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German Culture News
Cornell University IGCS
726 University Avenue
Ithaca, NY 14850

phone: 607.255.8408
email: lb433@cornell.edu

Leslie A. Adelson: Director
Lisa Bonnes Johnson: Editor & Designer

Sean Franzel: Copy Editor

Gizem Arslan:
Photographer & Student Coordinator

The Legacy of Kant: Classical Neo-Kantianism

"WHAT HAPPENED TO KANT IN NEO-KANTIAN AESTHETICS?"

Paul Guyer (Philosophy, University of Pennsylvania) opened the conference with a discussion of Kantian and Neo-Kantian aesthetics, asking (as his paper was titled) "What Happened to Kant in Neo-Kantian Aesthetics?" Guyer elucidated two aesthetic theories emerging from classical late nineteenth-century Neo-Kantianism; that of Hermann Cohen, as presented in his work *Begründung der Ästhetik*, and that of Wilhelm Dilthey, whose aesthetic theory appears in his writings on poetics and hermeneutics. Each of these philosophers created their own distinct synthetic theory of aesthetic experience, responding to and recasting Kant's account thereof. But, as Guyer pointed out, Cohen and Dilthey often strayed far from the letter of Kant's own writings, and were

clearly just as engaged with the aesthetic theories of the nineteenth century. Rational consciousness can, according to Cohen's reading of Kant, move in two directions: the scientific and the moral. Science is interested in how things really are, while morality is interested in how things should be; in Guyer's words, there is "the knowledge of reality on the one hand and the determination to change the will of reality on the other hand." But if art is to have a particular content, the cognitive and practical concepts that guide scientific and moral realms cannot be said to capture all elements of human experience. When aesthetic experience is concerned with knowledge or morality, it is interested in the underlying feelings upon which those forms of thought are built. It is therefore the dynamic of consciousness itself that becomes the content, an experience of self-sensing, self-feeling consciousness that precedes rigid determination. Guyer explained how Cohen intended this to

dovetail with Kant's theory of the free play of the faculties: "What animates the mind to free play is an awareness of a range of un-conceptualized feelings." Guyer went on to contrast Cohen's theory with that of Wilhelm Dilthey, whose aesthetics went in a very different direction from Cohen and Kant by insisting on the historical specificity of aesthetic experience. Dilthey argued that aesthetic experience is, in both its creation and reception, a rarified intensification of the poet's own experience in historical time. The difference between writer and reader of the poem is only a matter of degrees. Being bound to an historically located individual (the poet) the cumulative modes of relaying aesthetic experience remain historically determined, and a different set of formal tools would be available to poets living at different times. As commentator Peter Gilgen pointed out afterwards, a certain "willful misunderstanding of Kant" was necessary to pursue these theories. (P.B.)

(cont'd next page)

"HERMANN COHEN ON KANT'S TRANSCENDENTAL AESTHETIC"

Rolf-Peter Horstmann's talk (Philosophy, Humboldt University Berlin) "Hermann Cohen on Kant's Transcendental Aesthetic" provided the stimulus for one of the conference's most detail-oriented discussions, continuing the focus on one of the most prominent Neo-Kantians begun by Paul Guyer. Horstmann's argument hinged on a nuanced reading of Cohen's interpretation of one of Kant's central doctrines: the "thing-in-itself," or the realm of the noumena. For Horstmann, Cohen was one of the few (perhaps the only) Neo-Kantian who refused to do away with this doctrine. The other leading Neo-Kantians of the late nineteenth century believed that any investigation into the thing-in-itself invariably led to psychologistic interpretations of Kant, pan-logicism, or simply bad metaphysics. But Cohen, argues Horstmann, aims at siphoning out the "spirit" of Kant's philosophy, and comes close to achieving it in his work *Kants Theorie der Erfahrung*. It is here where Cohen identifies Kant as, above all, a theorist of experience. According to Cohen, Kant identifies a priori elements to be the foundation of experience, in part because experience is grounded in space and time. Cohen understands the elements of the a priori as being comprised of three distinct levels: a metaphysical one, which consists of space and time, and two transcendental levels, the first being the necessary conditions for empirical cognition, and the second being the mathematical justifications that sustain such cognition. The point of contention in this formula-

tion is that space here is assumed to be a priori, which as Horstmann reminded, Cohen takes to be a "given." Cohen's emphasis on the a priori conditions of cognition leads him to accept the epistemological claim of the thing-in-itself, which Cohen sees as a postulate, and even more so, as a task. This move, argues Horstmann, is wholly consistent with Cohen's realist reading of Kant's first Critique. Professor Michelle Koch (Cornell) responded with some interesting objections to Horstmann's presentation. She essentially questioned whether Cohen, in his claim to fidelity, was truly faithful to Kant in his potentially crude equations of the thing-in-itself with larger concepts like the "absolute idea," "experience," or the "transcendental object," which is what Horstmann was suggesting. In doing so, Koch wondered whether Cohen actually achieved what Horstmann claimed he did, which was the avoidance of either a psychologistic or pan-logistic reading of Kant. The verdict is still out. (A.L.)

"NEO-KANTIANISM AND THE POLITICS OF ENLIGHTENMENT"

Peter Gordon (History, Harvard University) offered an intellectual historian's perspective on Neo-Kantianism that placed the debates of Martin Heidegger and Ernst Cassirer in the political context of the interwar period. Introducing the dialogue of the two philosophers through their watershed meeting in Davos, Switzerland, Gordon's paper "Neo-Kantianism and the Politics of Enlightenment" focused on the intellectual exchange between Cassirer and Heidegger—a several-year debate often charac-

terized as that between existentialism and Neo-Kantianism—to explore how political tensions in the interwar years affected inflections of Enlightenment thought. In 1932, Cassirer published *The Philosophy of the Enlightenment*, a book that, in contrast to Heidegger's supposedly radical critique of modern philosophy, insisted on the relevance of Enlightenment thought as the paradigm for modernity. Gordon focused his close reading of *Philosophy* through Cassirer's notion of mental spontaneity and its distinction to Heidegger's concept of 'thrownness' (*Geworfenheit*). This notion of spontaneity identified the origin of creativity in thought itself. For Heidegger, however, faith in such a form of mental spontaneity was one of the main obstacles distracting man from accepting the passive nature of his existence. Gordon characterized the fundamental disagreement in this way: "whereas for Heidegger the defining flaw of philosophical modernity was its unwarranted confidence in the human subject as the creative force behind all things, for Cassirer it was just this confidence that most distinguished the Enlightenment and merited its ongoing defense." The onset of National Socialism in Germany saw many Jewish professors forced to leave their employment at universities. Likewise, advocates of Enlightenment philosophy—long aligned with Judaism and Jewish intellectuals—suffered the complications of anti-Semitic political sentiment, as Neo-Kantianism became a philosophical "scapegoat." Gordon concluded his argument by identifying this philosophical-political tension in Cassirer's reaction to Heideg-

grian existentialism. In Cassirer's final publication, *The Myth of the State*, written during his exile in the United States, he accused the concept of *Geworfenheit* of "helping to corrode the modernist's trust in mental spontaneity and it had thereby contributed to Germany's political disaster." With a final reminder that his distinctions between the two philosophers' works were coarse at best and that each philosophy merited discussion in its own right, Gordon closed by noting the historical irony that Heidegger himself was grounded in the very Neo-Kantian teachings that political influences would encourage him to turn against. (K.N.)

"NOUMENAL AFFECTION"

Desmond Hogan (Princeton University) argued that Kant's theory of freedom supports the account of noumenal affection that some have found in his mature works. The neo-Kantians Cohen, Natorp and Cassirer asserted that noumenal affection (the doctrine that we are affected by supersensible entities) is incompatible with Kant's system. Hogan argued, on the other hand, that Kant implicitly endorses noumenal affection in his mature works, and that this raises the problem of compatibility with Kant's doctrine of noumenal ignorance (the doctrine that we have no knowledge of the supersensible). Hogan did not try fully to resolve the problem, but he did show how a certain view of noumenal affection could play a key role in allowing for the individual free will of persons vis-à-vis the causal determination of phenomena. For Leibniz, the individual person is a "spiritual automaton" whose actions

are entirely determined by quasi-mechanical internal drives. This system in turn preserves a perfect conformity amongst all non-interacting substances. Kant holds by contrast that "in animals as in machines" there is "an external necessitation" but this does not hold for the free, conscious actions of human beings. Of course, humans are aware of others' bodily behaviors, but there is no causality that determines the action of each individual from outside. Action cannot be known in the way that phenomena are known; no determining ground of conscious action can be established, and thus comprehension of human action through perception or pure reason is impossible. Instead, the reality of the human being in its capacity for free activity is regarded, according to Kant, "as noumenon in the midst of its mechanism as phenomenon." (P.B.)

"EMIL LASK ON JUDGMENT AND TRUTH"

Dina Emundts (Humboldt University Berlin) discussed Emil Lask's theories of logic, judgment, and truth in her paper entitled "Emil Lask on Judgment and Truth." Emundts first drew the audience's attention to Lask's understanding of logical categories, in which he tried to rewrite Kant's original theory of transcendental logic. Linking Lask's theory of judgment to those of Husserl and Rickert, Emundts illustrated how Lask attempted to answer the question of how we can understand as a guideline for truth something that is independent of the subject. Emundts located the bridge between subject and object in the domain of judgment, where a predication could be

based upon the object. This allowed Lask to reduce different judgments to their original predications and to overcome grammatical judgment. This concretized Lask's idea that thought is not a metagrammatical predication, but a result of judgment about structure. By arguing that predications are true when they correctly represent relations between the subject and object, Lask sought to save Kant's spirit from the critique of subjectivism. Frederick Beiser (Syracuse University) began his commentary on Emundts' talk with a brief overview of Lask's short life. Beiser then pointed out that in his 1912 *Die Lehre vom Urteil* (The Doctrine of Judgment), Lask had completely desubjectified the conception of validity, and had stretched Kant to a breakpoint. According to Lask, Beiser pointed out, thinking and judging are processes of taking apart and rebuilding, and one judges wrongly when one rebuilds wrongly. Beiser suggested that Lask, having thus desubjectified validity, could not easily be regarded as Kantian. (G.A.)

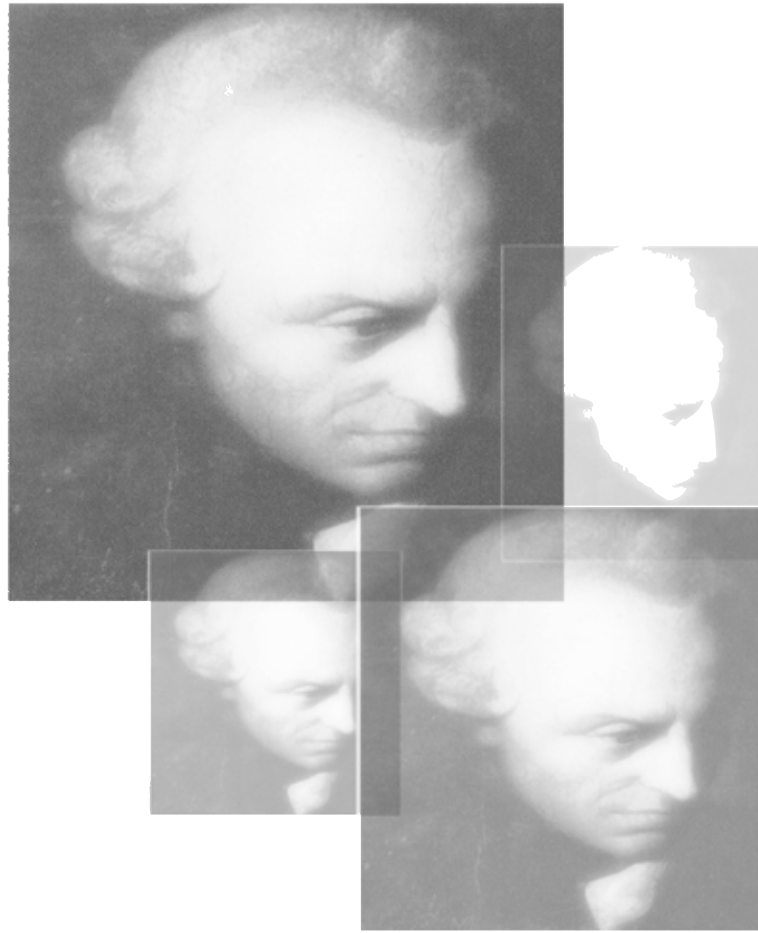
"INVOKING THE GREEKS ON THE RELATION BETWEEN THOUGHT AND REALITY: TRENDELENBURG'S ARISTOTLE, NATORP'S PLATO & BENNO ERDMANN'S SEXTUS"

Following was the paper by **Vasilis Politis** (Philosophy, Trinity College Dublin) entitled "Invoking the Greeks on the Relation between Thought and Reality: Trendelenburg's Aristotle, Natorp's Plato & Benno Erdmann's Sextus." Politis approached Neo-Kantian receptions of Greek philosophy through his primary interest in Plato and Aristotle.

tle, arguing that Natorp's reading of Plato's theory of forms in Plato's *Ideenlehre* can contribute to the understanding of Plato. At the same time, Natorp neglects certain questions that are arguably central for the understanding of Plato, namely how Plato's forms are related to explanations (*aitiai*), to sense-perception, and epistemological concerns. Politis discussed these issues in the context of Plato's account of explanation in the *Phaedo*, and of the argument for change and changelessness (*kinesis* and *stasis*) in the *Sophist*. Politis also posed the question of whether Adolf Trendelenburg's criticism of Kant in his *Logische Untersuchungen* and his defense of a distinctive alternative to transcendental idealism can contribute to the understanding of Aristotle. (G.G.)

“ERNST CASSIRER & THOMAS KUHN: THE NEO-KANTIAN TRADITION IN HISTORY AND PHILOSOPHY OF SCIENCE”

Michael Friedman (Stanford University) concluded the conference with his lecture entitled “Ernst Cassirer & Thomas Kuhn: The Neo-Kantian Tradition in History and Philosophy of Science”, which emphasized Thomas Kuhn's indebtedness to Neo-Kantian philosophy. Friedman began with a short summary of Kuhn's main thesis in *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*. For Kuhn, scientific paradigms shift suddenly and rapidly, and the gath-



ering of empirical evidence is not a necessary pre-condition for such shifts. Friedman likened Kuhn's ideas about scientific paradigm shifts to the Marburg School's historicized interpretation of Kant in which the 'a priori' is replaced by a developmental or genetic idea of science. According to Friedman, Ernst Cassirer introduced the first full articulation of a genetic idea of science in his text *Substanzbegriff und Funktionsbegriff*. The convergence in question in this developmental model would need to take place within scientific structures and not simply inside the mind, but is also primarily a functional rather than substantial category. Kuhn rejects all convergence to a concept of knowledge as absolute and in this way shares certain features with

the Marburg school's conception of knowledge. Cassirer, however, would conceive of all theories in a sequence as continuously converging in a final theory, such that all previous theories are approximate special cases of that final theory, such that reality would be the pure ideal limit of such a structure. This notion is quite Kantian, but Kuhn would not likely share it. Friedman connected this observation to Cassirer's understanding of science as a mathematization of nature, i.e. as the every increasing application of mathematics to empirical nature. This notion

of Cassirer's reveals another important difference between Cassirer and Kuhn. Where Kuhn is a follower of Meyerson when he embraces a substantialist ontological view of nature, Cassirer remains a relativist by accepting the continuity of mathematical structures as sufficient. Friedman finished his lecture by arguing that the integration of Einsteinian physics into Kant's universe poses substantial difficulties, but he also insisted that such integration is still possible. (J.S.)

Paul Buchholz, Ari Linden, Katrina Nousek, Gizem Arslan, Grace Gemmell, Jens Schellhammer are graduate students in the Department of German Studies.

German Mediascapes

DAAD Weekend Fall 2007

Conference organizer **Ute Maschke** (Cornell University) opened up this year's DAAD weekend, "German Mediascapes," with a performative demonstration of certain problems inherent to the medium of the power point presentation. By juxtaposing her spoken talk and the facile visuals of power point, Maschke indicated the need to approach the 'fourth estate'—i.e. news media in the public sphere—more critically. Questioning the relationship between media, consumers, and changing "modes of apprehending the world," Maschke cited Hans Magnus Enzensberger's cynical understanding of the freedom of modern consumers of media to separate media consumption from the pursuit of truth. Maschke pointed out that although the traditional media of newspapers and radio are still the most-trusted, they are losing out in actual use to the much less-trusted medium of the internet; this raises the question of the possible role of what might be called an inter-

net-based 'fifth estate.' After an electronic survey of conference participants on their media habits and awareness, Maschke concluded by inviting conference participants to rethink certain common fears about the future of media: that the end of newspapers is near, that an unhealthy amount of power is concentrated in the media business, that the emphasis on the local comes at the expense of the (inter)national, and that serious journalism will continue to turn into infotainment. (C.G.)

Rüdiger Lentz, director of Deutsche Welle North and South America spoke next about the difficulties of distributing objective, well informed, and globally oriented news coverage in the current German-American media landscape. In his presentation titled "The Media Scene in Germany, and Deutsche Welle and The Atlantic Times as German Image Builders on the U.S. Market," Lentz expressed concern over the increasing commercialization of German media. For Lentz, many

media outlets place too much emphasis on the marketing of news that caters to what the public wants to hear rather than what it needs to know. This leads to news that belies the complexity of current issues and creates a media-based rift between the United States and Europe. To illustrate this point, Lentz cited two unscientific polls in German publications in which Germans responded overwhelmingly that America is a bigger threat to "peace and prosperity" than both Russia and Iran. Lentz believed that these responses are the result of misinformation and media bias. Lentz discussed the specific role of Deutsch Welle in educating the world (and specifically the United States) about the "New Germany" and its role as integral part of the European Union. He also lauded the aims of the recently founded Atlantic Times, which targets elites with German news written in English by respected journalists. In the face of shifting American focus on Asian interests, the At-

lantic Times recognizes a need to focus on "new realities, common interests, [and] economic ties" between Germany and the United States. His hope is that further progress in this direction may begin to straighten out skewed and harmful trends in international news reporting. In closing, Lentz offered recommendations for the improvement of the global media landscape. He urged journalists to restore credibility to the news media and to increase professionalism in the face of pressure for success and the "scoop." Lentz called for trustworthy journalism that focuses on analysis and educating consumers about the complexity of contemporary political and economic issues. (M.E.)

In the next talk, **Patrizia McBride** (Cornell University) thematized the relationship between "Avant-garde Art and Mass Media in Weimar Germany" through a reading of selected work by the Dadaist montage artist Hannah Höch. Through Höch's work, McBride explored

different ways that the Western European avant-garde “changed the traditional ways of looking at art through sustained confrontation with mass culture.” The avant-garde defined itself in opposition to a traditional understanding of art, where everyday commodities do not count as works of art and artistic objects are seen to be distinct from everyday life; one of the central innovations of the avant-garde was to “scramble” the contexts associated with everyday items not normally understood as art. Höch’s work frequently commented on gender, femininity, and domesticity, and it scrutinized the media images of the “New Woman” that proliferated at the same time as the burgeoning of mass-distributed print and illustrated media in Weimar Germany. Using “Der Traum seines Lebens” (1925), “Deutsches Mädchen” (1930), and “Die Braut” (1933) as representative examples of Höch’s photomontage, McBride examined how the artist cut and combined images from magazines and periodicals to destabilize visual ideals of femininity, exoticism, fantasy, and sexual emancipation. The resulting artworks cause everyday images to signify in new ways and expose the complex

semiotic networks that underlie visual media, encouraging a more active critical reading of visual culture on the part of the viewer. Höch’s work was thus integral in engendering new modes of seeing. What better subject for art, McBride purported, than one that shows us how the ordinary objects around us fill our lives with meaning. (M.E.)

René Strien, director of Berlin-based publisher Aufbau Verlag, began his presentation with a brief overview of publishing in Germany in comparison to the United States. Strien explained that Germany is unique in that book prices are fixed; fixed book prices allow



René Strien, director Aufbau Verlag

small bookstores and publishers to compete with chain stores and larger publishing houses, which in turn guarantees diversity. The German book market contains a great variety of titles and the

book distribution system is highly complex. Nonetheless, bigger publishers and chain stores still alter market structures by manipulating shelf space. Strien also admitted that only major enterprises could sustain the distribution system and that there were almost too many titles, which often led to uneconomically small printing runs. With reading as the sixth most popular leisure-time activity in Germany, Strien expressed optimism for the future of German publishing. Strien then turned to the history of the Aufbau Verlag, which received a license from the Russians immediately after World War II and became a publishing success story during and after the collapse of the G D R . It was one of the few publishing houses from the former East to survive reunification. Today it is a mid-size company with an annual turnover of about sixteen million Euros, and is one of the few remaining independent publishers in Germany. Strien highlighted the im-

portance of the dialogic relationship between the publishing house and the readers, where the publishing house responds to the demands of the readers while at the same time bearing the responsibility to release high-quality books. He described the goal of Aufbau Verlag as enabling all readers feel like members of the human race by allowing them to see what they all have in common. Strien concluded his remarks by asking how we are to shape a media landscape that allows “old media” to thrive and develop new perspectives for the future. (G.A)

Sabine Haenni (Cornell University) opened her talk on transnational cinema with a short video clip documenting the competition between Volker Schlöndorff’s *Tin Drum* and Francis Ford Coppola’s *Apocalypse Now* at the 1979 Cannes Film Festival. *The Tin Drum* is a German, French and Polish co-production, and as Schlöndorff explains (in good French), this is a fight of the David of Europe against the Goliath of America. In the 1960s, the authenticity of foreign films had been stamped by their origin in a single national context: co-productions and dubbing were considered “against the culture” in which the film was made. However,

by 1979 it is not German but European cinema that is at stake. Haenni discussed the international and transnational engagements of the emerging European cinema by exploring two films, Schlöndorff's *The Circle of Deceit* (Die Fälschung) from 1981 and Wim Wenders's 1977 film, *The American Friend*. In *The Circle of Deceit*, western journalists from different countries find themselves in the no-man's land of the Green Line in Beirut, where civil war brings out the ugliest in national engagements. The film is decidedly multinational and multilingual, and slows down action to show the obstinacy of life in a city in chaos. *The American Friend*, is another co-production between France and Germany and is as much about European relations as about transatlantic relations. Haenni argued that the film appropriates the American gangster genre and includes a three-way exchange between a German, a Frenchman, and an American. In an extremely long and slow assassination scene, the clumsy assassin repeatedly stumbles against posters, embodiments of the transnational commodity market. According to Haenni, these films explore the negotiation of and creative engagement

with the newly emerging European market. (G.A.) In the evening continuation of the conference, **David Bathrick** (Cornell University) introduced the screening of *The Legend of Paul and Paula* to a lucky and select audience. This 1973 cult film from the GDR was directed by Heiner Carow and featured music by the band die Puhdys, a rock group that made its entrée into the German market through the film. Bathrick suggested that Paul and Paula came as a response to Erich Honecker's encouragement of artists to experiment creatively, claiming that there would be no more state-ordered taboos in culture and in literature. Paul and Paula represented a new direction in GDR film because it did not have a seamless narrative and questioned certain societal norms about sexuality. As Bathrick argued, for a time in the GDR, the recipe for a good socialist film came from a Hollywood cookbook. Necessary ingredients included a positive hero/role model with strong identificatory potential, a strong plot and seamless narrative, and a happy ending. *The Legend of Paul and Paula* is about a young man Paul and his extramarital relationship to the free-spirited single moth-

er Paula. Though Paul and Paula are eventually separated, Paul realizes later that he loves Paula, and his attempts to win

from the previous day's presentations. Discussing diagrams that illustrated audience answers to a variety of questions



David Bathrick
(German Studies/Theatre, Film & Dance, Cornell)

her back render their love legendary. Bathrick pointed out the significance of the word "legend," which can be understood as the story about a saintly person or a story much like a fairy tale. Paula wants to live in the present, and is full of integrity about fulfilling herself. In the end, she dies while giving birth to her and Paul's son, whom Paul adopts. Bathrick concluded with an open question, asking whether Paula's death represented that her failed self-fulfillment. (G.A.)

Conference organizer **Ute Maschke** began the second day of the conference with extended reflections on how and to what end different media outlets decide what is news or news-worthy information, drawing on findings

about their use and awareness of German media, Maschke argued that surveys and polls reveal some things about historical and political reality while masking others. Encouraging students and faculty in the audience to be aware of how gaps arise in the media coverage of various political, cultural and historical phenomena, Maschke appealed to an engaged, active practice of media use that should, as she put it, "mind the gaps rather than try to bridge them." The first presenter, **Stefanie Harris** (Northwestern University) used the occasion of the thirty-year anniversary of the "deutscher Herbst"—terrorist violence by the R.A.F. and affiliated groups in the fall of 1977—to reflect on

how aesthetic and medial strategies can support or problematize dominant state-centered ideologies. Harris showed two cinematic representations of this period in German history, one from the collaborative film "Deutschland im Herbst" and one from a more recent TV docu-dramatization of a 1977 airplane hijacking, and contrasted the compositional and ideological strategies of both. She read "Deutschland im Herbst" to complicate the viewer's understanding of Germany's historical past by forcing the viewer to engage actively in the production of meaning, relating this strategy to Alexander Kluge's notion of a counter or oppositional public sphere as a form of public debate that attempts to subvert dominant modes of opinion production in the mass media. The fact that this film was criticized both by the right and the left was a sign to Harris of the film's productive complication of ideological categories and positions rather than of some inherent weakness of the film. She contrasted this kind of medial engagement with a more conventional docu-drama that worked with a simple, unproblematic notion of the role of the medium of film in thematizing the past.

Peter Gilgen (Cornell University) juxtaposed several different accounts of the relationship between politics and media in his paper "Mediocracy/Mediocrity." Gilgen engaged with the ambiguity of his paper's title as a way to question the notion of a political public sphere governed by the dictates of modern technological mass media, or what the German political scientist Thomas Meyer calls a "Mediocratie." For Meyer, the mass media have 'colonized' the political system, moving extended political debate ever more towards the meaningless sound bite oriented to news cycles and advertising revenues rather than to the functioning of a healthy body politic. For Gilgen, Meyer simply reproduces traditional criticisms of democracy going back to Plato's political philosophy. A more pragmatic account of political decision-making processes in a modern democracy, such as that by American critic Louis Menand, could temper Meyer's pessimism about the persistent (and

often frustrating) fact of modern voters' relative ignorance about the basics of their political system. Gilgen then turned to Niklas Luhmann's systems theory and the notion of the relative differentiation of political and medial systems to propose an account of the distinctness, yet "structural coupling" of media and politics. Politics and media operate according to distinct logics for Luhmann, and for that reason do not have a direct causal effect upon each other as social systems. The cultural critic and social philosopher should look to sites where each

notions of the collection of medial products in an archive typical to print and other materially tangible media. Digital information accessible on the Internet is characterized by an immateriality and transience unique in relation to other media; hence, the notion of a digital archive means something radically different from a print archive (i.e. library). Reich-Casad explored the theoretical ramifications of this paradigm shift, and how contemporary media artists attempt to thematize this medial instability and transience into their artworks. She discussed how the CD-Rom periodical journal project "Art-intakt" put out by the Zentrum für Kunst und Medientechnologie in Karlsruhe dealt with issues of narrative and cultural memory in this new medium. Her paper culminated in a close

reading of an interactive DVD artwork "The Last Cowboy" that juxtaposed images from the American West and from East Germany in an attempt to perform cultural identity in new ways. (S.F)

Carl Gelderloos, Megan Eaton, Gizem Arslan, and Sean Franzel are German Studies graduate students.



**Ute Maschke and Mickey Reich-Casad
(German Studies, Cornell)**

system irritates the other's logic rather than to places where one supposedly dominates or instrumentalizes the other.

The final paper of the conference by **Mickey Reich-Casad** (Cornell University) drew attention to the need for the re-conceptualization of



Bassam Tibi
(photo courtesy of Davydd Greenwood)

On September 14th and 15th, 2007 at the Kahin Center, scholars from diverse fields of interest came together for an international colloquium and series of panel discussions entitled “Imagining Muslims/Imagining Others: South Asia, Southeast Asia, and Europe.” The gathering attempted to blend perspectives around three elements pertaining to questions of religious pluralism: positive images (good others), negative images (bad others) and historical contexts

IMAGINING MUSLIMS/ IMAGINING OTHERS: SOUTH ASIA, SOUTHEAST ASIA, AND EUROPE

and causes (historical others). Bassam Tibi, professor of international relations at the University of Göttingen and A.D. White Professor-at-Large at Cornell University, was among the presenters of the set of public lectures and workshops.

Tibi’s statements drew on his paper “Euro-Islamic Religious Pluralism for Europe: An Alternative to Ethnicity and to ‘Multiculturalism of Fear.’” Tibi’s paper presented a concept of Euro-Islam based on the idea of religious pluralism, describing pluralism as a combination of diversity and a consensus over values and rules. He posed Euro-Islam as “an alternative to an ethnicization of Islam in Europe resulting in a multiculturalism of fear.” Tibi argued that pluralism is an absolute necessity in a world where people of different cultural and religious

backgrounds must live with one another. In addition, he argued that previous models of multiculturalism and diversity have revealed themselves to be insufficient for coming to terms with the contemporary situation. Tibi insisted upon the importance of Euro-Islam as a model by which locals reinterpret Islam for Europe and render it European. He proposed several strategies for achieving pluralism, including the integration of Muslims into civic and civil culture and the maintenance of diversity, which implied consensus over values. Tibi highlighted the importance of refashioning European civil society as a home for the Muslims of Europe, which could help “relieve Muslims and Europeans from the effects of diasporic identity politics that uses cultural tensions for elevating the fault-lines into deeper conflicts.” (Gizem Arslan)



On October 24th, **Andreas Langenohl** (University of Konstanz) gave a talk entitled “Reflexivity in the Social Sciences and Humanities: A Double-Edged Asset” at the A.D. White House. Langenohl, a repeated visitor to Ithaca under the aegis of the Institute for German Cultural Studies and the Departments of German and Asian Studies, presented his newly-founded research group at the University of Konstanz entitled “Idioms of Social Analysis,” an interdisciplinary project funded by the recently awarded ‘excellence initiative’ of German higher education. Langenohl’s research group occurs as part of the larger project interrogating the “Cultural Foundations of Social Integration” at Konstanz, one of the beneficiaries of recent funding restructuring in the German university system. Langenohl’s talk presented his recent work

Langenohl

on the notion of reflexivity in contemporary society and on the interrelation of theories of reflection and modernization. As a sociologist, Langenohl was particularly interested in the role that reflexivity plays in social theories of thinkers such as Giddens, Beck, Bourdieu and others. For Langenohl, reflexivity is an important concept of cross-disciplinary interest, both as a critical concept and as a notion worthy of critique due to its overuse in current neo-liberal policy debates. An audience consisting of social scientists as well as members of the German and Asian Studies departments participated avidly in the post-talk discussion, raising questions about Langenohl’s theoretical indebtedness to philosophical hermeneutics, contemporary post-colonial social theorists, and the intellectual legacy of German Idealism. (Sean Franzel)

On November 15th, **Michael Steinberg** (Brown University) delivered a talk entitled, “The Uses of Disenchantment: Secularity in History and Theory,” co-sponsored by the Institute for German Cultural Studies and the Society for the Humanities. He opened with a discussion of a scene in Verdi’s *Falstaff*, an opera based on Shakespeare’s *Merry Wives of Windsor*. Following Harold Bloom, who once identified the figure of Falstaff as an embodiment of “immanent secularity,” Steinberg argued that this opera can be read as a representation of musical modernity in that it showcases instability, the absence of a “home” key, and syncopation, all of which are characteristics of what Steinberg identified as the “secular.” Secularity, however, resists crude periodization, and must be understood instead in terms of commonalities that underscore all modern thought: the notion of emancipation, the “dialectic of distance,”

Steinberg

repetition with difference (Freud), critique, and a turn to materiality, all in one. In this sense, Verdi’s opera is both a metaphor and a literal symptom of this very condition. Steinberg then moved toward a brief discussion of the new wave of “post-secularism.” His most comedic moment was perhaps when he read the blurb on the back of a book that praised the book as if it were holy scripture. This, Steinberg argued, seemed more indicative of a change in the *Zeitgeist* than the content of the book itself. One student asked how he would situate Verdi’s opera within in an Italian context, to which Steinberg replied that it fits very well into Italian notions of modernity, especially if one understands this as the mixing in the old with the new. Steinberg concluded with the suggestion that secularity may also be understood as the ability to embrace adulthood, citing certain political figures as prime examples of the opposite of this phenomenon. (Ari Linden)

Logics of the Living

On October 12th and 13th in the A.D. White House at Cornell, the graduate students of the Department of Comparative Literature brought together presenters from a variety of disciplines to offer further reflections on how the question of “life” is ordered, represented, repressed, celebrated, idealized or domesticated in the humanities today.

While a linguistic paradigm dominated theoretical inquiry in the humanities in the last decades of the 20th-century, crucial questions of literature, philosophy and politics are increasingly formulated in terms of “life” rather than language. Extending across disciplines, whether medical, environmental, juridical, philosophical, anthropological, or biological, an open-ended concept of “life” has also come to inform critical thinking in the humanities. How does an emerging life paradigm in the humanities reflect or lead to the development of various “logics of the living” through which “life” becomes an organizing principle or system, whether aesthetic, conceptual, or social? How do these “logics of the living,” as metaphors, actualities, ethical foundations, or theoretical frameworks, come to inform cultural criticism?

Productive Logics

Taran Kang (Cornell) opened the panel “Productive Logics” on Friday, October 12th, with his paper entitled “Reproduction and Recognition in Wilhelm Jensen’s *Gradiva*.” In his paper, Kang investigated the concept of reproduction, its ontological and epistemological significance, and the possibilities it opens for “productive ways of approaching and reading works of literature.” Jensen’s 1903 novella is known today mostly because of Freud’s interpretation of it. The novella tells the story of a young archaeologist named

Norbert Hanhold and his fascination for a plaster copy of a bas-relief of a robed woman. *Gradiva* is Latin for “the one who walks,” and Hanhold later dreams of being transported back to Pompeii where he is struck by the unusual gait of the same woman as in the relief, before the ashes of the volcanic eruption consume the city. In an instance of psychoanalysis of a fictional character rare in his oeuvre, Freud interprets Han-

hold’s fetish as the result of his feelings for Zoe

Bertgang, his childhood playmate. Kang

offered to shift the focus of inquiry

from the workings of unconscious

processes to “a broader medita-

tion on the status of intellec-

tual activity in relation to

life.” Kang then directed the

audience’s attention to the

juxtaposition of archaeol-

ogy and zoology in *Grad-*

iva, where the two schol-

arly quests— archeological

discovery of antiquities and

the categorization of living

beings— are brought together

in a novella that reveals a fascina-

tion with surfaces and valorizes cer-

tain modes of living at the expense of others.

Media and Biopolitics, or,

The Animatic Apparatus

In her paper “Media and Biopolitics, or, The Animatic Apparatus,” **Deborah Levitt** of The New School challenged the invocation of life as a scientific concept in political discourses and the mainstream media. Instead, following Agamben, she affirmed life as an ethico-political concept. She then drew attention to “devices like the zoetrope” and to “the names of the first cinema cameras patented in 1895: the U.S Vitascope, German Bioscope, and English Animatograph,” where new technologies and media are linked to new concepts of real life (such as the concept of a “live” broadcast). Referring then to Agamben’s *Notes on Gesture*, Bernard Steigler’s *Technics and Time*, and Brian Massumi’s *Parables for the Virtual*, Levitt showed

the ways in which definitions of life are (re)produced “biopolitically” in “media as an animatic apparatus.”

Living Code: Language, Acculturation, and the Trope of Pregnancy in Yoko Tawada's *Ein Gast*

Mickey Reich-Casad (Cornell University) concluded the panel with “Living Code: Language, Acculturation, and the Trope of Pregnancy in Yoko Tawada's *Ein Gast*.” Reich-Casad continued Levitt's media-theoretical perspective and chose to focus on the rise of the virtual, “the increasing recognition and acceptance of the interpenetration of communication systems and material life.” Reflecting on the concept of material life, Reich-Casad held that the word “genome” understood as a “code of life”, introduces a new model for cultural reproduction by supplanting the older writer-addressee model. This older model, she argued, implied a male writer and a text that flows between him and an idealized female reader, whose body is figured “as a site of cultural reproduction.”

Referring to a recent e-mail by Judith Roof in the list-serv of a media arts discussion entitled “The Poetics of DNA: The Evacuation of Representation,” Reich-Casad presented the new problems posed by “the genomic logic of the virtual,” namely that it allows the notion of genetic determinism to insinuate itself into cultural production and mythology. Roof describes this process as an “evacuation of representation” or a “foreclosure of representation.” Reich-Casad posited a kind of “virtual indexicality” as a viable critical apparatus to current cultural preoccupations. She then brought this new indexicality to bear upon notions of fertility treatment, “a fragmentizing intervention” by techno-science enacted in the name of age-old “configuration of identity and power.” Reich-Casad then turned to the importance of the figure as it relates “cultural reproduction to biological reproduction,” exemplified in Yoko Tawada's 1993 novel *Ein Gast*. *Ein Gast*, she argued, plays out the question of the virtual around the trope of pregnancy, and opens this trope onto “broader ways of thinking the virtual in terms of ideology and empowerment.” (Gizem Arslan)

THE COMMON EUROPEAN FRAMEWORK OF REFERENCE FOR LANGUAGES AND ITS EFFECT ON THE TEACHING, LEARNING, AND ASSESSMENT OF LANGUAGES IN THE U.S.

On October 26th and 27th, Ute Maschke and the Institute for German Cultural Studies organized a conference devoted to the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages and its effect on the teaching, learning, and assessment of languages in the U.S. The conference consisted of a keynote lecture, a plenary panel and a series of workshops and group discussions designed to bring together professionals in language instruction, assessment, second language acquisition and curriculum development from across different Cor-

nell departments, across the country and across the Atlantic, in order to share experiences and opinions of the usefulness of the CEFR in the US. Ute Maschke's introductory remarks stressed the significance of the CEFR

for rethinking language study in an era marked by globalization, migra-



Plenary Session I



Gunhild Lischke (Cornell University) and
Sauli Takala (University of Jyväskylä)

tion, and developments in media technology. The keynote lecture that followed, given by **Sauli Takala** of the University of Jyväskylä, Finland and Chair of the European Association of Language Testing and Assessment, addressed the history and reception of the CEFR in Europe. He stressed the usefulness of the framework in providing a common basis for the elaboration of syllabi, curricula, exams and textbooks and for emphasizing an “action-oriented” view of language use. He also mentioned the two main criticisms that the framework has received, namely that, in the estimation of SLA professionals, its theoretical framework is shaky and overly “teacher-based,” and secondly that the framework is not language-specific, i.e. it does not take into account structural differences between languages that might make the learning-process of, say, Finnish by a English speaker unfold differently than the

and teachers who will use it in a specific context. (Josh Dittrich)

The plenary discussion that took place the following morning consisted of short contributions by panelists who had had extensive and varied experience implementing the CEFR in their professional work. The first speaker was **Ally Muller** (Professor of Education Research, University of Nebraska), who discussed the implementation of a CEFR-based “Linguafolio” portfolio system in the K-12 school system in Nebraska, and its positive effects on student learning and professional development. The second speaker **Randall Lund** (German, Brigham Young University) discussed the positive impact of portfolio-based assessment on student motivation as a result of his systematic implementation of the framework during the last five years. Both Lund and Muller suggested the possibil-

learning of Portuguese by a Spanish speaker. His overall emphasis was on the possibility of adapting the framework, not necessarily adopting it wholesale, i.e. on the adaptability of the framework to suit the needs and ideas of students

ity that portfolio-based assessment could affect curriculum changes not just in language departments, but across all curricula in both K-12 and higher education. **Uwe Rau**, of New York City’s Goethe Institut, affirmed the usefulness of the CEFR in standardizing the teaching and testing of German as a foreign language across the 80+ Goethe Institutes worldwide. Finally **Gunhild Lischke** (Cornell) raised the point that, beyond the experiences of Muller and Lund, the framework is not necessarily just an assessment tool, but rather has the capability of impacting the curriculum as a whole, i.e. instructors, learners, teaching materials, and the progression of learning from one level to the next. In her experience the framework leads to more transparency and teamwork in the functioning of a language program, allowing intellectual space for the autonomy of both students and teachers (including junior instructors). (Josh Dittrich)

In the focus session entitled “Framework Levels, Portfolios, and other Assessment Systems,” **Randall Lund** (Brigham Young University) discussed the educational functions, principles and purposes of the Language Portfolio as conceived for the CEFR. Stressing the importance for language portfolios of learner ownership, positive focus, and life-long perspective upon language learning, Lund gave examples of various types of scales used to describe language ability. CEFR scales include global scales used by instructors and self-assessment grids that the students use to evaluate themselves. In both kinds of scales, Lund maintained, good descriptors of language

ability had to be positive, concrete, clear, brief and independent. According to the ELP Interim Report of 2006, portfolios and self-assessment appeared to stimulate a positive change in school culture and allow students and instructors alike to value learning as a whole. He then pointed to possible problems with the portfolio system, which could arise if portfolios are not adapted locally to a language program or to a specific language, or if the program focuses narrowly on checklists, assessment and reporting only, without adapting other elements of the CEFR. (Gizem Arslan)

the target language to measure individual progress and set goals for future learning. These goals allow the learner to take a more responsible role in their language learning by making them aware of the extent of their abilities and highlighting areas where they may desire to become more proficient, thus providing the opportunity to pursue personal learning goals.

The Cornell German Studies Department has employed the CEFR by writing detailed “can-do” descriptions for each of their courses. This creates transparency for learners about what they can expect from both themselves and

languages or courses. (David Low)

The focus groups on the introduction to the Common European Framework and on language policy were combined. Ute Maschke opened the discussion by asking whether a single language policy could be devised for the entire country. She also proposed to consider the problem of collaboration among language teaching professionals interested in the CEFR: what makes collaboration (not) work. Maschke cited stiff competition and the volume of work required as possible obstacles. Some participants of the focus

group who were school teachers inquired about sources of basic information about the framework. An abundance of such sources exists, as well as possibilities for funding and teacher professional development, but one recommended starting point is a resource housed on the Goethe Institute website (www.goethe.de/usa) or the Wikipedia entry on the CEFR. Jacque van Houten joined the discussion over the telephone. She informed the participants on the latest developments in implementing the CEFR in the United States. For example, schools are adopting a kind of thinking that is informed by the framework.

Also, much of the work on intercultural descriptors has been completed, and they are in the stage of being piloted. Participants further contemplated ways of relating the framework to existing grading practices and methodologies. There seems to exist certain anxiety about the framework challenging some established testing practices and curricula, which might affect the



Plenary Session II

Gunhild Lischke (Cornell University) led another focus session that presented how the Cornell German Studies Department uses the CEFR in all levels of German language instruction. She emphasized that the CEFR focuses on the learner’s proficiencies rather than his deficiencies. Both instructor and learner employ “can-do” descriptions of how the learner uses

instruction, and creates a learning continuity connecting all language instruction courses. The CEFR avoids the use of language instruction jargon, which allows teachers of all abilities to work within the cohesive teaching system and also allows the CEFR to be used with any language, though some re-working of the “can-do” descriptions is necessary when tailoring them to other

institutional advancement of students. Yet the framework acts as a tool of reference, not as a testing device or prescriptive set of methodologies. (Martins Masulis)

The conference ended with a plenary session that summarized and further discussed each workshop. Participants from the workshop on customizing the CEFR to specific institutional environments asserted that effective use of the CEFR entailed incorporating it with both language and literature aspects of language teaching, and that the “can-do” descriptors must be tailored to each course and undergo constant revision. There was some confusion about how the CEFR should be applied, as some participants hoped to apply the CEFR verbatim. In response to this, Gunhild Lischke emphasized that the CEFR is not a one-size-fits-all program.

The group on the development, purposes, and standards of portfolios discussed how portfolios work in different learning contexts and how the levels of the CEFR and the OPI systems compare and correlate to each other. The topic of comparison led to a discussion of standards of evaluation for the CEFR, which have been developed by some institutions for their own use but are not an implicit part of the CEFR. A discussion of the pros and cons of standard evaluation and its application to the CEFR followed, which concluded that research had only scratched the surface of this area and any final analysis would have to wait until more inquiries have been conducted. One final voice suggested that instruc-

tors should concentrate on working with the CEFR in such a way that doesn't reduce it to mere testing.

The Language Quality and CEFR Introduction sessions were combined for the sake of time and discussed the current state of language teaching in the United States and the possibility of establishing a uniform language policy involving the CEFR. Many institutions are implementing the CEFR, but a change in the mentality of both teachers and students is necessary for the CEFR to become an effective tool on a wider scale. Examples of this include developing mentalities for more personal work in the language learning process and the harmonization of the CEFR with already established language learning paradigms. In order for these to take place, a sense of ownership in the CEFR and a support network that creates communities of CEFR practitioners must come into existence. Ute Maschke pointed out that learning paradigms already in place are compatible with CEFR since it is only a

tool and does not determine methodology. There are already some websites that foster CEFR communities, many of which may be found on the CEFR Wikipedia entry or by googling the CEFR. An on-line self-assessment test using the CEFR is also available at www.langportfolio.unl.edu. (David Low)

Josh Dittrich, David Low, Gizem Arslan, and Martins Masulis are graduate students in the Department of German Studies.



Sauli Takala (University of Jyväskylä)

IGCS Spring Writer-in-Residence

Author Christine Rinderknecht will be the IGCS Writer-in-Residence for the Spring 2008 semester. During her tenure (April 6-27) she will present a literary reading, give a lecture on contemporary aesthetics, and conduct a mini-seminar for graduate students.

Schedule of Events

April 8th
4:30pm

Literarische Lesung
Guerlac Room- AD White House

April 9th, 16th, & 23rd
5pm-7pm

Kompaktseminar
"Das Theaterwunder
Schweiz"

177 Goldwin Smith

April 24th

4:30pm
Corneller Vorlesung
zur Ästhetik der
Gegenwart

Location and title TBA



Christine Rinderknecht
(photo courtesy of Pendo Verlag)

From Mighty State to Civil Society: The Impact of Foundations on Contemporary Germany

Lecture by **Michael Goering** (President, ZEIT-Stiftung)

February 7, 2008

4:30pm

153 Uris Hall

Cornell University

Romantic Media *Symposium*

April 26, 2008

As soon as we distance ourselves from the notion of Romanticism as disengaged from social reality—the Romantic with his head in the clouds, as it were—and critically examine attempts to intervene in politics and culture around 1800, at once we must ask about the media of Romantic social efficacy. That said, the question of the media through which intellectuals engage with and alter their environs does not seem to pertain identically to all historical periods; indeed, European thought around 1800 undertakes a radical interrogation of both concepts of mediation and medial technologies with which we are still trying to come to terms. Ranging from the pragmatics and polemics of printed and oral communications media to Chladni's exploration of acoustic media, from the figure of mediation in German Idealism to the awakening of political consciousness through theater (Kleist) or poetry (Novalis), the period usually referred to as 'Romanticism' represents a cluster of competing and often divergent configurations of the status and function of media and mediality. This cross-disciplinary symposium proposes to reflect open-endedly on Romantic notions of media and medial practices, considering the often unconventional deployment of conventional communications media as well as ways that certain thinkers attempt to expand the figure of mediation more generally. Participants will include Professors Andrew Piper (German Studies, McGill University) and Robin Sowards (English, Hobart and William Smith Colleges) and graduate students Ryan Plumbley (History, Cornell) and Sean Franzel (German Studies, Cornell).

The Technology of Memories: Collective Traumatic Remembrance in Modern Germany

DAAD Summer Seminar
Cornell University June 16 - July 27, 2008

The DAAD Summer Seminar on The Technologies of Memories would have three distinct points of orientation. The first would be a focus on the collective memory of specific catastrophic events occurring within the period of modernization in Germany from the end of the 19th Century through World War II. Possible examples here would include memories of World War I; the Holocaust; the air war over Germany in WW II; memories of specific one-time events. Secondly, we would be concerned with how such memories are constructed, preserved, manipulated, circulated (Kittler) and even fabricated via specific media technologies. These would include film, photography, radio, television and print media (newspapers, comics, and literature). What emerges then as a final issue are questions about what sorts of political, cultural, bureaucratic, linguistic or even “imagined communities” are created or enabled via the circulation of various memories and memory technologies.

Director: David Bathrick

(Professor of German/Theatre & Film, Cornell University)

Deadline: March 1, 2008

Contact:

Lisa Bonnes Johnson (lb433@cornell.edu)
Cornell Institute for German Cultural Studies
726 University Avenue
Ithaca, NY 14850

Tuition:

DAAD tuition stipends are available
for participants.

A \$50 administrative fee applies.

Eligibility:

Open to faculty in the humanities and social sciences at colleges and universities in the U.S. and Canada. Recent PhDs who do not yet hold faculty appointments will also be considered. Applicants must be citizens or permanent residents of the U.S. or Canada.

UNDEAD ENDS: Expression and Non-Organic Life in the Art History of Wilhelm Worringer

As part of a dissertation that describes modernist literary innovations as intensifications of the problems and practices of German *Lebensphilosophie*, **Josh Dittrich** (German Studies) presented a paper that worked to expose the paradoxical conception of “style” found in the “genre-bending” writings of Wilhelm Worringer. Dittrich began by discussing the problem of the relationship between words and concepts, building on references to Goethe’s *Faust* found in Worringer’s writings to emphasize the devilish way in which words can cover up the absence of a proper conceptualization. Dittrich hypothesized that *Lebensphilosophie* is marked in particular by the vicissitudes of the word-concept relation, in that its key terms (such as “life” and “expression”) take on a life of their own and cause the certainty of philosophical discourse to break down. In order to approach this problem as found in Worringer’s texts, Dittrich resolved to compare what Worringer’s texts say with what they actually *do*. Beginning with Worringer’s *Abstraction and Empathy*, Dittrich explained how this work describes two opposing motives driving artistic creation: the drive for empathy and the drive for abstraction, which correspond to the demands of “organic life” (tangible, human) and “inorganic life” (primordial, mysterious, undefined). On the example, then, of Worringer’s *Form in Gothic*, Dittrich showed how these opposing poles eventually collapse into one another, and how the “inorganic forms” of gothic geometry seem to come alive, no longer forming as a means of expression but as the very content of expression; this is what Worringer calls “the radical self-expression of Gothic art,” which “imposes itself violently on the viewer.” (Paul Buchholz)



‘MONSTERS’ and ‘WONDROUS BIRTHS’: Cases of Physical ‘OTHERNESS’ as Media Events in Early Modern Europe

The topic of **Patrick Schmidt’s** (University Gießen) colloquium paper was “‘Monsters’ and ‘Wondrous Births’: Cases of Physical ‘Otherness’ as Media Events in Early Modern Europe.” A visiting fellow at the Institute for German Cultural Studies, Schmidt is a member of Gießen research group that investigates transnational media events from early modernity to the present day. The special focus of his own project is the reporting on instances of bodily alterity (that is, “monsters” and “wondrous births”) in the mass media of the early modern period. The subject throws light on both the conti-

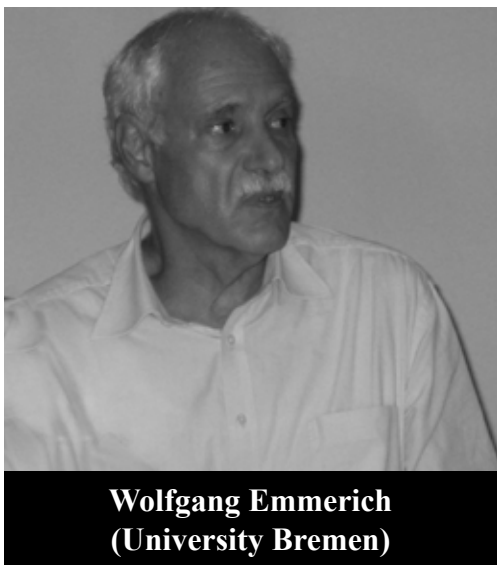


Patrick Schmidt (University Gießen)

nunities and transformations in the mechanisms that bring about media events: for example, while fascination with unusual bodies persists in the media to this day, the reception of such phenomena has changed over time. Whereas a *Flugblatt* in the sixteenth century would interpret extraordinary natural phenomena—among them abnormal births—as ill omens or warnings from God, the newspaper in the Enlightenment era would dismiss such irrationality and seek more scientific explanations. While the invention of printing with moveable type allowed for broader transmission of reports of bodily alterity, documentary accuracy was not always characteristic of such reports. On the one hand, narratives and visualizations of unusual bodies could be guided by interpretation first, and with that by established mythology or symbols that purveyed instant meaning. On the other hand, tales of “monstrosity” could be instrumentalized in political and confessional struggles to dehumanize opponents or to highlight a kind of overall decadence. Sometimes rumors located odd creatures in remote places, thus making verification impossible. On other occasions, authors of publications made special efforts to validate their reports, invoking eyewitnesses and special qualifications. Whether accurate or not, events that objectively had only private significance were elevated to the position of “media events,” claiming relevance for and scrutinized by the greater public. That, too, remains characteristic of today’s media. Newer research reveals further functions of narratives of bodily alterity: as ways to reinforce social discipline, patriarchal order, norms of sexual behavior, and more generally, notions of identity and alterity. Pamphlets could also serve as marketing devices for actual shows involving unusual bodies. Later in history, publications might reflect a strange juxtaposition of fascination, enthusiasm, uneasiness, satire, and criticism of this type of media events. Whatever the motivation for publishing such material, the eventfulness and uniqueness of the natural phenomena have remained unquestioned and often taken for granted. (Martins Masulis)



Dritte Räume als Gegenstand der Deutschlandforschung



Wolfgang Emmerich
(University Bremen)

Wolfgang Emmerich, an internationally acknowledged expert in the literatures of the DDR and co-founder of the International Graduiertenkolleg on Interdisciplinary Studies in Bremen, presented a paper focused on German literature of so-called “third spaces.” Emmerich’s theoretical point of departure was Homi Bhabha’s metaphor of “in-between spaces” and he discussed this metaphor’s applicability to German Studies. Professor Emmerich tried to sketch a plausible method for understanding changes in the field of Germanistik since its founding, from the insistence on the national, self-centered character of German literature to its embrace of difference. Emmerich noted six historical tendencies that justified the emphasis on difference: a) exile literature from 1933 until 1945 and the transformation from a national literature to a de-territorialized literature; b) literature of Jewish authors of German origin, writing under the trauma of

the Shoah; c) works of Jewish authors of the third or fourth generation, who raise the problem of belonging to a language or culture even more dramatically; d) literature of German authors, many of them products of multiple linguistic identities, forced to relocate from East to West Berlin and vice-versa; e) literature of authors belonging to German speaking minorities in Sibiu, Banat and Bukovina; f) contemporary literature of migration. Emmerich then elaborated his understanding of the “third space” with Kafka’s infamously enigmatic short prose piece entitled *Die Sorge des Hausvaters*. The attempt to define German literature according to the “third space” metaphor is not unproblematic, as revealed by the debates following the paper presentation, as colloquium participants proposed that the theorization of the “third space” seemed to be yet another version of enforced homogenization. Discussion emphasized the difficulty of undertaking German Studies nowadays without considering discourses of media studies, post-colonial studies, and other recent theoretical and methodological complications of the discipline. From this perspective, the “third spaces” become spaces of prime importance, and “minor” voices become major in contemporary approaches to modern German literature. (Arina Roturu)



History and the World: The Natural History of Africa in Widmer and Hegel

In his colloquium paper, **John Noyes** (University of Toronto) returned to the question, or lack thereof, of Africa in Hegel’s philosophy of history through a reading of Urs Widmer’s *Im Kongo* (1996). By engaging with the mythic narrative of timeless African nature, and “taking the steps that Hegel wouldn’t,” Widmer’s novel compels a reassessment of Hegel’s exclusion of Africa from the dialectic of world history. Hegel’s Africa, as delineated and dismissed in his Berlin lecture of December 2, 1830, is a showcase of man in his natural state, the “Unhistorical, Undeveloped Spirit.” By situating Africa exclusively in the natural realm, Hegel ignored contemporary sources that could have offered him a different, historical reading and necessitated Africa’s exclusion from his system. If indeed “the Negro represents the natural human,” then he is also the ungraspable interiority and the accidental of the vanishing present that must be edited out of the grander scheme of dialectic history – left, tellingly, to the novelist. As Noyes claimed, what Hegel is to be faulted with here is not merely obvious racism or shoddy historiography, but the attempt to neutralize negativity. By banishing what is accidental and embodied in Africa and his own lecture hall in order to claim a narrative standpoint beyond history, Noyes argued that Hegel’s system leaves itself open to an undermining. Widmer’s novel, through a variety of narrative strategies that point to the his-



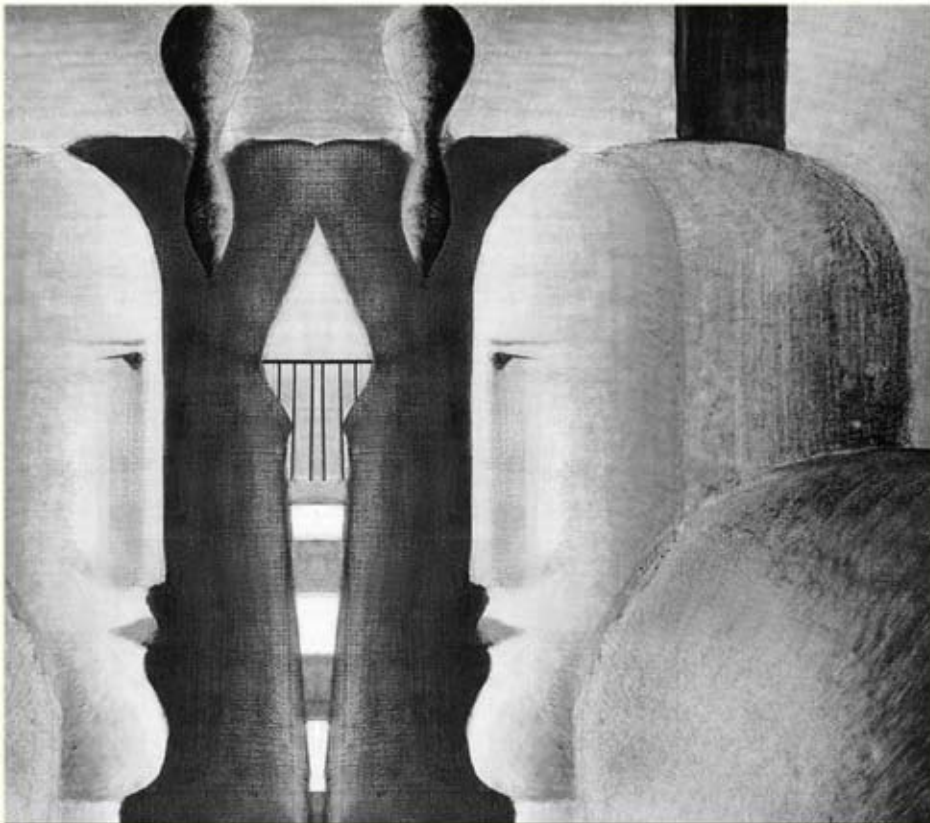
John Noyes (University of Toronto)

toricity of Nature's supposed timelessness and Spirit's complicity in historical forgetting, poses the question about what needs to be left behind in order to authorize history as Hegel conceived it. As Noyes argued, Africa is thus central not peripheral to the Hegelian concept of world history. (Carl Gelderloos)



GOETHE AND THE ARCHITECTURE OF THE REFERENT

Professor **Claudia Brodsky** (Princeton University) delivered the last talk of the colloquium series. Her paper took as its point of departure the indispensable presence of architectural motifs in modern literature. What purpose do they serve? Brodsky discussed the discursive uses of “architecture” and the “architectonic” in both Goethe and in a short scene in Claude Lanzmann’s *Shoah*. The paper sparked a spirited debate. Brodsky’s central claim was that literary language conjoins architectural and architectonic figures to form historical reference in different ways. To demonstrate her point, she analyzed a moment in *Shoah* in which Lanzmann engages a long-time resident of Sobibór at the site of a former extermination camp. Lanzmann points to a spot on one side of the train tracks, identifying where one would have been “inside the camp,” then points to a spot just on the other side of the tracks, signifying where one would have been “outside the camp.” The two fates—untimely death and prolonged life—both earn the verbal designation “here.” This filmic moment, argued Brodsky, sheds light on the dual nature of the referent, and thus on the relationship between history and language. Lanzmann has successfully created a “pure moment of reference.” Without any explicit narrative informing the scene, the viewer is led to ponder the physical space that has been buried with the passage of time, and with it, the memories and voices that have been left “unmemorialized,” leaving no trace to serve as testimony of their existence. A lively discussion focused on the multifaceted relationship between historical and literary referents. (Ari Linden)



Paul Buchholz, Martins Masulis, Carl Gelderloos, Arina Roturu, and Ari Linden are graduate students in the Department of German Studies at Cornell University.



Colloquium Series

Spring 2008

February 1

Davide Stimilli

German and Comparative Literature, University of Colorado
Aby Warburg's Impresa

February 22

Sean Franzel

German Studies, Cornell University
The Aesthetics of Apostrophe in the
Lecture and Novel (Fichte and Hölderlin)

March 7

Johannes von Moltke

Germanic Languages and Literatures, Screen Arts and Cultures, University of Michigan
Editor, *The Germanic Review* and *Screen Cultures: German Film and the Visual*

Trends in Academic Publishing:
Notes from the Field

N.B. There will be no advance paper for this presentation.

Apr 4

Manuel Koeppen

Institut für deutsche Literatur, Humboldt Universität zu Berlin
Abschied ohne Ankunft: Der frühe Wendefilm

April 18

Madeleine Casad

Comparative Literature, Cornell University
Reading Melancholy in Real Time: Wolfgang Hildesheimer's
Tynset and the Ethics of Virtual Memory

May 2

Walter Hinderer

German Studies, Princeton University
Title TBA

181 Goldwin Smith Hall

Fridays @ 3:00pm

For more information: lb433@cornell.edu
Advance copies of the paper are available in 183 Goldwin Smith Hall

Upcoming Events

February 7, 2008

From Mighty State to Civil Society: The Impact of Foundations on Contemporary Germany

Lecture by Michael Goering (President-ZEIT-Stiftung, Hamburg, Germany)

4:30pm 153 Uris Hall

March 1, 2008

The Preface to Hegel's Phenomenology of Spirit

Workshop Organizer: Peter Gilgen (pg33@cornell.edu)

1pm-6pm English Lounge- 258 Goldwin Smith Hall

Mar 7-8, 2008

The Limits of Love

Psychoanalysis Reading Group Graduate Conference

March 27, 2008

The Crime of My Very Existence: Nazism and the Myth of Jewish Criminality

Lecture by Michael Berkowitz (University College London)

4:30pm Guerlac Room-AD White House

April 8, 2008

Literarische Lesung mit Christine Rinderknecht

4:30pm Guerlac Room-AD White House

Apr 11-12, 2008

Diasporic Bodies and Visual Culture in Contemporary African and Arican Diaspora Art

Organized by the Department of the History of Art, Archeology, and Visual Studies

April 24, 2008

Christine Rinderknecht, Corneller Vorlesung zur Ästhetik der Gegenwart

4:30pm location and title TBA

Apr 26, 2008

***Romantic Media* Symposium**

Organized by Sean Franzel & Ryan Plumbley (PhD Candidates in German Studies and History)

1pm

Institute for German Cultural Studies
Cornell University
726 University Avenue
Ithaca, NY 14850

www.arts.cornell.edu/igcs

Additional information about all events listed is available on our website: www.arts.cornell.edu/igcs. Event listings will be updated throughout the semester. If you would like to be added to our mailing list, please contact Lisa Bonnes Johnson (lb433@cornell.edu).

Contributions to *German Culture News* are welcome. If you would like an event listed or have a brief review or article to submit, please contact Gizem Arslan (ga56@cornell.edu).