

German Culture News

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Economic Emergency

In her paper, **Bernadette Meyler (Law School, Cornell University)**

showed how discussions of legal systems intersect with theories of the state of exception inspired by Carl Schmitt and Giorgio Agamben. Her paper approached the state of exception *qua* emergency from the vantage point of American constitutional law and examined how constitutional rights are administrated—and suspended—during times of political, economic, and natural emergency. She argued that the US political system privileges political emergencies, and that the legal infrastructure for dealing with states of political emergency are more effectively developed than those for natural and economic emergencies. Her paper also examined issues of compensation for infringement of rights and asked whether it is possible to repay individuals whose

rights have been suspended. Meyler pointed out that compensation always occurs with a delay, some time after the emergency, and is less logical in some situations than in others. If a person is imprisoned, property is seized in an economic emergency, or individuals are removed from their homes during a natural emergency, is it actually possible to compensate them legally for that past suffering? In conclusion, Meyler advocated a flexible interpretation of economic rights. These, Meyler argued, are “the very basis of personal opportunity” and should not fall behind political rights in their legal importance. In the ensuing discussion, the conflicting conceptions of national and local emergency were addressed; why, for instance, are political emergencies such as terrorist attacks experienced as a collective emergency to which the entire nation responds, whereas environ-

mental emergencies such as Hurricane Katrina are seen as local? In the end, the question remained whether jurisdiction over the state of exception lies in the structure of US policy, or whether it is dependent on the interpretations of policy executed by the government in place. —P.B.

On the Exceptional and the Normal

Andrew Norris (Political Science, University of Pennsylvania) began his talk with an enigmatic attention-grabbing statement that underscored the theological nature of the conference topic: “We are gathered here today to discuss the exception.” Refusing to take a definition of “exception” for granted, Norris began by enumerating what the exception is not. Norris showed how familiar usage of the word “exceptional” fails to capture what the exception really is. Further-



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Taking Exception to the Exception

"The exception," Carl Schmitt wrote in *Political Theology*, "is more interesting than the rule. The rule proves nothing; the exception proves everything. In the exception the power of real life breaks through the crust of a mechanism that has become torpid by repetition." Contemporary theoretical discourses across multiple fields and disciplines—law, political theory, theology, history, literature, and philosophy—would seem to concur with this high estimation of the exception. And this high estimation has assumed political urgency in the wake of 9/11, with the contested legal status of "enemy combatants" and the invocation of executive privilege and discretion in waging purportedly new forms of warfare against a new kind of enemy. The contemporary theoretical imagination is arguably captivated by the logic of the exception, in its absolute purity. To paraphrase Wittgenstein, a certain picture of law and normativity seems to hold us captive, and our theoretical vocabularies seem to repeat this picture to us inexorably. How do we best account for the hold of the exception on the contemporary political and theoretical imagination? This conference will at once diagnose the hold of these preoccupations with the exception across the disciplines, while also inquiring into the costs of this captivation. Without falling back on a lost normativity, formalism, or legalism, we hope to raise a number of pressing political and theoretical questions: What conceptual rubrics are maintained and reiterated by the seemingly inexorable logics of norm and exception? What kinds of theoretical investigation are authorized and precluded by this preoccupation? How do they structure our political discussions, and direct and constrain our political options?

—Jason Frank & Tracy McNulty

more, many phenomena that seem to suggest an exceptional state can be assimilated into existent normative structures. For this reason, neither crime, nor anarchy, genius, tyranny, or excess (for instance, in executing a “war on terror”) truly present an example of the exception. According to Norris, the exception would have to be “outside and beyond the dictates of relevant standards,” whereby the old rule is finally found to be inadequate. The problem presented by the exception is not law itself, but rather the inability of a legislature to craft law for the future. In the absence of any effective law, a decree would be needed; nothing less, according to Norris, would really present a state of exception. Invoking John Dewey, Norris began to consider philosophical answers to the problem of exception. With Dewey’s system, a process of adaptation, reflection, and interaction will result in an integration of the exception. According to Norris, however, the moment philosophy supposes it can find the final solution it becomes either “propaganda or apologetism.” Moving away from philosophy, Norris took up a literary example (G. K. Chesterton’s novel *The Man Who Was Thursday*) in order to probe the way that literary characters negotiate, and themselves embody, the problems of the exceptional and the normal. In the end, Norris declined to give a “universal” definition of the exception and instead rec-

ommended an engagement with the “particular.” —P.B.

The Miracle of Metaphor: Pluralizing Political Theology

Does the sovereign decision inherently resemble the rupturing momentousness of a miracle? According to **Bonnie Honig (Political Science, Northwestern University)**, a certain notion of the miracle grounded the theoretical politics of Carl Schmitt, who can be said to have intervened in the ongoing debate about the status of “the miraculous” going back to the Enlightenment. But Schmitt was not alone; the Jewish theologian Franz Rosenzweig, best known for his work *The Star of Redemption*, and a contemporary of Schmitt’s, was engaged in a discussion of miracle that presents a fascinating contrast to the project of *Political Theology*. Rosenzweig aimed to assert the centrality of miracle through a philosophical reconsideration of the concept. Traditionally, the miracle is a sign of divine providence that is experienced as such and opens us up to the divine in the context of the everyday. But Rosenzweig’s miracle is based on entirely different circumstances: An “interruptive” quality is not a necessary condition of miracle. The event, in Rosenzweig’s conception, is the very act of prediction; thus, miracle and prophecy are inextricably linked.

The miracle is a miracle because it comes about when it does: after it has been foreseen. In retrospect, it can always be explained away in rational terms; nonetheless, it remains a miracle, because it invites us to something other than explanation. The distinction thus arises between the prophet and the magician; the prophet predicts the miracle, and it comes about, while the magician creates surprise—the sorcerer’s intervention is not expected. In order to highlight the distinction between sorcerer and prophet, Honig engaged in a close reading of the Biblical passage in which Moses “slips from prophet to magician” by calling water forth from rock. By appealing to the impatience of his people, Moses fails to be a prophet; his act is spontaneous and is not foreseen. Miracle “cannot happen if it is infelicitous,” and it does not generate its effect on its own, but rather in the context of prophecy.

According to Honig, Rosenzweig understood that the only way to combat the “otherworldliness” of theology was to create a theology of this world, a “this-worldly theology” that conceives of the so-called sacred as a plural entity which is integrated into our existence. In this way, Rosenzweig moves beyond the binary logic laid out by Schmitt. The “exception that revitalizes,” and that invites the many to decide rather than the one, will

“break beyond the rule-exception binary.” Thus, Honig described what a “democratic” state of exception might look like. —P.B.

The Commandment Against the Law: Benjamin and Kant

Conference co-organizer **Tracy McNulty (Romance Studies, Cornell University)** delivered a talk in which she proposed that Benjamin and Kant, despite their well-known critiques of positive law, actually advance strong arguments in favor of the written commandment as a particular instance of law that has nothing to do with positive prescriptions or norms. While St. Paul discusses the commandment as one example of what is wrong with the written law—namely that it offers a distorted or even perverse mediation of the transcendent “spirit” of the law—Benjamin invokes the classical Pauline distinction between the “letter” and the “spirit” of the law, but then turns it on its head. Drawing from Benjamin’s “Critique of Violence,” McNulty identified the “spirit” of the law with the tyranny of mythic violence (the violence of the gods of antiquity, but also of the modern police state) and the “letter” of the law (or writing) with divine violence and the justice to which it leads. In accordance with ancient Jewish tradition, a tradition that has been historically suspi-

conference coverage continued:

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cious of any appeal to the “spirit” of the law, Benjamin argues that the individual must wrestle with the law (*qua* symbolic limit) in solitude and assume responsibility for respecting or ignoring it. To round out the talk, McNulty mentioned how Kant believed the Second Commandment, which prohibits the worship of graven images, to be the most “sublime” of the Jewish laws.

During the discussion that followed the talk, **Professor Dominic LaCapra (Cornell, History)** expressed his appreciation for McNulty’s argument, but also observed that what she had provided was essentially a “Lacanian translation” of Benjamin. —A.L.

The Anti-Semitic Exception

In his talk **Gil Anidjar (Near Eastern Studies, Columbia University)**, began with a cursory look at liberal movements such as the abolitionist movement and environmentalism, whose genealogy he traced to Christian doctrine. He posited Islamic and Jewish identities as lying on the same continuum and characterized them as being opposed to the de-theologized Western culture of today, in which, Anidjar claimed, the cause of Islam was maligned. He then proceeded to ask the following questions: Has the naturalization of anti-Semitism been successfully addressed in thought? Has it been sufficiently understood and refuted? Anidjar

recalled Jean-François Lyotard’s characterization of the destruction of Nazism as a beating, but not a refuting, which created the possibility of an anti-anti-Semitic movement. Anidjar referenced today’s human rights movements as cases in point. Anidjar spoke of the war against anti-Semitism, identifying it as a mass movement and claiming that in its social and political aspects it is similar to that which it historically opposes. He then turned to the Holocaust and to the cult of the survivor, of lament, and of the documentation of the paradigmatic nature of the survivor, referring to Primo Levi as an example. The survivor, Anidjar argued, was not an exception. In the history of modern politics, he could often be found

at the center of politics due to his critical and paradigmatic status as victim. Anidjar’s provocative talk was followed by a heated discussion. —G.A.

Sovereignty and Liminality

In his talk, **Jeffrey Librett (German, University of Oregon)** considered the role that limits and the desire to transgress them play in the thought of Georges Bataille. Librett began by noting some of the seemingly paradoxical features of the process of secularization initiated by the European Enlightenment: By making religious belief a matter of personal conviction, the Enlightenment ended up elevating private experience to the status of the Absolute. The search for meaning in post-Enlightenment culture



hence tends to terminate in the trivial injunction that one “get in touch with one’s feelings,” a tendency exemplified in the contemporary trend towards what Librett called the “memoirization” of literature. Librett situated Bataille as one of many thinkers of his period who attempted to overcome this “limitless reign of the Limit” (Michel Foucault)—the modern prohibition on any properly public experiences of religious and/or aesthetic transcendence. While Librett noted similarities between Bataille’s valorization of excess and the similar efforts to recover a sense of post-secular transcendence characteristic of thinkers like Carl Schmitt, he also contrasted Bataille’s primarily aesthetic strivings in this direction with the more directly (and destructively) political aspirations of people like Schmitt.

During the discussion following the talk, Librett nonetheless conceded that there was something unmistakably “adolescent” about Bataille’s fascination with transgression—and perhaps, more generally, about the belief that secularization is something that needs to be overcome.

Paradox and Popular Constitutionalism

In his paper, conference co-organizer **Jason Frank (Cornell, Government)** drew on James Madison’s writings in the *The Federalist Papers* in an attempt to give an account of the

US Constitutional Convention that did justice to its “exceptional” nature without reducing it to the type of groundless, sovereign decision valorized by Carl Schmitt in *Political Theology*. Drawing on Jacques Derrida’s notion of the fabulous retroactive power of constituting moments—the way in which a document like the US Constitution claims to rest on the authorial authority of a collective subject (“We the people”) that does not preexist the document, but which the document itself performatively produces—Frank explored Madison’s enumeration of the pre- or extra-legal sources of legitimacy that would allow the citizenry of the United States to retroactively assume authorship of a Constitution written in secret by a group of conspirators. For Madison, the patriotic motives and supposedly upstanding character of the founders, as well as their adherence to “inherited procedures” and revolutionary traditions, allowed the Constitutional Convention to be construed as a legitimate act of founding rather than a mere usurpation. This informal register of normativity was capable, in Madison’s view, of “blotting out the antecedent flaws” of the essentially illegal manner in which the Constitution was written—although traces of arbitrariness, and hence of the Schmittian state of exception, still adhere to this foundational act. The American founding, ac-

cording to Frank, appears to have occurred in a space characterized neither by hard and fast rules, nor by the complete normative vaccum posited by Schmitt. Frank closed his talk with a discussion the figure of the “lawgiver” in Rousseau’s *Social Contract*, emphasizing the relevance of this figure to a discussion of the paradoxes involved in the creation of the US Constitution. —C.S.

Sokurov’s Sovereign Trinity

Susan Buck-Morss (Cornell, Government) began her presentation by discussing the role images have traditionally played in cementing the ideology of “sovereignty”: Visual representations of the political sovereign fulfill the otherwise impossible task of closing the gap between the sovereign as an empirical person and his or her claim to quasi-divine authority. Buck-Morss first focussed on representations of emperors and of Christ (or of emperors as Christ) in the painting and sculpture of the Christianized Roman Empire and Byzantium, then used a number of striking visual juxtapositions to show how images circulated in the contemporary media fulfill a similar ideological function of investing political leaders with an iconic, theological aura. The reign of the contemporary “iconocracy,” Buck-Morss emphasized, cannot be understood in

rational terms, but only in terms of the affective power of fetishized images. Looking for a way out of the “economy” that governs contemporary politics, Buck-Morss turned to Russian filmmaker Alexander Sokurov’s recent trilogy of films devoted to major icons of twentieth-century sovereignty—Hitler (*Moloch*), Lenin (*Taurus*), and Emperor Hirohito (*The Sun*). Sokurov’s trilogy, in Buck Morss’s view, constitutes one instance of an iconoclastic visual aesthetic that has the potential to work against ideological notions of sovereignty. By emphasizing the banality and physical vulnerability of his subjects—effectively reducing them from theological to human proportions—Sokurov helps to break the spell cast by the icon, hence calling into question the rule of modern iconocrats. —C.S.

Politics is a Mushroom: Immanent Sources of Exception and Decision

Kam Shapiro (Political Science, Illinois State University) began his talk by reconstructing Carl Schmitt’s theory of the exception. According to Shapiro, this theory was bound up with a thoroughgoing critique of philosophies of immanence, materialism, and “atheism,” which Schmitt treated as interchangeable. In his early writings, Schmitt adopted

conference coverage continued:

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the Christian perspective according to which post-lapsarian nature cannot by itself yield a juridical order—or, in Schmitt's poetic phrase, “life is not a mushroom growing out of death.” Yet—in accordance with Church doctrine—Schmitt also found sources of life, or law, in this world. While he repudiated theories of collective self-formation, he embraced a sovereign authority empowered to impose form on a chaotic society. In *Political Theology* (1922), he compared the form-giving power of the sovereign to an act of divine intervention. Law, he argued, can only function in a lawful or “normal” situation that precedes formalization, and the sovereign “produces and guarantees the situation in its totality.” In *The Crisis of Parliamentary Democracy* (1923), Schmitt retained theological terms: “A scientific study of democracy must begin with a particular aspect that I have called political theology.” In the modern age, democratic constituent power (*pouvoir constituant*) replaces the will of God as the transcendent source of a substantial order, namely democratic homogeneity. However, democratic will-formation thereby becomes an act prior to its subject, or, as Schmitt wrote, “[...] only political power, which should come from the

people's will, can form the people's will in the first place.” A variety of contemporary authors dwell on the paradoxical character of democratic sovereignty, sometimes tracing it back to Rousseau's well-known formulations.

Shapiro argued, however, that a closer look at Rousseau's discussion of democratic founding in *The Social Contract* reveals a dynamic relationship between immanent sources of the people's will and the political power that draws out and assembles them, or between what Shapiro called ‘the virtual and the virtuosic.’ In this talk, Shapiro explored this dynamic in *The Social Contract*. He then highlighted similar dynamics at work in Schmitt's Weimar writings, focusing on three instances: *Complexio Oppitorum* (1923), “National Myth” (1923), and the polemical opposition of friend and enemy in *The Concept of the Political* (1927). He went on to consider what might be called “democratic virtuosity,”

or virtuosity from below, focussing on Walter Benjamin's repudiation of sovereign acts of lawmaking or law-preserving in favor of a process of on-going collective habit-formation.

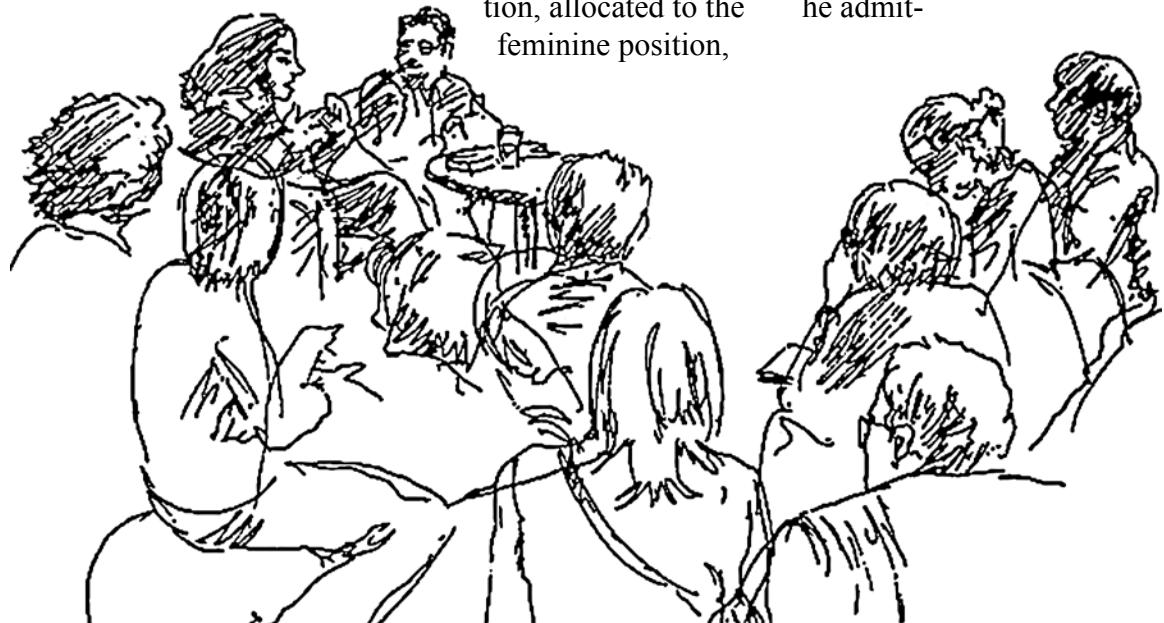
The Revolution is My Girlfriend

In Dominieck Hoens' (*Jan Van Eyck Academy, Maastricht*) provocatively titled paper “The Revolution is My Girlfriend,” the specific logic of the exception in Jaques Lacan's psychoanalytic theory was shown to be distinct from other, political theories of the exception. Hoens explained that, according to Lacanian psychoanalysis, there is a negation which avoids a mere dialectics of in- and exclusion, and thus evades simple “exception” from the system of signification—it is literally an exception to the familiar rules of exception. This negation is elaborated by Lacan when dealing with sexual difference. Lacan conceptualizes a negation, allocated to the feminine position,

that does not refer to an outside of a given universe but to its internal exclusion. In order to demonstrate this logically, he relies on Aristotle's logical square and a specific, that is a ‘maximal’ reading of the particular proposition, which is also known as the *petit object a*. Hoens concluded that, if there is a revolutionary potential to Lacan's philosophy, it is quite small and is limited to the exceptional inside/outside position of the female orgasm (hence “The Revolution is My Girlfriend”). Thus, Hoens argued against those who would try to translate Lacan's theory into radical political action. —P.B.

States of Grace: On León Rozitchner's Critique of Subjection

Bruno Bosteels (*Romance Studies, Cornell University*) launched an impressive polemic against Giorgio Agamben and his ever-increasing popularity in a series of remarks that, he admit-



ted, had been written principally “from the gut.” His incisive critique of Agamben demonstrated an intimate understanding of that writer’s attempt to uncover “the originary or fundamental structure of the political.” Specifically, Agamben describes a peculiar spatial relationship: The sovereign stands both inside and outside the law. There is an uncanny topology between law and life; one captures and feeds on the other. Agamben’s work conveys a sense of urgency and pathos by suggesting that this transhistorical fundament of the sovereign is especially evident in the political aftermath of 9/11. Its speculative, formal, and metaphysical approach allows one to jump freely between antiquity and modernity, “from Roman law to the Patriot Act.” In professing modernity’s fidelity to the arcane, Agamben hides a “subordination of the historical to the fundamental;” everything in history becomes a mere example of this fundamental principle, and the concentration camp is understood as an illustration of a metaphysical constant. What we are experiencing is the “gradual coming-to-light of the state of exception,” wherein history serves only as a sourcebook.

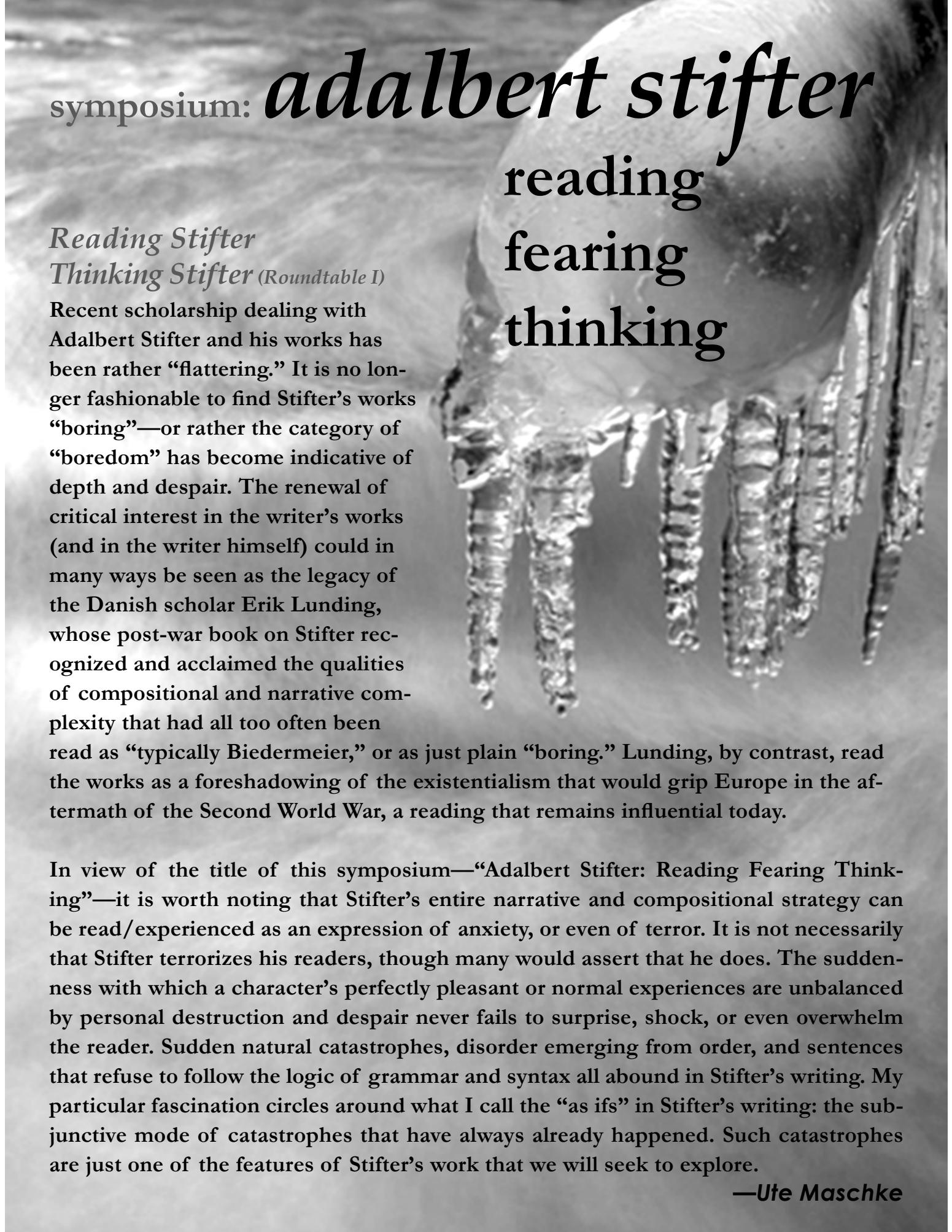
What all this leads to is an “erasure of previous options.” In the remainder of his talk, Bosteels sought to overcome this erasure by adopting an approach to the state of exception

that would be “historical-genealogical” rather than “speculative-metaphysical.” He returned to an earlier moment in history, when the promise of revolutionary upheaval was not “greeted with sarcasm and irony” by intellectuals who claim to have overcome its metaphysical underpinnings. Bosteels then went on to describe in depth the thought of Léon Rozitchner, an Argentinian philosopher and activist who suggested that capitalism would not have been possible without Christianity. Rozitchner attempted to think through the relation of “terror and grace.” For Rozitchner, pacification can only be understood when one understands the terrorism on which it is grounded. By interpreting terror in terms of military dictatorship, “terror” becomes an entity on the side of Christian capitalism, and the supposed state of “grace” or peace is made possible by a terrorizing military force. This discussion of Rozitchner presented a challenge to those who would try to subsume all political thought under Agamben’s peculiar discussion of the exception. The more we turn our backs on history, the more it sneaks up on us from behind: This was one of the many lessons of Bosteel’s talk. —P.B.

Paul Buchholz, Ari Linden, Gizem Arslan, and Casey Servais are graduate students in the department of German Studies.

As Acting Director of the Institute, it gives me great pleasure to announce that as of July 1, 2007, Professor Leslie A. Adelson will be assuming the directorship of this organization. Leslie has been Professor of German Studies at Cornell University since 1996, where she is also a Graduate Field member of Comparative Literature; Feminist, Gender, and Sexuality Studies; and Jewish Studies. Much of her research focuses on minority discourses and migrant cultures in postwar Germany, especially those concerning Jews and Turks, and on interdisciplinary German cultural studies. Adelson’s *Crisis of Subjectivity* (1984) was the first scholarly monograph to deal with the literary prose of Botho Strauß. In 1994, the Modern Language Association awarded her the Aldo and Jeanne Scaglione Prize for an Outstanding Scholarly Study in the Field of Germanic Languages and Literatures for her book, *Making Bodies, Making History: Feminism and German Identity* (1993). Her most recent book addresses the significance of Turkish migration for contemporary German literature and for migration studies more generally. *The Turkish Turn in Contemporary German Literature: Toward a New Critical Grammar of Migration* was published by Palgrave Macmillan (New York) in 2005. Her DAAD Faculty Summer Seminar (*Beyond the National? Interdisciplinary German Studies and the Global*) explored transnational implications and desiderata of contemporary German Studies. Between 1999 and 2006, Adelson served two three-year terms as Chair of the Department of German Studies at Cornell University. We affiliated with the Institute warmly welcome Leslie to her new position and wish her the very best as she carries out her new duties.

—David Bathrick



symposium: *adalbert stifter* reading fearing thinking

Reading Stifter *Thinking Stifter* (Roundtable I)

Recent scholarship dealing with Adalbert Stifter and his works has been rather “flattering.” It is no longer fashionable to find Stifter’s works “boring”—or rather the category of “boredom” has become indicative of depth and despair. The renewal of critical interest in the writer’s works (and in the writer himself) could in many ways be seen as the legacy of the Danish scholar Erik Lunding, whose post-war book on Stifter recognized and acclaimed the qualities of compositional and narrative complexity that had all too often been read as “typically Biedermeier,” or as just plain “boring.” Lunding, by contrast, read the works as a foreshadowing of the existentialism that would grip Europe in the aftermath of the Second World War, a reading that remains influential today.

In view of the title of this symposium—“Adalbert Stifter: Reading Fearing Thinking”—it is worth noting that Stifter’s entire narrative and compositional strategy can be read/experienced as an expression of anxiety, or even of terror. It is not necessarily that Stifter terrorizes his readers, though many would assert that he does. The suddenness with which a character’s perfectly pleasant or normal experiences are unbalanced by personal destruction and despair never fails to surprise, shock, or even overwhelm the reader. Sudden natural catastrophes, disorder emerging from order, and sentences that refuse to follow the logic of grammar and syntax all abound in Stifter’s writing. My particular fascination circles around what I call the “as ifs” in Stifter’s writing: the subjunctive mode of catastrophes that have always already happened. Such catastrophes are just one of the features of Stifter’s work that we will seek to explore.

—Ute Maschke

Thinking Stifter Fearing Stifter

(Roundtable II)

"Brigitta," Heidegger's Notion of "Bauen" & the Colonization of Eastern Hungary

Virginia Lewis (Northern State University) began her presentation by drawing a sharp distinction between two different possible human relations to nature: "enclosure" and "inhabitance." Enclosure, Lewis suggested, is the modern model of interaction with land and requires a sharp separation of man from nature; it involves subjecting the land to law, property, and labor. Inhabitance, on the other hand, precedes the modern subjugation of nature and denotes a more harmonious inclusion of the self in nature. Lewis identified enclosure with what she called the colonial "Robinson Crusoe-syndrome," whereby the human becomes a sovereign subject that rules over nature. Lewis culled her opposing notion of inhabitance from Martin Heidegger's concept of *Wohnen*. After setting up this conceptual framework, Lewis demonstrated how these conflicting notions are evident in Adalbert Stifter's story "Brigitta." In this text, the first device that marks private territory on the Hungarian landscape is a physical wall; in the course of the story, though, a

more complex, internalized power hierarchy is set up which allows certain sovereign individuals to lord over the landless peasants and subjugate them; this domination of other humans

is then mirrored in the material domination of nature in the surrounding land, with the violent, threatening wolves as the primary example. The Major must defeat the wolves in order to finally validate his position of power. In closing, Lewis suggested that Heidegger's notion of *Wohnen* presents a positive counterexample to the sort of enclosure which dominates the fabula of Stifter's text. —P.B.

Inside the Black Box: Stifter & Physiology

Silke Brodersen (Harvard University) opened her talk by pointing out that Stifter's works have time and again been discussed in terms of a contrast between a beautiful surface order and a repressed subtext of terror and disintegration that mourns the loss of metaphysical certainty and tries to recover it through the enforced notion of natural law ("Adalbert Stifters schrecklich schöne Welt" was the title of the 1993 in-

ternational Stifter colloquium in Antwerp). In order to explain these paradoxes and tensions, younger Stifter scholars like Eva Geulen and Christian Bege-

mann have turned to a study of Stifter's language as the place where reality is emulated in the play of signification in an otherwise empty universe of signs. While conceding that the process of signification is indeed an important topic in Stifter's work, Brodersen attempted to show how the notion of Stifter's world as constructed in language overly simplifies the matter since it fails to incorporate other dimensions of his "poetics of perception." Brodersen argued that signification in the texts is part of a larger emphasis on the mechanisms of cognition that focuses on the interface of sign use and sense physiology: the black box of human perception inside the brain. Brodersen gave an overview of how Stifter's texts use scientific models proposed by nineteenth-century physiologists like Johannes Müller and his student Hermann v. Helmholtz, who advocated a 'sign theory' of

perception that based ideas of reality on empirical input rather than innate ideas. She argued that the preoccupation with physiology in Stifter's works can be studied through various scientific templates and motifs that inform the narrative arrangement of the texts: observation, case study, contrast, experiment, diagnostics, therapy, and reflections on method to name a few. The early texts depict clashes of vision among different characters of a story that in turn uncover different theoretical mindsets ("Condor," *Hochwald*). To show the precariousness of any given process of perception, the stories focus on the dramatic physical consequences of misperception and prescribe a sophisticated regime of pedagogy to ensure stability of cognition (most notably in *Der Nachsommer*). Rather than just representing perception and its calamities, however, Stifter also builds in a meta-theoretical reflection (what could be called his "poetics of science") on the history of physiological experiments from Condillac's statue (which gains its senses one by one) to Diderot's and Herder's arguments on the importance of the sense of touch and Rousseau's ideas of artificially isolating a child from negative perceptions in *Emile*. The texts re-stage these historical (thought) experiments in order to recapitulate their insights into the workings of the mind. While Stifter's connection with eighteenth-

century classicist ideas has been widely acknowledged, his engagement with the science of his own century remains vastly underexplored: Diverging from the treatment of the subject as an epistemological problem in eighteenth-century philosophy, Stifter's texts distinctively link the topic of perception to the biological processes of the body and its development Brodersen focussed specifically on the texts' engagement with nineteenth-century models of physiology that foreground the notion of cognition as a multi-step process consisting of sensory input, neural (electric) transmission, and cognitive interpretation of sensory content as signs. She argued that some texts stage the breakdown of cognition in order to "probe" the inside of the mind and metaphorically depict bodily processes that reach beyond the plane of thought in/as language (as in the case of the 'extreme' landscapes in *Bergkristall*, "Mappe").

Stifter's Use of the Gothic in "Das alte Siegel" & "Der Hagestolz"

Mad monks, veiled women, old keepsakes, and churches in ruin—these are the familiar motifs of the "literature of nightmare" known as the Gothic. Austrian literature is not usually associated with the genre of the "Gothic," but Pamela S. Saur's (Lamar University) dissection of motifs in Stifter's stories "Das alte Siegel" and "Der

Hagestolz" revealed trends within these stories that could easily earn the name, especially if the genre is considered as an aggregate of traits rather than as an essential category. There are no overt supernatural forces in Stifter's stories, yet many of the generic signposts of the gothic are present in Stifter's complex fictions, especially since they share the religious realm of the gothic, all taking place in a Catholic space. There are fateful objects, secrets and mysteries, but in the end these nightmares are dispelled. Since Stifter's works tend to be developmental quests, the Gothic becomes a stage along one's journey and is eventually transcended; the protagonist undergoes a "gothic test," after which lingering mysteries are solved and the fog clears. Often enough, the Gothic elements of a story serve to represent a psychological phenomenon. When a man experiences a problematic attraction to a woman, for instance, it may be as if he has stumbled into a dark, ruined realm; but Stifter remains on some level a realist, and the ghost never stays to haunt. —P.B.

Thinking Stifter Reading Stifter (Roundtable III)

FORT/DA: Games with Beloved

Nicola Behrmann (New York University) began her talk by explicating a passage from Freud's work *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* in which Freud describes the game played by his young grandson, which came to be known as "Fort/Da." Freud interpreted the game as a working-through of the anxiety caused by the absence of the mother; one moment the wooden reel is close and in view, and the next it disappears. Behrmann described how this game is played out on the level of textuality, whereby textual movement postpones, sets aside, and defers all arguments that

could lead to a terminal understanding. Her approach to Stifter's *Bunte Steine* was informed by an awareness of this *Spielerei* occasioned by the tensions and absences of the stories, especially "Turmalin," which Behrmann understood as a "failed Fort/Da game." In the story, there are numerous passages of description

that cannot be explained by the causal structure of the narrative, and which seem to be placeholders for an unannounced, unspoken absence. These "cryptomimic word-things" (a term which Behrmann culled from Jacques Derrida, as well as from the psychoanalysts Maria Torok and Nicolas Abrams) constitute the topography of the story, in which the significant objects of desire are buried, encrypted, and invisible. Behrmann suggested that Stifter's story retained the possibility of positive meaning (an unlocking of the crypts) by virtue of its genre; it is, after all, a "detective story," and as such is oriented toward dissolution of mystery and narrative closure. Accordingly, the cryptomes become recognizable, rather than remaining part of a stream of nonsense. Ultimately, the father in the story has the task of placing and mastering the mother's absence. Thus, the illegibility of the story becomes somehow legible. —P.B.

Literary Liposuction: Removing the Fat from Der Nachsommer

Sam Frederick's (Cornell University) narratological investigation of Stifter's novel *Der Nachsommer* began by taking seriously a biographical observation about Stifter made by W.G. Sebald, who stated, without apparent irony or hyperbole, that Stifter effectively ate himself to death. Frederick showed how this pathological excess seems to

have translated over into his writing, palpably manifesting itself in the expansive prose of *Der Nachsommer*, which has consistently been received as a text of excess. Frederick was principally interested in how Stifter's editors effectively conflated the man with his book, treating *Der Nachsommer* as if it were the overweight Stifter himself, desperately in need of extreme weight reduction measures in order to save it from its demise. On the basis of the consensus view that Stifter's book was simply too fat, editors went to work trying to save the only thing they felt should be salvageable in a novel: its story. This turned out to be a difficult task. Once the author was dead, editors quickly rushed the novel into surgery for a kind of literary liposuction, attempting to remove its excess fat in order to make it slimmer, and more consumable, as the story it claimed to be.

Frederick, however, showed that the narrative strategies of the novel depend on the alleged lack of story, as well as the "fat" of description and digression—indeed, these have the effect of recuperating narrative. By denying tensions and resolutions, *Der Nachsommer* does not "irritate" or "frustrate"; rather, it guides the reader through a highly ordered spatial realm where lists, descriptions, and ritualized movements eclipse any sense of motivated action or emotional engagement. Stifter's

digressions do not usurp the place of story. They exist in relation to an attenuated story-function, declaring their purposeful purposelessness as reminders of story's absence. *Der Nachsommer*'s end arrives before its beginning, so that "story" is only a phantom that gives meaning to a fundamentally non-narrative collocation of events, events that become narrative only in story's shadow, in the space that opens up after story's cessation. These digressive passages carry out the narrative stasis that sets in after conventional time has stopped, in a post-narrative world. —P.B.

Keynote Address

Eva Geulen (University of Bonn, Germany) concluded the afternoon's talks with a keynote address on the topic of "wandering" in Stifter's works. Geulen followed two lines of interpretation corresponding to the two definitions of *Wandern* in German: first, to walk as on a *Spaziergang*, and second, to stray from the path. Geulen's particular hermeneutic approach was prompted by the question of wheth-

er it is legitimate to include Stifter's texts in a discussion of "aimless," merely "enjoyable" walking, which is without a goal or focus.

Geulen speculated

about whether something might be going on in Stifter's texts that is not exhausted by narratological approaches. The process that Geulen sought to illuminate in Stifter's texts was the "disclosure of the social dimension," and the path that his protagonists take towards socialization—even as they stray from this path. *Stiftungsgänge* are always *Stiftungsgänge*; even in the moment of straying, something is being established; the character enters into the continuity of a tradition and is normalized.

Geulen outlined the narrative form of "straying" in Stifter's works. First, the protagonist strays from "schöner Regelmäßigkeit;" he or she errs from the path. In the end, however, the digression results in a correction. This process of plot is mirrored in the thematization of the *Waldgänge* of those who lose themselves on a walk through the forest, the children of *Bergkristall* being a familiar example. Geulen located these tendencies historically,

as a kind of post-traditional establishment of tradition, with Stifter confronting the derailing potential of modernity. His characters fluctuate between nomadic existence and *Sesshaftigkeit*. Stifter's more anti-Semitic writings, however, fail to follow this formula exactly, because the characters (being uprooted Jews) are "not allowed entrance into the story." They are relegated to their own city in the desert, but are not ultimately included in a collectivity or traditional social model, because Stifter does not see their living-together as truly collective or as constitutive of an actual community.

Geulen's address was enriched by an absolutely encyclopedic knowledge of Stifter's work; each story was paraphrased vividly and dramatically, and even a reader unfamiliar with Stifter could follow the elegant logic of her extended close readings. She herself, at another moment during the symposium, admitted an addiction to his works, recounting a dream in which she discovered one more, unread and unknown Stifter text. Geulen's lecture made clear that, although she had read every one of his works, she had not yet exhausted the complex and confounding literary corpus of Adalbert Stifter. —P.B.

Paul Buchholz is a graduate student in the department of German Studies.

DAAD Summer Seminar: June 11 - July 20, 2007

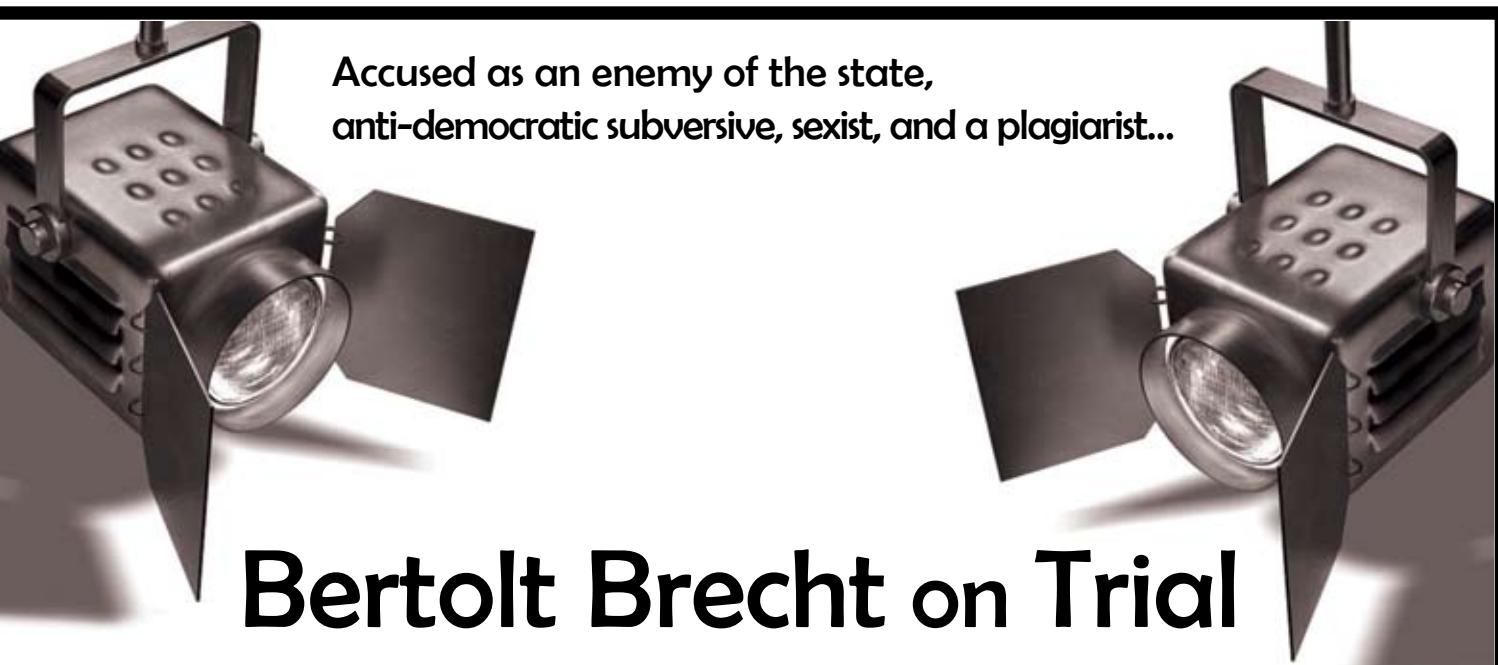
Seminar Director: Arthur Groos (Avalon Foundation Professor of the Humanities, Cornell University)

Deadline for Application: March 1, 2007

Open to faculty in the humanities and social sciences at colleges and universities in the U.S. and Canada. Twelve \$3,200 grants are available.

This seminar will explore how societies are represented in opera from the eighteenth century to the end of World War II. The focus is intended to be interdisciplinary, engaging systems of text, music, staging and reception, and inviting participation from scholars in German studies and music, as well as history, political science, and theatre history. Discussions might begin with representations of rulership in baroque music or attempts in operas such as *Die Zauberflöte* and *Fidelio* to imagine implications of the absolutist legacy for civil society and the bureaucratic state. Some sessions will consider nineteenth-century responses to the French Revolution and changing roles of the masses or 'the people'. Although some discussions will involve Wagner, projects involving grand opera or Verdi would also enable a comparative approach to constructions of national identity. Later sessions might focus on twentieth-century issues, such as *Zeitoper* or Viktor Ullmann's *Der König von Atlantis*, composed in the Theresienstadt concentration camp.

Operatic States Imagining Community in Music-Drama



Accused as an enemy of the state,
anti-democratic subversive, sexist, and a plagiarist...

Bertolt Brecht on Trial

7:00pm March 9, 2007 at the Risley Theater, North Campus

Artist-in-Residence Holger Teschke is an internationally renowned author and a former Dramaturg for the Berliner Ensemble. Working closely with Teschke, Cornell students have co-written a full-length play that the group will stage, direct, and perform.



symposium:
**Conjectures
before the
Sign of History:
Kant, 1786**

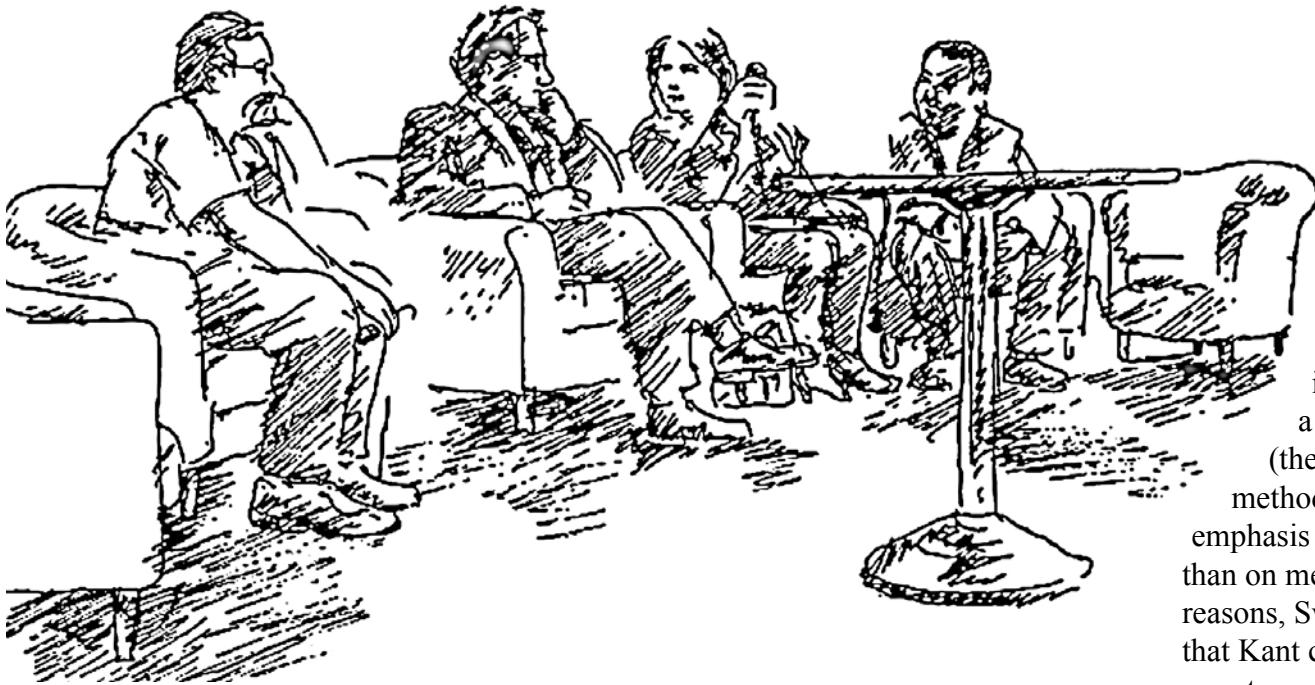
Nobody knew better than Kant that even the best laid plans often go awry. His entire critical project did not come about as he envisioned it; every one of the three *Critiques* turned out to take a rather different shape than Kant had assumed when he began them. However, in retrospect their sequence and structure appear to follow a clear overarching intention, a plan--even if that plan is no longer the one with which Kant started. In one of Kant's preferred metaphors, one might say that his initial plan served as a "guiding thread" without which the "critical path" never would have been taken--even if the actual windings and turns of that path did not always accord with the plan.

This is, of course, particularly true when, as Kant puts it memorably in his *Critique of Pure Reason*, we leave "the land of truth" behind us. This land is "the land of pure understanding," and it is merely "an island" that is "surrounded by a wide and stormy ocean." Needless to say, maneuvering on this ocean, where illusions lead us astray, turns out to be significantly more difficult than exploring the island. A certain groundlessness always threatens and forces the adventurer on many a detour.

What, then, can be expected from Kant's essay "Conjectural Beginning of Human History," "a mere pleasure trip" (*eine bloße Lustreise*) undertaken to explore such a remote and inaccessible zone as the beginning of human history? Once Kant starts reading his map and writing his essay--and none of his shorter writings is more deserving of that name--the obstacles start mounting. Numerous assumptions must be made, and conjectures become necessary in light of a lack of empirical data concerning the earliest development of humans. Conjectures, in turn, could easily become mere fiction. They need to be anchored by facts on either side; thus, a justified conjecture ought to serve only to provide an unknown "intermediate cause" between a remote cause and an effect. Only then will a history on the basis of conjectures not simply become the equivalent of a novel.

But does Kant's essay--and perhaps his entire philosophy of history--really conform to this rule? Does not the very title of Kant's essay ("Muthmaßlicher Anfang," or "Conjectural Beginning") contradict the rules it establishes in its opening paragraph? For if the matter at stake is truly a "beginning," it cannot be reduced to an "intermediate cause." Instead, it simply begins.

—Peter Gilgen



symposium: Conjectures before the Sign of History: Kant, 1786

Kant & the Limits of Historical Intelligibility

Aaron Hedges (Cornell University) defended the thesis that Kant's 1786 essay "Conjectural Beginning of Human History" articulates a theory of the imagination that both grounds the conjectural form and provides a model for thinking real historical experience as an act of reading. Kant's own description of his reading as a flight "on the wings of the imagination" therefore provides the basis for considering the Kantian doctrine of the imagination as it is formulated in the "Conjectural Beginning" and more prominently in the first Critique. This primarily involves emphasizing that the imagination is not, for Kant, something akin to mere speculation or idle daydreaming, but

instead signifies the subjective capacity to synthesize intuitions and concepts in the construction of experience—that is, the capacity to give sense to the world via the understanding. Hodge's primary thesis was that Kant extends this account of the imagination as a condition of possibility for subjectivity into the sphere of history in "Conjectural Beginning." This suggests a theory of historical imagination that relates to history in two senses. In one sense, the construction of something called history requires the imaginative (or conjectural) synthesis of experience with something that by nature cannot be given to experience. In a second sense, the imagination is something materially instantiated in history: Kant reads history as the emergence of increasingly complex modes of imagination, from primitive experimentation to the realization of the vocation of the species.

Kant on the Beginning of Human History-- Conjectures of a Sociologist

Richard Swedberg (Cornell University) delivered an entertaining talk on the concept of the "conjecture" in Kant and in general. For Swedberg, the conjecture inherently allows for subjectivity, and it is a form of thinking that has been all but forgotten. He thus called for a return to the conjecture in contemporary social scientific discourse. After giving a brief explanation of Kant's influence on three major sociologists—Durkheim, Simmel, and Weber—Swedberg proceeded to discuss the notion that at its most fundamental, a conjecture is a thought which leads to a good conclusion, and Kant's conjecture was that from the Bible one could draw serious ethical mandates. In Kant's short essay, Swedberg identified a "pure" conjecture comprised of

three parts: the avoidance of conventional modes of thinking (Kant includes humor); a starting point (the Bible); and a method that places

emphasis more on results than on means. For these reasons, Swedberg believes that Kant can be seen as a proto-sociologist, and a good one at that. Perhaps, however, the most humorous moment in the talk came when Swedberg, as an aside, pointed out that social maturity normally occurs in one's early 20s, except in the case of the academic, who undergoes this process at a much later time. —A.L.

Human History and the Genesis of Reading

Marianne Tettlebaum (Haverford College)

began by suggesting that a conjectural beginning of human history implies the possibility of a number of other beginnings, and that such a beginning could be historical in its own right. While history itself has to be based on records, establishing a conjectural beginning is a more experimental undertaking. A conjectural beginning requires the application of imagination, accompanied by reason. Kant likens the process to a pleasure trip

(*Lustreise*). Select chapters from the book of Genesis become his map—one that the reader can also follow step by step even while it ensures that the philosopher not go astray. This trip, then, is essentially the act of reading.

Kant goes on to read or interpret his “map” while implicitly contending with another reading of Genesis, Book 10 of Herder’s *Ideen*. While Herder seeks to gloss the sacred text, to use it literally as a historical document and thus reconcile the narrative with nature and actual events, Kant looks for a correspondence between the Biblical narrative and philosophy according to concepts. Herder is impatient with “conjectures.” They are speculations that lead one astray and must therefore be cleared from the path; they impede knowing. In Kant, imagination, the act of reading, free one from the restraints of the literal. That way, Kant can read original sin as an expansive use of reason, a stepping out of the state of nature into freedom, for example, a moment that is the conjectural beginning of human history. One of the wishes of the thinking man is a return to some past golden age, that is, the very state of nature one left behind. Philosophy cannot return to it, however, and some kind of unification of culture and nature might be a future goal for Kant. Yet artists and poets are free to revisit this utopian past (while, of course, poetic representa-

tions do not mean that the utopia was ever realized). Thus, there is a moment of poesis at every conjectural beginning. —M.M.

Kant’s Beautiful Struggles: The Identification of Individual Adversity and Social Progress

Ritesh Chatterjee (Cornell University) contextualized his paper by reminding his audience of the “discourse of victimization” that has pervaded American and Western culture since September 11th. He then turned to Kant’s 1786 essay to help answer the question of whether our traumas should serve as crutches upon which to advance. Kant, according to Chatterjee, argues that we should progress in spite of history’s mal-providence and continue the struggle whose beginning was the very initiation of human history. Chatterjee suggested that a general cynicism about the human project and an “existential disdain” has been on the rise since September 11, 2001, and that we now live

in a culture that promotes distrust of those who represent other nations, cultures, and political beliefs. Kant’s main idea is overwhelmingly relevant to the situation of distrust Chatterjee discussed. Perhaps the clearest way of expressing Kant’s point is to say that we cannot blame our misfortunes and malfeasance on anyone but ourselves—not as a nation or a segment of a nation, but rather as a species. Kant writes that each of us “should hold himself wholly responsible for all the evils that spring from the misuse of his reason.” Kant hence seems to combat what Chatterjee sees as the current tautological defense of “Western” versus “Eastern” culture, Christianity versus Islam, and so on.

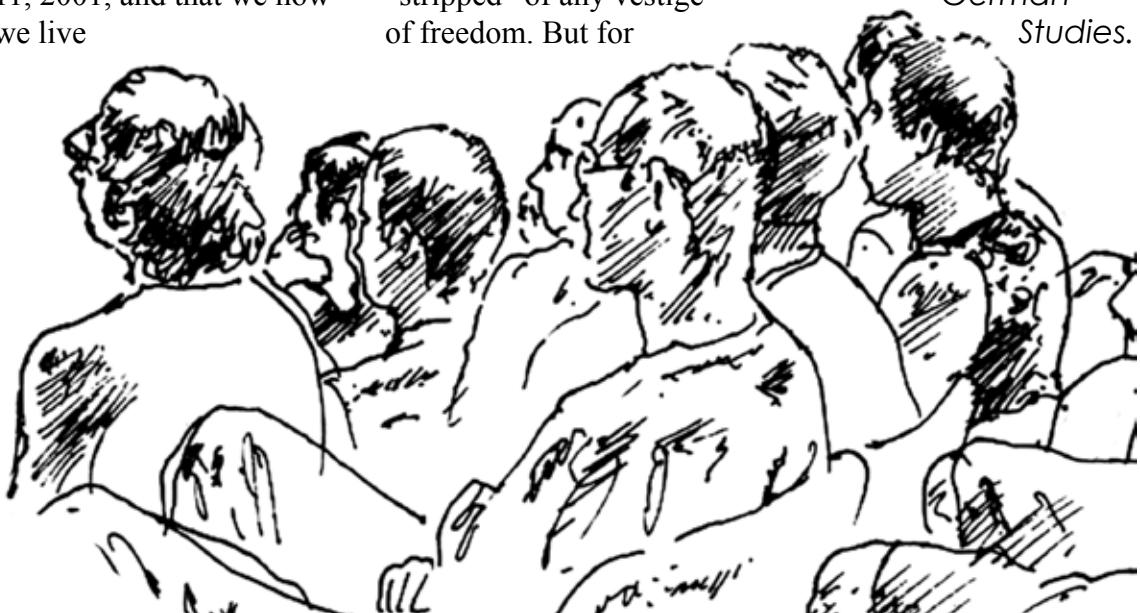
To highlight the friction necessary for progress, Kant takes on the issue of war, pointing to the China of his time as an example of a country that has not had to deal with war, and that has in some respects prospered, but that has been “stripped” of any vestige of freedom. But for

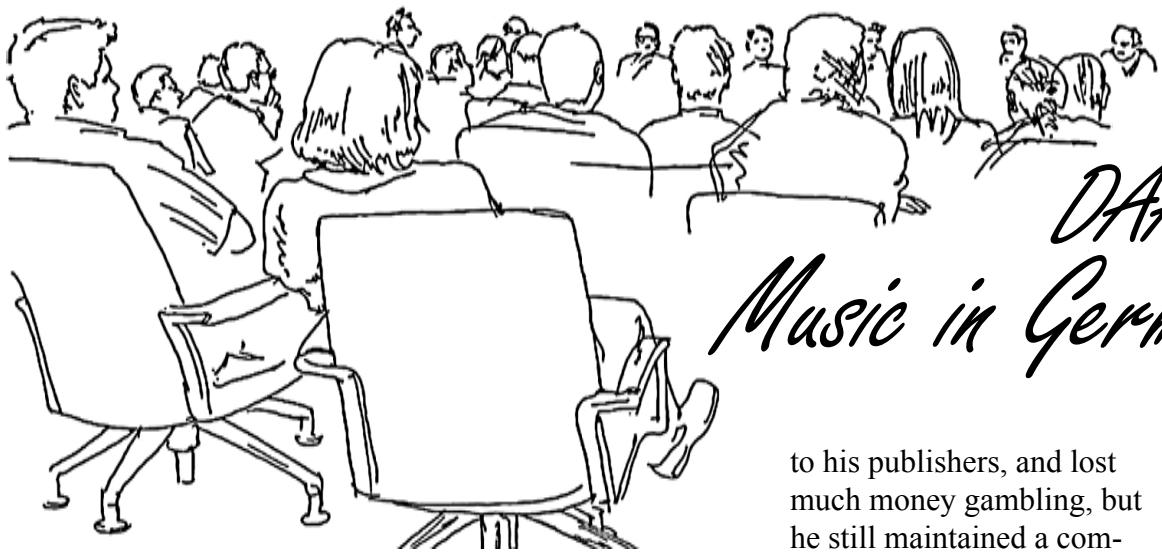
Kant, according to Chatterjee, this lack of conflict is not entirely ideal. Kant posits that “perpetual peace” will occur when human culture becomes fully developed, and at no time before this should freedom be hindered or the human struggle against adversity and threat be prematurely ended. The linchpin of cultural progress, as Chatterjee understands it from Kant’s essay, is the individual’s struggle with adversity, which, when combined in aggregate, ultimately yields benefits for the human species. Chatterjee ended his talk by quoting the slam poet Most Def, thereby revealing the origin of his title: “Life is beautiful. Life is a struggle. Life is a beautiful struggle.” —P.B.

Michelle Kosch (Cornell University, Philosophy) also presented a paper. A summary of her presentation will be available online.

Paul Buchholz, Ari Linden, Martins Masulis are graduate students in the department of

German Studies.





DAAD Weekend Music in German Culture

Introductory Remarks Mozart at 250

Neal Zaslaw (Cornell University, Music) interrogated the popular image of Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart in a multimedia presentation complete with film clips and newspaper cartoons; he not only debunked common myths, but also traced them genealogically in order to shed light on how the public—even those who know “nothing about music”—have come to know a certain constructed, imaginary “Mozart.” Zaslaw showed how a commonly known painting of a child Mozart seated at a piano was actually an emulation of another contemporary portrait of a young boy with a bird’s nest, but was somehow arbitrarily associated with the young composer in time. Another story about Mozart’s supposedly uncanny ability to copy down the score of a mass (from memory, after hearing it only once) was shown to be less a demonstration of supernatural talent than is commonly

thought—Mozart was well practiced in the craft of composition, but not heaven-sent. Mozart is often thought of as having “dictated from God,” a notion which was crystallized in the narrative of the American film *Amadeus*, which shows the dying composer gazing into the aether, pulling music out of thin air. This image can even be found in portraits of Mozart from the eighteenth century; an apocryphal letter which appeared in 1815, attributed to Mozart but written by an anonymous, romantic-minded forger, helped to corroborate this falsity: “Nor do I hear in my imaginations these parts successively,” writes the fake Mozart, “I hear them all at once. [...] All this inventing, this producing, takes place in a pleasing, lively dream.” But Mozart was far more bound up in practical concerns than is usually thought; even the idea of the late Mozart as a sick, starving genius with his head in the clouds does not correspond to reality. Mozart indeed lived in debt

to his publishers, and lost much money gambling, but he still maintained a comfortable bourgeois living for his family. Cumulatively, Zaslaw showed that this great composer was a talented maniac, but certainly not an unearthly messiah. In order to interpret his music and his life more faithfully, it is necessary to abandon these myths.
—P.B.

C.P.E. Bach and Musical Portraits in the Eighteenth Century

In a lecture entitled “C.P.E. Bach and Musical Portraits in the Eighteenth Century,” **Annette Richards (Cornell)** presented the audience with her readings of C.P.E. Bach’s *Pièces caractéristiques*. These short works for keyboard instruments were composed between 1754 and 1757, and the majority of them are musical depictions of concrete persons, for example of the poet Ludwig Gleim (“La Gleim”), with whom Bach shared a close friendship. A smaller group of these pieces is dedicated to the characterization of abstract types (“La Capricieuse,”

“Les Langueurs tender,” etc.). Richards situated these portraits within the context of eighteenth-century aesthetics, especially the fascination with *petit sujets* and Johann Caspar Lavater’s study of physiognomics. It was Lavater’s belief that a portrait should capture the complete character of a human being and not just his or her physical likeness. The nature of the character, however, could be identified by way of standardized physical traits, for example the shape of the ear. In contrast to a portrait artist, who depends on allegorization in order to accomplish an accurate and faithful representation of a person’s character, the composer has the advantage that his or her art is not spatial, but rather allows for expansion on the time axis. Music, then, is not only the ideal medium for portraying feelings in general—a belief common in eighteenth-century musical aesthetics—but is also particularly good at reconciling the concept of affect (fluid, changing) and character (fixed, general). In the second part of her lecture, Richards analyzed

some of Bach's *Pièces caractéristiques* and contextualized them by placing them within the wider framework of the musical fantasy, whose complex and ambiguous ontological status, fragmentary qualities, and subjective open-endedness—in short: post-modern appeal—she described in detail.—J.S.

The Musical Sublime and the Pastoral in Haydn's Creation and Seasons

James Webster, Goldwin Smith Professor of Music at Cornell University, gave a lecture on Haydn's *The Creation* and *The Four Seasons*. Following a short description of the genesis of both oratorios, Professor Webster began his presentation by addressing the history of their reception. According to Webster, *The Creation's* public premiere on March 19, 1799 "made history" on a pan-European scale in a way equaled by no other composition in the history of Western music." *The Four Seasons's* first public performance on May 19, 1801, was also received

highly favourably, but *The Four Seasons* was soon marginalized in comparison to *The Creation*, partly because its subject matter was deemed lower and because the text was judged aesthetically deficient due to its dependence on pictorialisms. Webster continued by pointing out how pictorialisms soon began to affect the nineteenth- and twentieth-century reception of *The Creation* as well. *The Creation* and *The Four Seasons* rely heavily on "narrative, contemplation, and celebration;" they are "essentially deistic in outlook;" they speak of "high and low," "sacred and secular," and, most importantly, "the sublime and the pastoral;" and in that sense they transcend the boundaries of the traditional oratorio.

The major part of Webster's lecture addressed the sublime in *The Creation*. He argued that the music of the *The Creation* invokes the sublime in a way that corresponds to Kant's notion of the "dynamic sublime," and which is also fundamental to works like Mozart's *Don Giovanni* or

Beethoven's Third and Fifth Symphonies. This dynamic sublime manifests itself in the way Haydn represents the Creation of Light on the first day, and in the way he moves from an unstable C minor to the shining clarity of C major and thus depicts the transformation from paradoxical disorder into triumphant order.

The pastoral images in *The Creation* should be perceived neither as an Arcadian idyll nor as a bucolic portrayal of country life. They are neither heroic nor "set in an artificial venue where the constraints of ordinary society do not apply." Webster attributes the slightly paradoxical effect rendered by illustration of the verbal images preceding the textual signifier to Haydn's intention of concentrating the listener's attention on the musical image. Not knowing yet what the sound event signifies would only force the audience to listen more attentively. Webster then defended the often criticized third part of the requiem, the introduction of Adam and Eve, by arguing that understanding

this part as a pastoral would expose its "criticisms as misguided".

The status of *The Four Seasons* as pastoral is, according to Webster, self-evident, since the "four seasons" is one of the most prominent topics within the pastoral tradition and since many of the "genre scenes" of the requiem are clearly within the pastoral tradition. Less obvious are the sublime aspects of the oratorio, which Webster sees crystallized most clearly in Winter, where Haydn "draws an analogy between "the rhythm of the seasons and the rhythm of our lives." On a higher level, *The Four Seasons* follows the same "ur-progression from Chaos to Light" that is employed in *The Creation*, but it is only represented as such in Winter,

whereas Spring is based on a move



from g to G, and Summer from c to E flat. So it is Winter that “restores Light itself, definitively.” Webster concluded that *The Creation* and *The Four Seasons* tell the “history of the world, from the beginning of time and the Creation of Light, to the Day of Judgement and the end of time.” Pastoral is what fills in the gap. —J.S.

The Bach Revival in the Nineteenth Century

Celia Applegate (University of Rochester) discussed the significance of the performance of J. S. Bach’s Matthew’s Passion in Berlin on March 11, 1829, from the point of view of cultural history. It was the first performance of the work since Bach’s death, and it was organized in Berlin by the young Felix Mendelssohn. According to Applegate, this could be considered the first “modern” performance. Although Berlin was still rather provincial in the context of European modernization processes, the Bach performance represented a shift in the status of musical compositions within the public sphere. Music emerged from its subordinate, functional role (e.g., as an element of church life) to play an important part in the attempts to revive German national culture.

Zelter’s Sing-Akademie zu Berlin, a society composed of amateur singers from the middle classes,

performed the piece. A first among many, this singing academy had been reluctant to perform publicly, as its main goal had been the edification of the members. Yet the members and their prominent connections ensured support for the new project. The three performances took place in a secular atmosphere: Occuring on a night that was not a church night, and at a non-ecclesiastic venue, it was received enthusiastically by the public, including a number of “celebrities” (Hegel, Heine, Schleiermacher, etc.).

This public presentation and consumption of a musical work reflected a new mode of listening, widening access to works regarded as “national patrimony” (which also included elevating the formerly esoteric figure of J. S. Bach to the status of a national cultural icon) and wresting music away from the confines of the court and church so as to instate it as part of the bourgeois process of *Bildung*. The logistics of organizing the performances also illustrated new uses of publicity in expanding the cultural citizenship of the urban middle classes. For example, Applegate highlighted a campaign led by the journalist A. B. Marx to promote the event. The inward-looking, self-contained Sing-Akademie also acquired a new role that ultimately extended its ideas and goals to a broader public. —M.M.

Constructing Germany (Die Meistersinger von Nürnberg)

Arthur Groos (Cornell), began Sunday’s portion of the DAAD conference with a presentation entitled “Constructing Germany: Die Meistersinger von Nürnberg.”

Professor Groos’s discussion, which was supplemented with musical excerpts, analyzed the diverse typologies at work in Wagner’s opera. In particular, Professor Groos focused on the various ways in which *Die Meistersinger* reflects typologies of the past and future in order to transpose a nineteenth-century agenda onto early modern history, in this case sixteenth-century Nuremburg. Groos emphasized the prominent role that Nuremburg played in the establishment of early German culture, an aspect of the city’s history that makes it the ideal setting for an opera that attempts to create a contemporary national identity. In this way, *Die Meistersinger* establishes a historical community—a cultural unity between sixteenth- and nineteenth-century Germany—even while offering a problematic projection of Germany’s future. Groos then reflected on the dialectic between two opposing tropes at the beginning and end of the opera: a form of the Biblical trope of prophesy and fulfillment and a prolepsis that serves to overshadow the first trope in order to indicate an alternative typology, that of the creation of the modern German state. Pointing to the

choruses of acts I and III as keys to understanding the dialectic between these tropes, Groos noted that these scenes in particular provide choral representations of society and hence help to construct a national image for the German people.—G.G.

Schönberg in Context

In a lecture entitled “Schönberg in Context,” Walter Frisch (Columbia), the H. Harold Gumm/Harry and Albert von Tilzer Professor of Music at Columbia University, introduced the audience to various aspects of Schönberg’s work and traced the composer’s career from Vienna to Los Angeles. He began by emphasizing that Schönberg was not “simply” a composer but a “total artist”: an exceptional expressionist painter, admired by Kandinsky, who included four of Schönberg’s paintings in a *Blaue Reiter* exhibition; a conductor of modernist music; a skilled teacher with a talent for attracting gifted students (Alban Berg, Kurt Weill, Anton Webern); an author and music theorist; a critic and commentator on new music; in other words: a true polymath. Schönberg was not a humble man, but rather regarded himself as the inheritor of the great Austro-German tradition of Beethoven, Brahms, and possibly Mahler. Indeed, it was Schönberg’s relationship with Mahler that Frisch discussed in most detail.

Differences of opinion on musical matters cast a shadow on Schönberg’s first encounters with Mahler in

Mahler's house in 1905. However, each composer felt a deep respect for the other's work. Mahler was very impressed with Schönberg's string sextet *Verklärte Nacht*, which, as Frisch emphasized, constituted his first instrumental masterpiece and represented a decisive event in the emancipation of dissonance. Schönberg wrote a letter of unrestrained admiration after he had heard Mahler conduct his *Third Symphony*, an admiration that would lead Schönberg to dedicate his major theoretical work, the *Harmonielehre* of 1911, to Gustav Mahler, and to commemorate his death in a short piano piece (Op. 19,

no. 6) and a lecture held on March 25, 1912 in Prague. In addition, Frisch highlighted conceptual similarities in Mahler's and Schönberg's musical thinking by comparing an excerpt from the first movement of Mahler's *Sixth Symphony* to Schönberg's op. 16 no. 4.

Frisch also discussed the convergence of music and the visual arts in Schönberg's work. For Schönberg, the idea of this convergence did not represent a contradiction between a *Zeitkunst* and a *Raumkunst*, a spatial and a temporal art. Frisch played a short excerpt from a 1950s radio interview in which Schönberg was questioned

about the relationship between the arts, and in which he took a synaestheticist position by stating that, to him, music was painting. Frisch implicitly connected this idea to Schönberg's invention of the "Klangfarbenmelodie," an orchestral technique in which melodic patterns emerge through changing instrumental colours rather than through the unfolding of single individual pitch lines.

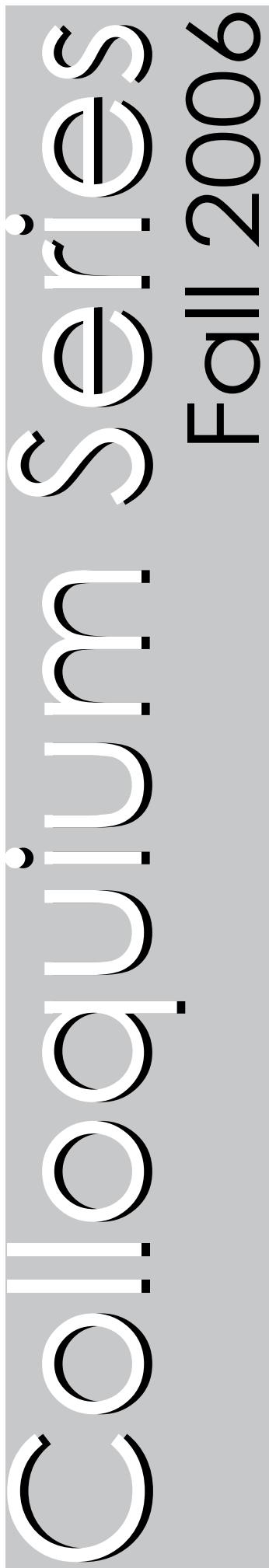
Frisch also dealt with Schönberg's activities as a teacher and theorist, first in Vienna and then, after Schönberg emigrated to the United States, at the University of Southern California and later UCLA. Frisch

emphasized Schönberg's unwavering dedication to pedagogy in spite of his frustrations with heavy teaching loads, his constant worry of being unable to support himself and his family financially after retirement, and the general ignorance with which his music was treated—the fact that his recognition as the most important living composer next to Stravinsky remained unreflected in the number of performances of his works. —J.S.

Paul Buchholz, Jens Schellhammer, Martins Masulis, and Grace Gemmell are graduate students in the department of German Studies.

2006 DAAD Summer Seminar: Nietzsche & Heidegger: The Question of Esoteric Political Philosophy

From June 12 to July 21, 2006, **Professor Geoffrey Waite** led a DAAD summer seminar on the topic "Nietzsche and Heidegger: The Question of Esoteric Political Philosophy." Participants included Peter Arnds (Kansas State University), Yurii K. Cohen (Cornell University), Myrto Dutrisac (École des hautes études en Sciences Sociales), Robert Guay (Barnard College/Columbia University), Richard Joines (Auburn University), Clancy Martin (University of Missouri, Kansas City), Tatiana Patrone (University of Arkansas), Casey Servais (Cornell University), Ji Yun Song (Stanford University), and Dale Wilkerson (University of North Texas). The seminar began by interrogating Leo Strauss's famous account of the tradition of esoteric writing, then moved on to examine some recent analyses of the traditions of Greek political thought that inspired Strauss. These readings and discussions served as a preparation for delving into the writings of Nietzsche and Heidegger themselves. Discussions focused on the issues of to what extent Nietzsche and Heidegger practiced esoteric writing, and, if so, of the exact nature of their indoor convictions. This portion of the seminar made particular use of work by the Straussian political philosophers Stanley Rosen and Laurence Lampert, who have written (esoterically) about esoteric elements in Nietzsche's thought. By reinserting Nietzsche and Heidegger into the tradition of esoteric political philosophy, the seminar served to problematize many of the premises underlying recent debates about the relationship of (their) philosophy to politics, most particularly the oft-repeated claim that Nietzsche and Heidegger have no political philosophy. It also raised the question of whether "Left-Nietzschean" and "Left-Heideggerian" are ultimately contradictions in terms given the constitutively esoteric dimension of Nietzsche and Heidegger's thinking, writing, and legacy. Professor Bruno Bosteels supplemented the seminar with a lecture on Alain Badiou's relationship to Nietzsche and Nietzscheanism. Film screenings and other cultural activities further enriched the experience of the seminar participants.



Das Lied von der Erde and the Mahlerian Interplay of Song and Symphony

In the first colloquium of the semester, **Cassandra Henry (German Studies, Cornell University)** provided a close musicological and textual reading of Gustav Mahler's *Das Lied von der Erde*. Henry began by explaining the complex imbrication of the work with its cultural context in late nineteenth-century Vienna. The liberal, urban bourgeoisie of Mahler's time felt deprived of "authentic experience;" their high degree of cultural attainment led, in their view, to an "inability to experience life." Thus, in the realm of art, one could witness an attempt to create a shared past that would allow the bourgeoisie to feel attached to rural existence. The idealized *Volk*, in turn, became a cornerstone of nationalist discourse as folk themes were incorporated into existing bourgeois art forms. The more complex and inaccessible these forms became, the more clearly questionable their authenticity was. As the nineteenth century wore on, composers tried to address this issue. Young activists tried to turn the symphony into a "universal genre" that would allow the masses

to experience their national and cultural heritage. Concerts were held in this spirit, but they were very poorly attended. Mahler's own engagement occurred on a more formal level. His appropriation of a *Lied* for his symphony looked to non-Western sources (the *Lied von der Erde* is culled from the French work *The Chinese Flute*, which draws on ancient Chinese texts). The work seems to be aware, on some level, that any attempt to interpret and integrate songs into symphonic genres will result in the destruction of the essence of folk art. Ultimately, the song would



be sung by a skilled, classically trained performer. The *Lied* can thus be seen as a work whose conscious appropriation of Chinese folk material critiques the emergent aesthetic forms of bourgeois nationalism.

—P.B.

Recognizing the Game in Dantons Tod



At the end of his game-theoretical reading of Georg Büchner's play *Dantons Tod*, **Ross Halvorsen (German Studies, Cornell University)** turned to a letter Büchner wrote to his parents, the so-called *Fatalismusbrief*. More than an expression of a

Yuliya Komska (German Studies, Cornell University) initiated her discussion of “visual nostalgia” with an appropriately vivid passage from Adalbert Stifter’s *Der Hochwald*: Johanna and Clarissa, two sisters who have fled into the mountain wilderness to escape the ravages of the Thirty Years War, gaze down upon the castle where they once lived and which now appears spotted and distorted far below. The “relationship between vision, chronology, and wartime displacement” posited here in Stifter’s prose made up the conceptual framework of Komska’s paper. By tracing visual practices genealogically, Komska hoped to show how nostalgia—rather than being written off as problematic or praised as “progressive”—can be defined as “productive,”

Visual Nostalgia



whether contributing to the experiential capacity of sightfulness or creating a unique “double exposure” not allowed by immediate experience. With these possibilities in mind, Komska confronted the concept of *Heimat*, usually representative of a “conservative strand of politics.” Komska, however, traced the historical permutation of this concept; has *Heimat* perhaps come to represent a universal or global human experience?

ence (following Kimberly Smith), rather than being simply isolationist, xenophobic, and reactionary? Resisting the “de-pathologization” of nostalgia, Komska reminded her readers of the physiological origins of the term nostalgia. It literally is a “home-sickness,” a somehow disrupted condition which is caused by historical circumstance. After these theoretical preparations, Komska discussed the ongoing controversy regarding the Sudeten-Germans forced to leave Bohemia after World War II. The Czech-Austrian borderland, as Komska showed with photographs from her own travels, still bears the landmarks of

many nostalgic pilgrimages by the displaced Germans, who would drive en masse to the border and gaze into the next country from an elevated position, much like Johanna and Clarissa in *Der Hochwald*. Augmenting these photos with written eyewitness accounts, Komska showed the way mental projection synthesized with actual landscape in the displaced Germans’ experience.

In conclusion, Komska showed that visual nostalgia is ultimately paradoxical and that the distinction between “restorative” nostalgia (a “transhistorical reconstruction of the lost home” [Boym]) and “reflective” nostalgia (more self-aware, focused on the actual feeling of longing itself, and supposedly more protective of “absolute truth”) is ultimately invalid. —P.B.

fatalistic attitude towards humanity, this letter formulates Büchner’s unique form of materialism, in which individuals are subject to the rules of history, but are at the same time allowed a distance from these rules, a perspective from which they can laugh at fate. Halvorsen’s paper, then, focused on an individual’s encounter with inevitability; Danton is forced to play an impossible game with Robespierre as his

opponent. In order to highlight the specifically game-theoretical aspect of his paper, Halvorsen began his presentation with a brief explication of elementary game theory, which concluded with a recognition that the game at work in Dantons Tod is infinitely more complex than the initial game model he provided. The game involves survival and self-protection, both in the sense of keeping the revolution alive, and

in the sense of saving one’s own skin. Halvorsen contrasted Robespierre’s illusory populism and deceptive maintenance of revolutionary ideals with Danton’s inability to represent the ideal of freedom to the masses. Robespierre promises an improvement of material conditions, while Danton “defends the authentic struggle for freedom” and recognizes the “conflict of individual agency” involved in the revolution.

By examining the stance of each through the course of the drama’s events, Halvorsen explored the consciousness of the two opponents, emphasizing that the revolutionary situation ultimately offers only the escape of laughter. —P.B.

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Points of View: The Impact of Linear Perspective on European Culture

Jochen Schulte-Sasse
(University of Minnesota)

argued that the emergence of linear perspective in European painting led to an empowerment of the human subject as visual practices and concepts that were once exclusively Christian became secularized through a rethinking of the human gaze. Filippo Brunelleschi's famous experiment at the Santa Maria del Fiore, which showed how a painting is oriented absolutely at a single pre-postulated

point in space, was the first significant step in "re-orient[ing] the human gaze." Brunelleschi's approach emphasized "activity over contemplation," establishing the viewer as an active agent. In theorizing this moment as a historical break, Schulte-Sasse employed Walter Benjamin's account of how one changes one's "grasp of reality on the basis of changing techniques." He also cited Erich Auerbach's theory, in *Mimesis*, of the shift from a vertical to a

horizontal worldview, such that individuals come to be centered in themselves. Individuals were no longer oriented towards a point outside space and time; they could now orient themselves historically without the help of Christian eschatology. It was precisely this secularizing force of linear perspective that concerned Schulte-Sasse: By establishing the vanishing point—a representation of infinity—it makes an absolute, secular establishment of truth



claims possible. Schulte-Sasse concluded by arguing that these cultural strategies, first developed in painting, signaled a move towards the transcendence of matter "in the direction of the absolute" that would later characterize German Idealism. —P.B

Fictions of Memory and Meta-Memory in Contemporary Literature



Birgit Neumann (University of Giessen) attempted to map out the relationship between ethics, literature, and memory. Leaving behind "universalist ethics of

good and bad," Neumann, in her paper, proposes an ethics of (self-) reflexivity that perpetuates the process of "value-making" while simultaneously analyzing and questioning that very process. Literary texts, Neumann continues, gain ethical value through the interplay of their content and the reflection on that content. In reading Michael Ondaatje's *Running in the Family*—a novel that aids our knowledge of the past by arranging visual material around

vignettes of various length in an apparently unstructured way, thereby mimicking the process of remembering as construction and reconstruction of the past—Neumann draws our attention to fictions of meta-memory, which resist representing the past as unified and instead force readers to reflect on their own ability to extract meaning from "memory's truth." Fictions of meta-memory, Neumann insists, are guided by the ethical imperative to reflect on

the process of reconstructing the past from a present that is culturally and socially particular.

Neumann's argument encouraged a lively debate. While Neumann seemed to take for granted an ethical quality to literature per se, members of the audience remarked that Neumann, rather than critically questioning literature's investment in ethics, blurred the distinction between the two. —M.S.

Colloquium Series

Spring 2007



181 Goldwin Smith Hall Fridays @ 3:00pm

February 23

Andrea Polaschegg

Institut für deutsche Literatur, Humboldt Universität zu Berlin

**Knowledge of the Bible:
A Challenge to the Theories of Intertextuality.
Mary Magdalene for Example**

March 30

Jens Schellhammer

Graduate Student, German Studies, Cornell University

Writing Pop Writing Presence



April 13

Chenxi Tang

Professor, Germanic Studies, University of Chicago

**Romantische Orientierungstechnik:
Kartographie und Dichtung um 1800**

April 27

Willi Goetschel

Professor, Germanic Language and Literatures, Univ of Toronto

May 11

Michelle Kosch

Professor, Sage School of Philosophy, Cornell University

Between Primitive Accumulation & the New Enclosures

Friday March 30 (AD White House)

& Saturday March 31 (Africana Studies Center)

Modernity is many things. Secularization is one of them, and speed-up, and the cult of technics, and disenchantment of the world, and false orientation to the future. But right at the heart of capitalist modernity, we would argue, has been a process of endless enclosure. The great work of the past half-millennium was the cutting-off of the world's natural and human resources from common use. Land, water, the fruits of the forest, the spaces of custom and communal negotiation, the mineral substrate, the life of rivers and oceans, the very airwaves—capitalism has depended, and still depends, on more and more of these shared properties being shared no longer, whatever the violence or absurdity involved in converting the stuff of humanity into this or that item for sale. Enclosure seems to us the best word for the process's overall logic.

—Retort, *Afflicted Powers: Capital and Spectacle in a New Age of War*

These New Enclosures . . . name the large-scale reorganization of the accumulation process which has been underway since the mid-1970s. The main objective of this process has been to uproot workers from the terrain on which their organizational power has been built, so that, like the African slaves transplanted to the Americas, they are forced to work and fight in a strange environment where the forms of resistance possible at home are no longer available. . . . Thus, once again, as at the dawn of capitalism, the physiognomy of the world proletariat is that of the pauper, the vagabond, the criminal, the panhandler, the street peddler, the refugee sweatshop worker, the mercenary, the rioter.

—Midnight Notes Collective, *The New Enclosures*

The conference will gather four outstanding thinkers within the field of analysis that both relies on and extends Marx's disquisition in *Capital* (volume 1) on what he calls "primitive accumulation." This process of the assertion of the right of private property over land that was previously held in common, that is, of enclosure, has in recent years been understood to continue to extend its reach globally and in ways that Marx could not have anticipated. The participants in the conference, mainstays of the Midnight Notes Collective and the Retort group, are among the most significant contributors to a theory and historiography of the New Enclosures, and to interventions aimed at recovering the commons. Iain Boal, George Caffentzis, Silvia Federici, and Peter Linebaugh will join us. A reader gathering material pertinent to the conference will be available (Please contact conference organizer Barry Maxwell (Comparative Literature) at bhm4@cornell.edu).

Sponsors: Africana Studies and Research Center; Anthropology; Asian American Studies; Ethics and Public Life Program; Feminist, Gender, and Sexuality Studies; Future of Minority Studies Research Project; Comparative Literature; Developmental Sociology; English; History; Institute for German Cultural Studies; MITWS (Minority, Indigenous, and Third World Studies Research Group); Peace Studies; Society for the Humanities.

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Illustrations by Andy Bleck (<http://andybleck.com>)

Additional information about all events listed is available on our website: www.arts.cornell.edu/igcs. Event listings will be updated throughout the semester. If you would like to be added to our mailing list, please contact Robin Fostel (rtf8@cornell.edu).

Contributions to German Cultural News are welcome. If you would like an event listed or have a brief review or article to submit, please contact Paul Buchholz (pjb45@cornell.edu).