood-like machinery of spin doctors who turn tricky politicians into charismatic human beings, we find this new-fangled indexical defense. Mankind is gradually but surely turning to the modest indexical marrow of our humanity, which we tend to forget is also animal, to seek reassurance that there is still a way to discover if there is something true beneath appearances. Popular culture has appointed informally but massively the index appeal as the harbinger of these good news amidst high widespread skepticism and low expectations.



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Studerende ved CBS Handelshøjskolen har de to sidste år haft mulighed for at tage en overbygningsuddannelse, hvor amerikanske studier kombineres med enten engelsk eller spansk sprog. Kurserne i den amerikanske "profil" udgør omkring halvdelen af det samlede studieforløb og de overordnede temarammer er "politik og samfundsforhold i USA og/eller Latinamerika", "kulturer og identiteter", "Markedsforhold i Den Vestlige Hemisfære", og "Teori og metode i Amerikanske Studier". Indenfor hver af disse brede kategorier udbydes kurser, der giver de studerende mulighed for at fordybe sig i et konkret emneområde. De udbudte kurser skifter typisk fra år til år. De kan behandle emner, som går på tværs af nationale grænser i den vestlige hemisfære, men de kan også koncentrere sig om forhold i enkelte lande. I 2005 underviste centerleder Niels Bjerre-Poulsen kurset i politik og samfundsforhold. Emnet var præsidentembedet i USA, og kursusforløbet bød på gæsteforelæsnings fra to af verdens førende forskere indenfor feltet. I oktober 2005 holdt Professor Sidney Milkis fra University of Virginia foredrag om "George Bush, the Republicans, and the New American Party System". I slutningen af november kom turen til Professor George C. Edwards fra Texas A&M University, der talte om "Policy and Polarization: The Presidency of George W. Bush".



FOTO: PETER GARFIELD/CORBIS

USA's største præsident Abraham Lincoln ville have haft det svært i de elektroniske mediers tidsalder.

Magt og afmagt i Det Hvide Hus

Studiet af det amerikanske præsidentembede har nærmest udviklet sig til en selvstændig disciplin indenfor politologien. Forskere, der beskæftiger sig med emnet har deres egen underafdeling i American Political Science Association. Der er tidsskrifter (først og fremmest *Presidential Studies Quarterly*) samt adskillige forskningscentre ved amerikanske universiteter viet til emnet. En portal til mange af disse forskningscentre kan findes på den amerikanske ambassades hjemmeside: <http://www.usembassy.dk/AmericanStudies/PresidentialStudies.htm>

Den store interesse for præsidentembedet er ikke så svær at forstå i betragtning af USA's præsident ofte regnes for at være "verdens mægtigste mand". Ganske vist har mange

præsidenter i tidens løb måtte sande, at embedet tog sig større ud udefra end det følte indefra, men det er ikke desto mindre uomtvisteligt, at det under de rette omstændigheder giver den siddende præsident beføjelser som på godt og ondt kan ændre historiens gang.

Det med omstændighederne er vigtigt: Præsidentens magt er nok forankret i den amerikanske Forfatning, men den er langt fra statisk. Mange faktorer har indflydelse på den: de ydre trusler mod nationens sikkerhed, det hjemlige politiske klima, Kongressens sammensætning, præsidentens popularitet, hans evne til at skabe en politisk vision og formidle den til den amerikanske befolkning, samt ikke mindst hans evner til at bruge de magtbeføjelser

og overtalelsesmidler, som embedet stiller til rådighed.

Studiet af det amerikanske præsidentembede er karakteriseret af en overflod af både kilder og disciplinære tilgange – historiske, politologiske, psykologiske, juridiske og medievidenskabelige. Blandt kilderne er blandt andet de millioner af dokumenter, som befinder sig i National Archives, samt i de mange *presidential libraries* i præsidenternes hjemstater: <http://www.archives.gov/presidential-libraries/contact/libraries.html>.

En stor del af studierne i præsidentembedet beskæftiger sig med dets forfatningsmæssige rammer – med hvilke beføjelser præsidenten har og hvilke han burde have. Emnet er

mere aktuelt end nogensinde, ikke mindst fordi Præsident George W. Bush mere end nogen anden præsident i nyere tid, med Richard M. Nixon som en mulig undtagelse, har forsøgt at udvide embedets beføjelser på bekostning af domstolene og Kongressen. Denne proces har – særligt efter terrorangrebene i New York og Washington, D.C., den 11. september 2001 – været omdrejningspunktet for en række af de mest kontroversielle spørgsmål, såvel internationalt som i den interne politiske debat i USA.

Bush-regeringen har først og fremmest henholdt sig til en særdeles vidtgående tolkning af præsidentens beføjelser i sin egenskab af øverstkommanderende for de væbnede styrker ("Commander-in-Chief"). Den

har blandt andet argumenteret for, at præsidenten ikke i krigstid var bundet af Geneve-konventionerne (men havde valgt alligevel at respektere dem), den har hævdet, at præsidenten har beføjelse til at kategorisere tilfangetagne personer som "fjendtlige kombattanter" og fængsle dem på ubestemt tid på Guantanamo-basen på Cuba. Denne tolkning har afstedkommet alvorlige internationale spændinger.

Ligeledes har den vidtgående tolkning af præsidentens beføjelser i krigstid bragt ham på kollisionskurs med Kongressen, senest i spørgsmålet om, hvorvidt han har beføjelser til at lade efterretningstjenesten NSA aflytte telefoner i USA uden en dommerkendelse, således som lovgivningen ellers udtrykkeligt kræver. Diskussionen af

de forfatningsmæssige rammer for præsidentembedet er altså langt fra kun af akademisk interesse. Den er helt central for forståelsen af både USA's hjemlige politiske debat og nationens internationale rolle her og nu.

Studiet af de forfatningsmæssige rammer udgør dog kun den første del af kurset i det amerikanske præsidentembede. Blandt de øvrige emner er hans rolle som international leder og samspillet med andre dele af USA's politiske system – Kongressen, Højesteret, de politiske ledere i enkeltstaterne, de mange interessegrupper, græsrodderne i hans eget parti, og ikke mindst medierne. En voksende andel af de omkring 2000 ansatte i Det Hvide Hus er beskæftiget med at påvirke og reagere på nyhedsstrømmen, og med at få præsidenten til at fremstå som troværdig og sympatisk.

Et andet emne som naturligt tiltrækker sig stor opmærksomhed er studiet af præsidenten som leder og beslutningstager: I hvilket omfang og hvordan formår præsidenten at formulere en politisk vision for nationen? Er han i stand til at gå forrest i den politiske udvikling eller lader han sig primært lede af meningsmålinger? Hvordan forsøger han at forene forventningerne

om en stærk leder med de principper om magtdeling, der er kernen i USA's politiske kultur? Disse spørgsmål henleder opmærksomheden på rollefordelingen i den amerikanske regering og på organiseringen af den store stab i Det Hvide Hus. Men de henleder også opmærksomheden på præsidentens personlighed og på hans psykiske ballast. De fleste præsidenter – i hvert fald i nyere tid – har sendt utallige historikere, journalister og psykologer på jagt efter "nøglen" til en forståelse af deres handlinger. George W. Bush er bestemt ingen undtagelse.

Et sidste emneområde som også spiller en central rolle i studiet af det amerikanske præsidentembede er dets symbolske funktioner. Her retter vi opmærksomheden mod præsidentens rolle i skabelsen af den nationale identitet. Richard M. Nixons rådgiver Ray Price mindede under valgkampen i 1968 sine medarbejdere om, at præsidenten skal kunne opfylde modstridende psykologiske behov hos vælgerne:

Folk identificerer sig med en præsident på en anden måde end med nogen anden offentlig skikkelse. Mulige præsidenter bliver holdt op mod et ideal, der er en blanding af mandlig

hovedrolleindehaver, Gud, fader, helt, pave, konge - tilsat bare en anelse af de hævnende furier. De ønsker, at han skal være overvældende, en levende legende, og alligevel i helt igennem menneskelig; én de kan holde frem som en rollemodel for deres børn; én de selv kan værdsætte som et agtet medlem af familien på nogenlunde samme måde som bondefamilier beder til ikonet henne i hjørnet af stuen.

USA's præsident er med andre ord meget mere end en politisk leder. Han er ceremonielt overhoved, og mange forventer også at han skal være et nationalt samlingspunkt. I et stort land, hvor det politiske system er baseret på en fragmentering af magten, er det oftest svært at forene rollen som landsfader med kravene om politiske resultater. Det har uden tvivl været en medvirkende årsag til, at samtlige USA's præsidenter siden 1945, på nær to (Reagan og Clinton) var mindre populære da de forlod Det Hvide Hus end da de flyttede ind. Intet tyder på, at George W. Bush bliver en undtagelse fra denne regel.



Niels Bjerre-Poulsen, lektor og centerleder ved CSA.

FORSLAG TIL VIDERE LÆSNING:

Barber, James David, *The Presidential Character: Predicting Performance in the White House*, 4th ed. (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1992).

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Richard E. Neustadt, *Presidential Power and the Modern Presidents* (New York: The Free Press, 1990 [1960]).

Stephen Skowronek, *The Politics Presidents Make; Leadership from John Adams to Bill Clinton* (Cambridge, Mass.: Belknap Press, 1998 [1993]).



En interamerikansk serenade: USA's udenrigsminister, Condoleezza Rice, klimprer på en "charango" hun netop har fået af Bolivias præsident, Evo Morales, 11. marts 2006.

CENTER FOR THE STUDY OF THE AMERICAS

Annual report 2005

In its second year of existence, the Center for the Study of the Americas at Copenhagen Business School maintained its high level of activity in its events calendar as well as on a number of other scores.

EVENTS

The spring of 2005 saw a full program of events with a series of 'Insights on Latin America' as well as guest lectures on the US. The Latin American series started off with a lecture by Vanessa Saenz Prytz, PhD student at the Center, on *Brazil's Growing Ambitions in World Politics and Trade*. Birgitte Holten from the Department of Management, Politics and Philosophy, CBS, talked about *Why Latin America is a forgotten Continent – and what we lose forgetting* and Jens Lohmann (freelance journalist) about *Mexican Humour*.

Focus on Latin America was crowned by a seminar on *Utopia, Memory and Globalization – political and cultural perspectives on Latin America*, a well attended one-day event with papers by scholars from universities across Denmark. The engaged participation and fruitful discussions bore witness to the demand for such opportunities to exchange ideas and discuss work in progress within the field of Latin American studies in Denmark. Subsequently, several of the papers from the seminar have been published on the Center website (www.cbs.dk/csa) and the publication of a volume on the topic of the seminar is currently under way in cooperation with the Colegio de Sonora, Mexico.

The Center also organised several seminars on the US in the course of

the spring semester: a seminar with Michael Leff (University of Memphis) on *The American Speech Tradition* co-hosted with the Center for Communication Studies; a research seminar on the shaping of American foreign policy since 1945 - *The United States in the World* – with Bruce Kucklick (University of Pennsylvania) and Gary B. Ostrower (Alfred University and Visiting Fulbright Professor at the University of Aarhus); and a seminar with David Blankenhorn (President of the Institute for American Values) and Edward Ashbee from the *Center on Marriage, the Family and Moral Values in Denmark and the USA*. Furthermore, John Dumbrell (University of Leicester) gave a guest lecture on *US Foreign Policy, the 2004 Presidential Election and Prospects for the Bush Second Term*. All events were well attended and showed

considerable student commitment to extra-curricular activities.

Most efforts in the autumn were focused on the Center conference, *Popularizing the Americas – Music, Media and Movies*. The theme of the conference, cultural exchanges and encounters within popular culture on the American continents, was consciously chosen to encourage attention on the transnational and interdisciplinary approach to the study of the Americas which is one of the fundamental tenets of Center work. The invited speakers approached the theme in a variety of ways but all within the common denominators of music, movies and the media. The speakers included George Sanchez (University of Southern California and Adjunct Professor at the Center) *The Emerging Music of Multiracial America*, Fernando Andacht (Universidade Federal do Rio Grande do Sul, Brazil) *The Lure of the Real in contemporary Brazilian Television on the Representation of Reality as a collective, indexical working through Process*, Ray Haberski (Marian College, Indianapolis) *It's only a Movie: The Paradox of Movie Power* and Dale Carter (Aarhus University) *Songs of the forgotten South: Van Dyke Parks and the Circum-Caribbean*; the full program can be seen on the Center website (under events). Furthermore, the approximately 100 participants – scholars as well as students – were treated to a performance of Latin American guitar compositions by the Chilean guitarist, Juan Antonio Sanchez, el 'Chicoria'.

Three guest lectures were hosted in the autumn: Sidney Milkis (University of Virginia) *George Bush, the Republicans and the New American Party System*; George C. Edwards III (Texas A&M University) *Policy and Polarization: The Presidency of George W. Bush*; and Ulrik Bie (Royal Danish Embassy, Washington DC) *The Significance of US Federalism for Business in the USA*.

SUPPORT

As in 2004 several of the events organised by the Center were supported financially or otherwise by the US

Embassy in Copenhagen. During 2005 the Center also took steps to initiate cooperation with the Latin American embassies in Copenhagen and, most recently, with the Canadian Embassy. Apart from any financial support, for which the Center is deeply grateful, cooperation with the various embassies is considered an important means of extending contacts with the regions covered by the Center and it is hoped that this cooperation will take further shape in 2006.

ADVISORY BOARD

Similarly, the Center in the spring of 2005 established an Advisory Board. The purpose of this step is obviously to ensure access to advice and inspiration from people who are considered crucial to the development of the Center for the Study of the Americas as a resource base in Denmark. So far two meetings have been held with the Advisory Board while individual members have shown considerable interest in participating in Center events, an interest which the Center greatly appreciates.

CENTER RESEARCH PROJECTS

The Center commenced a major research project in 2005. *Projections of Power* is an international, inter-university project whose primary object is to explore the ways in which power is represented or projected in the Americas. The resulting anthology will include essays on the framing of political discourses, symbolic representations of presidential power, iconography, the struggle over collective memories and the counter-strategies involved in notions of empowerment. In addition to offering different vantage points for the study of political culture in the Americas, the essays will also offer an interdisciplinary approach, with contributions from the fields of history, political science and cultural studies. Discussions about collaboration are going on with the University of Southern California and the Institut for the Study of the Americas at London University.

Another central Center research

area in 2005, continued from earlier years, was the study of US political culture and presidential history. It included Edward Ashbee's study of White House policy towards such issues as abortion, sex education, obscenity, and same-sex marriage. His book, *The Bush Administration, Sex, and the Moral Agenda*, suggests that although accounts have often emphasised the ties between George W. Bush and the Christian right, the administration's strategy was, at least until early 2005, largely directed towards the courting of middle ground opinion. The book offers a detailed and comprehensive survey of policy-making, assesses the political significance of moral concerns, evaluates the role of the Christian right, and throws new light on George W. Bush's years in office and the character of his thinking. The book will be published by Manchester University Press in September 2006. Niels Bjerre-Poulsen's work on the history of the American Presidency continued in 2005: he authored the book (in Danish) *Bushs Amerika* (with Jørgen Dragsdahl, Peter Kurrild-Klitgaard and David Gress) about President Bush and his impact on the USA. The book was published in December and is now in its second printing. Bjerre-Poulsen also worked on a study of the political struggle in the United States over President Ronald Reagan's legacy and the commemoration of him. Part of this work will appear as an article in a forthcoming book on the Reagan presidency, published by the Rothermere American Institute at Oxford University. Finally the study of US political culture at the Center also included Birgitte Madelung's work on collective memory. Her work includes studies of the National Mall and more generally the relationship between memory and history in creating identities.

A third center research area was Jan Gustafsson's work on identity constructions in Latin America, especially related to the concepts of empowerment and utopia, taking into account also current political contexts.

Om Center for the Study of the Americas



FOTO: NIELS BJERRE-POULSEN

Center for the Study of the Americas har som formål at fremme forskningen indenfor kulturelle, politiske, økonomiske og handelsmæssige emner i USA og Latin Amerika. Centret lægger især vægt på projekter som har en interdisciplinær tilgang, og som er baseret på en integreret tilgang til de amerikanske kontinenter. Centrets forskningsresultater gøres i videst muligt omfang tilgængelige for studerende, forskere, medierne, forretningsverden, frivillige grupper og statsinstitutioner. Centret ønsker også at styrke kontakten med andre universiteter, der har de samme eller lignende interesser. Desuden fungerer Centret også som omdrejningspunkt for koordinationen og udviklingen af Amerikanske Studier på CBS.

Centret afholder jævnligt arrangementer såsom gæsteforelæsningsseminarer og konferencer om forskellige emner indenfor studiet af de amerikanske kontinenter. Alle er velkomne til at deltage i disse arrangementer.

Centret har hjemme på Copenhagen Business School, Institut for Internationale Kultur- og Kommunikationsstudier, hvor en del af Centrets videnskabelige medarbejdere er baserede. Også Institut for Interkulturel Kommunikation og Ledelse har medarbejdere ved Centret, ligesom der er en del CBS forskere med løsere tilknytning til Centret. George Sanchez fra University of Southern California, College of the Arts and Sciences, og Carl Pedersen, Københavns Univer-

sitet, er adjungerede professorer ved Centret. Mange af Centrets medarbejdere underviser på BA kernefaget American Studies og det tilsvarende CLM profileringsfag.

CENTER MEDARBEJDERE:

Lektor Niels Bjerre-Poulsen
Centerleder
Institut for Internationale Kultur- og Kommunikationsstudier

Adjungeret professor George Sanchez
University of Southern California

Adjungeret professor Carl Pedersen
Københavns Universitet

Lektor Jan Gustafsson
Institut for Internationale Kultur- og Kommunikationsstudier

Lektor Edward Ashbee
Institut for Internationale Kultur- og Kommunikationsstudier

Lektor Eric Guthey
Institut for Interkulturel Kommunikation og Ledelse

Adjunkt Birgitte Madelung
Institut for Internationale Kultur- og Kommunikationsstudier

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Dansk Industri

Journalist og redaktør Niels Lindvig
Danmarks Radio, Radiohuset

Sekretariatschef Marie Mønsted
Danmark-Amerika Fondet & Fulbright Kommissionen

Advokat Birgit Philipp
Forum Advokater

Journalist og studievært
Poul Erik Skammelsen
TV2/Danmark

Konsulent Sue Wedlake
USAs Ambassade, London

Autumn programme 2006

Research seminar: Politics and public policy in the Americas

Sept. 13th, 2006, 13.30

Maribel Blasco (CBS Department of Intercultural Communication and Management [IKL]) *Linking lives with schooling: the micro-politics of educational decision-making in urban Mexico*
Edward Ashbee (CBS Center for the Study of the Americas): *Moral values and structures of political opportunity in the US*

Seminar on the US Supreme Court

Sept. 22nd, 2006

Organised with the US embassy in Copenhagen.

Friis Arne Petersen

(Danish Ambassador to the USA).

Sept. 26th, 2006, 15.00 – 16.00

Where is the USA heading? Aspects of US politics in the context of the mid-term elections.

Emilio Alvarez

(Mexico's Ombudsman).

Sept. 28th, 2006

Human rights in Mexico.

Research seminar: Politics and public policy in the Americas

October 4th, 2006, 13.30

Christian Egede Fich (CBS, Department of International Culture and Communication Studies): *Is America France's Other?*

Helene Balslev Clausen (CBS, Center for the Study of the Americas): *The North American Dream in Mexico - Transnational Migrants and Power.*

Seminar on The Dynamics of Migration: Cross-Border Movements between Central America and the US

October 5th, 2006

With papers by Silvia Sancedo (Colegio de México), Mario Velazquez (Colegio de Sonora), Anne Magnussen (University of Southern Denmark), Helene Balslev Clausen (CBS, Center for the Study of the Americas), Ken Henriksen (University of Aarhus), Birgitte Madelung (CBS, Center for the Study of the Americas).

Multiculturalism in the Americas: Challenges for Europe.

October 12th, 2006

Organised with the Canadian embassy in Copenhagen, with speakers from

Canada, Great Britain and Danish Industry

Guest lecture with Martha

Barcena Coqui (the Mexican Ambassador in Denmark).

October 26th, 2006

about the elections in Mexico.

Research seminar:

The 2008 US Presidential election

November 15th, (13.30)

A panel discussion reflecting on the results of the mid-term elections and looking ahead to 2008. The speakers include Peter Kurrild-Klitgaard Professor of Political Theory and Comparative Politics at the Department of Political Science, University of Copenhagen, Edward Ashbee (CBS Center for the Study of the Americas) and Niels Bjerre-Poulsen (CBS Center for the Study of the Americas).

Further information about the events will be available on the center website, www.cbs.dk/csa, as soon as possible. Join our mailing list if you wish to receive information about future events: csa.eng@cbs.dk

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CENTER FOR THE STUDY OF THE AMERICAS

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