German Culture News

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Retrospective of German Colloquium Fall 1995
Jeffrey A. Schneider

Although their methodologies varied—ranging from psychoanalysis and deconstruction to more historical approaches, the presenters of papers in the fall 1995 Colloquium Series sponsored by the Institute for German Cultural Studies nonetheless covered similar themes. Thus, the two papers on visual culture presented in the middle of the series, Thomas Levin’s paper on Panofsky’s film theory and Liliane Weissberg’s on the photographic exchange, drew on the writings of Walter Benjamin. The final presentation of the series by Kizer Walker analyzed the visual series by Kizer Walker analyzed the visual change, drew on the writings of Walter Benjamin. The final presentation of the series by Kizer Walker analyzed the visual change, drew on the writings of Walter Benjamin. The final presentation of the series by Kizer Walker analyzed the visual change, drew on the writings of Walter Benjamin. 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Eric Rentschler

Conference on Nazi Cinema Held at Cornell

On Saturday, January 27, 1996, Cornell University’s Department of Theatre Arts and Cornell Cinema presented a well-attended one-day conference entitled Hollywood vs. Babelsberg: Nazi Entertainment Films. The conference took place in the Film Forum at Cornell’s Center for Theatre Arts, and was offered in conjunction with the presentation of The Ministry of Illusion, a series of 13 films of the Nazi era at Cornell Cinema during the months of January and February.

“A great deal has been written about German Cinema in the Third Reich, much of it focusing on the political propaganda films of that era,” said David Bathrick, Professor of German Studies at Cornell, who also serves as coordinator. “Such an emphasis appropriately highlights the use of media by the Nazi regime to reshape the values and social imagination of the German people in the cause of war and (continued on page 4)
WAGNER CONFERENCE TO COVER VARIETY OF ISSUES

"Wagner: Opera and Cultural Practice," the conference organized by Professor Arthur Groos, German Studies at Cornell, will bring together an international group of scholars from a variety of disciplines. The purpose is to facilitate the exchange of ideas and of methods between scholars engaged in cultural criticism and musicology, areas of research not always known for their collaboration. Although the speakers include senior scholars in each field, a considered effort has been made to include younger scholars and graduate students. The proposed topics cover a broad range of interests currently in the forefront of Wagner scholarship: issues of racism and cultural pathology in Wagner's operas and theoretical writings, issues of modernism in the operas themselves (constructions of death and the hermeneutics of transcendence), and the reception history of performance practice and Wagner's theories of drama.

The conference which is sponsored by the Institute for German Cultural Studies and the DAAD (German Academic Exchange Service) of New York, will be held April 5-6, 1996 in the Guerlac Room, A. D. White House, Cornell University. It is free and open to the public. For more exact times, contact the Institute at (607) 255-8408 closer to the date of the event. The program of speakers and their papers is given in the box on this page.

STEVEN ASCHHEIM TO SPEAK AT CORNELL

Professor Steven Aschheim of the Department of History, Hebrew University in Jerusalem, and presently at the Institute for Advanced Study, Princeton, will present a lecture at Cornell entitled "Nationalism and the Holocaust in Contemporary Discourse." The lecture, which is sponsored by the Society for the Humanities, will be held on April 12, 1996 in the Guerlac Room, A. D. White House on Cornell campus at 3:00 p.m.

WAGNER: OPERA AND CULTURAL PRACTICE

April 5-6, 1996

John Deathridge
Professor, Cambridge University
"Walter Benjamin's Trauerspiel and Wagner's Musical Drama"

Thomas Grey
Professor, Stanford University
"Wagner the Degenerate: Cultural Pathology and Modernist Anxiety"

Arthur Groos
Professor, Cornell University
"Back to the Future: Hermeneutic Fantasies in Der fliegende Holländer"

Linda Hutcheon
Professor, University of Toronto
Michael Hutcheon, M. D.
"'Alles was ist, endet': Death, Dying and the Ring"

David Levin
Professor, Columbia University
"Reading a Staging/Staging a Reading"

Emanuele Senici
Graduate Student, Cornell University
"How to Become a 'Young German' Composer"

Marc Weiner
Professor, Indiana University
"The Racist Politics of Hidden Meaning"

SUMMER 1996 NEH/DAAD SEMINAR ON "CINEMA IN NAZI GERMANY"

Theatre Arts and German Studies Professor David Batchelor will direct the second in a series of four interdisciplinary seminars in German Studies for faculty and recent Ph.Ds at Cornell University from June 24-August 2. The seminar, "Cinema in Nazi Germany" will explore the politics of film in the Third Reich within the broader context of an emerging entertainment industry. Faculty members from various fields in the humanities and social sciences at colleges, universities and independent schools in the United States and Canada were invited to apply. The seminar is co-sponsored by the National Endowment for the Humanities and the DAAD (German Academic Exchange Service). It is administered by the Institute for German Cultural Studies in conjunction with the Department of German Studies at Cornell.
The Society for the Humanities at Cornell in cooperation with the School of Criticism and Theory will sponsor a conference on “Criticism and Theory” which will begin on Friday, April 26 at 1:30 and continue throughout the day on Saturday, April 27. Venue is 700 Clark Hall. Participants are:

- Sandra Gilbert
  Department of English
  University of California/Davis

- Steven Greenblatt
  Department of English
  University of California/Berkeley

- Barbara Johnson
  Department of English
  Harvard University

- Stephen Nichols
  Department of French
  Johns Hopkins University

- Michael Rifaterre
  Department of French
  Columbia University

- Richard Rorty
  Department of Philosophy
  University of Virginia

- Elaine Showalter
  Department of English
  Princeton University

- Helen Vendler
  Department of French
  Harvard University

Free and open to the public

For further information contact the Society for the Humanities, Tel: (607) 255-4086.

Contributions to German Culture News are welcome. If you would like an event listed or have a brief review or article to contribute, please contact Julia Stewart at 255-8408.
(film - continued from page 1)

ethnic genocide; however, it has also led to some misunderstanding concerning the nature of Third Reich cinema in its entirety.” According to Bathrick, of the 1100 feature films produced in Germany between 1933 and 1945, only 100 were officially coded as “political” and forbidden public showing in Germany by the allies after the war. In addition to melodramas and detective stories, almost half of all films were comedies and musicals, similar in genre to movies produced in Hollywood during the same period.

Through four lectures, followed by lively discussions, the day-long Cornell conference explored the politics of film in the Third Reich within the broader context of an emerging entertainment industry. The lectures were: “The Politics of Normal Life in Abnormal Times” by Isabel Hull, Professor of History at Cornell University; “Hollywood Made in Germany: Lucky Kids (Glückskinder)” by Eric Rentschler, Professor of Film Studies at the University of California at Irvine; “Making the National Family: The Nazi Request Concert (Wunschkoenzer)” by David Bathrick, and “The Doctor is In (and Out): Paracelsus’s Open House” by Jamey Fischer, a graduate student in German Studies at Cornell University.

The conference was launched with a screening of Great Love (Die große Liebe) the evening before at Cornell Cinema’s Willard Straight Theatre. The film was introduced by Eric Rentschler and David Bathrick, and discussion followed the presentation.

The event was cosponsored by the Department of German Studies, The Institute for German Cultural Studies, DAAD (German Academic Exchange Service) and Goethe House, New York City.
The colloquia are held in Room 181, Goldwin Smith Hall, beginning at 3:00. Papers can be picked up one week in advance at 183 Goldwin Smith or at the Institute for German Cultural Studies, 726 University Avenue, tel: (607) 255-8408.
made from a reproduction of the Schmutzer photograph taken from an Andenbuch. She notes the manifold ironies of the image's circulation, the most important of which stems from the 50-Schilling's re-establishment of the historical and persistent link between Jews and money, itself a citation of the (anti-Semitic) images of Jews printed on emergency money (Notgeld) around 1921, the same year that the original photograph was taken. Weissberg suggests that Freud's photographic image on paper money signifies the circulating economy of desire evoked by photographs, which forecloses the possibility of their authenticity.

In "'Objectivity' as a Gesture (Max Weber's Political Silence)" Tom Lampert (Cornell University, grad student) brought politics to the forefront by investigating Weber's attempts to distinguish pedagogy, science and objectivity from politics. In addition to careful readings of the instabilities and contradictions in Weber's "Science as Vocation" (1917) and The 'Objectivity' of Social-Scientific and Social-Political Knowledge" (1904), Lampert places these texts and other pronouncements by Weber in the historical context of Wilhelminian Germany. Though Weber has a reputation as a theorist who secured a distinction between politics and scholarship, Lampert demonstrates that Weber's differentiations, always sharply articulated at the beginning of his essays, inevitably become ambiguous by the end. In the lecture "Science as Vocation," for instance, these ambiguities surface in the theological language and imagery that continually reintroduce the ethical terms that Weber seeks to exclude from science and pedagogy. But Lampert also outlines how the setting of the lecture as a quasi-university event and Weber's allusions to the alarming political agitations of right-wing students and professors place the lecture "on the threshold between scholarship and politics" -- even as it remains unclear "where the threshold is located."

Lampert suggests that Weber's search for a value-free science is a response to the repeated disruptions of intellectual discourse by (charismatic) politics in Wilhelminian Germany. By the time of Weber's lecture in 1917, the war clearly aggravated many of the boundaries Weber had tried to draw. During the 1920s and 1930s, however, World War I resonated more powerfully than ever on the Right, particularly in the writings of authors like Ernst Jünger and Carl Schmitt. Though Walter Benjamin has been recognized as an astute observer of these resonances, Kieler Walker (Cornell University, grad student) makes an important case for shifting attention away from Benjamin's analysis of fascism to understanding war's effects on Benjamin's own theories. In his paper "Movement, Stasis, Shock: On Benjamin and Some Problems of the First World War," Walker offers a reading of "The Storyteller" (1936) and other essays by Benjamin from the late 1930s. In order to outline Benjamin's recognition of the shift in representation and narration caused by the breakdown of military strategy and human communication on the battlefield into stasis and senseless carnage in the war, Walker traces Benjamin's re-evaluation of the category of experience, showing the importance of Freud's theories on shock and Reizschutz as epistemological categories. Walker not only calls for an end to the traditional "moral constraints" against recognizing military influences on the Left; he argues that the First World War was essential to Benjamin's revolutionary stance.

Through the diversity of methods brought to bear on related and overlapping topics, the papers presented this Fall articulated radically divergent conceptions of cultural studies. Taken together, however, they serve as a set of exciting examples for reflecting on the task and goals of cultural studies, which will be explored in several papers in the colloquium series in Spring 1996. The work of the participants has opened new avenues of inquiry into the relationships between politics and scholarship in cultural studies. The papers presented this Fall have provided a rich and varied set of examples for reflecting on the task and goals of cultural studies, which will be explored in several papers in the colloquium series in Spring 1996.
of his project. Following the early Hegel, Honneth suggests that there are three kinds of recognition which are universally shared: love as the mutual recognition of the other; legal norms as the recognition of another’s legal autonomy (which Honneth associates with Kant’s concept of respect); and ethical and political community as the recognition of the other as a political subject. Correspondingly, “disrespect” takes primarily three forms: violent bodily infringement, legal disrespect, and the devaluation or denial of social esteem to forms of cultural identification. Honneth thinks that these concepts can be salvaged from the aporias of Hegelian metaphysics by turning to a naturalistic reinterpretation of recognition; more specifically, by turning to the social philosophy of G. H. Mead and the psychoanalytic work of D. Winnicot.

The seminar was in many ways the highlight of the three-day workshop, as Honneth extemporaneously elaborated complexities of the project not immediately evident in the lecture. Honneth also demonstrated a good deal of integrity and honesty as he faced difficult questions. Dominic LaCapra from the History Department, for example, suggested that the concept of “disrespect” is psychoanalytically problematic insofar as it cannot account for the visceral response of revulsion. He used the case of National Socialism as an example of the transition from ritual to biological anti-Semitism. In this situation, LaCapra argued, the term “disrespect” is rather inappropriate; one could not say that “Hitler disrespected the Jews.” The anti-Semitic’s reaction to the Jew in this case involves a bodily disgust, such that the Jew is “dirty,” “subhuman,” and “diseased.” Honneth at first defended his choice of words by pointing out that the German “Mißachtung” is broader than its English equivalent; the problem, then, might be one of translation. But through the course of exchange, Honneth seemed to agree that the term does not adequately capture the “biological” response.

Anna Marie Smith from the Government Department was concerned about what she sees as the “indeterminacy” of the political effects of social pathologies. Honneth’s project depends upon empirical studies of progressive resistance to forms of alienation, but Smith wonders about the experience of alienation as it gives rise to reactionary forms. Honneth seemed to be unable to offer an account as to why some responses to pathologies of the social are progressive and others reactionary. And yet given this problem, Smith continued, how does one rescue a politically emancipatory element?

The three-day event concluded with a roundtable discussion entitled “Unfinished or Exhausted? On the Contemporary Status of the Enlightenment Project.” Moderated by Susan Buck-Morss (Government), the roundtable consisted of Honneth, Allen Wood (Philosophy), Geoff Waite (German Studies), Aglaia Kordela (German Studies), and myself (Government). With the exception of Honneth (who participated as a respondent), the participants made formal presentations around the general topic of the Enlightenment legacy.

Allen Wood argued for the continuing significance and contemporary relevance of the Enlightenment project. Placing himself firmly within this tradition, he countered the Foucauldian view that it is intellectual blackmail to demand that one declare whether one is for or against the Enlightenment, since, he suggested, there is no plausible middle position. The ambivalence that intellectuals like Foucault hold toward the Enlightenment arises when one confuses the distilled ideals of the Enlightenment thinkers—such as thinking for oneself and individual autonomy—with the more muddled historically specific prejudices to which they succumbed. The ideals, Wood argued, can and must be separated from the contingent interests and goals. In my own presentation, which followed Wood’s and which was partly conceived as reaction to it, I pointed out that the term “enlightenment” is not particularly stable in Enlightenment thought. Using Kant as the most important example, I tried to show how the term shifted throughout his work, and, drawing on the criticism of J. G. Hamann, why the seminal essay “What is Enlightenment?” might best be thought of as a particular political intervention at the close of the European Enlightenment.

Aglaia Kordela began the second half of the program with an extensive Lacanian critique of the Kantian antinomies. Geoff Waite followed her with a strong attack on Honneth as an enactor of yet another irrelevant form of institutional philosophy. Referring to Honneth’s summary during the lecture of various positions within the tradition of social philosophy, Waite registered his irritation with Honneth’s “language of paraphrase” and this latter’s reliance on the work of “dead white men.” More appropriate to our age, Waite argued, we should pay attention to the philosophy that exists in “junk culture.” Describing the video game “Doom II” and showing an excerpt from the film “Natural Born Killers,” Waite proposed that high philosophy—and not merely the material for philosophizing—resides in such junk culture.

The European Community Studies Association (ECSA) would like faculty to notify qualified undergraduate and graduate students of the funding opportunities they hope to offer in the 1996-97 academic year. The ECSA hopes to offer three M.A. level graduate fellowships and four dissertation fellowship grants for the 1996-97 academic year.

Application deadline is April 1, 1996.

Information will be included in the Winter 1996 ECSA Newsletter and on the ECSA-USA home page on the World Wide Web (http://www.pitt.edu/~ecsa101).

For further information, please contact:

Bill Burros,
Administrative Director
European Community Studies Assoc.
405 Bellefield Hall
University of Pittsburgh
Pittsburgh, PA 15260
February


26 Lecture: "Germany after 1989: A Jewish Perspective." Ignatz Bubis, Chair, Central Council, Jews in Germany, speaker. 6:00 pm. Jurow Lecture Hall, 101A Main building, 100 Washington Square East, NYC. Sponsored by Deutsches Haus, NYU, NYU Center for European Studies and the Leo Baeck Institute. Tel: 744-6400.

March

9 Conference: "Why Wagner?" Organized by Sander L. Gilman, University of Chicago, in conjunction with first complete Ring cycle at Lyric Opera of Chicago. Sponsored by DAAD. For information: (312) 702-8494.


17-18 Conference: "Circles of Community: Collective Jewish Identities in Germany and Austria, 1918-1932." Organizers: Derek Penslar and Fred Grube1. Indiana University, Bloomington, IN. Sponsored by DAAD.


April