

German Culture News

Cornell University Institute for German Cultural Studies

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In this Issue:

Artist in Residence:
Hans Christoph Buch

Cornell Lectures on
Contemporary Aesthetics

The Legacy of Kant III
Conference

Signale Online Forum

Visit of Germany's
Consul General

Hohendahl Graduate
Essay Prize Awarded

Colloquium Series:

Thomas Kling and
the Avant-Gardes

Sakrale Räume im Schwank

Psychological Aesthetics and
the Paradox of Tragic Pleasure

Index and Diegesis in Weimar
Broadcasting - The Problematic
"Akustische Kulisse"

Wayward Trajectories: Peter
Weiss's Aesthetics of Resistance
and the Parataxis of History

Beyond Repetition? Karl Kraus's
"Absolute Satire"

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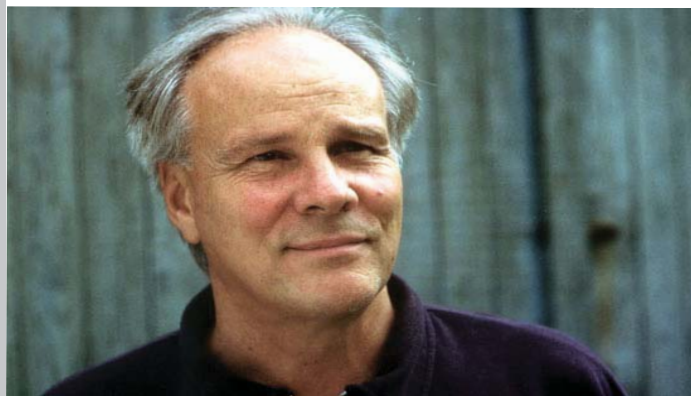


Photo by Gerd Vennemann

The German writer and journalist **Hans Christoph Buch** was the Institute of German Cultural Studies' Artist in Residence from September 5th through the 22nd. Buch was first noticed for his prose in 1963, when he gave a reading of his work at a meeting of the "Gruppe 47." After studying German and Slavic Studies in Bonn and Berlin, Buch received his Ph.D. in 1972. He worked as an editor for the Rowohlt Verlag in the 1970s and taught at several universities in Germany and the United States. In the 1990s, Buch became well known for reporting from war and crisis re-

gions in Africa for several newspapers and magazines. In 2004, he received the Preis der Frankfurter Anthologie, and in 2011, the Schubart-Literaturpreis.

In her introduction to his reading, Leslie Adelson called Buch a "precursor of postcolonial literature in Germany," given that early on in his career Buch began to make the nation of Haiti the focus of many of his works. His artistic involvement with Haiti entails both an examination of its colonial history as well as an engagement with his personal family history: Buch's grandfather had immigrated to Haiti in the late nineteenth century and married a Haitian woman.

His grandfather's pharmacy, which had been a family business for many decades, was destroyed in the earthquake of 2010, as was the Haitian publishing house that had published Buch's works in French.

Discussion of the earthquake marked the endpoint of Buch's introductory remarks. He next presented historical drawings, caricatures and photographs of Haiti from before and after the earthquake, stressing his personal investment in the country's social and political history. Buch observed that his strong interest in Haiti and other developing countries poses many challenges to German readers without this background knowledge to read his work. Buch then proceeded to present his works *Die Hochzeit von Port-au-Prince* (1984), the title an allusion to Kleist's *Die Verlobung von San Domingo* (1811), and *Tanzende Schatten oder der Zombie bin ich* (2004), which addresses Aristide's

Newsletter summaries of Institute-sponsored events are generously provided by graduate students in various stages of doctoral study in the interdisciplinary field of German Studies at Cornell University. These summaries are customarily written by students with a general audience in mind and highlight selected aspects of complex presentations by specialists.

role in Haitian history and a bloody carnival. The following discussion focused primarily on the oscillation of Buch's work between different genres, and on how Buch negotiates between the demands of publishing companies on the one hand, and the necessary constraints of journalistic writing on the other. Buch also mentioned that he had once tried to write a play about Haitian history, but soon realized that this dramatic subject matter defies all conventions of dramatic genre. (Hannah Müller)

On September 19, Buch delivered a public lecture on contemporary aesthetics entitled "Haiti and World Literature," in which he juxtaposed his own experiences living in and writing about Haiti with a long-standing tradition of other writers' and artists' fascination with the country. Buch referenced a number of authors, artists, and revolutionaries, including André Breton, the American Beatnik writer Herbert Gold, Graham Greene, the Cuban painter Wilfredo Lam, Claude Lévi-Strauss and Anna Seghers. These luminaries have all traveled to Haiti, generally seeking there one of the country's two romanticized images: the revolutionary ideal, and the heterogeneous, chaotic "land of voodoo."

Buch commenced his lec-

ture by reciting Wordsworth's "To Toussaint L'Overture" (1803), also quoted in Heiner Müller's *Der Auftrag* (1979). Wordsworth's poem pays homage to the revolutionary hero and freedom fighter, but makes no specific reference to Haiti. Like Hegel and Hölderlin, Wordsworth was a supporter of the French revolution who saw in Haiti a representation of humanitarian idealism. According to Buch, however, this ideal is by now far removed from the Haitian reality, which he described as "chaotic," "complex," "irritating" and "inexplicable." But Buch nonetheless identified in this chaos a creative, "revitalizing" force, which has enabled him to discover the limits of "his own [German] culture."

For Buch, the artistic perception of Haiti-as-chaos does not preclude the possibility for political engagement and critique. In Graham Greene's novel *The Comedians* (1966), for example, a parallel is drawn between the dictator Papa Doc and Baron Samedi, the god of cemeteries and voodoo. A similar rendition of Haiti can be found in Herbert Gold's more recent experimental novel *Haiti - Best Nightmare on Earth* (2001), which depicts the author's experiences since first arriving in Haiti in 1953. The novel lends itself to an illuminating post-

colonial reading, in which Haiti is ultimately seen as "kind" to the US author/tourist but "unkind" to its own people.

Buch ended his lecture by commenting on how the prevalent chaos in Haiti aggravated the impact of the recent earthquake, which prompted a discussion about the earthquake's effects on the image of Haiti portrayed by the American and European media. Buch asserted that while Western media certainly revive stereotypes about Haitians and Haiti, racism and stereotypes sadly govern the country's everyday life, and are equally disseminated by the right and the left sides of the country's political spectrum. Other questions from the audience addressed the possibility of an aesthetic translation of the "Haitian chaos," notions of experimentation and technique, and the links between the revolutionary histories of Haiti and Cuba. Buch's illuminating oral remarks on the place of Haiti in world literature and postwar German literary history are complemented by a separate aesthetics lecture that the author wrote for Cornell University on his own "poetics of non-identity." The IGCS is pleased to publish Buch's written remarks on this subject in this issue of GCN. (Anna Horakova)

"Futurity Now" Conference Scheduled for April 2012

Under the auspices of Cornell's Institute for German Cultural Studies Leslie A. Adelson of Cornell University (Jacob Gould Schurman Professor of German Studies and Director of IGCS) and Devin Fore of Princeton University (Germanic Languages and Literatures, Slavic Languages and Literatures, and Media and Modernity) are co-organizing a two-day conference titled "Futurity Now: Interdisciplinary German Studies in 20th- and 21st-Century Perspectives." The conference will be held at the A.D. White House on Cornell's Ithaca campus April 13-14, 2012, and is free and open to the public. Professor Samuel Weber of Northwestern University will present the conference's keynote lecture on futurity in relation to the aesthetics of terror. Additional confirmed speakers include Rüdiger Campe (Yale University), Nahum Chandler (University of California, Irvine), Fatima El-Tayeb (University of California, San Diego), Birgit Erdle (London), Peter Gilgen (Cornell University), Julia Hell (University of Michigan), Peter Hohendahl (Cornell University), Andreas Huyssen (Columbia University), Lutz Koepnick (Washington University), Patrizia McBride (Cornell University), and Madeleine Casad (Cornell University and Rose Goldsen Archive of New Media Art). Additional details will be posted on the IGCS website in spring.

JETZT: CONTEMPORARY AND HISTORICAL FIGURATIONS

MARCH 31/APRIL 1, 2012

KEYNOTE SPEAKER: PETER FENVES (NORTHWESTERN UNIVERSITY)

"Now: it has already ceased to be since it was pointed out; the now that is is an other than that pointed out to us, it is what has been."

(Hegel, The Phenomenology of Spirit)

The now, by virtue of its ephemerality, presents a series of problems for attempts to define it. Along with its deictic counterpart the here, it resists the fixity of any determinate content. Yet this very quality of now simultaneously includes a generative power—as demonstrated by ongoing efforts to conceptualize, interpret, produce or poeticize the now.

While the notion of the now is one of perpetual interest and difficulty, something to which one always returns, it is also important to historicize those moments in which the now reasserts itself against a fixation on the past or future. Recent attempts to do so can be seen, for example, in Hans Ulrich Gumbrecht's emphasis on presence in its temporal dimension as a "breite Gegenwart" and Fredric Jameson's assertions of the primacy of the present in late capitalism.

But if we can historicize the discourse of nowness, is theorizing the now not a more problematic task? How are we to conceive of something situated at the very horizon of the historical? To what extent does the now signal a break with the chronological linearity of past and future?

And how has the now's position at the cusp of history influenced its aesthetic figuration? What possibilities for an aesthetic figuration of the now does art present, and how can we bring these into dialogue with theory's conceptualization of the now?

This conference seeks to address the vicissitudes of now's history and figuration, if indeed either of these is possible.

Four Films by Alexander Kluge

presented by Cornell Cinema and co-sponsored with the Institute for German Cultural Studies & PG Kino

Tuesdays, 7:15pm, in the Schwartz Center for Performing Arts Film Forum in Collegetown

The series is being offered in conjunction with Professor Leslie Adelson's German Studies graduate seminar on Kluge as a literary author. The screenings are offered for free and will be introduced by Brian Hanrahan, Faculty Fellow in the Dept. of Theatre, Film & Dance, who will also lead post-screening discussions.

Feb. 7 – Yesterday Girl (1966)

March 13 – The Artists in the Ring: Perplexed (1968)

April 3 – The Power of Emotion (1983)

April 24 – Germany in Autumn (1978)

For more information, visit cinema.cornell.edu

WER BIN ICH, WOHER KOMME ICH, WOHIN GEHE ICH?

Bausteine zu einer Poetik der Nicht-Identität

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1

Der Identitätsdiskurs ist eine Falle. Der Satz: „Ich bin ich“ oder „Wir sind wir“ ist nicht so harmlos und unschuldig, wie er klingt – abgesehen davon, dass es sich um einen Pleonasmus handelt, der logisch nicht stichhaltig ist. Wenn ich zum Beispiel sage, dass ich ein deutscher Schriftsteller bin, der deutsche Bücher für deutschsprachige Leser schreibt, wird damit unausgesprochen impliziert, dass ich kein Afrikaner oder Asiate, kein Russe oder Türke, kein Jude oder Muslim bin, keine Frau und kein Homosexueller, sondern ein heterosexueller Mann im Sinne der christlich-europäischen Tradition und der deutschen Leitkultur – was immer das heißt. Demgegenüber hat der Dichter Arthur Rimbaud sich zu seinem Anderssein bekannt mit dem zum geflügelten Wort gewordenen Satz: „Ich ist ein anderer“, der die multiplen Identitäten benennt, in denen wir uns im Laufe unseres Lebens wieder finden: Als Junge oder Mädchen, Kind oder Greis, Konservativer oder Liberaler, Inländer oder Ausländer, Arbeiter oder Angestellter, Fußgänger, Radfahrer u. a. m.

Hierfür ein Beispiel. Seinen Entschluss zur Rückeroberung der Kolonie Saint-Domingue, wo aufständische Sklaven im Zuge der französischen Revolution die Macht ergriffen und die weißen Kolonialherren vertrieben hatten, begründete Napoleon so: „Je suis blanc et français, et ça suffit“ – „Ich bin Weißer und Franzose, und das genügt...“ Will sagen: Die von Napoleon angestrebte Wiedereinführung der Sklaverei, die mit einem militärischen Fiasko endete und in letzter Konsequenz zum Verkauf Louisianas an die Vereinigten Staaten führte – diese folgenreiche Fehlentscheidung wurde begründet mit einem klassischen Identitätsdiskurs. Dabei verschwieg Napoleon, dass er (so wie Stalin Georgier und Hitler Österreicher war) aus Korsika stammte und dass seine Frau Joséphine Land in den Kolonien besaß und damit seinen Entschluss zur Rückeroberung von Saint-Domingue beeinflusst hat. Umgekehrt beginnt die Verfassung Haitis, der zweitältesten Republik beider Amerikas, gegründet am 1. Januar 1804 von den Anführern des Sklavenaufstands, mit dem Satz: „Auf dem Territorium der Republik ist die Sklaverei für immer abgeschafft. Alle Einwohner von Haiti sind gleich und frei: Sie sind alle Neger, auch die Deutschen und Polen...“

Dieser rätselhafte Satz wird nur verständlich, wenn man weiß, dass in der von Napoleon entsandten Invasionsarmee auch deutsche und polnische Soldaten kämpften, die zu den Rebellen überliefen, als sie hörten, dass die Aufständischen die *Marseillaise* sangen: Neger, kreolisch *nèg*, ist in Haiti kein Schimpfwort, sondern gleichbedeutend mit Mensch. Die Farbe der Haut basiert auf einer kulturellen Zuschreibung, und nach haitianischem Recht bin ich ein weißer Neger, weil meine Großmutter väterlicherseits eine Kreolin aus einer alt eingesessenen Familie Haitis war, die nur zwei Worte deutsch sprach: „Schwein“ und „Kartoffeln“ – zwei Dinge, die sie bei Kuraufenthalten auf der Bühler Höhe kennen und schätzen lernte – zusammen mit Schwarzwälder Kirschtorte. Den mir zustehenden haitianischen Pass habe ich nach reiflicher Überlegung lieber nicht beantragt, weil man mich sonst umgebracht hätte, wie meine verstorbene Tante Jeanne zu sagen pflegte. Wer Familiengeheimnisse ausplaudert und sich noch dazu für haitianische Politik interessiert, lebt gefährlich in diesem Land, und die Lebenserwartung allzu neugieriger Reporter ist begrenzt...

Damit sind wir bei der Gegenwart angelangt, genauer gesagt bei der Frage nach dem wirtschaftlichen und politischen Niedergang Haitis, über dessen Ursachen sich die dortigen Intellektuellen seit Jahrzehnten die

Köpfe zerbrechen. Das Wort Niedergang klingt zu schwach: Die Rede ist von einer sich beschleunigenden Abwärtsspirale, deren vorläufiger Tiefpunkt das Erdbeben vom 12. Januar 2010 gewesen ist, das keine schicksalhafte Naturkatastrophe, sondern ein von Menschen gemachtes Desaster war, obwohl oder weil der haitianische Seismologe Claude Prépétit seit Jahren vor einem Beben der Stärke 7.0 in der Hauptstadtregion gewarnt hatte. Weder wurden Bauauflagen befolgt, noch Erdbebenübungen abgehalten, wie sie in Japan und Kalifornien gesetzlich vorgeschrieben sind – ganz zu schweigen vom Katastrophenschutz, der in Haiti nur auf dem Papier existiert. „Négligence criminelle“ – ‚kriminelle Vernachlässigung‘ steht auf Mauern und Hauswänden in Port-au-Prince, neben Graffitis, in denen Jesus um Hilfe gebeten, „Gnade für Haiti“ gefordert oder „Unsere Geduld ist am Ende“ verkündet wird.

2

„Wieviel Geld müssen wir Ihnen bezahlen, damit Sie endlich aufhören, über Haiti zu schreiben“, hat der schon damals legendäre Chef des Suhrkamp Verlags, Siegfried Unseld, vor Jahren zu mir gesagt. „Oder handelt es sich um Tahiti?“ Der Literaturnobelpreisträger V. S. Naipaul drückte dasselbe noch kürzer und drastischer aus mit dem Satz: „Stop writing about Haiti – it doesn’t sell!“

Die Frage ist berechtigt, warum ein mitteleuropäischer Schriftsteller sich mit einem entlegenen Inselstaat in der Karibik identifiziert, der am unteren Ende jedweder Statistik rangiert und nur durch Katastrophenmeldungen Schlagzeilen macht: In Haiti ist die Arbeitslosigkeit so hoch wie die Analphabetenrate - geschätzte 60 Prozent, und die Lebenserwartung so niedrig wie der Mindestlohn oder die tägliche Kalorienmenge; Malaria und Tuberkulose haben endemische Proportionen erreicht, ganz zu schweigen von Cholera oder Aids. Ist es unter diesen Umständen nicht sinnvoller, wenn ein deutscher Schriftsteller sich für den Mainstream *seiner* Gesellschaft interessiert und Romane über Ehekrisen, gleichgeschlechtliche Partnerschaften oder verlängerte Ladenschlusszeiten schreibt, statt vergeblich über die Ursachen der Unterentwicklung und die Mittel zu ihrer Überwindung zu grübeln? Aber auch der Umkehrschluss ist erlaubt, denn nirgendwo steht geschrieben, dass die künstlerische Phantasie keine Landes- und Sprachgrenzen überschreiten darf. Die Literatur hat dies zu allen Zeiten getan: Von Odysseus über Sindbad den Seefahrer bis zu Shakespeares *Sturm*, Defoes *Robinson* und Swifts *Gulliver*, von Voltaires *Candide* bis zu Jules Vernes’ *In 80 Tagen um die Welt*, und weiter von Bruce Chatwins *Traumpfaden* bis zu den *Traurigen Tropen* von Claude Lévi-Strauss. Streicht man diese und andere Titel aus dem Kanon der Klassiker, fürchte ich, dass unter dem Strich nicht viel übrig bleibt, denn Weltliteratur war und ist genau das, was der gängige Identitätsdiskurs negiert, eine Grenzüberschreitung nicht bloß im geographischen Sinn.

3

„Wenn er nicht auf Reisen ist, lebt er in Berlin“: Mit diesen Worten hat Hans Magnus Enzensberger, damals noch Herausgeber der „Anderen Bibliothek“, mein Leben und meine Arbeit charakterisiert - kurz und bündig, wie es seine Art ist. Seitdem geistert dieser Satz durch die Feuilletons und taucht, geringfügig variiert, in Buchkritiken, Klappentexten und Verlagsprospekten auf. Obwohl mir nicht ganz wohl ist bei der Vorstellung, als Reiseschriftsteller abgehakt zu werden, hat die von Enzensberger gewählte Formulierung viel für sich: Sie verweist auf die Relativität angeblich fester Größen wie Wohnort oder Lebensmittelpunkt, wie man auf Neuhochdeutsch sagt. Selbst die Sprache, die ein Autor benutzt, ist nicht unmittelbar gegeben, sondern Ergebnis einer bewussten Wahl: Es genügt, an dieser Stelle Joseph Conrad und Samuel Beckett zu nennen oder den Nobelpreisträger Joseph Brodsky, der seine Essays in Englisch, Gedichte aber auf Russisch schrieb. - „Who translates your books into German?“ Diese Frage wurde mir vor Jahren von einem Studenten in Südkalifornien gestellt, und ich war so perplex, dass ich mit der Antwort zögerte: „I write them directly in German“. - „Wow, that must be difficult!“ lautete die Reaktion des Studenten, der mehr vom Surfen verstand als von Literatur: Aus seiner Sicht wurde das Gros der weltweit gedruckten Bücher zuerst in Englisch geschrieben und dann für

Angehörige nationaler Minderheiten wie Araber, Chinesen und Deutsche in deren Idiome übersetzt. Jahre später, in Austin, Texas, wollte eine Studentin von mir wissen, was ich in der Nazizeit gemacht hätte. Die Antwort, dass ich 1944 geboren und bei Kriegsende ein Baby war, befriedigte sie nicht. Die Studentin kam in meine Sprechstunde, schloss die Tür hinter sich, was aus Gründen politischer Korrektheit verboten war, setzte sich auf den Schreibtisch, strich sich über die wohlgeformten Waden und sagte: „Jetzt kannst Du mir offen sagen, was Du in der Nazizeit angestellt hast.“ Vermutlich hatte sie zu viele Hollywood-Filme und TV-Dokumentationen gesehen, in denen sadistische SS-Offiziere wehrlose Häftlinge quälten.

Bin ich ein Kosmopolit? Ich zögere, die Frage mit *ja* zu beantworten, weil ich keinen Etikettenschwindel betreiben und mich nicht als Jude ausgeben will, der ich nicht bin. Mein Vater hatte Schwierigkeiten, den Ariernachweis zu erbringen, weil er der Sohn eines Deutschen und einer Haitianerin war: Nicht nur jüdische, auch afrikanische Vorfahren waren im Dritten Reich verpönt, und mein Vater fühlte sich vom NS-Staat bedroht. Er war kein Widerstandskämpfer, aber als stadtbekannter Nicht-Nazi ernannte ihn die amerikanische Besatzungsmacht 1945 zum Bürgermeister von Wetzlar, bevor er in den fünfziger Jahren ins Auswärtige Amt eintrat. Seine Herkunft prädestinierte ihn für den diplomatischen Dienst: Auf Haiti geboren, hatte er in Genf und London Völkerrecht studiert und bei einem jüdischen Doktorvater promoviert. Zu seinem Leidwesen war er in Bonn mit Ex-Nazis konfrontiert, die im Auswärtigen Amt Karriere machten. Mein Vater sprach fließend französisch und englisch; in diesem Punkt eiferte ich ihm nach, ohne zu ahnen, dass der Kosmopolitismus, für mich ein erstrebenswertes Ziel, anderswo als gefährliches Übel galt: Nicht bloß Adolf Hitler, auch Stalin war ein überzeugter Antisemit, für den Kosmopolit ein Schimpfwort und synonym mit Jude war: Beide galten als wurzellose Staatsfeinde, und nicht von ungefähr sagte Hitler kurz vor seinem Tod im Bunker der Reichskanzlei, er hätte alle Dolmetscher und Übersetzer erschießen lassen sollen, weil jeder, der mehr als nur seine Muttersprache spreche, ein Volksverräter sei. Dieses paranoide Programm hat Stalin in den Säuberungen der dreißiger und den antisemitischen Kampagnen der vierziger/fünfziger Jahre in die Tat umgesetzt: Wer deutsch sprach, war ein Nazispion, wer Japan besucht hatte, ein Agent des japanischen Imperialismus usf. Ganz zu schweigen von Maos gelehrigem Schüler Pol Pot, der jeden, der englisch oder französisch sprach, auf den Killing Fields der Roten Khmer abkehlen ließ – nur Führungskader wie Pol Pot, der in Paris studiert hatte und für Verlaines Lyrik schwärmte, fielen nicht unter dieses Verdikt.

4

Wer bin ich, woher komme ich, wohin gehe ich? Die letzte dieser drei Fragen wird mir am häufigsten gestellt, obwohl oder weil sie unbeantwortbar ist. Über die Zukunft kann ich keine gesicherten Aussagen machen: Ich weiß nur, dass ich eines nicht allzu fernen Tages sterben muss, aber selbst das ist eine Annahme, die diejenigen, die diese Erfahrung gemacht haben, nicht bestätigen, weil sie über das Sterben keine Auskunft geben können oder wollen. „Wovon man nicht sprechen kann, darüber muss man schweigen“, schreibt Wittgenstein, aber keiner hält sich an seinen Rat, denn die gängigste Frage, die mir nach der Rückkehr aus einem Kriegs- oder Krisengebiet gestellt wird, lautet nicht: „Wie war es in Haiti? Wie war es in Ruanda? Wie war es in Tschetschenien?“ sondern: „Wie geht es weiter mit Haiti, Ruanda oder Tschetschenien? Was wird die Zukunft bringen? Ist eine Lösung der Probleme in Sicht?“

Ich bin Schriftsteller, kein Prophet, und obwohl ich mir einbilde, Haiti besser zu kennen als Deutschland, kann ich die Zukunft nicht voraussagen, weil ich mehr als genug damit zu tun habe, Gegenwart und Vergangenheit zu verstehen. Es ist wie mit den Träumen, die angeblich auf Zukünftiges verweisen: Ein Aberglauben, der überall auf der Welt anzutreffen ist, obwohl nicht nur Freud uns lehrt, Träume anders zu deuten, im Hinblick auf Gegenwart und Vergangenheit – als unbewusste Erinnerung oder „unaufgelösten Tagesrest“, wie der Fachausdruck heißt.

Was hat das alles mit Literatur zu tun? Sehr viel, weil Kunst und Literatur Seismographen sind, die Risse im Fundament registrieren und künftige Beben vorausahnen – man denke nur an die Vorwegnahme des totalitären

Staats bei Kafka, Huxley oder Orwell. Die Zukunft hat schon begonnen, denn was einst deutsche Nationalliteratur hieß – ein Begriff, den die DDR wiederbelebte, um die Schriftsteller politisch zu vereinnahmen – was einst Nationalliteratur hieß, wird nicht bloß theoretisch in Frage gestellt, sondern von den Rändern her zersetzt durch Phänomene, die vorher als peripher oder marginal galten: Türkisch-deutsche Literatur, Frauenliteratur, Schwulenliteratur etc. Jede dieser Spezialliteraturen hat Kulturaufreiter und Bestseller hervorgebracht, und jede von ihnen zerfällt in weitere Untergruppen: Von der Arbeiter- und Angestelltenliteratur der siebziger Jahre, anknüpfend an Vorbilder aus der Weimarer Republik, führt *kein* direkter Weg zur Kanaksprak oder Lesbenliteratur. Das Problem ist, dass der Mainstream diese Entwicklungen nicht zur Kenntnis nimmt und so tut, als ginge türkisch-deutsche Literatur nur Türken etwas an oder als seien Schwulenromane nur für Schwule geschrieben – ein Missverständnis, das die so genannte Zielgruppentheorie befördern half. In Wahrheit wendet Literatur, die diesen Namen wirklich verdient, sich niemals nur an Türken oder Deutsche, sondern an alle Leser guten Willens, die bereit sind, ihre Botschaft zu hören: So wie die multiple Identität, von der eingangs die Rede war, nicht das Schicksal einer Minderheit, sondern unser aller Schicksal ist. Niemand ist ausschließlich Türke oder Deutscher, Christ, Jude oder Muslim. Ob wir es wahrhaben wollen oder nicht: Wir alle haben Patchwork-Identitäten, die es möglich machen, uns über politische und soziale, religiöse und kulturelle Grenzen hinweg miteinander zu verständigen.

Visiting Scholar from Berlin

Das IGCS freut sich sehr, Sibylle Benninghoff-Lühl vom Institut für Neuere deutsche Literatur an der Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin für zwei Monate an Cornell begrüßen zu dürfen. Sie verfügt über breite Erfahrungen in interdisziplinärer und internationaler Forschung und Lehre und hat zahlreiche Gastdozenturen im In- und Ausland wahrgenommen, u.a. in Nigeria, in Brasilien, in Kanada und in Thailand. Sie hat mehrere internationale Projekte erfolgreich geleitet, u.a. ein Projekt zum Voneinander-Lernen (Peer-Learning) von Interkultureller Kompetenz an Universitäten. Dieses Projekt wurde im Rahmen einer Gastprofessur mit Unterstützung des Innovationsfonds der Humboldt-Universität realisiert.



Während ihres Forschungsaufenthaltes an Cornell (Ende März bis Ende Mai 2012) wird PD Dr. Sibylle Benninghoff-Lühl sich mit dem *Buch der Natur* beschäftigen. Insbesondere wird sie sich mit Fragen der Autorschaft, der Signatur und des Lesens im Buch der Natur in Anschluss an die Untersuchungen zur Lesbarkeit der Welt von Hans Blumenberg beschäftigen. Ergänzend zu Blumenberg geht es ihr um konkrete Materialien des Buchs, nämlich um Holz, Glas und Stein. Zum Thema *Holzbuch* ist soeben erschienen: „Vom Buch als Schaukasten oder: Wunderbares Lesen. Die Holzbibliothek von Carl Schilbach (1788)“ in *Zeitschrift für Germanistik* N.F. XXII, 1/2012, S. 41-56. Im Rahmen

des German Studies Kolloquiums referiert Sibylle Benninghoff-Lühl am 27. April zum Thema *Citing Nature* über unterschiedliche Weisen des Zitierens aus dem Buch der Natur. Ihr unveröffentlichtes Manuskript „Das Buch der Natur zitieren: Carl Schilbach und die Autorschaft von Holzbüchern“ wird im April vorliegen und als Grundlage für das Corneller Kolloquium dienen.

Zu den weiteren Publikationen und Forschungsinteressen von Sibylle Benninghoff-Lühl gehören u.a. *Deutsche Kolonialromane 1884-1914 in ihrem Entstehungs- und Wirkungszusammenhang* (1983), *Figuren des Zitats. Eine Untersuchung zur Funktionsweise übertragener Rede* (1998), *Brasilien - Land ohne Gedächtnis?* (2001) und *Die ganze Welt ein Garten? Flora and Fauna im schriftlichen Nachlass von Ernst Jünger* (in Vorbereitung mit Unterstützung des Deutschen Literaturarchivs Marbach).

DAAD FACULTY SUMMER SEMINAR JUNE 17 - JULY 27, 2012

CORNELL UNIVERSITY

THE FUTURES OF INTERDISCIPLINARY GERMAN STUDIES

Seminar Director:

LESLIE A. ADELSON, Jacob Gould Schurman Professor
of German Studies and Director of the Institute
for German Cultural Studies, Cornell University

Stipends & Fees:

Participants are
eligible for a stipend;
a \$50 administrative
fee applies.

Photo credit: NASA, ESA, and M. Livio and the Hubble 20th Anniversary Team (STScI)

Program: Under the auspices of Cornell University's Institute for German Cultural Studies the program will combine regular seminar meetings and discussions with presentation of participants' research and occasional guest lectures. Seminar meetings will be conducted in English; advanced reading knowledge of German required.

Eligibility: Participation is open to faculty members in the Humanities and Social Sciences at colleges and universities in the U.S. and Canada. Applicants who have received their Ph.D.'s within the past two years but do not yet hold faculty appointments are encouraged to apply. Graduate students and Ph.D. candidates are not eligible. Participants are expected to have an active interest in German intellectual and cultural history and must be citizens or permanent residents of the U.S. or Canada.

APPLICATION DEADLINE: MARCH 1, 2012.

Form and instructions at <http://www.daad.org>. All application materials to be addressed to Prof. Adelson at the Institute for German Cultural Studies, 726 University Avenue, Cornell University, Ithaca NY 14850.

For further information about seminar content,
please contact Leslie A. Adelson at laa10@cornell.edu.
For other seminar-related questions,
please contact Olga Petrova at ogp2@cornell.edu.

PLEASE SEE REVERSE FOR SEMINAR DESCRIPTION

Futurism was once an artistic and political movement with multifaceted and contested ties to the historical avant-garde in Europe. Via Turkey and Russia Futurist motifs and legacies circulate in contemporary German literature and installation art through the phenomenon of late 20th-century migration. Yet in the wake of 1989, the end of state-sponsored communism in Europe, and 21st-century manifestations of globalization, many questions arise across the disciplines and socially about the status and conceptualization of “the future” in German culture and European life in an interconnected and precarious world, about utopia, hope, progress, optimism, potential, and even predictability in public life, virtual worlds, and critical thought. This historical juncture will serve as a springboard to reflect more broadly in the seminar on the yield of “futurity” for understanding German culture over time and interdisciplinary German Studies in relation to the humanities and social sciences today.

Selected readings and other focal materials will be exemplary rather than comprehensive, and selections will be based in part on participants’ research interests and disciplinary expertise. While the seminar takes its cue from new approaches to German culture and its influences in the academy and the world today, scholars concentrating on any historical period or cultural medium are welcome to apply, as the seminar aims to promote productive dialogue among various specializations within German Studies. Current debates about the proper place of area studies and national disciplines in educational institutions will provide an additional frame of reference for seminar discussion, and the future of German Studies in North America will be one of the many “futures” to be discussed.

The philosopher and novelist Jean Améry, who had survived imprisonment and torture under the Nazis, once called the future the “authentically human dimension.” If planning for and contemplating the future have long been staples of human culture, the forms and functions of futurity—in literature and other arts, philosophy and political science, historiography and critical theory, economics and cosmology, and so on—are culturally, historically, and conceptually specific. This seminar will investigate the status of futurity as an analytical category that may illuminate German culture and history in new ways, and discussion will revolve in the main around three key questions. Can we identify traditions of futurity that have shaped German-speaking cultures in specific ways? What aspects and forms of futurity have played especially important roles in German lives and cultures and why? How does an emphasis on futurity as a critical concept enhance our understanding of specific contributions that interdisciplinary German Studies can make to the academy now and in the foreseeable future?

Examining phenomena such as Faustian wagers about the future and postcolonial re-interpretations of Goethe’s *Faust*, the *Communist Manifesto* of 1848 and Herta Müller’s post-socialist literary reflections on futurity around 2000, Walter Benjamin’s angel of history and Alexander Kluge’s extraterrestrials, Enlightenment trajectories and the “extraordinary voyages” of science fiction in time, and much more, participants will be invited to assess the future as epistemological category, temporal dimension, rhetorical constellation, social vision, affective orientation, and imaginative ground in cultural materials, philosophical frameworks, and historical periods of pivotal interest to the field in general and their own research. If one influential anthropologist of globalization designates “the future as a cultural fact” (Arjun Appadurai) and another uses the utopian philosophy of Ernst Bloch to articulate “the method of hope” as a general desideratum for knowledge production in the 21st century (Hirokazu Miyazaki), the seminar additionally asks: How can we best understand the transnational network of futurity in which German culture and contemporary German Studies circulate in newly meaningful ways?

Lectures

In his paper, “Turkish and Jewish in Nazi Germany,” **Marc Baer** (University of California, Irvine) focused on the ways the Dönme, a group of Muslim converts from Judaism, challenged the efforts at racial, religious and national identification made by the Nazi party in Berlin and the German Embassy in Turkey during the first half of the twentieth century. Baer began with a brief survey of the variegated histories of this group of Ottoman Jews of primarily Spanish and Portuguese heritage who, forced to convert to Islam in the seventeenth century, developed a unique religious lifestyle involving a public practice of Islam and a private faith that combined elements of Judaism with their own Messianic beliefs.

In illuminating Germany’s and Turkey’s shared Jewish past through the interrelations of Turkish migration and the Holocaust, Baer began with the story of Isaak Behar, a Turkish Jew living in Nazi Germany who recalls in his autobiography the initial protection his Turkish citizenship seemed to offer against the first stages of Nazi anti-Semitism. In 1938, however, he and his family were stripped of their citizenship, labeled German Aliens, deemed stateless and ultimately subjected to anti-Semitic regulations and deportation like other Jews. In 1943, the Turkish government even rejected an offer from the Nazis that neutral countries could repatriate their

citizens. Baer then turned to the correspondence between the Nazis in Berlin and the German Embassy in Turkey concerning how to classify Dönme like Mümtaz Fazli Taylan, who eventually took over the Berlin-based Orak Company and managed its important economic ties between Germany and Turkey.

Whereas some considered the Dönme Jewish given their Judeo-Spanish roots, others argued that Dönme as Muslims and Turkish citizens should retain legal rights. Baer’s exploration of the

possibility and consequences of being identified as Jewish or Turkish



during the Third Reich not only expands the scope of scholarship on Nazi Germany by examining the interconnectedness of Turkish and German history, but also lends a new perspective on late twentieth- and early twenty-first century discussions regarding German citizenship rights for populations with Turkish backgrounds. (Katrina Nousek)

Peter Filkins



Karin de Boer



On November 9, a day marking the 73rd anniversary of the tragic and consequential event in the history of European Jewry known as *Kristallnacht*, **Peter Filkins** (Bard College at Simon's Rock) delivered a lecture entitled "Translating the Holocaust: Rediscovering H.G. Adler's novel *Panorama*." A survivor of Theresienstadt and Auschwitz, H.G. Adler is primarily known in Holocaust scholarship as the author of *Theresienstadt. 1941-1945. Das Antlitz einer Zwangsgemeinschaft, Geschichte Soziologie Psychologie* (1955), an account of life in Theresienstadt. His poetry and novelistic work, however, have received little attention.

As the translator who has rendered the novels *Eine Reise* (2002) and *Panorama* (1988) accessible to an English-speaking readership, Filkins offered insights into Adler's biography and work, focusing

Peter Filkins

mainly on *Panorama*. Initially written in 1948 and based on autobiographical details and Adler's thoroughly documented experience of the said concentration camp, *Panorama* was published first in late 1988 and then in 2011 in Filkins's English translation. A *Bildungsroman* written in the tradition of the modernist prose of Virginia Woolf and James Joyce, *Panorama* follows the life journey of Josef Kramer from his early years in Bohemia (at the time part of Austro-Hungary) through his experience in Theresienstadt and finally life in post-war London.

Integrating excerpts from *Panorama* into his introduction to Adler's novelistic work, Filkins further highlighted the affinities between Adler's prose and W. G. Sebald's writing with respect to the use of photography as well as the distancing effect of the fictionalizing gaze. (Andreea Mascan)

On November 10, **Karin de Boer** (Katholieke Universiteit Leuven) gave a talk entitled, "A Greek Tragedy? A Hegelian Perspective on Greece's Sovereign Debt Crisis," as well as a workshop the following day entitled "On Hegel: The Sway of the Negative." Professor de Boer's talk used Hegel's insights into Attic tragedy to shed light on the contemporary tragedy of modern Greece (and indeed, Europe): the current European Union debt crisis. Distinguishing between the late Hegel's notion of dialectics and his earlier notion of the tragic, de Boer argued that in order to understand the logic of the European crisis, we must return to the insights of this earlier moment in Hegel's thought.

De Boer suggested that according to Hegel's concept of the tragic, one term involved in the dialectic does not sublate the other, but rather the two terms are necessarily complementary and neither can be reduced to a moment of the other: any attempt to do so results in imbalance and tragedy. Accordingly, Oedipus's failure is that he attempts to extricate himself from his fate, which is precisely the move that confers his fate upon him. De Boer then drew a parallel between the story of Oedipus and the current crisis, which entails an unbalanced relation between the particular interests of civil society and the universal interests of the state.

Karin de Boer

Ancient Greece's tragedy is thus modern Greece's tragedy. Oedipus is both the liberator of the city of Thebes (as conqueror of the Sphinx), and its polluter (responsible, due to his incest, for Apollo's plaguing of the city). The same is true of the contemporary situation: if individual freedom, characteristic of modernity for Hegel, has led to today's globalized economy, it is this very freedom that, unregulated by the state, has now returned to harm us.

Oedipus's attempt to deny his fate is comparable to the denial by modern politicians of any structural problems concerning the economic status quo. If, de Boer argued, the modern freedom of the individual gave rise to both the particular interests of civil society as well as to the state that is subordinate to these interests, this balance currently needs to be redressed. Such a shift demands moving beyond modern liberal politics, in which the state acts only to protect the interests of civil society, and toward a model in which the state can actively intervene. For only through the state's refusal to be wholly subordinate to the economy—and vice versa—can another tragedy be avoided. Considering, however, the rise of a technocratic Europe, de Boer concluded that such a shift is unlikely to occur. (Matteo Calla)

Lectures

In “A ‘Sense of Possibility’: Robert Musil, Mysticism, and the Invention of Aesthetic Experience,” **Niklaus Largier** (University of California, Berkeley) explored how Musil takes up Meister Eckhart’s speculative mysticism—a reinterpretation of negative theology according to which divine truth cannot be expressed in concepts—in his philosophy of possibility. According to Largier, possibility for Musil is not simply that which was not (or not yet) real, but rather the ability to conceive of all that might be in the sense of not attributing more value to what is than to what is not. The divine darkness that is the ground of the soul in Meister Eckhart’s writings finds, for Largier, its literary correlate in Musil’s understanding of essayism as a space of receptivity, possibility, and conscious Utopianism, in which thought engages and experiments with itself and, in so doing, is liberated from determined, rational order.

Next turning to Musil’s review of the contemporary film theorist Béla Balázs, Largier connected possibility to aesthetic experience as he pointed to the novel relationship between objects and viewer that the medium of film seemed

to promise in the early twentieth century. By examining Balázs’s claims about silent film moving the figurative to the surface in ways that could free viewers and things from a discursive regime, Musil is able to transform Meister Eckhart’s mysticism into

a reflection on things and relations—in short, on what Largier called processes of figuration. Finally, Largier invoked Herder’s discussion of Winckelmann’s contemplation of a statue in order to demonstrate a configuration of aesthetic

experience (for Herder, the transfiguration of seeing through touch, whereby the plasticity of a figure arouses the soul), understood as a realm of possibility that might offer a way of transcending finitude.

By attempting to reconcile the different ways the soul has functioned in theological, mystical, and philosophical works with modern theories of aesthetic experience, Largier concluded that the ground of the soul becomes a space for modernist experimentation and its deployment of rhetorical forces that circumscribe both cognitive and sensual knowledge. (Katrina Nousek)

Niklaus Largier



On October 25, the Consul General of the Federal Republic of Germany, **Dr. Busso von Alvensleben**, gave a lecture entitled “Germany’s Role in Europe: Challenges and Opportunities.” The talk revolved around the recent crisis in Greece, which has challenged the European Union as well as the effectiveness of its political and economic apparatus.

Von Alvensleben pointed to the challenges associated with the implementation of fiscal policies, economic growth and accession debates, notorious for being laborious, time-consuming processes: all decisions have to be coordinated with the needs and aspirations of the twenty-seven states involved, and every solution requires consultation and revision. While von Alvensleben referred to the year-long periods of parliamentary debates or referenda that usually precede any decision-making as a veritable “nightmare,” he identified this slowness as a prerequisite for moving forward, and as a “test of the sustainability of the European idea.”

In light of both the recent crisis and the Second World War, the Consul addressed Germany’s ambivalence about taking a leading position in Europe, but nevertheless stressed that Europe and the Euro were a priority for the country, quoting Chancellor Merkel:

“If the Euro fails, Europe fails.”

The talk ended with the Consul General’s reiteration of the European ideal, which he believes will serve to prevent the divisions that engulfed the continent in the second half of the twentieth century. For Germany’s part, the Consul General assured that

it “will do whatever is necessary to keep the Euro on track.”

The questions posed to the Consul General further probed the unequal relationship between politics and economics in the EU. Other questions addressed the tension between economic integration and Europe as an ideological construct, the roles of Christianity and Islam in the European vision, the split of the European market, and other aspects of European integration and convergence. (Anna Horakova)

Busso von Alvensleben



Signale online forum

Jane O. Newman, Michael Jennings, and Victoria Kahn on *Benjamin's Library*

From November 28 through December 3, 2011, Cornell's book series Signale: Modern German Letters, Cultures, and Thought hosted an online forum with Jane O. Newman, author of the latest Signale title, *Benjamin's Library: Modernity, Nation, and the Baroque*. The book offers a provocative new reading of Walter Benjamin's 1928 *Origin of the German Tragic Drama*, one that systematically attends to the book's place in the ideologically-charged discussions of the Baroque in Benjamin's day.



Kahn

The public event unfolded within a blog format and featured Newman, Professor of Comparative Literature at the University of California, Irvine, in dialogue about her book with Michael Jennings and Victoria Kahn. Jennings is Class of 1900 Professor

of Modern Languages and Professor of German at Princeton University; he is the author and editor of several important books on Benjamin and general editor of the standard English-language edition of Benjamin's works, the *Selected Writings* published by Harvard University Press. Kahn is the Katharine Bixby Hotchkis Professor of English and Professor of Comparative Literature at the University of California, Berkeley. Kahn recently made an extended visit to the Cornell campus as a member of the 2011 faculty of the School of Criticism and Theory, where she led a seminar entitled "Early Modern/Post Modern: Political Theology, Secularism, Literature." She is currently at work on a related book project

with the working title "The Future of Illusion"; it explores the role of early modern texts in the construction of modernity. The three scholars probed *Benjamin's Library* in a series of blog posts. The lively exchange included questions and interventions from the public.

Newman's title - *Benjamin's Library* - refers in part to Pierre Macherey's claim that "every book contains in itself the labyrinth of a library." Newman's method involves a return to Benjamin's source texts together with a reconstruction of the context of the contemporary debates in which those texts were embedded. "Reading a book with its library," Newman writes, "means calling the texts of a book's library as witnesses"; Benjamin's "library" consists of the "archive of books and journals in which the discussions of the Baroque that he engages in the *Tragic Drama* book were conducted" (BL 13). Newman shows that these discussions, extending from German unification in 1871 up to and after the First World War, were concerned with the "construction of the Baroque as the origin of a peculiarly German modernity" (BL xi). Reading the *Tragic Drama* book with its "library," Newman maintains, "reveals how difficult it would have been for Benjamin not to adopt the premises of debates about the Baroque as a period of national rebirth circulating at the time" (BL 12) and she holds that Benjamin's engagement with the 17th-century dramatic works of the Second Silesian School is best understood in the context of these late 19th- and early 20th-century debates. Despite the critical impetus of Benjamin's project, the terms of discussion in



Jennings

the *Tragic Drama* book resonated closely enough with the established discourse about German nationhood that Benjamin's text could be taken up by conservative readers and writers far afield from the declared positions of its leftist, German Jewish author. Rather astonishingly, Newman is even able to trace a more or less covert reception of Benjamin's ideas on the Baroque in scholarship published in Germany well into the National Socialist era.

In the forum discussion, both Kahn and Jennings emphasized the persuasiveness and importance of Newman's argument about the *Tragic Drama* book, that it participates in an ideologically-inflected discussion of the Baroque's role in a German "narrative of nation." Jennings voiced a degree of skepticism, however, about the claim, by Newman, that Benjamin's treatment of allegory in the mourning plays served to expose "the ideology of the stability of the Westphalian state." Rather than a "distorted image of the political," Jennings insisted, Benjamin understood allegory as an "attempt to conjure meaning in an empty world." Although "partial" to Newman's historical contextualization of Benjamin's treatment of the Baroque, Kahn also struck a note of caution, asking how to square such an approach with Benjamin's own critique of historicism. Newman stressed in her response that she rejects a "conventional reduction of historical contextualization to historicism," insisting that reading Benjamin's reflections on the early modern past in terms of his early 20th-century present allows new constellations with 21st-century concerns to emerge. Contextualizing Benjamin's investigations of the Baroque "in terms of issues of nationalism and modernity as they were discussed during the inter-war years,"

Newman asserted, can "begin to set his inquiry into this specific moment of the early modern past free from that particular history so that it might circulate into our own time." Rather than a "deterministic" historical reading, then, one that would "confine" our understanding of Benjamin's Baroque to the concerns of his day, Newman is interested in this question: "what kind of optic [do] our own (post)modern inquiries into these same periods provide, what becomes newly visible in both the past and the present, in other words, when we read them with and through one another"?

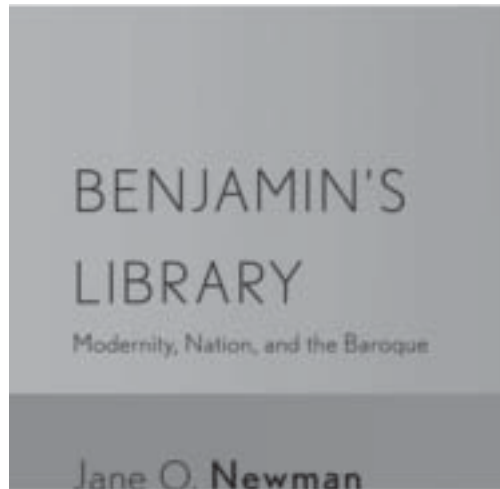
Ultimately, the discussants agreed that Newman has produced an "extraordinarily rich and provocative book, one with implications for other studies of modern



Newman

readers of early modern texts" (Kahn), and one that "achieves something wholly new and remarkable as it teases out the manner in which debates on the role of 'baroque' play into the construction of a German nationalist ideology after 1871" (Jennings).

The discussion in its entirety will remain accessible on the Signale author forum blog: <http://blogs.cornell.edu/signale2011newman/>. Print and electronic editions of *Benjamin's Library* can be purchased from the Signale website, which also provides a substantial free sample of the text: <http://signale.cornell.edu/>. Signale is an electronic and print book series in literary studies, criticism, cultural studies, and intellectual history pertaining to the German-speaking world, co-published by Cornell University Press and Cornell University Library and edited by Cornell's Peter Uwe Hohendahl. (Kizer Walker)



Inaugural Hohendahl Graduate Essay Prize in Critical Theory Awarded

The Institute for German Cultural Studies is pleased to announce that Paul Flaig, a doctoral candidate in Comparative Literature and German Studies, has been awarded the inaugural Peter Uwe Hohendahl Graduate Essay Prize in Critical Theory. Established in 2011 on the occasion of Prof. Hohendahl's retirement from Cornell's teaching faculty, this prize honors a distinguished scholar of international renown for his many publications on German literatures of modernity, comparative intellectual histories, critical theory writ large and the Frankfurt School especially, and the history and desiderata of university education in Europe and North America.

Titled "Brecht, Chaplin and Marxism's Comic Inheritance," this year's prize-winning submission especially impressed the selection committee with its scholarly erudition, intellectual rigor, and original insight. Paul Flaig summarizes his findings in an abstract that he was kind enough to prepare for GCN readers: "Although many scholars have discussed the influence of film star Charlie Chaplin on critical theorists like Theodor Adorno, Walter Benjamin and Bertolt Brecht, few have examined the broader political ramifications of this influence. The case of Brecht is particularly instructive as such influence spanned the playwright's entire career, from intense fandom in the early twenties to close friendship during his exile years in Hollywood. The intertwined history of Chaplin and Brecht suggests the importance of reciprocally reading these two figures, especially considering the politico-ethical concern they inherit from their nineteenth-century forerunner, Karl Marx. If the Marx of The Eighteenth Brumaire is forced into satirical anger by the intrusive interruption of the lumpenproletariat, Chaplin and Brecht make this discontinuous, distracted and trampish figure the central object of their formal and narrative strategies. Beyond the teleology of Marxist science, the lumpen performs the political by exposing the repressed nonsense of social relations, thus suggesting their critique and transformation. This essay argues that Brecht's epic theater screens these relations in a Chaplin-inflected montage of gestures, positions and attitudes, finding a means, to paraphrase Marx, to separate from the past cheerfully."

The IGCS received several outstanding essays for prize consideration in fall semester and is additionally pleased to announce that two of them have been awarded Honorable Mention. Matteo Calla (German Studies) earned this distinction for his submission on "Adorno's Critique of Benjamin's Montage Aesthetics" and Nathan Taylor (German Studies) for his essay "Towards a Theory of Negative Realism in Adorno's Aesthetic Theory." The IGCS extends warm congratulations to all the essayists for their exceptionally fine work and serious engagement with critical theory. The Peter Uwe Hohendahl Graduate Essay Prize in Critical Theory is made possible by a generous gift from an anonymous donor, in whose words "critical theory and critical historical inquiry are fundamental to engaged encounter with our times." The next call for new submissions will be issued in fall with a deadline of October 15. Special congratulations now to Paul Flaig, Matteo Calla, and Nathan Taylor!

Interdisciplinary Symposium Wittgenstein among the Disciplines April 21, 2012

The influence of Ludwig Wittgenstein's philosophy of language for the study of logic, ethics, religion, and aesthetics is wide-ranging, while his relationship to the discipline of philosophy remains contested. In addition, Wittgenstein is often claimed by domains such as literary criticism, political thought, visual art and performance studies. Following Stanley Cavell's arguments about the "availability" of Wittgenstein's thought, and motivated by Wittgenstein's own critique of traditional philosophy and by his anti-systematic philosophical project, scholars across the disciplines position themselves in Wittgensteinian modes for addressing the political and social questions of the later twentieth and early twenty-first century. This interdisciplinary symposium will explore the overlap and tensions between the terms "appropriation," "application," and "availability" as they relate to an academic discipline's relationship to Wittgenstein. The event will feature both scholars and artists, and seeks to develop new methodologies for approaching Wittgenstein's thought in interdisciplinary contexts.

Keynote Speaker: Martin Puchner (Byron and Anita Wien Professor of Drama and of English and Comparative Literature, Harvard University)

For further details, please contact Gizem Arslan (ga56@cornell.edu) and Althea Sircar (sircar@ucla.edu).

CONFERENCE ON "THEORIZING IN SOCIAL SCIENCE" APRIL 21, 2012

The main theme of this conference, which will take place at the A.D. White House, is that social scientists may want to move from being primarily concerned with theory, to being primarily concerned with theorizing. Theorizing is particularly fertile when it takes place in the context of discovery, that is, before one has to engage in whatever it takes to prove to one's profession that one is correct. This is where imagination, intuition, abduction and much much more have a crucial role to play. The conference is interdisciplinary, and the speakers include: Randall Collins (sociology), Daniel Klein (economics), Karin Knorr Cetina (sociology), Jim March (organization theory), Trevor Pinch (science and technology studies), Steve Turner (philosophy) and Karl Weick (business administration). The conference is organized by Richard Swedberg (Cornell, Sociology).

WITTGENSTEIN'S VISIT TO ITHACA IN 1949

On February 27, at 4:30 p.m. in the Guerlac Room in the A.D. White House, Trevor Pinch and Richard Swedberg will present their paper "Wittgenstein's Visit to Ithaca in 1949: On the Importance of Details". The event is co-sponsored by Cornell's Society for the Humanities and the Institute for German Cultural Studies. The paper presents Wittgenstein's three months in Ithaca in the summer of 1949 drawing partly on a set of new documents that the authors have located. The theoretical focus is on details, a topic that so far has attracted little attention. During his visit to Ithaca Wittgenstein participated in discussions with Norman Malcolm, Max Black, O.K. Bouwsma and others. He also made a couple of appearances at Cornell, which are presented through the eyes of various participants. The paper ends with an attempt to show what a theory and analysis of details may look like.

The Legacy of Kant III: The Fate of Kant after 1945

(September 16-17, 2011)

Peter Gilgen (Cornell University) was the first speaker of the conference dedicated to exploring the legacy of Kant after 1945. His lecture, “In the Shadow of Disaster: Hannah Arendt’s Kantianism,” traced the extent to which Kant’s philosophy played a role in Arendt’s political theory.

Gilgen argued that for Arendt, Kant’s critical philosophy remains latently political, yet in her own explicitly political project she is able to make use of Kant’s idea of the “*sensus communis*.” While Gilgen demonstrated the similarities between Arendt and Kant on this particular issue, he was also quick to underscore their differences. Gilgen further argued that Kant’s theory of the political is situated in a world of continuity, a world in which progress would be the result of a political system ready to use force and punishment in order to establish and maintain order. By contrast, Arendt’s theory of the political envisions a world in which forgiveness is a necessary precondition. Another difference between the two lies in how Arendt understands human action to have no telos: since we do not know what we do, why should a political system

punish our actions? Kant, on the other hand, considers forgiveness to be a moral and not a political issue. Throughout the talk, Gilgen invoked major interlocutors of both Arendt and Kant, adding thereby a wealth of information regarding the broader philosophical tradition in which these figures are situated. (Matt Stoltz)

In his talk on “Human Freedom and the Autonomy of Art: Adorno as a Reader of Kant,” **Peter Uwe Hohendahl** (Cornell University) examined the Kantian legacy in Adorno’s aesthetic thought. Hohendahl began by noting that while Kant figures as a target of criticism in the *Dialektik der Aufklärung*, Adorno’s attitude toward Kant generally became more favorable after his return to Germany in the 1950s. While Hegel remains the central reference point for Adorno’s lectures on aesthetics (as Adorno held that the Kantian judgment of taste is extrinsic to the artwork and cannot ground a theory of art), Hohendahl emphasized the importance of several Kantian motives in these lectures: first, Adorno endorses Kant’s insistence that art is about more than the “agreeable,” i.e.,



Peter Gilgen

mere gustatory pleasure; second, Adorno rehabilitates the figure of natural beauty against what he perceives to be the anthropocentrism of Hegel’s exclusive focus on artistic beauty; and third, he critically appropriates Kant’s concept of the dynamic sublime. Adorno decontextualizes the dynamic sublime from its function in Kant’s system (where it is restricted to natural phenomena and ultimately serves to demonstrate the superiority of reason over the natural realm) and recontextualizes it within a Romantic artistic sensibility as that which is incommensurate with subjective representation. In the context of Romantic art’s preference for the dissonant and incongruent, Kant’s discussion

of the sublime becomes a tool for understanding the sensibility characteristic of modern art.

Hohendahl concluded by pointing out that in the posthumously published *Ästhetische Theorie*, Kant assumes an even more prominent role, while the influence of Hegel is diminished. Although Adorno still opposes grounding a theory of art in the judgment of taste, Kantian motives are now closely integrated with Adorno's own discourse and provide an important background for Adorno's discussion of art. As an example, Hohendahl cited the concept of "truth-content," whose central paradox—that by making, art hits upon what lies beyond mere human making—he traced back to Adorno's re-interpretation of the Kantian sublime. (Johannes Wankhammer)

In her paper "Agreement and Consent in Kant and Habermas: Can Kantian Constructivism be fruitful for Democratic Theory?," **Christina Lafont** (Northwestern University) examined the prospects for extending Kantian constructivist approaches in moral theory to legal questions. She highlighted the tendency to assume that the Kantian notion of free and reasonable agreement is able to ground not only an account of the substantive correctness of legal norms but also a theory of the legitimacy of their enforcement. In particular, Kantian constructivism would seem well suited to provide a criterion of democratic legitimacy.

Lafont's analysis further uncovered the pitfalls of trying

to account for the legitimacy of the enforcement of legal norms in terms of the notion of agreement that Kantian constructivist approaches often work with, given that the notion in question is one of *hypothetical agreement*, and thus builds in a number of normative constraints (such as being voluntary and rational), rather than one of *actual consent*. For one thing, if Kantian constructivism attempts to explain the validity of collective political decisions in terms of hypothetical agreement, it is unclear how it could be instrumental in defending democracy, since democracy is a system of government in



Richard Miller

which decisions derive their validity from being *actually* authorized by citizens.

Lafont singled out Habermas's discourse theory as the contemporary constructivist model best suited to do justice to both the substantive correctness and the legitimate enforcement of norms. Stressing that these two dimensions of a norm's validity must be regarded as logically independent, Lafont argued that the

concept of discursive agreement operative in discourse theory could lead to an adequate account of democratic legitimacy only if it is not simultaneously proposed as the foundation for developing an account of substantive correctness. (Ana-Maria Andrei)

Richard Miller (Cornell University) began his talk "Rawls and Global Justice: A Dispute over a Kantian Legacy" by identifying the two primary ways in which the philosopher John Rawls regarded himself as an intellectual heir to Kant. Firstly, there is Rawls's use of the original position, which states that the principles of justice should be measured according to what the members of a society would choose without knowledge of their respective advantages or disadvantages. Secondly, there is Rawls's view of international justice, which was shaped by Kant's claim that international justice consists of terms of confederation suitable to free and sovereign peoples.

But contemporary philosophers have, according to Miller, denounced Rawls's two-fold inheritance from Kant as incoherent. The crux of this dispute rests on the Standard Case, which concerns instances in which political duties would dictate transnational help. Rawls's critics tend to attack the Standard Case for internationalizing the domestic original position and the political duty to reduce inequality. Miller argued against these critics, claiming that Rawls can still account for a cosmo-

politanism of need that neither entails global egalitarianism nor forecloses on the demand to reduce poverty worldwide. To support these claims, Miller argued that egalitarianism does not flow from a globalized original position. This position, however, also raises the question of whether the need to relieve poverty globally goes beyond Rawls's international norms, or rather confirms them.

In the final part of his talk, Miller turned to the limitations on the global applicability of the original position, ultimately suggesting that Rawls's and Kant's shared opposition

to injustice compels us to move beyond the limitations of the Standard Case and toward a more thorough investigation of the various abuses of power. (Alex Phillips)

In his paper titled "Kant, Sellars and the Myth of the Given," **Eric Watkins** (University of California, San Diego) highlighted the different understandings of the Myth of the Given operative in the arguments proposed by Wilfrid Sellars and John McDowell. If the former rejects the "Myth of the Given" because he thinks that sensations cannot be self-justifying and thus

cannot fully ground perceptual knowledge, the latter's repudiation of the Myth is motivated by his more radical stance that the given cannot play *any* role in accounting for the knowledge we possess. In contrast to McDowell, Sellars endorses the Kantian position that sensations are necessary for perceptual knowledge to the extent that they guide our cognitive process "from without." Thus, As Watkins pointed out, if McDowell ironically accuses Sellars of endorsing a version of the Myth, it is because McDowell interprets the infamous view in a weaker way than Sellars.

Visiting Scholar from Gießen (March 25-April 14, 2012)

Corneller Kollegen und Studierende freuen sich sehr, Prof. Dr. Uwe Wirth im Rahmen des Fakultätsaustausches zwischen dem hiesigen Institute for German Cultural Studies und dem International Graduate Centre for the Study of Culture der Justus-Liebig-Universität Gießen in diesem Frühjahr begrüßen zu dürfen. Seit 2007 ist er Professor für Neuere deutsche Literatur und Kulturwissenschaft am Institut für Germanistik der Justus-Liebig-Universität Gießen. Zuvor war er von 2005 bis 2007 wissenschaftlicher Koordinator des Zentrums für Literatur- und Kulturforschung in Berlin.

Seine Promotion über Theorien des Komischen (erschienen im Winterverlag unter dem Titel: *Diskursive Dummheit. Abduktion und Komik als Grenzphänomene des Verstehens*, 1999) und seine Habilitation über die Herausgeberfiktion in der Literatur um 1800 (publiziert im Fink-Verlag unter dem Titel: *Die Geburt des Autors aus dem Geist der Herausgeberfiktion. Editoriale Rahmung im Roman um 1800: Wieland, Goethe, Brentano, Jean Paul und E.T.A. Hoffmann*, 2008) wurden an der Goethe-Universität



Frankfurt geschrieben. Darüber hinaus hat er sich intensiv mit Performanz-, Schrift- und Kulturtheorie auseinandergesetzt – eine Theoriemelange, die ihn in eigener Darstellung zu seinem gegenwärtigen Projekt inspiriert hat: „der Auseinandersetzung mit Hybriditätstheorien biologischer, kultureller und literaturwissenschaftlicher Provenienz mit dem Konzept der Pfropfung, wie es von Theoretikern wie Jacques Derrida, aber auch von Schriftstellern wie Jean Paul ins Spiel gebracht wurden. Dabei interessiert mich insbesondere die Frage, inwiefern das Konzept der Pfropfung als eine Metapher fürs Schreiben und Zitieren das Konzept der Hybridität schärfen oder gar ablösen könnte. Kommt nach der Hybridität eine Art *Greffologie*?“ Zu diesem Thema referiert unser Gast im

Rahmen des German Studies Kolloquiums am 30. März.

Zu seinen wichtigsten Monographien und Sammelbänden zu Themen wie Pfropfen, Kulturwissenschaft, Performanz u.v.a.m. zählen: *Bewegen im Zwischenraum* (2012), *Impfen, Pfropfen, Transplantieren* (2011), *Konjektur und Krux* (2010), *Logiken und Praktiken der Kulturforschung* (2008), *Kulturwissenschaft. Eine Auswahl grundlegender Texte* (2008) und *Performanz. Von der Sprachphilosophie zu den Kulturwissenschaften* (2002).

In the first half of the paper, Watkins offered, on Sellars's behalf, a Kantian response to the challenge posed by McDowell of rendering intelligible how sensations contribute anything to cognition. Sellars maintains that the given cannot play any justificatory role, and stresses that what is needed for that task is a *taking* of what is given as instantiating a particular property. Watkins employed the Kantian notion of a *function* as a way of fleshing out the *takings* Sellars discusses, thus amending Sellars in a spirit that is still Kantian.

Watkins next drew on Kant and Sellars to answer the following three questions, which together clarify a number of crucial aspects concerning sensations: a) What is the ontological status of sensations? b) What kind of representational content do sensations have (if any)? and c) What is the exact sense in which sensations guide the cognitive process from without? (Ana-Maria Andrei)

In her paper on "Anthropology and Critique in Kant and Foucault," **Michelle Kosch** (Cornell University) demonstrated how an understanding of Kant might inform a reading of Foucault, and vice versa. Her paper focused on two Kantian concerns in Foucault's work: anthropology, meaning theoretical knowledge about human agency, and critique, or the "critical ethos" of the Enlightenment. Kosch began with an examination of Kant's

ethics, which contains a pure part of *a priori* truths, and an empirical part, which is the domain of anthropology. Here she explained Kant's distinction between physiological anthropology, which concerns "what *nature* makes of the human being," and pragmatic anthropology, which concerns "what *he* as a free-acting agent makes of himself, or can and should make of himself." The im-



Eric Watkins

portance of Kant's pragmatic anthropology is that it posits human characteristics not as the product of nature alone, but as, in part, the work of freedom.

With this in mind, Kosch turned to Foucault's work on the human sciences, arguing that Foucault's genealogies aim to convince us that some sciences we assumed to belong to physiological anthropology in fact belong to pragmatic anthropology, and thus involve freedom. One example is Foucault's examination of the way psychiatry and psychology started to construe

themselves as sciences and thus claimed to be physiological.

In the second part of her talk, Kosch turned to Kant's and Foucault's shared critique of authority. Examining what critical reflection meant for Foucault, Kosch contested the view that Foucault was an amoralist or moral relativist. Although Foucault differs from Kant by never appealing to *a priori* moral principles, he still demonstrates a moral concern. By showing, for example, that a critique of the prison was coeval with the very inception of the prison system, Foucault was able, Kosch argued, to provide a much more powerful critique. Kosch thus labeled Foucault's view of ethics as "contextualist," in which the critique is based on specific relations of power. But for both Kant and Foucault, Kosch concluded, the human sciences and the project of critique are equally necessary if we are to continue to know ourselves. (Tara Beaney)

Jeffrey Librett's (University of Oregon) talk, entitled "Aesthetics in Deconstruction: Kant in Derrida," addressed the legacy of Kant in the context of deconstruction. Librett began the lecture by juxtaposing the idea of deconstruction as an anti-aesthetic process—insofar as it breaks down the objects of its analysis—with the idea of deconstruction as an aesthetic act with respect to its practice of free-play. This observation raises the question:

Which aspects of Kant are confirmed and which are negated in Derrida's work?

Derrida, Librett argued, perceives a number of disturbances or ruptures in the transcendental philosophy that can be traced back to the political circumstances from which Kant's philosophy emerged. By exploring this discourse through Derrida's analysis of Kant's examples of the beautiful in the *Critique of Judgment*, Librett subsequently argued that Derrida finds Kant's distinction between adherent beauty and free beauty to mark both a presence and an absence. According to Librett, Derrida becomes interested in this dichotomy when, for example, Kant defines the "disgusting" as a kind of forced enjoyment like the sense of smell, which appears to contain both presence and absence, or rather content without perceivable form. (Matt Stoltz)

The conference concluded with a presentation from **Gregg Lambert** (Syracuse University), titled "Kant's Bastards: Deleuze and Lyotard." Lambert examined the reception of Kant in the work of Gilles Deleuze and Jean-François Lyotard, asserting that both thinkers reacted against historical and institutional pressures in order to reinterpret or reinvent Kant's work in a way that still dominates readings of Kant in France and the United States.

Lambert employed the term "bastard" to suggest the ambivalent stance that Deleuze and Lyotard took in relation to Kant as well as to the French

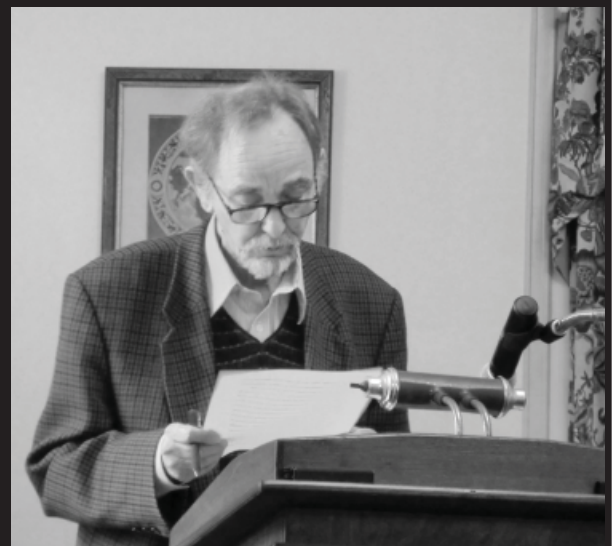


Gregg Lambert

academy in which both thinkers were trained. A bastard child is not recognized by its father, and in turn does not hold the right to claim such recognition. By extension, it also cannot claim an inheritance or heritage. Rather than thus succeed Kant's legacy or the institutional practices of the old guard of French philosophy, Deleuze and Lyotard adopted the status of the bastard child. The result was a philosophy stylized as distinctly French but that also expressed the national sentiment of the generation of French scholars who rose to prominence in the 1960s and 70s.

Lambert argued that Deleuze in particular was unable to accept the version of Kant bequeathed to him, and chose, rather, to invent Kant anew in the context of Modernism. Drawing from modernist literary sources, for example, Deleuze "grafts" modernist art onto

Kant's *Third Critique*. Similarly, Lyotard reevaluates the Kantian sublime in relation to modern art; rather than focusing on natural forms, he advocates freedom from form. For Lyotard, non-figural, abstract art does violence to itself and to its assigned cultural status as art, but in so doing frees both itself and the spectator's imagination. What results is a critical enthusiasm, which implies a socialized subject that is receptive or susceptible to moral ideas and ethics. For Deleuze, such susceptibility is culturally trained rather than essentially human, as Kant posits. For both of these thinkers, aesthetic and moral philosophy are thus grounded in artistic movements and historical and cultural specificity, and must at the same time resist domination from the history of philosophy. (Miyako Hayakawa)



Peter Hohendahl

Thomas Kling and the Avant-Gardes

August 26, 2011

The fall colloquium series commenced with **Arina Rotaru**, doctoral candidate in the Department of German Studies at Cornell, who delivered a paper entitled “Thomas Kling and the Avant-Gardes.” Rotaru’s paper mapped out the influences that have informed the post-1989 German lyric, focusing on the status of the avant-gardes once the binaries associated with the Cold War had been dissolved. Rotaru proposed that sound—and particularly the tropes of dissonance and harmony that had once permeated the discourse of modernism and the historical avant-gardes—reemerged in the context of German post-reunification. Among these reappraisals, Rotaru highlighted the West German avant-garde poet Thomas Kling, whose poetic sound performances or *Sprachinstallationen* yield an aesthetics of innovation well suited for the post-*Wende* geopolitical climate.



For Kling, such a context demands a new poetry that communicates between peoples not anchored in any specific nation-state. Turning to the artist’s theoretical writings, Rotaru next showed how Kling attempts to exculpate the Expressionist poet-turned-Fascist Gottfried Benn to whom he feels artistically indebted. But against Benn’s lyric poetry, which defies any form of public engagement, Kling envisions the poem as a bodily, public performance. He draws on Hugo Ball’s *Lautgedichte* and suggests that Dadaist visions of internationalism had anticipated the present model of communication and digital networking.

Kling’s transnationalism is, Rotaru highlighted, furthermore expressed by the poet’s interest in slang and regional linguistic forms, partially inspired by Franz Kafka’s theory of dialects and wandering languages. Kling’s oeuvre also invokes works by figures such as Gerhard Rühm, Kurt Schwitters and the Austrian Wiener Gruppe. Rotaru finally showed both how Kling often draws his poetic material from dialects prohibited under National Socialism, and how he converts the Dadaist model of sound into one corresponding to post-1989 realities and their attendant dialogue between the regional and the global. (Anna Horakova)



Sakrale Räume im Schwank

September 15, 2011

In his colloquium presentation entitled “Sakrale Räume im Schwank” (“Sacred Spaces in *Schwank*”), **Hans Jürgen Scheuer** (Humboldt University, Berlin) explored features of the sacred in its worldly incarnations and the spaces in which such incarnations occur. Scheuer observed that the sacred lends itself to hyperbolic representation, taking on obscene, ungainly forms when reduced to profane embodiment. In this world, the sacred is also either a body too many or an absent body sought in vain.



Scheuer then turned to the spaces in which the sacred manifests itself in *Schwank* (a short satirical story about everyday occurrences written at first in verse and later in prose, widely popular from the 13th to the 17th centuries). In *Schwank*, the sacred appears in closets, adjoining spaces, troughs and baskets, while its incarnations are subject to unexpected and undignified transformations. Examining the worldly forms of sacred bodies in “Der Pfaffe im Käskorb” from the St. Gallen Collection of short epic narratives (15th Century) and Hans Rosenplüt’s “Vom Pfarrer, der zu fünfmaln starb” (15th Century), Scheuer paid particular attention to these texts’ allusions to the Eucharist. According to Scheuer, *Schwank* and the miracle of the Eucharist share a similar hyperbolic gesture, in which God is believed to take human form in the body of Jesus, whose corpse disappears from his grave. This missing, sought body then transforms into and multiplies in the host. These disappearances and transformations require, in turn, a ritual transformation of space, which Scheuer traced in the cheese basket and the kneading trough in the two examples of *Schwank* mentioned above.

Scheuer argued that the relationship of worldly spaces in *Schwank* to exalted liturgical spaces was not, however, mimetic. Instead, the cheese basket and kneading trough suggest that the profane space has no sacred counterpart in the world. But through the most comical, unexpected, and even barbaric routes, sacrament and salvation find their destination. The hyperbolic bodily and spatial dimensions in *Schwank* thus illuminate traces of otherwise untraceable sacred spaces in this world. (Gizem Arslan)



Psychological Aesthetics and the Paradox of Tragic Pleasure

October 14, 2011

Tobias Wilke (Columbia University) arrived from Berlin to give his paper “Psychological Aesthetics and the Paradox of Tragic Pleasure.” The paper was developed as part of his project for the Cluster of Excellence Program, “Languages of Emotion,” at the Freie Universität Berlin. Research for the cluster spans a wide spectrum of scientific and academic disciplines, and includes projects by scholars from fields as diverse as neuropsychology, anthropology, media studies, literature and philosophy. Wilke is currently conducting research for a project titled “Conceptions of Emotions in Empiricist Aesthetics around 1900.” The broader aim of the “Languages of Emotion” cluster is to devise new, cross-disciplinary methods to better understand the reception and experience of art.

Within that framework, Wilke’s paper investigated documents that constitute a strand of late nineteenth-century empiricist-aesthetics. These writings—which, due to their unorthodox use of scientific vocabulary, have lost recognition in the twentieth century—summoned contemporaneous psychological and scientific categories to endorse a particular brand of literary aesthetics. The authors mentioned (namely Ernst Wilhelm von Brücke and Gustav Theodor Fechner) are especially concerned with theater, and have in mind a neo-classicist model of the tragic, which seeks to induce an emotional response in the form of “tragic pleasure” in the spectator. Such a response, however, is filtered through a scientific lens.

According to Wilke, the free-handed appropriation of (often pseudo-) scientific terminology for an aesthetic discourse to valorize a conservative, neo-classicist vision of cultural production points to one of the effects of the cross-contamination of nineteenth-century hard sciences with aesthetics. “Emotion” in the form of tragic pleasure, argued Wilke, gains its conceptual validity by these authors both from and for psychological, philosophical and poetic discourses. (Christine Schott)

INDEX and DIEGESIS in Weimar Broadcasting- The Problematic “Akustische Kulisse”

October 28, 2011

On October 28, **Brían Hanrahan**, an ACLS New Faculty Fellow in Cornell’s Society for the Humanities, presented a paper entitled “Index and Diegesis in Weimar Broadcasting – The Problematic ‘Akustische Kulisse,’” in which he outlined the concept of the “Geräuschkulisse” in 1920s radio and set out to explain why this new form of studio-recorded sound effects was widely rejected by the late 1920s.

Hanrahan positioned himself against the more widespread reception of the early aesthetic history of radio that reads the rejection of “Geräuschkulisse” as both a reactionary literarization of radio art as well as an opposition to the acoustic avant-garde. By contrast, Hanrahan argued that background sound and spatial sound effects were decidedly popular in the beginning, and suggested that the growing objection to these effects was the result of the dual divide “between the desire for effects of diegetic presence and the difficulty of their technological realization” and “between what was audible in outside broadcasts and what was reproducible in studio productions.” Attempts to create a fictional acoustic space had to fall short because the technical difficulties that arose in the attempt to recreate “authentic” effects in the studio made it impossible for studio recordings to live up to what the audience was used to from live broadcasts or recordings of open-air events. (Hannah Müller)



Wayward Trajectories: Peter Weiss's Aesthetics of Resistance and the Parataxis of History

November 18, 2011

On November 18, Comparative Literature Ph.D. candidate **Kaisa Kaakinen** (Cornell University) presented a paper titled “Wayward Trajectories: Peter Weiss’s Aesthetics of Resistance and the Parataxis of History.” The paper raised questions regarding the referential mode of Weiss’s *Die Ästhetik des Widerstands* (1975-1981), particularly the implications of paratactic historical reference as a structural feature of the novel. Weiss wrote the novel in Sweden, outside of the polarized East and West German states and also outside nationally constructed historical narratives about the Holocaust, the Second World War and its legacy. Through this novel, Weiss attempted to synthesize a commemoration of past resistance with an aesthetics of present and future resistance.



Reading against treatments of the novel that focus on failed resistance and an uncertain future but ignore the question of its conflicting temporal modes, Kaakinen argued that the structure of the text prompts readers to organize its references non-linearly, thereby resisting the hierarchization of historical material. Gaps and inconsistencies created by structural features of the text and by absent or doubled historical references activate readers’ prior knowledge of historical narratives. The novel’s mimetic mode, which relies not on reference but rather on affective stimulation within the constructed world of the text, encourages a multisensory reading practice enabled by the reader’s individual labor of analogizing. Kaakinen thus highlighted textual examples of class struggle, traumatic memories of the Holocaust and gender inequality, which demonstrate how the novel accumulates histories of oppression while negotiating the dialectical opposition between oppression and resistance. This multiplicity of historical discourses is explicitly connected to acts of memory in various temporalities relative to the text, involving readers and their extra-textual position in the text’s depicted act of interpretation.

Weiss’s novel thus creates a space in which readers can articulate perspectives not directly referred to in the text. This, argued Kaakinen, extends the novel’s relevance beyond its explicit historical context. Insofar as the novel juxtaposes multiple historical discourses against more mainstream Cold War and Holocaust narratives, it reminds us that in the absence of a European transnational public sphere, our reading is still dominated by national historical frameworks. (Miyako Hayakawa)

Beyond Repetition? Karl Kraus's "Absolute Satire"

December 2, 2011

The final paper of the fall colloquium series was delivered by German Studies Ph.D. candidate **Ari Linden** (Cornell University), entitled "Beyond Repetition? Karl Kraus's 'Absolute Satire'." Linden's paper argued that the substance of Austrian writer Karl Kraus's satire lies not in the slavish repetition of the existing (which Kraus identifies in Heinrich Heine), but in its negatively charged mode of repetition with difference. Borrowing Hermann Broch's term "absolute satire," Linden argued for a reading of Kraus that moves away from treatments of his satirical form as undifferentiated negation, as complicit with its object of ridicule, or as reliant upon a set of shared values with its audience. Particular to Kraus, Linden argued, is the immanent tension in Kraus's demand that authentic satire assume a position against its time, be directed toward "posterity" (*Nachwelt*), but nonetheless provide an accurate "transcription" (*Abschrift*) of its own time.



Linden's paper next identified the apogee of Kraus's satire in his dramatic lampoon of the First World War, *Die letzten Tage der Menschheit* (1915-1922), which puts to work the theory of satire first articulated by Kraus in his earlier essay on the nineteenth-century dramatist Johann Nestroy. Through the theatrical medium and its attendant dialogical form, Kraus distances himself from his own voice and ventriloquizes the voices of his historical moment. As Linden noted, however, the *Sprachkunst* of such dialogues lies in the omission of quotation marks, which Linden connected to Walter Benjamin's reading of Kraus.

But quotation forms only one mode of repetition in *Die letzten Tage*, along with the drama's use of scenic reprise and the figure of the *Nörgler*, a grumbling voice at the margins of the play who is both immanent in the drama and yet somehow extra-textual, "swallowed up by his own satirical method." As a *Randfigur*, the *Nörgler* mediates between Kraus's external voice and the ventriloquized voices within the drama. Such a move constitutes, for Linden, the "absolute satire" of *Die letzten Tage*: the negation of the whole present, from which no position, Kraus's or otherwise, is exempt. (Nathan Taylor)



Producing Publics

Cornell History of Architecture and Urbanism Society Graduate Student Conference

October 14-15, 2011

Torsten Lange (Bartlett School of Architecture, UCL) spoke on "A Built Environment for Socialist Life: the Concept of *Komplexe Umweltgestaltung*," which addressed the relationship between the theorization of the so-called "built environment for socialist life" and cases of its implementation in policy and on the ground in the GDR of the 1970s and 1980s. According to Lange, this fraught relationship was characterized by a halting dialogue between national ideology, state policy and the professional knowledge and ethics of planners, architects and urban theorists.

Lange began by summarizing the articulation of a specifically socialist urban theory and design among sociologists, architects and planners in the late 1950s. At the behest of Nikita Khrushchev, leading East German architects and planners began to publicly outline the field of socialist urban planning founded on "comprehensive industrialization and standardization." Influential Swiss émigré planner Hans Schmitt claimed that the problem of the "socialist character" of architecture was theoretical, but despite several conferences intended to promote his view, Schmitt's architectural program failed to take hold. The East German architect Bruno Frierl attributed the limited impact of his former colleague's approach to its entanglement in the ideological differentiation between East and West German architecture and planning. In Frierl's opinion, it was the growing influence of sociology and psychology on architecture in the GDR of the 1960s that pushed the field away from theorizing architecture as art and toward a new, socialist definition of architecture, conceived by Frierl as "the historically and socially determined, aesthetically formed built and spatial environment, in which human beings [...] shape their way of life."

Frierl's definition gained traction with the less dogmatic SED of the mid-1960s that seriously considered the opinions of social and architectural theorists. And although by the early 1970s the

state had moved away from technocratic policy making, Frierl continued to employ his theory of "komplexe Umweltgestaltung" to critique

the state's translation of theory into practice in the building regulations formalized by the 1976 publication of *Komplexe Linien*. Highlighting the exchange between various state organisms and expert publics in the articulation of the theory, policy and practice of the built environment for socialist life, Lange concluded by distancing himself from the dualism of "state versus society and regime versus people" that has long characterized the field of GDR historiography. (Bret Ler-aul)

On the panel "Constructing Public Narrative," Alexander Phillips (Cornell University) presented a paper titled "Producing German National Spaces: Three Literary Moments 1848-1900," in which he contrasted two exemplary novels from the period of German realism: Gustav Freytag's *Soll und Haben* (1855) and Wilhelm Raabe's *Die Akten des Vogelsangs* (1896). Citing Henri Lefebvre, Phillips argued that new spaces and organizations of space are produced in



Lange

the transition between modes of production. In both novels, the newly constructed space functions to reinforce the German nation-state and the nationalist political organization of space.



Phillips

In his analysis of *Soll und Haben*, Phillips confronted anti-Semitic depictions of characters as well as the fate of the aristocratic Rothsattel family, identifying the racial and class demographics apparently deemed adaptable or victimized by the production of modern space. Freytag's novel ultimately portrays industrialization and the resultant production of national (and culturally and ethnically inscribed) space as positive when it facilitates the dominance of the emerging bourgeois class, but negative when it results in the downfall of

nobility such as the Rothsattel family.

Raabe's *Die Akten des Vogelsangs* offers a more critical approach to spatial reorganization during processes of industrialization. Focusing on the family house and family museums in the novel, Phillips described how idealized spaces in the idyllic town of Vogelsang, located near a rapidly expanding city, are destroyed as a result of urbanization and industrialization. The family house links the family together over time and throughout generations, enabling spatial continuity and cohabitation despite temporal difference. Family museums function as fixed histories for their owners; their significance lies in the personal meaning of collected objects. Like the family house that constructs continuity, the museums exemplify a phantasmagoric bourgeois interior space in which temporal and spatial distance are collapsed. With modernization, the collected objects in the museum become scattered, or the museums themselves are destroyed. Phillips posited that the objects formerly on display in the museums lose their significance once they are displaced; that is, treasured objects and the spaces they inhabit mutually constitute value. Along with the changing spaces, the characters who inhabit the old and new spaces, or who remain on the margins of the changing spaces, also contribute to the figuration of socio-economic class. (Miyako Hayakawa)

Film and Stage Director Neco Çelik to Visit Cornell in February 2012

Award-winning Turkish-German film director, screenplay author, and multimedial stage director Neco Çelik will visit Cornell University on February 9-11, 2012, under the auspices of the University Lecture Series. On Friday, February 10th at 4:30pm, the Department of Theatre, Film & Dance will screen his acclaimed feature film about graffiti artists, break dancers, and urban rappers in Germany, *Urban Guerillas* (2003), in the Film Forum at Cornell's Schwartz Center for the Performing Arts. The screening will be followed by a question-and-answer session with the director and the audience. Discussion will be moderated by Prof. Melanie Dreyer-Lude (Theatre, Film & Dance), who is also organizing the artist's overall visit. On Saturday, February 11th, Mr. Çelik will additionally conduct a three-hour workshop on how to create socio-political documentary film with middle school, high school and college students in the Ithaca area.

Born in 1972 and raised in Berlin as the son of Turkish immigrants, Çelik grew up at a critical time in German history, witnessing the fall of the Berlin Wall, the unification of divided Germany, and the nation's struggle to come to terms with the realities of Islam, gentrification, and new forms of diversity in Europe. Dubbed the 'Spike Lee of Germany' by German and American media including the *New York Times*, Çelik has proven his artistic prowess with movies such as *Urban Guerillas* (People's Choice Award), theater productions such as *Schwarze Jungfrauen* (*Black Virgins*) by Feridun Zaimoglu and Günter Senkel (Mühlheimer Drama Prize Nomination) and Çelik's directorial adaptation of Fatih Akin's film *Gegen Die Wand* into a children's opera ("Der Faust" German Theater Award). Johanna Merhof from *Die Welt* writes, "Çelik's relentless positive attitude is a good beginning. This intercultural trailblazer is a prime example of a modern world citizen." The Institute for German Cultural Studies looks forward to welcoming this important contemporary artist to Ithaca and Cornell.

INSTITUTE FOR GERMAN CULTURAL STUDIES

SPRING 2012 COLLOQUIUM SERIES

FRIDAYS @ 3PM
181 GOLDWIN SMITH HALL

February 17

Katrina Nousek German Studies, Cornell University
Zeitrechnung: Non-Canonical Events
in Zsuzsa Bánk's *Der Schwimmer*

March 30

Uwe Wirth Neuere deutsche Literatur & Kulturwissenschaft
Justus-Liebig-Universität Giessen
Pfropfen als Schriftmetapher und Kulturmodell -
Vorüberlegungen zu einer Greffologie

March 9

Christina Lupton English, University of Michigan
Contingency as Media and Content
in the 18th-Century Novel

April 27

Sibylle Benninghof-Lühl Institut für deutsche Literatur
Humboldt Universität zu Berlin
Das Buch der Natur zitieren:
Carl Schildbach und die Autorschaft von Holzbüchern

ADVANCE COPIES OF EACH PAPER WILL BE AVAILABLE AT THE DEPT. OF GERMAN STUDIES, 183 GOLDWIN SMITH HALL.

FOR MORE INFORMATION, PLEASE CONTACT OLGA PETROVA AT ogp2@cornell.edu



Spring 2012

Calendar of Events



KLUGE FILM SERIES

FEB. 7, MARCH 13, APRIL 3 AND 24

7:15pm FILM FORUM, SCHWARTZ CENTER

FEB. 10

DEPT. OF THEATRE, FILM & DANCE PRESENTS URBAN GUERILLAS (2003)
WITH FILMMAKER **NECO ÇELİK**

4:30pm FILM FORUM, SCHWARTZ CENTER

FEB. 27

WITTGENSTEIN'S VISIT TO ITHACA IN 1949: ON THE IMPORTANCE OF DETAILS

Presented by Richard Swedberg and Trevor Pinch (Cornell University)

4:30pm AD WHITE HOUSE

MARCH 31-

April 1

JETZT

German Studies Graduate Conference with Keynote by Peter Fenves

LOCATION TBA

April 13-14

FUTURITY NOW CONFERENCE WITH KEYNOTE BY SAMUEL WEBER

Organized by Leslie A. Adelson (Cornell University) and Devin Fore (Princeton University)

AD WHITE HOUSE

April 20-21

SEX AND THE SYMPTOM: WHAT CAN A BODY DO?

Psychoanalysis and Gender & Sexuality Reading Groups Conference

301 AND 401 PHYSICAL SCIENCES BUILDING

April 21

THEORIZING IN SOCIAL SCIENCE

Conference organized by Richard Swedberg (Sociology, Cornell University)


AD WHITE HOUSE

April 21

WITTGENSTEIN AMONG THE DISCIPLINES WITH KEYNOTE BY MARTIN PUCHNER

Interdisciplinary Symposium organized by Gizem Arslan and Althea Sircar

LOCATION TBA



Additional information about all events listed is available on our website: www.arts.cornell.edu/igcs. Event listings will be updated throughout the semester. If you would like to be added to our mailing list, please contact Olga Petrova (ogp2@cornell.edu).

Archived copies of past newsletters are available electronically at <http://ecommons.library.cornell.edu/handle/1813/10777>

Contributions to German Culture News are welcome. If you would like an event listed or have a brief review or article to submit, please contact Olga Petrova (ogp2@cornell.edu).

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