

# GERMAN CULTURE NEWS

CORNELL UNIVERSITY INSTITUTE FOR GERMAN CULTURAL STUDIES

May 1997

Volume V No. 2

## RETROSPECTIVE OF GERMAN COLLOQUIUM: SPRING 1997

Julia Wagner  
and  
Maribeth Polhill

Opening the spring season of colloquia was Sarah Lennox. As the title of her paper, "White Ladies and Dark Continents in Ingeborg Bachmann's *Todesarten*," suggests, what was on the table was, ultimately, a probing study of the "relationship of imperialism to the construction of the white female psyche in this writer's unfinished cycle of novels. Examining, in particular, successive versions of the fragmentary *Der Fall Franza*, Lennox developed a succession of her own "Lesearten" to account for the problematic status of gender and race in Bachmann's *oeuvre*.

The dominant constellation was psychological: Lennox' paper begins with Freud's famous dictum on female sexuality as the dark continent, which she deploys there to open up the "imperial imagery" already present in Bachmann's earliest literary efforts. For Bachmann, however, the immediate antecedent is not Freud, but Rimbaud. As previous scholarship has indicated, this French poet and future gun-runner had established an approach to thinking about imperialism stringently divided along lines that emphasized gender, and placed the feminine on the salutary side of the counter-imperial, along with "magical" and "Egyptian (colored [sic]) culture." Drawing on this allegiance, Bachmann rose to "a forceful denunciation of the hegemonic force of European cultural imperialism" in the final version of *Der Fall Franza*.

However, the search for concrete experiences to cement an allegiance promised  
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Judith Butler

## "LEGACIES OF FREUD:" JUDITH BUTLER AND "MELANCHOLY'S RAGE"

Kiarina Kordela

On the 25<sup>th</sup> of February people from within and without Cornell had the chance to attend a stimulating intellectual event with Judith Butler at a fully crowded Hollis Cornell Auditorium. Biddy Martin introduced the guest speaker by offering a lavish rendition of her legacy. Butler, in turn affirmed, both in her talk and discussion with the audience, that Martin's introduction was "realistic" rather than merely "generous." The central concern in Butler's talk was the relation between state power and the constitution of the self. Her paper, entitled "Melancholy's Rage," focused on an attempt to project this relation onto, and delineate it within, the "intra-Lacanian-Foucauldian-Derridean" discursive space familiar to those acquainted with her work.

In a close reading of Freud's "Mourning and Melancholia" and *The Ego and the Id*, Butler applied the Benjaminian methodological principle that conceives of theory as an explanatory heuristic mode, which itself is the effect of the object it  
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## TURKISH-GERMAN MEMBER OF *BUNDESTAG* VISITS CORNELL

Alexander Sager

Reactionary youth, liberal age: if the cultural praxis of Germany's large Turkish/German population seems increasingly to follow a counter-intuitive logic, we should perhaps question our intuitions. Or German institutions. For Cem Özdemir, member of Parliament and Green Party spokesman on minority issues, the recourse of an ever larger number of mostly younger Turkish Germans and German Turks to various forms of anti-integrationist identity politics is highly disconcerting. But considering the implicitly anti-integrationist nature of German immigration law, it is anything but irrational.

Throughout his Cornell address, entitled "Germany: a multicultural country? Problems and perspectives from the viewpoint of a Turkish German citizen," Mr. Özdemir avoided facile explanations of the historical and current dilemmas of ethnic Turks in Germany. The Germans have not been the only ones guilty of racist and nationalist mythologizing. The first generation of Turkish *Gastarbeiter*, arriving in Germany after the Second World War, themselves long nourished a "myth of return" to their home country which did its part in hampering their assimilation. Nor is the current and increasing vogue of fundamentalist ethnic, nationalist or religious organizations among minority youth a specifically Turkish/German phenomenon, but is increasingly visible throughout the so-called "postideological" world.

Despite these caveats, Özdemir argued in no uncertain terms that the continuing  
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## POSTCOLONIAL THEORY AND GERMAN STUDIES

Leslie A. Adelson  
and  
Lara Kelingos

As postcolonial theories of literature and culture have gained currency in the international realm of cultural studies, the question as to their specific applicability to the field of German Studies has gone largely unaddressed. Even in those cases where postcolonial theory – derived from experiences with British and French colonialism – is applied to the analysis of German culture, we should examine the particular ways in which such theoretical frameworks are used either to foster or to obscure rigorous criticism of the historical phenomenon and legacy of German colonialism. At the same time it behooves us to consider whether the historical material of German colonialism raises a different set of theoretical questions that could entail significant interventions into postcolonial theory more generally. To this dual end Professor Leslie A. Adelson, the newest member of the Department of German Studies, offered a graduate seminar on “Postcolonial Theory and German Studies” during spring semester 1997. This course was complemented by a colloquium of the same title, organized by Adelson and hosted by Cornell’s A. D. White House. Thanks to the generous co-sponsorship of the Institute for German Cultural Studies, the Department of Near Eastern Studies, and the University Lectures Committee, Adelson was able to bring two scholars of German culture, one scholar of German history, and one German writer of Turkish origin to campus in order to explore ways in which postcolonial theory and German Studies might fruitfully be used to interrogate each other. Rather than seeking to articulate a comprehensive relationship between these two projects, the four speakers each brought a different historical, cultural, and methodological dilemma into focus for critical discussion. Through various points of entry, then, the group gathered

together on April 4-5, 1997, to probe some of the intersections between postcolonial theory and German Studies.

The colloquium opened Friday evening with a lively reading by and ensuing discussion with the Turkish-German writer and intellectual Zafer Şenocak, who was also writer-in-residence at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology in spring 1997. Born in Ankara in 1961, he has lived in the Federal Republic of Germany since 1970, where he has become one of the most prominent authors and critics of the burgeoning field of Turkish-German literature. A widely published and prizewinning poet, essayist, literary editor, cultural commentator, and co-founder of the international literary journal *Sirene*, this speaker appears frequently on television and radio in Germany and has lectured widely throughout Western Europe. His first collection of short stories was published in 1995 as *Der Mann in Unterhemd* [The Man in the Undershirt]; two more volumes of literary prose are forthcoming. Şenocak’s first presentation at Cornell was the evening reading, in German, which consisted of a medley of his poetry and prose, including works in progress. He also closed the colloquium on Saturday afternoon with another medley of literary reflection and critical commentary, this time for a slightly different audience in English. Although postcolonial terminology might characterize this speaker as a diasporic intellectual, the largest national minority residing in Germany today does not derive from Germany’s former colonies, most of which were on the African continent. For both of his colloquium presentations Şenocak chose to resist the widespread tendency to reduce Turkish-German issues to rigid sociological categories of identity, alienation, and difference. “Man wird Erzähler, wenn man vom Erklären müde wird.”

[One becomes a storyteller when one tires of explaining.] Although he complained that no one ever asks him about the mythic foundations of his work, he spoke of some of the dead figures that live in his imaginative landscape, among them Paul Celan, Walter Benjamin, Ingeborg Bachmann, and Franz Kafka. Making frequent reference to German-Jewish writers and issues of the early twentieth

century, he insisted that one could cite the relevance of this cultural material for Turks in Germany without in any way claiming structural parallels or comparability. His works bespeak a contemporary heterogeneity in German culture that articulates a unique historical juncture of national and transnational proportions. Rejecting the constraints of theoretical “models,” Şenocak prefers to explore, not ethnic



Zafer Şenocak

identities, but historically diachronic encounters, memories, and fantasies.

“Modeling” theoretical approaches to precolonial, colonial, and postcolonial phenomena was largely the task of the other speakers during the day on Saturday. Susanne M. Zantop, Chair of the Department of German at Dartmouth College, presented some of the archivally rich and methodologically provocative research leading to her forthcoming book on colonial fantasies in precolonial Germany (Duke University Press.) Whereas Edward Said’s dismissal of German colonialism as brief and late continues to shape postcolonial theorists’ lack of interest in this colonial history, Zantop effectively demonstrated that there is a long period of “latent colonialism” that manifests itself in German fantasies of colonial activity long before sustained actual colonialism became a reality for German in the 1880s. German colonial thinking prior to German colonialism entailed, not

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## "NEW DIRECTIONS IN GERMAN JEWISH CULTURAL STUDIES"

April 18-19 Seminar

Kiarina Kordela

On April 18th and 19th the Institute for German Cultural Studies and the Rose K. Goldsen Fund hosted a conference on "New Directions in German Jewish Cultural Studies." Formal papers (available from the Institute) were presented by Leon Botstein, Scott Spector, Anthony Nasser, and Andrés Nader. David Sorkin offered an informal paper and Leon Botstein presented a keynote address.

In his opening remarks, Michael Steinberg, the convener of the conference, outlined two approaches that have dominated the field of German Jewish studies: the *sybiosis* model — with George Mosse as one of its representatives — and the countermodel of the *delusory sybiosis* — established since Gershom Scholem's critique of the former. The assumption underlying both models is that there are two autonomous cultures, the German and the Jewish. In the United States these two models have produced the assumptions that the two cultures exist in mutual externality and that the internal narrative of Jewish history functions to preserve an essential authenticity, maintains an external status to the other, and an authenticity of Jewishness. Steinberg emphasized the need for a move away from these models. As an example of such an attempt, he referred to Paul Gilroy's *The Black Atlantic*, which proposes the notion of *double consciousness* as an alternative. Instead of the interaction between two autonomous entities, the double consciousness-model articulates the issue in terms of a third element that must be at work in the process of acculturation, and that must operate on its own terms. The notion of the double consciousness questions both specific cultural binary oppositions as well as the very category of binary opposition in culture.

In his keynote address, Botstein addressed critically some of the most influ-

ential studies on the subject in order to expose their unreflected assumptions. He characterized Goldhagen's approach as a regressive presentation of the issues, historically ludicrous and simplified, which ultimately offers nothing more than a kind of *Sonderweg*-explanation: the German anti-Semitism is supposed to be of a different type than that of all other countries. The process of acculturation is explained, according to Botstein, on the grounds of the delusionist hypothesis, while Goldhagen's entire argument implies a teleology without consideration of any alternatives. Botstein then turned to certain comparative issues of assimilation. Eastern European Jews are traditionally deemed, within the historiographical canon, to be the real victims in contrast to the German Jews who through alleged assimilation became identified with the positions of guilt. This scheme manifests itself within New York society's segregation of German and Eastern European Jews, for whom the former function as the emblem of "what went wrong in Jewish history." Moreover, the framing of Eastern European Jewish studies, with its exclusive focus on the "poor masses," prevents the examination of the history of the elite and the rabbinate.

Botstein drew attention to the contemporary absence of any definition of Jewishness other than the religious one. Jews are no longer defined in terms of class, social status, etc., as a result of which American historiography cannot fully understand the European anti-Semitism of the early twentieth century. Moreover, the concept of the "secular Jew" becomes an increasingly anachronistic and non-applicable term, as it no longer designates the atheist, agnostic cast of socialists of the early twentieth century, who joined a reform synagogue which they never frequented, but merely cases of mostly nominal intermarriages. In this context Botstein pointed out the difference between other types of racism, such as racism against blacks, and discrimination against Jews, within which marginalization is not generationally transferred with the biological transparency that characterizes these other types of racism.

A further tendency Botstein identified within most of the historiographical canon is that of the equation between Jewishness and the phenomenon of modernism. Within the general proclivity towards a "Judaicization" of all modernist major characters, figures such as Wittgenstein, Kafka, and Freud are equated — a gesture labeled by Botstein anti-Semitic. This historiographical strategy is frequently accompanied by the *nativist authenticity argument* which constructs the Jew as the outsider who comes into German culture to show to the Germans themselves what they always have been. Such is often the construction of the image of Schönberg, for example. The history of music has been mostly dominated by the assumption of a monochromatic, unilinear development, in which Schönberg is seen as the inevitable heir to Wagner, and is further sanctified as the only such heir by Adorno's exclusion of Stravinsky from the modernist canon. Finally, Botstein suggested that the time has come to re-evaluate the emigré narrative of the German Jewish past, which history has constructed in a condition of unverifiability.

An issue which was to become one of the recurrent motives of the conference concerned the meaning of the term "Jew." Botstein sees as nonsensical the American trend of studies that focuses on subjects such as "Jews in . . .," or "Jewish Women in . . .," when the notion of "Jewishness" itself is not clear. One will first have to define, Botstein claimed, what it means to be a Jew, to feel like one, and to be influenced by aspects of Jewish tradition and life.

There are two major pitfalls, according to Botstein, which contemporary historians should try to avoid: the employment of the concept of anti-Semitism as a "natural" but oversimplified explanatory model — which misses the plurality of differentiations that marks everyday actuality — and the unreflected use of the concept of "Jewishness," which has become decreasingly possible and/or fruitful.

Botstein's paper, "Neoclassicism, Romanticism, and Emancipation: The Origins of Felix Mendelssohn's Aesthetic Outlook," was the first to be discussed the next day of the conference. Dominick

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## "LEGACIES OF FREUD:" ADAM PHILLIPS AND "A STAB AT HINTING"

Andrés Nader

On the heels of philosopher Judith Butler's lecture on Freudian melancholia - and officially billed as the last item in a year-long series of explorations into the intersections between psychoanalytic theory, practice and the study of culture entitled "Legacies of Freud" - the British psychoanalyst and essayist Adam Phillips delivered a poetic account of the practice of psychoanalysis under the title "A Stab at Hinting." Phillips describes psychoanalysis as a theory of "hinting," the kind of work which requires passive receptivity and "not too much of a plan." With an example from Keat's letter of February 19, 1818 to his friend Reynolds, Phillips compares psychoanalysis to a "delicious diligent Indolence" akin to the work of the Spider, who spins her web and then waits patiently for what might come, or to the Flower, "taking hints from every noble insect." To be "avid with purpose," like the Bee - hurrying "impatiently from a knowledge of what is to be arrived at" - is a distraction.

Reading Henry James' essay on "The Art of Fiction," Phillips describes the process of inspiration: how a few words overheard at a dinner table may spark off a whole novel. Phillips picks up there the notion of a kind of "actively alert, passively available act of transformation, not unlike Freud's dream work." This requires a state of being "ripe for prompting." Important here is the idea that a useful hint is not intended as such: only a god could predict what we could use. "A calculated hint is a contradiction in terms:" it would be the equivalent of "giving someone a transitional object for a present, or pointing out to someone a day's residue for them to use in their night's dream." Like the Spider, we do not know what we are waiting for, but we do know when we have caught something; psychoanalytically speaking, we are profoundly unconscious of who we are and what we might become - we may develop a sense for

what we find inspiring, but we can still be surprised.

Wittgenstein's relation to Kierkegaard's writing - the fact that the former confesses to only being able to read a few words of the latter's text at any one time - illustrates for Phillips the notion that "a word or two are enough," that "too much chewing is bad for the digestion." Years after seeing a mediocre play, Wittgenstein remembers a line by a minor character "Nothing can hurt me." Drawing on Wittgenstein's enduring preoccupation with this banal line which overpowered any other memory of the play, Phillips postulates that "the value of a hint is irrespective of its aes-



Adam Phillips

thetic value."

Hinting links ordinary talking and reading to the practice of psychoanalysis. Phillips proposes that a particular psychoanalytic school's relation to hinting (as he defines it) might be a good criterion for differentiating between schools. On the one hand, Melanie Klein is someone who "gives orders," who "points" to the "real" meaning of what the patient says: Richard's "nurse" stands in for the Good Mother and so forth. At the other extreme there is Winnicott, who only "teaches" when he is very tired: his method is suggestion.

Hints, Phillips claims, are the currency of "unconscious communication," they are unpredictably and mutually implicating. In contrast to orders, which create a categorical distinction, hints point to our

"unavoidably being mixed up with each other." An order cannot, like a hint, be easily transformed. An order confines, whereas a hint leaves room for interpretation. Psychoanalysis as hinting takes into account the unpredictable nature of language, its inherent ambiguity. Phillips wants to avoid saying that all language is hinting and to hold on to the following distinction in psychoanalytic communication: the patient associates, the analyst interprets. However, between the self-righteousness of "teaching" and "pointing out" and the covert coerciveness of suggestion and seduction, Phillips proposes that psychoanalysis as a practice of hinting can sustain both the complicity and the difference between analyst and analyst. Psychoanalysis as hinting is a practice in which the conventions of the system, its normativity, are exposed: with an awareness of the norms (which are, in fact, received orders) we are less likely to impose, - in Keat's words - to be "led away by Custome," and perhaps more capable of opening the space up for a hint. Time - leisure - is important as well: "analysis might enable the patient to give himself a hint and to be able to take it, but not too quickly."\*

*Andrés Nader is a graduate student in the Department of German Studies at Cornell.*

## GERMAN COLLOQUIUM SERIES TO CONTINUE IN FALL 1997

The German colloquium series, sponsored by the Institute for German Cultural Studies, will begin again in September with the usual format of outside professors and Cornell graduate students presenting papers. Among those who have accepted the invitation to attend are Andreas Huyssen, Professor, Department of Germanic Languages and Literatures, Columbia University; Arlene Teraoka, Associate Professor, University of Minnesota at Minneapolis; David Brenner, Assistant Professor, Department of Germanic and Slavic Languages and Literatures, University of Colorado; Michael Richardson and Brad Prager, both graduate students in the Department of German Studies, Cornell.\*

## INGE STEPHAN HUMBOLDT/CORNELL EXCHANGE PROFESSOR

Barbara Mennel

During the Spring Semester 1997 Professor Inge Stephan from the Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin visited the Department of German Studies at Cornell University. Stephan's visit was part of an ongoing academic exchange between the faculty of the Department of German Studies at Cornell University and their colleagues at the Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin. Stephan, professor of German Literature at the Humboldt-Universität, was the third professor to visit, after professors Rüdiger Steinlein and Hartmut Böhme. As part of her visit she gave a talk on March 25, entitled "Im Zeichen der Sphinx: Psychoanalytischer und literarischer Diskurs über Weiblichkeit um 1900," which was sponsored by the Institute for German Cultural Studies and the Department of German Studies. Her presentation is part of her larger project on the relationship of gender and discourses of mythology throughout the twentieth century.

Stephan's talk, which concerned the psychoanalytic and literary discourse of femininity at the turn of the century, also integrated analyses of painting, mythology and drama. She posited that at the intersection of literature and psychoanalysis lies the discourse about femininity, bound to a discourse of gender. Her talk turned the tables on the relationship of psychoanalysis and literature: instead of using a psychoanalytic approach to literature, she used a literary critical approach to psychoanalytic discourse.

Setting the stage with a short overview of gender discourses in science, politics, and the arts in the first part of her talk, Stephan argued that gender roles were remythologized under the banner of the war of the sexes. In the second part of her talk, Stephan focused on the cultural configurations of the Sphinx and Oedipus in psychoanalytic discourse, which, according to Stephan, reformulated the riddle of the Sphinx as the riddle of femininity. In

the third part, Stephan addressed Hugo von Hofmannsthal's drama *Oedipus and Sphinx*, which was premiered by Max Reinhardt at the Deutsches Theater in Berlin to great acclaim. In Hofmannsthal's drama, however, the Sphinx itself does not appear on stage. On the one hand, this absence enables projections about her and femininity. On the other, it represents a major shift in the discursive relationship of Oedipus and the Sphinx by placing male subjectivity at the center of the drama. Stephan concludes that Hofmannsthal reformulates the original question about humankind into a question about male subjectivity, which now incorporates femininity.

In her summary, Stephan positioned her readings of Freud and Hofmannsthal in a broader cultural-historical context. She argued that the question about gender relationships around 1800 had been an open question, whereas by the end of the century gender relations were organized hierarchically. According to Stephan, the incorporation of femininity constituted a discourse with explosive force. She promises to pursue the ramifications of this constellation in subsequent work on gender discourse in the twentieth century. •

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## ADORNO SYMPOSIUM PLANNED

Professor Peter Hohendahl is organizing a one-day symposium November 22 on "*Dialectic of Enlightenment* Revisited, 1947-1997," reference to the famous Horkheimer/Adorno book. There will be three panels of 3-4 panelists on The Concept of Enlightenment, Culture Industry, and Elements of Anti-Semitism. In addition, it is foreseen that papers on Marx, Nietzsche and Freud will be presented. As of this date, Cornell professors Susan Buck-Morss, Barry Maxwell, David Bathrick, Dominick LaCapra and Michael Steinberg have indicated interest in participating. The symposium, to be held in the A.D. White House, is seen as a forerunner of the conference in April 1998 on "The Present State and Future of Critical Theory." •

## DAAD CONFERENCE ON YOUTH CULTURE SEPTEMBER 20 - 21

The German Academic Exchange Service (DAAD) / Cornell Department of German Studies weekend conference, traditionally held in the fall, will be held this year on September 20-21. Purpose of this conference is to serve as an "outreach" between Cornell and students and faculty at surrounding colleges and universities at various levels. This year there will be four speakers from Cornell, including Professor-at-Large George Mosse, and at least one invited speaker from the outside. Graduate students in the Department will also participate.

According to principal organizer Geoff Waite, focal point of the conference this year will be German youth culture - specifically, a historical perspective from the middle ages to the present combined with interdisciplinary topics such as popular music and visual culture. Participants will also explore such topics as the changing patterns in the perception and role of youth in German societies over the ages, the problems of generational conflict in terms of individual and social psychology, church and education, constitution of the labor force, military service, rituals of maturation, the formation of national identity, perceived and real differences between German youth and that of other regions, and youth culture generally.

Several graduate students and faculty members at Cornell are working specifically on varieties of youth culture, including Isabel Hull (History), and visiting professor Mosse, a premier historian of his generation, while David Bathrick (Theatre Arts and German Studies) is concerned with the depiction of youth in films. Some graduate students have expressed interest in contributing work on contemporary popular music.

Organizers will be inviting colleagues from other institutions who have written on youth culture: Sabine Hake and Sabine von Dirke (both from German Studies at the University of Pittsburgh) have agreed in principle to participate. •

## FACULTY BOOK REVIEW



### Walter Benjamin and the Demands of History

Edited by  
Michael P.  
Steinberg  
(Ithaca and London:  
Cornell University  
Press, 1996) vi +  
262 pages

Richard Schaefer

At the center of his essay, Irving Wohlfarth poses a question that above all provides the context for the collection *Walter Benjamin and the Demands of History*, namely: "Has Benjamin's project been exhaustively researched, or has the work it entails scarcely even begun?" The question cuts two ways. On the one hand, the appropriation of Benjamin's work as a theoretical matrix for pursuing questions in a wide variety of disciplines sometimes gives the impression of, if not exactly 'a Bacchanalian revel in which no member is not drunken,' then at least one where everyone has been drinking a little too much Benjamin. On the other hand, the question presents the sobering possibility that much more work needs to be done in order to fully appreciate the import of Benjamin's thinking.

The essays collected in the volume all approach Benjamin with this latter possibility firmly in mind. In fact, there is without exception, a cautious tone about each of the contributions regarding any simple 'appropriation or application' of Benjamin's thought. There is moreover, a conscious attempt to delimit a critical approach from those characterizing the bulk of what more than one contributor refers to as the "Benjamin industry." In this regard the essays in the collection align themselves against facile allegorical pastiche. Instead, each elaborates in their own way on what editor Michael Steinberg refers to in his introduction as Benjamin's historical practice as a "critique of allegorical reason". Steinberg argues that this critique involves a sublimated neo-Kantianism which allowed Benjamin to maintain the ethical impera-

tive associated with maintaining distance and devotion to the object-world, in the face of more dangerous philosophical alternatives holding subject-object convergence (Heidegger's phenomenology). While not all of the contributions can be said to operate on this specific historical premise, they nevertheless all reflect on the conditions and limits of Benjamin's historical method, and they do so informed by an ethical concern for the ramifications of their answers.

If Walter Benjamin has become the theorist of the nineties, to the point where some may even be experiencing a Benjamin hangover, then most historians are arguably the teetotalers of the bunch. Theory is generally approached with caution if not disdain, and this is certainly reflected by the fact that very few of the contributors are members of the discipline. But if any presentation of the problems and possibilities of thinking about Benjamin should interest historians, then it is this volume. The contributions in it certainly show how those outside the discipline can and do think seriously about the project and practice of history. The authors all raise questions which bear directly on any attempt to forge historical knowledge. But lest it seem as though I'm overstating the case for a unified perspective, it is important to note that no essay merely recapitulates the others. Rather, it is more often the case that the reader finds him or herself flipping back and forth from one essay to another in order to reflect on the merits of a variety of divergent positions. Fragments, anyone?

The first essay in the volume, by Jacques Rancière, begins by placing Benjamin's thought within the discursive context of modernity. For Rancière, the emergence of a "dreaming cogito," which dreams the social emancipation of the collective, evolved from a discursive exclusion of the dispersive, polysemic aspects of language and thought. Modernity's dream of emancipation through unity comprises an "archaemodern" turn, whose effect was to instantiate a concept of awakening that excluded anything unassimilable to the progressive harmonizing of reason. Not surprisingly, excluded fragmentary

reason finds its exponent in Benjamin, in the raggpicker. In a brilliant analysis of three 'key figures,' the child, the street, and the dawn, Rancière shows how these figures function in Benjamin's writings to posit a new and different sense of awakening. Awakening from the dream of commodity fetishism can not simply be its repetition in the form of fetishized emancipation. Rather, it must entail a "free leap of the now into the past." And it is in the nature of this leap to pass beyond the phantasmagoria of commodities and cast a glance at the prospect of nothingness, at the dissolution of all dreams. For Rancière then, any cultural history which begins with Benjamin must be attentive to the limits of the project of 'demythification.' Its method must by necessity be piecemeal, and avoid the temptations of even a "postarchaemodern turn." Only in this way can it incorporate in itself, in the form of a parable, the "faint trace of another writing, of the vanishing point of the production of meaning."

Kittsteiner's essay follows up on Rancière's concern with placing Benjamin within the context of modernity. Kittsteiner argues that Benjamin's work must be understood within the context of a failure of the philosophy of history. Looking at various pictorial representations of the figure of history at different points within modernity, Kittsteiner historicizes Benjamin's thoughts on allegory within a failure on the part of the philosophy of history to successfully become a secular substitute for lost stability. In a bit of a twist, Kittsteiner shows how Benjamin is actually involved in a response to the failed allegories of the philosophy of history. In that sense, Benjamin is engaged in a "deallegorization" of the remnants of the failed allegorical referents of the philosophy of history, re-employing them in a self-consciously li-

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German Culture News is published by the  
Institute for German Cultural Studies  
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## FACULTY PUBLICATIONS



**Nietzsche's Corps/e**  
**Aesthetics, Politics,**  
**Prophecy,**  
**or,**  
**The Spectacular**  
**Technoculture**  
**of Everyday Life**

By Geoff Waite  
(Durham:  
Duke University Press  
1996)

Appearing between two historical touchstones—the alleged end of communism and the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Nietzsche's death—this book offers a provocative hypothesis about the philosopher's after-life and the fate of leftist thought and culture. At issue is the relation of the dead Nietzsche (*corpse*) and his written work (*corpus*) to living Nietzscheanism across the political spectrum, primarily among a leftist *corps* that has been programmed and manipulated by concealed dimensions of the philosopher's thought. If anyone is responsible for what Waite maintains is the illusory death of communism, it is Nietzsche, the man and concept.

Waite advances his argument by bringing Marxist—especially Gramscian and Althusserian—theories to bear on the concept of Nietzscheanism. Moving beyond ideological convictions, he explores the vast Nietzschean influence that proliferates throughout the marketplace of contemporary philosophy, political and literary theory, and cultural and technocultural criticism. In light of a philological reconstruction of Nietzsche's published and unpublished texts, *Nietzsche's Corps/e* shuttles between philosophy and everyday popular culture and shows them to be equally significant in their having been influenced by Nietzsche—in however distorted a form and in a way that compromises all of our best interests. Controversial in its “decelebration” of Nietzsche, this remarkable study asks whether the postcontemporary age already upon us will continue to be dominated and oriented by the haunting specter of Nietzsche's *corps/e*.—Duke University Press

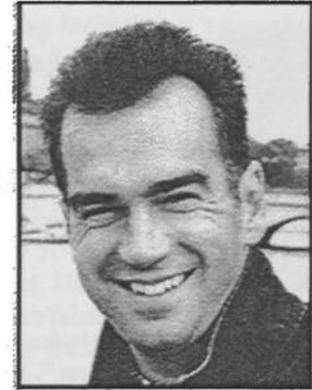
## FACULTY PROFILE

This fall assistant professor Peter Gilgen will be joining the department of German Studies here at Cornell. He is welcomed as an expert on late eighteenth and early nineteenth-century literature specializing on the relationship between poetics and philosophy in the period from Kant to Nietzsche. Gilgen received his doctorate from Stanford University in German Studies with a dissertation advised by Kurt Mueller-Vollmer and H.U. Gumbrecht entitled *The Aporia of Recollection: From Lessing to Hegel and Beyond*.

Peter Gilgen has been calling California his home for a while, but originally he comes from the small country of Liechtenstein, nestled between Austria and Switzerland, with a population of thirty thousand, which is roughly the same as that of Ithaca, New York. He finished his schooling in Liechtenstein at the Liechtensteinisches Gymnasium in 1983 and went to study in Zurich, where his three areas of concentration included German, English and Comparative Literature. Gilgen has not only a measure of pride in his national identity, but develops a greater understanding of Liechtenstein in his academic work through writing pieces such as “L wie Liechtensteiner” in *LieLex. Ein Nachschlagewerk zu Liechtenstein*.

He first came to the United States to study German Literature at the University of Illinois at Chicago where he wrote a masters thesis on Friedrich Hoelderlin's elegy “Heimkunft.” He continued to work on Hoelderlin at Stanford, but his work expanded into a larger project on the subject of memory and recollection. As an example of his work, he gave a talk at Cornell last spring which offered a reading of Hegel's poem “Eleusis” and found a way of understanding Hegel's *Phenomenology* by way of Hoelderlin's fragment “Judgment and Being,” and its reflection of the act of recollection.

Gilgen found his way to the German Studies Department at Stanford University where he instructed courses for undergraduates as part of the famously controversial “Cultures, Ideas, and Val-



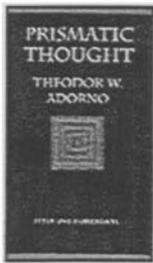
Peter Gilgen

ues” program formerly known as “Western Culture.” His syllabi included a wide range of texts. At Cornell he will be teaching a variety of courses in his first year including one on Modern German Drama and another on continental philosophy during the period from Kant to Hegel. He hopes that the course will attract many students, since there has been interest in such a course for a long time, though one like it has not been offered in recent years.

Gilgen's studies are not limited to the age of Goethe. His numerous publications include an article on montage in Benjamin entitled “Apparatus/ Montage/ Aesthetics” which will be included in the forthcoming *Mapping Benjamin in The Digital Age* from Stanford University Press. He has also published an interview with Jean-Francois Lyotard.

Gilgen may have a hard time moving away from the gorgeous campus of Stanford University and its continuous warm weather, but he's felt the crunch of snow under his feet before. An acquaintance recently told him that he spent the best summers of his life in Ithaca, and Gilgen expects that the waterfalls and wine regions of upstate New York will measure up to the Alps and the Rhine. “It will be a change of pace after Stanford,” he acknowledges, “but I'm sure it will relate to some of my previous experiences: The winters will be as cold as the winters in Chicago, the summers as nice as the summers in California, the town as ‘rural’ as Liechtenstein, and the lake as beautiful as Lake Zurich.” B. P.

## FACULTY PUBLICATIONS



### Prismatic Thought: Theodor W. Adorno

By Peter Uwe Hohendahl  
(Lincoln: University of  
Nebraska Press, 1995)  
xi + 287 pages

This book is organized into three parts. The first section, "Contexts," outlines various current approaches to Adorno. It highlights major points of contention, i.e., whether Adorno should be read within the Hegelian-Marxist paradigm or along with Nietzsche and Heidegger, whether he prepared the ground for poststructuralism or upheld the German idealist tradition, whether he contributed to the Habermasian project or, unwittingly, helped shape postmodernist views—in short, whether Adorno is outmoded or up-to-date. The debate, according to Hohendahl, remains inconclusive. Two further chapters in this section reconsider Adorno's intellectual relation to the United States and, equally contextualized, his research projects and lectures on an emancipatory pedagogy after he returned to Germany in 1949. Both chapters make strong points about the political and cultural contexts to which he responded with such passion.

"Criticism and Method," the second part, consists of four chapters: an exposition of several of Adorno's literary essays, a detailed discussion of his essay on Heine, an analysis of his theory of mass culture, and a reconsideration of his sociology of art vis-à-vis postmodernist theories. The introduction to Adorno's literary criticism is particularly useful. It stresses this criticism's idiosyncratic approach as well as its public function, both of which combine into reading "canonical" texts (such as Goethe's *Iphigenie* and Eichendorff's poetry) against the grain. The chapter on Adorno's Heine essay raises the question of Adorno's relation to Jewish culture, but it does not fully pursue it. Instead, it attributes to Adorno a Heideggerian stance, i.e., the dichotomy between "na-

tive," or "authentic," poetry and the "commercialized" language of the "foreigner." (A check with Adorno's essay "Words From Abroad" as well as with his polemic *Jargon of Authenticity* would help here.) The chapter on Adorno's reading of mass culture (Adorno himself refrained from using the term) emphasizes his double-edged, dialectical assessment of the phenomenon, though Hohendahl ultimately considers his notions of "the culture industry" and an "administered society" eclipsed by current, more affirmative views on the "dispersal of capitalist relations" with attendant cultural pluralism (145ff.). By contrast, the last chapter in this section, "The Social Dimension: Art and the Problem of Mediation," stays close (and sympathetic) to the fine-tuned, innovative Marxist analysis that Adorno developed regarding the social production of art.

The third part, "Modes of Theory," moves from Adorno's idea of the partnership between philosophy and the art of the necessary but insufficient discourse of philosophy and the problem of language. Hohendahl, like Zuidervaart before him, offers a complex if more abbreviated reading of *Aesthetic Theory* via the concepts of illusion and redemption. He also, in a second step, points to the similarities to and, more importantly, the differences from Heidegger's philosophy of language. Concerning yet another facet, an epilogue concludes that "Adorno's vigorous insistence on the impossibility of traditional...can act as a counterweight against a procedural or functional structure of theory" (252).

*Taken from a review by Karla L. Schultz, University of Oregon, which appeared in Monatsheft, University of Wisconsin, Madison, Vol. 89 No. 1 (1997)*

*Contributions to German Culture News are welcome. If you would like an event listed or have an article to contribute, please contact Julia Stewart at 255-8408 or e-mail: js75@cornell.edu.*

*(Turkish-German - continued from page 1)*  
paralysis of German immigration policy reform is the most tangible problem, and here he didn't hesitate to name culprits: the old hard-liner majority in the CDU/CSU. Even though many younger members of these parties favor reform and despite the 1994 coalition agreement, which placed a thorough scrutiny of current immigration policy on the government's agenda, conservatives continue to ignore the issue.

The current law, a relic from pre-WWI Germany, requires a 50-year residency, and denies both dual citizenship and citizenship by birth. Özdemir advocated an eight-year residency and citizenship by birth. However, he didn't take a clear position on dual citizenship, perhaps the most difficult issue for those who encourage full integration into German national culture, yet at the same time wish to maintain some degree of separate ethnic or national identity. Dual citizenship is an especially vexed issue for ethnic Turks inside the European Community. Turkey will be accepted into the EC only if it can convince the western European leadership that it is committed to secular, democratic government and open to economic reform. If that were to happen sooner rather than later, the problem of dual citizenship would become moot, at least in a practical sense. But given the current massive under-representation of widespread liberal democratic opinion in Turkey, it's likely to happen later. So the ethnic crisis is bound to deepen in the next few years, and non-citizen German Turks will feel doubly excluded: from Europe as well as Germany.

Çemal Özdemir left the question mark still very much in place after his presentation on Germany and multiculturalism. His background in social work and journalism has given him a practical outlook, however, and he thinks less in terms of solutions than ethics. "Even multiculturalists need basic values," he insists. But the large-scale "taxation without representation" currently practiced by the ostensibly democratic German government upon its Turkish minority is the most glaring ethical infringement of the current crisis.

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(colloquium - continued from page 1)

in theory proved far more problematical. When Bachmann ventured into North Africa, both actually and in her imagination, the boundary between imperialism and anti-imperialism proved far more fluid. Moving more deeply into the North African desert in her search for a genuine experience free from European projections, Franza (the heroine) falls victim to them even as she engages in conscious acts of avoidance: "her response to Egypt takes the form of a romantic repudiation of everything her guidebook recommends, a defiantly dichotomous reaction still negatively determined by the terms of the prescriptions it rejects."

While the writer is aware of her heroine's intellectual posturing more often than not, bias and imperialism periodically overwhelms Bachmann, too, but at the subconscious level, and especially when she introduces sexual experiences and fantasies into the novel. At first, these suggest an intent to explore the possibilities for more direct and egalitarian encounters between Franza and her male partner, or between the Countess Kottwitz and her lover (in the Eka Kottwitz/Aga Kottwitz fragment added to *Todesarten* in 1968-69). In both encounters, the African men involved never emerge from their status as objects, remaining stereotypes of the black man as lover, while Bachmann uncritically "reproduces several... core racial and sexual preconceptions" native to white culture. However, Bachmann's staging of the encounter between the German protagonist and her Somali lover in the late fragment can also be read as an attempt to investigate the role of race in identity formation, or, more to the point, in limiting identity formation in women. In this fragment, the heroine's self-inflicted physical paralysis mirrors (and is precipitated by) her social paralysis, the Somali lover coming to stand for the societal norms that constrain her. Lennox turns to two possible psychological explanations to probe and account for just how deeply these norms are integrated into the identity of Bachmann's heroine. Kristevan "abjection," for instance, "might help explain both the disruptive allure of sex with the Somali student...and

the urgency of her denial that she is aroused by him," a condition that, according to Kristeva, "simultaneously beseeches and pulverizes the subject." Masochism, however, might account for the birth (and possible cathecting) of the heroine's agonized state in a genuinely passionate sexual encounter.

This, then, is the peculiar psychology of Bachmann's "White Ladies," her female heroines: "Though White Ladies cannot be represented as the direct agents of imperialism, they are clearly implicated in its racial logic, as captive to racial fantasies and projections as white men (though implementing them in gender-specific ways). One key component of their racial identity is thus their utter obliviousness to their own racial determinants." In *Der Fall Franza* and the *Eka Kottwitz/Aga Kottwitz* fragments, Sara Lennox excavates those occasions when Bachmann recognizes, ironizes, critiques and, momentarily, engineers a personal hiatus from Western Imperialism. In the end, I think, she finds those moments wanting, lamenting, with Christa Wolf, Bachmann's inability to go beyond simply questioning "the racialization of the white psyche."

Extended, wide-ranging and probing discussion characterized the reception of both this and the following presentation. In her paper, Barbara Hahn examined the links in a chain of theorizing that cemented a fundamental idiosyncrasy in the German university system: the historical exclusion of women from the professorate.

Hahn prefaced her remarks with the observation that the percentage of women who have been attained university position lags far behind the lot of women in the rest of Europe. Proposing that the reason for this might be in reasoning about the nature of the university, Hahn returned to programmatic texts in the formation of the German university, which she interspersed with information culled from letters, notes, and essays. In her paper, she observes a narrowing of the concept of the university that has its roots in the idea of the German "Nationaluniversität." Around 1810, this idea began to replace a prior model

founded on the premise of universalism, and tacitly came to connote a place of learning limited to a nationalist epistemology that included the tacit assumption that the acquisition of knowledge was an exclusively male endeavor.

This narrowing of the university's intellectual charter occurred also while it was, to all appearance, also expanding. Turning to Nietzsche's contribution on the subject, Hahn notes the boundaries that he establishes in the name of greater intellectual freedom. In "Von der Zukunft unserer Bildungsanstalten" (1871), a seminal lecture delivered before an audience of non-academics in a Basel lecture hall, Nietzsche is heard to demand the "utopia of a notion of education concerned with the living idea," the supplementing of the extant "Bildungsmaschine" ("Pedagogical Machine") to make room for an institution where knowledge might be pursued in a more pure form. Here, no limit would be placed on the questions that might be asked.

However, a limit had already been established on the questions that might be asked, and more explicitly than in the earlier model of a "Nationaluniversität." This limit becomes apparent when we examine the attitudes towards gender that undergirds Nietzsche's utopianism. This questioning, this universalism, is only possible within the constraints of a "Männerbund," a close association composed exclusively of men. This association, and the university that thrives on it, is, characteristically, rooted in an originary myth around the romantic notion of the "genius."

This genius is exclusively male in the grammatical that has been assigned to it ("der Genius") unlike the "Dämon," whose gender is historically unstable, fluctuating between male and female usage. This male genius is born of woman, although the myth, and its maternal metaphors, make clear that she "is nothing more than a container and therefore uninvolved in the process of conception itself." The genius, indeed, is autogenic, a detail that later seems to come to life in Hahn's assessment of Heidegger's intellectual posture. In a later essay, "Schopenhauer als Erzieher," phallic imagery and a phal-

lic *mise en scène* characterize Nietzsche's "implantation" of a famous letter by Kleist. This letter stages the Ur-scenario for the acquisition of knowledge without the presence or assistance of women. Here, a distinction is established between the "Gelehrter" (learned person; studious) and the "freier Denker" ("the thinker released from all bonds"); the former is essentially unfertile, teaches at the university (e.g., the conventional "Bildungsmaschine") and may be married, while the latter avoids institutions of learning and marriage. In other words, from this point on the thinker's social life is carefully divided between the women with whom he thinks, and the women with whom he sleeps.

And indeed, intellectuals did structure their lives according to this model, as a look at the relationship between Max and Marianne Weber indicates. As is well known, their bond was essentially sexless, since Weber reserved his libido to those women with whom he did not think. However, actually acting on Nietzsche's prescription, actually structuring one's involvement with "living ideas" proved difficult to instantiate without an involvement with women at a more affective level. He sought out his wife in letters, particularly to alleviate his intellectual torment during the twenty-year period in which he could neither write nor lecture. He sought out women, in this instance his lovers as well as his wife, to perform symbolic duty as the affective glue that enabled him to fashion fragments into "finished" works, turning to women as substitutes for a less-than satisfactory notion of "transcendent progress in knowledge."

Marianne Weber is presented in this paper as a woman who transgressed, moving beyond the correspondence with her husband to compose, and publish, works of her own ("Die Beteiligung der Frau an der Wissenschaft" [1904], "Typenwandel der studierenden Frau" [1917]). Yet even though these are transgressive gestures that threaten to place her within the territory governed by Nietzsche's "association of men," her thinking places her firmly within the established tradition — and outside of the university. Women are

unsuited to academia due to the "subjective" nature of their culture; the university is an "objective cosmos of male knowledge." However, to follow the criticism of her contemporary, the poet, cultural theorist and essayist Margerete Susman, Marianne Weber's impulse to stop at the gates of the university might be construed as wisdom. Susman wrote of a world that was succumbing to male tinkering; certainly the increasingly more limited notion of the university could be reckoned a part of that tinkering. These adjustments tended in direction that, far from resulting in a university founded on the most radical of Nietzsche's demand, threatened to capitalize on the most conservative.

In Hahn's discussion of Heidegger this tendency becomes apparent. It is not only that he delivers his 1933 lecture ("Die Selbstbehauptung der deutschen Universität") in front of a university audience, thus breaking a brief tradition established by Nietzsche, Weber and Jaspers. It is, above all, the framework into which he inserts the question of questioning. Despite an attempt to reassure his audience by once again elevating questions to "the highest form of knowledge" and by asserting the primacy of questions over boundaries between university departments, Heidegger nevertheless moves to organize questioning into the tripartite tonalities that constitute "Dasein," a move that effectively limits questioning at the ideological level. According to Hahn, "The gesture of questioning thought is, as a result, constantly being shut down in a motion of tripartite closure." In this model, the daemons that plagued Weber are transformed into "servile spirits," while the genius is "bureaucratized." The university becomes a place of rest.

Where this leads, politically, is clear. What the implications are for intellectual women, is comical. Heidegger establishes "frauliches Denken" as a form of thought separate from male intellectuality; it becomes thought without "struggle" ("Kampf"), "loneliness" ("Einsamkeit"), or exchange. This impels Heidegger to use letters from women like Elizabeth Blochmann as opportunities for solipsism rather than dialog, and to suggest to a scholar the caliber of Hannah Arendt

that it is wonderful to inhabit the "and" between "Heidegger and Jaspers." Caught in "this position within the and," asserts Hahn, "excludes women from the passing on of knowledge." It appears to relegate them to a function even less than the one envisioned by Marianne Weber.

Only in the critical thought of Karl Jaspers does Barbara Hahn see a possible source of hope for the older, universalist ideal. In his lecture, "Die Idee der Universität" (1923), Jaspers proposes a sensualist model that breaks through the models of knowledge founded on the "Männerbund." Learning, for Jaspers, should occur in contexts that allow for genuine discussions without any consideration for boundaries. He conceptualizes those contexts as preeminently those of the most intimate sort, in friendships, in love and, astonishingly, in marriage. Most significantly, sexuality no longer exists outside of intellectuality, but at its core. With this comes an "introduction of a heterogenous, disquieting moment" into the idea of a university, and its gates begin to open to the too many women waiting outside.\*

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Kicking off a series of three IGCS colloquium contributions by Cornell graduate students from various departments, Eleanor Courtemanche, a doctoral candidate from Comparative Literature, presented a paper entitled "*Nationalökonomie, Freytag's Soll und Haben, and the Geist of Capitalism.*" Courtemanche, who sees her work as influenced by New Economic Criticism, would like to transfer this type of literary and economic investigation, which has previously focused on British concerns, to the field of German Studies. Taking aesthetic and moral discourse, theories of economics and the "invisible hand," and investigations of private and public (vices and) virtues at the end of the eighteenth-century as points of departure in her dissertation, Courtemanche considers both the development of these discourses in European economic theory of the nineteenth-century and their reflections in works of, for example, Gustav Freytag, Theodor

Fontane, and Franz Kafka.

Courtemanche begins her colloquium paper emphasizing the role of economics in realizing “the liberal dream of national unity,” which Bismarck politically solidified when he unified the German states in 1871. She argues that economics not only provided concrete results for the new German nation, but that it also succeeded in “creating for Germans the fantasy of a topographically unified nation,” as German liberals transformed internationalist laissez-faire ideologies into a “capitalism with borders.” Tracing the incorporation of, most notably, Adam Smith’s *The Wealth of Nations* into the new German economic thought of *Nationalökonomie* at the beginning of the nineteenth-century, she points out that Kantian ideas combined with older cameralist influences to make *Nationalökonomie* more static and socially-oriented than laissez-faire movements, but still cosmopolitan and universal enough to stimulate critique by contemporaries such as economic protectionist Friedrich List.

Within this framework of economic, nationalist and moral discourse, Courtemanche situates Gustav Freytag’s highly successful novel *Soll und Haben*—possibly “the best-selling German novel of all time”—published in 1855 (which, as Peter Hohendahl commented, most Germanists have read, of course). The last section of her paper deals with this, as she describes it, “optimistic commercial Bildungsroman, which glorifies German *Fleiß* and *Ordnung* against a backdrop of racial cliché and colonial conquest.” After discussing how Freytag unites economic liberalism, a “belief in the organically bounded nation,” and a “strong dose of romantic-traditional *Sittlichkeit* and *Gemeinschaft*” through the “glue of *Arbeit*,” Courtemanche concludes that the work can be read as an “allegory of national unity through capitalism.”

A lively and productive discussion followed Courtemanche’s introduction to her paper, with Leslie Adelson questioning the extent to which Courtemanche privileges economic discourse and Kiarina Kordela pointing out that the categories of *Fremd* and *Freund* frequently mentioned in the paper function differently in

economic contexts than they do in discourse on exoticism. Participants raised numerous questions about the representations of Jews in Freytag’s novel and the role of women. Barbara Mennel was intrigued by the main female character’s role as “silent business partner,” who possesses the secrets to the family’s business. Courtemanche noted that she plans to investigate gender issues in the novel more closely in future work, although her focus will remain economic.

The next IGCS colloquium took a decisively philosophical turn, as Brian Jacobs presented a working section of his dissertation. Jacobs, officially a doctoral candidate in the Department of Government, has a presence in many of the Cornell departments, working with, among others, Peter Hohendahl. Jacobs introduced his paper entitled “Kantian Autonomy as Practical Intervention and Experiment” by providing a background of the general problematic of his research. As a way of understanding his project, he noted the increasing sophistication of the human sciences in the last two centuries, despite the basically unchanging nature of their fundamental epistemological questions, which were formulated in the eighteenth-century. He then moved on to discuss the shift in philosophical and scientific thought from a Cartesian notion of agency to a monistic one in order to provide a context for Kantian philosophy.

Jacobs begins his paper with a discussion of the “openness” of complex foundational philosophical assumptions that pave the way for considerations of how readers have variously interpreted Kantian concepts. Interested in Kant as the founder of the modern notion of subject autonomy, Jacobs sees the purpose of his paper as an attempt to focus on the concept of Kantian autonomy “within the framework of Kantian thought itself” in order to limit the term so that it “remains compatible with the causal assumptions of not only Kantian thought but, more generally, of the burgeoning eighteenth century monistic ‘science of man’ that the new physics had inspired.” Part of the hidden, or not so hidden, agenda of his project is to criticize the appropriation of Kant’s concept in what to him seem inappropriate

contexts in works of subsequent theorists and in recent postmodern discussions of the human subject, rationality and freedom.

Tracing the meanings of the term autonomy in pre-Kantian contexts as both a political concept and as signifying subject autonomy, Jacobs then argues that Kant’s concept should be viewed as “a counter-experiential principle of a rational will.” Herein lies the problem with much previous and current Kantian scholarship’s use of the term, as Jacobs sees it, for the concept is often used to designate “an empirical or psychological property of the human being,” rather than something “counter-experiential.” Jacobs also objects to the equation of autonomous thinking and enlightenment, for he notes that Kant never uses the term in his enlightenment essay. Jacobs then discusses Kant’s concepts of “heteronomy” and “hypothetical imperatives,” before concluding with an investigation of the *Grundlegung*. He writes that “Kant’s positing of autonomy must be understood as a practical intervention that intends to rescue the concept of freedom by conceiving it as inaccessible to human reason.” As Jacobs continues, since for Kant “the concept of autonomy has no objective reality...there are no moral acts (acts of freedom) that we can identify as such,” but Kant considered autonomy a “necessary idea to account for...human freedom and morality.” Jacobs ends with a discussion of “the conception of the true self as purely autonomous rational action” and provides a humorous twist when he notes that, as Kant implies, “the true self is...potentially at home on any planet,” even on Mars.

Discussion was once again intense, as Peter Hohendahl raised questions about how Jacobs sees Kantian autonomy’s connection to the Enlightenment Project, since Jacobs is arguing that autonomy and *Selbstdenken* should not be conflated in their relation to Kant’s term enlightenment. After much debate, the discussion took a somewhat lighter turn as Jacobs was asked to explain hypothetical imperatives, after which all participants left the room for wine and refreshments.

In the next meeting of the IGCS collo-

quium, Andrés Nader, one of the few scholars in the Department of German Studies at Cornell who research lyric poetry, presented a draft of the third chapter of his dissertation, which is tentatively entitled "The Poetics of Trauma: Literary Production in the Ghettos and Concentration Camps." As Nader explained at the colloquium, the introduction and earlier chapters of his dissertation cover philosophical issues about the Holocaust and its representation, considerations of the camps and reasons why people chose to write poetry during their imprisonment, and theories of trauma. Future work will investigate political and religious poetry written in the camps and will include a chapter on Theresienstadt, a camp that provided (relatively) better living conditions than others and that had a high literary production.

Nader begins his paper "Poems in the Concentration Camps" with nausea, which as he explained at the colloquium, was his literal reaction to the poems upon first reading them. He quickly moves away from nausea in his paper, leaving it hanging in the air, and discusses possible positive and productive (non-masochistic) "pleasures" that could arise through an investigation of inmates' poems. Through his analysis of the poems he would like to "explore individual aesthetic reactions to the experience" in the camps and concentrate on individual texts rather than on the lives of the individuals themselves or the details of camp life. He hopes to enlarge "affective communities" interested in the texts. He writes, "I hope that the words, some of the words, may suggest themselves to us in a way that we might remember them again, ponder over them, and that those thoughts may perplex us, create a sense of intimacy with the author, cause discomfort, and that the fact of their existence, the events to which they are a response, may never stop offending us."

With his close readings of several poems written in German by camp inmates such as Edgar Kupfer-Koberwitz and Henri Sternberg, Nader discusses some themes and emotions that recur in the poems: a sense of un-lived time, sensory decay, a perceived distance between camp inmates and those outside the camps, deep loneliness, loss of emphatic bonds, and

hunger. Toward the end of the paper, he notes Lawrence Langer's analysis of, as Nader writes, "a 'split' in the survivor's consciousness, through which a 'normal' and a 'camp' self coexist in one mind," and concludes with a poem from Theresienstadt that he feels is an especially good example of one that produces a feeling of alienation.

Colloquium participants showed an avid interest in Nader's topic, and discussion proved fruitful and informative, with helpful analytical comments from Leslie Adelson, Bidy Martin and Dominick LaCapra. Initial questions focused on clarifying terms and place names such as Muselmann and Theresienstadt. Later in the discussion Jill Gillespie offered an insightful comment for consideration—whether the interest in cultural relics from the Holocaust is increasing because survivors are dying, necessitating other means of keeping the history and memories alive. Eleanor Courtemanche raised questions about the possible functions of the child-like rhythms and rhymes in the poems, and Peter Hohendahl commented that it was difficult to avoid holding these poems up to Celan as a model. Many participants agreed.

Cornell Medievalists and Germanists alike flocked to hear the final IGCS colloquium speaker, Volker Mertens, a charismatic and distinguished professor from the Freie Universität Berlin, as he presented a paper on "Concepts of Gender in the Writing of Male Medieval Mystics." Mertens, who was visiting Cornell before traveling on to the annual medievalist conference in Kalamazoo, Michigan, has published widely on early German sermon texts, on Hartmann von Aue's *Gregorius*, and on the figure Laudine in Hartmann's *Iwein*, among other topics. Working with two basic models in his colloquium paper, "a polar opposition of genders" and "a gradualistic concept of gender," he analyzes the writings of two male mystics from different time periods: St. Bernard of Clairvaux and the Dominican mystic Heinrich Seuse.

As Mertens explains in the beginning of his paper, Bernard, in his sermons on the Song of Songs written between 1135 and 1153, interprets the bride as allegorically representing the human soul, rather than



*Volker Mertens, Art Groos at colloquium*

the Church, as was commonly the case. By implication, this often places Bernard, especially when he uses first person, in the role of the bride loving the heavenly (male) bridegroom. Since women were often seen as weaker than men, such a positioning of the human soul as feminine and God or Christ as masculine could seem logical. But, as Mertens continues, in Bernard's view "the soul has the ability of becoming perfect (and thus, in a way, a man), its impulse being longing." Passionate desire, usually considered a "feminine fault" is here a positive trait. What one finds in Bernard's writings of bridal mysticism, concludes Mertens, is "a progression to perfection via the specifically feminine characteristic of passionate love without taking the detour via 'manly' strength." This does not seem to be "merely" a gradualistic concept of gender, "where woman is an incomplete man," but instead contains an "additional, dual concept": feminine gender characteristics, such as passionate love and maternal breasts, can be transferred to men, "without other sexual contexts also being transposed."

In his writings, Heinrich Seuse, who worked with Dominican nuns in Constance in the early and mid fourteenth century, resists representing himself as a bride, instead often taking on the role of God's son-in-law, wooing God's daughter, wis-

dom. These gender attributions often break down, however, with wisdom being occasionally “Lord” or “bridegroom” and Seuse’s soul often represented as female. In contrast to Bernard, Mertens asserts, Seuse demonstrates a “holistic concept of gender,” in which the giving role is male, and the receiving, female. According to Mertens, rather than being a “polar and oppositional” conception of gender, “it is a polar and monistic” one: “the assignments of gender are interchangeable on the basis of an identical affective situation, of the ability to love or the need to love.” Finally, Mertens analyzes Seuse’s biography and developments in holistic concepts of gender in vernacular poetry to account for the differences in his conceptions of gender and those of Bernard. An interested audience focused on the illustrations that accompanied Mertens’ paper, and discussion centered around details of gender and the body (and other “b” words).

As promised, the IGCS colloquia provided a wide variety of topics this spring representing many of the diverse aspects of German Studies: postcolonialism, psychoanalysis, gender issues, mysticism and medieval religious discourse, Kantian philosophy, economics and literature, and representations of the Holocaust. Literary figures ranged from Bernard to Bachmann and beyond. Participants will have much to think about during the summer months, while awaiting the next series of exciting speakers and heated discussions in the fall. •

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*(Butler - continued from page 1)*

attempts to describe, whereby the distance between theory and its object is neutralized. This mode of approach provided her with the conceptual tools to interpret what, in Freud, may at first sight appear to form a set of preposterous arguments, as symptomatic of the intrinsically retroactive structure of the formation of both melancholia and the ego.

The retroactive constitution of melancholia in Freud’s account becomes par-

ticularly evident in those points of apparent logical contradiction in his essay. Such a point lies in the fact that melancholia is said to differ from mourning insofar as in it, the self substitutes the lost object for itself which it takes for this object, in a kind of “seduction of reflexivity.” However, it is this “seduction of reflexivity” that first produces the self which has been assumed as the subject of this reflexivity in the first place. The ego is first produced by means of this “melancholic turn” which at one stroke institutes the ego as defense against the real loss and substitutes the real loss with the ego. Thus, in Freud’s essay the tropological process of melancholia is resolved into the ontological entity called the “ego,” whereby the latter proves to be the congealment of loss which, in turn, reveals itself as constitutive of the formation of the ego. As a result, Freud’s articulation of melancholia, centered on the description of its symptoms, turns to be a presentation of melancholia’s discursive effects rather than capable of functioning as its explanatory model.

Consequently, the ego, defined as above, is a “poor,” always inadequate, substitute for the lost object, thereby ensuing the illusory unconscious belief that the ego *could* fulfill the gap opened up by this loss. This belief owes its possibility on melancholia’s inability to recognize and declare the loss which can thus be interiorized. In other words, that which is interiorized by the melancholic psyche is not merely the lost object but *loss itself*, since the loss of the object withdraws from consciousness, thereby allowing loss itself to become lost, and melancholia to be identified with “the loss of loss.” Thus, melancholia could be articulated as “the refusal to lose an already gone time.” This condition of melancholia is reflected in Freud’s attempt to distinguish it from mourning in terms of the former’s assumed capacity to know who (real object) but not what (ideal object) has been lost, as opposed to the latter’s assumed inability to know the real lost object, due to the fact that the ideal, which it knows, comes to substitute the lost object.

Analogous to the retroactive, melancholic, formation of the ego is the introduction of its split into “ego” and “critical

agency.” As Freud writes, through the process of interiorization, “an object-loss was transformed into an ego-loss, and the conflict between the ego and the loved person into a cleavage between the critical activity of the ego and the ego as altered by identification.” (249) This “critical activity” judges the ego, which can thus appear denigrated. In other words, the decrease of self-esteem can be procured only by the critical agency that has been assumed to require from the ego its self-esteem in the first place. Similarly, self-esteem emerges as the product of the very agency by which it is potentially destroyed.

The important aspect of the psychic reflexivity described so far as marking the melancholic process lies, for Butler’s argument, in the fact that it allows melancholia to elaborate the internalization of the thus disavowed loss as a dissimulated sociality. This becomes clear when one draws the logically necessary inference that, in the process of the melancholic experience of loss, what is lost from consciousness is not only the other but also the social role in which such a loss was possible. Not only loss but the entire configuration of the social world is withdrawn in the psyche. In becoming the “topos of no loss,” melancholia preserves its lost object (which pertains to the social configuration) as its own psychic effect.

However, this correlation between the melancholic self and social life, in which the separation of the ego into a part of itself and a critical agency takes place, should not be understood as a mimetic internalization of social agencies but as a process in which forms of social power emerge that regulate what losses can or cannot be grieved. It then follows that in view of melancholia’s excessive “communicativeness,” melancholia constitutes a discursive field, in which what cannot be spoken is the loss itself, which thus determines what in this melancholic field of speech is speakable (“grievable”) and what not. The *split of the ego* is tantamount to the *social foreclosure of grief*, whereby, nonetheless, loss cannot be fully denied. Hence, the violence of social regulation is the route by which the psyche accuses itself of its own worthlessness. The question then arises as to whether the

loss is thus situated so as not to oppose the ego, in order psychically to save the object. This is tantamount to the question about the source of this ideal object: does it arise from the psychic or the social world?

The aforementioned determination of the field of the speakable by the unspeakable loss points to the fact that the unacceptable and “ungrievable” loss ultimately becomes the loss on the grounds of which arises the ego. Linked to this insight seems to be Freud’s assertion in *The Ego and the Id* that melancholia is in the service of the death drive. This follows from Freud’s conceptualization of sadism as preceding masochism—a claim about which a lot can be, and has been said, all of which, nevertheless, remains irrelevant to Butler’s approach to the Freudian text insofar as it relies on the economy of the latter’s immanent logical coherence—, a scheme possible under the assumption that the other exists prior to the ego. Aggression is thus assumed to derive always from the exterior world, against which it is directed. It is by means of interiorizing the other, to which aggression is directed, that sadism can turn into masochism, thereby allowing, by means of a mimetic attitude towards the other, the production of the ego as object. Melancholia performs the interiorization of the other as an attempt to preserve the other and, at the same time, to dissimulate the aggression for the other. Hence, the ego can constitute an object on the precondition that it internalizes aggression. This is the meaning of the statement that melancholia is in the service of the death drive.

Accordingly, Freud writes in Butler’s citation, melancholics originally “proceed from a mental constellation of revolt, which has then, by a certain process, passed over into the crushed state of melancholia.” (248) Consequently, as Homi Bhabha has pointed out, melancholia is a “mode of revolt,” which *contests ideology by incorporating it*, whereby the incorporation of the other is tantamount to the disincorporation of the master. Being, however, only a “crushed rebellion,” melancholia is ultimately the *power of the state to preempt an insurrection of rage*.

However, this, Butler cautioned, should

not be understood as a statement that allows for the equation between superegoic consciousness and state power. Rather, the state, one could say, “cultivates melancholia as the site of dissimulation and displacement of its own ideal authority.” *Consciousness is not the simple instantiation of the state but rather a mechanism of discipline that erects itself by means of dissimulating an external, imaginable object*. The process of the formation of the subject renders the power of the state invisible and effective. The incorporation of the ideal of the law underscores the contingent relation between state ideology and its power. This ideology can always be incorporated elsewhere and render its operations invisible.

Nonetheless, the element of “revolt” in melancholia can be “distilled” through the process of mourning, as its following articulation by Freud indicates: “Just as mourning impels the ego to give up the object by declaring the object to be dead and offering the ego the inducement of continuing to live, so does each single struggle of ambivalence loosen the fixation of the libido to the object by disparaging it, denigrating it and even as it were killing it.” (257) Since ambivalence, initially attributed only to melancholia, turns out, in Freud’s essay, to be—due to the fact that there is no mourning without the involvement of melancholia—the characteristic shared by both melancholia and mourning, it follows that in either case the withdrawal of the libido from the object involves the “killing” of the object, which in the case of melancholia is the ideal part of the ego.

Hence, *the desire to live is not the desire of the ego but the desire that undoes the ego in the course of its emergence*. Similarly, the mastery of the ego is nothing but the effect of the death drive, of the “killing” of the object. The object desires as the idealized unconsciousness, while the ego is situated in that topographical scene where the unconscious and the ego are necessarily undone by the murderous impulse of life. *Consciousness turns out to be the gathering place for the death drive which proves to be necessary for survival*.

Moreover, to the extent that melancholia establishes the directionality of the

ego (the distinction in the ego between the psychic and the social), it is also that which renders possible the epistemological encounter with alterity. Melancholia shows, Butler concluded in sync with Derrida, that only by absorbing the other as oneself does one become a self at all. Power becomes an object-loss of a loss of a more ideal kind, as melancholia produces power as the voice of an agency of judgment, which emerges in the process of the failed constitution of the self involved in the ideological interpellation of the subject. Drawing on this point many an analyst has placed the emphasis on the “psychic excess” thereby produced as that which escapes the control of the process, and, as such, opens up the space of subjective freedom.

The political thrust of her argument, Butler pointed out, lies in the attempt to shift the emphasis from this point—which she, nevertheless, does not want to deny, as she stated in the discussion period, in contrast to her earlier derogatory remarks on a “psychic entity,” the hypothesis of a psychic minimum that eludes social determination—to its reversal which equally applies: the production of the psychic as a distinct domain cannot obliterate the social or, in other words, the institution of the ego cannot obliterate its social residue. The only structure that can accurately describe the relation between power and ego is that of *ambivalence: the power imposed upon one is the very power that allows for one’s emergence*. Finally, this inference entails the further conclusion that becoming a self rules out the possibility of a strict identity, or, in other words, that *identity and sociality are the effects of a disavowed loss which necessarily imbues them with ambivalence*.

Hence, the distinction between psychic and social is to be traced to the ambivalence constitutive of consciousness, which is *rhetorically* reflected in the fact that Freud can articulate the intrinsically melancholic constitution of the ego only by means of its spatialization—a point discerned by Walter Benjamin in his assertion that “melancholia produces landscapes.” Furthermore, the constitutive function of ambivalence in the formation of the ego is also *methodologically* reflected in the fact that Freud, can articu-

late the psychic state only by employing metaphors of the social topography. This, however, undercuts his one claim that he thereby provides an explanation of the psychic state as distinct from social organization. It is this state of the Freudian text that allowed Butler to raise the questions that enticed and determined the development of her entire argumentation: first, is there a social text in this topographical rendition of the psychic; and, second, is this topography nothing but the textual symptom of this which it tries to explain, and, as such, everything one needs to examine in order to explain it?

The lecture was followed by a very lively and productive discussion which mainly focused on, and extended, the elaboration of the reasons of her objection to certain versions of psychoanalysis, such as Kleinian theory, and of the implications of her argument for history, politics, ethics, and psychoanalysis itself.

Page numbers refer to Sigmund Freud's "Mourning and Melancholia," *SE, XIV*, pp.239-258. References to Walter Benjamin concern issues in his *The Origin of German Tragic Drama*, entitled "Allegory and Trauerspiel."

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(Postcolonial - continued from page 2)

only imagining a German nation, but also imagining the German nation as plantation (hence the title of Zantop's talk: "Nation and Plantation: Colonial Fantasies in Precolonial Germany"). As Zantop's discussion of eighteenth-century fantasies of a failed colonial venture in South America by German merchants in the 1500s indicates, the relationship between latent colonialism and manifest colonialism cannot be understood as teleologically direct, geographically specific, or historically simultaneous. Her presentation was a tantalizing introduction to the forthcoming book, which will unsettle some of postcolonial theory's presuppositions about the nexus of colonial desire and colonial practice.

After a brief coffee break the program continued with a paper by Helmut W. Smith, Assistant Professor of History at

Vanderbilt University. "Making Segregation Modern: German Experiments in *Herrschaft*, 1900-1914" addressed the emergence in Germany of what Smith tentatively terms the "modern segregationist imagination." German colonial forces not only conducted genocidal massacres of the Herero and Nama in German Southwest Africa during the first decade of the twentieth century, but they also imagined these massacres and did so in terms of modernization. In Smith's assessment the emergence of a hard color line in this particular German colony reflected a new and specifically modern segregationist imagination to the degree that a modern state codified racial segregation in a postslavery world. This speaker argued that this constellation is not predicated on spatial separation but on racialized hierarchies that profoundly affected "white ways of seeing," both in the colonies and in Germany. Smith thus seeks to map the historical moment when a modern German state and institutionalized racial segregation in the colonies became mutually constitutive. As in the case of the first speaker, Smith concerned himself with the function of certain kinds of imaginings in a specific historical context. While Zantop examined primarily the century before national unification, Smith concentrated on the Wilhelminian period. Both scholars made a strong case for the need to theorize structural relationships between colonial and domestic German histories, between cultural imaginaries and fantasies involving Germany in Europe and Germans abroad.

After the Institute for German Cultural Studies had graciously provided lunch to all in attendance, the conference resumed with a presentation by Katrin Sieg, Assistant Professor of Germanic Studies at Indiana University. "Ethnic Drag: Ventriloquism, Agency, and Identity in Contemporary German Theater" reflected this scholar's larger project of analyzing staged performances of postcolonial positions in German culture since 1945. Exposing the "disavowal of racial underpinnings in German national discourse," Sieg proposed "ethnic drag" as a way of understanding how "not-knowledge" can be orchestrated as historical material. While all performance is a kind of imperson-

ation, spectators have to learn how *not* to read one part of a given identity, and only very specific blind spots need be deployed for this to work. By viewing ethnicized discourses through the sexualized and gendered discourse of drag, Sieg hopes to mobilize an insurgent use of drag to articulate triangulated modes of collective identification in the postwar period. In structural terms this requires a third party whose absence organizes the cultural meaning of a relationship between two other parties whose presence is staged. Two case studies grounded and enlivened Sieg's theoretical argument. The first involved the annual Karl May festival in Bad Segeberg during the 1970s, when theater audiences swooned to the affect of interracial conflict as presented through Karl May's Winnetou saga of cowboys and Indians. Sieg used her notion of ethnic drag to analyze these performances as a kind of *Wiedergutmachungsfantasie*, whereby audience response to the noble Indian (Winnetou) functions phantasmatically to negate the Holocaust as well as the early postwar silencing of it. This results in a "carefully engineered ignorance" that sustains a cathartic but false sense of German innocence. Sieg's second example of ethnic drag was drawn from the most recent postwar arena, that postdating both Turkish immigration and national (re)unification. An unpublished play by the prizewinning novelist Emine Sevgi Özdamar stages multiply deferred identities and fantasies that culminate in Little Red Riding Hood marrying Keloglan (a figure from popular Turkish children's literature), all against the backdrop of Puccini's *Madame Butterfly*, which Özdamar conjures as the ultimate – and ultimately gendered – colonialist myth. In Sieg's assessment Özdamar wrests racial masquerade from its colonialist moorings and undermines both the notion of authenticity and the cult of performativity that have plagued German national discourse as well as Turkish-German representations in the 1990s.

Since the rigorous discussions following each talk could not possibly be encapsulated here, suffice it to say that the conference speakers left rich food for thought behind and probably took some home with them as well. This was not a

forum for pat answers to pat questions but a unique opportunity for collective ruminations on postcolonial theory and German Studies. As the individual speakers aptly demonstrated, this type of reflection calls for more nuanced approaches to the places where histories and fantasies both meet and diverge. Understanding these constellations better will necessarily complicate our sense of precolonial, colonial, and postcolonial time and agency. For this and other provocations we are grateful to our outside speakers and our dedicated participants from Cornell. •

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*(German-Jewish - continued from page 3)*

LaCapra opened up the discussion by pointing out two claims that underlie the latter's argument: first, that the knowledge of the historical and cultural context may effect also the aesthetic taste; and, second, that classicism, as well as Mendelssohn's affiliation to it, is read against romanticism, and, for that matter, against poststructuralism, insofar as the former is constructed as a philosophical scheme within which the locoi of art, ethics, and civic virtues coincide. With regard to the first point, Botstein proposed the necessity of a quasi-"archeological" reading (in the Foucauldian sense) of the process of listening and of the therein involved expectations, all of which should be seen as historical categories. Mendelssohn's model of listening, for example, draws on the "rational argument of form," which runs parallel to the "scientific argument," according to which the cognitive subject passes through form to an absolute truth (such as the truths of Newtonian physics) that transcends form, albeit inherent in and accessible only through it.

Drawing on Botstein's articulation of listening as a process of cognitive recognition with resonance on the moral order, LaCapra suggested that this conceptualization of music seems to be appropriate for a discourse that operates

according to the principle of *Bildung*. Botstein objected that within this very discourse music is conceived as not being loaded with ideology—something which, however, LaCapra suggested, may constitute yet one more reason for it to be ideal for purposes of *Bildung*. In any case, Botstein insisted, Mendelssohn's discourse is a pre-bourgeois one that does not yet operate according to the principle of self-development, as we know it from the *Bildung*-ideal. Michael Steinberg complicated the terms of the question by pointing to the possibility that Mendelssohn's generation may — by countersuggesting an emergence of truths transcendent to the form rather than depicted as images in it — pertain not to a pre-*Bildung* discourse but to one which criticizes the specifically *mimetic* model of *Bildung*.



*Leon Botstein*

Scott Spector expressed the hypothesis that the simultaneity, in Mendelssohn, of both an opposition to modernism and a non-regressive agenda— according, at least, to Botstein's reading — may point to an "alternative modernity," in which case the modernity we are talking about would not be the only actual modernity. David Sorkin foregrounded the analogy between the quasi-paradoxical assumption of the immanence of a transcendent and unalterable truth in music and the principle of perfect translatability as is known within the pre-romantic German Jewish tradition that surrounds the debate on the Bible's translatability. Both are underscored by the assumption of the

preservation of meaning between languages, be they linguistic or musical.

The discussion concluded with Botstein's self-reflective remark that his paper was the result of the polemical desire to oppose the Wagnerian agenda to "destroy" Mendelssohn on the grounds of the fact that a post-Kierkegaardian world, which conceives of religiosity as a complex issue, religious music has also to be complex. Mendelssohn's apparent musical simplicity is, as his paper attempted to show, undergirded by highly sophisticated philosophical assumptions and claims.

The next speaker was David Sorkin, a leading American historian of the making of German Jewish modernity, who presented his paper "Beyond the Émigré Synthesis: Recent Directions in the Study of German Jewish History." Sorkin's grounding claim was that the phenomenon of emigration within German history is the catalytic moment that informs all twentieth century Jewish historiography, implicit even when not thematized. Sorkin referred to several such omnipresent categories that belong to this "intellectual baggage," such as the concept of "assimilation" — a term first introduced in the German Jewish discourse in 1870s-1880s - the essentialist notion of the German Jewish symbiosis — insofar as it presupposes two clear, distinct entities, *Deutschtum* and *Judentum*, the latter standing for both the "Jews" and "Judaism" — the assumption of the parallel existence of two histories, the *internal* history of *Judentum*, and the *external* history of the relation between *Judentum* and *Deutschtum*. Moreover, these two histories follow two distinct historiographical patterns. The *internal* history is constructed according to the methods of *Geistesgeschichte*, thereby looking at major figures that prevailed in the field of scholarship and ideas. The *external* history focuses on issues of emancipation, anti-Semitism, and, in short, politics. The division perpetuates, Sorkin maintained, the traditional binarism of *Gelehrten- und Leidengeschichte*. Finally, turning to the all too easily assumed "naturalness" of the concept of "orthodoxy," Sorkin pointed out that it is impossible to have a notion of "orthodoxy" unless a notion of

“heterodoxy” is also operative within the discourse. Thus, orthodoxy is a nineteenth century invention, produced as an effect of the radically novel establishment of normative standards at that time, and, as such, orthodoxy should not be understood as the continuation of a tradition, but as the beginning of a new tradition.

A further stereotype within German Jewish historiography, Sorkin continued, is the consensus as to the beginnings of German Jewish history, which are always identified with the 1780s, a moment traditionally understood as the “passage from darkness to the light.” The constructedness of this assumption becomes particularly evident in the 1956 trilingual publication (German, English, and Hebrew) of the Leo Baeck Institute, *German Jewish History in Modern Times*, in which the translations, unlike the German version, begin with the Middle Ages. Referring to Hannah Arendt’s *The Origins of Totalitarianism*, as a successful attempt to take up the stereotypical casting of the categories of religious experience as anti-Semitism and articulate them not in terms of propaganda but as categories of historical understanding, Sorkin proceeded to present some contemporary attempts to challenge the “symbiosis” model. He himself proposes in this regard the model of a “German Jewish subculture,” in which assimilation is not seen as a passive but as an active process of both appropriation and *change* of the major culture by the minor. This becomes evident in the investment of new meanings that the concept of *Bildung* has experienced due to the German Jewish phenomenon.

Similarly, Shulamit Volkov, Sorkin continued, suggests a model of “flexible modern tradition” that changes internally and interacts with German culture. Peter Pulzer focuses on the peculiarity of the political behavior of minority groups, due to the inevitable production of a political subculture, as is manifest, for example, in the incongruity between voting patterns and social-economic status of the voters. The Jewish ostensibly represent the loyal opposition from the center towards the left, without ever identifying with socialism, due to their singular position of emancipation.

Moreover, the methods that could con-

tribute to the transgression of the categories of the “Émigré synthesis,” Sorkin suggested, are offered since the 1980s by social history, comparative history, Gender Studies, and Cultural Studies. A further, relevant, crucial distinction lies between history itself and reception of history. Michael Meyer, in his social history of reformism, focuses on the question whether the reform originates in the Jewish Enlightenment of the eighteenth century [*Haskalah*] or not. Here, Meyer claims, one should distinguish, for example, between Mendelssohn’s own thinking and the mode in which he was received, understood and used, as becomes clear in the fact that, although Mendelssohn himself was not a reformist, certain aspects of his theories could, and have been, used by reformists for their own purposes.

Moreover, German Jewish historiography, in accordance to the patterns of general historiography, exhibits a shift in focus, from “representative individuals” to “representative institutions and movements.” Nonetheless, the study of the latter is deficient insofar as their relation to the everyday life remains unexamined. The questions that need to be asked here are of the following type: what is the effect on the individual of going to a school of dual curriculum; or, when and how do Jews stop speaking Yiddish and start to speak German; or, what does it mean that certain German books are printed in Yiddish, and so forth.

Sorkin’s argument culminated in his emphasis on the privileged position of German Jewish historiography within the American academy due to their shared constant and inevitable reference to issues of identity and minority. The discourse on subaltern groups, dominant today in American scholarship, lends itself so easily to the issues of German Jewish history, that the latter constitutes, according to Sorkin, almost an “object of fascination” for the American contemporary academic discourse.

In the discussion period, it became clear that the validity of Sorkin’s argument depends on the availability of perceptible effects of the examination of Jewish history on the history and the concept itself of Germanness. Does, for example,

Germanness look different when you look at the Haskalah? The impact of the Haskalah on German history is broad, Sorkin asserted, as is evident in its ultimate function as a disseminator of German culture in Eastern Europe, as well as in the interaction between the Haskalah and the emancipation discourses. LaCapra objected that the model of the “Émigré synthesis” may constitute a unified and simplified image, but it does not for that reason cease to represent a significant testimony on the level of recorded experience. Bidy Martin challenged Sorkin’s methodological approach insofar as it betrayed its own postulate to operate according to the methodologies offered by Gender and Cultural Studies. Martin characterized the model of social history offered in Sorkin’s paper as pre-Foucauldian insofar as it does not constitute itself around the central issue of the function of the history of sexuality in the field of German Jewish identity. Sorkin invoked the lack of archival supply on the subject, but Martin specified that it is the conceptual, not the archival, level that she refers to. Suzanne Stewart added that it is the notion of social history itself that should change according to the insights offered by both Gender and Cultural studies and the Foucauldian theory of sexuality as a discursive construct. Martin proposed George Mosse as a historian who, despite his otherwise traditional historiographical approach, has always employed the concepts of sexuality and gender as categories that explode unitary, gender-exclusive categories. Sorkin was categorical in his preference to subject his argument to the above critique rather than be understood as a positivist.

The next speaker, Anthony Nassar (German Studies, Cornell University), discussed his paper “Rudolf Borchardt’s ‘Villa’: Exile as Idyll.” Reading Borchardt’s essay “Villa” (1907), Nassar established an analogy between the metaphor of “villa” and the concepts of “idyll” and “exile,” whereby “The idyll is not a subjective possibility, but an objective social fact, and its accessibility only to Latins is part of its objectivity.”

Scott Spector (University of Michigan) participated with a paper on Edith Stein, the Jewish-born Carmelite nun who per-

ished in Auschwitz and whose beatification by Pope John Paul II in 1987 stirred an important controversy about Christian-Jewish identity and relations.

Spector framed the discussion period with an introductory remark on the issue of canonicity. Agreeing with Botstein's earlier comment about the unstable character of concepts such as "German" or "Jew," Spector extended the range of this problem onto the concepts of "Christian" and "Jew," as becomes particularly evident in the history of Stein's beatification. In the latter's narrative Stein, a Jewish victim of the Holocaust, is reconstructed as a Christian martyr. This gesture is technically necessary for her beatification, insofar as beatification in general requires either miracles or a martyric death for the Christian faith in the history of the person in question. The problem in Stein's case lies in the conspicuous fact that Stein, although her death was unequivocally martyric, did not die for the sake of Christian faith. The Christian appropriation of the Holocaust, as is manifest in Stein's case, raises the question about how the boundaries of identity and, consequently, canonicity, get drawn and what is at stake in this process. Spector described his own endeavor in his paper as an attempt to trace this problematic canonical status back to her own philosophical, theological, and biographical work, and, furthermore, to suggest that there is something of this problematic status already inscribed in her life and work.

In terms of methodology, Spector excluded any radicality from his argument and pointed out that if this articulation of the constitution of the self does indeed in any way challenge more canonical models of identity within our discourse, it does so only through and according to the "rules of the game," as set by this very discourse. Along the same lines, Spector expressed his hesitation to accept uncritically the idealized notion of "hybridity" as that which marks Stein's identity. Challenging the model of authenticity, Spector linked it to the issues of translatability and the question that haunts any mimetic process, namely, that of the primacy between original and copy. In reference to the model of symbiosis, Spector maintained that it is anti-Semitic,

by drawing attention to the fact that historically this model has not been proposed by Jewish historiographers, and that, on the contrary, it seems that for them it is a concept made to be rejected, as the work of Scholem suggests. Central throughout his talk remained the relation between German-Jewish historiography and Gender Studies.

Steinberg drew attention to the central function of the metaphor of "passing" in Spector's argument; a metaphor traditionally used in canonical German Jewish historiography to construct the Jew as that subject who always attempts to "pass into" society. One of the endeavors of his argument, Spector responded, lies precisely in showing that this image of the anxiety-driven "passing Jew" is completely reversed in Stein's work. Stein's particularly "Jewish way of becoming a Christian," within which she never experienced her Jewishness in conflict with Christianity, is reflected in the doubling of the legend that surrounds the establishment of the Carmelite order: Saint Teresa, with whom Stein identifies, is not supposed to have been the real founder of the order, which is ultimately attributed to the prophet Elijah. Hence, unlike the unidirectional image of the assumption of the Jew's social passing, Stein's passing points to a tight interlacing, as becomes clear in the fact that the "cross" and "crossing" could equally have been identified as the central metaphor in her work, instead of "passing," being as it is linked both to Saint Teresa and to the image of Jewishness produced by Stein with her identification of the Holocaust as the "cross the Jews have to bear for all of the people."

Issues about the relation between atheism, religion and philosophy, specifically phenomenology, were raised particularly by Susan Buck-Morss and Dominick LaCapra, instigated by the fact that Stein, Husserl's assistant, having felt neglected by Husserl, abandoned her position ultimately to become a Carmelite nun. Extrapolating on this, LaCapra proposed "hybridity" as a metaphor for Stein's conceptualization of the German Jewish identity and, furthermore, as perhaps the most plausible model for cultural formations. However, attention was drawn to

the fact that "hybridity" is an image that can also blur the distinguishability between what the neutral concept of "culture" and the ideologically negatively laden concept of (cultural) imperialism convey. An inversion of the hierarchy between "hybridity" and "authentic purity" does not necessarily evade the problem of evaluation and hierarchization, as hybridity itself can become a new entity which establishes a new system of value judgments, which may as well just perpetuate the old one. The epistemological issue thereby raised concerned the pertinence and usefulness of introducing new concepts instead of maintaining old ones which one tries to specify more closely, given that the use of new ones may often merely serve to gloss over old structures and, what is more, even to reproduce them. The discussion led to the establishment of an analogy between the centrality of the Derridean concept of "supplementarity" within contemporary discourse and theoretical formations from the first half of the twentieth century, such as Stein's aforementioned model or Benjamin's notion of "mutual dependency," as exemplified in his theory of translation. In the latter, the original is assumed to be always already lost and in need for a translation insofar as any act of understanding involves translation, whereby only in this translation can one have at least an echo of the original which, taken in its "purity," is irrevocably lost.

Spector himself felt that a lack in his paper lies in not having addressed the relation between Stein's work and its philosophical context, notably Husserl, Heidegger and Dilthey. In this context, a possible analogy was suggested between Stein's notion of "empathy" and Husserl's notion of "epoché," as well as Benjamin's understanding of "empathy," within the context of commodity society, as a process of mimetic identification with an other which one does not know — unlike the case of "sympathy" — as is manifest in the possibility of "becoming a certain person" by means of a masquerade facilitated by clothes or other commodities, precisely because one does not know what it means to be that person.

Finally, Andrés Nader (German Department, Cornell University) offered a paper

on the experience of interviewers with witnesses of the Holocaust. Nader's paper articulated the complexity of problems that emerge in and through the transference that takes place between interviewer and interviewee, as he and his colleagues experienced it while working as an interviewer under the supervision of Dori Laub. David Sorkin drew attention to the fact that Nader's paper, which he compared to an exciting "detective story," establishes a tight, unbreakable link between the excavation of historical memory and the process of therapy. Many of the interviewees had been in insane asylums and were in therapy for more than twenty years, Nader said, and many of them could not bring themselves to thematize the issue of the Holocaust until very lately. Suzanne Stewart addressed the distinction the paper draws between intellectuality and emotionality, as well as the teleological reduction of the entire project to a "German Jewish conflict." Nader maintained that this was purely an empirical fact of the process, whereby the need was postulated to differentiate between the "empirical fact" and its articulation so that the latter does not uncritically replicate the epistemological structures and ideological assumptions immanent in the mode of the actual experience of the empirical fact. Tracie Matysik recast Sorkin's question in terms of a teleological narrative that starts with the assumption that there is communication, then passes through the discovery that instead of communication there is trauma, finally to arrive at a communication established through and by the therapeutic process. Epistemologically it may be easy to resist any kind of resolution, but Nader pointed out that ethically the issue is much more complicated, particularly insofar as one decides to operate from within an ethics that takes into account the human factor and the inevitable need for some kind of resolution, even if only a tentative one that involves the acknowledgment of an irreducible conflict.

This discussion led to the question about the structural necessity of trauma as an intermediary step towards communication at all, an assumption implicitly constructed in Nader's narrative. LaCapra referred to the link that is established

between empathy and trauma in the assumption that the interviewer has to undergo a "secondary trauma" if she or he is not to be totally apathetic towards the witness. This, however, LaCapra urged, should not in the least mean an absence of critical distance or of boundaries, as could be the case of an absolute identification between witness and interviewer. In other words, the historian should not allow the identification with the victim to become the mode of writing. In the writing of history the trauma has, consequently, not only to be acknowledged but also to be stylistically conveyed, whereby conciliatory or denying attempts towards the trauma should be avoided. As a case of such "bad" historiography, LaCapra mentioned the majority of American accounts of the history of slavery. A similar function, LaCapra suggested, may fulfill a lot of deconstructive theory, the structure of which exhibits a great analogy to a post-traumatic discourse. Nader reinforced this claim by pointing out that, if trauma becomes a normative condition or a *sine qua non* for subjective identity, as is the case in much of contemporary theory, then the absence of trauma is ultimately pathologized.\*

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*(Review - continued from page 6)*

mitted process of signification (something which Steinberg suggests is actually closer to a different understanding of allegory, and so maybe a "reallegorization" instead of a "deallegorization"). Therefore, like Rancière, Kittsteiner emphasizes how historical study involves a mediated, fragmentary relation between the present and the past. In this sense he challenges those who move too quickly to invoke the language of redemption, including even Benjamin himself.

In the next two essays, Harry D. Harootunian and Michael P. Steinberg both explore the specific dimensions of Benjamin's historical materialist method. Harootunian concentrates his analysis on the way Benjamin mixes memory, repeti-

tion, and politics in a manner that moves history beyond representation and its emphasis on reconstituting an integral identity of the historical subject through time. Instead, he shows how Benjamin's historical praxis depends on a coalescing of these three elements in a way that demands the historian intervene for a specific political purpose. In examining the structure of this "Benjamin effect," Harootunian invokes the example of late nineteenth century attempts in Japan to reintroduce the mythical rule of the emperor Jimmu as a bulwark against the erosion of Japanese society by corrosive forces of modernism. As with Steinberg, Harootunian denies any seeming affinity of Benjamin's method with Heidegger's "depth hermeneutics," citing a fundamental irreconcilability between the latter's presumption of a totality and a process of "empathic understanding," and the former's heterogeneous construction of the dialectical image. For Steinberg, the figure of the collector best exemplifies this piecemeal procedure of materialist dialectics. Using Benjamin's essay on Eduard Fuchs as a "prism" through which to view the interrelations of his historical thinking, Steinberg traces the development of his critical historical materialism as an ethical response to the dangers inherent in historicism. By focusing on Heidegger's comments on Van Gogh's shoes, Steinberg translates and transforms the terms of what might seem a matter of mere aesthetic theory into a debate over the implications of authority over culture in general. He argues that, through Fuchs, Benjamin develops a radically contextualist and materialist approach to history that, in respecting the brokenness of the fragmented object world as bound by memory, resists the temptation towards resacralizing of those objects.

Curtis M. Hinsley and Ackbar Abbas attempt to push this Benjamin-inspired demand for critical historiography into particularly interesting areas. Hinsley's contribution explores the "spatial and ideological constructions" of the World's Fair in Chicago in 1893. Invoking Benjamin's "spirit" as his guide, Hinsley addresses the contradiction of how precisely the important symbols of the exotic non-bourgeois world could, at the same

time, be consigned to the fading tapestry of the past in an era of progress, while also continually rewritten into the bourgeois narrative. Hinsley answers that the fair responded to this challenge by making the encounter with the exotic a matter of the most ritual bourgeois activity, namely, the stroll. The layout of the various components of the fairgrounds allowed the stroller to accommodate her or himself to a quaint dose of the strange, only to be assured upon entering the "The White City," that all would merge peacefully in the end. Like Hinsley, Abbas too focuses on the importance of the imperial grand narrative. His concern, however, is to locate how imperialist and globalist narratives break down in the face of the strange hybrid entity that is Hong Kong, and, with discerning the potential for critical thought in certain cultural forms emerging from such a "hyphenated" space. In particular, Abbas maintains that Hong Kong cinema, in the figure of Wong Kar-wei, engenders an important form for rethinking such cultural basics as visuality. Abbas's argument is that the abstraction attendant on an increasingly 'digitalized' way of life, so much a part of modern Hong Kong, makes the image, and hence visuality, a central mode of living. As a type of critical response, Abbas posits that Wong Kar-wei problematizes the visual by reducing images to a series of "false expectations," related to the fetish of commodities.

Françoise Meltzer's essay draws attention to the context of the initial reception of Benjamin. She shows how early commentators such as Arendt and Adorno feminized Benjamin by placing him outside traditional academic-masculine categories of 'work' and 'seriousness'. Meltzer holds that Arendt's and Adorno's commentaries rely on strongly gendered language to place Benjamin within a genealogy of the sin of slothfulness (*Acedia*). The characteristics associated with sloth include "faint-heartedness, wandering (of the mind), sluggishness, spite, despair (or melancholy), and malice." Meltzer maintains that these characteristics are all invoked at one time or another (with the exception of malice) in order to move Benjamin's slothful life and wandering style into an "economy of feminin-

ity" outside of serious academic thought. Her tone, however, is polemical, and will certainly provoke reaction from Adorno and Arendt scholars for what might seem to be a quick summary of their positions. In particular, Meltzer pays little attention to the way her own reading of Adorno's comments depends on summarily placing terms like "philosophy" within a traditional academic frame that does little justice to Adorno's own critique of academic philosophy.

Like Meltzer, Max Pensky and Irving Wohlfarth include a certain amount of polemicizing in their contributions. These two important Benjamin scholars take the opportunity in their essays to be critical of Benjamin himself, indicating certain strains of his thought as potentially contestatory rather than trying to force on them an ill-fitting continuity. Pensky outlines the importance of both Proust and surrealism as important formative influences on the formation of Benjamin's understanding of how to relate to the past. But instead of accepting Benjamin's work as a *prime facie* answer, he foregrounds the problems of the remembering subject as it pertains to the issue of critical agency and developing a "tactics of remembrance" that moves beyond private melancholy. Like Steinberg, Pensky draws attention to the figure of the "collector" in Benjamin's work, and argues that it is collecting which does the most to dissolve the melancholy of the "brooder." However, Pensky remains critical, and locates in the collector's devotion to the object world a self-sacrifice of subjectivity that must needs extend to the 'objects' of the collection. He asks: "Is this the necessary price paid for that loyalty to things, that optics that would read objects without destroying them?" In his presentation, Wohlfarth returns us to the issue of the central political motivation towards revolution, and so squares Benjamin's historical materialism off against historicism of any form, thereby implicitly answering Pensky's question in the affirmative. At the core of his argument, Wohlfarth draws attention to the radically anti-chronological dimension of historical materialism, and argues forcefully with Benjamin against any progress-oriented cultural history. In a strong polemic against contemporary cul-

tural history, Wohlfarth asks the uncomfortable question of whether recent attempts to rethink the history of heretofore marginal groups 'as from below' has not actually tended simply to historicize and passify their real claims for social revolution? Wohlfarth, therefore, draws attention to those "Brechtian alienation effects" in Benjamin's work as ultimately directed towards the smashing of the "kaleidoscope" of all bourgeois phantasmagoria, including the historicist strain of cultural history.

Certainly there is much to think about in this volume, not the least of which are attempts such as Wohlfarth's to awaken historians from their 'dogmatic slumber.' One could argue, with Steinberg, that contemporary cultural history has done much to rethink itself and incorporate Benjaminian patterns of historical thinking. Nevertheless, the absence of contributions by more historians suggests a continuing gulf between history and thinking about history, and the manifest possibilities for using Benjamin's thought as a model for synthesizing these necessary activities. But buyer beware. There lurks behind this volume another story which may inaugurate its own "Benjamin effect," inasmuch as it involves Benjamin himself flashing up at a 'moment of danger.' In his introduction, Steinberg reflects soberly on the relation between de Man's interaction with Benjamin's thought and asks: "And what transference work are any of us doing, for that matter, when we want, or claim, to read with, or as, de Man, with Benjamin, or with both, hunched over and bespectacled, gazing at cultural and textual objects as if through the layered lenses of an Antwerp diamond trader: peering, penetrating, sorting, but not authorized to cut?" Certainly this question demands, not an answer, but that it be continually posed by everyone attempting to think with Benjamin, and that it provoke an ethical commitment to accountability. Still, if the warning label on this volume must read "buyer beware," then the buyer may rest assured that a careful and thought provoking set of instructions are included. •

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\* **CALL FOR PAPERS** \*

**“THINKING CULTURE: LITERATURE AND BEYOND”**

**Graduate Student Conference of the Cornell University  
Department of German Studies**

**November 7-8, 1997  
Cornell University  
Ithaca, New York**

**Sponsored by the Institute for German Cultural Studies and the Department of German Studies**

We welcome submissions pertaining to any of the following topics. One need not strictly adhere to the five themes listed, which should be considered jumping-off points for presentations. We encourage abstracts which address areas of overlap between panels. 1-2 page abstracts for approximately 20-minute presentations are due by **September 17, 1997**. All abstracts will be read without consideration of the author's name or institution.

□ **Der, die oder das? Thinking Genders and Sexualities**

How does the emergence of such fields as “gender studies” and “queer theory” affect the way we practice “German studies?” Can American visions of feminism and lesbian/gay culture and politics be “translated” into German(y)? What might some key differences be? What is at stake in “queer readings” of canonical literary texts? How might we rethink masculinity—how is it constructed in German cultural productions? What are the discursive legacies of late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> German theories of gender and sexual identity (e.g., those of Krafft-Ebing, Hirschfeld, Freud, Weininger)? How do particular moments in German culture challenge us to fine-tune our working notions of gender and sexuality?

□ **Culture (Re)Viewed: Performing German**

How is German culture defined, represented, and critiqued by the visual and performing arts—how is German culture performed, onstage and off? What does “German” look like? In what sense are representations of German Culture and identity dependent on representations of the non-German. Does filmic language communicate something about German culture that written language cannot? From medieval iconography to the Brechtian gestus, how do gesture and movement, physical presence (or absence) describe, inscribe, or proscribe German culture in a particular way?

□ **Postmark Germany: Contextualizing Postcolonialism**

What are the historical or conceptual constraints on the paradigms of postcolonialism and Orientalism in German Studies? How is Germanness racialized and gendered? How can one employ such categories as minority literature without reifying notions of the margin and the center? What happens to representations of the body and sexuality in the colonial and postcolonial condition? How do “hybrid identities” trouble conceptions of Germanness? How do texts reconcile postmodern subjectivity and ethnic identity?

(over)

□ **Psychoanalytic Culture, Cultural Psychoanalysis**

How can psychoanalysis (which psychoanalysis?) enrich concepts of self and internal psychic life? How can it (or should it?) help us recuperate the notions of “depth” and interiority jettisoned in Marxist, postmodernist, or Foucauldian theories? How might the concept of the phantasmatic elucidate and complicate the relationship between internal psychic life and politics? In concrete terms, for example, how might the phantasmatic enable us to rethink orientalist fantasy in the German context? How do political fantasies relate to forms of political engagement? What might German studies contribute to the study of the writings of Freud and psychoanalytic theory?

□ **Thinking History, Memory, Identity**

Do historians have an “ethical” relationship to their mode of representation? How have particular events in German history changed shape in their various representations? What are the “proper” uses of history and what are its abuses? What role does or should trauma play in historical representation? What are the connections between history, memory, and identity? How might we understand German attempts at *Vergangenheitsbewältigung*, both in “historical” texts and in literature and film? What is the status of pre-modernity—what are the cultural stakes in studying pre-modern, as opposed to “re-cent,” history?

□ **Open Topic**

We welcome any contributions to German studies, particularly those with interdisciplinary themes.

Please send abstracts to:

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