

In this Issue:

Conferences:

Loners and Networkers: Cultural-political Conservatism in West Germany after 1945

Primitive Accumulation and the New Enclosures

(Mis) Speaking the End: Hyperbole and Apocalyptic Tone

Symposia:

Was ist Glück?

Colloquium Series:

Writing Pop Writing Presence

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

Romantische Orientierungstechnik: Kartographie und Dichtung um 1800

Frankfurt School and Frankfurt Schul: Heinrich Heine and the Post Contemporary

What Abraham Couldn't Say

Also:

Interview with Holger Teschke

Faculty Profile: Patrizia McBride

IGCS Farewells Hohendahl

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Loners and Networkers: Cultural-political Conservatism in West Germany after 1945

For those of us who experienced the leading intellectuals of the 1950s firsthand during our educational socialization in the 1960s, it's a strange sensation to see these figures who have continued to interest us—sometimes openly, sometimes only privately, but in any case as living figures, as admired or repellent personalities—reappear in the work of younger scholars. Be that as it may, recent research in the fields of History, Communications, and Literary Studies has pointed to a continuity in elites before and after 1945, to old connections that were still good in the postwar period, to networks at the universities and in the media, in politics, the economy, and the culture industry, in the quickly reconstituted military and in the halfheartedly de-Nazified justice system. More than once, this research has identified figures who, although seemingly fatally compromised by their services to the Third Reich, sought and gained influence in the "new time" after the end of the war. Interest in the professional biographies of rehabilitated old Nazis and the often scandal-driven search for a "National Socialist penetration of the Federal Republic" (L. Hachmeister) easily obscured the fact that

In Gratitude to Peter Uwe Hohendahl

From its inception in 1992, the Institute for German Cultural Studies has owed its existence and vitality to the intellectual vision and collegial spirit of its founding director, Peter Uwe Hohendahl, Jacob Gould Schurman Professor of German and Comparative Literature. Under his dynamic leadership, the Institute has long made its mark as a premier venue, both within Cornell University and in the interdisciplinary field of German Studies more generally, for the critical study of German-speaking cultures from the medieval period to the present. Thanks to the founding director's foresight and dedication, what began as an innovative attempt to over-



come traditional disciplinary divisions within our home institution has become an indispensable feature of rigorous inter- and trans-disciplinary inquiry in the College of Arts and Sciences and beyond. In a variety of

(cont'd page 11)

most of the members of the technocratic-pragmatic “Generation of the Unconditional” (M. Wildt) adapted quite smoothly and successfully to the changed political and social conditions after 1945—successfully not only for themselves, but also for the long-term stabilization of reliable structures.

Another aspect of recent research into postwar conservatism is just as significant. This is the effort to assess the long-term influence of conservative cultural politics, including the influence of those figures who once competed with each other as precursors to National Socialism, who believed that they could influence and improve the new National Socialist rulers by embracing them, who opted, sooner or later, for distance or opposition, and who, in the postwar period, were just as proud of their earlier, quieter positions as they were of their decidedly louder opposition to the even newer new holders of power.

This description applies above all to four intellectuals, each of whom considered himself the most solitary of loners, but who collectively, by observing and sending out feelers to each other, constitute, at least ex negativo, a group: Carl Schmitt, Martin Heidegger, Ernst Jünger and Gottfried Benn. Three of the four—Carl Schmitt, Martin Heidegger, and Ernst Jünger—were the topic of a

conference at Cornell University early last year. In view of the many questions that emerged there about the context and influence of these figures, we decided to continue our examination of conservative thought in the post-1945 period, shifting our focus from the “spiders” (Schmitt, Heidegger, and Jünger) to the webs that they and their followers spun.

—Erhard Schütz

Loners and Networkers: Cultural-political Conservatism in West Germany after 1945

Under the title “Loners and Networkers: Cultural-political Conservatism in West Germany after 1945,” the participants in an international conference at Humboldt University opened a broad perspective on conservative currents of thought in the western zones of Germany in the years immediately following World War II. The conference, organized by **Peter Uwe Hohendahl** (Cornell University) and **Erhard Schütz** (Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin), further developed topics addressed at the conference “Conservative Thought in West Germany after 1940: Martin Heidegger – Carl Schmitt – Ernst Jünger,” which was organized by Peter Uwe Hohendahl and **Wolf Kittler** and held at the Cornell In-

stitute for German Cultural Studies on February 1 and 2, 2006.

“Loners and Networkers” both built on the results of the Cornell conference and offered several young scholars the opportunity to present their work on this topic. As a whole, the presentations and lively discussions demonstrated that the cultural-political conservatism of the postwar period cannot be understood as a single fixed set of ideas. The common denominator of this type of conservatism was the rejection of socialist and liberal alternatives. Conservatives also shared an attitude of all-embracing cultural pessimism, which helps account for areas of overlap between their work and that of movements opposed to them, like the Frankfurt School or the Gruppe 47. The conference participants made clear that, in spite of efforts by some “loners” to maintain an arrogant distance from the postwar public sphere, half-public networks of conservatives developed. By this means, intellectuals who had been involved with, or in any case come to terms with, the National Socialist regime were able to adapt quickly to the conditions of the postwar period and hence exert influence on the process of intellectual reconstruction.

The two opening presentations illuminated the historical context and the relevant intellectual-historical back-

ground. **Constantin Goschler** (Ruhr-Universität, Bochum) examined “Radical Conservative Thought in the Early Federal Republic in Context.” He thematized the “ambiguities in the apparent success story as which the postwar history of West Germany is often told.” A radical conservative attitude developed during this period, characterized by the rejection of Allied attempts to assign guilt to Germany, the delegitimization of the de-Nazification process, and a self-stylized victimization. The profile of conservative cultural pessimism began to change only in the 1950s, when figures like Hans Freyer, Arnold Gehlen, and Helmut Schelsky entered a “truce with modern, pluralistic society.” At this point, radical conservative thinking was consigned to the margins of the conservative spectrum. Goschler followed Karl Mannheim in arguing that “constant transformation belongs to the essence of conservative ideology.” Nonetheless, “radical conservative undercurrents” have continued to exist in the Federal Republic, as the example of CDU Bundestag member Martin Hohmann illustrates.

Dirk van Laak (Friedrich-Schiller-Universität, Jena) addressed “Major Intellectual-Historical Constellations in the Early Federal Republic.” His point of departure was the nationalistic and chauvinistic realignment of German intellectu-

als in the context of the First World War, a realignment that shaped the Weimar Republic and ultimately paved the way for National Socialism. Martin Heidegger and Ernst Jünger proved to be prophetic thinkers who were “in touch with, or even ahead of, the times.” In retrospect, however, they saw themselves as having been at the forefront of an unavoidable historical process. Van Laak diagnosed a gap between thoughts and deeds that opened up already in the period after 1933. Using the example of chief National Socialist ideologue Alfred Rosenberg, he showed how intellectuals provided slogans to the “young ‘*Tatmenschen*’ from the circles of the SS and the SD,” but lost any real power to influence developments. The implications of the ideological impulses they had helped to unleash were revealed in the Holocaust and the violence of the war. In postwar Germany, however, radical conservative intellectuals retreated into a stylized self-righteousness and avoided admitting any personal responsibility. Only rudiments of radical conservative ideology were handed down to future generations.

Journalists and publicists influenced by Ernst Jünger formed one of the central topics of the conference.

Gregor Streim (Freie Universität, Berlin) spoke about “Cultural-critical Positions between Jünger and Heidegger: Gerhard Ne-

bel and Egon Vietta.” Both Nebel and Vietta studied with Heidegger during the interwar period and helped to transmit elements of his thought in their post-1945 essays. As Streim put it, they assigned their intellectual adoptive fathers “the function of army flags marking the way to a new radical conservatism and/or ‘conservative revolution’ in the intellectual field of West Germany.” While Nebel failed in his efforts to “bring together the metaphysical, theological, and ontological versions of the critique of nihilism” by founding the journal *Pallas* in collaboration with Jünger, Vietta’s politicized literary criticism constituted an unsuccessful attempt to develop a radical conservative critique of modernity by cultural-political means. Streim concluded by identifying three reasons for these failures: the absence of political ideas, the impossibility of reconciling individual positions, and the isolated nature of the efforts by Jünger, Benn, Heidegger and others to establish themselves in the intellectual life of the Federal Republic.

Roland Berbig (Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin) devoted his presentation to an unusual convergence of the postwar years: “The Encounter Between Margret Boveri and Ernst Jünger.” The journalist and former America-correspondent Margret Boveri first tried to establish contact with Jünger in the summer of 1946. She sent him her short book

America-Primer for German Adults (Amerika-Fibel für erwachsene Deutsche) along with a personal letter in which she presented herself as a “devout follower” of Jünger and offered a daring interpretation of his works, suggesting that *In Stahlgewittern*, *Der Arbeiter*, and *Auf Marmorklippen* constituted a unity. The relationship between Boveri and Jünger developed in three stages: “Boveri’s epistolary rapprochement and her journalistic subservience gave way to the third stage: a personal acquaintance.” While Boveri still adopted a tone of deference in her correspondence, her journalistic work played a significant role in “freeing Jünger from misconceptions and presenting him in his true form to the interested reader.” Although Boveri’s emotional fascination with Jünger diminished after she got to know him personally, her intellectual devotion remained constant. This devotion, in combination with Jünger’s failure to admit guilt after the war, caused Berbig to express doubts about the value of Boveri’s contributions to the postwar literary field, however.

Peter Uwe Hohendahl’s keynote address provided an intensive reading of Jünger: “Forced Synthesis: Ernst Jünger’s Novel *Heliopolis* as a Political-Theological Project.” Hohendahl asked to what extent Jünger’s utopian novel *Heliopolis* offered the “aesthetic-theological solution to a politi-

cal problem.” The events of the novel, which take place at an indeterminate point in the future, foreground two contrasting political models: “The victory of the Landvogt would be the totalitarian solution, whereas the victory of the Proconsul would represent the authoritarian solution to the problem of civil war.” Because both models necessarily fail, Jünger offered a double solution: On the one hand, the “commandment to love one’s neighbor” (realized in protagonist Lucius de Geer’s relationship with Budur Peri, a victim of persecution), and on the other hand the “idea of absolute power derived from the knowledge of nature” (represented by the transcendental figure of the Regent). This forced synthesis united “the criticism of the most recent past with a new ethics conceived in religious terms.” Hohendahl concluded on a critical note, commenting that the historical learning process represented in the novel absolved human beings of responsibility for the historical past. Hohendahl added that the novel was unsuccessful at the time of its publication and that Jünger later distanced himself from it.

Erhard Schütz (Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin) examined a particular motif in Jünger’s literary work and concluded the conference’s consideration of Jünger with his presentation “The Name for Independence: Ernst Jünger’s *Waldgang* in Context.” Start-

ing from the diverse implications of the *Waldgänger* figure, Schütz expounded on the cultural-historical and cultural-philosophical debates with which Jünger 1951 *Der Waldgang* engaged. Jünger incorporated his own wartime experiences into his image of the forest as “a place of retreat and regeneration for the soldierly man;” his experience of the present, meanwhile, shone through in his use of the *Waldgänger* as a metaphor for the big-city dweller. As Jünger loads this image with ever new associations, the *Waldgänger* becomes “a surprisingly expanded and ubiquitous phenomenon.” On the one hand, it refers to a human being’s capacity to retreat into a state of inner freedom, but on the other hand it was related to discussions of personal freedom of action and guilt. Schütz saw Jünger’s *Waldgänger* as “part of an art of defeat that artificially interchanges and mixes perpetrators and victims so that in the end perpetrators become victims, some of whom—in sacrificing themselves—become placeholding perpetrators.” Schütz also argued that the motif of the *Waldgänger* influenced future literature, for example in Arno Schmidt’s *Aus dem Leben eines Faunes* (1953), Alfred Andersch’s *Winterspelt* (1974), or Reinhard Jirgl’s *Abtrünnig. Roman aus der nervösen Zeit* (2005).

Another major point of discussion was the continuity in elites before and

after 1945. **Rainer Rutz** (Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin) examined the magazine *Signal* in this context. He described both the final days of *Signal*—which had been created by the Nazis as a propaganda instrument for distribution in their occupied territories—and the re-emergence of a culture of illustrated magazines in Germany during the postwar Allied occupation. Both the staff of the newly founded magazine *Christ und Welt* and the rapidly growing glossies *Quick* and *Revue* offered examples of conservative networks and of a continuity of elites. Reporters like Harald Lechenperg and Franz Hugo Mösslang, who had already proven themselves in the Nazi propaganda apparatus, contributed to the success of *Quick* and *Revue* in the period after 1945: “The success of these publications depended on the work and the skills of professionals.” Rutz used a series of title pages to show how these networkers “built, as much as possible, on the public’s pre-existing visual and literary appetites.” A kind of “conservatism for the masses” combined with “loosely historical adventure stories” served postwar society’s hunger for entertainment. By the 1960s, however, the *Signal* group’s success began to plateau, and their designs seemed increasingly *passé*.

David Bathrick (Cornell

University, USA), through his presentation “From UFA to DEFA,” relocated the topic of continuity from the print media to the realm of film production. Using Wolfgang Staudte’s film *Die Mörder sind unter uns* (1946) and Kurt Maetzig’s film *Ehe im Schatten* (1947) as examples, Bathrick posed the question: “What does continuity mean in relation to Vergangenheitsbewältigung and coming to terms with the past?” He detected “political and aesthetic connections between old and new” in the DEFA productions of the first postwar years and pointed to a continuity in personnel between UFA and the newly founded DEFA as well as to the use of stylistic elements and citations from old UFA productions. Bathrick interpreted these stylistic continuities psychoanalytically as an attempt at re-cathecting signifiers familiar from a traumatic past. In their filmic reproduction, these signifiers led to a hopeful ending, and hence should be understood as “coordinates of memory, of forgetting, and of overcoming.”

Under the title “Arnold Gehlen and Technocratic Conservatism,” **Jens Hacke** (Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin) concerned himself with a “philosopher, sociologist, and public intellectual” who is now considered a classic. “Influential, and representative of the advocates of a technocratic conservatism,” Gehlen opened

up new opportunities for a “cultural-critical anti-liberalism to orient itself within industrial society without having to commit to radicalization.” Catchwords like “Sachzwang” and “Daseinsstabilisierung” (both coinages by Gehlen) aided in the analysis of a society shaped by technology in which grand social ideas no longer made sense. Hacke emphasized, however, that Gehlen misunderstood the significance of the role of critical intellectuals, failing to see that they were “an indispensable legitimating and identity-establishing resource for the state.” Hacke concluded that Gehlen’s analyses anticipated “a number of the themes in the postmodernism discussion” and hence have retained their relevance to this day.

In his presentation on Hans Egon Holthusen, **Stephen Brockmann** (Carnegie Mellon University, Pittsburgh) revived the memory of a literary critic who “always defended the continuity of the world, forwards and backwards, in space and in time,” and who developed a position opposed both to the cultural criticism of the Frankfurt School and to the theory of the “Stunde Null.” Holthusen interpreted Thornton Wilder’s play *The Skin of our Teeth*, which was successfully performed in Munich in 1946/47, as an expression of the German present. He wrote: “[That] was the human being in our costume, here and now

and always, the poetic revelation of our fate.” Brockmann thus documented Holthusen’s understanding of history as the “continuation of a problematic but also comforting—because often repeated and often dealt with—tradition of human failure and human resurrection” (Brockmann). Insofar as Holthusen dissolved the “here and now” into a continuous “always,” he also deprived National Socialism of its historical uniqueness. Brockmann concluded that Holthusen’s attempt to build a bridge between past and present and between different western cultural traditions was consigned to oblivion by the politicization of culture that came about with the Cold War.

Wolfram Knäbich (Freie Universität, Berlin) characterized Friedrich Sieburg’s role in postwar culture. As an “exponent of conservative literary conservatism,” Sieburg achieved a leading role in the literary field during the 1950s and established himself as a critic of modern society. His production was driven by “the effort to maintain his own, idealistically-conceived personality in a lebenswelt that was undergoing a process of differentiation.” His “elitist and aristocratic self-understanding” allowed him to preserve traditional nationalist ideas after the war, but in response to the consolidation of parliamentary democracy he postulat-

ed the “ideal of the political citizen as a personality capable of judgment.” This position, a kind of conservative compromise, found expression, on the one hand, in Sieburg’s advocacy of democracy, but on the other hand in his cultural-pessimistic “reservations about mass democracy and pluralism as socio-cultural factors that contributed to leveling and decay.” Knäbich summarized Sieburg’s ambivalent position, arguing that Sieburg’s “discomfort with his own present also provided the necessary productive friction” that allowed him to shape one facet of the conservative field.

Sean A. Forner (Michigan State University, USA) sketched “The Other Side of Cultural Criticism: Publicists of a ‘Third Way.’” If, after 1945, the claim was made that “this German Sonderweg’ led away from the West and into catastrophe,” the “third way” of cultural criticism defined itself in terms of the goal of “bringing the potential for participatory democracy at the core of the cultural tradition to bear on politics.” Forner coined the term “engaged democrats” to describe those advocating this goal. The engaged democrats were organized primarily around the newly formed Kulturbünde in Berlin, Frankfurt, and Heidelberg; these Kulturbünde, in turn, built on pre-existing networks of leftist thinkers. These intellectuals shared

the conviction that culture was “paradigmatic for free human activity in general and hence was also relevant to the areas of society and politics.” The engaged democrats’ strong public presence and their aversion to elitist exclusivity distinguished them from right-wing conservative circles. While well-known figures like Johannes R. Becher, Alfred Kantorowicz, Ernst Rowohlt, or Erich Kästner initially attempted to link the various cultural associations, the emergence of the East-West conflict and of increasingly rigid ideologies led to the dissolution of their common cultural project. Nonetheless, Forner concluded, the existence of this cultural-political third way causes “the relationship between culture, politics, and democracy in postwar Germany to appear in a new light.”

Casey Servais (Cornell University) concluded the conference with his presentation on neoconservative tendencies in the United States: “Overcoming the Aesthetic: Carl Schmitt and the American Neoconservatives on the Lawless Subject of Modernity.” Servais traced the tradition of neoconservative thought in the U.S., attempting to show how elements of Carl Schmitt’s ideology were influential beyond Germany’s boundaries in the period after 1945. Through the influence of the émigré scholar Leo Strauss in particular,

elements of Schmitt’s critique of aesthetic modernism found their way into the cultural criticism of the American neoconservatives. In particular, the American neoconservatives share Schmitt’s anxiety about the modern subject’s emancipation from state and religious authorities and recapitulate his effort to overcome this type of emancipation through recourse to a “political theology.”

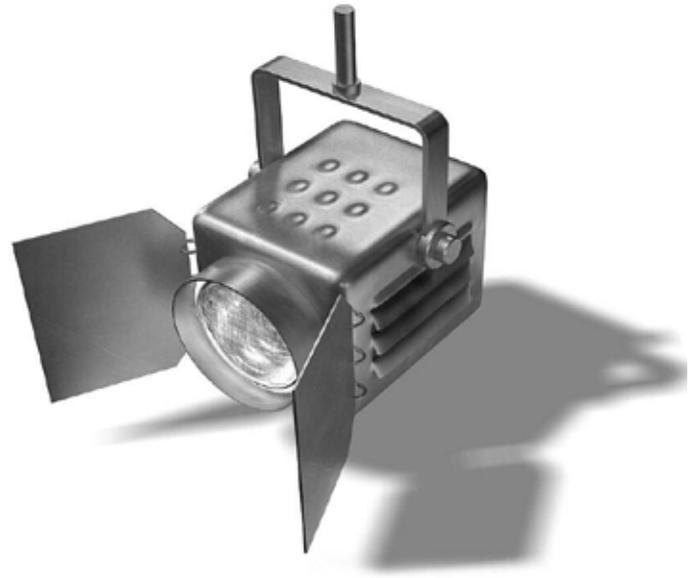
As a whole, the conference confirmed the complexity of conservative thought in the Germany of the postwar period. In spite of this complexity, it was possible to draw connections between diverse conservative actors, even while clarifying the differences between individual positions. Not least importantly, it was possible, at points, to identify the consequences and inheritances of these postwar intellectual trends. The success of the conference not only made an important contribution to the intellectual history of German conservatism; it also intensified the productive collaboration between Cornell University and Humboldt University and built on the two institutions’ shared research interests. The Fritz-Thyssen-Stiftung deserves special thanks for its financial support.

—Jonas Brendebach

An Interview with

Holger Teschke

by Gizem Arslan, Ari Linden, & Arina Rotaru



For five weeks during the semester, the Institute for German Cultural Studies was graced by the presence of Rügen-born playwright, poet, and director **Holger Teschke**. He led a seminar with one goal: to direct a motley crew of graduate students, undergrads, and community members in a theatrical staging of Bertolt Brecht's hearing in front of the House Un-American Activities Committee in 1947. With fine-tuned editing—including peppering the production with excerpts from some of Brecht's poems and plays—the staging took pace on March 9 at the Riskey Hall Theatre in front of a full house. **Gizem Arslan, Ari Linden, and Arina Rotaru**, all members of the production, sat down with Teschke to ask him a few questions about his life and work.

A.L.: Let's begin with the cliché: Was there a period of time or moment in your

*life when you knew that this was the direction in which you wanted to go—I like the German word *Berufung*.*

Teschke: My father was a sailor, so he was away for a long time. Four or five months, in a pretty big vessel, and the first book that he gave me when I was small was *Moby Dick*. And I loved that book. You know the first scene when Ishmael is with the cannibal and they go to bed together, and it was totally crazy, and I said: "This is the life of a sailor! I want to be a sailor." And I read everything that I could find from Herman Melville, and then I became a sailor, and worked on a ship for almost a year, but it was the toughest time of my life. Then I said, "I want to get out of here to a place that is warm and cozy, and write about all of these things, but I don't want to suffer this any longer!" I was not allowed to make a so-called *Abitur*, but there was a detour, we called it the "Russian *Abitur*." We had to learn a profession, and you could do the *Abitur* at the

same time; that was for three years. During that time I started to write a lot of poetry and was really impressed by Pablo Neruda and Sarah Kirsch, because she was still in East Germany, and I had met her. She introduced me to people who I would not have known, because she knew so many interesting poets. So, when I couldn't take it anymore on the ship, I was telling people, "I want to study philosophy," and they said, "Are you crazy? In East Germany?" So I said, "I want to study German literature." "No don't do that." So I said, "Shit, what can I do?"

I read an article in a magazine by a woman of whom I had never heard before that was about Brecht's eightieth birthday. She was the director of the Institute for Directing (a theatre company). I had a conversation with her. She asked me "Have you ever worked in the theatre?" "No." "Have you worked in children's theatre?" "No." "Have you worked in publishing?" "No." And then I told her I

had started to work on my first play, which I actually had. And she said, "Bring me the scenes." Then I showed it to her, and she said to me, "You know, you have no idea about theatre. But I like your scenes, go over and maybe they'll have a job for you." And she had already called the Berliner Ensemble. And I was a proper fool. I had no idea about the theatre, but there were so many interesting and supportive people, who, for whatever reason, liked these scenes, and so they hired me as an assistant director. From then on, I no longer had to kill fish with my own hands! So that was the beginning.

G.A.: You said you were writing for the theatre while you were working in the theatre. Were you still writing poetry while you were working in the theatre? Do you think of your poetry as performative and your theatre as poetic?

Teschke: Not so much with the poetry. As an assistant director, I would go to the performances of the produc-

tion for which I was responsible every night it was on and write a little report and speak to the actors: "You did this differently, don't do this, keep this, etc." I really enjoyed it. I don't know, but you stay there until the performance is over, and sit and chat with the actors, and then you sleep. You leave late, and at nine in the morning you are back there, so it's very time-consuming. And so what I did, instead of writing long diaries, I tried to condense, and the poetry became my diary in a way. All of the other things I wanted to write I condensed into little snapshots, and that actually became the first volume of my poetry. It's snapshots, and it's about life in the theatre. That was in '83, and it was very difficult with the censorship. There were a couple [poems] the publishers didn't want to have in it. They said, "We either take these two out, or the whole thing is gone!" Luckily, I had my other life, which was completely different from that.

A.R.: You have been in the U.S. before. Can you tell us a bit about your experiences here, and your impressions of this country? How would you compare the way theatre is treated here to the way it is treated in Germany? We know, for example, that you have expressed a certain hesitancy toward American "kitchen-sink naturalism."

Teschke: I think it was the same thing Brecht experi-

enced when he was here in '35 for the first time, and I think it has something to do with the fact that it's very hard for experimental theatre in this country, because there's so little money. It was worse, of course, in the Thirties and Forties. In Germany during the "Golden Twenties," although it was a conservative country, private donors gave money. The guy who produced Brecht's *Three-penny Opera*, for example, it was all private. When I came here for the first time in '88, I was invited to direct my Rosa Luxemburg play in Kentucky, of all places, but they had a very interesting and progressive German department that worked closely with the Theatre department. There was the Actors Theatre of Louisville nearby and also a festival, so I got to see contemporary American theatre from all over the country. Though there were some productions that tried to leave it, you could see the overwhelming influence of Stanislavski, with a little flowerpot at every windowsill. We met afterwards and had discussions about American theatre and European theatre. And these actors had actually traveled and seen European theatre. Some found it very interesting, some found it strange, but all of them were very good actors, and I said, "Maybe we'll have a chance to work together," but then I started to work mainly with students here in the States.

"Poetry became
my diary in a
way"

The great opportunity in colleges and universities is that you can try things out, from Georg Büchner to Heiner Müller, and they like this stuff; the students are fascinated, and the more avant-garde the better. Some of them came from NYC or Chicago, but most of them had never seen a play, that is to say a professional performance, except for their high school plays. So they were very open. There was no canon. I have to say: Some of the most interesting plays I have seen are college or university performances. Universities have the time and money, things that are so hard to

many talented actors are around, and student actors. The hardest part has actually been to decide on the cast, because I think that the casting is eighty percent of the production. Once you have the cast, you can go to hell and back!

Ari: You've mentioned a few names so far. I wanted to ask you about certain playwrights or poets whom you have incorporated into your own writing style or who have influenced you in perhaps unconventional ways.

Teschke: The first one was, of course, Brecht, because you know, when I was in school, there were the tradi-

tional plays of Brecht, but later on, in '78 or '79, I read the early plays, which were avant-garde and crazy, wild, and the language was on fire. And of course then I was much more interested. And then there was the connection between early Brecht and Heiner Müller, whom I read. Some of it wasn't even available, even though he was an East German playwright, but it was smuggled in. My great-grandfather had actually had dirty laundry in which he had smuggled it over. And Büchner was very important, and he still is. The hard part is that the classics, they are so overpowering, so overwhelming, that it takes quite a while until you can walk away from them. My first play was a totally Brechtian play. It was modeled after *Galileo*, and my second one was totally a Heiner Müller play. The good part is that you learn from people like this, and of course, from a master like Shakespeare. I would always tell my students, "Don't start with Brecht, go to Shakespeare!" because the best schooling I had was translating Shakespeare. I had to translate every word, and you begin to feel the structure of the play and to ask yourself questions like, "Why, in this scene, does the messenger come in first and then the prince?" And then you discover how cleverly each scene is constructed. It's fascinating; I learned a lot about directing by simply translating

ing Shakespeare. For every dramaturge and every playwright I can say that you can learn so many things by studying Shakespeare. So I would say these three—Brecht, Müller, Shakespeare—were absolutely crucial.

G.A.: Brecht is a character in the play that we will be performing on Friday evening, and obviously you've chosen not to write Brecht's part but to use what he had already spoken. How do you feel about casting your influence in your play? What led to the choice to write Brecht, but not to write his part?

Teschke: Well, you know, during my time here I actually worked on another Brecht play. This morning I finished my first draft. It's about the night before [his trial], when he went to Washington. The good part is that no one knows what really happened that night, so I was able to kind of write an actual character of Brecht. And then when we had our seminar, I had to go back and see the historical Brecht; there was a very nice tension between these two things. For the first time ever I've had to look at Brecht as a character in a play, in both our production and in the play that I was working on. And he was a total stranger to me. And someone whom

you've worked on for thirty years, someone you think you know so much about, all of a sudden, in the moment you write about him, he's a stranger. I think that was a good sign, because it means you're not glued to him, the human being Brecht. But then I started to like him again, and it sounds weird, but I came closer than ever. In my own play I looked at him and I said, "Ok, you're playing tricks again, you're wheedling out, you don't want to answer this question." The process was interesting. By writing and by

"I'm interested in the reactions of people"

doing our rehearsals, I came closer, but it was also different.

G.A.: How was it different? What was the difference between the Brecht you wrote and the Brecht in the trial?

Teschke: Well, it was rather that they came together. Certain things he said [in the trial] sound to me as though they were rehearsed. And there's a strategy behind that. And then you start to do what I always find interesting in our profession, which is to ask questions like a criminal investigator, and then answer these questions in order to find out the motives. There's always a motive, even when there doesn't seem to be any, and you as a writer or investigator, you have to figure it

out. Otherwise you will not know how he will react in the next scene when encountering someone totally different. And of course there is the political situation: the next night this thing will be on the radio, the Russians and the Americans will hear it. And [Brecht's] about to leave this country, so there are again, on the surface, very simple kinds of motives. There's a game going on, it's almost like a dance.

A.R.: What do you think about German audiences as compared to American audiences? You're writing a play that has taken place in the States, but you have obviously worked for a while in Germany. Do you write differently here?

Teschke: It's a very interesting question. Every audience, every night, is different, so I have problems with generalizations, *the* German audience, *the* American audience, *the* Asian audience. My very personal experience is that if you have an intelligent and interesting play and you have a very good cast, and if you manage to put up a good production, you can convince even the most conservative audience. It happened for instance at Notre Dame, when I did *Galileo*. There were a lot of people who were convinced it was a horrible play, nothing to do with *Galileo*, and that it's basically Communist propaganda. And I knew that from certain remarks that people made before. And I said, "I would like to get these guys,

I would like to find a way for them to get interested in this." So we started to work with new scenes that I found in the archives, and I love to seduce the audience, to say, "Come on, you're intelligent people, that's the reason why you're going to the theatre and not to the casinos." And so I had a very interesting experience [with an American audience], but that was with university theatre.

G.A.: So let us move from audiences across places to audiences across time. You have obviously not been directing the same things now as you did before, but how have audiences changed over time? Do you think that audiences today are prepared and susceptible enough to be swayed by political plays?

Teschke: The best answer is from an old actor in the Berliner Ensemble who is a good friend of mine. I asked him, right after the wall came down, in January 1990, "Is it different to play now?" and he said, "You bet. I can show it to you. Before the wall came down, in East Germany, our audiences were sitting at the edges of their seats. And now, the audiences are leaning backwards, saying 'entertain me.' The theatre no longer talks about things that are forbidden; the tension is gone. Heiner Müller used to say, 'gutes Theater gibt es nur in Diktaturen.' That sounds cynical, but there's something to it. And one thing is, he says "gutes Theater." He doesn't say good plays or

good performances, he says “gutes Theater,” because there’s a tension between the audience and the stage. And I’ve seen, for instance, one of the best productions ever of *Mother Courage* came from a Nigerian company that we invited for the hundredth anniversary, because the war for them in Nigeria was a reality. It was very weird to take that out of their context and show it in our neo-Baroque theatre, but there was an intensity there, and you could tell that these people knew what they were talking about. I still think about it, because if you live in a more-or-less democratic society, are you actually losing this tension, is everyone leaning back?

Brecht was much more avant-garde in the Twenties than he was when he had his own theatre, because he said “It would go over the heads of my audience, and I’m not interested in doing that.” It’s like the surrealists who say “I’ll betray my art if anyone understands me.” That’s what I mean with my conservatism. I’m interested in having an audience. I’m interested in the reactions of people, and probably this has something to do with working with students, with children, etc. They don’t come back if you preach over their heads. And the political circumstances have also changed in Germany. There is less money than there was during the time of the Cold War, when everyone showed up and all this money was poured into the arts. You can still do intelligent things with less money,

but you have to come up with new ideas.

A.R.: I have to ask one more thing. Is there a tension between filmmakers and playwrights and directors now, and does this affect the way you direct and write?

Teschke: In film and TV there are so many people who have their say; the director or screenwriter is just one person in a big package. And that’s something that I’m not so interested in. First of all, you have worked for years to get this money for the production together, then you work with six or seven screenwriters, and then it takes years until the thing is produced, and that still doesn’t mean that the film will ever be on any screen. So I feel much better working on my radio plays; I know that they will be produced, and I have my say. It’s important to me.

But I like empty stages, I really do. And for instance for the *Threepenny Opera* [in Korea], the stage designer that I had chosen, I had seen some of his work, and he had worked a lot with video. So I said, “Can we have the whole city of Seoul at the back of the play as a backdrop, so that when the light dims, the people think there’s no wall in the theatre, they’re really overlooking the whole city?” And he said, “No problem, we can do that.” I was overwhelmed. He had two assistants, and they shot at night from different angles, and then he put this together. Actually, I was overwhelmed

the first night they brought it in. There were four projectors, and they projected. The wall was dark, and the cars were going there, and it was amazing. I was very impressed, and I think you only have this kind of experience when you work with this medium. And for my next production I actually would like to go one step further and have some of the scenes on video. That would be a really new kind of alienation effect. You can really develop something new. This is one example where you say, “I can use the medium, and this can create something new for the theatre, and a kind of challenge for the actors as well.” And when we leave, I don’t have to see furniture or flowerpots. And the other thing, the good thing talking

about younger audiences who are used to the pace of MTV and things like that, you can really make the productions faster. And I think, to be honest, this is not destroying a play, you add something new, and you add a new kind of rhythm to it. When Brecht had the *Threepenny Opera*, that was very fast in comparison with Schiller. The point is to translate these plays and to give them back the power of provocation that they had in the Twenties. How can I do that in 2007?

*Gizem, Ari, and Arina:
Thanks a lot, Holger.
This has been great.*

■



Was ist

Glück?



On April 21, **Ute Maschke** (Cornell, German Studies) organized the second of her two *Gespräche*, this time on the theme of *Glück*. The keynote speaker, Professor **Christian Sinn** (Max-Kade-Professor at Vanderbilt University), selected a chapter from his recent book project for the primary student interlocutors—**Samuel Frederick**, **Stanka Radovic**, and **Ari Linden**—to read in advance. The student par-

Happiness

ticipants also contributed their own materials to the discussion: Frederick a list of excerpts from various novelists, Radovic a painting by Chagall and a selection from a V.S. Naipaul novel, and Linden a list of quotes relating to the theme of *Glück*. Faculty—among them **Anette Schwarz**, **David Bathrick**, and **Bonnie Buettner**—and students from the German and the Comparative Literature departments not only attended the *Gespräch* but contributed heavily to the conversation, which lasted the five hours scheduled and could have certainly gone on longer.

So what, then, is *Glück*? Professor Sinn concentrated on the historical trajectory of the word, which, as we learned, has been translated as everything

from “beatitude” to “happiness” to “luck” over the centuries. His book chapter traced the development of the concept of happiness as Kant and his modern day critics have discussed it. The chapter also discussed the relationship between reading and happiness and examined why certain authors have been more skilled at creating *Glück* for their readers than others.

Maschke was interested in what sociological statistics had to say about present day happiness. Such statistics have generally shown an inverse relationship between the wealth of a nation and the level of happiness of its inhabitants. Radovic was concerned with the relationship between happiness and ownership/property. She started

Beatitude

by connecting the two notions through Thomas Jefferson’s famous phrase, “the pursuit of happiness,” which was simply a slight variation of John Locke’s earlier formulation, “the pursuit of property.” From there she ex-

amined the link between happiness and property using the example of Naipaul’s novel, *A House for Mr. Biswas*, concluding that destitution is linked not only to a lack of material means but also to a lack of self-awareness and self-possession. Frederick discussed *Glück*’s less charming but often more interesting underside, unhappiness, citing such writers and philosophers as Arthur Schopenhauer, Roland Barthes, Robert Walser, and

Luck

Ludger Lütkehaus along the way. Linden elaborated on the way the notion of happiness has been assimilated into popular culture as seen through the eyes of individuals such as John Lennon, Friedrich Nietzsche, and the Comedian Harmonists.

If any conclusion was drawn from this lively conversation, it was that *Glück* is far from being a self-evident concept, and that it may indeed be too abstract to define. But even harder than defining it, most agreed, was achieving it!

—Ari Linden

formats that have proven especially conducive to focused debate about matters of intellectual, cultural, historical, political, and methodological concern in the humanities and social sciences, the Institute regularly brings together faculty and students from the United States and abroad to advance the critical enterprise of German Studies and to consider, in turn, how the analysis of German-speaking cultures enhances the investigation of cultural theory, intellectual history, literary studies, visual studies, sound studies, political science, and public spheres writ large. The production of knowledge about German-speaking cultures in different historical settings has been, one might say, both the subject and medium of a rich palette of Institute activities organized or facilitated by Peter Hohendahl.

German Culture News, the Institute's bi-annual newsletter, regularly reports on Institute-sponsored events for a diverse audience of interested friends and colleagues at Cornell and other universities or communities throughout the world. From the bi-monthly colloquium series in German Studies to a wide range of large and small conferences

and individual lectures, the Institute has distinguished itself under Peter Hohendahl's enabling supervision time and again by substantive rigor and institutional innovation alike. Event highlights over the years have included, just to name a few: *Private Lives/Public Spaces*; *Patriotism, Cosmopolitanism, and National Culture*; *A German-American Dialogue on the Future of the University*; *The Future of Critical Theory*; *After the Intellectual*; *Freudian Legacies in Cultural Studies*; *Wagner: Opera and Cultural Practice*; *Postcolonial Theory and German Studies*; *Dialectic of Enlightenment Revisited*; *Aesthetics/Ethics/Politics*; *Cultures of Memory*; *Berlin-Beijing-Beyond*; *The End of Art*; *Visuality and Cultural Memory*; *Hollywood vs. Babelsberg*; *Hegel and Haiti*; *Tales and Taboo*; *Globalizing Critical Theory*; *Mozart and the Keyboard Culture of His Time*; *Nietzsche's Birth of Tragedy Revisited*; *Remembering Europe*; *Heiner Müller in Performance*; *Intersections with Robert Walser*; *Marxian Horizons: Critical Social Theory for the 21st Century*; *Heidegger's Occident*; *Headscarves and Islam: Germany and Europe Today*; *Topographies of the Early Modern City*; *German-Jewish Experience*; *Conservative*

Thought in West Germany; *Pop*; and much much more. Even this long list represents only the tip of the proverbial iceberg. For his significant part in institutional innovations and commitments such as the faculty and student exchanges with the Humboldt University of Berlin and the Justus-Liebig-University of Giessen, the annual DAAD-Cornell summer seminar for North American faculty, the visiting fellows program, and the mentoring of graduate students, we also owe Peter Hohendahl a very great deal. Most recently his vision and verve have resulted in the exciting implementation of a multi-medial artist-in-residence program as well, established in 2002 with the generous support of the Office of the Provost. To date this program has brought engaged artists such as Oswald Egger, Stefan Beuse, Monika Treut, and Holger Teschke to campus, where they have inspired a diverse local community and even pursued new artistic production on site. Rumor has it that at least one new German novel scheduled for imminent publication will feature a character inspired by our founding director himself.

An extraordinary record of individual scholarship has likewise accompanied this colleague's countless accom-

plishments on behalf of the Institute for German Cultural Studies. For this record, he has most recently been named to the American Academy of Arts and Sciences (2003) and awarded the Alexander von Humboldt Research Prize for Humanists (2005). At this juncture in his distinguished career Peter Hohendahl has decided to pass on the mantle of the Institute directorship to other colleagues committed to the pursuit of interdisciplinary German Studies as a shared intellectual and international enterprise. Those of us fortunate enough to follow in his footsteps can only hope to do some measure of justice to the task. In the meantime we take this opportunity to express our deep gratitude, warm congratulations, and best wishes to an especially productive and cherished member of our field as he embarks on several new projects—not yet to be revealed—from which the field of German Studies can only benefit. Fortunately for the Institute, Peter Hohendahl and his thoughtful projects will continue to be tied to Cornell. Stay tuned for exciting future updates in *German Culture News*!

Leslie A. Adelson
Incoming Director
August 2007

Operatic States

Imagining Community in Music-Drama

DAAD Summer Seminar



The DAAD Summer Seminar in German Studies was once again held at Cornell University (June 11-July 20, 2007), this time under the expert direction of Arthur Groos, Avalon Foundation Professor of the Humanities. “Operatic States” explored how states and communities are represented in European music theatre, from the eighteenth to the twentieth century. The interdisciplinary seminar engaged systems of text, music, staging and reception, and invited participation from scholars in fields ranging from German studies, music, and theatre to history and political science. The group investigated, among other things, how baroque opera participates in absolutist self-representation, focusing on examples such as paradigms of good and bad rulership in the Germanic Lombardy of Handel’s *Rodelinda*, or exoticism and early colonialism in Graun’s and Frederick the Great’s

Montezuma. Other sessions centered around attempts in operas such as *Die Zauberflöte* and *Fidelio* to imagine implications of the absolutist legacy for civil society and the emerging bureaucratic state. Several sessions were devoted to nineteenth-century opera, focusing on the French Revolution and its reception, the changing role of the masses and “the people” around mid-century, and the formation of national identities. Discussions investigated representations of revolution in grand opera (Rossini’s *Guillaume Tell*, Meyerbeer’s *Prophète*, Wagner’s *Rienzi*) and the construction of German society in Wagner’s *Meistersinger*. Consideration of Italian operas (especially Verdi’s adaptations of Schiller, such as *Luisa Miller* or *Don Carlo*) allowed for some comparative discussion of the operatic construction of national identity. Another set of sessions considered the role of opera in the years immediately before and during World War II, ranging from the social criticism of Expressionist

opera and *Zeitoper* (Weill, Krenek) to issues involved in imaginary musical universes, such as the Greek alternative to Wagner in Strauss’s *Daphne* or Viktor Ullmann’s *Der König von Atlantis, oder die Todesverweigerung*, composed in the Theresienstadt concentration camp, where the imagined state is the realm of death itself.

A member of Cornell University’s departments of German Studies, Medieval Studies, and Music, Arthur Groos served as Director of Medieval Studies from 1974-86 and Chair of German Studies from 1986-91 and 1996-99. His many publications include *Romancing the Grail: Genre, Science, and Quest in Wolfram’s Parzival* (1995), *Medieval Christian Literary Imagery* (1988), *Giacomo Puccini: La bohème* (1986), and seven edited volumes, including *Madama Butterfly: Fonti e documenti* (2005) and *Reading Opera* (1988), as well as more than 100 articles and reviews. Founding co-editor of the *Cambridge*

Opera Journal, he is also general editor of the *Cambridge Studies in Opera* and co-editor of the early modern monograph series *Transatlantische Studien*. A co-founder of the Centro Studi Giacomo Puccini (Lucca), he is editor of *Studi pucciniani*. He has held Guggenheim and Senior Fulbright Fellowships, and received the American Society of Composers and Publishers Deems Taylor Award as well as an Alexander von Humboldt *Forschungspreis*. Thanks to generous funding by the DAAD and Cornell University’s College of Arts and Sciences, the Institute for German Cultural Studies was pleased to host this exciting summer event, which allowed twelve seminar participants from a range of North American colleges and universities to advance their own research agendas in rigorous discussion with an especially distinguished colleague.



GRADUATE STUDENT CONFERENCE [MIS]SPEAKING THE END: HYPERBOLE AND APOCALYPTIC TONE

This year, the graduate students of the Cornell University German Studies Department held a conference that sought to capture a symphonic discussion of *apocalypse* in its various meanings. With the title “(Mis)speaking the End,” the conference was meant to draw attention to the various ways in which apocalypse emerges as a linguistic act, as a certain spoken tone, or as an event which is embedded in a particular voice. Thus, contributors to the conference were encouraged to link their discussions not only with the singular word “apocalypse,” but with an entire constellation of possibly associated terms: revelation, pessimism, prophecy, hyperbole, polemic, crisis, misanthropy, and beyond. The papers presented often dealt with German-language texts and contexts, but at times extended to the larger frame of Euro-America. The first contribution focused on a contemporary German installation artist, and the conference finished with a reading of poetry by one of Cornell’s

own MFA candidates. Held in the A.D. White House on March 3 and 4, 2007, (Mis)speaking the End proved to be a timely discussion of what plenary speaker Peter Gilgen called “the event of all events, the cessation of time.” The questions that emerged promise to extend far into the future.

The keynote address, dedicated to the memory of Philippe Lacoue-Labarthe, whose faithful translator **Thomas Schestag** (Northwestern University) has been for many years, addressed apocalypse and was “eingeschrieben,” encrypted within and dedicated to it. The address viewed apocalypse in the light of the emergent and primal biblical word as the finitude encoded in the beginning of the Book. Schestag’s interpretation framed the effect of the Book in the double light of the revealed and misspoken word and read the access to the Book as split between passionate love and consumption (bibliophilia/bibliofagia). The key question arose as to whom the Book pledges itself and whom it deceives, creating a sense of estrangement in the midst of the familiar. Schestag read this strange unfamiliarity as a third apocalypse, mediated by John, the third witness.

In the chiasmic void of grammar, the time of finitude comes, along with the revelation of the evanescent word and the traps and folds set for the word in the guise of parody. Schestag’s reading of the apocalypse pinpoints the caesura within the genealogical, a force of breeding without power of creation, an epoché of *Genesis*, the space between the word unborn and the parody of the articulated end.

Schestag further focused on the various hypostases of the printed word and the book as a product—its proliferation, echoing the seven-foldedness of the word and its power of revelation in print. Sebastian Brant’s *Narrenschiff* (*Ship of Fools*), one of the important books of German humanism, served Schestag as one of the models of creation for the Book and for its author. The *Ship of Fools*, the inverted world and metaphor of the inverted word, can be read within the fold of a turn-over, start, and catastrophe. In the caesura of the open genitive and in the



time of an end (*finis venit/venit finis*) the possibility of revelation comes forth. The mouth of truth and the catastrophic, revelatory speech of the prophets are signposts for reception and maculation. Just as the power of seeing is recognized within the book, so is the unique marked in the sacredness of the unrepeatable.

Schestag’s analysis of the apocalypse mapped reading as a force of taste, the power of savoring and undoing language, the enjoyment of the prophetic glimpse of the word. The book or the Book as a source of creation and destruction, bearing the lament inherent to prophecy and the end in its beginning, plays along a suspended “apo” towards and against its imaginary reader and witness, appealing to one’s senses but also to one’s force of destruction, encrypted apocalypse.

—Arina Rotaru

Model Catastrophies and the Puzzle of Perception. Concerning the Art of Destruction in the Works of Christoph Dräger

Sebastian Baden opened the conference by presenting the fascinating and disturbing corpus of the German artist Christoph Dräger, whose consistent theme, throughout his work in different media, is disaster. Dräger has created convincing models of disaster sites and photographed them in a manner that makes them indistinguishable from documentary photographs. A consistent motif in Dräger's work is that of the puzzle piece; in one case, a disaster site is photographed and made into a complete jigsaw puzzle. In another, the puzzle is disassembled and strewn across the floor of the installation. Indeed, such work might seem to reflect a deep cynicism and would encourage interrogations of its ethical dimensions. Dräger was confronted with such questions when he planned, in 2001, to put on an exhibition of photographs entitled *If You Lived Here, You Would Be Dead Now*. The exhibition was scheduled to open on Sept 20, 2001, already in the summer of that year, and after the terrorist attacks on New York City it was postponed. The text accompanying the col-

lection promised a picture of a "futureless future" and invites viewers into the end of humanity, which they shall "enter at [their] own risk"—an invitation which was ultimately extended to the public. After a month of planning, Dräger and the gallery owner decided to open the controversial exhibition, including an additional text in the catalog promising full respect for the attacks of the previous month. The name of the exhibition was changed simply to *Ode to a Sad Song*. After providing this interesting overview of Dräger's works, Baden suggested that the ethical questions of simulated disaster are precisely those that interest theorists like Baudrillard and Blanchot.

Lose Blätter im Sommerferien- heft: Apokalypse, Pessimismus und ästhetische Mo- dernität in Wilhelm Raabe's Pfisters Mühle

After this encounter with the installation artist Christoph Dräger, **Nico Schlösser** steered the first panel in a literary direction by conducting a theoretically informed reading of a nineteenth-century novel, Wilhelm Raabe's *Pfisters Mühle*. This work is subtitled as a *Ferienheft*, instilling expectations of an innocent ideal landscape, and is initially built upon what Schlösser

called a "romantic semantic substrate." Schlösser picked a handful of quotes from the beginning of the work that describe the blooming beauty of nature, imagery that could just as well have been culled from Eichen-dorff's *Taugenichts*. And yet there is much more at work in *Pfisters Mühle* than simple generic emulation. The mill where the protagonist will take his vacation, once owned by his grandfather, has been yielded to the greedy industrialist Asche, whose sugar factory pollutes the water running under the wheel; the encroachment of industrial capitalism is presented alongside an apocalyptic foreshadowing of the end of man, a prophetic tone that finds its center in a poem included in the middle of the novel. Here Schlösser saw a thematic correspondence with Adorno and Horkheimer's *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, with the progress of industry bringing about new forms of barbarism unknown in the agricultural society that preceded it. But Schlösser introduced Adorno not simply to suggest a doubling of that theory in Raabe's novel; rather, he turned then to Adorno's posthumously published *Aesthetic Theory* to show how the work enacts a dialectic of aesthetic discourses on the formal level. In the final collapse of the narrative and the fragmentation of the narrator's discourse at the novel's end, Schlösser saw an "Austrag der Antagonismen," a mani-

festation of brokenness and a disruption of harmony that for Adorno marks the processuality of any modern art.

KAFF or the SEVEN CROWNS

Dan Costello (UC Riverside) recommended a reevaluation of the experimental German postwar writer Arno Schmidt, whose work has often been regarded as "apolitical," ostensibly concerned only with textual issues such as syntax and alternate orthography, and the maintenance of a rigorously avant-garde aesthetic. Costello argued, conversely, that Schmidt's works are deeply concerned with the issue—highly salient when Schmidt was writing, and indeed even now—of nuclear annihilation. Schmidt, according to Costello, could merit comparison to Saint John, the messenger of the doomsday, even if he was a vehement pessimist, for, as critics have pointed out, he was an ascetic, a hermit, and an extreme cultural pessimist. According to Costello, what Schmidt has provided us with is "an emphatic structure for speaking about the apocalypse." Before showing how this would manifest itself in the novel *KAFF*, Costello discussed the relation to Jacques Derrida's theory of the archive, and more specifically to a lecture Derrida gave on the relation of the nuclear threat to literature. Since the apocalypse has not happened yet,

Canonical Apocalypses: Eschatology and Narrative Closure

In his talk entitled “Canonical Apocalypses: Eschatology and Narrative Closure,” **Jacob Brogan** (Cornell) attempted to reveal the apocalyptic as a condition of narrative closure. Brogan argued that the addition of the apocalypse to narrative corpora, a fictional world, or other modes of cultural production that lack order functions as a mode of control over these narratives in the form of imposed order. According to Brogan, this strategy of control not only “closes” the otherwise open narratives, but, in doing so, closes off the possibility of narrating. Brogan drew attention to the notion of canon formation, understood not as an event in and of itself, but as an inchoate process by which a number of texts pass in and out of an elusive core. He suggested that one understand the apocalypse introduced into the multitude of narratives as a way of reading or making sense of what remains. After drawing on a number of canonical texts such as the Christian Bible and the Ramayana, Brogan focused primarily on *Crisis of the Infinite Earths*, a 12-book comic book limited series produced in 1985 by DC Comics, which tracts together the narratives of Superman, Batman and Wonder Woman within

it exists only in literature, and writing thus enacts the dying of itself in itself, a curious kind of “dying in life.” Literature would require that we “mourn ourselves in advance,” and Costello showed how Schmidt partakes in just such a mourning in his narrative, which is a “judicious exploration of consciousness and a portrayal of banal everyday life.” The apocalyptic narrative in *KAFF* is in fact confined to a secondary narrative; a main character of the novel tells a story about the sole survivors of a nuclear apocalypse living out their last days on the moon. The interpolation of this secondary narrative in the banal context of the primary narrative indeed explodes the reality presented by the novel, and through this contrast produces just the “emphatic structure” promised earlier in Costello’s presentation —Paul Buchholz

Before the End

Professor **Peter Gilgen** (Cornell University) prefaced his plenary address with the admission that he would “not be a good apocalypticist”: In his talk he would not be teleological in his approach, but would instead likely “veer off and do something else.” With this, he proceeded to give a definition of the genre of apocalyptic writing, “which has as its content the communication about the event of all events, the cessation of time.” Depending on one’s

philosophy (or theology) of history, this event could be either simply the end of time, or the fulfillment of time. Being possibly “the only event that deserves the name,” the term apocalypse in fact transcends and exceeds the semantics of *event*. In Christianity, the apocalypse is the doubling of a previous event; the end of times has come already with the arrival of the messiah, and all that has yet to occur is the doubling of this original arrival, the consummation of the event is waited for. As Gilgen eloquently put it, “as a Christian one already lives within the end,” and lives “within the deferred effectiveness of the death of the messiah.” Because the final sacrifice has been made, sacrifice itself (the economy of which always again *reestablishes* a disturbed order) is sacrificed.

Having given this account of Christian eschatology, Gilgen turned to Karl Löwith, who advocated an order *against* chronology, and who argued that apocalyptic eschatology “developed a problematic virulence” in modernity, when the narratives of *Heilsgeschehen* and *Weltgeschichte* were no longer kept separate. It is the expansion of time into that final “waiting period” (a crisis moving towards a final decision) which allies the modern philosophy of history with Christian eschatology. Their shared belief in teleological progress, according to

Löwith, has been the cause of the worst catastrophes of modernity.

With his own refusal to insist, from the beginning, on an a determined end result (by warning he might “veer off”), Gilgen formed a (not uncritical) methodological alliance with Löwith, whose 1949 book *Meaning in History* emerged as the principle focus of Gilgen’s lecture. In the preface to *Meaning in History*, Löwith wrote deliberately against the “constructive” tendencies of scientific and scholarly works, insisting that this teleological pursuit of knowledge and results leads to the dangerous trio of “ideology, illusion, madness.” Gilgen lingered on the preface and conclusion of the work, suggesting that the book moved in a cyclical rather than linear-argumentational mode. Gilgen used the first section of his lecture to examine Löwith’s point of departure in the preface, where the author engages with the question of whether it is “true that the truth is more desirable than illusion.” Löwith assumes that it is, and Gilgen proceeded to explicate what the truth formulated by *Meaning in History* might have been. This truth (offered, by Löwith, *in the end*, a deliberate and self-reflexive irony) is that the events of history have no inherent meaning, that there are no divine traces to be uncovered in the flow of worldly occurrences.

—Paul Buchholz

itself. In this series, nearly every DC comic hero takes up arms in a battle between the Earth and “the antimatter.” The battle reaches monumental dimensions. By introducing a heart and a continuous narrative thread to stories of DC heroes that originally displayed no inter- or intra-textual cohesion, DC has employed, in Brogan’s terms, the impending apocalypse as a strategy of canon formation.

When Predictions Fail: Documenting the Inevitable Catastrophe. Werner Herzog’s *La Soufrière*

Jennifer Zahrt of the University of California, Berkeley, explored contingency and unpredictability as the core of the desire to document in her talk, “When Predictions Fail: Documenting the Inevitable Catastrophe. Werner Herzog’s *La Soufrière*.” Zahrt illustrated the ways in which Herzog’s documentary captured both “the non-event” and Herzog’s own response to finitude and temporality. When, defying statistics and probability judgments, the volcanic eruption reveals itself to be a non-event, its imminence, or its being almost there, is transformed into immanence, its being inherent to life on the island. In the face of the impending apocalypse that is captured in documentary format,

Herzog also experiments with temporality. Time is no longer to be understood as *chronos*, a chronology or a sequence of events, but as *kairos*, an atemporality, because of its relation to the end. Zahrt exemplified this idea with a short clip from *La Soufrière* showing a cloud of smoke: The cloud filmed by Herzog might or might not be a cloud of poisonous fumes from the volcano. However, the mere and sure reality of its having been filmed “exposes the intimate relationship between finitude and the event.” Using the documentary form as a means of documenting and defying the catastrophic end, Herzog fulfills the desire of the curious man “to see a world on the brink of destruction.” This curiosity is to be understood in Foucault’s terms as an ethical force that sharpens one’s sense of reality. It also arouses the passion to seize the now and to throw away accustomed modes of thinking in order to perceive life on the brink. As failure and error, chance and accident remain as errors in time, Herzog renders the non-event historical precisely by treating it in documentary film.

Apocalyptic Vision in *After Midnight*

Gorsharn Toor of the University of British Columbia discussed apocalyptic visions in Irmgard Keun’s novel *After Midnight*

in her talk entitled “Apocalyptic Vision in *After Midnight (Nach Mitternacht)*.” Toor summarized some key events in the novel that underline its pessimistic and apocalyptic tone. The narrative is centered around nineteen year-old Sanna Moder, who witnesses the arrest and mistreatment of Jews and lives in fear of denouncement while questioning the practices and ideology of the Nazi regime. Toor highlighted the importance of understanding the apocalyptic tone of the novel because of its correspondence to historical events and real organizations. Toor recalled Hannah Arendt’s analysis of totalitarian regimes as working through alienation of the individual by blocking public debate and communication (in the novel, Sanna’s freedom is taken away from her because she can no longer communicate her thoughts by writing). Toor drew attention to the apocalyptic vision manifest in the notion of many individual average citizens upholding the National Socialist regime.

—Gizem Arslan

The Prophetic Stance of Nietzsche’s *Birth of Tragedy*

Speaking on Nietzsche’s *Birth of Tragedy* and the subsequent *Also sprach Zarathustra*, **Jonas Karlsson** (Yale) argued that there is a common purpose to be

found in the philosopher’s earlier and later works. In Karlsson’s view, it is precisely where Wagner’s influence is most heavily felt in *The Birth of Tragedy* that the work is most aligned with *Zarathustra* and its discourse on the *Übermensch*. A rebirth occurs when Nietzsche moves away from Prometheus and Ancient Greece, and towards Wagner and Germany. Nietzsche writes later that the *Übermensch* must be created through an act of certain will—and Wagner, using markedly similar vocabulary, describes Siegfried as a man who must create himself through our destruction. Karlsson briefly acknowledged, without making any specific claims, the possibility of an influence of these ideas on Nazism, which sought to create a new human being. Karlsson then moved on to discuss how this “activation of will” is situated in time, and how Nietzsche’s dystopia (and utopia) is formulated temporally. The disgust that cripples *Zarathustra* is aligned with excessive reflection—an *Umsichsehen* that keeps the individual focused on the past and on outside considerations rather than on the “subjectivity of internal volition.” In Nietzsche’s implementation of the contrasting images of Dionysus and the crucifix, Karlsson uncovered two attitudes toward time: one that floats outside time, and one that withers away from the wounds inflicted on it in his-

tory. It would be, according to this reading of Nietzsche, through a negation of memory and circumstance that the Utopian would be realized.

Watching Germany's Fall? Bernard Vesper's "Die Reise" and the withdrawal into misanthropic skepticism

Daniel Kollig (Universität Mannheim) spoke on Bernard Vesper's unfinished novel *Die Reise*, posthumously published in 1971 after the author's suicide in a psychiatric institution. Kollig read the novel as the author's unsuccessful attempt to establish a personal and social identity in the face of the historical forces that ultimately constitute him. Vesper was counted among those younger Germans whose hopes for radical social reforms in the 1960s were disappointed by the coalition of the SPD and the CDU, and his novel narrates how the protagonist attempts to achieve distance from the society of the BRD through an LCD trip and a beatnik-style road trip across Europe. The protagonist hopes that this distance, in turn, could help to establish a perspective from which effective reforms and alternative social models might be formulated. Vesper, Kollig pointed out, sympathized with violent revolt against

representatives of the capitalist system, such as firebomb attacks on an IBM office; but Vesper finds himself troubled by leftist violence when it is paired with Palestinian guerrilla groups who, to him, seemed to exhibit the same anti-Semitism that the left hoped to abolish in Germany. Vesper's skepticism prevented him from joining any camps—and this skepticism ultimately extended to himself, as the novel culminates in a reflection on Vesper's own past under the Nazi regime during his period of socialization. Despairing at his parents' support for the NS regime, Vesper came to see himself as a pariah and identified himself with the Jewish population of Germany during World War II, an identification that, as Kollig pointed out, was not at all rare among German intellectuals after the war. Ultimately, Vesper developed "a radical skepticism which drove him into misanthropy and suicide," and his book concluded with the insights that socialization cannot be undone, and that dogmatism can be present in any form of political action.

A Very Hands-Off Apocalypse. Competing Ideas of Deficient and Overbearing Authority in Germany's Twentieth Century Crisis, 1918-39

Edward Price (University College London) presented a paper, which he promised would be "uncomfortable," on the topic of competing notions of apocalypse and disorder in Germany's twentieth century crisis. The basic provocation of Price's paper was the suggestion that the notions of order and disorder are entirely relative, and that the Western liberal democratic order (represented by the United States and the European Union), in holding a view of Nazi Germany as a crisis or disorder in the world order, is perpetrating the same violence as did Germany. Integrating citations from archival materials, Price hoped to show that "Germany" was trying to create its own order in a state of crisis during the 1930s, and that the various militant right-wing groups active before, during, and after the Weimar era were trying to evade what Price called an "apocalypse," which for Price was interchangeable with the terms "crisis" and "disorder." All of these terms are for him no longer useful or sufficient in historical writing. Price located his project in relation to the orthodox approach of British historians and claimed that he had gone into the archive without any preconceived intention or prejudice towards the material. The question remained, in the end, whether "Germany" should be conceived of as a unified entity organically separate

from Europe and whether this thing called Germany could be accessed directly through the archive. Price's argument recalled contemporary discussions in the humanities on sovereignty and the state of exception (Agamben, Butler, Žižek), yet he stressed that he himself was concerned with problems of orthodox historiography.

—Paul Buchholz

The conference was memorably closed by a reading of poetry by **Stephanie Gehring**, currently an MFA student in Creative Writing at Cornell. The first stanza of her poem is reproduced here:

Dürer Darling by Stephanie Gehring

Revelation of St. John

*I have been told you are
apocalyptic.
I can see wanting to think
about last things: fear,
then obsession. Brimstone
sounds ridiculous,
but this is different: there
are no devils
in your etchings. It is the
angels who are scary,
the Christ with sword-
tongue.
You were pyrotechnically
in love
with disaster. Small wonder
Martin Luther
impressed you; you knew
what he was afraid of.*

News in Brief

A.D. White Professor-at-Large from Göttingen

Cornell University is pleased to welcome back A.D. White Professor-at-Large Bassam Tibi, international relations expert from the University of Göttingen and author of *Political Islam*, for his second visit. Related interdisciplinary events scheduled for September 2007 include a comparative workshop on religious pluralism entitled "Imagining Muslims/Imagining Others: South Asia, Southeast Asia, and Europe" (September 14-15). On September 26 Bassam Tibi will also present a public lecture, "A Migration Story: From Muslim Immigrants to European 'Citizens of the Heart?'" (Kaufmann Auditorium, Goldwin Smith Hall). For additional programming details and updates, please contact the A.D. White Professor-at-Large Program or the Institute for European Studies.

Visiting Scholar from Giessen

The Institute for German Cultural Studies will be pleased to welcome Patrick Schmidt as a Visiting Scholar from the Justus-Liebig-Universität Giessen for three weeks this fall (September 24-October 14, 2007). Specializing in artisans' history, urban history, memory cultures, and media history, Dr. Schmidt is currently a Postdoctoral Fellow in the Graduiertenkolleg devoted to the study of "Transnational Media Events" at the University of Giessen. On September 28 he will present his most recent research, "'Monsters' and 'Wondrous Births' as Transnational Media Events in the Early Modern Period," to the German Studies colloquium (3-5pm, 181 Goldwin Smith Hall). Advance copies of the paper will be available in 183 Goldwin Smith Hall.

Faculty Profile: Patrizia McBride

This fall the Department of German Studies welcomes Patrizia McBride as an exciting new addition to Cornell's professorial faculty. Her research and teaching span eighteenth to twentieth-century literature and culture, with special emphases on the relation between literature, philosophy, and political theory. She comes to Cor-

nell via the University of Minnesota, where she taught for the past nine years. Born in Rimini, Italy, McBride earned an M.A. in German and English Language and Literature from the University of Bologna before doing graduate work in linguistics at the University of Klagenfurt (Austria) and earning a doctoral degree in German literature and culture from Indiana University, Bloomington in 1998. While her work

focuses primarily on modernism, that is, on the cultural constellation that shaped the period from the 1880s to the 1950s, it is framed by her experience of rapid cultural change in post-Cold-War Europe.

McBride defended her M. A. thesis in Bologna on November 9, 1989, the day the Berlin Wall was un-

expectedly opened. Her subsequent work has drawn on the modernist constellation as a springboard for investigating the momentous cultural and ethical transformations of our times, especially the



Between Primitive Accumulation and the New Enclosures

On March 30 and 31, 2007, Barry Maxwell (Comparative Literature) invited to Cornell three outstanding thinkers who have analyzed and extended Karl Marx's famous concept of "primitive accumulation." The resulting conference focused specifically on one aspect of primitive accumulation, namely "enclosure." Historically, this term has been used to describe the process by which the right of private property is asserted over land that was previously held in common. In recent years, "enclosures" of various kinds have been taking place globally in ways that Marx could not have anticipated. According to Maxwell, "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."

Following Maxwell's welcoming remarks on Friday evening, Susan Buck-Morss (Cornell, Government) introduced the speakers with some historical and biographical contextualization. Buck-Morss noted that she and many of her colleagues had come to Cornell as radical Marxists, only to find their concerns shift as they became deans and heads of departments. Developments in critical theory in recent decades have put radical Marxism on hold, but the current political crisis reveals the inadequacy both of traditional Marxism and of the post-Marxist "theory" that followed it. Buck-Morss hence proposed that "back to the drawing board" serve as a

(cont'd next page)



ways in which literature and other artistic practices encode and challenge culturally specific modes of conduct and thinking. In her first book, *The Void of Ethics: Robert Musil and the Experience of Modernity* (2006), she examined the aesthetic theory of Austrian novelist Robert Musil, whose concern with exploring the relationship of art to ethics resonates deeply with our day. In a similar vein, her introduction to a volume she recently co-edited (*Legacies of Modernism*, 2007) portrays

the modernist preoccupation with shifting notions of subjectivity and political agency as indicative for the cultural and political dilemmas faced by contemporary Europe. McBride is especially excited about teaching her first graduate seminar at Cornell on the "politics of cultural despair" in turn-of-the-century German-speaking culture. The course posits that the antagonism between culture and mass politics articulated at the beginning of the twentieth century in philosophy, sociology, and the arts echoes

themes at the heart of contemporary debates on globalization. She is also looking forward to teaching an undergraduate course on the historical avant-garde this fall, which reflects her growing interest in visual studies. This interest is also reflected in a new book project, well under way, on Kurt Schwitters and the media of the historical avant-garde.

McBride is keenly aware of the irony that, as an Italian-born new arrival at Cornell, she is one of the few faculty members who can boast of having braved colder

winters at her previous institution. When asked, she proudly volunteers her knowledge about wind chill factors and layered winter clothing, which, she insists, does not have to be incompatible with the joys of fashion. She looks forward to the good wine and gorgeous summer weather of the Finger Lakes region. Most of all, she looks forward to being part of the vibrant and invigorating intellectual community at Cornell University.

kind of slogan for the conference. She emphasized that this was a creative moment for the Marxist tradition, one to which she hoped the speakers could contribute much.

Peter Linebaugh (Midnight Notes Collective) provided an analysis of Karl Marx's *Das Kapital* that drew on his experience teaching the book both at universities and at maximum security prisons. In his paper "Frau Gertrude Kugelmann and the Five Gates of Marxism," Linebaugh reconstructed the historical constellation into which *Das Kapital* was born. The year 1867, in which Marx left London to bring the manuscript to his publisher in Hamburg, also saw the beginning of the colonialist "scramble for Africa" and the invention of barbed wire—two developments significant for the subsequent history

of capitalism. While Marx waited in Hanover to correct the proofs of the book, he stayed with Ludwig and Gertrude Kugelmann, two acquaintances sympathetic to the communist cause. Gertrude Kugelmann was interested in the book whose author was staying in her home, and so Marx recommended five chapters to her, claiming that the chapters on The Working Day, Cooperation, The Division of Labor, Machinery, and Primary Accumulation were "the most immediately readable." Linebaugh recommended these same five chapters to his listeners, suggesting that their rich historical detail and brilliant prose can serve as an antidote to the "arid, brittle academicism" that has characterized readings of *Das Kapital* in recent years. These chapters, Linebaugh insisted, foreground the of-

ten overlooked essence of Marxism, which is class struggle.

Iain Boal (Retort) traced some important, but often invisible, continuities in the history of enclosure. He focused in particular on the history of colonialist ideology, noting that in past centuries colonialists spoke of "improving" the colonies—a surprisingly apt if benign-sounding word, as the etymological root of "improvement" is "profit." In more recent decades, the term "development" has replaced "improvement," but the underlying process of primitive accumulation remains the same. Boal pointed to the privatization of universities and to Google's commodification of the image world as other instances of formerly public "commons" being turned into sources of capitalist profit. He emphasized the importance of creating analytical links between old and new forms of enclosure, a project he pursues in his book *The Long Theft*.

George Caffentzis (Midnight Notes Collective) traced his interest in the topic of enclosure to the time he spent in Nigeria in the early 1980s, a period in which he "found it

wise to leave the United States." Caffentzis taught at a university in Nigeria, where he was able to observe struggles over the communal ownership of land. The discovery of petroleum reserves in the Niger valley led the Nigerian government to privatize land on behalf of international oil companies; this provoked various forms of resistance, up to and including guerilla war. The World Bank's structural adjustment programs also played a role, as these programs insisted that land be privatized and that farmers grow cash crops for the world market rather than crops for local use. After witnessing the process of primitive accumulation first-hand in Nigeria, Caffentzis realized that class struggle is both the struggle for a wage and the struggle against it, i.e. the struggle to remain outside of capitalist relations of production. After his eyes were opened to the enclosure of the commons in Africa, Caffentzis began to see endangered commons everywhere, including in the United States.

The three speakers' presentations served as the starting point for a broad and free-flowing discussion. Members of the audience engaged intensively, often contributing as much as the speakers themselves.

■



Left to Right: Barry Maxwell, George Caffentzis, Iain Boal, Peter Linebaugh

“The Common European Framework of References for Languages and its effect on the teaching, learning and assessment of languages in the U.S.”

26-27 October 2007

The German Studies department and the German Cultural Studies Institute will hold an international symposium on “*The Common European Framework of Reference for Languages* and its effect on the teaching, learning, and assessment of languages in the U.S.” that Ute Maschke and Gunhild Lischke are organizing for October 26-27, 2007. Over the last four years, the members of the department have undertaken a complete revision of the German Studies undergraduate program, which is - within the U.S. American context of higher education, and to the best of our knowledge - still rather unique in adapting the *Common European Framework of Reference for Languages* (CEFR) and *Profile Deutsch* to reflect the needs and qualities of Cornell students. Throughout the process, we have been eager to establish a nation-wide conversation forum (at the annual ACTFL conference and in cooperation with the Goethe Institute, for example), broaden our horizon in dialog with members of the Council of Europe’s Language Policy Division (e.g., two high-profile members, Michael Byram and Waldemar Martyniuk, kindly joined us for previous workshops), and initiate a wider network in cooperation with textbook authors, publishers, and developers of language portfolios. In a national and various regional outreach workshops, we have also introduced U.S. high school teachers to the CEFR; the feedback has been notably positive and strengthened our relationships within the larger community. Several of our initiatives and collaborations have led to very satisfying results and continue to motivate our work; some of our attempts to initiate an ongoing dia-



logue about the CEFR here in the U.S. have not yet been successful. For all these reasons and in consideration of the important intergovernmental policy forum in Strasbourg on 6-8 February 2007, we do think that it is time to (re-)consider our own responsibilities in the educational process and bring together experts and practitioners (predominantly from within the U.S.) to discuss in depth current and future developments concerning the use(s) and influence of the CEFR. We want to review the situation in the U.S. (also in comparison and relation to Europe), discuss how better to share experiences and insights, and investigate possible initiatives to use the framework to its full potential not always just for a single language but *across* languages, and hence to foster plurilingual competences. The symposium will open with a keynote by Professor Sauli

Takala from the University of Jyväskylä, Finland (contributor to the CEFR and its assessment manuals and chair of the European Association of Language Testing and Assessment) and three case-study presentations by well-known American scholars in Second Language Acquisition. On Saturday, four different sessions will provide participants with the opportunity to discuss and investigate particular aspects and interests in more detail: curriculum development; language policy; assessment; curriculum development; and a special session for participants who feel the need for a more in-depth familiarization with CEFR and accompanying documents.

-Ute Maschke

Colloquium Series

Spring 2007

Writing Pop Writing Presence

Jens Schellhammer (Cornell, German Studies) kicked off the spring colloquium series with a portion of his current work on "Pop." He opened with a refreshing call for all present to reconsider and embrace the literal meaning of the word *colloquium*, emphasizing the event's colloquial nature. Without further ado, he invited responses to his paper, "Writing Pop Writing Presence." Discussion then focused on some of the characteristics of Pop literature Schellhammer's paper addresses, such as the production of a "presence effect through a morphosis to music" and the "odd interplay at work in Pop between presence and nostalgia," both of which he sees as being inherent in the process of repetition. Schellhammer holds that repetition is essential to Pop, that it is the "main technique by which Pop produces a presence-dimension." Emphasizing that repetition is by its very nature both death and renewal, replacing the original "if not originality itself," he notes the significance of language and meaning to this discourse. His paper further inquires into

the relationship between meaning and presence in literary texts by noting that in literature "as soon as the meaning-effect kicks in, the presence-effect goes out the window." He then examines the presence of meaning in writing and literature in comparison to music and its reception, holding that literature has a "dimension of meaning that is hard(er) to eliminate" than in the case of music. He emphasizes that music is only a language in a metaphorical sense and that it "cannot name concrete objects or state concrete propositions. It is unable to declare 'this is a chair, this is a table.'" It is neither a semiotic system, nor

can it be translated, as some have claimed. Schellhammer reflects that Pop in the form of literature "strives toward a fusion with music because it has greater ambitions than a black box: Its intention is not simply to record or document the present." Pop at its best achieves a direct inscription of presence by *inducing* it, so that writing becomes "a truly *performative* act." Schellhammer also alludes to the significance of an earlier notion of the unity of the two discourses of language and dance/music in classical antiquity. Overall, a lively, productive conversation took place.

—Grace-Yvette Gemmell

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



In her paper "Literarisches Bibelwissen als Herausforderung für die Intertextualitätstheorie. Zum Beispiel: Maria Magdalena," Andrea Polaschegg questions the validity of the theory of intertextuality via the discrepancy between the biblical "*Hypotext*" and literature which draws on

Romantische Orientierungstechnik: Kartographie und Dichtung um 1800

Chenxi Tang's paper "Romantische Orientierungstechnik: Kartographie und Dichtung um 1800" was introduced as part of a larger project concerned with how space was conceived during a "profound semantic transformation" in Europe at the beginning of the nineteenth century, and how this conception allowed for collective orientation around and upon a unified national entity. Tang initiated his paper with reading of Novalis's "Die Lehrlinge zu Sais," explicating a passage in which the roles of the thinker and the poet are aligned with the role of the cartographer. In this conflation,

the poet-thinker is seen as one who measures and maps nature and sets man on the right path. Novalis himself, in the most poetically productive period of his life, was engaged in a study of cartography and orienteering in the *Bergakademie* at Freiburg, and he even practiced as a surveyor in Saxony. But Tang emphasized that it is not just this biographical fortuity that should be of interest, but rather wider discourse of the nineteenth century in which poetic, philosophical, and cartographic representation are conceived as intimately related symbol-

ic practices. Tang then went back to Kant's essay on the orientation of thinking in space, in which Kant states that orientation requires a *feeling* (Gefühl) of difference in one's own subject, such as the difference between left and right. This *immediate* and body-bound, subjective feeling of orientation, however, can be present in a *mediated* experience, namely the viewing of the geometric and graphic figures of a map; thus, the medial map presents the subject with the same tangible orientation as any other experience and endows the medi-



um with a special representative power. Around 1800, Tang showed, the cultural technology of cartography was said to require, paradoxically, both mathematical, calculative rationality, and a poetic-subjective feeling. This romantic merging would ultimately become a means of imbuing a population with beliefs about national belonging and collective orientation, and would help to forge the myth of an organic state.

—Paul Buchholz

its themes without regard to content. In her pedagogical interaction with the Bible in courses designed to provide knowledge of the Bible as a pre-text for reading literature, Polaschegg has observed that the real problem lies in the epistemological status of the Bible as a book-in-use. Specifically, the Bible is no longer a part of German non-formal cultural knowledge. Her statement "knowing the Bible actually means knowing the *meaning* of the Bible" leads into a discussion of which tropic biblical images

and signs actually appear in the text of the Bible, and which are intertextual references without concrete referents in any text. Her conclusion is that the stability of texts in communication with one another is not a given, and that Gerard Genette's model of intertextuality may not function as cleanly as it claims.

Polaschegg explores the literary syncretism of the Bible's non-formal meaning for literary comprehension by analyzing the widely varying range of Mary Magdalene's appearing in German liter-

ature and graphic arts. Though only briefly and contradictorily identified in the New Testament, Mary Magdalene became the vehicle for a variety of penitent and pious archetypes whose close orbit around the figure of the messiah lent them value as allegorical figures for literature and art. Polaschegg surveys the tension between the Bible and *Bibelwissen* in Mary Magdalene's appearances in literature and concludes that the latter, rather than being determined by the

former, may in fact be leading to a re-definition of the former, thus redefining the cultural meaning of a text that is itself supposedly the basis for the lion's share of Western literature. In light of this conclusion, Polaschegg asserts that despite the temptingly straight-forward method offered by Genette's "Palimpsest Model" of intertextuality, such a model might be oversimplified and unable to account for the received meanings of *Hypotexte* informed by syncretism.

--David Low

Frankfurt School and Frankfurt Shul: Heinrich Heine and the Post Contemporary

Dr. Willi Goetschel, from the University of Toronto, led a lively and humorous discussion at our penultimate colloquium on an oft-discussed and oft-disputed topic in the history of German literary criticism: the role of Heinrich Heine. Poet or bastardizer of the German language? German-Jew, or a German who happened to be of Jewish descent? Without completely dismissing previous scholarship on this enigmatic figure, Goetschel proposed that Heine be seen in light of an intellectual tra-

jectory stemming from Marx and culminating in the thought of the Frankfurt School. This trajectory might seem somewhat ironic, considering that Theodor W. Adorno is well-known for his rejection of Heine. Indeed, Adorno suggested that Heine had failed, at least in part, because of his over-identification with German culture. Goetschel, conversely, argues that Heine's work contains an overlooked but highly significant cosmopolitan element that could only have emerged from an "Other" of sorts.

This is in part what aligns him with some of the German-Jewish thinkers who rose to prominence in the first half of the twentieth century, including Benjamin and Adorno. In nuanced readings of Heine's prose, Goetschel uncovered a strikingly self-reflexive theory of semiotics (contained in the image of a



scorpion with a symbol etched into its tail). In reading the famous poem about the Lorelei, Goetschel showed how the shifting, unstable perspective of the lyrical speaker develops a commentary on the absurdity of essentializing the character of national territory and landmarks (in this case, the river Rhine). Goetschel concluded with the witty remark that if Apollo is one archetypal figure of Western literature, then the *Schlemiel*, one of Heine's celebrated (if somewhat pathetic) characters, ought to be considered another.

—Ari Linden

What Abraham Couldn't Say

At the final colloquium of the semester, Michelle Kosch, who recently joined the field of German Studies at Cornell as a professor of Philosophy, presented a paper on a much-discussed controversy in Søren Kirkegaard's *Fear and Trembling*: the question of Abraham's silence during his demonstration of faith. Kosch

argued against a number of traditional interpretations of Kirkegaard's reading of this Bible story; these interpretations variously assert that Abraham's silence is due to the inexplicability of his situation and thus its linguistic inexpressibility, or that it is due to Abraham's privileged knowledge, and thus his inability to make his situation comprehensible to those around him. Instead of these two options, which could be seen as deliberate mystifications, Kosch argued firmly in favor of a third interpretation, namely that Abraham's silence is due to his own ignorance. He is cogni-



tively limited, as are the others around him, but the reader and the author Johannes *de silentio* do not have this same limitation. Kosch engaged in a thoughtful discussion of the first two interpretations, examining the conditions for knowing and expressing particular individual states (that of the knight of faith, for instance). Can we, indeed, ever know the interior state and motivations of another person? Certainly not, if this character is merely a poetic construction and only has interiority through the reader's projection. Kosch ultimately concluded that the determining trait of Abraham is that he is a

fictional character; this is precisely the cause of his cognitive limitation. His act of true faith is a fiction, and the reader has no cause to admire Abraham. This implicit message of *Fear and Trembling* is, as Kosch showed, the explicit message of Kirkegaard's *Philosophical Fragments*, which assumes an entirely different form yet deals with the same issue. Thus, we should not read *Fear and Trembling* in isolation, as an homage to Abraham; what is needed instead is a reflection on the identification with fictional characters, and its damaging potential.

—Paul Buchholz

Colloquium Series

Fall 2007



August 31

Josh Dittrich

German Studies, Cornell University

Undead Ends: Expression and
Non-Organic Life in the Art History
of Wilhelm Worringer

September 28

Patrick Schmidt

Historisches Institut, Justus-Liebig-Universität Giessen

"Monsters" and "Wondrous Births":
Cases of Physical "Otherness"
as Media Events in Early Modern Europe

October 19

Wolfgang Emmerich

Deutsche Literatur, Universität Bremen

Dritte Räume als Gegenstand der
Deutschlandforschung

November 2

Madeleine Casad

Comparative Literature, Cornell University

Reading Melancholy in Real Time:
Wolfgang Hildesheimer's *Tynset* and
the Ethics of Memory

November 16

John Noyes

Germanic Literature, University of Toronto

History and the World: The Natural History of
Africa in Contemporary German Literature

November 30

Claudia Brodsky

Comparative Literature, Princeton University

Goethe and the Architecture of the Referent

181 Goldwin Smith Hall

Fridays @ 3:00pm

For information: lb433@cornell.edu

To obtain an advance copy of the paper:

Dept. of German Studies, 183 Goldwin Smith

The Legacy of Kant: Classical Neo-Kantianism

7-8 September 2007

A.D. White House

Cornell University

Friday

11:00 - 12:45

Paul Guyer

University of Pennsylvania

What Happened to Kant in
Neo-Kantian Aesthetics?

2:15 - 4:00

Rolf-Peter Horstmann

Humboldt-Berlin University

Hermann Cohen on Kant's
Transcendental Aesthetic

4:15 - 6:00

Peter Gordon

Harvard University

Neo-Kantianism and the Politics
of Enlightenment

Organized by: Andrew Chignell and Terence Irwin

Sponsored by: Cornell Humanities Council, Cognitive Science Program, Institute for German Cultural Studies, Program in Ancient Philosophy, Sage School of Philosophy, Society for Humanities, and the College of Arts & Sciences Dean's Office

Saturday

9:30 - 11:15

Desmond Hogan

Princeton University
Noumenal Affection

11:30 - 1:15

Dina Emundts

Humboldt-Berlin University
Emil Lask on Judgment and Truth

2:45 - 4:30

Vasilis Politis

Trinity College Dublin
Invoking the Greeks on the
Relation between Knowledge &
Reality: Trendelenburg's Aristotle,
Natorp's Plato, &
Benno Erdmann's Sextu

4:45 - 6:30

Michael Friedman

Stanford University
Ernst Cassirer & Thomas Kuhn:
The Neo-Kantian Tradition in
History and Philosophy of Science

Institute for German Cultural Studies

Cornell University

726 University Avenue

Ithaca, NY 14850

www.arts.cornell.edu/igcs

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 Lisa Bonnes Johnson (lb433@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 Gizem Arslan (ga56@cornell.edu).