

# German Culture News

Cornell University Institute for German Cultural Studies

Fall 2015 Vol XXIV

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## The Poet and the University

Sept. 26-27, 2014

The two-day conference, "The Poet and the University: Stefan George among the Scholars," organized by **Peter Uwe Hohendahl** and **Paul Fleming** (Cornell), and sponsored by the Institute for German Cultural Studies, the College of Arts and Sciences, the Society for the Humanities, and the Departments of German Studies, Philosophy, and Comparative Literature at Cornell, examined the influence of German poet Stefan George (1868-1933) on the scholarly work of his disciples in the George Circle. In his introductory remarks, Peter

proper place of poetry became increasingly contested. George offered an answer to the question of the relationship between poetry and thought: a scholarship born of the spirit of poetry. The deep impression that this idea made on several fields of study can be traced through publications of members of the George circle. Fleming discussed works by Max Kommerell (1902-1944) and Ernst Kantorowicz (1895-1963), and argued that the best output of the George Circle scholars was in fact produced after they had broken with and distanced themselves from George. In taking this position, Fleming asked two primary

cluded with a central insight from Kantorowicz that also applied to the relation of members of the George Circle to their *Meister*: "sometimes the only way to save the king is to kill the king."

**Robert Norton** (University of Notre Dame), in his presentation "Plato and the George Circle," elaborated on the uniquely important role of Plato for the Circle, and also traced the rise of a peculiar vision of Plato concurrent with the vision of the Circle itself. Plato served as a motivating force for George's desire to fashion a new mode of existence for poetry and to transform the world



Uwe Hohendahl sketched the central role of the George Circle in German high culture in the first half of the twentieth century, and stressed that the activities of the movement in fields such as literary theory, sociology, political science, and philosophy can be seen as a last general effort of German conservatism before the NSDAP's rise to power.

In his talk entitled "Reading with the Poet: George's Incursion into the Humanities," **Paul Fleming** focused on dynamics among the poet, his followers, and scholarship in the university. Fleming claimed that whereas for a long time the importance of poetry for thought had been beyond dispute on both sides of the political spectrum, the controversy over the

questions: "What has to be left behind?" and "What remains?" Before examining Kommerell's books *Der Dichter als Führer* (1928) and *Jean Paul* (1933), Fleming first sketched George's own account of Jean Paul. He observed the resemblance of the figure of the poet in Kommerell's interpretations to George, as well as subversive tendencies in the later book on Jean Paul. In Fleming's reading of Kantorowicz's *Kaiser Friedrich der Zweite* (1928), he showed how the modes of historiography and prophecy converge, yielding to the latter, although this methodological constellation is absent in Kantorowicz's better-known and much more sober work, *The King's Two Bodies: A Study in Medieval Political Theology* (1957). Fleming con-

according to the Circle's vision. Norton juxtaposed George's and other members of the Circle's appreciation for Plato with their aim of creating a new state. In their conception, the precondition for a new state was the renewal of the people inhabiting it. Yet it was the work of Kurt Hildebrandt (1881-1966) that served as the foundation for an interpretation of Plato that made the philosopher's ideas compatible with a eugenic perspective. His 1933 book *Platon. Der Kampf des Geistes um die Macht* ("Plato. The Struggle of Spirit for Power") depicts Plato as the founder of a theory of eugenics. In his talk, Norton therefore argued for a reconsideration of the apparently apolitical

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*German Culture News*  
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# Word from the Director

It has been another productive, collaborative year at the Institute for German Cultural Studies, with many exciting events and several new programs to report – and much more to come in 2015-16. In addition to the writer-in-residence, colloquia, workshops, conferences, and concerts documented in this issue of German Cultural News and on the IGCS website, I would also like to highlight the following from 2014-15:

**The graduate student exchange with the University of Cologne, begun in fall 2014, is now in full swing.** Last year, Matteo Calla, PhD candidate in German, was awarded the first stipend to Cologne for 2014-15; this academic year 2015-16, Matthew Stoltz and Leigh York will each spend a semester at our exchange partner, Cologne University's Humanities graduate school, a.r.t.e.s. *Applications for the 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. Please encourage students to apply.* 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 graduate student for the full 10 months, or 2 graduate students for 5 months each (it can be the same semester). Applications are generally due mid February.

**Congratulations to Alina Carrillo,** Cornell undergraduate majoring in "Environmental Science and Sustainability," for being awarded a full tuition and accommodation scholarship to the six-week **"Cologne Summer School 2015 on Environmental Studies: Sustainable Cities."** Every year, Cologne offers up to 2 stipends to Cornell undergraduates. The topics change every year; *please keep an eye open for the announcement in spring (application usually due end of March).*

**The Contemporary German Literature Reading Group** will continue its monthly meetings dedicated to the discussion of the most recent works of German literature (texts appearing in the last 5-10 years). If you are interested in participating for a

relaxed evening of discussing literature and good food, please be in touch with IGCS.

**Please mark your calendars for the upcoming Fall 2015 IGCS sponsored and co-sponsored events – for more information and up-to-the-minute reports, visit the IGCS website (igcs.cornell.edu):**

## Colloquia

Unless otherwise indicated, colloquia take place at 3pm in 156 Goldwin Smith Hall. An advance copy of each paper can be obtained in the Department of German Studies, 183 Goldwin Smith Hall.

**Sept. 4, 2015** *Nur über seine Leiche: Literaturgeschichte der Männerfreundschaft* (Andreas Kraß, Institut für deutsche Literatur, Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin)

**Sept. 25, 2015** *Genealogy Trouble: Secularization in Löwith, Blumenberg, Schmitt and Agamben* (Kirk Wetters, German, Yale University)

**Oct. 16, 2015** *Before Truth: Walter Benjamin's "Erkenntniskritische Vorrede"* (Kristina Mendicino, German, Brown University)

**Nov. 6, 2015** *Mosenthal's Deborah and the Politics of Compassion: Anatomy of a Tearjerker* (Jonathan Hess, Germanic Languages & Literatures, UNC at Chapel Hill) \*co-sponsored by the Jewish Studies Program

**Nov. 20, 2015** *Clouded Visions: Particulate Matter in F. W. Murnau's Faust and Hartmut Bitomsky's Dust* (Paul Dobryden, German, Cornell University)

**Dec. 4, 2015** *Klopstock's Darstellung and the Cult of Aesthetic Experience* (Matteo Calla, German, Cornell University)

## Conferences & Workshops

**The Challenge of Realism: Theodor Fontane**  
Sept. 18-19, 2015, 258 Goldwin Smith Hall

**Keynote lecture: Sept. 18, 4pm,** Eric Downing (University of North Carolina), *Fontane & the Future Ends of Realism*

**Sept. 19:** presentations by Sean Franzel, Ulrike Vedder, Anette Schwarz, Peter Hohendahl, Elisabeth Strowick, Sam Frederick

Organized by Peter Hohendahl; Sponsored by Cornell University's IGCS, College of Arts & Sciences, and the Departments of German Studies, History, and Comparative Literature

**Oct. 23-24, 2015,** 401 Physical Sciences Building  
**Mapping the Medieval /** Conference in honor of Arthur Groos Organized by the German Studies Department

## Lectures & Other Events

**Sept. 8-10, 2015** **A Yiddish Theater Festival** Organized by Cornell Jewish Studies Program with Ithaca College Jewish Studies and Cornell Council for the Arts For more information, please visit jewishstudies.cornell.edu

**Sept. 15, 2015,** 4:45pm, Toboggan Lodge **Martin Heidegger Saved My Life** (Grant Farred, Cornell) Co-sponsored with African Studies

**Sept. 24, 2015,** 4:30pm, 366 McGraw Hall **Through storms of steel: The path to the marble cliffs. Ernst Jünger dealing with Thucydides** (Christian Wendt, Free University, Berlin) Co-sponsored by History, Classics, IGCS, and Program on Freedom and Free Societies

**Nov. 16, 2015,** 4:30pm, place TBA, **Wrong Sex and the City: Polish Work Migration and Subaltern Masculinity** (Dirk Uffelmann, University of Passau) Co-sponsored with FGSS

More co-sponsored events for Fall 2015 will be added soon; please browse the IGCS website (igcs.cornell.edu) for all that is taking place this year.

--Paul Fleming

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George Circle, as portrayed in recent biographies, by underlining the shift in George's position toward politics. As Norton demonstrated, this changing notion is evident in George's conversations with Berthold Valentin (1877-1933), in which George's shows deep interest in the figure of the leader. Considering George's profound influence on Hildebrandt's Plato book, Norton argued for a reassessment of the relationship between eugenics (*Rassenpolitik*) and *Geistpolitik*, as pursued with the publication of the poet's series of *Geistbücher*. (Matthias Müller)

Co-organizer **Peter Uwe Hohendahl's** presentation, titled "Critic or Prophet? The George Circle and Friedrich Nietzsche," identified Nietzsche as one of the most problematic figures that the George Circle had attempted to come to terms with. Hohendahl found that the group's main challenge in confronting Nietzsche was that its members were unable to reach an easy consensus with respect to how they would integrate and interpret his work. On the one hand, the group found Nietzsche's critique of his age to be of value to them; on the other hand, Nietzsche came dangerously close to a certain kind of modernity that they rejected. George acknowledged Nietzsche's importance, yet made his disciples aware of specific limitations of the philosopher's work. Hohendahl argued that these limitations were emphasized in order to ensure that George, as opposed to Nietzsche, would be regarded as the prophet of a new age. Hohendahl then focused on a work by Ernst Bertram (1884-1957), *Nietzsche: Versuch einer Mythologie* (1918), in order to illustrate how divided Nietzsche reception was within the group itself. Kurt Hildebrandt and Friedrich Gundolf (1880-1931), two prominent group members, privately contested Bertram's work, even though George himself publicly approved it. Bertram's Nietzsche was defined by the present, which turned him into a prophetic figure poised to lead a new generation of Germans out of the chaotic mob of modern society and towards a new future society. Hohendahl argued that Gundolf, by contrast, did not see any fruit in the future that Nietzsche offered. He felt that Nietzsche failed to create original poetry and that the concept of the *Übermensch* led to an inhuman creature instead of to a new man. In this way, Nietzsche in fact served to promote George as the true prophet of the future. Hildebrandt was also dissatisfied with Nietzsche's critique of Socrates as a corruptor of society, and found that Nietzsche's life and thought fell short of exemplarity. Hohendahl concluded his talk

by observing that the reception of Nietzsche in the George Circle resists a simple reading, insofar as the members were both attracted to and repulsed by the philosopher and his work.

**Ernst Osterkamp** (Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin) presented a conference paper titled "The Poet as Cultural Savior: Friedrich Gundolf's *Goethe*," in which he argued that Gundolf's work represents three significant historical breaks: a break from the history of German Studies, a break from the history of German philology, and a break from the scholarly history of the George Circle. Osterkamp pointed out how the legacy of Gundolf's *Goethe* could not be separated from the political-historical situation in which it was written. The 1916 publication of the book epitomized German culture at the time, and enabled soldiers in WWI to imagine what they were fighting for. In the Weimar Republic, the work essentialized cultural aspirations and assured Germans of their national identity. However, Osterkamp expressed concern with regards to the methodological implications of the text. For instance, German scholars had criticized the book because it was considered to be the product of an artist (*Wissenschaftskünstler*). Yet, the work also represented *Geisteswissenschaft*, a new form of scholarship that was beginning to gain a foothold over the older paradigm of philology. After discussing the book in this larger context, Osterkamp spoke of its reception within the George Circle. He explained that George initially had no words of praise for Gundolf's work. George's objection was that Gundolf over-emphasized the notion of spiritual becoming and failed to see how Goethe's language embodied both being and becoming. For George, Goethe's work was a living thing: a *Gestalt* or a being. According to Osterkamp, those who claimed Goethe as a totality of being and becoming did so by historicizing him, that is, by presenting Goethe as a living force in the present moment. The greatest challenge for Gundolf was to conjoin his "science" with George's conception of *Gestalt*. In other words, Gundolf sought to revise his judgments of Goethe so that the notion of being and becoming constituted the kind of unity that George desired. At the end of his talk, Osterkamp stressed how Gundolf's methodological decisions had enormous consequences for his judgments on Goethe. (Matthew Stolz)

In her talk, "Poetry, Politics, and Friendship in Kommerell's *Classicism*," **Elke Siegel** (Cornell) presented a reading of the figurations of the friend in Circle member

Max Kommerell's 1928 study, *Der Dichter als Führer in der Deutschen Klassik*, and the relation of these figurations to the role of friendship in the Circle itself. In his book, Kommerell "allows the poets therein to come on to the scene as role models of a community as active people (*als Vorbilder einer Gemeinschaft als wirkende Personen*)," a move that endows the poet with a significant political force, for which friendship plays a crucial role. For Siegel, two models of the poet-as-friend emerge as particularly important in Kommerell's *Classicism*: the neo-Hellenic conception found in Klopstock's writing, and the friend as co-conspirator depicted both in Schiller's *Don Carlos*, as well as in his relationship to Goethe. Klopstock's model treats the circle of friends as a "grounds of life" (*Lebensgrund*), albeit a narrow one, in which the poet enables a lacking "*völkische Reife*" to grow. In this poetic, *völkisch* "state," the poet's occupation is revealed to be a "priestly" one that connects Germany to Greek antiquity and helps establish it as a "*wieder erstehende Hellas*." Kommerell's reading of conspiracy in Schiller's *Don Carlos*, however, reveals a darker notion of friendship as a means to an end. Caught in a tension between the top-down structure of the *Verschwörerstaat* and the mutuality of *Verschwörerfreundschaft*, the conspiracy-friendship leads to a state in which friendship is no longer needed once an intended "deed" has been carried out. This reading, Siegel observes, eerily resonates both with Kommerell's departure from the George Circle and with the suicide of his friend and fellow member Johann Anton, to whom *Der Dichter als Führer* is dedicated, after the Circle's dissolution. Siegel concluded with Walter Benjamin's refutation of the idea of the literary community as a "secret Germany," particularly in its iterations in Kommerell's book and in the Circle, in favor of another kind of secret Germany to be found in the letters of German language authors, including but more importantly moving beyond the paradigms of Classicism.

**Carsten Strathausen** (University of Missouri) in his presentation, "The George Circle and Biopolitics," addressed the relationship between biological discourse and the politics of the Circle, drawing special attention to its legacy, which remains haunted by the specter of fascism. Arguing against Georg Lukács's famous characterization of the Circle as "protofascist," Strathausen distanced the biological metaphors and interpersonal politics of George's collective from the biopolitics associated with National Socialist ideology and

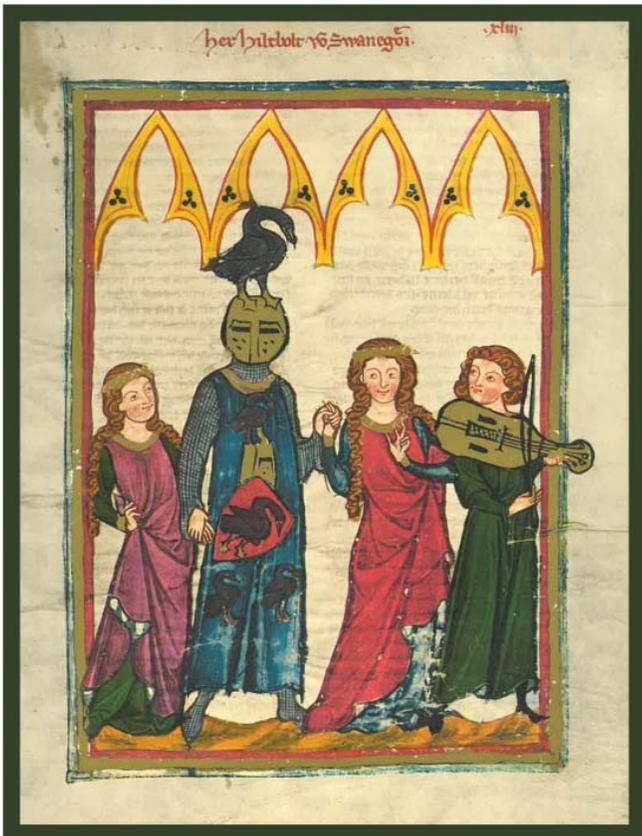
its deployment of Social Darwinism, hygienic discourse, and eugenics. Far from the humanitarian regulation of a fascist state's *Völk-skörper*, Strathausen argued that the Circle's aesthetic politics—here considered in Klaus Landfried's terms of a *Politik des Unpolitischen*—were based on a notion of poetic transubstantiation, directed against the sterile *Abgrund* of bourgeois society. Through this notion, George ascribed to the poet a life-creating potential, in his ability to unify the material body of the letter with spirit, using paper as the fertile *Grund* for incarnation. Strathausen was careful to point out, however, that this figuration of the poet is decidedly and exclusively masculine, and thus symptomatic of the anti-feminist politics of the Circle.

In his talk, "Political Thought in the George Circle: Edgar Salin and Political Economy,"

**Russell Berman** (Stanford University) shifted the attention of the conference towards the manner in which George's ideas "incubated and metamorphosed beyond the life of the Circle," as exemplified by the writing and political activity of economist and former Circle member Edgar Salin (1892-1974). Following the trajectory of Salin's pre-WWII economic writing, and emphasizing a comparison of the territorial unification of Europe to his postwar appeals to the Athenian legacy of the Swiss democratic city-state, Berman isolated two particular remnants of the George Circle in Salin's scholarship and activism. First, Berman suggested that Salin's "transition to the middle"—his criticism both of the state-run monopolies of Joseph Schumpeter's socialism and of liberalism's privileging the market over the state—could be considered a positive

remnant of his time in the George Circle. In Salin's advocacy of a social market economy (*soziale Marktwirtschaft*), the business owner approaches the George-ian figure of the poet as both creator and *Führer*. Berman furthermore suggested that the manner in which Salin adopted and transformed George's rejection of the scientific rationalization of knowledge is of lasting relevance for the study of political economy. Salin's attempt to synthesize *Wissenschaft* and artistic consciousness, thus resisting a disciplinary move towards quantitative analysis, therefore provides a valuable model for a reexamination of the contemporary social sciences. (William Krieger)

## A conference in honor of Professor Arthur Groos: "Mapping the Medieval in German Culture and Beyond."



**October 23-24, 2015 in Room 401 in the  
Physical Science Building, Cornell University**  
Detailed Program and Poster will follow.

### Speakers include:

Professors Ingrid Bennewitz (Universität Bamberg)  
Andrew Galloway (Cornell University)  
John Greenfield (Universidade do Porto)  
Andrew Hicks (Cornell University)  
Claudia Lazarro (Cornell University)  
Volker Mertens (Freie Universität Berlin)  
Alex Sager (University of Georgia)  
Courtney Roby (Cornell University)  
Markus Stock (University of Toronto)  
Michael Twomey (Ithaca College)  
Charles D. Wright (University of Illinois)

**Free and open to the public.**

# Critical Theory and (post)Colonialism II

December 6, 2014

In the second 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 brought Critical Theory and Postcolonial Theory to bear on one another. The workshop format consisted of short presentations, followed by extensive discussion. Readings were circulated among participants prior to the event, including works by Marxist, postcolonial, and anticolonial thinkers including: Theodor W. Adorno, John Akomfrah, Walter Benjamin, W.E.B. Du Bois, Denise Ferreira da Silva, C.L.R. James David Lloyd, Georg Lukács, Karl Marx, and Mao Tse-Tung. Representative publications from workshop presenters were also included in the reading selection.

Using Jacques Derrida's critique of Giorgio Agamben's work on biopolitics as his point of entree, **Grant Farred** (Cornell University) offered a philosophical reconsideration of *Policing the Crisis*, a 1978 work edited by Stuart Hall et al. *Policing the Crisis* analyzes the disproportionate prosecution of young postcolonial subjects in cases of so-called mugging in the Handsworth neighborhood of Birmingham (UK) in the early 1970s. As much as Hall et al's Gramscian account of "mugging" is properly structured around concepts of hegemony and culture, Farred suggested that there might be something to be gained – learned – from Michel Foucault's thinking, especially Foucault's

understanding of biopolitics as "an efficient management of every individual world." Farred raised the possibility that the British state understood the biopolitical nature of the "mugging crisis," a mode of thinking that was not apprehended by Hall and his colleagues at the Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies. If biopolitics is, Farred argued, distinguished from sovereignty (for Foucault) because of its "efficiency," then the Handsworth case offers itself as an exemplary instance of the state's capacity to manage crises for its own political ends. The Handsworth "muggings" became an opportunity to make a specific case exemplary for all transgressors. This is how disproportionate sentences can do political work: they subject

the individual postcolonial will to the general will. The term "mugging" did the linguistic work – discourse is crucial to the regime of biopolitics – of "racing" postcolonial subjects in the metropolis without mobilizing a rhetoric that is more obviously racist. Following Farred's presentation, the discussion largely focused on the questions about the "non-/retrieval" of theories and of understanding race as a singularity while resisting the turn to essentialism or a reductive nationalism.

**Nahum Chandler** (University of California Irvine) built his intervention on a re-engagement with "the problem of the color line," as formulated by W.E.B. Du Bois. Reading with Du Bois, Chandler argued, offers the possibility of "a re-narrativization of modernity." Taking, Du Bois's promulgation of the year 1441, the year in which the apocryphal "thirty Africans" were captured off the coast of West Africa, transported, and then sold in Lisbon, making the inception of the modern Atlantic slave trade as also inception of modern imperialism and the incipient emergence of capitalism, Chandler proposed that Du Bois in fact offered an original conception of modern historicity. Du Bois's reflections allow for criticizing sovereign power at its point of inception, rather than at later moments of re-

count of the Haitian revolution for a perspective that understood the problem of slavery as it erupted on the island of San Domingue and issued in world historical revolution as in fact the radical node of the inception of the democratic initiative that has been understood as the French Revolution. In his 1971 lecture, James recognizes Du Bois's account of the sensibility of Negro American slaves in the 1860s as a distinct and powerful historiographical perspective that allowed Du Bois to bring attention to that sensibility as initiating a radicalization of the democratic impulse in the whole debacle of the American Civil War and its aftermath. James thus declared, in his 1971 lecture that Du Bois had properly recognized those slaves as the first instance of a true general strike (the slaves' initiative pre-dating those instances given such status, such as initiatives in Europe in the 1890s and the first decade of the twentieth century. This led James to place Du Bois's work at the highest level of historical accomplishment. Discussants raised questions about whether or not in 1441 the slaves conscripted thus could be in all truth recognized as subjects. Chandler responded that in its historicity one had to recognize that "Portuguese" "Europe" too are produced out of that encounter. Thus, in its eventuality, both are configured out of this inception. Too, apparently one aspect of this line of questioning can be understood to wonder if Du Bois's interpretation of slaves' work stoppages as a "general strike" is compelling enough to decenter modernity as a European construct, since slaves participated in that strike as objects rather than subjects. Chandler engaged with this line of questioning by indicating that Du Bois's whole point was to show that "fugitive" slaves forced the issue of slavery to the fore, even as the Union sought



to disregard it, compelling Lincoln to issue the Emancipation Proclamation and eventually to declare the legality of arming the slaves as soldiers for the Union Army, without which Du Bois argues, the Union could not have succeeded against the South. In this whole line of thought, Chandler argued the necessity to "show the production of Europe" by drawing on Du Bois's focus on the production of "the problem of the color line," given distinctive meaning in Du Bois's discourse, as shown for example in his trenchant 1915 essay "The African Roots of War," in addition to his major work across more than six decades.

istance to its exertion. Chandler triangulated the 1960s virtual dialogue between Du Bois and C.L.R. James (virtual, in that Chandler has reconstructed it historiographically, posthumous to both figures), as well as the relative concurrent publication of their respective books *Black Reconstruction* (1935) and *Black Jacobins* (1938) in the 1930s, utilizing both Du Bois's 1961 essay "Africa and the French Revolution," in which he references James 1930s study and James's 1971 lecture proposing a reading of Du Bois's 1930s study. In Chandler's account, Du Bois's 1935 study offered a broad and general renarrativization of modern historicity, from the fifteenth century to the twentieth. In his 1961 essay, Du Bois insisted on the pertinence of James's ac-

to disregard it, compelling Lincoln to issue the Emancipation Proclamation and eventually to declare the legality of arming the slaves as soldiers for the Union Army, without which Du Bois argues, the Union could not have succeeded against the South. In this whole line of thought, Chandler argued the necessity to "show the production of Europe" by drawing on Du Bois's focus on the production of "the problem of the color line," given distinctive meaning in Du Bois's discourse, as shown for example in his trenchant 1915 essay "The African Roots of War," in addition to his major work across more than six decades.

**Gary Wilder** (Graduate Center at City University New York) intervened against

two dominant scholarly narratives: that any kind of universal thinking only comes from the white metropolis, and that all writing from the periphery is not universal, but preoccupied with place, ethnicity, and local consciousness. As the complement to “provincialize Europe,” Wilder proposed *deprovincializing* our readings of “non-Western” authors, such as Aimé Césaire and Léopold Senghor. Wilder not only linked Césaire and Senghor to surrealism and Bergson, but also acknowledged their contributions to Marxist humanism and Christian personalism, critiques of instrumental reason and reification, and the limits of Soviet communism. Césaire and Senghor formulated their critique not primarily against civilization, but conceived of decolonization in terms of “human emancipation” and “existential disalienation” from the antinomies of modern capitalism, imperialism, and race. Wilder sought to mobilize Césaire and Senghor’s critique in order to rethink formulations of romantic anticapitalism, as exemplified in Georg Lukács’s essay “The Old Culture and the New Culture” (1919). Discussants engaged with this latter point in relation to Benjamin’s proposition that the relationship between present and future must always be mediated by the past.

**Robert Kaufman** (University of California Berkeley) gave a paper titled “Piketty et la poésie” that connected Thomas Piketty’s *Capital in the Twenty-First Century* (2013; English trans. 2014), a 2009 triptych of poems titled “Auschwitz” by Chilean poet Raúl Zurita, and recent developments in Chilean politics and economics following from the post-2008 international financial crisis (in particular, the 2011-12 Chilean students’ strike that led to a reinvigoration of the Chilean Left and the election of a progressive/left majority in the Chilean parliament, the “Nueva Mayoría”). Kaufman began by contextualizing the ways Piketty’s book approaches “neo-classical” political economy theory (e.g., Ricardo) and its most famous critics (e.g., Marx), as well as post-1945 economists whose work had been crucial in theorizing that capitalism had entered a stage of what appeared to be sustainable and relatively continuous growth (above all, Simon Kuznets). Piketty and his colleagues show – with vastly richer data-sets than any other economists had ever assembled for the relevant periods – that since capitalism’s 18th century rise, rates of growth had always been relatively low and outstripped, with consequent severe societal inequality, by the return on wealth/capital (Piketty’s formula is  $r > g$ ). Piketty goes on to show that the difference in much of the 20th century (until about the mid-1970s) was almost entirely due to the massive government stimulus spending required in response to two world wars and global depression between them; this spending had made huge inroads in decreasing inequality *until* the mid-1970s, when inequal-

ity again started to gain, until the present day, when it has returned essentially to pre-20th century levels. Relating Piketty’s book to contemporary Chilean politics, Kaufman noted that Piketty had been invited to Chile for discussion by Chilean President Michelle Bachelet’s Minister of Finance; and that President Bachelet and the Nueva Mayoría coalition government’s increased taxes on wealth (as well as its strengthening of laws establishing minimum wages and creating other protections for those facing “precarious labor”) were very much in line with Piketty’s policy recommendations. Returning to the literary connection, Kaufman noted that Piketty – in a way that echoes famous comments by Engels – highlights how great 19th century novelists (Balzac, Austen) had presented remarkably accurate pictures of the return on wealth and capital, and its constant outstripping of overall economic growth without having had “data” for their showings. This praise of the novel’s ability to illuminate socioeconomic dynamics led Kaufman to ask if modern lyric poetry has any contributions of its own to make in helping us understand the experiences and meanings of economic inequality. Kaufman argued that the developments in poetry and poetics that have emerged from the debates about the “barbarism of poetry after Auschwitz” held the key. Zurita’s “Auschwitz” poems were seen as his most explicit engagements with the “poetry after Auschwitz” histories (in poetry and the other arts, as well as in philosophy, critical theory, and criticism) most famously taken up by Theodor W. Adorno, Paul Celan, Ingeborg Bachmann, and a number of other figures. Kaufman noted that Zurita’s poetry had already been working through the various meanings of the “barbarism” of “poetry after...” in his country (and continent), which involved not so much literally “after Auschwitz” as “after the regime of the disappearances” inaugurated by the Pinochet dictatorship with his Sept 11, 1973, U.S.-supported military overthrow of the democratically elected Socialist President, Salvador Allende. In his “Auschwitz” triptych, Zurita risked even further the “barbarism” question by more explicitly than ever bringing poetry’s histories of taking up the aftermath of the National Socialist genocide, and Latin Americans’ own reflections on their 1970s-and-after relation to the Holocaust’s aftermath, with a matter that had always been “off-limits”: making an overly simple equivalence between economic exploitation and genocidal intention/effect.

**Haiping Yan** (Tsinghua University, Beijing) presented a project entitled “My Dream: The Intermedial Turn in Contemporary Chinese Performing Arts.” Focusing on the tensions between personal and historical experience, Yan analyzed performances by the Chinese performing arts troupe My Dream. In three separate instances, My Dream questions the specifically modern categories of “dis-

ability” and “ability” by choreographing performances with ‘special artists’ (as they call themselves) who are hearing-impaired (“A Thousand-Hand Bodhisattva”), sight-impaired (“Let’s Go See The Spring”), or variably “impaired” (“Green Seedlings”). Yan concentrated particularly on the re-embodiments of China specific “visions and imaginaries” in these performances that are also resonating with viewers worldwide. In “Let’s Go See the Spring,” sight-impaired dancers, according to Yan, “lead us with their trans-embodiments of the ‘spring’ to another realm of seeing or the possibilities of seeing differently,” and this creates “a radical opening to rethink the question of human sight itself.” While there is an immanently personal dimension to the liveness of these performances, their mobile imagery and reconfiguration of historical dance traditions provoked broader questions: Yan explores the ways in which the “dream” of My Dream evokes an impetus for human transformation which is simultaneously and constitutively national and transnational, historical and transtemporal in its implications and aspirations.

**Xudong Zhang** (New York University) confronted three critiques of power: Walter Benjamin’s “Critique of Violence” (1921), Mao Tse-Tung’s *Critique of Soviet Economics* (1958/59), and Carl Schmitt’s *Theory of the Partisan* (1963). Zhang read Benjamin against the backdrop of the NYPD’s recent unprosecuted killing of Eric Garner, giving a new actuality to Benjamin’s category of “law-preserving” violence. Zhang argued that in Benjamin’s essay police violence is a liminal case that indicates the point at which power breaks down: what we construe to be a liberal-democratic police force is lawlessness in the name of the law. Zhang then interpreted Benjamin’s third category of “divine” or “pure” violence not in a mythological sense but as a force that ruptures the existing system. For Mao, such “pure violence” is no longer utopian but, rather, in the form of a revolutionary seizure of power serves as the precondition for developing forces of production beyond capitalist ownership of property. While Schmitt’s notion of the exception designates such seizure as the extralegal location of the sovereign, his *Theory of the Partisan* paints Mao as “the greatest practitioner of revolutionary war” in a concrete situation and a *Grossraum*. Zhang located Mao’s real and particular enmity in a Schmittian sense: first, as directed at the enemies of the revolution, and later against the regeneration of bourgeois elements within the party itself. In the conversation following Zhang’s deliberately provocative presentation, the participants discussed the role of Islam (a road taken by Malcolm X and some Black Radicals) as a missing piece in Left thinking about postcolonialism and revolutionary possibility. (Alex Brown & Jette Gindner)

# Derrida's Jewish Specters

September 16, 2014

In a one-day symposium, presented by the Jewish Studies Program and co-sponsored by the IGCS, participants discussed the legacy of Jacques Derrida (1930-2004) for humanistic studies broadly conceived, and for Jewish Studies in particular. Organizer **Jonathan Boyarin** (Anthropology, Cornell University) presented opening remarks, in which he pointed out the ambiguous presence and significant absence of references to Jewishness in Derrida's oeuvre, as well as their increasing frequency and urgency in the philosopher's later work. The catalyzing text for the program, invoked in the title of the day's proceedings, *Specters of Marx: The State of the Debt, the Work of Mourning and the New International* (1993), considers the practicability of Marxism in relation to Modernity; Boyarin posed questions as to whether or not *Specters of Marx* also develops an understanding of Jewishness and Jewish texts, and if it should be seen as exemplary or representative of Derrida's work.

The first presentation, delivered by Boyarin along with **Martin Land** (Hadassah College Jerusalem), simulated a series of email exchanges between the two scholars that began roughly ten years ago and resulted in co-authored publications including an article in the *Cardozo Law Review* in 2005, and a book, *Time and Human Language Now* (2008). Boyarin recalled how, at the beginning of the project, he had been struggling to find a way to think about the future and responsibility for the future in the wake of Walter Benjamin's abandonment of the illusion of progress. Having read *Specters of Marx*, Boyarin wrote to Land, a theoretical physicist, who at the time was researching temporal symmetries and relativistic dynamics. Land discovered that his work bore a surprising resemblance to the conceptual challenges presented by Derrida's text. Thus, the two friends began their conversation on *Specters of Marx*, thinking of the present as a product of contingent intersubjective communication rather than as a point in a linear and teleological progression of time. Adopting the Talmudic form of commentary, Boyarin and Land envisioned an ongoing project of annotation centered on Derrida's text, including contemporary forms of hypertextuality enabled by digital media. The reader of their planned text would be invited to imagine a page encased by two hands as parallel margins of commentary.

Without intending to cast Derrida's work as inherently Jewish, both presenters emphasized that *Specters of Marx* focuses on themes such as emancipation, justice, ob-

ligation, debt, and the "injunction to reaffirm and choose an inheritance," which are also central to Jewish thought and Judaic theology. The interlocutors further contemplated how Derrida's statements concerning the relationship between Marxism and Stalinism might contribute to a performative practice of Marxism that could also inform a performative Jewishness. In their collaborative analysis, the two presenters posited the presence of Jewish "ghosts" in Derrida's text, which are significant in their silence; likewise, they considered how specters and spectrality might play a role in conceptualizing Jewishness. Land also noted the importance of themes related to the fields of physics, mathematics, and analytic philosophy in Derrida's text. If the absence of Jewish references in Derrida's work assumes a ghost-like spectrality, then the ghosts of Kurt Gödel's incompleteness theorem and of mathematical set theory might also be recalled in relation to the text and its temporality. Thus, Boyarin and Land considered how deconstruction, undecidability, and the overcoming of language and logical, axiomatic determinism might facilitate a conception of time that calls for renewed commitment to the past for the sake of the future and temporality without progress.

The morning session continued with a presentation by **Sarah Hammerschlag** (University of Chicago Divinity School), titled "Between the Jew and Writing." Hammerschlag turned her attention to Derrida's early collection of essays, *Writing and Difference* (1967), specifically to three sections: "Force and Signification"; "Edmond Jabès and The Question of the Book"; and "Violence and Metaphysics: An Essay on the Thoughts of Emmanuel Levinas." Hammerschlag argued that these essays should be read as a tripartite response to the work of Levinas, in particular to his 1961 publication, *Totality and Infinity: An Essay on Exteriority*. This confrontation, she emphasized, informed Derrida's early considerations of the relationship between religion and literature, as well as the concept of writing that he develops *Writing and Difference*.

Hammerschlag explained that if considered along with "Violence and Metaphysics," in which Derrida examines the role of form and writing in Levinas' attempt to free language from totality, the section "Force and Signification," which does not reference Levinas explicitly, should also be read as part of Derrida's rejoinder. In Derrida's view, although Levinas attempts to escape from totality and force, he ultimately falls into metaphysical binaries and a heliotropic metaphor, and in fact fails to accomplish what his essay claims to advance. Nevertheless, Derrida casts Levi-

nas as successful, precisely in his exploitation of the metaphoric entanglement that he was attempting to evade. Hammerschlag emphasized that Derrida interpreted Levinas' text explicitly against Levinas' own intentions, positioning Levinas as both an influence and a foil to his own work. Hammerschlag continued her analysis with Derrida's reception of the Egyptian poet Edmond Jabès (1912-1991), arguing that Derrida engages Jabès in such a way that their signatures merge, or the form of the philosopher's essay acts as a countersignature that validates the work of the poet. With the choice of the Jewish poet, Hammerschlag averred that Derrida designates Judaism as a site where religion and literature can be differentiated, and Jabès as the writer who exemplifies literature's ability to free religious themes from the frozen time of the book. Finally, in Derrida's encounter with Levinas in *Violence and Metaphysics*, he questions the possibility of the survival of the text, of humanity, and of Judaism. According to Derrida, Levinas had not fully confronted Judaism, and thus, had missed an opportunity to use the Jew's split identification and alterity to explore the structure of contingency itself. In bringing Derrida's interest in Levinas to the fore, Hammerschlag thus proposed that, from the beginning of his career, Derrida was grappling with the relationship between religion and literature.

**Michael Levine** (Rutgers University), began the afternoon session with a presentation titled "Speaking in Starts: Freud's Moses and Archive Fever." Levine performed an analysis of Derrida's *Archive Fever: A Freudian Impression* (1995), which features a reception of Yosef Hayim Yerushalmi's monograph, *Freud's Moses: Judaism Terminable and Interminable* (1991). With particular attention to Yerushalmi's last chapter, "Monologue with Freud," Levine brought Derrida, Yerushalmi, Sigmund Freud, and Freud's father, Jakob, into shifting paternal and filial relations. The philosopher, religious scholar, and father of psychoanalysis along with his own father, encounter each other in scenes of reading, figured by Derrida as *coups de théâtre*: instantaneous moments that disrupt linear time. In his book, Yerushalmi stages a conversation with the absent Sigmund Freud, concerning the psychoanalyst's relationship with Judaism. Derrida observes that Yerushalmi's address is on the one hand filial and respectful, but on the other hand paternal, in that it repeats the message inscribed by Jakob Freud in a Bible that he gifted to his son twice: once on the occasion of his circumcision, and once again as an adult. Levine drew attention to gestures of interruption and stuttering: when Yerushalmi allows the absent father, Jakob, to speak

through him to an absent son, Sigmund, spectral voices are superimposed onto one other, creating interference. Additionally, Derrida characterizes Jewish temporality as a hyphen (a *trait d'union*), which interrupts time but also functions as a tie to the future and enables repetition, which in turn facilitates a recurring injunction to remember. Derrida concludes that if the essence of “being-Jewish” is a receptive stance towards the future, then “to be open to the future would be to be Jewish. And vice versa.” Depicting a temporality dilated by oppositional forces of past and future, Levine remarked on ways in which speech becomes “open to another future,” and to otherwise unarticulated possibilities.

Further attempting to conceptualize Jewishness, Yerushalmi concludes his address to Freud by asking whether or not psychoanalysis is a “Jewish science.” While Yerushalmi urgently seeks an answer with regards to the nature of psychoanalysis, Derrida, with Freud, turns to another example of scholarly struggle, depicted in Wilhelm Jensen’s novel from 1902-03, *Gradiva*. The protagonist of Jensen’s book, Norbert Hanold, reaches an impasse while visiting Pompeii, in that he finds that the field of archaeology is no longer tenable. Hanold then suffers from what Derrida diagnoses as “archive fever,” and sleeps, to be awakened by a dream of that which he has never experienced before, “of reliving. But of reliving the other.” At the limit of archaeology, the archive is a tangent, a dimensionless point of contact of which the archaeologist can only dream. *Gradiva*’s iconic step thus recalls an openness to alternate futures and repetition, much like the gesture of stuttering in Derrida’s reception of Yerushalmi.

The final presentation was contributed by **Sergey Dolgopolski** (University at Buffalo, SUNY), and titled “Earth, Memory, Rabbis: A Derridean Reading of Deleuze.” Dolgopolski hypothesized that Rodolphe Gasché’s reading of Deleuze and Guattari in his study, *Geophilosophy: On Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari’s What is Philosophy?* (2013), is highly influenced by Derrida’s work; thus, Dolgopolski situated himself in dialogue with Gasché, who in turn is in conversation with Derrida, on the subject of Deleuze and Guattari’s last collaborative publication. Dolgopolski further sought to intervene in discourse on the mutual engagement of art and philosophy, by proposing the Talmud as an intellectual and political form that prompts reading that is persistently open to the future and occupied with an unfinished task. Talmudic philosophical and political engagement entails irreducible distinctions, the task of remembering, and action informed by paradoxical impossibilities of decision-making.

Dolgopolski plotted out Gasché’s critique of



Deleuze and Guattari (D&G), which identifies geocentrism in the work of the two colleagues and friends. While Gasché, along with D&G, explores the Grecian origins of philosophy, Dolgopolski included ways in which Rabbinical customs and thought might correlate to the described phenomena. For instance, the fractalization of Greece, or colonial societal structures founded upon friendship and rivalry, bears similarities with Rabbinic communities in which rules of debate and participation also include figures of an inside and outside, and a multiplicity of perspectives. Gasché also examines the purported privilege of philosophy, as opposed to other forms of thought such as science and art, due to its inherent immanence and independence from reference. He further explicates D&G’s concept of “earth” as an absolute deterritorialization without reterritorialization; however, in his reading, D&G have not escaped Heidegger’s notions of earth and land. In order to think concepts such as the earth, the world, the cosmos, nature, and memory, Dolgopolski returned to the irreducibility of distinctions in the logic of the Talmud. Whereas the ultimate result of continuous de- and reterritorialization would be loneliness, Dolgopolski argued that refutation is never lonely in the Talmud. If the concept of territory necessarily inhabits the domain of reference and solutions, then aporia is inevitable; however, in Talmudic thought, the political is directed towards a world beyond the text, signification, and geophilosophy. In conceiving of the world, one would have to reach past absolute deterritorialization, to a “point with no coordinates,” and towards a world to be remembered. (Miyako Hayakawa)

In the concluding round-table discussion, **Neil Saccamano** (English and Comparative Literature, Cornell University), **Jonathan Culler** (English and Comparative Literature, Cornell University), **Max Pensky** (Philosophy, Binghamton University, SUNY), and **Camille Robcis** (History, Cornell University) posed questions and provided insight into debates

inspired by the preceding presentations.

Saccamano linked *Specters of Marx* to Derrida’s texts on religion and Judaism, singling out *Gift of Death* (1995) and the essay, “Above All, No Journalists” (2001). Based on these texts, he suggested that for Derrida, the critique of religion is also a critique of information and media. He pointed out that Derrida did not consider being Jewish to be a religion, and that he therefore positioned Judaism in opposition to Catholicism and Christian Hegelianism. Saccamano proposed that *Specters of Marx* functions as a kind of manifesto in favor of a lack of communication, that nevertheless promotes “community and communicability.” He concluded by wondering what kind of community Derrida had imagined. Jonathan Boyarin replied with a reference to Derrida’s concept of “the new international,” which for the philosopher was a reaction to the threat of globalization. However, Boyarin also conceded that no one has yet been able to satisfactorily model Derrida’s envisioned community. Jonathan Culler answered with a reminder that Derrida had seen, after the fall of socialism, an increased necessity to read Marx. Likewise, the messianic, once liberated from messianism, was supposed to produce new, effective ways of action.

Camille Robcis referenced Benoît Peeters’ recent biography of Derrida (2012), in order to reframe his relationship with religion as a movement between text and context, and between communism and Christian social democracy. In light of such scholarship, she questioned how to think about Derrida’s Jewishness in the context of a biographical development in which a “Christian Derrida” later gave way to a “Jewish Derrida.”

Max Pensky noted that it was Francis Fukuyama who kindled Derrida’s opposition to neo-conservatism, which in turn influenced his work and political involvement. Pensky recalled that very late in Derrida’s life, he and

Jürgen Habermas had reached an rapprochement on political issues, and revealed that Habermas and Derrida had meant to rally intellectuals together to publish a statement protesting against the invasion of Iraq and the Second Gulf War. He went on to suggest

that for Derrida, what was important was not so much the arrival of a “new international,” but rather the act of waiting for its formation, and that this stance was in fact what Derrida had tried to derive from Judaism. The group concluded with a discussion of the status of

literature, speculating that literature might have been the domain of the incommunicable for Derrida, and thus a way to communicate without communication. (Hannah Müller)

## On Seriality

May 1-2, 2015

The German Studies Graduate Student Conference “On Seriality” (organized by Hannah Müller, Leigh York, and Will Krieger) explored the concept of seriality as a common ground for multiple disciplines and discourses, in which seriality can be understood as, among other things, an aesthetic form, a practice or common logic of production above all in mass media, and as a mode of connecting and organizing objects considered similar or related, but still distinct.

The first panel focused on “Serial Killers and Spies: Genre and Seriality in Crime Narratives.” **Bryan Klausmeyer** (Johns Hopkins) delivered his presentation with the title “‘I’ll see you again in twenty-five years’: On Seriality in *Twin Peaks*.” In the wake of David Lynch’s announcement regarding an upcoming sequel to *Twin Peaks* (1990-1991, ABC), Klausmeyer analyzed the groundbreaking television series, which has often been considered the forerunner to today’s serialized cable dramas. He briefly considered how the upcoming sequel might retroactively affect spectators’ understanding and viewing of the original series, before focusing primarily on the show’s epistemology of serialized narration. At the center of his presentation was the claim that *Twin Peaks* incorporates elements from two seemingly incompatible serialized genres: that of the soap opera or melodrama, whose episodes relate to one another in a more or less contingent and contiguous fashion, and that of the detective series, whose narrative structure depends on patterns of inference and deduction. Klausmeyer argued that by combining elements of suspicion and doubt with a perpetual suspension of disbelief, *Twin Peaks* develops its own heterogeneous form(s) of serialized narration, active at an intersection of linear and nonlinear plots or series while also using clues and cliff-hangers, thus employing a logic that is predominantly contingent and associative, as opposed to deductive and inferential.

**Conall Cash** (Cornell) then presented a paper on “Sartrean Seriality and Nietzschean Heroism in Serial Killer Narratives.” He

discussed a number of cinematic and televisual depictions of serial killers in an effort to understand the role such figures play in the social imaginary. Following the work of Ernst Bloch and Fredric Jameson on utopianism, Cash suggested that serial killers fulfill a utopian function, of however perverse a kind, as individuals able to carry out free, creative, and non-alienated labor. He also proposed that the parallels often drawn within these narratives between serial killers and the obsessive investigators that pursue them have to do with these figures’ common expressions of a collective utopian wish. Cash positioned these narratives in relation to the notion of seriality developed in Sartre’s *Critique of Dialectical Reason*, as well as the Nietzschean concept of the ‘overman.’ The serial killer, he suggested, provides in place of the formation of a Sartrean ‘fused group’ an individual, apolitical, and Nietzschean overcoming of the divided world of seriality.

The following panel revolved around “Episodes, Cases, Anecdotes: Modes of Seriality in Narration.” **Pelin Kivrak** (Yale), in her presentation titled “‘How sweet is thy story, O Sister Mine:’ Reflections on Seriality and Abandonment in *One Thousand and One Nights*,” discussed the role of Scheherazade’s sister Dunyazad and her ambiguous role as reader and partner in the original text, as well as in more recent adaptations of the folkloric material. Kivrak proposed that within the framework of the nightly copulation rituals inside the King’s chamber, Dunyazad continuously abandons both her voice and her sexuality only to regain them later, outside of this confined space. Furthermore, Dunyazad acts out a similarly purposeful abandonment of Scheherazade’s tales in order to confine the King to the experience of willing suspension of disbelief every night. Kivrak’s paper contrasted the indefinitely extendible story-telling in *One Thousand and One Nights* with the potential expandability of the character of Dunyazad by focusing on a number of retellings of the text from around the world, such as John Barth’s “Dunyazadiad” in *Chimera* (1972), Naguib Mahfouz’s *Arabian Nights and Days* (1979), and Assia Djebar’s *A Sister to Scheherazade* (1987), and looked into the

ways in which the character of Dunyazad has been taken out of Scheherazade’s narrative vacuum by twentieth-century writers.

**Sarah Seidel’s** (Konstanz University) presentation “On the Relation of Seriality and Case Studies” focused on Karl Philipp Moritz and August Gottlieb Meißner and their engagement with the textual genre of the literary case study, prompted by an awakened interest in serial publications in the late eighteenth century. Whereas Moritz’ *Magazin zur Erfahrungsseelenkunde* distributed anthropologic and medical cases collected by the publishers or readers of the magazine, Meißner’s case studies focused on aspects of criminality. In her presentation, Seidel investigated two features of seriality: first, the relationship between seriality and case studies, and second, the meaning of contextual relativity. The publication of “revisions” and “revisions of revisions” in Moritz’ *Magazin* implies both an idea of seriality and a conception of textual dialogue. While the model of serial publication helps to enlighten the reader by comparing exemplary cases, Seidel demonstrated how the same text can obtain other meanings in different contexts, and how serial publication produces very different contexts, from Aesopian fables to philosophical treatises. The concept of seriality consequently impacts both individual literary case studies and the conception of the case study in general.

The panel continued with a presentation by **Will Krieger** (Cornell), titled “Anecdote and Series in Kleist’s ‘Improbable Veracities.’” Krieger examined the serial logic of Heinrich von Kleist’s “Unwahrscheinliche Wahrhaftigkeiten,” published in an 1811 edition of the *Berliner Abendblätter*. In the text, an old officer of the Prussian Army relates three stories to a critical audience. The officer begins by posing a “first condition of truth”: while general expectations are that truths appear probable, experience teaches us that this is not always the case. Ostensibly in order to prove this proposition, the officer proceeds to tell his stories, reconstructing contingent events as chains of causality while emphasizing the veracity of his accounts. Krieger observed that the officer’s

audience expresses increasing disbelief at the officer's stories, and argued that rather than the content of the stories, it is primarily the officer's narration — its modes of reconstructing the course of events and the serial nature of the stories' delivery — that pose an epistemological problem and cause the officer's audience to laugh and discredit him entirely by the end of the text. Krieger compared the officer's use of examples with the mode of persuasion described in Aristotle's *Rhetoric*, by which examples are strung together based on analogy. In Aristotle's elaboration, anecdotal examples from the past are deployed in order to predict outcomes of present situations that have not yet been resolved. Therefore, persuasion by example is caught in a precarious temporality of belatedness, in which proof must wait until events have run their course. In contrast, Kleist's officer applies the same frustrating temporal logic of belatedness to historical events, reading factual events as improbable. Krieger argued that the stories are situated on an interstitial threshold between necessity and impossibility, and concluded that the narrative's seriality opens up a space in which a spectrum of probability and improbability can be explored.

The third panel of the conference was concerned with "Continuity and Deferment: TV Series and Lowbrow Genres." **Kriszta Pozsonyi** (Cornell) presented a paper with the title "Serialized by the Running Gag: *Ellen*'s Coming-out Season," which discussed the coming out of Ellen Morgan, the title character of the sitcom *Ellen* (1994-1998, ABC), played by Ellen DeGeneres. The constantly deferred coming out of the character was meticulously synchronized with the public coming out of DeGeneres as lesbian, resulting in a series of media events, all confronting the expectation that the fictional and the real Ellen would finally come out of the closet. Instead of prioritizing the actual moment of Morgan's or DeGeneres' coming out, Pozsonyi focused on the build-up of viewers' expectations. She discussed how the figurative closet and the coming-out narrative as running gags work to create a coherent arc for the fourth season, thus pushing the structure of the sitcom in the direction of a serial. While situation comedies generically consist of self-contained episodes, the running joke, especially the "in-joke," contributes features of repetition and continuity. Pozsonyi showed how the running gag on *Ellen* pulls together the episodes of the fourth season, and pointed out that the expression "running gag" does in fact reference the repeated silencing of the coming out, which forms the butt of the jokes. In order for the jokes to work, the viewer must recognize the coming-out narrative in scenarios that paradoxically turn out to *not* be about coming out. Meaning in the season is therefore based on a recurring choreography of misrecognition.

**Anastasia Klimchynskaya** (University of Pennsylvania) spoke on the topic of "Genre and Seriality: From 19th-Century Fiction to 21st-Century Television." Klimchynskaya discussed two forms of serialized fiction and their relationships to conventions of genre. First, she described serialized fiction that hinges on cliffhangers, unresolved questions, and deferred narrative closure — stylistic devices of the nineteenth-century novel, which eventually developed into melodrama and soap operas. In contrast, Klimchynskaya presented A.C. Doyle's approach to serial narratives, which create a "(pre)virtual reality" through a collection of linked yet standalone stories. Such literary virtual reality, which led to the emergence of genre shows in the twentieth century and transmedia storytelling in the twenty-first, won viewer loyalty by developing fictional worlds over many segments. Klimchynskaya tied together genre and seriality, demonstrating the influence of the two aforementioned approaches to serialization on genre, and argued that the combination of these approaches to serialization is responsible for the unprecedented mixing of genres in recent television. Focusing on the long-running TV show *Supernatural* (2005-present, CW), she demonstrated how today's cult shows blend the narrative deferment of soap operas with the virtual realities of genre fiction and thus allow for the innovations of contemporary television storytelling.

**Ilana Emmett's** (Northwestern) presentation with the title "Seriality and the Afterlife of Reality TV" drew attention to binge-watching practices of reality TV shows. Emmett explained that serial drama is not the only type of television programming that has an afterlife on a variety of platforms, including network websites, streaming sites, and DVD. Just as one can find fictional television programming on DVD or online, so too can one access various types of reality television, including docusoaps, competition shows, and makeover programming. Emmett's presentation focused on the question of how to explain the fortitude of these programs, despite the fact that this kind of television is often thought of in both popular culture and scholarship as disposable. She argued that, like dramas, these texts also gain staying power through seriality, though in their cases seriality exists not through continuing narratives but through continuities of space, character, and familiar images. By looking at the text and afterlives of TLC's makeover/fashion program *Say Yes to the Dress* (2007-present), and Food Network's competition reality show *Cupcake Wars* (2010-2013), Emmett explored the ways in which seriality is developed through themes and images, through spaces and faces, and through repetition and structure.

On Saturday, May 2, the first panel, "Without Original: The Multiple in the Visual Arts"

offered presentations on the visual artists Roni Horn and Joseph Beuys. **Zachary Rottman's** (UCLA) paper "Two Objects That Are One Object: Roni Horn's Androgynous Seriality" discussed Horn's work with reference to the style of Minimalism. Rottman posited that seriality appears to characterize the predominant sculptural paradigm of Minimalism. Minimalist works are often industrially fabricated, and this serial mode of production often expresses itself in gridded or otherwise repetitive compositions. Therefore, to speak of an "original" in the context of Minimalist seriality is inaccurate. In consideration of this claim, Rottman analyzed Roni Horn's *Pair Object VII: (For a Here and a There)*, an installation that consists of two solid copper volumes — compact but plainly massive truncated cones — which have been machined to identical specifications. Rottman proposed that seriality is clearly at stake in a work premised on such a precise repetition, whose roman numeral "VII" in its title asserts its belonging to a larger series. Yet the main question, he suggested, is how to think of a pair object as serial. In his presentation, Rottman argued that the logic of the pair pervading Horn's work critiques Minimalist seriality. While repetition in the Minimalist sculptures of Donald Judd is concerned with fixing a work's identity, Horn's serialized pairs call into question the very notion of a stable identity. Horn's pair, though presented as an exact repetition, proposes that its constituent parts are not the same but *different* — that they are far from representing a condition of "multiples without originals." Because Horn's pairs prefigure a logic of androgyny that the artist would explore in later works, Rottman ultimately argued that the pair offers an androgynous conception of seriality: one premised not on sameness but on difference, no longer consolidating identity but opening it to plurality.

**Andrea Gyrody's** (UCLA) presentation focused on "Repetition and Difference in Joseph Beuys's Multiples." Although best known for his myth-infused performances and sculptural installations in the 1960s and 70s, German artist Joseph Beuys also created nearly six hundred so-called "multiples" — small, three-dimensional objects that were replicated or reproduced in other media, such as prints or photographs. Considered revolutionary for their "democratically" low prices and their challenge to the singularity, unity, and uniqueness of the art object, multiples have nevertheless been largely neglected by art-historical scholarship, often seen as mere by-products of monumental works or as moneymaking souvenirs. Drawing on archival research and interviews with Beuys's colleagues, Gyrody argued, on the contrary, that Beuys's multiples perform an important function that his other projects do not: in addition to embodying social principles Beuys espoused, the multiples also



Martyn &amp; Frey

inadvertently index aspects of their own production and their imbrication in an art world dominated by market forces. For example, the multiple *Ich kenne kein Weekend* (I Know No Weekend, 1971-72) includes a text by Kant and a bottle of Maggi seasoning; however, a later edition of 1995, which was only produced to meet demand, contains a bottle with a different label, reflecting a Maggi re-branding campaign. Another set of multiples consisting of a green violin and a tin can telephone, initially sold together in a wooden crate, were separated by the dealer after numerous customers expressed disdain over the unsightly crate. Gyrody argued that the porousness of these objects blurs the line between high art and commercial mass production, furthering the challenge that multiples as a medium pose to traditional conceptions of high art. Moreover, the multiples stand to disrupt the standard narrative around Beuys's oeuvre by placing the artist's reliance on myth in tension with his strong material ties to his own historical moment. (Hannah Müller)

The last panel of the conference, "Work and War: Industrialization and Serial Techniques," was opened by **Josh Alvizu** (Yale) with a paper entitled "Let's Make it Work: Montage, Series, Raccourcis." Whereas montage is predominantly considered as a form (either as a genre or as a technique), Alvizu argued for a reconsideration of the montage as an *activity*, thereby stressing the montage praxis of cutting, colliding, connecting, and assembling. In his discussion of Soviet theater director Vsevolod Meyerhold's (1874-1940) constructivist method of actor training known as "biomechanics," Alvizu showed how Meyerhold's and Sergei Eisenstein's (1898-1948) notion of the *raccourci* — a "utilitarian point of break between two moments" — can be read as a montage praxis that overcomes the older notion of the pose and sheds new light on our concept of montage in general.

The second speaker of the panel, **Ross Etherton** (University of Colorado, Boulder) presented his paper "Reading against the Gun: Seriality and Ernst Jünger's *Sturm*." Etherton considered both Ernst Jünger's novel and the machine gun as manifestations of a conflict between two orders of martial technology: one bound to rotation, continuity, and the incalculability of chance operations, and another bound to calculability, precision, and productive interruption. Both the novel and the gun were produced serially, as Jünger's novel first appeared as a serial publication in 1923 and the MG 08/15 model was the first mass-produced machine gun. However, they also produced seriality: the MG in its ballistic projection, and the novel in its disruptions and continuously attempted restorations of linear progression. Thus, the case of war as reflected in the nature of the machine gun and in *Sturm* shows a non-progressive form of seriality.

**Kasia Kieca** (Binghamton University) concluded the panel with her paper "Industrial Visions: The Politics of Assemblage in Lewis Hine's *Men at Work* (1932)." In her reading of Lewis Wickes Hine's 1932 photo story *Men at Work: Photographic Studies of Modern Men and Machines*, Kieca discussed to what end seriality, layout, and design function to create, subdue, or contest meaning in the book. In Hine's work, she claimed, meaning is created through fragmentation of two kinds: through temporal dislocation and recontextualization of photographs, as well as through the interruption of logical sequences. In a continuous deferment of closure emblemized by the absence of finished industrial products and panoramic pictures, the book functions as an opaque and cryptic commentary on the conditions of the working class of his time. (Matthias Müller)

**Christiane Frey** (New York University) and **David Martyn** (Macalester College) delivered a collaborative keynote lecture in

two installments: "What do Lists Know? Thinking Serially I" on Friday, and "Classify, Collect, Enumerate: Thinking Serially II" on Saturday. Laying the groundwork for a poetics of the list, Frey's and Martyn's lectures explored lists as an alternative to "subsumptive" forms of knowledge that identify a thing by subordinating it under a class. If literary theory has often valued lists for their *disarticulating* or deconstructive potential, Frey and Martyn emphasized the capacity of lists to *articulate* things *differently*: techniques of sequentially arranging, combining, and ordering words and things not only subvert categorical hierarchies, but they also positively generate new orderings of knowledge. As predecessors who investigated such an epistemic potential of lists, Frey and Martyn cited (among others) methodological reflections of the early-modern philosopher Francis Bacon and Johann Wolfgang von Goethe's natural-scientific writings. Bacon's groundwork for a new scientific methodology recommends techniques of collecting observations in lists and tables as an antidote against false generalizations, and Goethe similarly endorses a practice of recording "observations without concepts" that can be ordered and re-ordered in various ways, revealing the multi-dimensional connectedness of things in nature.

Echoing Hans Blumenberg's 'absolute metaphor,' Martyn and Frey then introduced the phrase "absolute series" in their second lecture, to designate enumerations whose unifying principle can itself only be represented in serial form. Absolute lists thus do not exemplify an external principle or concept, but engender ordering principles tied to a specific serial articulation. The kinds of patterns registered by such ordering principles are, in contrast to related taxonomical techniques for knowledge generation, open-ended; they include not only 'type-of' relations, but also multiple and various kinds of relationships between members. Mindful of the irreducibly list-like articulation of this form of knowledge, Frey and Martyn advanced their discussion by closely reading a number of lists in literature and philosophy. Examples included: a passage from George Perec's *Life: A User's Manual* that describes in serial form unsatisfactory attempts to put hotel stickers in order; Johann Gottfried Herder's interpretation of the sequence of the seven days of *Genesis* as a 'hieroglyph' for the structure of creation; Jacob Grimm's speculations that the arrangement of letters in the Latin alphabet follow an underlying structuring principle; and an aphorism in which Friedrich Nietzsche lists things with regard to which he persistently and hopefully develops "Brief Habits" that seem to promise lasting satisfaction: areas of life including "dishes, thoughts, people, cities, poems, music, doctrines, daily schedules, and ways of living." (Johannes Wankhammer)

# Artist in Residence: Ulrich Peltzer

April 1-19, 2015

From April 1-19, 2015, German author **Ulrich Peltzer** visited Cornell University as Writer in Residence at the Institute for German Cultural Studies. Author of five novels and a book on poetics, and co-author of several film scripts with the Berlin school filmmaker Christoph Hochhäusler, Peltzer has been recognized with numerous distinguished literary awards and is the director of the literature section of the “Academy of the Arts” in Berlin. During his stay at Cornell, he held a literary reading, conducted a compact seminar with students and faculty, presented films he had co-written, and delivered the Cornell Lecture on Contemporary Aesthetics.



legible. With these encounters, Peltzer’s novel opens an additional space for contact between historical events of the twentieth century, especially those concerning the oppositional and revolutionary left and the intricate cartographies of contemporary finance capitalism. These fields of contacts, encounters, and crossings converge to shape the stakes of the novel: how thinking a “better life” and satisfying a “longing for justice” (*Verlangen nach Gerechtigkeit*) can be possible in the present. (William Krieger)

On Tuesday, April 14, Peltzer met with faculty and graduate students from Cornell’s Department of German Studies and adjacent literature departments for a compact seminar on the topic “Die Ästhetik des Politischen.” In his opening remarks, Peltzer mapped out ways of thinking the relationship of aesthetics and politics in contemporary literature, in particular in the novel, based on Theodor Adorno’s *Notes to Literature*, the work of Gilles Deleuze, and Peter Weiss’ dictum “aesthetic matters are always also political matters.” Peltzer raised several key questions for discussion: What is resistant or incommensurable about art? Does the political novel necessarily have to be a realist novel? And how much socio-economic analysis does a literary author have to undertake in order to write at all? Discussion among seminar participants ensued concerning the meaning and usefulness of realism as a central aesthetic category for political literature today. Close-readings of passages from E.L. Doctorow’s 1971 novel *The Book of Daniel* provoked a debate about the concept of the political in light of the feminist and Civil Rights movements, and about the politics of representation, narrative perspective, and form for the contemporary political novel. (Jette Gindner)

To conclude the series of events during his stay, Peltzer delivered his Cornell Lecture on Contemporary Aesthetics, titled “Lesend Schreiben.” **Peter Gilgen** (Cornell) introduced

the author, highlighting Peltzer’s important role as a *Poeta doctus* who questions the possibilities and obligations of literature in a world of media and global capitalism. Peltzer then took the podium to provide insight into personal experiences, the texts and writers that influenced him, and the relationship between theory and praxis that has shaped his perceptions of history, the present time, and himself as an author.

Peltzer spoke about his early years as a student of psychology and philosophy in Berlin, during which he wrote forensic reports to make money, and learned how to examine the reality around him while also gaining familiarity with individual case histories of social outsiders and misfits, later recurring themes in his oeuvre. He described his studies under Klaus Holzkamp, who took a central role in the critical psychology movement with a Marxist approach, and explained that this shaped his understanding of socio-political structures in his surroundings. Apart from his own political standpoint, Peltzer realized early in his writing career that literary texts from Samuel Beckett, Mark Twain, James Joyce, Gustave Flaubert, and Fyodor Dostoevsky seemed to him most convincing in pointing out the insufficient status of reality because they create a new syntax that triggers epistemological insights, affects, and emotions on a level beyond any political or ideological program. Peltzer explained that he sees his own role as an author as that of a catalyst, altering the reality around him with his own perceptions. At the same time, these perceptions are highly formed and influenced by certain intellectual traditions and cannot be thought without them.

In turn, Peltzer described how reality also intrudes into these traditions, interrupting and suspending them. While he was writing his second novel *Stefan Martinez* (1995), the Berlin Wall fell, along with the established order of life with which he had been familiar. In the process of writing *Bryant Park* (2002), his fourth novel, which is set in New York City, the September 11<sup>th</sup> attacks occurred. Both events questioned the status of his own work and challenged Peltzer to find a new way to narrate his stories, and a new syntax that quotes certain traditions while breaking with them at the same time. (Annekatriin Sommer)

On April 6, Peltzer read from his newest novel titled *Das Bessere Leben* (2015). The novel, set in 2006, follows three protagonists whose professional endeavors trace the geographies of globalized capitalism as well as recall past protests and uprisings against it: a German sales manager Jochen Brockmann, who works for an Italian industrial firm; Angelika Volkhart, an employee of a Dutch shipping company who was born in the GDR and speaks Russian fluently; and an “older” American named Sylvester Lee Fleming. For his reading, Peltzer selected a scene in which Fleming — a shadowy figure, both biographically and professionally — awakens in a cold sweat in a Sao Paolo hotel room, where he is staying on unnamed business. Sipping a half-drunk beer left over from the night before, Fleming recounts his dream, which moves between an uprising in the streets of Sao Paolo and episodes on the American college campus Kent State with a friend and possible love interest named Allison (Krause, who was one of the four students killed), as the two pass through campus demonstrations against the Vietnam War and the Nixon administration. As Peltzer suggested in the introduction to his reading, *Das Bessere Leben* addresses problems of contingency and necessity in the forms of contact that shape its “plot,” a critical aesthetic point of interest for the author. Through the intersection of the three protagonists’ biographies, Peltzer provokes his readers to consider to what extent the history/story [*Geschichte*] these three figures inhabit is mere accident, or if *Geschichte* perhaps unfolds in accord with a larger logic that approaches that of a Marxist historical materialism —if the course of history is not utterly contingent, the lives of Fleming, Brockmann, and Volkhardt map out the political and economic relations that structure the present and make history

# Retrospective: Fall 2014

## Colloquium Series

### Fabelhafte Macht:

#### Louis Marin liest Jean de La Fontaine

September 5, 2014

In her paper, "Fabelhafte Macht: Louis Marin liest Jean de La Fontaine," **Ethel Matala de**



**Mazza** (Institut für Deutsche Literatur, Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin) elaborated upon twentieth-century philosopher Louis Marin's readings of Jean de La Fontaine's fables in order to investigate how power circulates in political imaginaries. According to Matala de Mazza, Louis Marin's *Le portrait du roi* (1981) is a poetic reflection on the power of images, as well as an investigation of the mutual implication of sovereign and subject through a type of doubled desire that Matala de Mazza calls *Bildbegehren*. Marin, adapting Port-Royal political logic, asserts a notion of sovereignty in which power depends more on subjects' recognition of a king's power than the physical body of the king or attributes accruing to it; as Marin pointedly states, the image of the king makes the king. Matala de Mazza argued that this formulation demonstrates both the semiotic and performative aspects of sovereignty. For Marin, the image or representation of the king does not only replace his physical body, but also constitutes the real presence of his power.

Matala de Mazza focused on the interludes in Marin's *Le portrait du roi*, which is structured like the courtly ballets of Ludwig XIV, as well as Marin's essay, "Le pouvoir du récit," published in the 1978 collection, *Le récit est un piège*. These works engage Jean de La Fontaine's versions of the fables, "The Fox and the Crow," "The Cat, the Weasel and the Young Rabbit," and "The Power of Fables." Matala de Mazza showed how Marin's reading of sovereignty through "The Fox and the Crow" posits a model of power in which the crow, flattered to be compared to a phoenix by the fox, relies on

the fox's misnomer for its own self-definition. At the same time, the fox depends on the recognition of its flattery for its own self-sustenance. The fable form's depiction of the operations of sovereignty thus reveals the minor genre's conceptual power as a second-order image that represents the mechanisms constituting sovereignty in the political imaginary. Matala de Mazza then analyzed images of "fabelhaften Machteffekten" illuminated in Marin's readings of the two other fables to speak more broadly to the power of the narrator (*Erzähler*), concluding that *Bildbegehren* binds sovereign and subordinate in an unwritten fictional pact resembling a social contract. (Katrina Nousek)

### Seeing the Invisible: Hygiene and Contagion in 19th Century Popular Media and Narrative

October 24, 2014

For the IGCS colloquium series, **Christiane Arndt** (Queen's University) presented a pa-



per entitled "Seeing the Invisible – Hygiene and Contagion in 19th Century Popular Media and Narrative." Arndt observed that the development of microbiological research and the discovery of a multiplicity of microbes at the end of the nineteenth century were accompanied by a push for public education on health and hygiene. Several German family journals participated in this popularization of medical knowledge, in part by publishing microphotography: photographs of microbes accompanied by explanatory captions and articles. Arndt explicated this publication practice with examples drawn primarily from

the journals *Gartenlaube* and *Über Land und Meer*, which both began publication in the 1850's. However, the content of these photographs remained entirely indecipherable to the largely lay audience of these journals; only through captions accompanying printed images could the reader know what was being represented in the microphotographs. The usefulness of photography was thus found not only in conveying the content of images, but also in the implications of the medium: as photography was understood to be an objective representation of reality, microphotography served to index the real existence of intangible yet omnipresent microbes. By making the invisible visible through the purportedly objective, positivistic medium of photography, family journals participated in a form of medial hygiene. Arndt argued that microphotography thereby served as a strategy for control: first, in that the process of preparing microbes for photography by treating and staining literally killed the photographed microbes themselves; additionally, and more importantly, because the popularization of microphotography served as an attempt to curb the spread of microbes through public education on issues of hygiene.

Arndt also highlighted a contrasting aspect of the popularization of microphotography: despite its use as a means of control and containment, popular media (, including photographs and information concerning public health), can spread from person-to-person and thus escape the supervision of its original producers, or, in today's nomenclature, "go viral." Furthermore, the language that family journals used to explain microbes and promote health did not necessarily exemplify contemporary ideals of scientific control and objectivity. Instead, microbial contagion was described in hyperbolic rhetoric that exploited the uncanny nature of the invisible world of microbes. Far from being a straightforward means of visualizing and controlling microbes, the claim of "making the invisible visible" also served to represent an uncanny and threatening aspect of everyday life. Arndt further referenced two literary examples that connect scientific writing and microbiology with uncanny or frightening effects: Jeremias Gotthelf's *Die schwarze Spinne* (1843-44), and Edgar Allen Poe's *The Sphinx* (1846), both of which, Arndt claimed, use the uncanny effect of smallness and invisibility to reflect on phenomena of contagion and the media. (Leigh York)

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.

## Fiction, Figment, Fabrication: Artifice and Evidence in J.J. Breitinger's Poetics

November 21, 2014



**Johannes Wankhammer** (Cornell University) concluded the Fall 2014 IGCS colloquium series with the presentation of his paper, "Fiction, Figment, Fabrication: Artifice and Evidence in J.J. Breitinger's Poetics." Wankhammer examined Breitinger's 1740 poetic treatise *Critische Dichtkunst* in light of the author's engagement with and differentiation from the philosophies of Christian Wolff and Gottfried Leibniz, as well as his concurrent anticipation of certain problems that would later become central to the aesthetics of Alexander Baumgarten. As a "poetics of *evidentia*," Breitinger delineates the capacity of language to "present things before the 'eye(s) of the mind' by vivid or detailed description." The eye then processes these representations through an operation of "active inspection," a translation of the empirical "manifold of an object" into "a set

of salient features corresponding to nominal or logical definitions." Wankhammer argued that Breitinger's poetics at first follows, but eventually opposes Wolff's principle of reduction, which is a neutral model for the progressive reconstruction of objects in the world through the elimination of the contingencies of presentation. In Wolff's model, the mode of presentation to the inner eye is artifice: a supportive device that later disappears, in accordance with the project of *Aufklärung*, taken literally as "the gradual 'clearing up' of concepts until they correspond ... to the true order of things." While Breitinger largely concurs with Wolff, he does so with a movement counter to that of the principle of reduction, assigning poetry the role of restoring an "excess multiplicity" to truth that is lost in the distillation of a "logical essence" from a "manifold representation." Such restoration adds to essentialized truth a pleasant "taste"—as that of a sugar coating—that eases its consumption by "the great majority of people, who are guided by phantasmatic images produced by the passions and the senses."

Wankhammer argued that while Breitinger's poetics of *evidentia* may imply a "necessary order of truth," his interpretation of Leibniz' notion of the world as contingent—the possibility of "countless worlds *qua* compossible things"—undermines precisely the determinate order to which Breitinger's poetics allegedly points. According to Wankhammer, Leibniz' account takes on a concessive aspect that Breitinger forgoes. For the former, the world is derivatively necessary, being the result of the creator's decision to make actual the best of all possible worlds. In Breitinger's poetics, the same notion not only becomes proof of the world's infinite changeability, but also becomes the grounds for the poet's "license to

*make* the world otherwise than it *is*." Phrased differently, Breitinger endows the poet with the ability to "make things *appear* differently than they are according to common or philosophical understanding," by using rhetorical and formal techniques external to the supposed natural order. Thus, temporary artifice in Wolff's model becomes instead the "proper activity" of poetry for Breitinger.

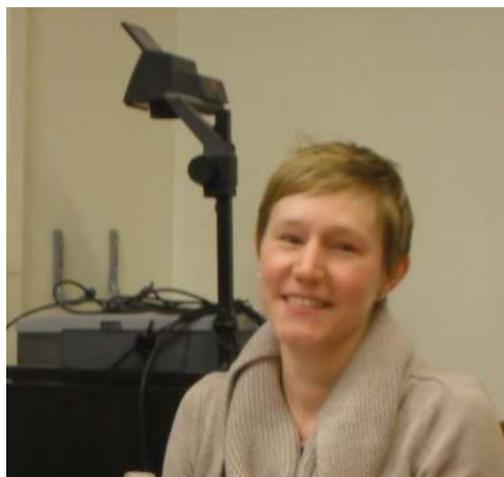
Rather than representing a mere inconsistency in Breitinger's work, Wankhammer suggested that the tension between these currents in *Critische Dichtkunst* "responds to a fissure in the order of words and things." The force of this tension culminates perhaps in the figure of the marvelous, which Breitinger defines as a "defamiliarization of truth" beyond recognition, and which allows for two approaches to poetic truth: one of degree and another of kind. In the former, a subset of the category of the new, defamiliarization interrupts the mechanized translative activity of the mind and lends it the appearance of novelty, while allowing truth to be restored without altering its essential qualities. The marvelous can also reveal the possibility of another kind of false or improper evidence, in which poetic truth—considered by means of the paradoxical metaphor of an at once "wholly foreign" and yet "transparent" mask—is no longer simply "(re)constructed" according to a given practice, or what is left after "artificial additions" have been removed, but rather the very function of presentational techniques. As Wankhammer argued, such "metaphysical fissures" rendered legible in Breitinger's poetics both anticipate and shed light on the concerns of the subsequently emergent field of aesthetics. (William Krieger)

## Retrospective: Spring 2015 Colloquium Series

### From Secretive Subculture to Alternative Public Sphere: Journal-Based Fandom and Political Discourse

February 6, 2015

The Spring 2015 IGCS colloquium series opened with the presentation of a paper by **Hannah Müller** (Cornell University), titled "From Secretive Subculture to Alternative Public Sphere: Journal-Based Fandom and Political Discourse." Müller explored the potential advantages and disadvantages of linking Jürgen Habermas' notion of the public sphere with discursive practices of



online communities. Specifically targeting online fan-based journals, Müller argued that the increased emergence of political discourse within these communities indicates a need to reconceptualize the notion of fandom (and the public sphere) so as to include their alternate forms of social and political activism.

After noting significant controversies concerning the status of "community" in online settings, Müller defined community as a description of the common practices, experiences, vocabularies, histories, and shared affective commitments of any social group, stressing that an individual can be invested in multiple communities at once with each contributing to an aspect of their self-conception. She then elaborated upon how transformative fandom in particular has been the subject of much scholarly work, insofar as its practices bind fans together in communities even more so than the objects of interest themselves. The key to understanding

transformative fandom is, according to Müller, the fact that the fans involved do more than simply consume cultural objects and texts; rather, they revise and rework content in an expression of fandom. These appropriations, which are generally referred to as “fanworks,” often contain subversive impulses that challenge concepts of authorship and originality by treating works as open archives that can be expanded upon indefinitely. In such a way, transformative fandom starts to constitute an alternative public sphere.

Müller used several examples to illustrate the political potential of transformative fandom. One striking instance involved fans of the *Hunger Games* franchise, who used the films’ narratives to underscore parallels between the social inequalities depicted in the novel-based films and those that actually exist, or that they themselves had experienced. Müller also cited the debates of the 2009 online controversy dubbed *RaceFail ‘09*, as an important moment in the discourse surrounding transformative fandom. *RaceFail ‘09* was a controversy in the science-fiction community between mostly white authors of science fiction and their transformative fans of color. Fans criticized the widespread ethnocentrism and cultural appropriation in speculative fiction, while some authors attempted to regulate fans’ criticism by insisting on adherence to the rules of academic discourse. Müller concluded that the *RaceFail ‘09* debates may not have resulted in a universal consensus among participants, yet they do indicate how transformative fandom can compel a dominant or hegemonic community to repeatedly confront its own discursive rules, opening up a space for productive critique. (Matthew Stoltz)

### Dreams of ‘Cosmic Culture’ in *Der schweigende Stern* [The Silent Star, 1960]

February 20, 2015

**Sonja Fritzsche** (Illinois Wesleyan University) was the second speaker of the IGCS Colloquium Series in spring of 2015. She presented her paper with the title “Dreams of ‘Cosmic Culture’ in *Der schweigende Stern* [The Silent Star, 1960],” which explored the production of science fiction movies in the GDR in the 1950s and 1960s. Fritzsche proposed that in order to fully understand the conditions that shaped science fiction cinema in East Germany, it is necessary to consider films within a framework of inter- and transnational relations. Not only is it important to take into account the rivalry between Eastern European countries and the West during the Cold War era, but East German cinema also needs to be seen in its connection to cultural production

and the space program in the Soviet Union.

Against the backdrop of this regional constellation, Fritzsche analyzed Kurt Maetzig’s film *Der Schweigende Stern* (1960) as part of the ‘cosmic’ or ‘space culture’ in 1950s/1960s Eastern Europe. She suggested that the success of early GDR science fiction films owed much to public interest in the Soviet space program and the use of the theme of space exploration as a way to engage and educate children and youth.

For Fritzsche, *Der Schweigende Stern* is an example of the ‘utopian realism’ that developed as an aesthetic approach in East German post-war speculative fiction out of the tension between ideological restrictions and the genre of fantastical literature. The focus on technological advancement that functioned as an important aspect of East German Marxism allowed science fiction to reach beyond a strict adherence to the rules of government-prescribed socialist realism. Featuring settings positioned in a near future and futuristic speculation supported by ‘scientific’ explanations, science fiction could be legitimized as scientific prediction rather than fantastical imagination.

Fritzsche further suggested that contrary to general assumption, the anti-nuclear message conveyed by Maetzig’s film and the role of its American protagonist were not only an engagement with the history of the American physicist Julius Robert Oppenheimer and the development of the nuclear bomb. Instead, she perceives this plot also as a reference to the controversial German rocket scientist Werner von Braun, whose story was integrated apparently seamlessly into the US-American and



West German cultural memory. In contrast, Fritzsche proposed that through the figure of a scientist who defies political pressure in favor of his desire for scientific exploration, the movie *Der schweigende Stern* was intended to disengage East German space culture from Germany’s history of rocket production during the Third Reich. (Hannah Müller)

### Baroque Colors: A Concept in Transition

March 13, 2015

**Margrit Vogt** (Max Kade Distinguished Visiting Professor, Michigan State University /



Universität Flensburg) presented her paper “Baroque Colors: A Concept in Transition” for the IGCS Colloquium Series on March 13, 2015. Vogt’s paper was introduced as part of a larger project that investigates the manner in which color concepts are formed and portrayed in literature across disparate historical and cultural contexts. Color concepts, Vogt argued, are not universal and invariant, but rather are socially and culturally conditioned and come to be determined in connection with the means of producing and reproducing colors that are available to any given society.

Within this framework, Vogt presented the Baroque period as a time in which a transitional understanding of color was negotiated. In contrast to the preceding Medieval period in which colors were fully associated with and inextricable from the objects that instantiated them, in the Baroque period, colors were increasingly seen as detachable from the objects in which they were observed. Colors, Vogt argued, come to be understood, as René Descartes and John Locke posit, as secondary properties that are not essentially attached to objects, but are rather separate and secondary phenomena. Vogt asserted that this epistemological shift in the way in which colors are conceived is rooted in the changing means of production and reproduction of color on a societal level. As opposed to the Medieval period, during which certain colors could not be produced at all and other colors could only be inconsistently reproduced, in the Baroque period, improved means of production and wider access to common resources enabled more consistent color

production and reproduction. This, in turn, prompted the conceptual distancing of colors from the objects that instantiated them.

Vogt illustrated this ongoing process of dissociating the understanding of color from perceived objects with examples drawn from Baroque poetry, in which colors are described not as inhering within objects, but rather as separate from objects. Vogt concluded her paper by arguing that this process of understanding colors as detached from their objects continued in subsequent centuries until it reached its pinnacle in expressionist art, in which colors are experienced as entirely independent from objects, an understanding that likewise reflects contemporary social experiences. (Stephen Klemm)

### The Multimodal Novel: Generic Change and its Narratological Implications

April 10, 2015

On April 10, the IGCS colloquium series continued with a presentation by **Wolfgang Hallet**

(Justus-Liebig-Universität Giessen). Hallet's paper, "The Multimodal Novel: Generic Change and its Narratological Implications," reflected on the emergence and increasing prevalence



of multimodal novels since the 1990s. Hallet defined the multimodal novel as a novel that integrates multiple semiotic systems into its narrative discourse, often including non-verbal elements such as images, maps, or diagrams. These artifacts are not external to the narration, but instead are intrinsic to the fictional world of the novel and are created, used, and produced within that world. Verbal narratives also often comment on and refer to co-present, non-verbal modalities active in a text. In consideration of these phenomena, Hallet argued that prominent narratological paradigms must be reconceived in order to accommodate the presence and function of these textual features. According to Hallet, language is only one among many possible ways of producing and communicating meaning, and the multimodal novel combines a variety of semiotic modes to produce a unified "transmodal" meaning.

Hallet distinguished multimodality from intermedial analysis, asserting that theories of intermediality consider non-verbal elements in a

text to be media that relate to the verbal narrative but do not themselves produce or communicate meaning. In contrast, a multimodal understanding of narrative conceptualizes each non-verbal mode as its own distinct system of communication and meaning-production.

Focusing on textual examples such as Marlene Streeruwitz's novel *Lisa's Liebe* (2005) and W.G. Sebald's *Austerlitz* (2001), Hallet posited that the multimodal novel necessitates a number of significant shifts in the conceptualization of narrativity in the novel, namely: writing becomes designing; narration becomes a function of collecting, archiving, and presenting; theories of narrative expand to include non-verbal, non-linguistic semiotic systems; the act of reading assumes a non-linear, hypertextual character; and the reader can be understood as a "user" who takes an active role in ordering and constructing meaning across multiple verbal and non-verbal semiotic systems. Hallet concluded by proposing that concepts of multimodality might throw new light on historical precursors of the contemporary multimodal novel, such as Laurence Sterne's *Tristram Shandy*, an early novel in the history of the genre that famously incorporates non-verbal and non-novelistic elements. (Leigh York)

### Out of the Groove: Aural Traces and the Mediation of Sound

April 24, 2015

The IGCS Spring 2015 colloquium series concluded with the presentation of a paper by **Andrea Bachner** (Cornell) titled "Out of the Groove: Aural Traces and the Mediation of



Sound." For her paper, Bachner excerpted selections from her current project, titled *Inscriptive Passions, Poststructuralist Prehistories*, which seeks to construct a "theoretical genealogy" of metaphors of inscription in contemporary theory and poststructuralism. By examining depictions and theoretizations of sound recording from the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, Bachner asserted that poststructuralism requires an "inscriptive imaginary" for its foundational concepts of mediation.

Bachner's point of departure was Rainer Maria Rilke's 1919 essay, "Ur-Geräusch," in which an experiment is proposed that would

trace the sutures of a human skull with the needle of a phonograph. Although Rilke speculates that the experiment would produce a "primal sound," Bachner observed that the sound Rilke imagines would not in fact be primal, but rather a sonic mediation of natural contours with an inscriptive trace. Paradoxically, sound is only considered "primal" once it has been mediated; at the same time, the concept of mediation is what gives rise to the very concept of something un-mediated. Bachner, thus, understands Rilke's essay to be exploring a concurrent excess and lack of mediation in sound recording.

Bachner then read Friedrich Kittler's interpretation of Rilke's essay, presented in his highly influential work for German media studies, *Grammophon – Film – Typewriter* (1986). She argued that Kittler appropriates Rilke's experiment for his own theory of media-specificity and progression, understanding sound recording as surpassing the capabilities of graphic writing in its mediation of reality. In contrast, Bachner argued that by focusing on inscription, Rilke develops a concept of mediated sound that retroactively informs, rather than dismisses the possibilities of writing. With reference to media historian Lisa Gideman, Bachner maintained that written and sonic media are mutually influenced; furthermore, notions of mediation and the un-mediated are continually revised as new mediums develop.

The paper concluded with two literary excerpts from works written in the 1990s that allude to Rilke's essay: Dürs Grünbein's essay "Three Letters" ("Drei Briefe," 1991) and Marcel Beyer's novel *The Karnau Tapes (Flughunde)*, 1996). Grünbein's text ascribes to X-ray imaging an invasiveness similar to the acoustic inscription imagined in Rilke's essay. Grünbein's poetics more broadly, as demonstrated in his aphoristic essay, "Neun Variationen zur Fontanelle" (1993) and the collection of poems titled *Falten und Fallen* (1994), is concerned with a human corporeality that cannot be thought separately from language. In Beyer's novel the protagonist Karnau, a sound technician who had performed experiments on prisoners held in concentration camps during the Holocaust, narrates the very experiment that Rilke suggested, as Karnau's former SS colleagues carry it out on his own person. Karnau experiences the sound that he hears during the procedure as penetration; thus, inscription on the body is translated into sound, which in turn inscribes itself onto the body in a mediated feedback loop. For Bachner, the conceptual quandary of inscription and mediation laid out in Rilke's essay, and the imagined experiment that illustrates the paradoxes inherent in concepts of materiality and originality, draw attention to a necessary but often overlooked precondition for poststructuralist thought and literature in the later twentieth century. (Miyako Hayakawa)

# Lectures and Events

## Turkish Nationalism and German Colonialism: A Joint Venture During WWI

November 19, 2014

As part of the series, “WWI in the Ottoman Empire,” hosted by the Ottoman and Turkish Studies Initiative (OTSI) at Cornell University, **Malte Fuhrmann** (Ruhr-Universität Bochum) presented a lecture entitled “Turkish Nationalism and German Colonialism: A Joint Venture During WWI.” Fuhrmann began by observing that traces of postcolonial conditions can be seen in German society today. For example: Turks currently comprise the largest immigrant population in Germany; Germany has been Turkey’s most important trade partner since the 1920s; and the Pergamon Museum in Berlin, which is the most visited museum in the country, has a collection of archeological finds from the Ottoman Empire. However, Germany has never directly colonized any part of the Ottoman Empire. Fuhrmann suggested that an explanation for these postcolonial phenomena in German society can be found by looking at German-Ottoman entangled histories from the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, during a period of activity that he referred to as German colonialism. These entangled histories have only recently received scholarly attention, most notably from historical scholars such as Mustafa Gencer and Klaus Kreiser. Fuhrmann identified two major challenges in reconstructing a history of

German colonialism. First, source materials are composed of disparate autobiographical writings and personal correspondences of both Ottoman and German dignitaries, military leaders, and intellectuals. Furthermore, there was no unified and state-sanctioned scheme to implement German colonialism in the Ottoman Empire. Instead, German colonialism or imperialism was a continuously regenerated process fueled by rivalries between different groups in Germany.

In the latter part of his lecture, Fuhrmann identified three stages in the development of German colonialism in the Ottoman Empire: romantic colonialism (with reference to the work of Hannah Arendt), technocratic colonialism, and a generation of purportedly liberal or peaceful colonialists. Fuhrmann turned to the figure of Carl Humann as a representative for the first of these stages. Humann, a road construction engineer by training, is credited with the so-called discovery of the Pergamon Altar, and inspired a streak of grand-scale German archeological explorations in the Ottoman Empire. The focal figure of the second phase of techno-

cratic colonialism was Ambassador Adolf Marschall von Bieberstein, who helped German industry make inroads into the Ottoman Empire. Finally, Fuhrmann identified as representatives of the third stage Colmar Freiherr von der Goltz, who was a military leader and writer, Ernst Jäckh, a journalist and promoter of a German-Ottoman alliance during WWI, and Ismail Enver Pasha, an Ottoman military leader. The attention of this latter phase of German colonialism was primarily on the Ottoman educational system, as well as on forging a military alliance between Germany and the Ottoman



Empire. Thus, Fuhrmann introduced themes and events of cultural, industrial, and military significance that supported his conception of German colonialism. (Andreea Mascan)

## The Jewish Question in the Era of Questions

March 16, 2015

As part of the Jewish Studies Program Spring 2015 Event Series, **Holly Case** (History, Cornell) presented a paper titled “The Jewish Question in the Era of Questions.” Case began by emphasizing that the “Jewish question” was just one of many focuses of the nineteenth-century “era of questions.” Questions such as the Corn, Bullion, and Population question, the Polish and Eastern questions, the Slavery question, the Woman question, and the Jewish question were all prominent in public debates of the time. These discourses demonstrate a common application of the term “question,” which was understood as a problem that requires a solution rather than an answer or opinion. Based on this commonality, Case argued for a re-consideration of the “Jewish question” in the context of the multitude of questions circulating in the nineteenth century.

Case primarily explored what a closer look at the “Jewish question” can reveal about the “era of questions” more generally. She first argued that in the nineteenth century a new kind of ‘question’ emerged, and outlined some of the concept’s main features. Questions in the nineteenth century consistently deployed rhetorical modes that obscured the realities of situations under discussion. Although the origins of some of the questions could not be found earlier than the beginning of the nineteenth century, their proponents tended to endow them with a rich tradition, making them seem older than they actually were. In the case of the “Jewish question,” the earliest mention that Case was able to locate occurred in the 1820s, yet many nineteenth-century commentators traced it back to the origins of Judaism itself. Such an invented long and rich tradition, Case argued, gave rise to a sense of urgency. Built on this sense of urgency, discussions around questions were characterized by a mood of agitation, expressing dissent from across the entire political spectrum with regards to the status



quo and demanding sweeping changes in domestic and international policy. In the nineteenth century, questions were readily internationalized and universalized and one often drew parallels between disparate or unrelated questions, suggesting for instance

that the “Jewish question” could be solved the way other questions had or would be solved.

After outlining the features shared by the “Jewish question” and many other nineteenth-century questions, Case argued that it was not until after WWII that commentators of the “Jewish question” began to isolate it from other perceived questions. Case concluded by noting a post-WWII shift in global political discourse that entailed a move away from the question, towards more temporally limited terms such as “issue,” “situation,” or “crisis.” (Andreea Mascan)

## Schiller and Carl August as Censors of Goethe

October 20, 2014

**W. Daniel Wilson** (Royal Holloway, University of London) delivered a lecture entitled “Schiller and Carl August as ‘Friendly’ Censors of Goethe.” Wilson investigated what he called Johann Wolfgang von Goethe’s “experiment,” a test as to what extent a writer in eighteenth century German lands could succeed in publishing erotic literature. Following his sojourns to Italy in 1786-88 and 1790, Goethe’s unsuccessful attempts to publish parts of his two major efforts at erotic poetry, the “Roman Elegies” and the “Venetian Epigrams,” proves for Wilson that the experiment had failed. Goethe was forced to admit that a poet of his time, in his literary sphere, could not go very far with the publication of erotic poetry; rather, such poetry could be circulated only in small, private groups. However, Goethe’s efforts were originally censored by two of his closest friends, Friedrich Schiller and the Duke Carl August of Saxe-Weimar. This regulation, Wilson argued, was the beginning of close to three-quarters of a century of censorship of Goethe’s works, as the poet’s raciest compositions were suppressed and omitted from collections during his life and after his death in 1832, up

until the 1915 publication of the ‘Weimar Edition,’ in which much of his erotic poetry first appeared. Wilson stressed that by that time, Goethe’s reputation as an Olympian moral teacher and moral paradigm had already been set in stone in such a way as to not take into account Goethe’s erotic poetry.



According to Wilson, the main motivation for this censorship was that Goethe’s editors feared that the publication of such suggestive works would give the poet the appearance of a libertine, a figure in which sexual license is combined with religious heterodoxy. Goethe’s erotic poetry, in other words, was not solely censored because of its content, but more specifically, because much of it combined sexual license with scathing religious critique in a seemingly autobiographical style. Goethe’s friends and editors feared that this would leave the writer vulnerable to personal attacks, as well as to accusations that he was, in fact, a libertine, even if the works in question were penned in an experimental spirit.

Wilson presented two main reasons why an accusation of libertinism was particularly worrisome to Goethe’s editors both during his life and after his death. First, both Carl

August and Schiller foresaw that any charge of libertinism directed towards Goethe would negatively influence the reputation of the Duchy of Saxe-Weimar, which was already known its liberal moral and intellectual positions. Second, Wilson argued that Goethe’s editors were concerned that the poems would be damning to Goethe’s reputation itself, and that it was in the public figure’s own interest to allow his poetry to be censored so as to protect his self-constructed reputation as an Olympian moral teacher.

In conclusion, Wilson explained that Goethe’s poetry was, both during and after his death, carefully safeguarded by editors who were acting to a greater or lesser extent with Goethe’s approval, in order to create and secure a specific image of him as a moral teacher. Largely as a result of such censorship, this image has dominated the poet’s reception and reputation up to the present day. (Stephen Klemm)

## “Priester-Schriftsteller”? Politische Autorschaft und Religion in der deutschen Nachkriegsliteratur

March 23, 2015

**Christian Sieg** (Max Kade Guest Professor, Georgetown University / Westfälische Wilhelms-Universität Münster) presented a lecture entitled “‘Priester-Schriftsteller’? Politische Autorschaft und Religion in der deutschen Nachkriegsliteratur.” Sieg began by referencing the political engagement of several post-war German writers such as Heinrich Böll (1917-1985), Günter Grass (\*1927), and Christa Wolf (1929-2011), and emphasized that the critical reception of their respective works often seeks to identify literary texts with the public intellectual activities of their authors. Sieg argued for an approach that concentrates instead on the texts themselves and examines how the question of political authorship, or writing as political intervention, is staged in these works.

Sieg stressed that political authorship—both as a genuine literary practice and with regards to post-war German literature—relies heavily on religious motifs, intertextual references,



and allusions. In his analysis of two exemplary works of fiction, Christa Wolf’s *Kassandra* (1983) and Günter Grass’ *Die Rättin* (1986), Sieg traced the role of religion in relation to politics. In these texts, Sieg argued, religion functions not simply as a secularized arsenal of signs. Instead, he suggested reading them in the tradition of narratives of apocalypse, stressing that apocalypse is not itself an event, but rather a text that describes and interprets an event. Therefore, much like the model of apocalyptic authorship in religious works, the function of writing as depicted by these authors is to reveal the future. Furthermore, in his analysis of paratexts, including

Wolf’s lectures on poetics and Grass’ commentaries on his work, Sieg suggested that the two authors display a belief in the power of the word to transcend individual authors and make the text a medium of truth. Conveying this through structural features, both *Kassandra* and *Die Rättin* stage dialogues between two voices: whereas *Kassandra* ultimately regains her “body voice,” in Grass’ novel the rat has the better arguments and leaves the narrator at a loss. Sieg reads these constellations as the elimination of ‘wrong’ voices in the texts, by which the communication of certain knowledge is assured.

With reference to Carl Schmitt’s *Political Theology* (1922), Sieg pointed out the structural similarity of religion and political modernity. By relying on familiar patterns of religious discourse, he argued, political authorship draws on analogies that, according to Hans Blumenberg, can foster cognition (*Erkenntnis*). Thus, political authorship in German post-war literature, in an attempt to distinguish itself from a self-consciously secular mainstream society, withdrew to the social realm of religion in order to communicate a complex truth. (Matthias Müller)

## Inheritance Trouble: Migration, Memory and the German Past

September 12, 2014

The lecture, “Inheritance Trouble: Migration, Memory and the German Past,” presented by **Michael Rothberg** (English, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign) and **Yasemin Yildiz** (Germanic Languages and Literatures, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign), and co-organized by graduate students of the Department of German Studies at Cornell, focused on intersections of apparently discrete memory cultures, and promoted a trans-cultural approach to the analysis of memory and inheritance in Germany. Focusing on the production of Holocaust memory, Rothberg and Yildiz laid out how German practices of memorializing the Holocaust as inherited guilt simultaneously construct a national identity that leaves out members of society of migrant background. Due to the exclusion of this population from the concept of German “*Erbschuld*,” which is dependent on the idea of blood inheritance, migrant subjects are also ignored by any national identity formed by this concept. Rothberg and Yildiz consequently drew attention to memory work that thematizes the Holocaust while making passing but overdetermined references to migrants, thus marking their lack of association with events that implicate the majority population, as well as works that intertwine the memory of both Holocaust and Turkish-German experiences. A literary text by the Turkish-German author Menekşe Toprak (b. 1970) featured prominently throughout the



lecture. The short story, titled *Der Brief im Koffer*, was written in Turkish but is set in Berlin; extracted from Toprak’s 2007 collection *Valizdeki Mektup*, the text was published in German translation in 2012. In the narrative, Toprak depicts a young Turkish-German woman on a tour of an underground bunker; there, the woman encounters a space in which stories of the Second World War and the Holocaust are evoked, along with recollections of her own past and of the history of Turkish migration in Germany. In her imagination and memory, these seemingly disparate narratives of memory are brought together in the image of the suitcase indicated in the title. Toprak thus intervenes in German Holocaust discourse by incorporating Turkish-German migrant experience into the performance of memory. Rothberg and Yildiz claimed that the question of inheritance and memory

thereby becomes vivid in its reach beyond a German *Erbschuld*, and can be understood as a transnational and transcultural figuration in which diverse memory discourses converge.

The discussion after the talk raised several questions regarding the status of inheritance, connections between differing national discourses, dimensions of gender, as well as the will to be included in such a painful memory as that of the Holocaust. Rothberg and Yildiz emphasized that inheritance functions as a metaphor for memory that is

closely connected to citizenship and national identity; it can therefore be desirable and necessary for migrants to be part of this discourse.

The seminar led by Rothberg and Yildiz the next day, titled “Memory Studies after the Transnational Turn,” centered on theoretical questions of how to define basic concepts of memory, the transnational, and the transcultural, as well as futurity’s role in the conceptualization of a transcultural memory. The content of the discussion was informed both by the lecture from the previous afternoon, and by seminar participants’ research interests in matters of migration, inheritance, the field of memory studies as such, a dynamic and contingent notion of memory, and material implications of memory work in global and local contexts. (Mascha Vollhardt)

## University Lecture: Multilingual Literary Reading, in German, Japanese, English and Other Surprises

March 11, 2015

On Wednesday, March 11, the Tokyo-born literary author **Yoko Tawada**, known internationally for her creative approaches to multilingual aesthetics in German and Japanese, filled the Guerlac Room in the A.D. White House for her University Lecture, “Multilingual Literary Reading, in German, Japanese, English and Other Surprises.” For the event, Tawada collaborated with **Bettina Brandt** (Pennsylvania State University), a prominent scholar and translator of Tawada’s work into Dutch. Following Tawada’s readings, primarily in German or in Japanese, Brandt read English translations of the presented texts. The event was funded by the University Lectures Committee and co-sponsored by the East Asia Program, the

Institute for German Cultural Studies, and the Department of Comparative Literature.

As organizer of the event, **Leslie Adelson** (German Studies, Cornell) first introduced Tawada’s work from a German Studies perspective. She described how Tawada’s oeuvre explores imaginative intersections between philosophies of language, cultures of migration, and questions of translation in experiences of globalization today. Next, **Brett de Bary** (Asian Studies, Cornell), described Tawada’s position in contemporary Japanese literature and scholarship. De Bary emphasized how Tawada’s writing is involved in the work of mourning, particularly with regards to the nuclear meltdown and its aftermath in the Fukushima prefecture in Japan. She observed that Tawada’s literary reading was appropriately being held on the fourth anniversary of the 2011 earthquake and tsunami in the region. These introductory remarks encouraged the audience to abandon their position as passive consumers and to actively respond to surprises



that might arise in the course of the reading.

Tawada and Brandt opened with selections from the collection of poetry titled *Abenteuer der deutschen Grammatik* (2010). At first alternating between German and English versions of the poems, they then began to read the German and English texts simultaneously, increasingly blurring the boundaries between the

two languages. The performance culminated in the reading of the poem “Passiv,” in which both languages were intertwined so closely that a hybrid language seemed to emerge.

The second part of the performance was titled “Shirabyōshi.” With reference to the practices of certain twelfth-century Japanese female court dancers who performed for nobles while dressed as men bearing swords, Tawada and Brandt initially donned ostentatiously westernized paper masks. Employing Japanese, English, and Italian, they read a story of two dancers who become trapped in a triangular relationship with a wealthy patron. Italian words drawn from a lexicon of musical terminology replaced descriptors of speed and emotion in the Japanese text, which

also imitated the syntax of a twelfth-century Japanese epic tale. In contrast, the English translation, rendered by Susan Bernofsky from a German version of the story written by Tawada, provided a linear narrative from a modern point of view. Thus, the English presentation of the story was supplemented by Japanese and Italian phrases that added an intentionally defamiliarized layer of affect.

The event concluded with the presentation of twenty-four untitled and unpublished poems that developed out of Tawada’s experiences and reactions during a visit to Fukushima. Tawada explained that she wrote the poems in German during her trip in order to take advantage of an affective distance between the Japanese of her surroundings and the German

of her writing. The reading was accompanied by a dramatic performance, in which Brandt attached sheets of paper to a line strung across the room. After each poem was read aloud in German and in English, the paper on which it was written was affixed to the line, along with cards on which Japanese words representing each poem were written. Leaves propped in cups of water and aligned beside the two readers made reference to the environmental consequences of nuclear contamination. The performance opened up a multilingual and multi-medial space between German, English, and written Japanese, and the audience found itself drawn into this space by the voices of the two women and by aural and visual manifestations of language. (Annekatriin Sommer)

## They that sow in tears

April 12, 2015

On April 12, 2015, the IGCS co-sponsored “They that sow in tears,” a concert organized by **David Miller** (Music, Cornell). Presented in the Anabel Taylor Hall Chapel, the historically-informed performance brought together sacred music by Baroque composers Matthias Weckmann, Johann Hermann Schein, Heinrich Schütz, and Samuel Scheidt, inflecting the modern concert setting with a sense of the original seventeenth-century liturgical context of the works performed. The musicians, including graduate students from the Department of Music at Cornell as well as visiting experts in historical performance practice, impressed the audience with the sum of their virtuosic technical and expressive skills.

In his opening remarks, Miller indicated that the concert program followed a progression from a “stable picture of the order of things” through “doubt, fear, [and] despair” to a final “reaffirmation of faith” that musically suggested a “hopeful future.” The program offered a three-part selection of pieces for voice and varying organ and continuo accompaniments. Interjected into the second and third parts of the program were readings concerning the “Great Comet of 1618,” interpreted as a fateful omen by an astronomer and doctor, and an account by Sister Junius



describing an encounter with the enemy during the Thirty Years’ War. These secular texts lent the performance a sense similar to that of religious readings in a church service.

Especially powerful was the musicians’ use of the altar and loft at opposite ends of the chapel to produce acoustic effects. An impressive yet seemingly effortless musical moment was the call and response between baritone **David Tinervia** in the loft and other musicians at the altar in Schein’s *Aus Tiefer Not schrei’ ich zu dir*. Similarly, in Schein’s *Meister, wir haben die ganze Nacht gearbeitet*, Tinervia and tenor **Scott Mello** executed a highly exposed, antiphonal call and response, aided in creating this ‘music for tears’ by **Jonathan Schakel** (Cornell) on the organ. Schakel’s organ interlude provided a reprieve from the religious “cry” to God at the end of the second section of the program. Soprano **Claire Raphaelson** and Mezzo-Soprano **Julia Cavallaro** likewise sang highly exposed solo and soli passages with comfort and control. Cavallaro’s sonorous interpretation

of Schütz’s *Ich will den Herren loben allezeit* endowed Schütz’s song of praise with a sonorousness that filled the chapel. In turn, Raphaelson conveyed a highly effective sense of urgency at the tense beginning of Schütz’s *Eile mich, Gott, zu erretten*.

An instrumental ensemble accompanied the vocalists and, at moments such as the second half of Schein’s *Aus tiefer Not schrei ich zu dir*, created the effect of confounding the grain of the voice with the vibration of strings in the full ensemble’s musical communion. Both Miller and **Zoe Weiss** (Cornell) performed on viols — a visual and acoustic reminder that even through much of the eighteenth century, the contemporary hegemony of the cello was unimaginable in the face of the viol’s dominance. **Matthew Hall** (Cornell) performed on the harpsichord with thoughtful expressiveness, and **Anna Marsh** offered interpretations on the bassoon that were lucid in tone and timbre. Another sight and sound unfamiliar to many modern audiences was the theorbo, a large instrument of the lute family, played by award-winning lutenist **Ryaan Ahmed**. Together, instrumentalists and vocalists musically enacted for an audience in a modern, secular environment the religious theme of the program, drawn from the biblical verse, “They that sow in tears shall reap in joy” (Psalm 126:5-6). (Alexander Brown)

# The Antisocial Turn: The Age of Riots

October 17-18, 2014

The interdisciplinary conference, “The Antisocial Turn: The Age of Riots,” presented by the Department of Comparative Literature and the Comparative Cultures & Literature

Forum at Cornell University, and co-organized by **Tatiana Sverjensky** (Comparative Literature, Cornell University) and **Joshua Clover** (Department of English, UC Davis), began with a conversation moderated by Clover, with filmmaker **Melanie Gilli-**

**gan**. Gilligan’s films, which include *Crisis in the Credit System* (2008), *Self Capital* (2009), and *Popular Unrest* (2010), engage in a project of aesthetically knowing in a way that counters the mystification of the financial world. Gilligan seeks to represent

spheres that for their breadth and level of abstraction seem to otherwise defy representation. Her current work in progress, entitled *The Common Sense*, takes up similar themes of narrative and representation while turning from the world of financial capital to the challenges involved in staging a riot.

According to Gilligan, films that stage riots tend to fall short of representing social processes in detailed and meaningful ways. Riots are depicted either with an investment of particular personal feelings or in strictly systemic terms. On the other hand, amateur footage of riots, such as videos posted by par-

graphic changes in suburban spaces, and how these factors will shift the structure of riots and strikes as forms of collective resistance.

Clover, who specializes in twentieth century Anglophone poetry and poetics, crisis theory, and political economy, mainly focused on intersections of literature, culture, and finance. In his talk, he elaborated on how and why tactics of civil resistance develop over time and changing economic systems. In the centuries before capitalism, the riot, defined as a violent form of civil disorder or chaos, was central to the tactical repertoire of the dominated classes. This situation persisted in the generalization of the marketplace that

urban and suburban spaces, and the influence of suburban riots. Using Seattle and St. Louis as examples for the suburbanization of poverty, Neel showed that more poor people in the US are currently residing in suburbs than in large cities. These national trends also signal a significant shift in the racial geography of the country, as thoroughly gentrified urban centers such as New York, Seattle, and San Francisco may soon be encircled by rings of suburban poverty and public housing, with the poor increasingly banished from the interior of the city. In his outlook, Neel opened up the problematic infrastructural aspects of these transformations, and posited how they will become influential for specific forms of suburban riots in the future. (Annekatriin Sommer)



ticipants or passersby on the Internet, often capture a building energy in events without creating a discernible narrative. Gilligan's film, *The Common Sense*, works around this problem of perspective by developing two different stories: the eruption of a revolution on the one hand, presented against a more personal narrative in which political events bring about no change. Gilligan is interested in the dispersal of market-wide experience into individual lives and how riots are generated from within capitalist social relations. In *The Common Sense*, as in her other films, she confronts difficult representational situations by moving beyond synchronic representations of socio-economic circumstances, such as graphs or individual film scenes. Her films do not trace a narrative with a development and culmination, but instead represent a serial string of activities. (Alexander Phillips)

The morning panel of the conference capitalized on the theme of "Time." **Joshua Clover** turned his gaze towards the past in order to theorize concepts of riot and strike as historical phenomena. In contrast, **Phillip Neel** (Department of Geography, University of Washington) presented an outlook on the future of geographic, economic, and demo-

presaged industrialization and the formation of a working class. Riots, while sometimes concerning themselves with taxes, land rights, and other traditional privileges, found their modern coherence as struggles in the marketplace. However, over the course of the nineteenth century, the strike, understood as the formalized tactic of passive resistance, emerged as the tactic of choice. Even when it adopts the violence and confrontation of riot, transforming sometimes into general insurrection, the strike nonetheless begins from the standpoint of labor and its product, and emphasizes a pacific and moralized element. Clover observed that strikes are legitimated precisely insofar as they are purged of violence; thus, a latent opposition comes to the fore, and the riot becomes the strike's 'other.' The riot is transformed, as it were, behind the back of the strike. It thence appears as the *métier* of the urban poor, the colonized peoples of the third world, of women and homosexuals and that strange new social category, the "youth," who are now involved in what has come to be called "The New Age of Riot."

From the perspective of this new generation of riot, as both a graduate student and curator of the website *ultra-com.org*, **Phillip Neel** presented a quantitative and qualitative analysis of geographic and demographic data of

In the second panel on Saturday, which focused on "Place and Manner," **Eli Friedman** (International and Comparative Labor, Cornell University) opened the discussion by examining conditions and causes of recent urban riots in the People's Republic of China. His presentation, entitled "Riots in the PRC," began by conceptualizing riots in general, distinguishing them from "social movements." Whereas a social movement is subject to the logic and language of the state and uses this language to express its demands, Friedman argued that riots operate according to their own internal logic, which remains unintelligible to authority. In contrast to a social movement that engages with the state in a continuous effort to achieve certain articulated goals, a riot, in declining to propose a specific vision of the future, appears from the perspective of the state as something ephemeral, violent, and spontaneous. Friedman then asked why it is that we are currently experiencing an "age of riots," specifically focusing his query on the conditions that have led to a massive increase of riots in China over the past decade. Friedman proposed four possible reasons for this increase: the withering of a civil society and the decline of organizations, such as unions, that mediate between the proletariat and the state; the informalization of work, which produces a large class of people that are no longer absorbed by formal labor; the commodification and militarization of urban public space, as cities move from spaces of production to spaces of bourgeois consumption; and an expanding denizenship class, that is, a growing population of workers who do not have access to full citizenship in their place of residence. The militarization of public space and the problems of denizenship are particularly pertinent in China, where citizenship is explicitly tied to registration in a given locality. Millions of migrants are thus excluded from full citizenship rights and from access to public spaces in the urban areas in which they live.

Next, **Tatiana Sverjensky** challenged the framework of the "campaign" as an organizing principle of political resistance, arguing

that the campaign, though emblematic of grassroots movements today, is in fact a historically specific form that is inherently reformist and limited in scope. A campaign has a concrete goal, and mobilizes a set of actors in order to achieve its stated reform or policy change; as such, it is easily narrativized and analyzed in the language of the state. Though anarchism has long been critical of reformism, Sverjensky argued that many ostensibly anti-reformist movements have in fact utilized the campaign as their default organizing structure, and thus have demonstrated an inconsistency between anarchist rhetoric and grassroots practice. The riot, on the other hand, produces a demand that cannot be answered in the language of the current system, and points to another possible model of (anti-)political resistance. As examples of campaigns that nevertheless make efforts to move beyond reified forms of resistance, Sverjensky turned to the SHAC (Stop Huntingdon Animal Cruelty) campaign to shut down one of the largest animal testing laboratories in Europe, and RAMPS (Radical Action for Mountain People's Survival), which seeks to end strip mining in Appalachia. While SHAC targets specific aspects of capitalist organization so as to more effectively attack parts of its structures, RAMPS explores possibilities of reproduction beyond capital. In conclusion, Sverjensky proposed that an "anti-politics" that allows for extra-legal tactics, organizes according to affinity rather than identity, and focuses on what an action produces rather than what it represents, could challenge the limitations of the campaign model of social movements. (Leigh York)

**Beverly Silver** (Department of Sociology, Johns Hopkins University) presented the keynote address that concluded the conference. Entitled "Age of Riots: Past and Present," Silver framed her lecture with three questions raised in order to define the notion of an "age of riots": How is it? What is it? What will it be?

Relying upon a wide-reaching historical framework, Silver focused on systemic cycles of crisis characteristic of the *longue durée* of historical capitalism. According to Silver, the cycles of crisis in these periods can be conceptualized as "pendulum swings" between the poles of capitalist profitability and systemic legitimacy. These cycles largely correspond to three periods of global economic hegemony since the early sixteenth century: the Dutch colonial empire that lasted until the mid-eighteenth century; the British colonial empire that lasted until the mid-twentieth century; and US-American hegemony that is now facing its own "terminal crisis."

For example, in the transition from British to American hegemony, the reestablishment of the Gold Standard in the "Great Transformation" of the 1920s served as a response to the profitability crisis of British hegemony, as evidenced by newly elected socialist governments that enacted austerity measures. In the 1960s and 1970s, the acceptance of Keynesian redistributive policies constituted the reaction to the systemic legitimacy crisis that corresponded with the rise of American hegemony. The neoliberal counterrevolution confronted a new profitability crisis in the proceeding years. Therefore, despite

the persistence of neoliberal policies today, a new legitimacy crisis has been at hand since 2003 and especially since 2008.

In addition to using empirical economic data, Silver confirmed and further elaborated her theoretical framework using a database of reports of labor unrest since 1870 from *The Times* of London and *The New York Times*. Reports of labor unrest increased in periods that marked the systemic legitimacy crisis and transition from one hegemonic power to another. These tumultuous periods of non-normative social unrest from under- and unemployed redundant laborers occurred during periods of financialization, marked by capital circulation, and followed longer, sustained periods of capital accumulation.

In the current systemic legitimacy crisis, reports of labor unrest began spiking in 2010 with striking workers at Honda in China, followed by resistance to austerity measures in the European Union, the Arab Spring, Occupy Wall Street in the United States, and more recent uprisings including those in Ferguson and worldwide. Far from being at "the end of history," Silver insisted that we are at another pivotal moment of transition in capitalism's historical cycles of transformation, creative destruction, and constant reorganization of our livelihood. Silver cautioned, however, that older Keynesian politics were a response to a past legitimacy crisis, and that the crises of the present and future demand that we radically rethink our modes of action. (Alexander Brown)

## Call for Submissions

### *The Peter Uwe Hohendahl Graduate Essay Prize in Critical Theory*

The Institute for German Cultural Studies is pleased to announce its 2015 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.

# ***THE CHALLENGE OF REALISM:*** **Theodor Fontane**



September 18-19, 2015

all events in  
**258 GOLDWIN  
 SMITH HALL**

Keynote Lecture:  
**Friday, Sept. 18, 4pm**  
**Eric Downing**  
 (University of NC)

***Fontane***  
 &  
***the Future Ends  
 of Realism***

**Workshop: Saturday, September 19**

**9:30am Sean Franzel, University of Missouri**  
*Schach von Wuthenow: Fleeting Fashions, Prussian Crisis,  
 and the Historical Novel*

**10:30am Ulrike Vedder, Humboldt Universität, Berlin**  
*Ringe, Glocken, Tränen: Theatralität in Graf Petöfy*

**12pm Anette Schwarz, Cornell**  
*Cécile, or the Invention of the Psyche in Space*

**2:30pm Peter Hohendahl, Cornell**  
*Eindringliche Beobachtung: Zur Konstitution des Sozialen  
 in Unwiederbringlich*

**3:30pm Elisabeth Strowick, Johns Hopkins**  
*Die Poggenpuhls: Fontanes Realismus der Überreste*

**5pm Samuel Frederick, Penn State**  
*Furnished Inutility: The Objects in Mathilde Möhring*

Pre-registration and  
 advance readings  
 required for workshop.  
 To register and receive  
 readings, please email  
 Olga Petrova at  
[ogp2@cornell.edu](mailto:ogp2@cornell.edu).

# Institute for German Cultural Studies Fall 2015 Colloquium Series

156 GOLDWIN SMITH HALL

FRIDAYS @ 3PM

## SEPTEMBER 4

Institut für deutsche  
Literatur  
Humboldt-Universität  
zu Berlin

## Andreas Kraß

Nur über seine Leiche:  
Literaturgeschichte der Männer-  
freundschaft

## SEPTEMBER 25

German Studies  
Yale University

## Kirk Wetters

Genealogy Trouble:  
Secularization in Löwith,  
Blumenberg, Schmitt  
and Agamben

## OCTOBER 16

German Studies  
Brown University

## Kristina Mendicino

Before Truth: Walter Benjamin's  
"Erkenntniskritische Vorrede"

## NOVEMBER 6

Germanic Languages &  
Literatures  
UNC at Chapel Hill

## Jonathan Hess \*

Mosenthal's Deborah and  
the Politics of Compassion:  
Anatomy of a Tearjerker

*\*co-sponsored by the Jewish Studies Program*

## NOVEMBER 20

German Studies  
Cornell University

## Paul Dobryden

Clouded Visions: Particulate  
Matter in F. W. Murnau's *Faust*  
and Hartmut Bitomsky's *Dust*

## DECEMBER 4

German Studies  
Cornell University

## Matteo Calla

Klopstock's *Darstellung* and  
the Cult of Aesthetic Experience

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<http://igcs.cornell.edu/>

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](mailto:ogp2@cornell.edu)).

Archived copies of past newsletters are available electronically at <http://ecommons.library.cornell.edu/handle/1813/10777>

*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](mailto:ogp2@cornell.edu)).*