I. Introduction

In order to establish a post-exceptionalist agenda for the field of American studies that has for the longest time been defined by a discourse of American exceptionalism, scholars have for the past decades probed new critical paradigms, most prominently transnational American studies (cf. Fisher-Fishkin; Fluck 2007; Pease 2011; Rowe 2014). In following these endeavors, I argue that the framework of “critical regionalism” is useful for conceiving of American studies not in narrowly confined national and exceptionalist models and that it allows us to address matters of space, place, and, occasionally, ‘placelessness’ (i.e. the conspicuous absence of a particular location of Americanness) in terms of interconnections and comparison moving beyond and across the nation state. “Regionalism” has been discussed in different disciplines and often with very different meanings and implications and is “a loosely and variously defined zone that cuts across the boundaries of the academic landscape” (Powell 6). The program of “critical regionalism” may be viewed as one particular trajectory of more recent revisionist regionalist scholarship. The term itself has entered cultural studies debates via contemporary architectural criticism as it has first been coined by Alexander Tzonis und Liane Lefaivre in 1981 and has been programmatically used and expanded upon by Kenneth Frampton in his manifesto *Towards a Critical Regionalism: Six Points for an Architecture of Resistance* (1983). Frampton advocates critical regionalism not as a nostalgically tinged return to earlier architectural styles but as an ethical principle for the architecture of late capitalism and as a critique of its increasing uniformity and, subsequently, its erasure of ‘placebound-edness’. In American studies, it is in the works of Cheryl Herr and Douglas Reichert Powell, among others, that critical regionalism has been more fully explored with regard to cultural studies projects creating “model[s] of region

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1 In the field of architecture, there is a separate and very complex discussion on regionalism that we can trace back at least as far as to Lewis Mumford’s early works on regionalism and on the American city (cf. 1986).
making as a practice of cultural politics” (Powell 8) and working out how the conceptualizing of a region or regional difference is intricately connected with more general ideas of the conceptualizing of place and space.2

In order to flesh out critical regionalism more fully, also with regard to older variants of regionalism, I will trace its emergence on the basis of foregoing paradigms of regionalist scholarship to which it at times appears to be in stark opposition. Critical regionalism (re)turns scholarly attention to the region and interrogates the discursive ‘production’ and the role of regions in larger geopolitical constellations – often under the conditions of colonialism/empire and/or modernism, neo-liberalism, and globalization. Thus, it critically reflects, first, on a traditional paradigm of regionalism that was often invested in essentialist, at times romanticized and nostalgic notions of regional formations and identities as well as, second, on an earlier abandonment of the concept as somehow site-specific for the sake of nation-specific models. The former is manifest in much (regionalist) criticism of 19th century so-called local-color writing as well as in the programmatic writings of Southern agrarians in the first half of the 20th century and their insistence on regional difference and opposition to the nation; the latter has given the discipline of American studies its foundational images: the New England of the Puritans (Samuel Eliot Morison, Perry Miller, Sacvan Bercovitch) and the West of European explorers and settlers (Henry Nash Smith, Frederick Jackson Turner) expanding into the nation. Both, the New England landscape and the West have been so thoroughly allegorized that they ‘appear to disappear’ as specific locales and regions. Thirdly, critical regionalism conceptualizes alternative geographies that register and affirm geographical formations both, beyond and below the level of the nation-state. These revisionist geographies produced concepts such as Aztlan (as identified and revised by Gloria Anzaldúa and Guillermo Gómez-Peña), diasporic geographies such as the Black Atlantic (famously introduced by Paul Gilroy) and Chinatowns as diasporic sites, and they point to histories of colonialism, migration, dispossession, and empire that have often been ‘lost’ or gone unregistered in hegemonic narratives that consider the formation of the US nation their telos. ‘Below’ the nation state, we may conceive of the US in terms of their plurality of “states” rather than in terms of their “unity” by focusing on internal differences (past and present) that are evocative of American regions as “rival nations” (cf. Colin Woodard’s latest publication American Nations) and that have historically been prompted by a pronounced federal structure. And critical regionalism certainly also complicates our sense of ‘traditional’ regions, such as the South or the West by pointing to internal tensions and transnational connections, both diachronic and synchronic. Fourthly, critical regionalism is generally interested in connections among regions. i.e. in

2 A small but growing critical regionalist canon can be identified in cultural studies and would include, next to Herr and Powell, some of Neil Campbell’s and Krista Comer’s work, Susan Kollin (2007), and Timothy Mahoney/Wendy Katz (2009). In a slightly different disciplinary context, Doreen Massey’s and Edward Soja’s works are relevant for this discussion.
interregional exchange, or interregionality and brings to light significant links between seemingly contingent pairings by accounting for phenomena of cultural mobility, “shed[ing] light on hidden as well as conspicuous movements of people, objects, images, texts, and ideas” (Greenblatt 250). Critical regionalists often think in terms of transnational connections that establish important relations between allegedly isolated and remote regions and between at times vastly different locales, e.g. the Midwest and Ireland (Herr) or the Appalachians and Scotland (Blaustein) or Johnson City, TN and the rest of the world (Powell), or off the grid and on the grid in Canada (Vannini). Over all, critical regionalism clearly moves away from positivistic descriptions and former discourses of idealizing and/or allegorizing the regional and is informed instead by a constructivist, neo-Marxist concept of place in the wake of the spatial turn making places “the outcome, not the backdrop, of social, cultural, political, and economic activity” (Powell 4; cf. Doreen Massey’s work, in particular For Space). In what follows, I will briefly review all of those different aspects of critical regionalist scholarship in the vein of post-exceptionalist American studies: its critique of ‘traditional’ regionalism and of using the region merely as allegory of the nation, its evocation of alternative geographies as well as the interregional dimension following local-global connections. I will use the concept of “crossmapping” which I appropriate from the work of Elisabeth Bronfen and which is to be understood both, literally and figuratively, in my engagement with regional (and national) fantasies in recognition of complex processes of cultural mobility. It is a comparative, new historicist reading strategy that engages and connects “visual imagery” and “figures of thought” in different ‘texts’ that are not in any narrow sense intertextually connected but can be brought into play to productively signify on each other. The concept of crossmapping adds another level of abstraction to critical regionalist discourses as it seeks to scrutinize how accounts of regions are circulated to produce and be absorbed into new regionalisms elsewhere, so to speak, and to become ‘re-territorialized’ in terms of their symbolic capacities. In the second part of this essay, my case study will be a critical regionalist reconstruction of the ‘career’ of Fredrick Jackson Turner’s thesis in post-war Germany, a topic that may seem a bit on the surprising side, at first glance. The German reception of Turner’s best known work that envisions the nation emerging out of frontier regions takes place amidst ‘competing’ German and US exceptionalisms that both reach back into the 19th century and yet intersect in the post-war moment. Their reconstruction points to the overlapping spatial designs and desires that are produced and reproduced in an emerging cold war constellation, a constellation that also has, time and again, affirmed the exceptionalist paradigm of the field of American studies (cf. Pease). It is in a framework of comparative imperial state exceptionalisms (here: USA and Germany) suggested by
Donald Pease (2010) and in the observation of the translation and ‘folding’ (cf. Herr) of one into another that I will explore a series of ideological formations that hinge on the production of areas and regions.³

Generally speaking, the concerns of critical regionalism in its different facets may be seen as invested in a post-exceptionalist paradigm, both of the region and of the nation, and thus can be considered as a revisionist intervention into US-centered American studies and thus as another form of critical engagement in the transnational mode. In that sense, critical regionalism also exposes the problematic narrow focus of spatial conceptualizations linked to the (US) nation that is at once seen as an exceptional place and yet at the same time as awkwardly ‘placeless’. In Amy Kaplan’s words:

A key paradox informs the ideology of American exceptionalism: it defines America’s radical difference from other nations as something that goes beyond the separateness and uniqueness of its own particular heritage and culture. Rather, its exceptional nature lies in its exemplary status as the apotheosis of the nation-form itself and as a model for the rest of the world. American exceptionalism is in part an argument for boundless expansion, where national particularism and international universalism converge. [...] If the fantasy of American imperialism aspires to a borderless world where it finds its own reflection everywhere, then the fruition of this dream shatters the coherence of national identity, as the boundaries that distinguish it from the outside world promise to collapse. (16)

It is precisely this precarious (im-)balance that also informs my critical regionalist reconsideration of Turner’s work in a transatlantic context.

I would like to conclude my introduction with a note on terminology: the definition and meaning of regions continues to call for conceptual work. It is not always unequivocally clear what is considered to constitute a region: the term is used in ways similar to “section” and in contrast to “nation” – even as it is often used concurringly with both terms. It is sometimes associated with the rural – i.e., it is used in contrast to the urban. The term “regional studies,” however, at times also is used synonymously with “area studies,” and the difference between the concepts of region and of area seems foggy – regions can be both, subnational and supranational. In his Keywords, Raymond Williams, indicates that regionalism is used, on the one hand, to characterize the provincial and marginal in contrast to the urban and the metropolitan center, while on the other hand, regionalism carries an “alternative positive sense” of a “valuably distinctive way of life” (266). Even as the first meaning seems to be the common one, the second defines much of regionalist scholarship. Clearly, “[r]egions are culturally constructed spaces of the collective imagination and not simply coherent entities located inside clear lines on a map” (Lassiter/Crespino 11). Traditional regionalist approaches and various ‘returns’ to the regional run the risk of isolating regions in an essentialist framework of mentality studies, a regionalist imaginary, and the like; still, regionalism is politically ambiguous since regionalisms ‘on the right’ and

³ Pease argues for a critique of comparative exceptionalisms involving a whole range of other empires ranging from the British to the Russian and for “resituation[ing] U.S. American exceptionalism within this expanded field of imperial exceptionalisms” (2010: 80).
'on the left' (cf. Michael C. Steiner’s collection and Michael Denning’s notion of a “proletarian regionalism” 133) have been identified as quite divergent. As I move along in my argument, I will clarify the ways in which region has become operative in different kinds of contexts. Certainly, ‘regions’ only exist in relation to particular criteria. They are not ‘out there’ waiting to be discovered; they are our (and others’) constructions” (Allen et al.: 2). Yet, the fuzziness of regions and of regionalisms and their function for exceptionalisms of all kinds will also become apparent in my subsequent remarks and in my discussion of Turner’s ‘German career.’

II. The Region and the Nation

Revisiting the regionalist paradigms in the field of early/earlier American studies, it appears that regionalist scholarship can be loosely divided into two different kinds: the kind that focuses on the region in opposition and contradistinction to the nation and with some critical investment in localized cultures as “subnational units of variable size” (Bradshaw 18) vis-à-vis the kind that conceptualizes the region predominantly as the kernel/germ of the nation that it ultimately tries to describe via the regional as its original primal scene. In some instances, of course, this distinction does not hold as we find oscillation between both poles, so to speak, and for the most part, we have to assume a dialectical relationship between the region and the nation as somehow co-constitutive. The term “regionalism” was only coined in the late 19th century “in response to the centralizing discourse of state-sponsored nationalism” (Ladd 51). Still, in many instances both variants of regionalism also differ greatly, and in the context of the US, different regions seem to have lent themselves for different kinds of purposes, as we will see.

Exploring the “sensation of rootedness” (Greenblatt 251), much scholarship in regional studies (political, cultural and literary) has traditionally been produced on particular regions of the US (i.e. New England, the West, Appalachia, the South, the Northwest, etc.) and thus occurs in “relatively self-contained, if not parochial, areas of interest” (Powell 7). Regionalist scholarship thus has been looked at in its various institutional pockets and frameworks as it establishes a particular “regional geography” (Cresswell 16). In particular phases of US history this kind of regionalism was rampant. Most prominently in the context of 19th century literary production as well as in the early decades of the 20th century that saw a revival of regionalism. For the former, Richard Brodhead has tried to demystify the status of regional writing (‘local color’) and its alleged particularity in terms of “literary opportunity” – of course, this argument has long been made for women writers and African American writers. Richard H. King identifies the emergence and articulation of an “ideology of regionalism” for the period of 1918-1945 that is invested in a strong cultural critique often considered anti-modern: it posits the regional as the ‘real,’ rural-based America that is threatened by processes of urbanization and industrialization (55) and it demands that federal policies accommodate
regional specificities and needs. To single out a prominent instance of the kind of regionalism that is directed against the nation, we may consider the Southern Agrarians and their manifesto “I’ll Take My Stand” (1930). Written at this time of regionalist revival and on the verge of a deep economic crisis, the collection is a critical intervention into discourses of modernity, such as industrialization and urbanization as it represents a kind of utopian conservatism that rejects consumer culture and materialism in favour of agrarian traditions and self-sufficient farming. Robert Dorman calls it a “regionalist revolt” (1993: 105). The manifesto’s “Statement of Principles” is in defense of the “traditional Southern life” (li) and in rejection of “industrialism” as an “evil dispensation” (lii). It defines the South as rural and agricultural and affirms “the South’s timeless defiance of national norms” (Lassiter/Crespino 3). Slavery, the institution that many would probably associate most readily with the South and its history, and its aftermath are not frowned upon, at times the texts are only barely falling short of an outright defense of slavery (cf. Owsley). There is no sense of self-critique in the “self-consciously reactionary stance” (Donaldson x), only criticism voiced against the North and the system of capitalism making region, i.e. the South, a central framework in the culture wars of the 1920s and 1930s (ibid. xi), fully rejecting emancipatory concerns along the lines of gender and race (xv). It interpellates white southern men as the inheritors of a “regional heritage” (xix) while making agrarianism into a “distinct brand of regionalism” (Conkin 98) and defining Southernness against the national ‘other’ (Gray xvi). The regionalism of the Southern Agrarians uses the region, i.e. the South, as a vehicle of cultural critique as it develops an organic, wholesome, heroic (even though unappreciated and marginalized) and clearly essentialist sense of the region.

It is the “mind of the South” that is also addressed by Vernon Parrington in his multi-volume US intellectual history and one of the early works of American studies-scholarship, Main Currents in American Thought which won the Pulitzer Prize for History in 1928. To begin with, Vernon Parrington’s work unfolds an American genealogy in “regional drama[s]” (Thomas 236) in its attempt to reconstruct a history of ideas. Yet more prominent than the ‘Southern mind’ and far more relevant to nation-building in Parrington’s work than the South certainly is “The Mind of New England.” In his descriptions of the latter, we see the second variation of addressing the region: the over-writing of local specificity for the sake of ultimately creating a national history and making the regional past anticipate the national present and future. Vernon Parrington thus begins the first part of his study as follows:

Common report has long made out Puritan New England to have been the native seat and germinal source of such ideals and institutions as have come to be regarded as traditionally American. Any critical study of the American mind, therefore, may conveniently seek its beginnings in the colonies clustered about Massachusetts Bay and will inquire into the causes of the pronounced singularity of temper and purpose that marred off the New England settlements from those to the south, creating a distinctive New England character. (3)
Parrington’s analogy between the “American mind” and the “New England character” has the former appear as a result and continuation of the latter. Clearly Parrington is not the only scholar to suggest this connection. Other American scholars as well as European observers (among them, most prominently, Alexis de Tocqueville and Hannah Arendt) have made similar claims. “The Mind of New England” (271) becomes the “The Mind in the Making” (133) and results in “The Awakening of the American Mind” (179) – the various “minds” and “mindsets” differing in regional and national attribution are often used interchangeably, if only to affirm the overall argument that one is a pars pro toto for the other – one is “folded” into the other (Rice 205–207; cf. Herr).

In addition to those two examples, the Southern agrarians’ manifesto and Vernon Parrington’s study, we can easily think of further instances, where the regional is identified as particular, localized, somewhat essentialized, one the one hand, and where it is elusively allegorized as the national, on the other hand. The two examples at hand also demonstrate that – for obvious reasons – particular regions have a greater propensity to figure as particular, local, and as the ‘other’ of the nation (such as the South at various points in history), whereas some regions (New England, the West) appear to lend themselves more readily for the larger claims of having inculcated the ‘national spirit’ (or ‘mind’). From a critical regionalist perspective the Southern agrarians and Vernon Parrington have different agendas only to the extent that they employ and perpetuate different kinds of exceptionalisms. Whereas the former claim a territorial Southern exceptionalism of sorts (complete with a regional civil religion) that they see as counter-hegemonic in relation to a dominant discourse (of course, it is also used by the dominant discourse for purposes of ‘othering’), the latter develops American exceptionalism out of the exceptionality of New England that is foundational for the formation of the US as a nation state. In the decades to follow, New England-based historians (many of them Harvard-trained) will pick it up from there and turn it into the dominant paradigm of the ‘New England way’ that no longer even conceives of New England as a region at all. In Sacvan Bercovitch’s seminal The American Jeremiad (1978), the South only appears in a footnote to an argument that considers the Puritan North/New England as the ‘origin’ of American identity (cf. Monteith/Jones 3). When Andrew Delbanco recently published an anthology on New England literary culture, somewhat misleadingly titled Writing New England (2001), a glance at the table of contents reveals that most of the texts do not necessarily ‘write’ New England in any particular way, but rather advertise ‘the city upon the hill’ or ‘the errand into the wilderness’ even as they are perhaps written in New England (Winthrop’s text clearly is not, of course). Promotional historical discourse fills many pages of this book. As one reviewer notes: “The few living writers excerpted […], compared to the feast of authors from the past, gives the collection an elegiac feel – and raises the question of whether today’s mobile society can establish a regional literary heritage” (Kirkus review). Delbanco does still use the language of ‘mind’ and mentality when introducing the ‘original region’ – notwithstanding the
many caveats in his introductory remarks, he is clearly not a critical regionalist and has little to say about the implications of the regional dimension which one anticipates from the title.

There are normative claims attached to regionalism and to the making and studying of regions: “The life and people of certain favoured regions are seen as essentially general, even perhaps normal, while the life and people of certain other regions are, well, regional” (Williams 1973: 199). Thus, regionalism is about power relations and power asymmetries and appears to be “a symptom of centralized cultural dominance” (Gray xiii). Once a ‘region’ is the cultural and political center, it apparently ceases to be a ‘region’; and yet, local and regional formations continue to be produced and stabilized – be it for political, social, or economic reasons. Critical regionalism gives accounts of those power relations and makes visible the investments in regional identity and alterity.

III. Alternative Geographies and Crossregional Trajectories

In his coffee table book, Lost States: Texlahoma, Transylvania, and Other States That Never Made It (2010), Michael J. Trinklein re-introduces an element of contingency to the “nice, round number” of the fifty states in order to suggest that it “wasn’t nearly that tidy” (8). His book unfolds in a series of not entirely serious accounts of regions and their representatives who at one point or other had unsuccessfully claimed statehood for their provinces. The stories of those ‘failed states’ today echo past regional interests and formations even as those seem to have lost their identificatory momentum and are hardly reclaimed; still, they do point us to alternative maps of the US. Certainly, regionalist scholarship involves more than the “study of spatial variations within a national culture” (Steiner 3) taken as a given, and critical regionalism has been concerned with such alternative geographies that can be developed within and beyond the US national framework. To fully grasp the contingency of regional and national formations and their quasi-natural existence is one of the main aims of critical regionalist practice. Group-based geographies may or may not converge with recognizable regions or, politically speaking, sections or states.

When we turn back once more (and, again, exemplarily) to the South that has been addressed in the last section in terms of an ‘older’ version of regionalism, we can find reconfigurations of that discourse in critical regionalist terms: traditionally, as Paul Lyons notes, “sectionalists have heroized the struggle of individual will (shaped by regional ethos) against incursion and poverty rather than analysing the relays between global and national forces and regional self-understanding” (117). The American South, of course, is not a monolithic entity but has to be conceived of as in itself heterogeneous. For the context of literary studies, Barbara Ladd has asked questions that could very well be extended to a larger field:
What will happen to southern literary studies if we decenter the Civil War and decenter the discourse of nationality that surrounded it and delineated the parameters and the meaning of southern literary study? What if we take a look at southern life (past, present, and future) within a multinational context and within a longer and more complex history than the one afforded by the historiography of the Civil War? (Ladd 54).

Apart from Ladd herself, a number of writers and scholars have added their observations to these queries. In his travel account of the American South, V.S. Naipaul in *A Turn in the South* (1990) comments, among other things, on “how close, in the slave days, the slave territories of the Caribbean and the South were” (87), after all, “Barbados was the model for the South Carolina plantation colony” (ibid.). Naipaul repeatedly finds that closeness surprising and hard to accept as he himself is steeped in a discourse that has kept the British empire and the US empire categorically apart. Columbian writer Gabriel Garcia Marquez once quipped that he had more in common with the American southerner William Faulkner than with any other Latin American author. And in scholarly terms, more recently, Matthew Guterl described Haiti, Cuba, and the American South as the “American Mediterranean” pointing to 19th century discussions involving ‘civilization’ in the tropics, “slave-holding solidarity” (103) as well as various kinds of anxieties regarding cultural, political, and racial difference and contact. His account of the relations between the South with other regions across the hemisphere prompts him to wonder:

If we establish that the deep South reached out to the Americas, engaged in trade, institution building, and intellectual exchange, and verged on social, economic, and cultural distinction from the rest of the United States, are we, then, illuminating a historic South that was, at one point, politically independent? Or are we simply establishing that the history of the United States – including its various and diverse regions and regional histories – cannot be contained by the national archive? (112)

Guterl’s rhetorical questions gestures toward a post-exceptionalist logic regarding the South as well as the US by excavating an alternative genealogy of the ‘South’ in hemispheric terms. Thus, it partakes in a critical regionalist understanding of variations of ‘Southernness’ as provisional and shifting and questions accounts of the South as a unified region. Similar critical frames for the South can be found in Ward, Bone, and Link’s *The American South and the Atlantic World* and in Link’s *Just Below South: Performing Intercultures in the Caribbean and the South of the United States* by Adams, Bibler, and Acillien. These critical regionalist works take up the initiative to articulate “postsouthern” cartographies (Simpson, Bone) that unsettle both, the myth of Southern exceptionalism conceived of in an essentialist regionalist agenda as well as myths of the nation that ignore the cultural specificity of regional formations and their transnational connections as interpretive frameworks or, alternatively, have engaged in simply ‘othering’ what is perceived as regional difference and ‘deviation’ from the national norm.
Moving from constructions of ‘the South’ to another prominent ‘region,’ that of ‘the West,’ we can detect a similar dynamic: new Western histories have been written to address hidden and submerged aspects that may at times even fundamentally redirect our perception of the object in question (cf. Limerick’s work in general and more specifically on conceiving of the West ‘from the West’ and not, in classic Eurocentric terms, from the East), and “postwestern cultures” have been identified by Susan Kollin and the contributors to her volume of the same title. In his study *The Rhizomatic West*, Neil Campbell seeks to define “westness” (41) beyond a national paradigm and considers the West as a “travelling” and “mobile discourse” (ibid. 1) and, with James Clifford, as a “travelling concept” (1997: 4). And Paul Giles has asked us to view “native [American] landscapes refracted or inverted in a foreign mirror” in order “to appreciate the assumptions framing these narratives and the ways they are intertwined with the construction and reproduction of national mythologies” (2). The approach of critical regionalism allows us to focus on the West in its local and global dimensions simultaneously, and to look at the connections between both. Such a critical regionalist view also necessitates looking more closely at economic factors and the neoliberal logic that shapes the identity of regions and their international reception/consumption in a globalized world: Critical regionalist scholars have their eyes on processes of globalization that also ‘produce’ regions as marketable commodities, and the West – as (part of) a “corporate geography” (Herr 3) – has been such a commodity for a long time, a commodity that sells products and politics (cf. Comer: 35-36).

A transnational critical regionalist framework also pays new attention to comparative frameworks of analysis. The West and its myth(s) are analyzed from such angles, for instance, by The Comparative Wests Project at Stanford University, which researches “the common histories and shared contemporary issues among Indigenous populations and settler colonialists in Australia, New Zealand, Western South America, the Western United States, Canada, and the Pacific Islands” (comparativewests.stanford.edu). The American Midwest and Ireland have been analyzed as two regions whose histories have been connected to and have shaped each other over a long period of time (cf. Herr). Herr discusses these non-proximate regions as coming together and as linked in “cross-regional assemblages” (Herr 28) that recognize “a partly repressed, partly scripted identification of one region with the other’s desired object, the use of one region to speak the other’s fear of abandonment, loss, and mourning” (ibid. 169). In this highly theoretical and poetical work, Herr uses Adorno’s negative dialectics in order to explore the purposefulness of local knowledge and difference “in opposition to relentless worldwide homogenization” (ibid.) while reminding us of the contingency of particular regional constellations that need to be meaningfully connected, much in the same way in which Doreen Massey dwells on the production of spaces that may be intent on obscuring or acknowledging transnational linkages (cf. Massey).
From a historical perspective, Edward Watts urges us to study the West (in particular the Midwest) not only as an American region in an intranational context but also as a colony – or “hypercolony” – “within the context of the global European diaspora of the nineteenth century,” as it shares certain features with other Dominions of the British Empire at the time (166, 169, 174); Watts holds that it

turns more on the scholarly redefinition of what a colony is (and what its relationship to its metropolis is) than on whether the Midwest was ever a colony to the East the same way Massachusetts was a colony of the British Empire in 1776. A colony in the eighteenth century was one thing; in the nineteenth, another. And the Midwest can and should be studied alongside not just the other regions with whom it shares a nation, but also alongside the other colonies with whom it shared a century. (ibid. 187)

Critical regionalism thus calls for an internationalization of the study of regions and for connecting ‘the West’ as region, fantasy, and brand to concepts of (neo)colonialism and globalization.

A critical regionalist and post-exceptionalist approach in American studies has not only complicated and re-worked our sense of ‘traditional regions,’ such as the South and the West, as part of larger geopolitical constellations and histories, ‘other’ regions have been put on the agenda, regional constellations that have been produced by histories of migration, displacement, and slavery. Geopolitical formations such as the Black Atlantic, the Chicano homeland of Aztlán, or Chinatowns as diasporic sites have come to be studied as prominent scenarios of an alternative modernity/geography, and much research has been done that for the most part connects well with critical regionalists concerns. The Black Atlantic can, in fact, be considered as a critical regionalist concept that challenges national and cultural-nationalist exceptionalisms: Gilroy defines the Black Atlantic as an “intercultural and transnational formation” (ix) that is propelled by the

desire to transcend both the structures of the nation state and the constraints of ethnicity and national particularity. These desires are relevant to understanding political organizing and cultural criticism. They have always sat uneasily alongside the strategic choices forced on black movements and individuals embedded in national and political cultures and nation-states in America, the Caribbean, and Europe. (Gilroy 19)

Although Gilroy has also been criticized for his own limited scope (that privileges Europe and the US and does not make room for Africa, Canada, and Latin America) and for an, at times, strangely dichotomous and euphemistic argument, the Black Atlantic has been enormously resonant for African diaspora studies and critical race theory as it has produced a new historiography along with new archives that pay attention to the hemispheric and transatlantic dimensions of African diasporic histories, and it echoes in much contemporary cultural production, film and fiction (see, for instance, the phenomenon of so-called neo-slave narratives that have come to be a transnational genre). The Black Atlantic connects productively with scholarship on black geography (cf. McKittrick) and is a point of reference for
abolitionism’s “investment in geography as an idiom of political critique, by turns liberal and radical, practical and utopian” (Schoolman) whose claims move beyond the classical North-South, East-West divisions.

The concept of Aztlán is localized in discourses of Chicano nationalism that may appear nostalgic and essentialist rather than displaying a constructivist sense of place (cf. Pisarz-Ramirez). However, in the critical feminist readings of Gloria Anzaldúa, Cherrie Moraga and others, it becomes a complex, multi-layered, spatial configuration. In addition, we find instances of revisionism and crossmapping regarding Aztlán as geography and as a region than can serve as the basis for cross-regional solidarity. In *Aztlán and Viet Nam: Chicano and Chicana Experiences of the War*, George Mariscal shows how a Chicano anti-war movement is articulated by ‘mapping’ Aztlán onto Vietnam and thereby forging a specific Mexican-American anti-war formation. Similarly, Lorena Oropeza’s *¡Raza Sí! ¡Guer­ra No! Chicano Protest and Patriotism During the Viet Nam War Era* (2005) looks at the cultural production (poems, non-fiction, visual art) that has been created in the context of this discursive crossmapping of Aztlán and Vietnam by Mexican-American artists. More recently, Guillermo Gómez-Peña has created an online, interactive experiment that involves the audience in a self-reflexive ‘racial profiling’ by asking viewers to match images, artists, and regions. In that sense, “The Chica-Iranian Project: Orientalism Gone Wrong in Aztlán” (Gómez-Peña and Ali Dagdar) is also suggestive of a crossmapping that involves an Arab-Aztlán and that points to the contingency of racist biases connected to particular locations (cf. López 207).

Finally, Lisa Lowe’s contention about “the international within the national” in Asian-American cultural politics becomes evident in the study of Chinatowns as diasporic sites that bespeak critical regionalism’s trajectory as at once local and global (as well as globally connected). Recent work on Chinatown geographies includes the volume by Vanessa Kün­nemann and Ruth Mayer on *Chinatowns in a Transnational World* whose contributors “map the global Chinatown” (Mayer 2011: 4) via its different local manifestations in places as diverse as San Francisco, Rotterdam, Liverpool, and Hamburg (among others) and find it both, a “projection surface and a lived reality” (ibid. 14). Chinatown as an ‘exotic’ region of otherness within the Western urban landscape conjures up notions of far-away regions that then are spatially allocated and yet contained within the metropolitan centers of the West. More generally, studies of Asian diaspora cultures in the US and of the so-called Pacific Rim as a transnational framework have also drawn on a critical regionalist terminology. In his analysis of local Hawaiian cultures as an exemplary region, Rob Wilson invokes Hawaii

as the space of counterhegemonic discourse and a “critical regionalism” capable of resisting, by means of community imagination, threats of external domination and internal sublimation” and by way of a strategic essentialism and a “foreground[ing of] certain qualities, attitudes, and aspirations that would make up this culture of the “authentically local.” (Wilson 287-88)

4 Thanks to Carmen Brosig for bringing this work to my attention.
The conceptualization of these exemplarily introduced alternative geographies can be considered as “practices of subaltern region making” (Clifford 2013: 58). They constitute “transnational geographies [...] inhabited by exceptioned peoples” (Pease 2011: 27) and once more link critical regionalism to post-exceptionalist American studies of the kind that is also advocated by the editors of Re-Framing the Transnational Turn in American Studies. It is “within an encompassing geopolitics of knowledge” that studies on these ‘regions’ can develop new “disciplinary protocols” (Pease 2011: 1), re-mapping our world, however tentatively and provisionally, and our discipline. In this sense, they figure as projects within an archaeology of knowledge that uncover lost histories and connections particular to the respective ‘region’ while also challenging our epistemological toolkit that is informed by a model that divides the world into seven continents, or in eleven ‘areas of concern,’ etc.

In addition to these alternative regional configurations and their emphasis on interregionality and transnationalism, the critical regionalist perspective also prompts a revisiting of straightforward reception processes in light of cultural mobility and with a new historicist methodology. The ‘career’ of ‘regions’ put into the service of the nation may be illustrated by the reception of Frederick Jackson Turner, whose work on regions and sectionalism in US culture is much less prominent than his somewhat counter-intuitive, yet highly resonant ‘frontier thesis.’

IV. A Critical Regionalist Case Study: The Recycling of Turner’s Thesis after World War II

The writings of Frederick Jackson Turner and their somewhat strange and uneven reception point to the already established dialectic between the regional and the national. Turner (as scholars have repeatedly pointed out) was actually a historian of the region (i.e. the section; region/section are often referred to as cultural/political designations, albeit both are not the same) more than of the nation. Yet his text on “The Significance of the Frontier in American History” (1893) has become a highly canonical and foundational text for the nation, while his work on the “The Significance of Sections in American History” (1932), published during the Depression (and where he backtracks a little from the earlier frontier-thesis), has received comparably less attention. It is quite recently that this part of Turner’s oeuvre has been re-considered – in the light of larger claims concerning the role of regions in American history and with regard to their critical regionalist potential (cf. Ginette Aley and Edward Watts in Timothy Mahoney’s and Wendy Katz’s volume Regionalism in the Humanities).

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5 John Carlos Rowe has researched the history and the making of area studies (along with the definition of areas) and the geopolitical polarities that this has lastingly produced. I see his scholarship also in the light of a critical regionalist perspective, in particular as it gives an account of how post-war power structures are mirrored and reproduced in the new ‘ordering’ of the world (Rowe 2012).
Of course, discussions of Turner’s frontier thesis have been highly controversial and they fill whole libraries – and I have already briefly referred to the myth of the West underlying it. Initially, i.e. in 1893, many scholars still favored Herbert Baxter Adams’ thesis about the Germanic origins of America, but Turner’s argument soon became widely accepted and by the 1920s had turned into the dominant scholarly opinion on American national history, rendering the American Historical Association, as one critic has it, “One Big Turner Verein” (Billington 3). The persuasiveness of Turner’s argument had been amplified in the previous decades by semi- or pseudo-scholarly works such as Theodore Roosevelt’s multi-volume *The Winning of the West* (1889-96), which identifies “race expansion” and “Western conquest” as foundational for American nation-building and as a monumental and successful effort at “carv[ing] states out of the forest and the prairie” (Vol. 9, 527). Throughout the Great Depression and especially after Turner’s death in 1932, critical assessments of Turner’s work came to the fore focussing on the (a) speculative, (b) hyperbolic, and (c) entirely unempirical character of his argument, which to many no longer seemed convincing: “How could a frontier environment, which persisted only briefly before the settlement process was completed expert such an enduring influence over [...] the nation as a whole?” (Billington 4). More fundamentally, the Great Depression led to a reconsideration of the frontier myth in general. For one thing, Turner’s historical safety valve argument was reversed in the sense that cities on the Eastern Seaboard rather than the rural West were attributed the function of containing and defusing social turmoil (cf. Shannon). In a broader framework, George Pierson argued that Turner’s thesis had merely replaced “the God of the Puritans,” who had until then vouched for American superiority, with a seemingly “natural force” – the frontier – “as source and justification” of American exceptionalism (39). Rather than supporting a reaffirmation of exceptionalist designs, Pierson early on argues for a comparative/transnational perspective on US history and settlement (cf. ibid. 40). In the 1950s in the context of the ‘Cold War,’ the Turner Thesis once more is widely praised (in the name of a national/ist approach to American history and in search of a simple argument) only to be yet again radically critiqued in the 1970s by revisionist scholars such as Richard Slotkin, Annette Kolodny, and Patricia Nelson Limerick, who have emphasized the violence of colonization and expansionism, the masculinist matrix of discourses about the West and empire-building, and the Eurocentric and ethnocentric biases involved in the frontier logic. Slotkin in particular has addressed the historical guilt inherent in the ways in which “the inanimate world of nature” was “humanized” in the appreciation and appropriation of the West, while the Native Americans at the same time were “dehumanized” (1998: 53). The Native American genocide can be considered the gaping absence in Turner’s thesis as well as in much of its early revisions; it has only been addressed more fully in the past decades in alternative histories of “how the West was lost,” not won by Native Americans (cf. Calloway), of which Dee Brown’s *Bury My Heart at Wounded Knee: An Indian History of the American West* (1970) is perhaps the best-known example. In contemporary
scholarship of the so-called New Western Historians, the frontier has become the “f-word,” as Patricia Limerick quips (1994: 72). But even if many scholars have found Turner’s argument utterly problematic, if not ridiculous, it has not lost its powerful grip on the popular imagination with its focus on the concept, not the region, of the West and continues to be quite effective in what John Carlos Rowe refers to as the “nationalizing of the international.”

In what follows, I want to zoom in on the Turner of the cold war. In the 1950s, Turner’s Thesis once more was widely praised and came to renewed prominence, since after World War II it serves, once again, as an anchor of defining Americanness and as a tool of affirming American ‘virtues’ of individualism and democracy at home and abroad - particularly in the geopolitical constellation of the ‘cold war’ (cf. Hartz’s affirmative argument about the liberal tradition in America). As Amy Kaplan notes, “[t]he domestic and the foreign have long met on ‘the Frontier,’ a major conceptual site in American studies” (Kaplan 1993: 16). In 1947, in the political climate of West-German reeducation/reorientation, Turner’s major work, The Significance of the Frontier in American History, is published in German/Germany for the first time. I will contextualize Turner’s argument within German and American discourses of space/place, expansionism, and democracy and reconstruct some of its ‘preferred readings’ and cultural translations in this particular transatlantic moment. This will lead to more general observations regarding the potential of critical regionalism as an analytical framework.

The year is 1947. It is the year of the Truman doctrine (May 12) that shifts the ground of geopolitical confrontations for the next 40 years, and in June, at Harvard University, the U.S. Secretary of State, George C. Marshall, outlines an economic recovery plan for Europe. The House Un-American Activities Committee begins its investigations into alleged communism in Hollywood; 1947 is the year in which Simone de Beauvoir visits the US and is amused by - and alarmed about - encountering only “Ex-Communists” (America: Day by Day); it is the year in which the “Gruppe 47”, a group of German writers, meets to think about a new democratic German literature (most prominently the former US prisoners of war, Hans Werner Richter and Alfred Andersch) that counters the “destruction of language” (“Sprachzerstörung”) perpetrated by the national socialists by way of propaganda, lies, and pathos. 1947 is also the year in which the first German edition of Turner’s The Frontier in American History is published. The volume of Turner’s writings is based on the 1920 US-edition published by Henry Holt and comes out in Germany by Walter Dorn in Bremen (as a major port for supplies, Bremen was also part of the US military zone even as it was in the North). The book is printed with the registration number (granting permission for publication) US-W-1003 allotted by the military government (“Nachrichtenkontrolle der Militärregierung”); its initial run being 1000 copies. The German title is Die Grenze - “the border.” Whereas today, we can easily use “frontier” as a word in the German language as part of our anglicized newspeak, and quite frequently this is done, in 1947, this word was apparently still foreign to the Germans, hence the translation. This publication has to be viewed as
part of the reeducation/reorientation effort: Immediately after its publication, Turner’s translated thesis was available for a German-language readership in the Amerika-Häuser, the US information centers; the copy that the university library in Erlangen holds was formerly the property of the local Amerika-Haus library.

German readers encountered the geographical determinism of Turner’s frontier thesis exactly at the moment when they were having to overcome their own kind of geographical determinism that had proven disastrous. The hegemonic Nazi version of German geopolitics and its territorial claims, still rampant at the time, can be summed up in the phrase of the “Volk ohne Raum” – “A People without Space.” In many ways, Turner’s thesis in a postwar transatlantic moment may have been considered, by some Germans at least, as a response to this fantasy that is deeply embedded in German fascist ideology and was used by Adolf Hitler himself in many speeches and in his infamous manifesto Mein Kampf. It suggests that the lack of German Lebensraum, i.e. space, will lead to the suffocation and starvation of a whole people (cf. Fülster 9). In Mein Kampf, Hitler had identified four ways for the German people to “escape such a future development”: regulation of birth rate, internal colonization, further industrialization, and the acquisition of more space for settlement (Fülster 10). Among those options, Hitler advocates the latter by way of a war of expansion: “For Germany, the only possibility to practice a healthy politics of the soil is through the acquisition of new land in Europe itself.” [“Für Deutschland liegt die einzige Möglichkeit zur Durchführung einer gesunden Bodenpolitik nur in der Erwerbung von neuem Land in Europa selbst.”]. Moreover, is “this new land to be gained only in the East” [“die Gewinnung neuen Bodens nur im Osten zu erreichen”] (ibid. 11). Mapping a policy of eastward expansion, Hitler delineates the German Reich with its civil religious superstructure of blood and soil-ideology: “Never forget that the holiest right on this world is the right to the soil that one wants to cultivate one’s self and the holiest sacrifice is the blood that you shed for this soil” [“Vergeßt nie, dass das heiligste Recht auf dieser Welt das Recht auf Erde ist, die man selbst bebauen will, und das heiligste Opfer das Blut, das man für diese Erde vergießt”] (ibid. 139). Fascist ideology disseminated the topos of “Volk ohne Raum,” but the phrase was actually coined as the title of a novel, a 1300-page novel by Hans Grimm that was first published in 1926 and widely read – by 1935, more than three hundred thousand copies had been sold (cf. Baranowski 152). Grimm advocates classic colonial schemes: The feeling of “crampedness” and a “critical shortage of space” ‘logically’ lead to expansionism and colonialism, in Grimm’s plot this project takes place in Africa. In four sections (“Heimat und Enge”, “Fremder Raum und Irregang”, “Deutscher Raum” and “Das Volk ohne Raum”), we learn about the fate of Cornelius Friebott, born in rural Germany and luckless as a farmer (he has no access to farmland) and no opportunity to become a skilled worker (he

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6 Skimming the pages in this book, the writing in the margin of a German reader signalling disapproval as well as agreement is at least as interesting as studying the German translation itself.
cannot undergo an apprenticeship to become a skilled worker and a crafts-
man; he decides to go to the city and work in the industries in the Ruhr-area 
(Bochum). Due to his union activism he gets into conflict with the authori-
ties, is briefly arrested, and decides to emigrate to South Africa. After many 
ups and downs, he settles as a farmer in the Lüderitzbucht in the German 
colony of Southwest Africa. After World War I, he is arrested and returns 
to Germany only to be reunited with his childhood friend and the love of 
his life, Melsene. Back in Germany, he becomes a public speaker advocating 
expansionism and colonialism for the “people without space”; he dies shortly 
before the Hitler-Ludendorff Putsch on November 9, 1923, at the hands of an 
enraged worker.

As many critics have pointed out, Grimm uses quite an old-fashioned 
style and a grammar and vocabulary that were already outdated at the time 
when his novel was published, but this, of course, nicely fits the 19th century 
colonial agenda. His representation of German society is as schematic and 
stereotyped as his description of Africa which is explicitly racist and deni-
grates the indigenous inhabitants. The book has an overtly chauvinist and 
racist message written under the impression of the German ‘defeat’ in World 
War I. Kurt Tucholski reviewed this text under the title “Grimm’s Märchen” 
(Grimm’s fairy tale). Under national socialist rule it became a mandatory text 
book to be read in all classrooms. The colonialist text was used to legitimate a 
war of aggression within Europe, i.e. to do the cultural work of propaganda: 
“No other text shaped the semantics of German space as greatly as Grimm’s did” (Simons 167). If Turner’s thesis is often linked to its first presentation at 
the World’s Columbian Exposition in Chicago, Hans Grimm’s novel also has 
a claim to fame concerning such an event: in 1933/34, it was the only German 
book presented as “German literature” at the World Exposition, again in 
Chicago, with the title “A Century of Progress.” The motto itself is sugges-
tive of a colonial agenda and converges with some of Grimm’s notions of 
‘progress.’ His racist renderings of life in Africa seemed to blend in with an 
overall ideological framework, a kind of transnational mood if you will, of 
colonialist fantasizing and racist iconographies at the site of the exhibition.

Apart from some faint analogies in the two fantasies of nation-building 
and territorial expansion under consideration (it remains unknown to me 
whether Hans Grimm was familiar with Turner’s work and I doubt very 
much that he was), the preferred reading of Turner by a German audience 
in 1947 certainly was supposed to identify fundamental differences rather 
than similarities or inverted analogies between the self-proclaimed “People 
without Space” which was left “without space,” i.e. with less space, once 
more, and the American people who had been, according to Turner’s thesis, 
formed and moulded at the ever expanding ‘frontier’ between civilization 
and wilderness in their westward course. My initial reaction to coming upon 
this 1947-publication was to wonder about the seeming paradox that German 
readers were offered a text that seemed to condone and even idealize expan-
sionism; a text that from today’s point of view is notorious for concealing 
many problematic aspects of American history. There does not seem to have
been any sense of irony involved in the German publication of Turner’s work, a text that jubilantly describes the territorial expansion of a nation to an audience who had just lost an aggressive war of previously unimagined scope and who was now supposed to be taught to stay within its new borders, demilitarized, peaceful, and preferably democratic. In the context of the time, any tensions and contradictions obviously went unnoticed and, instead, critical differences were identified that need to be unpacked. Let me point to four major issues here that directly point to the project of re-educating the Germans:

First, Turner’s rendering of US history describes westward expansion as peaceful (and inevitable), and thus the movement along the different frontiers (even as it entailed battling the forces of nature), in Turner’s logic was imagined as a largely peaceful process of settlement, a circumstance that is corroborated by much iconographic visual material (cf. John Gast, American Progress and Francis Flora Bond Palmer, Westwards the Course of Empire):

But the larger part of what has been distinctive and valuable in America’s contribution to the history of the human spirit has been due to its nation’s peculiar experience in extending its type of frontier into new regions; and in creating peaceful societies with new ideals in the successive vast and differing geographic provinces which together make up the United States.

[In German: Aber die Hauptsache dessen, was für den amerikanischen Beitrag zur Geschichte des menschlichen Geistes entscheidend und wertvoll war, verdankt man der besonderen Erscheinung im Leben dieser Nation, daß sie ihre Grenze in immer neue Gebiete vorverlegte und friedliche Gesellschaften mit neuen Idealen in den sich aufeinander folgenden weiten und verschiedenartigen geographischen Provinzen, die zusammen die Vereinigten Staaten ausmachen, bildete.]

Thus, Turner ‘advertises’ peaceful US expansion as the total opposite of the violent and brutal war led by Germany (and as the total opposite of what we have come to understand as the result of Indian wars and Native American removal).

Second, Turner’s argument focuses on the individual who triumphs over nature and eventually ‘masters’ the wilderness. A dominant individualism and self-reliance engendered by a radical experience of space feeds into a bottom-up, rather than a top-down perspective, and again produces a contrast: between anti-authoritarian, self-help individuals and a totalitarian state apparatus that has conditioned and rendered obedient its citizens/soldiers in a collectivist fantasy of supremacy and conquest. Turner identifies individualism, non-conformity, and ingenuity as quintessential American, by implication we are to conclude that opposite characteristics are European, in particular German, and need to be reformed.

Third, Turner describes America as a “frontier melting pot” that creates a new race (in the German translation: “eine Mischrasse”) which is described in positive terms as strong, independent, and free from older racial/national
idiosyncrasies. Thus, racial mixing, at least in the limited way that Turner imagines it, is promoted in the text – in stark contrast to other views about race prevalent at the time in Germany (and the US).

Fourth, that the US derives from its unique history a responsibility and a sense of mission in the world is stated by Turner in no uncertain terms. In his preface, Turner defines Americanness in the spirit of manifest destiny not only westward but also with regard to influences on Europe. It is this 1920-passage that seems to come in handy for the project of reeducation/re-orientation and the project of democratizing Germany, and thus I quote at length:

Writing at the close of 1796, the French minister to the United States, M. Adet, retorted to his government that Jefferson could not be relied on to be devoted to French interests, and he added: ‘Jefferson, I say, is American, and as such he cannot be sincerely our friend. An American is the born enemy of all European peoples.’ Obviously erroneous as are these words, there was an element of truth in them. If we would understand this element of truth, we must study the transforming influence of the American wilderness, remote from Europe, and by its resources and its free opportunities affording the conditions under which a new people, with social and political types and ideals, could arise to play its own part in the world, and to influence Europe. (vi)

Placing Turner’s thesis in such a transatlantic context from a critical regionalist perspective reveals various kinds of geographical determinisms and the currency they have – and lose. It becomes part of a narrative of ‘westernization’ as it also privileges a Eurocentric view of the US. The discursive context of the German reception is shaped by long-standing ideologies of colonialism (cf. Grimm’s “People without Space”) and fascism (cf. Hitler’s appropriation of the “People without Space”) that are cast – by implication – in sharp opposition to Turner’s thesis about the making of Americans rather than pointing to similarities. And, of course, there is no middle ground.

At this point I am not aware whether Turner’s work was translated into Japanese and presented to a Japanese audience at that same historical moment. In terms of the European reception of the US myth of the West that Turner promoted, I have been informed that there was a discourse in Poland that apparently operated with the rhetoric of this myth in order to talk about the country’s massive and once more traumatic territorial changes after World War II - westward.
Germans who were raised as much on Hans Grimm as on Karl May (who was as successful as Grimm both in the Weimar republic and in the Third Reich) must have felt cognitive dissonances of some kind – in particular because of their strong identification with the noble savage Winnetou. Yet, the landscape Turner writes about is not the landscape of May – they exist on different planes or, more to the point, both are as placeless as they are fantastic. According to a recent study of bestsellers in Nazi Germany, Hans Grimm ranks at position 25, Karl May at 38, and somewhere in between, at 35, is Margaret Mitchell’s *Gone with the Wind* – another dubious regionalist fantasy. Reading Turner with May may raise the question that the Native American poet Jimmy Durham recently put as follows: “What if you could be the cowboy AND the Indian. A perfect set-up for profits both psychological and economical” (qtd. in Hillis 284).

Of course, I can only speculate about the German Turnerian fantasies instigated by that peculiar reeducational move and about replacing one regionalist exceptionalism with another, and we may ponder on the question which contradictions and interferences it might have produced. Here, I would like to address one last ‘turn’ in the making of a German ‘Turner’. As a cold war text, Turner’s thesis was not only published in German for a German audience, it also became a topic of newly emerging disciplinary discussion: American studies in Germany.

It is Hans Galinsky (1909-91), who had already been a quite prolific, even if – in retrospect – certainly dubious scholar during the Third Reich, who becomes one of the first post-war German Americanists of international standing and an expert on Turner’s work. In fact, Galinsky’s scholarship on the American West and on early American history would become quite renowned (cf. Mackenthun). Born on May 12, 1909 in Breslau and raised catholic, Galinsky had eventually ‘converted’ from Catholicism to National Socialism (cf. Hausmann 458). From 1927-32 he studied and worked in Heidelberg, Breslau, London, and Manchester enthusiastically putting his efforts into the service of German foreign relations-propaganda (“begeistert in den Dienst der Auslandspropaganda”, ibid.). In 1934, he returned to Germany and prepared his Habilitation in Berlin. In 1935, he published a book on “British Fascism” for use in schools. To Kurt Wais’ anti-semitic literary history *Die Gegenwartsdichtung der europäischen Völker*, published in 1939, Galinsky contributed a 80-something pages long article on the literature of the “English and Anglo-Irish” investigating “literary production as a function of a people in fighting for their survival and expansion” (“die Dichtkunst als eine Lebensfunktion des Volkes im Kampfe um den Lebensbestand und die Lebensentfaltung”). However, Galinsky argues, the English are not one people but are a composite of different groups: English, Scottish, Irish, Welsh.

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8 Robert H. Brinkmeyer has analyzed the reverse cultural mobility by addressing Southern affinities to European fascism in his book *The Fourth Ghost* (2009).

9 In this paragraph, I am relying mostly, as indicated, on Frank-Rutger Hausmann’s research in *Die Geschichte der Anglistik und Amerikanistik im Dritten Reich* (2003) and on some of the archival sources that he has uncovered.
No people, no *Volksliteratur* (ibid. 142). In this logic, he clearly favors an essentialist model of racially constituted regions. In addition, the Jewish influence is identified as strong and thus problematic (he drops names, such as Zangwill’s, but, of course, does not address any work by a Jewish author); what he calls “the Jewish theory” (Freud) is also excluded from the analysis. Because of his German wife, D.H. Lawrence is credited by Galinsky with some deeper insights about the German race and its exceptionality (ibid. 144). A prime exemplum of a “racist literary history,” according to Hausmann, Galinsky’s essay fits well into the collection. In this and other publications, he engaged in what K. Ludwig Pfeiffer has described as the main task of German *Anglistik* during the Third Reich: to refute the English culture ideology (“englische Kulturideologie”), to thoroughly dismantle the positive aspects of the British image regarding cultural, political, and military achievements and superiority (Pfeiffer 40), and to reject “the British world mission” (Hutton 28) by affirming a German exceptionalism for all of Europe (Galinsky 1943: 40). In one of his early publications, Galinsky critically discusses “the erosion of the Nordic character of the British nation” and wonders how to revive the Celtic element (Hutton 131); in another he discusses Europe with regard to German interests and English isolationism (“der Großraum-Gedanke und seine europäische Verwirklichung durch Deutschland” 1943: 30); and in yet another, he indicates that the British reception of German literature has been distorted in England by Jewish critics and publishers (1938: 482). Because Galinsky was married to Edith Margenberg, born in Martigny-les-Bains (in Elsaß-Lothringen), Hausmann suggests, he was appointed in 1941 as professor in Strassbourg, the so-called “Kampfuniversität,” where he was supposed to aid the re-launching of academic training in the spirit of nationalist socialism (Hausmann 458-59). In 1945, Galinsky was removed from his university position, yet after a brief period of time, he apparently could be reappointed, in 1952, and in 1957 he even became chair of American studies at the University of Mainz, launching his ‘second career’ while refraining from listing most of his pre-1945 publications in his research bibliography. Ludwig Pfeiffer sees him critically as one of those scholars who remain attached to a blood-and-soil ideology and “die nach dem Krieg schnell wieder aufsteigen und sich sogar um die Entwicklung neuer Fachzweige wie der Amerikanistik verdient machen, ohne einem heftigen, zumindest privaten Antisemitismus jemals abzuschwören” (43). As one of the first post-war Americanists, Galinsky read and taught Turner’s work in English and did not have to rely on the German edition that I have discussed above. That he read it is certain. With Hans Galinsky, Turner’s thesis helps to launch German American studies. Among his post-war publications is an edition on “The Frontier in American History and Literature” (1960) as well as a monograph on *Regionalism and the Pursuit of Unity in the US* (1972). The former argues for myth-and-symbol approach to US culture that ‘integrates’ history and literature into a larger ‘universal narrative’ of the US (cf. Mackenthun); the latter is in-part a linguistic and an overall positivistic study; Galinsky locates regionalism, for instance, in the linguistic difference of “the negro;” this difference
indicates, according to Galinsky, that race consciousness could negatively impinge on or endanger the “national consciousness” (28). Galinsky became well-connected and established co-operations with German and American colleagues as he quickly came around to teaching and advertising a new (and yet old) geographical exceptionalism – in any case different from the one he earlier swore by.\footnote{For a critical discussion of Galinsky’s later work and his investment in American exceptionalism and in the radically ‘different degrees of civilization’ that come into contact in colonial America when white explorers meet the native population, see Mackenthun 1993: 226-28.}

Thus, in some weird way, he has “wielded American studies as a double-edged sword” (Pease 2010: 50 with reference to Lipset). It is not without irony that the current German Wikipedia entry labels him – in the spirit of his Turnerian wanderings and expertise – the ‘pioneer’ of German American studies.\footnote{It has been pointed out repeatedly that the institutionalization of American studies in Germany was not a post-war development but one that had been begun by the nationalsocialists (Gassert 42-43; cf. Hausmann).}

The final part of my argument, thus, only reinforces once again, that there is no such thing as a ‘good’ or a ‘bad’ exceptionalism (ibid. 56) when it comes to the critique of imperial state fantasies. Turner’s German career can be viewed as an instance that calls for a critical regionalism, one that engages in a crossmapping in light of what Donald Pease has referred to as a comparative approach within an “expanded field of imperial exceptionalisms” (cf. Pease 2010: 80). These exceptionalisms carry a spatial and a temporal index, and they obviously have served very different political ends and means with very different results as they are “linked to different states of exception” (ibid.).

For one thing, Turner’s West as “travelling concept” (to invoke James Clifford and Neil Campbell again) and as a regional fantasy provided a fantasy of relief, exoneration, and escape (an Entlastungsfantasie), i.e. a way out for post-war German fantasizing about place/space and thus produced a new kind of regionalist and nationalist longing. It is ubiquitous and placeless at the same time and thus resists easy refusal (as we find a popular belief in stark contrast to elite revisionism). The roots and routes of Turner’s frontier thesis that I have traced directly and indirectly in my essay evidence what John Carlos Rowe calls “the military-industrial-scholarly complex” (Rowe 2014) in the mid-20th century and thus the concept of the frontier is mobilized and mobilizing at the same time as the re-education-agenda collides with (or rather slides into) a cold war scenario. A critical regionalist perspective engages with narrow regionalist fantasies (such as those of the blood-and-soil kind) but also looks at the transnational reverberations of regional narratives. In analyzing the various forms of regionalisms, it insists on an ideology critique of the various strategies of immunization that regionalist agendas provide.

In contemporary German literature, the ideology of the ‘frontier,’ of the West, and, in particular, of going West is remembered and re-articulated. Wolfgang Büscher, journalist and travel writer, has chronicled his ‘walk
across America’ in his non-fiction book *Hartland* (2011). Toward the end of his notes he muses about the fascination the (American) West held for Germans back in the post-war moment:


Why America? The other cardinal direction was out of the question – it was the direction into which men had disappeared. The East lay heavy on the soul, anxious thoughts, loss. Barred, blocked, it did not signal – only week signals of darkness and downfall. I was reminded of my father’s remark: on foot I would have walked to America back then. His ‘back then’ was the post-war period. A young man of 18, 20 years and the desire to get out of the misery to a place where everything is light, young and where winners live. (my translation)

Thus Büscher’s recollection of German “frontier magic” (Slotkin 1998: 40) once more indicates the impact of the myth of America and the West (a fantasy of conquest and territorial gain and of individual self-realization) and the desire it produces as an unattainable region of the mind. Questioning and deconstructing such fantasies of placelessness and region (in the light of Amy Kaplan’s problematization quoted above) will be one of the ongoing tasks of critical regionalist scholarship.

### V. Conclusion

In this essay I have worked through various ways of ‘doing’ critical regionalism in the context of post-exceptionalist American studies. This critical practice involves the interrogation of how regions are constructed and produced – as the ‘other’ of the nation or its natural embryonic exceptionalist state. It also involves the questioning of regional as well as national exceptionalisms and an insistent challenge to the ‘territorial integrity’ of regions and, in fact, to “territorializations of all kinds” (Rice 8). Among the best-known ‘territorial regions’ of the US are those that I have revisited in this essay as part of my argument and that appear almost as stereotypical, yet that have been defined and re-affirmed by generations of Americanists/regionalists, among them Frederick Jackson Turner. In Barbara Ladd’s words: “[T]he United States was made up of an intellectual new England, a cosmopolitan Mid-Atlantic, an agricultural Midwest, a defeated but resurgent South, and a West of opportunity and promise” (Ladd). These topoi, or rather clichés, are of little use for a critical regionalism. Instead, its practice involves particular attention to alternative geographies that we may valorize as counter-hegemonic formations, at least for the time being.
My own more specific case study has shown the importance of a discursive, new historicist crossmapping that allows us to explore the function of regional formations and the services they are put to in scholarly and non-scholarly spheres. I see this kind of crossmapping as a productive critical practice in order to explore the meaning(s) and contingencies of regional and other spatial formations. The perspective of critical regionalism sheds light on the kind of maps produced by the heritage industry, the local activist, the real estate agent, and the scholar of regionalism. These maps can be analyzed with regard to their cultural imaginaries, their potential local-local or local-global trajectories, and the kind of regionalist fantasies they nourish or debunk. It is this kind of critical regionalist work that is committed to post-exceptionalist American studies.

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