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Critical Theory and (post)Colonialism

March 15, 2014

In a daylong workshop co-organized by **Paul Fleming** and **Natalie Melas** on behalf of The Institute for German Cultural Studies and The Institute for Comparative Modernities (Cornell University), presenters and participants examined conspicuous absences in Critical Theory and its development, with regard to colonial modernity and capitalism in regions outside of Europe and North America. Likewise, attention was drawn to unexplored affinities between the respective discourses of Critical Theory and postcolonial critique and theory.

Hohendahl; these were brought into contact with works by prominent thinkers of global capitalism and proponents of postcolonial critique and theory on the other hand, such as Aimé Césaire, Franz Fanon, C.L.R. James, Dipesh Chakrabarty, Enrique Dussel, and Roberto Schwarz. Representative publications from workshop presenters were also included in the reading selection.

Max Pensky (SUNY Binghamton) opened the discussion by outlining his current project, which aims to bring global justice theory into contact with

theories conceptualize justice and injustice, as well consideration as to whether or not justice as a universal criterion is fundamentally at odds with postcolonial accounts of global inequality. Pensky interrogated the notion of justice as a universal category by referring to Theodor Adorno's writings on historical progress and social justice in fundamentally dialectical terms.

Antonio Y. Vazquez-Arroyo (Rutgers University) continued the discussion by arguing for a re-evaluation of canonical accounts of the Enlightenment as a develop-



The workshop format consisted of short presentations, followed by extensive discussion of ideas and questions raised both during the workshop and in texts and publications circulated among participants prior to the event. Advance readings included works by scholars and theorists affiliated with the Frankfurt School and Neo-Marxist social theory on the one hand, notably Theodor W. Adorno, Max Horkheimer, Walter Benjamin, Ernst Bloch, Zygmunt Bauman, and Peter Uwe

postcolonial theories. He introduced global justice theory as a branch of political philosophy that seeks to account for distributive inequality on a global scale. According to Pensky, postcolonial theory could offer an explanatory tool for the roots of global maldistribution of justice.

Forging common ground between these theoretical frameworks would involve an investigation into ways in which postcolonial

ment in European thought alone. He proposed the concept of plural enlightenment, which repositions intellectual developments of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries into a global configuration. Philosophical writings of this period circulated in regions often considered to be off of the Enlightenment map, despite the fact that translations and printed copies of influential texts were distributed in non-European areas.

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Word from the Director

It has been a rewarding and productive first year at the helm of the Institute for German Cultural Studies, with many exciting events and several new programs to report – and much more to come in 2014-15. In addition to the colloquia, workshops, conferences, concerts, and films documented in this issue of *German Culture News* and on the IGCS website, I would also like to highlight the following news from the 2013-14:

The IGCS is excited to announce our new graduate student exchange with the University of Cologne, starting this fall 2014. Our exchange partner is Cologne University's Humanities graduate school, a.r.t.e.s. (part of Cologne University being awarded an "Exzellenz" status among German universities). Applications for the new exchange are open to all Humanities graduate students with a knowledge of German who could benefit from a semester or a year researching in Cologne. As part of the exchange, Cornell students receive 1,000 euros per month for up to 10 months: every year we can send either one 1 graduate student for the full 10 months, or 2 graduate students for 5 months each (it can be the same semester). If you are a graduate student in the Humanities, know German, and would like to apply to this program for 2015-16, please be in touch with IGCS. Congratulations to Matteo Calla, PhD candidate in German, for being awarded the first stipend to Cologne for 2014-15.

[for more information on a.r.t.e.s., please visit: <http://artes.phil-fak.uni-koeln.de/>]

Congratulations to Alina Dvorovenko, CAS undergraduate major in Economics, for being awarded a **full tuition and accommodation scholarship** to the six-week "Cologne Summer School on Legal Aspects of European Integration 2014."

IGCS is also very happy to sponsor a new **Contemporary German Literature Reading Group** dedicated to the discussion of the most recent works of German literature (texts appearing in the last 5-10 years). We meet several times throughout the term at IGCS; last semester we read work by Rainald Goetz, Ann Cotton, and Maxim Biller. If you are interested in participating, please be in touch with IGCS.

Last year, IGCS together with the German Department, inaugurated a **new, yearly graduate student forum with the**

University of Colorado-Boulder and Johns Hopkins University for advanced graduate students in German to workshop dissertation chapters with professors and graduate students at our partner schools.

We were very happy to support the travel of four of our graduate students to Boulder for 2 days of intellectual exchange: Johannes Wankhammer, Hannah Mueller, Alexander Phillips, and Katrina Nousek.

Please mark your calendars for the upcoming Fall 2014 IGCS sponsored events – for more information and up-to-the-minute reports, please visit the IGCS website (igcs.cornell.edu):

Sept. 5, IGCS Colloquium, "Fabelhafte Macht: Louis Marin Liest Jean de la Fontaine" (Ethel Matala de Mazza, Institut für deutsche Literatur, Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin)

Sept. 12, 3pm, A.D. White House Lecture "**Inheritance Trouble: Migration, Memory, and the German Past**" with speakers Michael Rothberg (English, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign) and Yasemin Yildiz (Germanic Languages and Literatures, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign)

Sept. 13, 12:15pm, 236 Goldwin Smith Hall **Luncheon and Seminar with speakers Michael Rothberg** (English, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign) and **Yasemin Yildiz** (Germanic Languages and Literatures, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign) Org. by German Studies graduate students

Sept. 16, 9:30am – 5pm, 258 Goldwin Smith Hall Conference: "**Derrida's Jewish Specters**" Organized by Jonathan Boyarin, Jewish Studies Program Speakers include: Martin Land (Jerusalem), Sarah Hammerschlag (Chicago), Michael Levine (Rutgers), Sergei Dolgopolski (Buffalo),

Sept. 26-27, A.D. White House Conference: "**The Poet and the University: Stefan George among the Scholars**" Organized by Peter Uwe Hohendahl and Paul Fleming With talks by Eva Geulen (Frankfurt am Main), Ernst Osterkamp (Humboldt University-Berlin), Robert Norton (Notre

Dame), Russell Berman (Stanford), Carsten Strathausen (Missouri), Elke Siegel, Peter Uwe Hohendahl, and Paul Fleming (all Cornell)

Oct. 17-18, Conference "**Antisocialism: The Age of Riots**" Organized by the Department of Comparative Literature

Oct. 24, IGCS Colloquium, "Seeing the Invisible: Contagion and Hygiene in 19th Century German Popular Media" (Christiane Arndt, Languages, Literatures and Cultures, Queen's University)

Oct. 31-Nov. 1, Sage School of Philosophy, 218 Goldwin Smith Hall Conference in Honor of Allen W. Wood "**German Philosophy & the Ethics of Belief.**" Organized by Andrew Chignell, Cornell University; Lara Denis, Agnes Scott College; Desmond Hogan, Princeton University

Nov. 7, IGCS Colloquium, "Shylock's Daughters: Philosemitism, 19th Century Melodrama, and the Liberal Imagination" (Jonathan M. Hess, Germanic Languages and Literatures, UNC at Chapel Hill) *co-sponsored by the Jewish Studies Program

Nov. 19 Time and place TBA Lecture "**Turkish Nationalism and German Colonialism: A Joint Venture during WWI**" (Malte Fuhrmann, Orient-Institut Istanbul)

Nov. 21, IGCS Colloquium, "Figment, Fiction, Fabrication: Artifice and Evidence in J.J. Breitingner's Poetics" (Johannes Wankhammer, German Studies, Cornell University)

Dec. 6 Time and place TBA **Critical Theory and (post)Colonialism Part II** A joint workshop with ICM

Please take the time to read the *German Culture News* (in its 'new' retro layout) and browse the IGCS website (igcs.cornell.edu) for all that is taking place this year. The IGCS is eager to partner in exciting, multi-disciplinary events; if you have ideas or suggestions, please feel free to contact me.

--Paul Fleming

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Vazquez-Arroyo argued that to root Enlightenment developments in the narrow context of Northern European intellectual history is to misconstrue what is, in fact, a plural enlightenment as singular and to disregard how enlightenment ideas formed in multiple settings and in contact with non-European intellectual cultures. Vazquez-Arroyo developed his thesis further by consulting different postcolonial responses to the universal as a philosophical category. He presented C. L. R. James' notion of a 'concrete universal,' as well as Aimé Césaire's conceptualization of the universal as arising from singularity, as points of entry into possible re-configurations of Enlightenment thought and its legacy in postcolonial theory.

Jennifer Wenzel (University of Michigan) first gave a short overview of her previous scholarly work, in which she examined theories of temporality in relation to revolution and failure in a postcolonial context. Western analytic tools for conceptualizing temporality and revolution, so Wenzel, cannot sufficiently account for the temporal continuation of revolutionary thought after failed revolutions. Wenzel then introduced her new book project, which investigates crises of futurity as articulated in contemporary ecocritical discourse.

Eco-discourses of today envision the future as one of impending apocalypse, and evoke such a future in terms of the West's ultimate decline and collapse; yet global warming is understood to be a global phenomenon, and becomes concrete and visible to the West first by means of catastrophic events in non-Western regions. In relation to these tensions, Wenzel explored "waste," particularly in a spatial register (e.g., the notion of "wasteland"), as a phenomenon that can help to write reversed histories of progress.

Zahid Chaudhary (Princeton University) offered a reading of Joshua Oppenheimer's 2012 documentary *The Act of Killing*, informed by Walter Benjamin's conception of magic. Benjamin's notion of the magical 'here and now' that produces an acute presence and non-exchangeable particularity speaks to the way in which the film negotiates the historical facticity of mass murder in the medium of film.

The film reenacts the 1965-1966 anti-communist surge and resulting death squads in Indonesia, and recruits perpetrators and soldiers who actively participated in the killings as actors who narrate and reenact executions before the camera. Former perpetrators perform violent acts of killing in the recording studio on dolls, while also incor-

porating various staples of the Western film genre. By transporting these real histories into a Western genre as well as persistently making visible means of production such as stages, costumes, fake blood, and recording devices, the film produces the uncanny effect of making present and documenting historical trauma in a format that consciously articulates itself as artifice. (Christine Schott)

Susan Buck-Morss (CUNY Graduate Center) opened the afternoon session with reflections on how to write history in a way that translates into contemporary practice. Her presentation revolved around two figures of thought inspired by Walter Benjamin: A remembering of the past that is the communal responsibility of a "generation" (all human beings alive today) rather than the prerogative of particular groups with exclusive claims to their own pasts; and a mode of such remembering conceived along the lines of Benjamin's *Eingedenken* – an interruptive commemoration that reopens past possibility and calls for its redemption in the present.

The ensuing discussion raised, among others, questions as to whether or not it is possible to separate historical memory from particular ethnic, national and social groups in the manner that Buck-Morss envisions, without sacrificing the affective and transformative potential associated with such memory, and as to whether or not the concept of generation sufficiently takes into account differences in positionality determined by relations of power and geographical location.

Next, **Enzo Traverso** (Cornell University) reconstructed reasons for the lack of dialogue between Theodor Adorno and C. L. R. James, who met during Adorno's exile in New York but who failed to seriously engage each other's work. Despite notable affinities in their diagnoses of Western modernity, Adorno and James ultimately develop different concepts of negative universal history: While Adorno focuses on the progressive domination of nature from the contemplative perspective of an intellectual in the Hegelian tradition, James foregrounds conflict and struggle and insists on the possibility of emancipatory political practice.

Suggesting that the missed dialogue resulted from a colonial unconscious of classical Critical Theory, as evidenced by the lack of references to colonialism in central works of this tradition, Traverso concluded by asking what might have happened if there had in fact been a fruitful encounter between

Adorno and James: Might it have changed the New Left's blindness to anti-colonial struggles? Might it have led to a better understanding of the ambiguities of development in the aftermath of anti-colonial revolutions? In the discussion, Susan Buck-Morss recognized such counter-factual questioning as a form of *Eingedenken*, and consequently as a demand to redeem a missed possibility by staging a dialogue in the present.

The final presenter and co-organizer of the workshop **Natalie Melas** (Cornell University) turned to Ernst Bloch and C. L. R. James for models of critical non-contemporaneity that upset linear narratives and developmentalist models of historical time. Both thinkers challenge homogenous notions of contemporaneity by insisting on the currency of remnants of bygone eras (Bloch) and of uncompleted pasts awaiting their future realization (James). Against retroactively appropriating anti-colonial writings for today's postcolonial theory, Melas suggested that anti-colonial texts might unfold their contemporary potential precisely in their irreducible non-contemporaneity. She also noted the productive tension between figures of non-contemporaneity and the notion of a present "generation" as proposed by Susan Buck-Morss, asking if such a generation could not be conceived of in a way that leaves room for disjunctive experiences of time.

The concluding discussion opened up a range of considerations that suggested ample material for a continuing conversation. Participants questioned the nature of Critical Theory's omission of colonialism as accidental, contingent, or even perhaps necessary, while also reflecting upon lines of distinction drawn in the face of the fact that pioneering figures of anti-colonial activism and Critical Theory such as W. E. B. DuBois and Max Weber are known to have influenced each other. Attention was also drawn to the works of third generation Critical Theorists Alexander Kluge and Oskar Negt, which might provide further interlocution with postcolonial critique and theory. (Johannes Wankhammer)

Radical Politics, Critical Aesthetics, Queer Pleasure: A Workshop on Herbert Marcuse

April 26, 2014

In a one-day workshop co-organized by **Paul Fleming** (Cornell University) and **Ulrich Plass** (Wesleyan University) and sponsored by the Institute for German Cultural Studies at Cornell and The Center for the Humanities and The Certificate Program in Social, Cultural, and Critical Theory at Wesleyan University, presenters and participants considered the influence of the philosopher, social critic, and New Left activist Herbert Marcuse (1898-1979).

Despite the highly controversial public profile of the scholar during his lifetime, thirty-five years after his death his work is not as often taken into consideration in discourses on radical political thought and action. In opening remarks from the co-organizers, Paul Fleming observed that Marcuse's legacy has become "disconcertingly uncontroversial" and is considered, on the one hand, to lack the philosophical rigor of 'high' critical theory and, on the other, to be too complex to inform political practice. Similarly, Ulrich Plass emphasized the disciplinary stakes for Marcuse's work along the theory-praxis divide.

The co-organizers thus articulated the aim of the workshop: to situate Marcuse in current discourses both in critical theory and in radical practice, and to provide a forum for workshop participants to define personal and professional stakes of Marcuse's work on their own terms. Additionally, one of Marcuse's most renowned former students, the scholar and social activist **Angela Davis** was engaged as a respondent for the morning session.

Paul Fleming opened the morning session of the workshop, "Radical Politics," with a presentation titled "Democratic Intolerance," in which he explicated Marcuse's 1965 essay, "Repressive Tolerance," and extracted several primary theses: Tolerance towards all opinions has lost its historically oppositional force and now serves not democratic progress but the repressive status quo; therefore, progressive democracy must begin to incorporate intolerance in certain spheres of discourse, such as the political, where life and happiness are at stake; determining

grounds for intolerance, however, is an ongoing project integral to deliberative reason.

In making these claims, Marcuse posits that true tolerance is not the relation between freedom and opinion, but rather between freedom and rationality—intolerance must be exercised in the name of reason, liberation, and democracy. Therefore, one reaches an impasse when democratic structures come to serve the purpose of repression.

Fleming proposed that the question as to who decides the "minimum rational demand" of that which is to be tolerated remains to be resolved, as education and knowledge are only part of the answer. In the discussion that followed, historically predominant conceptions of progress, historical contingency, and the



possibility of an absolute truth were taken into consideration with regards to both Marcuse's thought and the work of other scholars affiliated with Frankfurt School social theory.

Angela Davis contributed observations from a social activist's point of view, particularly drawing from her experiences with legal practices and legislation. Although elements of Marcuse's thought contributed to arguments in support of laws intended to eliminate racism and its dissemination, some of these same laws today work against people of color (e.g., 'hate speech' laws are more often invoked against people of color), thus accomplishing the opposite of what they were intended to do. Consequently, Marcuse's claim that "the telos of tolerance is truth" relies upon a be-

lief in either absolute or contingent truth that must be continuously reevaluated, cognizant of the tension between philosophical discourse and the execution of political action.

Next, in a presentation titled "Errors of Form: Adorno and Marcuse on the Dialectics of Praxis," **Matthew Garrett** (Wesleyan University) discussed the famous letter exchange between Marcuse and Theodor W. Adorno in the year 1969 regarding the German student protest movement. Garrett's account of the "embarrassingly" personal nature of the correspondence considered their respective positions regarding the theory-praxis divide as expressed in their stance towards student demonstrations.

The debate was prompted by the occupation of a room in the Institute for Social Research at the University of Frankfurt, led by SDS (*Sozialistischer Deutscher Studentenbund*) members and the activist Hans-Jürgen Krahl, in response to which Adorno called in the police, much to Marcuse's disappointment. The letters between the two friends express their disagreement concerning academics' roles in support or opposition of such radical manifestations of protest. However, their dialogue ranges broadly with respect to subjective or objective limitations and the possibility of personal engagement in radical political action.

In the discussion, attention was drawn to the historical context of the correspondence in light of populist movements in Germany, including on the one hand resistance to activism that is not informed by theory and, on the other, the high degree of intellectual training of student activists. Based on personal acquaintance, Davis confirmed the degree to which prominent leaders such as Krahl were influenced by theorists such as Adorno and, in light of the scholar's resistance to praxis, in fact used Adorno's thought against him.

The morning session was concluded by **John Abromeit** (SUNY Buffalo State), whose presentation, "Herbert Marcuse and the Social Psychology of Right-Wing Populism" elucidated the historical context and contemporary relevance of Marcuse's posthumously published essay, "The Historical Fate of Bour

geois Democracy” (1972). Witnessing the reelection of Richard Nixon, the persistent war campaign in Vietnam, and the abandonment of socialist democracy in the consolidation of conservative movements in Europe, Marcuse observes social and psychological factors involved in the political shifts of the time.

Marcuse asserts that bourgeois democracy relies upon the identification of the working class with leaders in power, which resulted in irrational and dangerous domestic and foreign policy as well as in class divisions being replaced by racial discrimination. Abromeit cited contemporary social historical research on racism in the working class in the US, the construction of a white identity, and systematic racism both in the historical context of Marcuse’s essay and today.

Aligned with the work of social philosopher André Gorz, Abromeit emphasized that a new rationality and sensibility becomes necessary as wealth accumulates among an ever-decreasing portion of the population and a new caste society emerges. The discussion focused on the privileging of productivity that is visible in today’s political landscape, particularly in the US in minimum wage debates and Tea Party agendas, and on a global level, in the history of colonialism, in which racial discourse overwhelms class differentiation and furthermore becomes aligned with productivity. (Miyako Hayakawa)

Workshop co-organizer **Ulrich Plass** opened the afternoon session on “Critical Aesthetics and Queer Pleasure” with his presentation, “Reason and Gratification,” which focused on the “Philosophical Interlude” in Marcuse’s *Eros and Civilization* (1955).

Retracing Marcuse’s elaboration of Sigmund Freud’s *Civilization and Its Discontents* and Freud’s notion of *Lust* (pleasure, joy), Plass interrogated the peculiar role of the concept of reason in Marcuse’s text. On the one hand, Marcuse portrays the history of philosophy as an unfolding of “the Logos of domination,” which he seeks to undo via recourse to Nietzsche’s circular temporality of the eternal recurrence interpreted as a joyful eroticization of being. On the other hand, and in contrast to Wilhelm Reich, Marcuse retains reason (which he seeks to re-appropriate as “logos of gratification”) as a constitutive means towards attaining a just society in which pleasure becomes practical freedom and is no longer at odds with the demands of rational self-interest.

The ensuing discussion brought up similarities between Marcuse and Friedrich Schiller’s

Aesthetic Education of Mankind, with its ideal of a harmonious unfolding of joyful play and rational freedom in an aesthetic state. However, workshop participants also criticized the lack of historicity in Freud’s and Marcuse’s respective theories: The antinomy between sensuous bodily instincts and reason is itself historical and could be overcome if the totality of social relations were organized differently.

In her presentation titled “Liberation of Nature as Human Liberation,” **Mari Jarris** (Wesleyan University) discussed Marcuse’s chapter on “Nature and Revolution” in *Counterrevolution and Revolt* (1972), fleshing out the role Marcuse attributes to internal and external nature in the development of a “new radical sensibility” capable of effectively resisting capitalism’s instrumental rationality.

Jarris criticized Marcuse’s essentializing account of a supposedly peaceful female nature in this context, and part of the ensuing discussion revolved around the question of how to treat such compromised passages in contemporary scholarship on Marcuse. Workshop participants also posed questions as to how to rescue Marcuse from the critique often posited against Negri and Hardt, which asks how a refuge to nature can be read as something beyond an undialectical exit from historically complex antagonisms inherent in reified social relations.

Katherine Brewer-Ball (Mellon Fellow, Wesleyan University) delivered a presentation titled “Remembrances of Freedom: What Can Art Do?” in which she brought Marcuse’s text on “Art and Revolution” from *Counterrevolution and Revolt* into dialogue with the work of artists and ACT UP activists Zoe Leonard and David Wojnarowicz.

Starting with Leonard’s propensity to photograph clouds during the height of the AIDS crisis and her activism, Brewer-Ball used Leonard’s work and Wojnarowicz’s comments on it to reflect on the role of beauty in politics. Both Wojnarowicz and Marcuse locate a utopian function in the aesthetic form, or think of beauty “as the sensuous appearance of the idea of freedom” (Marcuse). Brewer-Ball pointed out that while Marcuse initially locates resistance in street art, after the fall of the New Left he returns to high art, identifying it as that which is separate from reality and allows us to imagine freedom. However, unlike Adorno, Marcuse also claims that such resistant art should subvert traditional material preserved in folk art and traditions. Discussants challenged Marcuse’s later dismissal of pop culture, and considered how to situate his work in this

regard within the Frankfurt School tradition.

In the workshop’s final presentation, titled “Queer Pleasure in Marcuse and Foucault,” **Peter Rehberg** (DAAD Professor, UT Austin) staged a missed encounter between Marcuse and Queer Theory, relating Marcuse’s *Eros* to Michel Foucault’s concept of pleasure. Rehberg explained Queer Theory’s dismissal of Marcuse as a consequence of the strong influence that Foucault’s anti-repressive hypothesis has had upon the field since its inception: In comparison to Foucault’s account of power as a productive rather than repressive force, Marcuse’s writings on sexual liberation in *Eros and Civilization* were bound to look hopelessly naïve. Nevertheless, as Rehberg demonstrated, Foucault’s account of productive power owes much to the idea of commodified pleasure, or “repressive desublimation,” which Marcuse developed in his later work *One-Dimensional Man* (1964).

Rehberg also made a case for acknowledging the similarity of the utopian moment of pleasure in Foucault, which can be juxtaposed to the sex-knowledge regime of power, and the emancipatory dimensions of *Eros* in Marcuse’s work. As a way of reading the material aspects of Foucault, Rehberg’s concluding suggestion was to make space for Marcuse in a new, anti-capitalist project of Queer Theory. (Jette Gindner)



New Directions in Interdisciplinary German Studies IGCS Symposium

October 25, 2013

Following introductory remarks by **Paul Fleming** (co-organizer of the event, together with **Leslie Adelson**), **Suman Seth** (Cornell, Science and Technology Studies) presented work from a book project on theories and practices of human, animal, and plant acclimatization in England, France, and Germany from 1760 to 1914. In his talk, titled “Difference and Disease: Alexander von Humboldt and the Problem of Seasoning,” Seth problematized Susanne Zantop’s notion of “latent colonialism” as well as George Steinmetz’ (2007) notion of German “pre-colonial ethnographic representations” of the tropics in German language texts.

In an attempt to avoid the teleological implications of categorizing German relations to the tropics in the eighteenth century as pre-colonial, Seth emphasized the need to discuss ways in which Non-European countries enter German texts, and the way they function in their own terms. As an alternative to pre-coloniality, Seth suggested a focus on “tropical presence” in representations of tropical environment and climate in medical texts and travelogues. As a methodology, Seth proposed a trans-imperial approach to understanding the relations between eighteenth century Europe and the tropics, allowing for a synchronic tracking of multiple points of connection, including the realms of the natural, the historical, and the human.

Seth demonstrated his approach by interrogating Alexander von Humboldt’s (1769-1859) theory of tropical seasoning, a phenomenon that in nineteenth century England would come to be known as acclimatization. Humboldt’s interest in seasoning is spurred by a case of differential infectivity of the disease known as yellow fever. Humboldt notes that in the Mexican port of Veracruz, while natives of the immediate region are unaffected, the disease spreads not only among Europeans, who are new to the area, but also to natives of nearby regions.

In tracing how Humboldt develops an explanation for this apparent inconsistency of infection, Seth deployed a double contextualization. Following the circulation of knowledge from the metropole to the periphery, Seth began by connecting Humboldt’s theory to concepts of human biology and stimulation in Galvanism and the

Brunonian system of medicine. He then proceeded to his proposed trans-imperial approach, which placed Humboldt in a network of discourse on diseases in warm climates.

This network connected, across national and imperial boundaries, a German explorer (Humboldt) in search for an explanation for a Mexican affliction with a Philadelphian doctor (Benjamin Rush), who in turn derived his understanding of seasoning from the unpublished lectures of his Scottish professor (William Cullen), who had spent the early years of his career as a surgeon in the West Indies studying cases of yellow fever. (Andreea Mascan)

Elke Siegel’s (Cornell, German Studies) lecture “Nulle Dies Sine Linea: Einar Schleeef’s Diary Project (1953-2001)” considered the implications of Schleeef’s diary project together with the author’s career as an actor, theatre director, and set designer. At stake in Schleeef’s diary as well as in his theatrical praxis is the question of language production, authenticity, and the constitution of the self.

Einar Schleeef began keeping a diary in 1953 at the age of nine, and pursued diary projects sporadically until his death in 2001. The diaries reflect the 1953 worker’s uprising in Schleeef’s native East Germany, his troubled family life, a 1960 accident in which he fell out of a train and had to spend a year in the hospital, and his 1976 move to the West. Schleeef transcribed and, essential for Siegel’s argument, added comments to his diaries as early as 1960, but most of this work was done in the late 1990s, as Schleeef prepared his writings from 1961 to 1999, for publication as part of a project called *Container Berlin*. The work was intended for the occasion of the tenth anniversary of the fall of the Berlin Wall, although Suhrkamp Publishing rejected the manuscript.

The act of speaking was laborious for Schleeef, who had a speech impediment, and who frequently reflected on language production as akin to giving birth. Siegel juxtaposed Schleeef’s diaries with his career as a theatre artist; the diary is seemingly a private space devoted to exploring the individual, and thus the opposite of the social space of the theatre.

Schleeef’s theatre explores the process of individualization through a re-introduction of the chorus, which is a break from convention, with what Schleeef viewed as a failed

search for authenticity after 1945. Tragically effects individualization through expulsion from the chorus; the individual is mature when he has found his own language. Schleeef’s goal in reinstalling the chorus was to achieve a linguistic conference, breaking the illusion of the individual in theatre.

The connection between the diaries and the theatre for Siegel is that the diaries, particularly in the “Container” project, are inscribed into a classical context for the genre. In “Container,” the language of the individual monologue is confessional, as would be a defense. The text of the diary has no purpose of art, but rather devotes itself to truth and to remembering. For Schleeef, a diary is not about authenticity. Instead the act of remembering, like the act of speaking, is a labor of re-reading and commenting. This work of re-reading and commenting added additional text, but Schleeef was at pains not to modify or rewrite his first layer of text. The diary is thus a palimpsest of the self. (Alexander Philips)

In his paper entitled “Job as a Model of Hope,” **Hirokazu Miyazaki** (Cornell, Anthropology) discussed readings of the Biblical story of Job, to describe conditions in Northern Japan after the March 2011 earthquake, tsunami, and nuclear disaster in Fukushima. Reflecting on his personal experience of the Fukushima disasters and daily reportage that continues to assess human and environmental damages to the region, Miyazaki noted feelings of deep epistemic uncertainty and distrust. Amidst political denial and insufficient or falsified scientific knowledge about the effects of radioactivity, the population of Northern Japan has nowhere to turn but to each other to resolve their fears. Despite the seemingly overwhelmingly helpless situation, Miyazaki developed readings of Job’s suffering to show how hope springs from the return to human relationality spurred by the disaster.

Miyazaki turned first to Ernst Bloch’s search for hope in “The Book of Job” in *Atheismus im Christentum* (1968). In contrast to traditional readings that focus on the triumph of truth and conclude that Job is ultimately redeemed at the end of the trials, Bloch argues that Job’s situation remains unresolved and his story avenges human struggle by proclaiming the heresy of the human condition. Miyazaki then showed how anthropologist Meyer Fortes’ 1957 lecture, published in *Oedipus and Job in West African Religions*, con-

trasts Western and West African thought to argue the centrality to the story of filial piety and divine efficacy derived by mortals. Also concerned with hope as a product of human struggle, Antonio Negri's *The Labor of Job* (2009) argues that the relationship between humanity and divinity is transformed into a matter of immanent relationality when Job finally sees God. Shifting focus away from theological debates, Edwin Good emphasizes the consolation Job finds in shared quotidian activities in *In Turns of Tempest* (1990).

Yet consolation and return to normality no more resolve Job's suffering than they do the politics of denial and shared feelings of distrust in post-Fukushima Northeastern Japan. Although human relations are the only comfort in times of suffering and revoked truth, relationality is often also deeply oppressive. The irresolution of the nuclear disaster produces hope through a continuous need to be in relation. Concluding, Miyazaki noted that "kizuna," Japanese for "bonds," was selected as the 2011 "kanji of the year." Popular debates about the term as both a symbol of perseverance and nationalistic ideology foreground the importance and difficulty of human relationality in the absence of truth. (Katrina Nousek)

Amy Villarejo, department chair and professor in the Department of Performing and Media Arts at Cornell, spoke on "Critical Theory, Cultural Studies, and the Death of Television." Villarejo explained that her presentation on television was inspired by Jameson's strategy of gathering strands from both critical theory and cultural studies to think about visual culture. However, while Jameson, in his 1991 *Postmodernism or, the Cultural Logic of Late Capital-*



ism, had been aiming at a study of visual culture, he never actually wrote on television, but rather focused mostly on cinema.

Villarejo moved on to speak about Theodor Adorno's writing on television from the 1950s, puzzling as to why it has not yet been revived in the service of recent, in particular queer, television studies. She specifically referenced Adorno's article "How to

look at television," written before the backdrop of 1950s television culture. In Adorno's text, television appears as a domestic medium that is associated with women's household work, and is characterized by the uniformity of television programming.

Villarejo discussed how Adorno demonstrates that television reproduces sociopolitical structures, and understands television as a representation of stereotypes. However, she also observed that Adorno also provides close textual analysis of specific programming, although she conceded that his readings mostly neglect the visual element of television, possibly as a result of his working directly with the scripts. She then contrasted Adorno's criticism with Raymond Williams' book, *Television: Technology and Cultural Form* (2003). Influenced by the new experience of US television with its many commercial breaks and trailers for future programming, Williams studies television as a practice, focusing on the sequential quality of television and the "flow" that synchronizes the viewers: a flow that leads to the abandonment of critical modes, but also opens up a potential for communal practices.

Villarejo concluded that the different ways of writing about television – Adorno's focus on individual programming in contrast to Williams' study of the "flow" – also marked a historical shift in the development of TV from the 1950s to the 1970s. Today's television studies, she suggested, also need to reconsider their approach, since the digital migration of television on the one hand, and the flourishing of reality and amateur TV on the other, have induced another significant shift in television culture. (Hannah Müller)

Call for Submissions

The Peter Uwe Hohendahl Graduate Essay Prize in Critical Theory

The Institute for German Cultural Studies is pleased to announce its 2014 call for submissions for *The Peter Uwe Hohendahl Graduate Essay Prize in Critical Theory*. This named prize honors a distinguished scholar of international renown for his many publications on German literatures of modernity, comparative intellectual histories, critical theory writ large and the Frankfurt School especially, and the history and desiderata of university education in Europe and North America. As Jacob Gould Schurman Professor of German Studies and Comparative Literature from 1977 to 2011, Peter Uwe Hohendahl taught and inspired many Cornell students on the importance of critical theory for public life and the collective good.

Essay submissions may be submitted in German or English on any topic pertaining to critical theory, and registered graduate students in any relevant field of study at Cornell University are eligible to apply. Only one submission per person. The author of the winning essay will be awarded a prize of \$250.

Essays may be up to 25 double-spaced pages in length and should be submitted under an assumed name. Authors must indicate their primary fields of study on the essay and submit a sealed envelope containing the author's identity, including student ID number, local address, telephone, and Cornell e-mail address. The title of the essay submitted for prize consideration must be entered on the outside of the envelope. *The deadline for submission is October 15.* Entries should be submitted to Olga Petrova, Assistant to the Director of the Institute for German Cultural Studies, at <ogp2@cornell.edu>. IGCS offices are located at 726 University Avenue on the third floor (tel. 255 8408).

The Peter Uwe Hohendahl Graduate Essay Prize in Critical Theory is made possible by a generous gift from an anonymous donor.

Retrospective: Fall 2013

Colloquium Series

Anfänge der Aufklärung

September 6, 2013

In the first colloquium of the Fall 2013 series, **Steffen Martus** (Humboldt Universität zu Berlin) delivered a paper titled “Anfänge der



Aufklärung,” a chapter draft for a forthcoming monograph on the German Enlightenment. Martus’ paper addressed the methodological challenge of narrating a historical epoch by interweaving a historical account with meta-reflections on narration; the Enlightenment thus comes into view as a time that narrates itself through the figure of a new beginning.

The turn from the seventeenth to the eighteenth century was for the first time debated as a temporal incision marking the beginning of a new epoch. This contrasts with the cyclical view of time that was prevalent in earlier centuries and that continued, as Martus emphasized, to exert a strong influence throughout the complex and internally ambiguous period since called the Enlightenment. While the cyclical view of time construed the world as composed of a finite set of elements that could only be redistributed and rearranged over time, the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries saw the emergence of a new sensibility that understood human production as a source of the genuinely new, unlocking the future as an open horizon of possibilities yet to be realized. It is not least a pervasive “project consciousness” (*Projektbewusstsein*) concomitant with this future-oriented temporality that characterizes the Enlightenment.

Following a strategy of interweaving literary and social history with biographical accounts, Martus concluded with a portrait of Christian Thomasius (1655-1728) as an epoch-making figure. Thomasius’ unlikely career is characteristic of the complex *mélange* of positions and counter-positions that gave rise to the Enlightenment: starting as a conservative member of Leipzig’s scholarly estab-

lishment, Thomasius turned into an *enfant terrible* exiled from his hometown; in his later years as a professor in Halle, he exploited the possibilities of a new media public and forged various alliances with the court, the church, and the state – supposed enemies of the Enlightenment – to advance his agenda.

Focal points of the discussion following Martus’ presentation included problems of narrative form, the status of historical linguistics, the changing status of rhetoric during the eighteenth century and, on the occasion of the non-specialist audience of the book, the different intellectual climates and publishing landscapes in Germany and in the United States. Among many of the discussion points, Ernst Bloch’s concept of Non-simultaneity emerged as a possible figure for addressing the double risk inherent in historical narrative, of homogenization on the one hand, and loss of coherency on the other. (Johannes Wankhammer)

Auerbach’s Worlds: Dante’s Political Theology as a Point of Departure for a Philology of World Literature

September 20, 2013

Jane O. Newman (University of California, Irvine) presented a paper entitled “Auerbach’s Worlds: Dante’s Political Theology as a Point of Departure for a Philology of World Literature.” Newman argued that anthologies of World Literature tend to incorporate new literatures only by excluding older texts, thereby practicing a “supersessionalist” expansionism that is not truly inclusive. Despite an appearance of inclusivity, the relations among texts in World Literature discourses are often determined by political inequalities of size, power, and prestige. This reflects what International Relations scholars have termed a “post-Westphalian” condition, referring to the model of state sovereignty that became the norm following the Treaty of Westphalia (1648).

Despite their diversifying and transnationalizing intention, new canons of World Literature often fall into what New-

man calls an “implicit Westphalianism.”

Newman finds a possible alternative model for building a World Literature in Erich Auerbach’s reading of Dante, which relies on a Thomistic model of totality. In the theology of the thirteenth-century Dominican Saint Thomas Aquinas, creation achieves a likeness to God only through its vast diversity; the divine unity of God is manifested in the material diversity of creation. Likewise, Auerbach reads Dante as using specific concrete phenomena to capture a divine totality.

Drawing from his 1929 monograph, *Dante: Poet of the Secular World*, his essay, “Philology and *Weltliteratur*” (1952), and other lectures, essays, and posthumously published writing, Newman argued that Auerbach’s model of a “world” or “planetary” totality allows for an “alternative post-Westphalianism,” through which it is possible to constitute a World Literature without deferring to hegemonic power systems.

Newman emphasized the necessity of a model of World Literature that accounts for concrete literary texts both in their specificity and in their relationship to the world as a whole. Following Auerbach, she proposed an anti-supersessionalist model of literature, which reads each text “at the level of the planet,” that is, both for the world it contains in itself and for its ability to radiate out into the world, or planetary whole. By tracing Auerbach’s thought to its Thomistic influences, Newman found in pre-modern thought a possible point of departure for an alternative post-Westphalian method of World Literature. (Leigh York)

Jewish Trouble: Reading Butler Reading Others

October 18, 2013

Jonathan Boyarin (Cornell) presented a paper entitled “Jewish Trouble: Reading Butler Reading Others,” in which he conducted a close analysis and critique of Judith Butler’s 2012 monograph, *Parting Ways: Jewishness and the Critique of Zionism*. With a focus on the text’s introduction, Boyarin critically assessed the efficacy and necessity of certain rhetorical decisions in Butler’s argument, as well as assumptions regarding conceptions of Judaism and Zionism in relation to each other.

Butler’s project explores the possibility of

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



an anti-Zionist rhetorician that both avoids the charge of anti-Semitism and does not promote a notion of Jewish excep-

context, and furthermore, that a wider range and more differentiated spectrum of models of identification would be more effective for Butler's task. (Miyako Hayakawa)

Of Doubled Men and Deceased Souls—A German Media Archaeology of Queer Masculinities, 1895-1933

November 22, 2013

In a paper entitled "Of Doubled Men and Deceased Souls: A German Media Archaeology of Queer Masculinities, 1895-1933," **Christiane König** (University of Cologne) proposed a historiography of the medium film, attentive to histories of "queer masculinities." Queer masculinities, König argued, are central to the filmic medium insofar as film participates as a material-semiotic agent in the active production of cultural gender norms and identities. Though neither teleological nor linear, the media history developed by König focused on Germany, and spanned early appearances of the medium film in the 1890s through the rise of the Nazi dictatorship.

For König, a queer perspective on the history of film undertakes a critical intervention in media theoretical and archaeological discourses by emphasizing how film's epistemological, aesthetic, and technical capacities incorporate a will to power. For König, this power, which she termed "*Lustwissen* and/or *Wisenslust*" is inherent to pleasures of knowing, seeing, and being seen, orchestrated by the medium film. *Lustwissen* operates not only in

film's modes of representation, but most importantly, in its technical capacities, such as its principles of transduction and remediation, as well as its processuality.

With an emphasis on transduction, for instance, König observed that film offers specifically

transduced gendered identities: more than simply reproducing a gendered image or reality, film actively produces what it depicts, altering properties and qualities of its object. By deploying a concept of interfaces to describe sites wherein projected images affect viewers and relating this, in turn, to film's principles of transduction, König traced processes by which queer masculinities are pro-

duced and performed through the medium film in shifting, historically specific ways.

Drawing on contemporary debates on queerness in works by Judith Butler, Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, and others, König extended insights on queer performativity and epistemologies to the filmic medium with the goal of emphasizing film's production of queer male desire. Through a reading of Sedgwick's insights on queer performativity, König developed a concept of queerness for film that grapples with differences between male and female queerness without evoking a strong subject referent, essence, or fixed identity.

In this way, König established a methodology for writing a non-heteronormative history of the filmic medium that would situate masculine love in a realm of erotic pleasure neither mired in binaries of hetero/homo or male/female, nor bound to oedipal family structures, naturalized homosexuality, or homosocial bonds. Rather, the proposed history is derived from "unpleasurable, uncanny" sources, brought to public display through film. Male-male desire or queer masculinities thus belong integrally in the history of the filmic medium's self-constitution as medium. (Nathan Taylor)

Environmental Depredation and Aesthetic Reflection in Wilhelm Raabe's *Pfister's Mühle* and *Die Akten des Vogelsangs*

December 6, 2013

Alexander Phillips (Cornell University) closed the fall colloquium series with his paper "Environmental Depredation and Aesthetic Reflection in Wilhelm Raabe's *Pfister's Mühle* and *Die Akten des Vogelsangs*."

By carefully attending to these self-aware narratives that register the immediate consequences of industrialization on the natural environments of previously idyllic spaces, Phillips argued that Raabe's environmental thematic represents an important engagement with a central aesthetic aporia of programmatic German realism.

tionism. For Butler, critiques of Zionism, of the exclusivity of a Jewish state, and of human rights abuses committed in the name of such a state should invoke "fundamental democratic values" in order to be truly open to and inclusive of non-Jewish others. A critique based in Jewish precepts and traditions runs the danger of merely replacing existing power inequalities with another hegemony, coded as Jewish. In order for Jewish ethical standards to apply to non-Jewish populations, values must be translated into more broadly applicable ethical frameworks. In her critique, Butler engages selected twentieth century European Jewish intellectuals, most significantly Emmanuel Levinas, Walter Benjamin, Hannah Arendt, and Primo Levi, as well as Palestinian intellectuals, Edward Said and the poet Mahmoud Darwish.

Boyarin emphasized that Butler's critique of Zionism simultaneously seeks to articulate a notion of "Jewishness" that is open to others, thus setting for itself two distinct goals that need not be pursued together. Boyarin argued against the inextricability of Judaism from Zionism, referring to extant Jewish criticism of Zionism, as well as to the historical multiplicity of Jewish practices of identification and Zionist movements.

A potent critique, Boyarin suggested, might subversively appropriate the very rhetoric of a particularist hegemony. Boyarin also questioned the need for a process of translation to facilitate receptivity of Jewish values among those who are not Jewish, positing that Biblical injunctions such as "thou shalt not kill" are not in fact implicitly limited to a Jewish population, as Butler argues they are.

In Butler's argument, Boyarin detected a mapping of an ontological Jewish identity onto Zionism, contrasted with relationality, contingency, and openness to encounter with others, which in turn are mapped onto diasporism. Boyarin maintained that a strong sense of Jewish identity and community, necessarily caught in tensions between the particular and the universal, can be effective against chauvinism in a diasporic



Because the writing narrators of *Pfisters Mühle* (1884) and *Die Akten des Vogelsangs* (1896) seek to locate poetic potential in a prosaic, modern world in ways that recall Friedrich Theodor Vischer's seminal theoretical emphasis on *grüne Stellen*, the two texts offer a productive and self-reflective encounter with the aesthetic legacy of German realism in the historical context of increasing industrialization. *Pfisters Mühle* critically reflects upon the fraught status of natural idylls – and by extension, of aesthetic experience as such – in an age of rapid environmental depredation. Romantic idylls, including the narrator's own desire for natural beauty, are ironized to the extent that a purely aesthetic relationship to nature is shown to be complicit in its own confounding, and the text ends with

the dissonant image of an industrial idyll.

Die Akten des Vogelsangs moves from a consideration of the possibilities of the aesthetic as such to a critical exploration of the legacy of programmatic realism. Phillips read the novel's thematic insistence on the color green as an articulation of an immanent aesthetic tendency within German realism, whereby the same logic of isolation and preservation that enables green spaces also signals their undoing. While memories of the idyllic neighborhood of *Vogelsang* serve as a projection of past innocence and harmony after *Vogelsang* has been incorporated into urban sprawl, the category of the natural itself is undercut by episodes of failed aesthetic identification or enjoyment in the text that show the complicit

social dimension of these projections of nature.

Raabe's narratives thus disrupt the fantasies that yoke aesthetic perception and production to harmonious natural idylls, without also abandoning a commitment to the project of programmatic realism. A vivacious colloquium discussion touched, among other topics, on the roles of *Verklärung*, media, perception, and historical change in the context of German realism; the stakes of pollution and purity in the context of a history of the senses; the analytic status of capitalism in narratives of historical progress and aesthetic change; and methodological issues involved in identifying a dialectical relationship between nature and society. (Carl Gelderloos)

Retrospective: Spring 2014 Colloquium Series

Carl Schmitt, Modernist: On Making Power Visible

March 7, 2014

William Rasch (Indiana University) opened the Spring 2014 colloquium series sponsored by the Institute for German Cultural



Studies, with a paper titled "Carl Schmitt, Modernist," in which he argued that there are affinities between Schmitt's political theory and Anglo-American Imagism of the early twentieth century. Rasch observed that Schmitt's theory is invested in exposing politics that conceal power behind a rhetoric of virtue.

According to Rasch, Schmitt would find the denial of *Machtpolitik* (power politics) to be a more pernicious manifestation of Machiavellism than a kind that merely favors force over moral virtue. Such denial is

dangerous because it fails to acknowledge the role of power in the world. As Rasch emphasized, Schmitt believes that good and evil are not inscribed in power, but rather that power is simply given, and since it exists it ought to be properly displayed, "clearly in the full light of day."

Rasch positioned Schmitt as a political theorist who recuperates a notion of political honesty by acknowledging the fact that modern political practice includes a rhetoric of virtue, which must be exposed for what it is. Similarly, Rasch argued that modernist poets such as Ezra Pound, T.S. Eliot, T.E. Hulme and Wyndham Lewis were firmly committed to honest language that constructs simple images inviting thought, contemplation and further intellectual inquiry. Unlike their Romantic predecessors, these Imagist poets expressed a deep skepticism towards poetic language that represents sublime enthusiasm, decadence, yearning, and the infinite. Imagism overcame its skepticism by approaching language with an ethos that emphasized restraint and, at the same time, activated highly concentrated instances of thought through singular, concrete images.

Much like Schmitt's project of promoting political honesty, Imagists such as Pound sought to use clear distinctions and precise definitions in order to critique language that conceals meaning or intention. Rasch identified a "language of visibility" as the link

between Schmitt and the Imagist movement around which he constructed his analyses.

Much discussion at the event centered on how Rasch explored the function of the sovereign as a decision-maker. Rasch noted that Schmitt's conception of sovereignty is idiosyncratic, insofar as it is not limited to traditional qualities such as a monarch or a ruler who dictates the norms of conduct. Rather, sovereignty is grounded in the existential claim that power requires an agent who makes a decision—as Schmitt famously declares, "the Sovereign is he who decides on exception." The crucial point for Rasch's argument was Schmitt's claim that the state of exception functions as a moment of crisis in which the public demands the decision-maker to become visible and accountable. (Matthew Stoltz)

Ontological Indifference: Orders and Disorders of German Romanticism

March
21, 2014

Gabriel Trop
(University of
North Carolina
Chapel Hill)



presented a paper entitled "Ontological Indifference: Orders and Disorders of German Romanticism." Trop argued for an approach to Romantic poetics that shifts its emphasis from

an “absolute of identity” to an “absolute of attraction.” Tracing the role of this latter “second-order absolute,” Trop sought to identify energies of attraction and repulsion in Novalis’ poetics that destabilize the status of being as a master signifier for singularity. Trop’s project thus calls for new practices of reading that are attuned phenomenologically to more dynamic textual practices of Romanticism—practices that fixate less on pure identity and embark instead on an energetic movement between zones of difference and indifference.

Trop argued that “zones of indifference,” in which static signs and differences multiply and in turn collapse into one another, figure crucially in a Romantic poetics that conceives of being not only as “oneness” or absolute identity, but also as a multivalent sign full of attractive and repulsive charges, characterized by movement, divergence, and multiplicity. In this way, Romantic poetics entails two “co-present ontologies,” which are neither mutually exclusive nor aporetically entwined, but rather entertain a perturbing relationship. An ontology of absolute identity is upset, repurposed, and disturbed by an equally pervasive ontology of attraction.

Trop’s case for a Romantic absolute of attraction, informed in part by contemporaneous scientific discourses, and his emphasis on zones of indifference pivoted on careful readings of Novalis’ work, notably of his *Fichte-Studien* and late poem, “Alle Menschen seh ich leben” (1800). Through a series of countertheses, posited against commonly circulated theses concerning the absolute of identity, Trop drew attention to easily overlooked aspects of Novalis’ philosophical understanding of the absolute, being, and identity. Trop thus showed how Novalis’ conception of being can never quite be hermeneutically pinned down, but can be discerned in the poetic texture of his work in its “flow of order and disorder,” or its *Schweben*, to invoke what Trop identified as a crucial poetic term for Novalis’ absolute of attraction.

As Trop’s reading of Novalis’ poem showed, an absolute of attraction is activated by momentum engendered by the poetic text, and not for instance in its allegories: On the levels of meter, sound and semantics one finds moments when oppositions are erased, identities upset, and both differentiations and indifferenciations abound. It is in the pushing and pulling, in the swaying between being and non-being, and in zones of indifference that an absolute of attraction works to per-

turb an absolute of identity. (Nathan Taylor)

German Rampage: Media, Discourse, and the Emergence of a Disturbing Phenomenon

April
11, 2014

Jörn
Ahrens
(Justus-
Liebig-
Univer-
sität
Gießen)



presented his paper, “German Rampage: Media, Discourse, and the Emergence of a Disturbing Phenomenon,” which is part of a larger research project that compares and contrasts media representations and the social understanding of acts of violence that take the form of a rampage or school shooting (*Amoklaufen*) in the United States and in Germany. In particular, Ahrens asks why it is that these forms of violence can be classified as *Amoklaufen* and, thereby, can be seen as falling outside the sphere of violent actions that are otherwise generally viewed as regrettable but ‘acceptable’ aspects of life within society.

In his paper and presentation, Ahrens analyzed the manner in which two major German media outlets, *Der Spiegel* and the *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* (FAZ), reported on two separate cases of *Amoklaufen* that occurred in Germany: in Erfurt in 2002 and in Winnenden in 2009. The goal of this comparison was to analyze the way in which these media outlets negotiated and constituted the social space in which cases of *Amoklaufen* came to be determined. Ahrens observed that the contrasting media depictions of the two different cases show how these media outlets did not merely portray a violent act for which a certain convention of representation was already available. Instead, Ahrens argued that the media struggled to define and determine a social space and discourse, by means of which cases of rampage or *Amoklaufen* first took on an identity as a specific type of violent action fundamentally different from other types of violence whose narrative and representation has already been determined

Ahrens argued that in contrast to 2002, when

the German media struggled to form a narrative or even find a term for the phenomenon of a mass shooting, coverage of the 2009 event made use of an already established narrative and category of social understanding. From this comparative analysis, Ahrens concluded that the question as to whether or not an act of extreme violence is classified as a case of *Amoklaufen* is dependent upon and constituted by the social discourse with which it is addressed in the media. Consequently, according to Ahrens, a large portion of media coverage consists of nothing more than proof that these events should, in fact, be labeled as acts of *Amoklaufen*.

The presentation prompted a lively discussion that circled around the question as to whether or not one can focus an analysis on the way in which media coverage shapes the social discourse of one specific type of violence, namely, *Amoklaufen*, or if such an analysis of media coverage necessitates consideration of structural violence and the manner in which media activity screens and obscures such violence. While Ahrens was sympathetic to concerns regarding structural violence, he insisted that it is still possible to reduce the scope of a study to particular cases of violence without addressing structural violence as such. (Stephen Klemm)

Continental Memory and Racial Amnesia: Western Europe as Postsocialist and Postcolonial Space

May 2, 2014

The Spring 2014 colloquium series concluded with a paper entitled “Continental Memory and Racial Amnesia: Western Europe as Postsocialist and Postcolonial Space,” presented by **Fatima El-Tayeb** (University of California San Diego). The paper examined the evolving role of Germany in the construction of a transnational European identity. When Germany’s integration into post-1990 Europe rendered the antagonism between an “undemocratic [German] aggressor” and a “democratic Europe” untenable, the role of the aggressor – which had long framed twentieth-century European history – was in part ascribed to communities perceived to be “non-European,” consisting of Black, Roma and Sinti, and European Muslim populations in particular. Such assessments, supported by legal, cultural, economic and academic discourses, attribute to these communities the status of permanent newcomers, whose expulsion could put an end to Europe’s



uncertain economic and political future.

The resulting narratives correspond to Stuart Hall's "internalist" conceptualization of continental Europe as "both homogeneous and entirely self-generated." Such a conceptualization perceives "migrants" and their descendants as unassimilable and remains oblivious of the effects of colonialism and

the slave trade on the continent's history and its present. Furthermore, the narrative resists multiethnic and multi-religious accounts of Europe's history and present, and instead produces the novelty of a "multi-cultural" state – a notion that implicates both its own failure and need for regulation.

In recent decades, the collapse of the Soviet Bloc created a need for finding another target on which to project Europe's ills. Such targets were found in the former East Germany, the conflict in the former Yugoslavia, the "war on terror" in the Middle East, and among Germany's own Muslim population. Since the unification of East and West Germany in 1990, a West-German narrative has collapsed the GDR's complex forty-year history with Stalinism, interpreting East German anti-Semitism as the lingering influ-

ence of the "non-European" Soviet Union.

The US-led, Europe-aided intervention in Kosovo was framed as a reenactment of World War II, in the process of which fascism was "finally... successfully moved out from Europe's geographical center to its eastern periphery." During the conflict, Bosnian Muslims were portrayed as the "European" victims of a new fascism; however, since September 11, 2001, Muslims in Europe and the Middle East have become redefined as antithetical to European civilization, rendered scapegoats for the dismantling of the West European system, and portrayed as anti-Semites. This latter development reconfigures white Christian Europe as the savior, rather than the persecutor of the Jewish minority, and as constantly challenged by Muslim outsiders. (Anna Horakova)

Lectures and Events

Tatort – Serie und/oder Werk

September 11, 2013

In her lecture, entitled "Tatort – Serie und/oder Werk," **Claudia Stockinger** (Georg-August-Universität Göttingen) focused on questions of genre in analyzing the popular German television show *Tatort*. At first glance, the categories of "television series" and "work" seem to be mutually exclusive, as a work relies on categories such as uniformity, coherence, and completedness for its definition, while a series is conceptualized for continuity. Stockinger, however, demonstrated that neither a serial-aesthetic nor a work-aesthetic model in isolation are sufficient in describing the police drama series *Tatort*.

Stockinger began by observing several characteristics of *Tatort* that make it unlike a television series in a traditional sense, such as the show's length of production, from 1970 until today, and the series' concept, which is only applicable within Germany because the variety of broadcasting corporations within ARD (*Arbeitsgemeinschaft der öffentlich-rechtlichen Rundfunkanstalten der Bundesrepublik Deutschland*) results in different teams of investigators in their respective regions. Nevertheless, *Tatort* clearly operates with certain traditional features of a television series, including credits accompanied by a signature tune. At the same time, features of a "work" are also an essential part of *Tatort*, in that it

consists of a variety of single films and shorter series that have in their entirety a historical significance. Thus, core features of both seriality and a complete, coherent work are part of every *Tatort*. Within such a work, variations of serial form can be observed: the new is narrated as the slightly changed old, and operates on the basis of a certain continuity.

With a close reading of selected scenes, Stockinger demonstrated that single episodes, and retrospectively, the series as a whole, clearly contain the characteristics of a single work. Stockinger showed that the police procedural can be assigned a work-immanent aesthetic on three levels: on the level of the single episode, on the level of single series (with respect to the detectives at regional and state levels), and on the level of the series as a whole, which takes place in the entire Federal Republic and contemporarily portrays the cultural history of the nation.

Stockinger also posited that *Tatort* gained increasing narrative complexity over the years, identifying self-reflection as an indicator for this development. It can be concluded that, on the one hand, the series shows a certain unity in its deployment of plot, array of characters, and dramaturgy, but that on the other hand it is also conceived for continuation and seriality. (Giulia Comparato)



Intuition, Picturing, Immanence

March 12, 2014

For the Comparative Cultures and Literature Forum, **Ray Brassier** (American University of Beirut) presented a talk entitled “Intuition, Picturing, Immanence.” Brassier’s presentation anticipated his upcoming book on 20th century American philosopher Wilfrid Sellars (1912-89), drawing on Sellars’ lectures in *Naturalism and Ontology* (1979) and multiple essays, including “Empiricism and the Philosophy of Mind” (1956) and “Some Remarks on Kant’s Theory of Experience” (1967). Brassier’s talk situated Sellars in the history of philosophy, arguing that Sellars’ reinterpretation of the Kantian thesis on the role of intuition challenges later critiques of Kant within continental philosophy.

Brassier’s analysis centered on the relationship between conceptual knowledge and the receptivity of perception, mediated through the Kantian concepts of intuition and sensibility. Brassier posited that whereas Kant is unclear regarding the interaction of intuition and sensibility, Sellars emphatically distinguishes between these two terms. For Sellars, intuitions

are conceptual, while sensibility is the way in which conceptual intuitions are guided and constrained by non-conceptual factors.

Brassier drew attention to the asymmetry between properties of physical objects themselves and properties of sense impressions of the same objects, siding against the possibility of any “direct” access to objects in themselves, independent from the conceptual framework of intuition. Critiquing notions of perception in which an object “impresses” itself directly on the mind, Brassier instead used Sellars’ notion of “picturing” to describe the relationship of real objects to human knowledge: Picturing involves a “second-order isomorphism” between the properties of objects in the world and linguistic or conceptual categories.

After establishing a Sellarsian model of conceptual picturing to describe the relationship of human knowledge to non-conceptual objects, Brassier critiqued notions of experience found in certain strands of continental thought, specifically in the works of Henri-Louis Bergson and Gilles Deleuze. While thinkers like Bergson and Deleuze have advanced a kind of direct knowledge of non-conceptual experience, Brassier argued, following Sellars, that all knowledge is concep-



tual and rule-governed. Though there exists an experience outside of concepts, our access to that experience is always conceptually mediated. During the discussion following his presentation, Brassier answered questions about the nature of Sellars’ picturing, the possibility of absolute knowledge, and the political relevance of philosophy. In conclusion, Brassier emphasized the necessity of philosophy for politics and indicated a long-term goal of reconciling post-Darwinian naturalism with historical materialism. (Leigh York)

Faust (2011 Russia, directed by Aleksandr Sokurov, with Johannes Zeiler, Anton Adasinsky, Isolda Dychauk, Hannah Schygulla)

March 7 and 9, 2014

On March 7 and 9, Cornell Cinema screened Alexander Sokurov’s film *Faust* (2011), a free rendition of the much-adapted myth, which received the Venice Film Festival’s highest prize, the Golden Lion, upon its premiere.

While viewers familiar with the legend will recognize its essential characters and plot, Sokurov provides an unconventional and possibly contentious frame for the tale of Dr. Faust’s pact with the devil and desire to transcend the material and intellectual poverty of worldly existence. The film concludes Sokurov’s “Men of Power” tetralogy, placing Faust in the uneasy historical company of Adolf Hitler (*Moloch*, 1999), Vladimir Lenin (*Taurus*, 2001), and the Japanese emperor Hirohito (*The Sun*, 2005).

How Faust belongs to or prefigures this group is not immediately obvious. Sokurov’s Faust (Johannes Zeiler) embodies a restless, brooding masculinity, dissatisfied with his academic subjects, theology and medi-

cine—he dismisses his assistant Wagner’s inquiry into the location of the human soul during an opening autopsy as “idle chatter” (*Geschwätz*). His shadowy, claustrophobic world lacks food and money, but is pervaded by the sounds of human and animal suffering and the sights of death, disease, and crime.

Faust is thus driven to procure a vial of hemlock, when the film’s Mephistopheles—a corporeally deformed pawnbroker named Maricius Müller (Anton Adasinsky)—coaxes him away with bread and an answer to the famous problem of biblical translation that plagues the scholar: in the beginning was not the word, but the deed (*Tat*), from which meaning (*Sinn*) arises.

It is perhaps Faust’s acknowledgement of this translation that secures his place among Sokurov’s “Men of Power.” During their final struggle on an unpopulated, icy mountain, Maricius/Mephistopheles reminds Faust of their contract, in which he pledged his soul to the devil in exchange for one night with his love Margarethe (Isolda Dychauk)—a fate that binds him to eternal solitude without salvation. Not grasping his situation, Faust retorts: “Natur und Geist: Mehr braucht man nicht, um hier auf

freiem Grund ein freies Volk zu erschaffen!”

Within the context of the tetralogy, a founding *Tat* (deed) with the force to establish a *Volk* (people or nation) resonates as proto-totalitarian. Sokurov in turn binds this sentiment to isolated delusion: After Faust stones Mauricius to death, he runs giddily after Margarethe’s disembodied voice, which asks him



where he is going. Disappearing into the film’s final panoramic shot of a seemingly endless landscape, Faust replies: “Dahin! Weiter! Immer weiter!” The caveat of the pact that allows him to transcend his claustrophobic, worldly existence is to run forever under the illusion of moving forward. (William Krieger)

W.A. Mozart's Requiem and G.F. Haas' 7 Klangräume zu den unvollendeten Fragmenten des Requiems von W.A. Mozart

April 25, 2014

On April 25, 2014, an audience of students, faculty, and Ithaca community members experienced a performance of Georg Friedrich Haas's *Seven Soundspaces on the Unfinished Fragments of W. A. Mozart's Requiem in D Minor* (2005), sponsored in part by the Institute for German Cultural Studies. Under the direction of Michel Galante, Cornell orchestral musicians as well as members of Cornell's University Chorus and Glee Club (both directed by Robert Isaacs) joined the Argento Chamber Ensemble and vocal soloists Judith Kellock, Ivy Walz, Thom Baker, and David Neal on the stage of Bailey Hall. This unique combination of student and professional performers provided the vocal and instrumental power necessary for the execution of Haas' ambitious 'soundspaces' (*Klangräume*) and the demanding fragments of Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart's unfinished *Requiem* (1791).

Haas presented brief introductory remarks prior to the concert, in which he challenged the audience to hear the *Requiem* fragments on their own terms and to experience the emptiness of the music left unfinished due to Mozart's untimely death. With regards to his own soundspaces, Haas expressed a hope of capturing Mozart's mental state in the days preceding his death, during which the *Requiem* was composed. Haas also stated that he wanted to question the present epoch's "approach to death," according to which death and dying are often rel-

egated to the confines of medical facilities.

Haas' soundspaces also reject any intention of completing the *Requiem* fragments. Consequently, they interrupt a performance of the fragments in a manner that differs entirely from works such as Franz Süssmayr's often-performed completion of the *Requiem* from 1792. Instead of filling out thinly orchestrated, sketched passages in the "Tuba Mirum," "Recordare," and "Domine Jesu" movements, Haas demands that these portions of the work



be executed in their incomplete arrangement.

In the "Recordare" section, this posed a particularly difficult task for the quartet of featured soloists, who at some points seemed to be singing tonally challenging passages with almost no accompaniment from the orchestra. Other movements such as the "Confutatis" and "Lacrymosa" were also intentionally left unfinished—quite conspicuously in the case of the "Confutatis," with its tonally unresolved, 'open' ending.

Interspersed between these fragments were Haas' soundspaces. The first of these—between Mozart's "Dies irae" and "Tuba mi-

rum"—ends in a tonally ascending crescendo that climaxes with an instrumental and vocal scream. It thus draws the audience into an aesthetic of the interstitial that Haas achieves with each subsequent interjection. In the fourth soundspace, tonal blocks of consonant modulation almost recall the conventions of classical composition, despite dissonant interruptions that insist upon the non-arrival of the modulation at a new tonal center.

Haas' unapologetically contemporary additions to the *Requiem* fragments are in fact clearly in conversation with late-eighteenth century aesthetic norms informing Mozart's composition. The fifth soundspace uses mimetic effects to paint the sounds of death and dying: an unstable heartbeat, breathing, a ventilator, and perhaps even an electrocardiogram. Haas' use of musical mimesis complements the musical pictorialism of Mozart's fragments, evident for instance in the illuminating orchestral and choral moment of the passage "...et lux perpetua luceat eis" ("...and let perpetual light shine on them") in the "Introit" section.

Despite Haas' insistence that his *Klangräume* and Mozart's *Requiem* constitute "two separate works by two separate composers," disjunctions between soundspace and fragment that result from the performance recall the sublime sonic contrasts that preoccupied Mozart and his contemporaries. Ultimately, Haas' *Klangräume* give one pause in contemplating the possibility of the uncanny return of a forlorn sublime precisely by making currently invisible topoi (e.g., death) once again musically visible. (Alexander Brown)

Daniel Kahn and Jake Shulman-Ment

March 6, 2014

The evening of March 6 at the Big Red Barn was dedicated to Klezmer music performed by Daniel Kahn and Jake Shulman-Ment. The program included old as well as original songs performed in Yiddish, English, German, and Russian, displaying a mixture of Klezmer, radical Yiddish song, political cabaret, and punk folk genres.

While Kahn gave the audience a taste of his dark and humorous storytelling, Shulman-Ment performed Romanian Klezmer songs he learned while living in northeastern Romania



on a Fulbright grant and studying Romanian violin styles. The event was presented by

the Jewish Studies Program and co-sponsored by the Departments of Near Eastern Studies, Anthropology, and German Studies as well as the Institute for German Cultural Studies, the Institute of European Studies, and the Cornell Klezmer Ensemble. (Andreea Mascan)

For more details on Daniel Kahn & The Painted Bird: <http://www.paintedbird.de/>

The Ambiguity of Virtue: Gertrude van Tijn and the Fate of the Dutch Jews during World War II

April 29, 2014

Bernard Wasserstein, Harriet & Ulrich E. Meyer Professor Emeritus of Modern European Jewish History at the University of Chicago, presented his most recent book in a talk co-sponsored by the Jewish Studies Program, the Department of History, and the Institute for German Cultural Studies at Cornell. His work, titled *The Ambiguity of Virtue: Gertrude van Tijn and the Fate of the Dutch Jews* (Harvard University Press, 2014) follows the life of Gertrude van Tijn, a Dutch Jewish woman who worked for the Jewish Council in Amsterdam during the Nazi occupation of the Netherlands.

Using van Tijn's life and work as an example, Wasserstein questioned and complicated Hannah Arendt's criticism of the Jewish Councils under National Socialism and their role in carrying out the Holocaust, by detailing the constraints and circumstances under which van Tijn was working and the risks she took in order to do her utmost to help her fellow Jewish citizens.

Wasserstein described how van Tijn had worked since the early 1930s to assist Jew-

ish fugitives emigrating from Germany to the Netherlands. Among other positions, she held the post of secretary at a farm school in North Holland where German Jewish fugitives were trained in agricultural work and a variety of crafts in preparation for emigration to Palestine. She was also involved in the organization of the trip of the *Dora*, a ship transporting several hundreds of fugitives to Palestine in 1939.

Wasserstein pointed out that when the Netherlands were occupied by Nazi-Germany, van Tijn refused to flee to Great Britain, though she was given the chance to do so. Instead, she stayed and continued her work for the Joint Distribution Committee and the Dutch Refugee Committee throughout the war. He estimated that over the course of a decade from 1933 to 1944, van Tijn was directly or indirectly responsible for the emigration of approximately 22,000 Jews.

Wasserstein compared van Tijn's approach to her work for the Jewish Council to that of her colleague David Cohen, chairman of the Refugee Committee. While Cohen was both known and criticized for selecting individual Jewish citizens for deportation, van Tijn consistently refused to single out individuals, a stance that Wasserstein interpreted as a way of holding onto as much of her moral integrity as possible.

Accordingly, van Tijn's greatest regret seems

to have been that she and Cohen were deceived by Nazi-Hauptsturmführer Klaus Barbie into releasing a list of names and addresses of Jewish boys and young men.



Cohen and van Tijn had requested permission to reopen the aforementioned farm school, and Barbie pretended to grant their request. However, he instead rounded up and deported most of the listed fugitives.

Van Tijn herself was arrested in 1943 and sent to the internment camp in Westerbork and later to the Bergen-Belsen concentration camp. In an exchange of Jewish emigrants for Germans living in Palestine, she managed to escape to safety in 1944, but continued her efforts on behalf of refugees and returned to the Netherlands after the war. (Hannah Müller)

Incoming Guests of IGCS

IGCS is very pleased to welcome **Prof. Dr. Ethel Matala de Mazza** as our **Humboldt University exchange professor** for the first

weeks of September 2014. Professor Matala de Mazza's current research focuses on the poetics of the small as a literary mode of negotiating modernity's self-inscription.



She has published extensively, including the monographs *Der verfaßte Körper. Zum Projekt einer organischen Gemeinschaft in der Politischen Romantik* (1999) and *Dichtung als Schau-Spiel. Zur Poetologie des jungen Hugo von Hofmannsthal* (1995), as well as essays on the cold war; the construction of

the body politic; E.T.A. Hoffmann; Heinrich von Kleist, and Georg Büchner, among many others. Professor Matala de Mazza will be presenting at the first colloquium on Friday, September 5, at 3:00, with a paper entitled "Fabelhafte Macht: Louis Marin liest Jean de la Fontaine." For the full line up of this Fall's colloquia, please see the poster included in these pages.



In April 2015, IGCS is delighted to welcome **Ulrich Peltzer** as **Writer-in-Residence**. The author of five novels, a book on poetics, and co-author of several film scripts, Ulrich Peltzer has won most of German's biggest literary prizes: the Bremen Literary Prize (2003); the Berlin Literary Prize (2008); the Heinrich Böll Prize



(2011); the Carl Amery Prize (2013). He will be here to present his new novel (due out in spring 2015) as the forthcoming film (spring 2015) he co-wrote with Berlin

school filmmaker Christoph Hochhäusler: *Die Lügen der Sieger* [The Victors' Lies].

Radical Thought on the Margin II

October 4-5, 2013

The Cornell Theory Reading Group, in collaboration with the Princeton Theory Reading Group, hosted the event, “Radical Thought on the Margins II,” the second of a two-part conference organized by individual members of Theory Reading Groups at the two universities. The first conference,

Politics in Civil Rights Historiography.” In his interpretation, the preponderance of the romantic narrative has occasioned an ironic narrative to negate and resist it. Terry sees this ironic emplotment as itself manifest in a paradoxical combination of two distinct phenomena: on the one hand, scholars such as Leon Litwack and some stars of black youth culture represent white supremacy as

gories, by now to a large extent absorbed into neoliberal discourses of diversity, Puar suggested the Deleuzian concept of assemblage as a more dynamic framework for understanding how those different categories interact.

With disability as the central category of her inquiry, Puar argued that the disability of white, Euro-American, middle-class subjects, when foregrounded and spectacularized in media narratives of overcoming, normalizes the systematic debility and disenfranchisement of racialized and economically underprivileged others. She drew attention to the fact that 80% of so-called people with disabilities worldwide are disabled as a result of war, forced migration, and colonial occupation, and should thus be described as debilitated by political and economic circumstances rather than as disabled.

Puar concluded her talk by stressing the need for disability studies to overcome its Euro-American-biased biomedical rights discourse and to establish links to issues of global health. Rather than reproduce the uneven distribution of resources by depoliticizing the results of armed conflicts as disability in other locations, an assemblage approach to disability could, according to Puar, help reveal the ways in which debility and disability produce and relate to each other. (Jette Gindner)



“Radical Thought on the Margins” was held May 2-3, 2013 at Princeton University; dialogue continued with the conference on October 4-5, 2013 at Cornell University.

Brandon Terry (UC Chicago/Harvard) opened the first panel and began his presentation by sketching out his ongoing, larger research project: Drawing on Hayden White’s account of historiography, Terry explores how the narrative emplotments of romance, tragedy, and irony have shaped the understanding of the Civil Rights Movement as an exemplary moment in black political history. Romantic emplotment, which narrates history as the becoming of unities or the realization of ideas, has, according to Terry, thus far dominated discourse, yet its representation of the Civil Rights Movement as consensual and organized around the central figure of Martin Luther King, Jr. has marginalized both the movement’s diverging strands as well as King’s investment in egalitarian and anti-imperial struggles.

After this introduction, Terry honed in on the focus of his presentation, “Irony and its

ineradicably permanent; on the other hand, the incorporation of post-structuralist criticism in African-American Studies leads to an equation of racial signification with “racism” and a hermeneutics of suspicion that denigrates collective political action.

While an ironic emplotment may have been helpful in unmasking the epistemic and ideological problems of the romantic narrative of the Civil Rights Movement, Terry argued that it runs the risk of falling into serious contradictions and tipping into “racial paranoia,” ultimately revealing itself as politically limiting in its forms of negation.

The second speaker was **Jasbir K. Puar** (Rutgers/Society of the Humanities at Cornell). Puar’s talk, “Affective Politics: States of Debility and Capacity,” gave an overview of her ongoing book project and its interventions into both disability studies and queer theory. Drawing on recent theorizations of affect, materiality, and post-humanism, Puar proposed an alternative to a current impasse in theories of intersectionality. While the latter depend upon the assumption of stable identity cate-

In the first talk of the second panel, “History at the Margins: An Interpretation of the Mayan Caste War,” **Ana Sabau** (Princeton) explored the presence and absence of maps of the Yucatan Peninsula made by the Mexican government during the Yucatan Caste War. Sabau was specifically interested in reading the way in which these maps of the Yucatan Peninsula, commissioned by the newly emerging, European-centered Mexican Government, leave blank exactly those areas of the Yucatan Peninsula that remained in control of the Mayan rebels during the Yucatan Caste War.

Sabau argued that the absence of any acknowledgement of Mayan habitation and civilization in these blank spaces actually indicates the presence of a political narrative that first established the way in which the Mexican government conceived of and

defined itself. According to this narrative, everything touched by the “savage” Indians was erased by the central authorities commissioning the map and, thus, was literally not written into the country’s self-conception. Only those areas, Sabau argued, that fit neatly into the narrative promoted by the central government – that of progress and the development of enlightenment civilization – were written into the cartography and developing narrative of the newly westernized country. The failure to map such areas, Sabau argued, is indicative of the way in which the Yucatan Caste War was relegated into the margins of history until it could be reintegrated into a more general historical narrative.

In his paper, “Marxism and *Indigenismo* Reconsidered,” **Gavin Arnall** (Princeton) considered and reconsidered the sometimes-troubled relationship between Marxism and *Indigenismo* in South America, specifically in Peru. Arnall argued that many Marxists rue what they consider a “missed encounter” between the proletariat in several South American countries and the *Indigenismo*, who have failed to come together in a collective and unified class struggle. While the proletariat and the *Indigenismo* share a common economic plight, and hence, Arnall argued, ought to be prime candidates for collective action, the cultural, linguistic, and geographical (urban/rural) differences between the groups often occasioned, from a Marxist perspective, a missed opportunity for large-scale collective action.

Arnall read those occasions in which individuals have been able to transcend the differences between these groups, serving both as linguistic and cultural translators, as opportunities to bridge the gap between Marxism and *Indigenismo*, in order to locate a new Marxism unique to specific historical and local conditions. This encounter, Arnall argued, fosters an Indo-American socialism, which does not merely apply a European model onto a given set of historical conditions, but rather seeks to create a socialism that is locally and historically determined. Such Marxism would take the demands of the *Indigenismo* as well as the proletariat into equal account, modifying itself to the specific historical situation at hand.

In her talk “Staging Change: Dual Power, Motley States, and the turn to the Commons (from René Zavaleta Mercado to Raquel Gutiérrez),” **Susana Draper** (Princeton) analyzed the situation of dual power in political and historical processes in Chile and Bolivia in the 1970s as explicated in the works of Rene Zavaleta. Draper traced the

development of the Trotskyist notion of dual power in the writings of Zavaleta to indicate how he adopts and applies the idea to the context of Latin America, specifically to Bolivia. Zavaleta develops this notion of dual power, conceptualizing the relation between an established political government and movements of social uprising, to show how a political space can be created apart from the dominant form of political governance, which possesses a sovereign autonomy.

Draper argued that Zavaleta’s reworking of the notion of dual power can be applied to Bolivia today in order to make sense of proletariat struggles against dominant state powers. This application, Draper explained, would not explode or attempt to overturn the state, but would attempt to work with the state in order to integrate new interests into the state in a dialectic process. (Stephen Klemm)

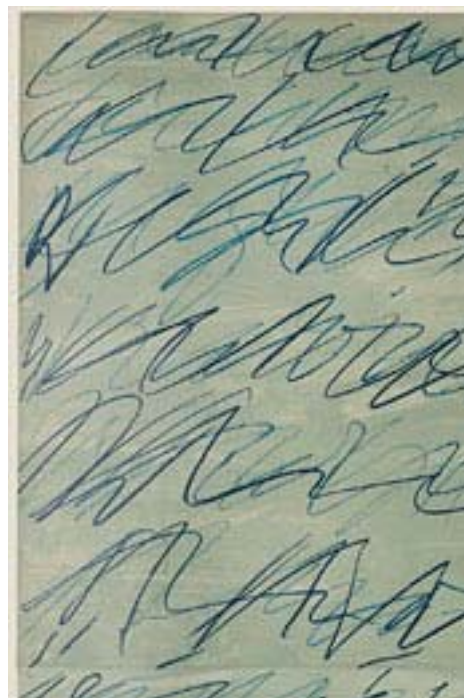
Naoki Sakai led the third panel of the conference, presenting from his work and eponymous book project, “Dislocation of the West.” Sakai’s initial remarks targeted the idiosyncrasy of the term “West”: While “the West” immediately evokes a topological and cartographic designation or placement, the term’s indexical function always renders “the West only a West.” Furthermore, as a historical construct, “the West,” indicates mores, traditions, ethnicities, and civilizations, while producing other geographic designations such as the Middle or the Far East from its assumed vantage point in the center.

Citing Antonio Gramsci, Sakai related such compartmentalization of the planet to global hegemonic configurations. Today, the myth of the West along with its ancillary presumption of whiteness have become increasingly less certain in both unity and identity, as Sakai demonstrated through his reading of J. M. Coetzee’s 1999 novel, *Disgrace*. While the novel’s white protagonist David Lury assumes a reified positionality of the West as naturally independent and separated from “the Rest” (Stuart Hall), his situation becomes destabilized by the radical changes “whiteness” is undergoing in post-Apartheid South Africa and beyond. (Anna Horakova)

Efthymia Rentzou’s talk, entitled “Beyond the Human: Universalism, Humanism, and the French Avant-garde of the 1930s,” examined the politics of the French Surrealist literary magazine, *Minotaur*. Because the magazine was not allowed to explicitly discuss politics, Rentzou proposed that its authors used indirect

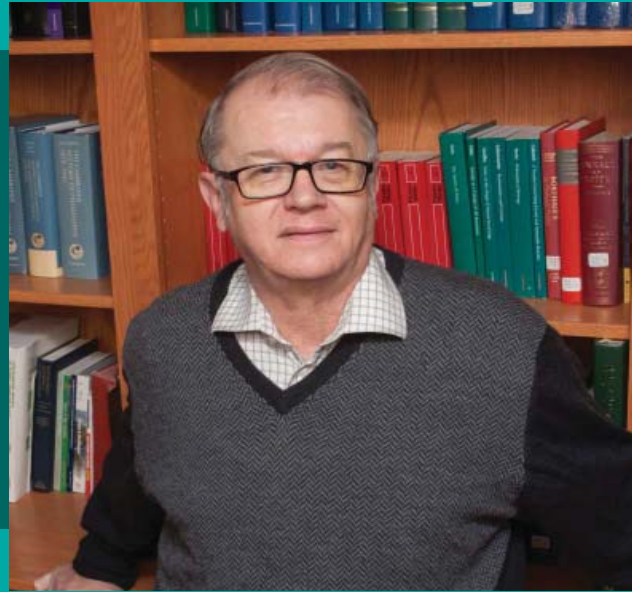
methods to communicate their political agendas. These means were, above all, aesthetic, embedded in magazine covers, images, and layout. Through an analysis of these images and forms, Rentzou suggested that the magazine expounded a non-humanist universalism, configuring the category of the “human” as polymorphic. Central to her analysis was the magazine’s cover art, all of which depict images of a Minotaur. The shifting depictions of this hybrid human/animal figure over the magazine’s history suggest a universalism grounded in change rather than human fixity.

Nick Nesbitt concluded the panel with his presentation, “Fragments of a Universal History: Capitalism, Mass Revolution and the Idea of Equality in the Black Jacobins.” Through an analysis of *The Black Jacobins: Toussaint L’Ouverture and the San Domingo Revolution* (1938), the Trotskyist writer C.L.R. James’ famous history of the Haitian revolution, Nesbitt suggests – against a common conception of the text’s anti-universalist aims – that there is in fact a model of universalist history presented in the work, linking the Haitian revolution to the revolutions in France and Russia, from which it is often detached due to a Eurocentric bias. C.L.R. James’ universal model is based on three elements common to all revolutionary movements: the existence of a leader, a disenfranchised mass, and ideas that possess a historical force. These elements are to be found in all three of the aforementioned revolutions. Conforming to a universal theory of revolution, Haiti is, in this reading, not a geographical, cultural and historical outlier, but part of universal history. (Matteo Calla)



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German Philosophy & the Ethics of Belief



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Saturday, November 1 2014**
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ANDREW CHIGNELL Cornell University
REBECCA COPENHAVER Lewis and Clark College
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The Poet and the University:

Stefan George among the Scholars

September 26-27, 2014, Cornell University

A. D. White House



FRIDAY,
SEPTEMBER 26

1:30pm Paul Fleming

German, and Comparative Literature, Cornell
"The Poet and the State of Academia"

2:45pm Robert Norton

German, Notre Dame
"Plato and the George Circle"

4:30pm Peter Uwe Hohendahl

German, and Comparative Literature, Cornell
"Critic or Prophet?
The George Circle and Friedrich Nietzsche"

SATURDAY,
SEPTEMBER 27

9:30am Ernst Osterkamp

German, Humboldt University-Berlin
"The Poet as the Redeemer of Culture:
Friedrich Gundolf's Goethe"

10:45am Eva Geulen

German, Goethe-University, Frankfurt am Main
"The Other Beginning: The George Circle's
Discovery of Hölderlin and the Place of Goethe"

1:30pm Elke Siegel

German, Cornell
"Poetry, Politics, and Friendship in Kommerell's Classicism"

2:45pm Carsten Strathausen

German, University of Missouri
"The George Circle and Biopolitics"

4:30pm Russell Berman

German, Stanford University,
and former President of the Modern Language Association
"Political Thought in the George Circle:
Edgar Salin and Political Economy"



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FRIDAYS @ 3PM

SEPTEMBER 5

Ethel Matala de Mazza

Institut für deutsche Literatur, Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin

Fabelhafte Macht: Louis Marin Liest

Jean de la Fontaine

OCTOBER 24

Christiane Arndt

Languages, Literatures and Cultures, Queen's University

**Seeing the Invisible: Contagion and Hygiene
in 19th Century German Popular Media**

NOVEMBER 7

Jonathan M. Hess*

Germanic Languages and Literatures, UNC at Chapel Hill

**Shylock's Daughters: Philosemitism, 19th
Century Melodrama, and the Liberal Imagination**

*co-sponsored by the Jewish Studies Program

NOVEMBER 21

Johannes Wankhammer

German Studies, Cornell University

**Figment, Fiction, Fabrication: Artifice and
Evidence in J.J. Breiting's Poetics**

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

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