

Melanie Smicek

Suburbia as a Narrative Space between Utopia and Dystopia in Contemporary American Cinema

Examination Thesis

YOUR KNOWLEDGE HAS VALUE



- We will publish your bachelor's and master's thesis, essays and papers
- Your own eBook and book - sold worldwide in all relevant shops
- Earn money with each sale

Upload your text at www.GRIN.com
and publish for free



Bibliographic information published by the German National Library:

The German National Library lists this publication in the National Bibliography; detailed bibliographic data are available on the Internet at <http://dnb.dnb.de> .

This book is copyright material and must not be copied, reproduced, transferred, distributed, leased, licensed or publicly performed or used in any way except as specifically permitted in writing by the publishers, as allowed under the terms and conditions under which it was purchased or as strictly permitted by applicable copyright law. Any unauthorized distribution or use of this text may be a direct infringement of the author s and publisher s rights and those responsible may be liable in law accordingly.

Imprint:

Copyright © 2012 GRIN Verlag
ISBN: 9783656671381

This book at GRIN:

<https://www.grin.com/document/274947>

Melanie Smicek

Suburbia as a Narrative Space between Utopia and Dystopia in Contemporary American Cinema

GRIN - Your knowledge has value

Since its foundation in 1998, GRIN has specialized in publishing academic texts by students, college teachers and other academics as e-book and printed book. The website www.grin.com is an ideal platform for presenting term papers, final papers, scientific essays, dissertations and specialist books.

Visit us on the internet:

<http://www.grin.com/>

<http://www.facebook.com/grincom>

http://www.twitter.com/grin_com

**Suburbia as a Narrative Space between Utopia and Dystopia in
Contemporary American Cinema**

Schriftliche Hausarbeit

Im Rahmen der Ersten Staatsprüfung, dem Landesprüfungsamt für
Erste Staatsprüfungen für Lehrämter an Schulen

vorgelegt von:

Melanie Zimmermann

Köln, den 06. Juni 2012

Englisches Seminar I
der Universität zu Köln

Contents

1 Introduction	1
2 Suburbia as physical and cultural space in the USA	4
2.1 The history of the suburbanization of the USA	4
2.2 The concept of suburbia as a cultural space	7
3 Utopian and dystopian narratives of suburbia	11
4 Suburbia in contemporary American cinema	15
4.1 Film as narrative space	15
4.2 The invention of reality: Simulations, simulacra, suburbia.....	16
4.3 Suburbia as setting and center of contemporary American Films: Introduction to the film analyses	18
5 Once upon a time: Suburbia as nostalgic utopia in <i>Pleasantville</i>.....	20
5.1 Introduction and plot summary.....	20
5.2 The opening scenes: Real vs. nostalgic visions of suburbia.....	21
5.3 The utopia of <i>Pleasantville</i>	23
5.4 Exploring utopia: The suburban space of Pleasantville.....	25
5.5 The creation of new spaces in Pleasantville	27
5.6 The end of paradise: Fall of Man, racism and visions of dystopia.....	29
5.7 Happy ever after? A summarizing reading of <i>Pleasantville</i>	32
6 Better than reality? Suburbia as simulacra in <i>The Truman Show</i>.....	34
6.1 Introduction and plot summary.....	34
6.2 Different layers of diegesis: Utopian and dystopian perspectives in <i>The Truman Show</i>	35
6.3 The space of Seahaven: The utopian artifice of suburbia.....	38
6.4 Seahaven between simulacra and simulation	40
6.5 “On the air. Unaware”: Surveillance and control in <i>The Truman Show</i>	43
6.6 Truman’s escape from dystopia: hope for suburbia?.....	45

7 “Look Closer”: Suburbia as imprisoning dystopia in <i>American Beauty</i>	48
7.1 Introduction and plot summary	48
7.2 Utopia or dystopia? The introduction of the suburban space of <i>American Beauty</i>	49
7.3 Defining the dystopia of <i>American Beauty</i> : Suburbia as a prison	51
7.4 The destructiveness of the American Dream in suburbia	53
7.5 The suburbs as “picture windows”: Voyeurism and control in suburbia	55
7.6 Hope for suburbia? The search for the true beauty in dystopia	57
8 Conclusion and outlook	60
List of figures	62
Works Cited	66