

German Culture News

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Expertise and Authority

September 21-22, 2018

This international conference brought to Cornell scholars and doctoral students from the thematic network “Literature, Knowledge, Media,” a collaborative initiative of the Humboldt Universität zu Berlin, Cornell University, Harvard University, New York University, Princeton University, Yale University, and the University of California, Berkeley, to discuss the relationship between expertise and authority within an interdisciplinary framework that drew upon literary history and criticism, philosophy,

and disciplinary discourses. The expert’s roots in the experiential and experimental (*expertus*, related to *experiri*, means having tested or experienced) can, however, also serve to challenge the very hierarchies that buttress institutional knowledge cultures, whether in academia, the corporate world, the government, or the mass media. In our moment, the idea of independent, specialized knowledge has come under intense attack from political populisms and cultural tribalisms of various stripes. In today’s “postfactual age” experts make a quaint impression as naïve advocates of hard information

and consider the development of modern capitalism, which is informed by an ideology assuming that a benevolent, “invisible hand” guides the market toward prosperity. According to Vogl, the belief that “the market knows best” reproduces a secular variation on the theme of theodicy that he termed “oikodicy.” Touching upon the two central themes of the conference—authority and expertise—the idea of oikodicy exposes a blind confidence in the efficacy of “self-regulating” economic systems (and their experts), on the one hand, and a desire to doubt that confidence



political theory, the history and theory of science, political economy, and media studies.

Conference speakers examined the interrelationships of expertise and authority from both theoretical and historical perspectives, emphasizing how the two concepts have long stood in a relation of both complementarity and tension. Derived from the Latin *expertus* (expert), the term encompasses modes of knowledge rooted in empirical protocols bent on securing and formalizing advanced skill sets

and epistemological restraint—when they do not invite outright vituperation as the gate-keepers of elite cultures and the political status quo. (Patrizia McBride)

In his keynote address, “The Strange Survival of Theodicy in Economics,” Prof. **Joseph Vogl** (Humboldt University, Berlin) explored the surprising entwinement between the theological question of theodicy and finance capitalism, arguing that the concept of theodicy and its history provide a unique perspective from which to

by observing economic realities that fail to meet our expectations and confirm our assumptions, on the other. (Matthew Stoltz)

Day one : September 21, 2018

On September 21, 2018, Professor **Peter Gilgen** (Cornell University) opened this year’s collaborative network conference: “Literature, Knowledge, Media,” organized around the theme of expertise and authority, with a talk entitled “Information and the

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Word from the Director

By Patrizia C. McBride

Welcome to IGCS! Founded in 1992, Cornell's Institute for German Cultural Studies fosters rigorous interdisciplinary inquiry in the German intellectual tradition and the humanities more generally. Over the years the Institute's emphasis on the multifaceted tradition of Critical Theory has made it hospitable to continental and social theory in addition to the essential work of the Frankfurt School. I am proud to continue drawing on this vital intellectual tradition as I rely on colleagues at Cornell and beyond to advance the mandate of IGCS.

I am delighted to draw your attention to the exciting events scheduled for Fall 2019. In September 2019 the Institute will host a two-day international conference, "Re-Imagining the Discipline: German Studies, the

Humanities, and the University," which I am co-organizing with Paul Fleming (Professor of German and Comparative Literature and Taylor Family Director of Cornell's Society for the Humanities). The conference aims to take stock of contemporary German Studies as a multi-disciplinary and transnational field of investigation, while also using it as a lens for appraising the state of the humanities in the current landscape of higher-education. At stake are the challenges and opportunities created by profound changes in the structure and funding of the university; the technological and institutional developments that have reshaped the ways we teach and conduct research; the diversification and stratification of our student population; and the shrinking support for public education displayed by politicians and the public at large. The conference will bring together scholars affiliat-

ed with a wide range of institutions that are home to German Studies in North America. We especially look forward to the keynote address by Professor Sara Guyer (Director, Center for the Humanities, University of Wisconsin, Madison; President, Consortium of Humanities Centers and Institutes). Her talk, "The Humanities of Testimony, revisited," doubles as this year's "Future of the Humanities Lecture" of Cornell's Society for the Humanities.

This is just one highlight on the event calendar for this fall. For a complete schedule of our initiatives, including our bi-weekly colloquia and the many events co-sponsored by IGCS, please check our website <https://igcs.cornell.edu/>. Please contact Olga Petrova (ogp2@cornell.edu) if you would like to receive regular e-mail updates through the IGCS listserv.

Call for Submissions

The Peter Uwe Hohendahl Graduate Essay Prize in Critical Theory

The Institute for German Cultural Studies is pleased to announce its 2019 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. **Please submit your essay via email attachment. In the body of the email please include your name, the essay title, your department, and your email address.** The essay itself should have a title but not include your name anywhere. *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>.*

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

continued from page 1 Authority of Poetry.”

The presentation focused on overcoming the urge for newness in the information age and how poetry, which activates language on both semantic and semiotic levels, can be a model for granting information a timeless significance. Gilgen explored this premise through an analysis of Oswald Egger’s book *Die ganze Zeit*, a text that attempts to interconnect poetry and images without having them fuse together into a whole.

Gilgen’s talk was followed by Professor **Ada Bieber** (Humboldt University), who presented on “The Authority of Wax.” Bieber shifted the conversation to the motif of the child flaneur in Heiner Carrow’s film *Ikarus* (1975), which escaped GDR-censorship since it was labeled a children’s movie by the authorities. Carrow’s film raises two disturbing questions: are parents ultimately responsible for their children’s destruction? Does the process of child-rearing depicted here lead to the boy’s figurative suicide?

Andreas Lipowsky (Humboldt University) gave the next talk entitled “Vitalism and the Revolution in (British Social) Anthropology.” Lipowsky’s presentation outlined an “immersive approach” to anthropology by drawing on two seminal anthropologists, Bronisław Malinkowski and Franz Boas, whose work interrogates the broader context of modern anthropology’s general suspicion against science. Together with this general trend, Malinkowski and Boas considered science to be “bloodless” and therefore a threat to humanity.

Sebastian Brass (Harvard University) gave the last presentation of the morning session with his talk entitled “Candor and Expertise: Autobiographical Authority and its Crises.” Brass explored the paradoxical question of how biographical texts may be said to be self-referential on the one hand, yet still lacking in *self-awareness*, on the other. Brass approached this topic by investigating the different ways that make a biography “trustworthy” to its reader (i.e. how it creates a sense of authority). Brass concluded that the most important devices were formulations meant to produce the effect of factuality and sincerity. (Sophia Léonard)

Anatol Heller (Humboldt University) opened the second panel of the conference with a talk titled: “Anfänger: Husserl und Kafka.” In the talk, Heller explored how the question of “beginnings” might be regarded as a primal question; one that has always preoccupied human reflection. According to Heller, such a search for the origins also concerns a practice of beginning, which is just as necessary as it is problematic. To illustrate this point, Heller discussed how every beginning is always preceded by criteria that themselves function

as a kind of beginning, which complicates the idea of *originality* as such. As he argued, the idea of a radical beginning as an epistemic operation subverts and constantly questions itself by creating a complex operative dynamic. Not only does it make its way through theoretical and methodological decision-making and justification procedures, but it also becomes part of a language of reflection and writing practice, in which the traces of the beginning can always be understood in terms of representational form. Resulting from this is the figure of a “beginner,” who self-identifies as an expert, which Heller then went on to discuss through the works of Husserl and Kafka. Heller noted that in the “bottomless beginning” of Husserl’s transcendental phenomenology, the figure of a beginner—who is not a dilettante—emerges and this figure’s “sense for the seriousness of the beginning” becomes philosophically qualified. Heller then discussed Kafka’s fragmentary writings and how the practice of beginning becomes tangible as a textual problem in works like “Der kleine Ruinenbewohner.” In that work, Heller claimed, the “little ruin dweller” constantly searches for the origin of his “ruined” life, starting over and over again from an indeterminate beginning. Heller concluded that both Husserl’s and Kafka’s attempts to find the “right” beginning comes at the cost of never reaching an end.

Uta Sommer (Humboldt University) was next to present with her talk titled: “Ich mache Ihnen den Vorwurf der Unwissenheit!” In the talk, Sommer pointed out how many of Arno Schmidt’s protagonists are solitary, impoverished, autodidacts, whose passion for mathematics, astronomy, and statistics contribute to their status as “know-it-alls.” According to Sommer, Schmidt’s know-it-all protagonists display their vast and eccentric knowledge by describing antiquarian books, files, and maps; by making apodictic judgments; and by expressing their literary preferences on every possible occasion. Throughout the talk, Sommer developed close-readings of Schmidt’s know-it-all protagonists, paying special attention to the status that education and knowledge holds for these curious figures. Sommer argued that models of recognition play a key role in legitimizing these figures, especially as it relates to recognizing their ability to surpass any and all competition. For Sommer, however, this also means that the figure of the know-it-all is mutually produced: it can be formed by the know-it-all themselves, yet it can also be attributed to them, for example, from an anti-intellectual standpoint. On the one hand, being a know-it-all can have its own value. On the other, it can also become a source of resentment insofar as such individuals have a tendency to become dogmatic and pontificate their knowledge. Central to Sommer’s thesis was

that Schmidt’s protagonists oscillate between a useful form of knowledge and a useless form of knowledge that lies somewhere beyond the recognition model and the desire to be recognized. (Matthew Stoltz)

Following Uta Sommer’s talk, the panel turned last but not least to **Endre Holéczy** (NYU). Holéczy spoke on “Defiguring Authorial Subjectivity: Metalepsis in Jean Paul Richter’s *Leben Fibels*.” Departing from the formal quirk in this early nineteenth-century novel that not just one, but a series of characters emerge as candidates for the central narrator and thus authorial authority in the work, Holéczy used the narratological concept of metalepsis, as developed by French literary theorist Gérard Genette, to better understand the crisis of narrative and authorial subjectivity in the text. However, Holéczy argued that the confusion of voices proliferates to the point that it becomes not only difficult to identify some central narrator or movement between narrators, but that a “defiguration effect” is brought to bear on the omniscient narrator as such. According to Holéczy, this technique replaces author with text, producing a “troubling effect” whereby “the *narrating* world is actually a *narrated* one, and along these lines, the narrating entity and its narratees belong to the same narrative,” a flat world void of any reliable frame or stability. This situation, Holéczy elaborated, has dire implications not only for the authority of the author and narrator, which “implode completely,” but also for narratology and its analytical concepts, like metalepsis. If metalepsis as a figure of reading is possible when narrative frames experience momentary breaches, when levels of narrative knowledge briefly implode, then the universe of Jean Paul’s *Das Leben Fibels* pushes metalepsis to its limits. Holéczy concluded by considering how switching from Genette’s voice-based notion of metalepsis to one based on writing might engender the most stable reading of this text. He proposed that *Das Leben Fibels* may “exhibit another textuality”, one “based not on an intertwining of voices, but rather on a network of writings.” (Juan-Jacques Aupiais)

Day Two: September 22, 2018

Joel Lande (Princeton) opened the second day of the conference with his talk “Drive and the Limits of Self-Knowledge.” Lande traced the history of the concept “Trieb” (drive) by showing how it has been a source of innovative reflection for a variety of thinkers. From Blumenbach’s concept of “Bildungstrieb” to Kant’s appropriation of this term as a means of uniting the mechanistic with the purposively malleable, Lande demonstrated a keen awareness of the different contexts in which the term has emerged. He concluded his talk by exploring

the attrition of the so-called drive theory at the hands of Lichtenberg and Schopenhauer (among others), who challenged its opaque, indeed occult, nature.

Benjamin Schluter's (NYU) talk, "Mimetic 'Expertise' in Stifter and Goethe," focused on the empirical and poetic intersections of art and literature. At the center of Schluter's talk stood the question of how representations of reality in art and literature might never be objective. According to Schluter, Stifter's "mimetic speech" and Goethe's "morphological gaze" index the "real" by describing places, people, and things "as they are." And yet literary description necessarily finds its limits in language; every gaze directed at the world is an *inflected* gaze. Schluter concluded his talk by illustrating a tension between perceived reality and reality in art that can be observed in Stifter's "Die Bewegung" (The Movement), which describes a painting of a (motionless) stone.

Matthew Stoltz (Cornell) began his talk, "Farewell to Sola Scriptura: Lessing's Critique of Biblical Authority during the Fragment Controversy," by challenging Heine's influential interpretation of Lessing as the successor to Luther's theology. Stoltz then discussed the ways in which Lessing's theological writings were more aligned



David Dunham

with Luther's humanist rival, Erasmus, who pled for the need to employ "spiritual" or figurative readings of scripture when literal readings failed to satisfy. Lessing's "theology of spirit," Stoltz argued, introduced a paradigm shift that undermined Luther's doctrine of *sola scriptura*. As he concluded, after the fragment controversy the spirit—not the letter—was recognized as an equally legitimate source of religious authority.

Florian Scherübl's (Humboldt Universität) talk "Heinrich Heine and the Authority of Hegel" focused on Heine's complex relationship to Hegel by showing how the poet stood ready to accept Hegel's authority on

the condition that his Prussian State acknowledge the "Jewish predicament." According to Scherübl, Heine rejected Hegel's "fetishization" of Christianity as *the* foundational religion of Western society. In humorously paraphrasing Hegel, he voiced his dissatisfaction with Hegelian philosophy. During the lively discussion period, audience members debated whether Heine was able to properly distinguish between Hegel's conception of "Verstand" and "Vernunft," and how his blurring the two notions may have driven his criticism of Hegel. (Mark Mandych)

The final panel of the conference began with a presentation by Professor **John Hamilton** (Harvard University) titled: "Undercurrents of Expertise: Aspects of Iphigenia in the Twentieth Century." Hamilton introduced the talk with several amusing anecdotes about Goethe's life, works, and his reception before segueing into an expansive and exciting reading of the *Iphigenia* myth in the context of the modern age. A long-standing contributor to the Leibniz-Kreis working group that focuses on the "Afterlife of Antiquity," Hamilton argued that Goethe's expertise on classical subjects and traditions breathed new life into the myth of Iphigenia, which he reworked for his 1779 *Iphigenia auf Taurus*. After compellingly describing the tension between allegory and symbol found in Goethe's reworking of the story, he described the reception of Goethe's play and as a model for humanism after World War II. Drawing on Adorno's 1967 lecture on *Iphigenia* as an anchor point of his talk, Hamilton argued the play's central concept of humanity does not so much mark a victory of civilization over its own "primitive" origins. It rather remains ensnared in a battle with its own mythical elements, which can never be completely sublimated by subsequent cultural movements like German Classicism. Hamilton concluded his talk by exploring how figures like Rainer Werner Fassbinder and Hans Robert Jauss engaged Goethe's play.

Hamilton's talk was followed by a presentation by Professor **Kirk Wetters** (Yale University) titled: "The Authority of Theory: Nicolaus Sombart and Carl Schmitt." Part of a larger work in progress exploring the relationship between theory and authority, Wetters' talk built on sociological research that draws on Adorno's authoritarian personality. In particular, Wetters discussed the ways in which theory became a source of authority for the sociologist Nicolaus Sombart and the political theorist Carl Schmitt, who tethered many of their observations to theoretical discourses. According to Wetters, Sombart understood how Schmitt's thought was animated by some of the periods' most radical theories of his day, not shying away from enlisting them in the service of fascist ideologies. Sombart, by contrast, attempted

to maintain a critical stance toward Schmitt through his anti-Schmittian liberalism, which is especially apparent in Sombart's writings on empirical psychology, which he continued to develop well into the 1990s. Wetters argued that many of Sombart's works, especially his *Die Deutschen Männer und Ihre Feinde*, searched for latent influences from theory to reflect on questions of authority and expertise.

Robert Rößler (Harvard) presented next with his talk titled: "Formalisierung und Lobbyismus: Zur Geschichte der Empirischen Psychologie." Rößler explored the origins of empirical psychology through the works of Johann Friedrich Herbart, who established himself as a leading expert in the field already at the beginning of the nineteenth century. Rößler argued that Herbart distinguished himself as an authority by introducing quantitative modes of analysis that claimed to not take recourse to speculative metaphysics. Rößler then explored Herbart's influence on a constellation of subsequent figures like Freud and Schnitzler, who studied many of his writings on empirical psychology. In fact, one of Herbart's students, Franz Exner, became a lobbyist advocating for the implementation of "Herbartianism" across Austrian schools during a period of pedagogical reform in the late 1840s. Rößler concluded his talk by describing the ways in which Exner was able to redesign the curriculum of Austrian schools to reflect Herbart's teachings.

David Dunham (Cornell University) brought the conference to a close with his talk titled "The Figure of the Analyst: Topic Modeling the Case Reports of Moritz' Empirical Psychology." In the talk Dunham applied a methodology known in the digital humanities as "topic modeling," which identifies linguistic patterns within textual fields of data. Using this method to identify "outliers" within Moritz' writings, Dunham isolated keywords across disparate parts of the author's work, focusing especially on the figure of the analyst. After reviewing selections of the author's works from this perspective, Dunham argued that topic modeling can be used to identify "turning points," in which a single text transitions between two distinct topics. Dunham then explored the capacity of topic modeling to identify authors within larger discursive fields and the subjects to which they likely contributed. This, Dunham claimed, allows readers to gain a more global perspective on the breadth of expertise of a given writer and the degree to which one author shapes and influences the language of an area of discourse. Dunham concluded that this kind of statistical analysis is based on probability and it may change the way scholars understand expertise, insofar as new technologies increasingly measure a given authors' writing in terms of quantifiable data. (Matthew Stoltz)

Without Naming It: Pragmatics and Poetics of Pronouns

March 22-23, 2019

On Friday, March 22, the German Studies Graduate Student Conference kicked off its first panel by focusing on the philosophical problems involved in using pronouns. The panel featured papers on Hegel by **Emir Yigit** (Cornell, German), on Kant and Descartes by **Søren Larsen** (Cornell, German), and on contemporary analytical approaches by **Alec Pollak** (Cornell, English). It opened a dialogue about the conceptual frameworks available for thinking pronouns as systems of reference, highlighting not only the epistemological, but also the ethical and cultural dimensions that condition gestures of naming and indexing. In “I-Thou-We: Hegel on the Restless Genus of Subjectivity,” Yigit analyzed the metaphysical substance

(strictly speaking “*it* thinks, therefore *it* is”, before “*it*” has been properly shown to be what we call “*I*”); an over-specification that can be traced from Descartes into Kant through the latter’s explication of the famous Transcendental Unity of Apperception. Using psychoanalytic techniques, Larsen read the lacuna that remains inherent to the Kantian appropriation of the *cogito* not as a breach of the metaphysical system, but as a symptom revealing the structure of desire at the heart of Kantian economies of reference. Finally, in the presentation titled “The Universal Use of They/Them/Theirs: An Exploration of the Potentials of Pitfalls of Gender Neutrality,” Pollak concluded the panel by interrogating the recent argument, advanced by Dembroff and Wodak, that “we have a moral duty to universalize the use of they/them/theirs

Richardson (University of Maryland, English and Comparative Literature) drew on his formidable expertise to review several recent literary examples featuring unusual narrative structures and acts of narration. His samples were meant to showcase what he deems an increase in narrative pronouns other than the traditional “*I*,” which might entail an “*I*” whose referent does not remain fixed, a “*we*” that stands in for a community of thousands, or a “*you*” that resembles an “*I*” talking to itself.

Moving swiftly through a variety of newer literary forms—from the “autofiction” of Ben Lerner’s *10:04*, to the made-for-twitter format of Jennifer Egan’s *Black Box*, to the “qualified omniscience figured by the “*we*” of village gossip in Zakes Mda’s *Ways of Dying*—Richardson suggested that when it comes to pronouns, scholars should not limit themselves to strict linguistic definitions but rather “explore and model what authors actually do,” even though (or precisely because) authors appear to delight in undermining the expectations of literary scholars. In dealing with narrators that seem impossible, contradictory, or even post-human, it becomes clear that, as Richardson puts it, “transformation of the predominant narrating pronoun can in and of itself follow a kind of plot trajectory.” Richardson ended his talk by suggesting that the manner in which pronouns are employed by authors tells a story of its own. (Mark Mandych)



Brian Richardson

of the transition from singular (*I*) to plural (*we*) subjectivity in Hegel’s *Phenomenology of Spirit*. Yigit understands this transition as a social and ethical complication of Hegel’s contemporaneous natural scientific discourse, holding that tensions around the biological concept of “genus” are worked out in the mediation, effected by social processes of “desire and violence,” between organisms taking up the positions of “*I*,” “*you*” and “*we*.” Thus in Hegel, pronouns offer a window into “the logical movement between meronomical and taxonomical relations that consciousness pursues in its path to self-certainty.” In the presentation titled “*I*, or He, or It (The Thing), Which Thinks,” Larsen traced the philosophical afterlife of the Cartesian *cogito*, demonstrating that the first-person perspective assumed in Descartes’s famous proposition “*I* think, therefore *I* am” is an over-specification of what is phenomenologically ambiguous

as third-person gender-neutral pronouns for all subjects, regardless of gender and self-identification”. While agreeing with the premise that “the presence of gender markers in language is directly proportional to a native speakers’ internalization of socially-prescribed gender-roles,” Pollak argued that the universalization of gender-neutral pronouns does not constitute a “gender elimination” approach because it obscures the penetration of gendering processes of culture in language “beyond pronouns and names.” Drawing on feminist critiques of “gender neutrality” as an implicit perpetuation of the “standard” character of masculine-coded modes of identification, Pollak sought to formulate solutions for internalized femmophobia in philosophical activism. (Juan-Jacques Aupiais)

Keynote: March 22, 2019

In his keynote address, entitled “Multiple Voices, Unruly Identities,” Professor **Brian**

Saturday, March 23, marked the second day of the German Studies Graduate Student Conference, which started with a paper by **Alex Brock** (Princeton University) entitled “Royal Pronouns and Royal Power in Shakespeare’s *Richard II*.” Brock’s presentation explored Richard II’s shifting use of personal and royal pronouns at the moment when he loses his throne to his nephew Bolingbroke, who will soon become Henry IV. This shift in personal and royal address raises the question of what it means to be recognized in one’s claim to political rule. Brock argued that the grammatical struggle between the diverse forms of address expresses a complex network of power relations. The panel continued with a presentation by **Elisabeth Schoppelfrei** (Penn State University) titled “Why’s he so upset? – Trans Voice and Poetry Slam,” which addressed the question what it means to identify and produce a “trans voice” in the

specific context of poetry slam. Drawing on theories from sound, queer and trans studies, Schoppelfrei argued for a multidimensional conceptualization of trans voices that necessitates listening to the interchange and movements of bodies, voices, audiences, poets, institutional apparatuses, affects, histories of racialization, and gender and ungendering processes. **Cosima Mattner** (Columbia University) concluded the panel with a paper entitled “Destabilizing Deixis with Embodied Performative Presence – Bodies of Pronouns in René Pollesch’s Kill Your Darlings.” She analyzed forms, functions and bodies of pronouns in Pollesch’s work, relating them to a post-dramatic critique of the subject.

The last panel of the conference’s second day began with a talk by **Florenz Gilly** (Humboldt University Berlin/Cornell University) on Wilhelm Raabe’s *Horacker*, which reflected on the novelist’s distinctive use of the pronoun “man.” Gilly argued that Raabe’s ambiguous use of the pronoun opens up a space for speculation meant to allow a German audience to build social and ultimately political consensus without defining their particular identities. The panel continued with **Marius Reisner’s** (HU Berlin) talk entitled “The Pronoun With(out) Qualities”, in which he explored a central scene in Robert Musil’s “Die Verwirrungen des Zöglings Törleß.” In a non-heteronormative encounter between two characters, a change in the gender of

pronouns occurs, which Reisner read as the “metaphorical disclosure” of a form of intimacy that could not be otherwise admitted or disclosed. Through the feminization of the pronoun, Reisner argued, the non-heteronormative relation escapes conceptual closure. The panel concluded with a paper by **Michael Paninski** (Brown University) titled “gender pluralities - Notes on translating Barbara Köhler’s Niemand’s Frau.” The talk investigated Köhler’s poem cycle with a focus on the production of subjectivity through the pronoun “I”. Paninski argued that translating this text from German involves a confrontation with the ambiguous question of otherness as implied in the construction of a demarcated I. (Emir Yigit)

Heidegger and the Jews

Anti-Academicism: Old and New, German and American

March 6, 2019

On March 6th, Professor **Donatella di Cesare** (Universita’ La Sapienza, Rome) gave a talk in the A.D. White House entitled “Heidegger and the Jews,” whose title referenced not only di Cesare’s own book on Heidegger’s *Black Notebooks* but also Jean-François Lyotard’s important book on Heidegger and “the Jews” from 1988. Di Cesare’s talk centered around close readings of several controversial passages from the *Notebooks*. Her analysis focused on what she saw as a necessary relationship in Heidegger’s writings between “Die Judenfrage” (the Jewish question) and “Die Seinsfrage” (the question of being), that is, between Heidegger’s antisemitism and the core of his philosophical project. As she argued, in Heidegger’s work the Jewish Question is inextricably tied to the question of Metaphysics more generally; as a result, the destruction of the Jews is directly

connected to Heidegger’s investment in the destruction of “traditional” metaphysics. Di

a potentially missed redemption within the intellectual trajectory of Heidegger’s thought.



Di Cesare’s in-depth analysis gave rise to a lively Q&A. Topics ranged from fine points of her readings to much larger questions concerning Heidegger’s relation to Karl Jaspers and other important post-war thinkers. One of the most chilling and insightful moments of her talk focused on Heidegger’s use of the term “weltlos” (world-less, without world) in reference to the Jewish people. As di Cesare ended her lecture by focusing on Arendt, it is helpful to highlight Arendt’s conception of “world”

Cesare termed Heidegger’s antisemitism “a metaphysical antisemitism,” adding that the only way to overcome the “problem” of the Jewish question thus conceived was through a metaphysical “self-annihilation” that relieves everyone but the Jews themselves of the responsibility for their own destruction. In closing, Professor di Cesare turned to the Arendt-Heidegger relationship as a site of

as precisely that space between individuals that must be carved out and cultivated in order to maintain any notion of humanity. This vital core of Arendt’s humanism is precisely what Heidegger was unwilling to grant the Jewish people, according to di Cesare. (Daniel Binswanger Friedman)



Alexander Kluge: New Perspectives on Creative Arts and Critical Practice

October 11-13, 2018

Untimely Interventions: Alexander Kluge and the German Media Landscape

On Thursday, October 11th 2018, **Michael Jennings**, Class of 1900 Professor of Modern Languages and Professor of German at Princeton University, delivered the keynote lecture for the conference *Alexander Kluge: New Perspectives on Creative Arts and Critical Practice*, organized by Leslie A. Adelson, Jacob Gould Schurman Professor of German Studies at Cornell University. The talk, *Untimely Interventions: Alexander Kluge and the German Media Landscape*, made public for the first time some of the fruits of Jennings's ongoing research into Kluge's life and artistic career for his forthcoming critical biography of the artist. Jennings discussed two segments of Kluge's career—the early 1960s, around the formulation of the Oberhausen Manifesto and the emergence of New German Cinema, in which Kluge was an instrumental figure, and the late 1980s, around the formation of Kluge's DCTP, an outstanding channel for cultural programming in West German private television—in order to show how Kluge's contribution to the German visual arts of the last fifty years lies not just in breaking new aesthetic ground, but also in staging key interventions in West German cultural politics. For Jennings, an under-appreciated facet of Kluge's work has been his ability to pivot, and thus facilitate collaboration, between artists and institutions in ways that ensure space for critique and oppositional culture within the German media landscape. The keynote in this way set a context and a tone for subsequent conference presentations to address and probe further. (Juan-Jacques Aupiais)

Alexander Kluge: New Perspectives on Creative Arts and Critical Practice Minute Films

October 11, 2018

On October 11, 2018, speakers and audience members at the Alexander Kluge conference took to the cinema to see several of Kluge's experimental "minute films," which featured a special prefatory dedication by the artist to Ithaca—a fitting gesture for Kluge, who, while unable to attend the conference, still found a powerful way of asserting his presence. In

their opening remarks, Cornell Professors Leslie Adelson (Department of German Studies) and Sabine Haenni (Department of Performing and Media Arts) explained how the composite film works in triads that can be formally broken down into these three parts: minute operas, which often rewrite operatic stories from the classical tradition; minute films inspired by Carl von Clausewitz's writings on warfare; and films about reading, writing, education, and



the troubled legacy of the Enlightenment. Adelson went on to identify a central question that the film introduces, namely, what does it mean to make a political film today? In his introductory remarks, which helped situate the evening's film program in relation to the history of cinema, Professor Erik Born (Cornell, German Studies) reminded the audience that Kluge's minute films are not meant to be prescriptive but rather evocative, dispensing with the need for narration in favor of improbable presentations that arouse curiosity, surprise, and wonder. In Kluge's words, "the Minute film plays in the mind of the spectator, rather than onscreen."

After its dedication to Ithaca, the film segued into a humorous, yet deeply unsettling juxtaposition of President Trump arriving in Saudi Arabia with a wind-up circus of animals clattering and bouncing in the foreground. This at once distracted from but also mimicked the orchestrated scenes of handshakes between the Saudi and American heads of state. After a medley of evocative scenes, including a representation of the battle of Borodino seen from a literal bird's eye view, an extended montage of 9/11 as depicted in Captain America comic books, and excerpts from a Puritan opera, the film ended with a humorous sketch featuring comedian Helge Schneider, who played the role of a "Leseratte" (a book-hungry rat)

that claimed never to watch TV, preferring instead to read anything that contains letters, from instruction manuals to newspaper advertisements to literature in any language. (Mark Mandych)

Kluge and Clausewitz: Chance & Imagination in the Real World

October 12, 2018

Kicking off the second day of the conference

Alexander Kluge: New Perspectives on Creative Arts and Critical Practice, the morning of Friday October 12th featured a live skype session with Kluge himself as well as two presentations treating the theme of war in Kluge's work.

At the frontline was Professor **Alan Beyerchen** (Ohio State University), expert on nineteenth-century German military history and culture. In his talk entitled *Kluge and Clausewitz: Chance & Imagination in the Real World*, Beyerchen discussed why Kluge might harbor a special fascination—as many of his interviews, films, and writings attest—for Clausewitz's theory of war when Clausewitz "said nothing about war at sea, did not experience the industrial revolution, and could hardly have addressed war in the era of cyberspace." Despite these shortcomings, Beyerchen argued, Clausewitz does a certain work for Kluge: "the writings of Clausewitz form points of departure for discussion and contemplation of the vagaries of war and the shape-shifting nature of what we call reality." Kluge's writing benefits from and responds to the particular conception of realism which Clausewitz developed: the representation of war, at the very least of which an aesthetic realism is at stake, must face up against the violent *Realpolitik* in which, as Clausewitz phrased it, "war is a continuation of politics by other means." Indeed, through the key term of realism it becomes apparent that

the project of a writer like Kluge, who searches for a set of aesthetic forms and representational strategies in which to adequately and meaningfully narrate war, but most importantly for Kluge, also to prevent it, is in essence a permutation of Clausewitz's military-theoretical project. For the latter, realism makes the promise of a systematic, structured picture of war as a process that can be understood and narrated without recourse to mythology and mysticism, though it does involve chance. Through this facet of rationality—for sure not an anti-humanist rationality—Clausewitz's notion of war aspires, like Kluge's literary writing, to address “with exactitude” a common and shared basis for social experience and survival.

Responding to Beyerchen, Professor **Max Pensky** (Binghamton University) pointed to the “productive ambiguity” of Beyerchen's genealogy of realism, stressing the innovative albeit difficult move of tying the realism of international relations and political science to literary realism, in particular because the former seems in most accounts to have been a ploy of desubjectivization and value-neutrality in its discipline. In developing an account of Clausewitz's military theory, in which realism possesses a rationality and systematicity but also aspects of “friction” and human “contingency,” Beyerchen not only prepares the most plausible version of Clausewitz's thought for appropriation by Kluge's literary program, but also enriches the picture of Clausewitz in political science today, Pensky contended.

After this first panel, the tone shifted somewhat as Alexander Kluge skyped in (from a booth at the Frankfurt Book Fair!) to discuss the “Music of History and the Voice of Things” with musician and composer Professor **Kevin Ernste** (Music, Cornell University). Following the recent publication of Kluge's *Temple of the Scapegoat: Opera Stories* by New Directions—stories in turn inspired by Kluge's “Minute Opera” short films—this segment of the conference sought to investigate the status of sound, music, and musical narration within Kluge's oeuvre. Kluge and Ernste's conversation spanned several subjects and took on a workshop quality as samples of Ernste's original compositions and performances as well as Kluge's Minute Operas were compared and discussed in relation to musical history, personal experience, politics, and the literary tradition. In this context, Kluge elaborated upon his personal relationship to opera and argued for the continued importance of this narrative and musical medium in today's digitized culture and overcrowded media landscape. For Kluge, film must harness musical narrative and seek a “productive collision” with it, because this is the way

to most deeply imbue filmic narrative with emotion: music is for Kluge the deepest form of emotion. Kluge and Ernste concluded their talk by discussing plans for future collaboration on a composition, possibly an avant-garde musical composition of Ernste's design in dialogue with Kluge's “opera stories.”

The last event of the morning returned to the topic of war and literature when Professor **Ross Etherton** (Wooster College) spoke on “Interrupting the War Machine” in Kluge's work, focusing on Kluge's first book, *Schlachtbeschreibung*. Etherton traced the function and narrative status of the metaphor of the machine in Kluge's account of the Battle of Stalingrad, examining the ways in which the figure both applies in certain ways to the hierarchical social apparatus of an army, yet also falls far short of capturing the chaos, irrationality, and violence of that apparatus. In this way Etherton too invoked the Clausewitzian dichotomy foregrounded by Pensky: war is both a rational and systematic operation of *Realpolitik* and a phenomenon with real human costs and human unpredictability. Etherton argued that this dichotomy manifests in both the form and content of the work, contending that “this understanding of the war machine as being comprised of interruptive and friction-causing individuals accounts for [*Schlachtbeschreibung*'s] prizing of the individual and of the speculative moment,” while also explaining “several of Kluge's strategies of interruption” in the multi-medial and multi-formal composition of *Schlachtbeschreibung*. The war machine thus becomes visible and representable in this text precisely because it breaks down. The aesthetic agenda Etherton described, however, also issues into social critique, responding to a crisis at once technological and cultural that has been unfolding since the industrialization of the nineteenth century.

In responding to Etherton, Professor **Suman Seth** (Science and Technology Studies, Cornell University) addressed what he held to be the central question in this talk, namely, “what is a machine that was never a machine.” Seth fleshed out the historical and rhetorical context in which Kluge's Stalingrad text sees the metaphor of the machine break down, which is in Seth's eyes occasioned by decisive paradigm shifts in military technology that occur across the span of *Schlachtbeschreibung*. Between 1832 (publication of Clausewitz's *Vom Kriege*), 1942 (the Battle of Stalingrad) and 1964 (when the first edition of *Schlachtbeschreibung* was published), war and our experience of it had to grapple with the emergence not just of mechanized weaponry on the industrial scale, but also of the nuclear age. Looking at discussions of military technology since

the Cold War, Seth focused on one particular figure of technological imagination which made an appearance shortly after the reality of the nuclear age began: a figure existing at a different confluence of human and (war) machine, the cyborg. Drawing on contemporaneous evidence from popular media and later science fiction, Seth showed that “by 1964, Kluge had the potential to no longer imagine machines and humans as *that* distinct,” given the role in military technology that the cyborg had been playing since the mid-century. As Seth suggested, rather than seeing the interruptions of the war machine caused by its human elements as a moment of hope, one may also find in these interruptions a reflection of the pernicious future lying ahead of the Battle of Stalingrad, a future in which man and machine are systematically and pervasively integrated into a perpetual military motion machine. In that constellation, quoting Clausewitz's pre-industrial musings on war may appear nostalgic. “One might then read *Schlachtbeschreibung*,” provoked Seth in his conclusion, “as a cyborg novel.” The conference had to move to lunch in order to digest that proposal. (Juan-Jacques Aupiais)

Friday Afternoon Sessions (Oct. 12, 2018)
Alexander Kluge, “Theory like swimming in the storm,” with Richard Langston, Ben Lerner, and Leslie Adelson

The Friday afternoon sessions began with a scheduled conversation between **Alexander Kluge** (via remote technology from Frankfurt, where his new co-authored book, *The Snows of Venice*, was being presented), Professor **Richard Langston** (University of North Carolina), and Professor **Leslie Adelson** (Cornell). This conversation additionally included impromptu exchange with **Ben Lerner**, the American literary author and MacArthur Fellow with whom Kluge collaborated to write *The Snows of Venice*, and whose poetry provides Kluge's chosen title for this session. *The Snows of Venice*, which Leipzig's Spector Books has also published in German, recounts the history of cooperation between Kluge and Lerner and their remarkable working relationship. The four interlocutors read excerpts from the new book, including the session's title piece, “Theory like swimming in a storm.” Kluge found the session's polyphonic readings especially significant and insisted on several of them himself. He also offered remarks on the screening of his minute-films, which had been shown the evening before at Cornell Cinema's Willard Straight Theatre, and parts of which had been composed specifically for the conference, thus contributing to the uncommon, trans-medial thrust of the conference. Both the readings and the screenings of Kluge's and Lerner's work were met with probing questions from Adelson and Langston. In

his lively and engaged responses, Kluge emphasized the importance of the works' intrinsically polyphonic quality, noting that "the skin and the heart, the head and the feet already comprise four voices within a single person." (Daniel Binswanger Friedman)

Hans Jürgen Scheuer, Tricksterprosa: Alexander Kluges apokryphes Erzählen

In his paper, "Tricksterprosa: Alexander

apocrypha form a textual body that is open-ended and will necessarily include ever more fragments. Kluge's writing is thus abundant in a literal structural sense, apocryphal in its unconventional mixing of fact and fiction and productively overabundant in narrative form.

Dorothea Walzer, Marx as a Model and Question: Alexander Kluge's Critical Inquiries



Kluges apokryphes Erzählen," Professor **Hans Jürgen Scheuer** (Humboldt University) brought his expertise in medieval studies to bear on what he described as a new subject for him, namely, the work of Alexander Kluge. Taking his cue from medieval apocryphal writings by Cäsarius von Heisterbach, and even locating rare but telling references by Kluge to this medieval figure, Scheuer considered the implications of a comment Josef Vogl made on Kluge's "aesthetics of the gap," in which Vogl associates the figure of the gap with apocrypha. The aesthetics of the gap, an eminent topic in Kluge research, concerns ways in which Kluge's works are able to activate what is not present, or what is left open, to productive artistic effect. Scheuer's discussion juxtaposed apocryphal to canonical writings in order to highlight a generative overabundance of narrative material in Kluge's work, which often assumes fragmented and non-canonical forms, thus recalling a montage aesthetic. Scheuer noted that, whereas the canon is exclusive, bounded, and selectively ordered, medieval

Dorothea Walzer (German Literature, Bochum University) presented "Marx as a Model and a Question: Alexander Kluge's Critical Inquiries," in which Walzer analyzed several key roles that questions play in *Nachrichten aus der ideologischen Antike*, Kluge's film project featuring eight hours of commentary on Karl Marx's *Das Kapital*. Walzer emphasized Kluge's fascination with ways in which Marx himself repeatedly raises questions that point back to and revisit his *Kapital*. In his film work and in his collaborations with Marxist sociologist Oskar Negt, Kluge's interpretation of Marx thus stresses the importance of Marx for answering questions in ways that are not always already prefigured by the questions themselves. In his response Paul Fleming (Director of the Society for the Humanities and Professor of German Studies, Cornell University) stressed the surprisingly ambivalent relationship between question and critique posited by Kluge's engagement with Marx as illuminated by Walzer. (Nicholas Zyzda)

Literary Reading by Ben Lerner

Friday evening, October 12, 2018

On Friday October 12, 2018 the American poet and novelist Ben Lerner gave a literary reading, consisting of one excerpt from his latest novel *10:04* and multiple selections from the recently published collaborative book by Kluge and Lerner, *The Snows of Venice: The Lerner-Kluge-Container* (Spector Books, 2018). In veritable Klugean fashion, the collaboration began a few years ago after Lerner (an avid admirer of Kluge's film and literary work) checked his spam folder for a lost administrative email and happened upon an email from Kluge that had been sent much earlier. Kluge had gotten hold of a German edition of Lerner's first book of poems, *The Lichtenberg Figures*, and was immediately compelled to write an entire set of short prose pieces in "response" to Lerner's poems – short prose pieces that were sent in appreciation but only belatedly received. This set of odd occurrences led to a multi-year international collaboration, the physical manifestation of which Lerner read selections from on Friday evening. I [DBF] experienced a certain Klugean effect when I was drawn into the reading myself, which underscored not only a dialogue but also a triologue between the texts, their (present and absent) authors, and audience members.

Lerner's polyphonic reading performance gave way to a fascinating discussion that ranged from detailed questions about Kluge's and Lerner's collaborative process, to Lerner's views on the relationship between his work and society, the environment and fiction, as well as the role of fiction in late capitalism, and finally to the recent discovery that Paul Klee's famous *Angelus Novus* painting is mounted on a gilded portrait of Martin Luther. Near the end of the evening reading, snow became a central topic of discussion, which surprisingly linked up with art historian John Ruskin's work on Venetian architecture titled *The Stones of Venice*. Lerner's comments made clear that the sonic, poetic and historical potentials opened up through linguistic and semantic slippage between 'snows' and 'stones' nodded to much of what was at stake too in

his unique collaboration with Kluge. (Daniel Binswanger Friedman)

Saturday, October 13, 2018

The third and final day of the conference devoted to Alexander Kluge began with a compelling talk by **Erik Porath** (Philosopher, Media Theorist, and Independent Artist, Berlin) entitled: “Alexander Kluge: Text & Bild—eine unendliche Beziehung.” Porath explored complex relationships in Kluge’s oeuvre between image and text by focusing on how these two modes of representation challenge and put productive pressure on one another in Kluge and Negt’s 1981 *Geschichte und Eigensinn*, and by illuminating key connections between Kluge’s creative work on this relationship and Freud’s approach to imagination (rather than fantasy) as an emphatically productive social process. A term of central importance throughout Kluge’s work, “Zusammenhang” figured throughout, as it points to ways in which text and image as modes of representation can engage with one another. Porath also raised more theoretical questions concerning possible connections between “First and Second Nature” of human beings and between concepts and labor and society more generally.

The following talk by Professor **Sabine Haenni** (Performing and Media Arts, Cornell) was titled “Time Lapse: Preliminary Notes on Alexander Kluge & City Symphonies, and shifted the focus to some of Kluge’s lesser known inter-medial filmic and televisual pieces. Specifically, Haenni explored one of Kluge’s early “documentaries” of Chicago and Detroit, which confronted the cities as foundational sites of the development of “techno” as a social and artistic phenomenon. Through the conceptual framework of “the city symphony,” in reference but also contrast to some examples from early twentieth-century film history, Haenni additionally analyzed Kluge’s particular aesthetic of “centrifugality” in his creative work on Chicago and Detroit as he engages the evolving problematics of urban dynamism and the city as an enabler of modernity.

Juan-Jacques Aupiais (Doctoral Student in German Studies, Cornell) concluded the morning session with his talk entitled: “Alexander Kluge’s Parallel Globalizations: Other Places, Other Lives, Writing Otherwise.” Aupiais began with Kluge’s provocative notion that the ice age represents the first instance of human globalization. Through close, critical readings paired with theoretical reflections, Aupiais strove to reconceptualize current debates concerning globalization, especially in its complex cultural dimensions as indexed by literature and the visual arts. Drawing on Klugean concepts of imagination, narrative space, and parallel worlds, Aupiais then analyzed

Kluge’s 2017 collaborative book with artist Georg Baselitz, “Weltverändernder Zorn.” This brought the discussion back full circle to questions of connectivity between image and text. Kluge and Baselitz, Aupiais pointed out, engage with the biography and self-portraits of the Japanese painter Hokusai in order to open up new ways of thinking through globalization from non-Eurocentric perspectives in the public, social and literary sphere. (Daniel Binswanger Friedman)

October 13, 2018 (afternoon sessions)

On Saturday, October 13th **Tara Hottman** (University of California, Berkeley), **Ulrike Vedder** (Humboldt University of Berlin) and **Alexis Radisoglou** (University of Oxford) spoke on Kluge’s aesthetics and transmedial processes for their respective presentations, which were followed by a roundtable discussion with **Susan Buck-Morss** (Cornell/CUNY Graduate Center), **Richard Langston** (University of North Carolina), and **Leslie Adelson** (Cornell).

Tara Hottman analyzed Kluge’s museum installations, focusing on the *remediation* of his televisual work in the context of art exhibitions, which according to Hottman

montage, existing only at the margins of an installation.

Ulrike Vedder reconstructed Alexander Kluge’s “museum constellations” by developing several theses on processes of “musealization,” which for Kluge are centered on practices of “Vergegenwärtigung.” Kluge’s intensified interest in museum exhibitions is in many ways counterintuitive, according to Vedder, inasmuch as his museum work pursues a form of museum-critique, one that unfolds in an interplay between museum and cinema. As Vedder contended, the latter is the true “place” of Kluge’s intervention, which becomes even more apparent when one frames Kluge’s work in a genealogy of movies that thematize the destruction of museums.

In the final formal presentation of this international conference devoted to “new perspectives on creative arts and critical practice” in and with Alexander Kluge, **Alexis Radisoglou** defined Kluge’s aesthetics as an “(Anti-)Realism for the Anthropocene.” Radisoglou supported his claim by reflecting on the political ecology of Kluge’s use of the media sphere, which questions the “planetary



re-write Kluge’s previous work through a new set of trans- and multi-medial objects. Hottman argued that these exhibitions “recontextualize” Kluge’s previous televisual works. She focused especially on Kluge’s *Nachrichten aus der ideologischen Antike: Marx, Eisenstein – Das Kapital*, which was presented at the 2015 Venice Biennale. Hottman argued further that this and other transmedial exhibitions become for Kluge an opportunity for intensified cooperation and also place the work of an ‘author’ in a social context in order to shine light on the multiple individuals involved, who otherwise typically remain hidden behind televised forms of

turn” celebrated by others and explores the conceptual challenges of “thinking beyond the one, and on multiple scales of the one.” This transition from the globe to the planet in Kluge’s particular sense offers a new perspective that is at once ex-centric and anti-hegemonic. According to Radisoglou, the short narrative forms that make up many of Kluge’s works lend themselves well to opposing a totalizing expansion of the globe. Indeed they perform the opposite, anti-realistic move, which is “a compression of space” in miniatures of the planetary. (Mariaenrica Giannuzzi)

Artist in Residence: Rebekka Kricheldorf

February 26 - March 9, 2019

Masterclass

On the afternoon of February 28th, the German writer-in-residence **Rebekka Kricheldorf** gave a masterclass focusing on her new play *Testosterone*, which was concurrently having its English-translation première at the Cherry Arts Space in Ithaca. Conducted in German, the masterclass took on the form of a seminar, which allowed for intensive group discussion. All participants had received the German original and the English translation of her play, as well as a Grimm Brothers' fairy tale titled "The Story of the Youth Who Went Forth to Learn What Fear Was," which served as a template for the play. The oddities and nuances of this fairy tale ended up as one of the main foci of the seminar. The narrative follows a young man's attempt to overcome his inability to feel fear by seeking out dangerous situations. As Kricheldorf began to unpack the reasons for her long-standing fascination with the play, a few main themes crystalized: the anti-psychological character of fairy tale figures, the fact that feeling fear is referred to by the young boy as an "art", the way the tale can be seen to prefigure a kind of toxic masculinity, and whether or not the inability to feel fear can be perceived as socially deficient or advantageous.

The discussion also revolved around Kricheldorf's writing practices, touching on questions of method and composition. Many of Kricheldorf's plays take their impetus from fairy tales or other stories whose main figures resist a kind of contemporary psychologizing. In their anti-realism, Kricheldorf believes, they can reveal telling aspects of our current situation. The discussion productively focused on the difficulty of rendering specific German terms in English, especially the German verb "gruseln" that occurs repeatedly in the fairy tale and whose translation might lie somewhere between "feeling fear/afraid" and "having the creeps." The in-betweenness of this term—which does not directly refer to fear or its object yet is not completely dissociated from it—became a productive touchstone in the conversation not only with respect to fear and its social function, but also with respect to translation, different cultural audiences and the challenge of accurately expressing foundational emotions through language. It was only fitting that, as Kricheldorf noted, the Grimm Brothers were responsible for the word coming into common usage in German. (Daniel Binswanger Friedman)

Testosterone (The Cherry Artspace, Ithaca)
February 21-March 3, 2019

Testosterone means many things. Perhaps most obviously it signifies the male sex hormone, yet from a cultural standpoint the word has come to enjoy a broader semantic range and is often associated with expressions of (toxic) masculinity. This is the most immediate meaning that is evoked by *Testosterone*, Rebekka Kricheldorf's play, which premiered in a new English translation at Ithaca's Cherry Artspace, February 21 to March 3.

The play was commissioned in 2012 by the Kassel State Theater as the second installation of a trilogy inspired by the fairy tales of the Brothers Grimm. As Kricheldorf explained in a conversation with faculty and graduate students, the story that inspired her play, "The Boy Who Went Forth to Learn What Fear Was," does not so much dwell on the "fairy" dimension of folk tales. Magic powers, talking animals, spirits and ghosts here possess only an ancillary function, for the quest of the main character involves coping with "fear." The ability to fear and to struggle with finitude, in Kricheldorf interpretation of the Grimm tale, involves the polarized dichotomy between a "good" and a "bad" son. The former, the embodiment of a Rambo fanatic, is unable to fear, while the latter is the opposite stereotype: a caring and prudent doctor, but also (and primarily) a coward. The opposite forces of human nature symbolized by the siblings—strength and weakness, along with their caricatures: the macho and the sissy, the prostitute and the virgin—remain polarized in the play until the moment of trial, brought about by the sudden irruption of the unpredictable world known here as the "bad neighborhood" into the domestic space. The peaceful life of the good son, along with his "good wife" and their "good patriarch" is forcibly rearranged as a result. This starts a chain reaction in which characters trade roles and values in a tantalizing game of exchanges that in the Ithaca production took place in a suffocating domestic space symbolized by a carpeted box hyper-protected by grotesque surveillance systems. The return of a character in the form of a ghost introduced a rich array of comic elements that played against dramatic conventions. (Mariaenrica Giannuzzi)

Workshop on Translation

On March 4th, 2019, the IGCS writer-in-residence Rebekka Kricheldorf held a workshop following the English première at Ithaca's Cherry Arts Space of her play

Testosterone. She was joined by Neil Blackadder, who has translated several of Kricheldorf's plays besides *Testosterone*.

In spite of its foreboding subtitle, "a dark parable," the play features many comic elements that are grounded in the non-psychological and non-realistic unfolding of characters and scenes. As in many of her plays, Kricheldorf works here with pre-existing material. *Testosterone* is based on "The Story of the Youth Who Went Forth to Learn What Fear Was," a fairy tale included in a collection



by the Grimm Brothers. Kricheldorf drew attention to the shifting distinction between good and evil in her play, which complicates the morals of the original tale. The discussion also focused on the process of translating the play into English, thematizing among other things the challenge of transposing Kricheldorf's complex negotiation of rhythm and register from German to English while staying true to the text's original meaning. Attempts to contextualize the play with respect to differences between German and American theater traditions evoked the concept of the Brechtian "Verfremdungseffekt" (estrangement effect), which prevents the audience from identifying with the characters on stage.

This workshop was the last of the events featuring the 2019 author in residence. The series included a meeting of the Contemporary German Literature Reading Group with Kricheldorf, a workshop with Cornell graduate students and faculty, as well as a collective visit to the production at the Cherry Arts Space. The performance was followed by a lively Q & A with the author, the director, and the performers. (Sophia Leonard)

Retrospective: Fall 2018

Colloquium Series

Buffon, Blumenbach, Herder, and the Origins of Modern Anthropology

September 7, 2018

On September 7, 2018, Professor **Carl Niekerk** (University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign) kicked off this year's colloquium series with his paper entitled



“Buffon, Blumenbach, Herder, and the Origins of Modern Anthropology.” Tracing the conflicted relationship between Enlightenment humanism and anthropology, Niekerk showed how many 18th century thinkers used a speculative approach to arrive at their theories of the “human.” Niekerk also engaged the discourse of cosmopolitanism, together with its universalizing aspirations, by reflecting on biological treatises, geographical records, travelogues and other accounts of human diversity, claiming that thinkers like Herder, Buffon and Blumenbach never entirely freed themselves from a normative conception of the human.

During the event, graduate students and faculty responded to Niekerk's paper with a number of stimulating comments and questions. For instance, students inquired about Kant's relationship to emergent theories of race, particularly with reference to Herder and Blumenbach. Niekerk emphasized how these thinkers historicized the origins of different races, moving away from the more static paradigm found in Linnean taxonomies. Participants highlighted the centrality of sedentary societies in these theories of the human, which led to a discussion of the status

of semi-sedentary or nomadic communities among them. According to Niekerk, this Eurocentric bias persists in many

Buffon-inspired monogenetic accounts, which explain diversity on the basis of a common origin and species. Concepts like *Abartung* and *Ausartung* help to explain, albeit problematically, how “other” races in “other” parts of the world were (de)generated and took on the phenotypes observed. The colloquium was followed by a warm reception for Niekerk, where the discussion continued. (Emir Yigit)

Intermediale Selbstthematization

November 2, 2018

On November 2, 2018, Professor **Vance Byrd** (Grinnell College) presented a paper titled “Intermediale Selbstthematization: Nineteenth-Century Illustrated Periodicals, Panoramas, and Commemoration,” which is based on current research that examines the relations between photography, panorama and war journalism. In the paper, he focused on the work of two panorama artists: Friedrich Wilhelm Heine and Theodore R. Davis, which he treated as representative of nineteenth century commemorative culture. In describing the stakes of the project, Professor Byrd voiced his intention to shift the existing scholarship on commemoration away from a sort of “methodological nationalism” towards “writing comparative global media history.”

Byrd's paper also raised the issue of contextualization by asking whether an artwork that has taken on a new meaning should be presented to the public by seeking to recover its original context. This led to a conversation on the constructedness of historical narratives as telescoped by the question of whether, due to their inherent mediation (through notes - sketches - wood engravings), panoramas could be considered less authentic than verbal war narratives.

While acknowledging the panorama's important role in provoking reflection about social and historical subjects, Byrd stressed that this very function can be problematic, since the perspective a panorama lends to historical knowledge always remains simplified rather than differentiated. Many questions following Byrd's short



presentation revolved around the forms that productive spectatorship can take in this inter-medial context, as well as how one is to appraise the relation between different kinds of media. (Sophia Léonard)

Lessing, Novalis, and the Redemption of the Image

November 16, 2018

On November 16, 2018, as part of the colloquium series of the Institute for German Cultural Studies, Ph.D. candidate **Matthew Stoltz** (Cornell), presented part of his dissertation project in a paper entitled: “Lessing, Novalis, and the Redemption of the Image.” Stoltz, in an illuminating and thoughtful reading, brought to light the multifaceted debate on the status of the image for two central figures of the eighteenth century (Lessing and Novalis) with respect to their philosophies of religious education. Stoltz stressed the importance of relating Lessing's polemic against the plastic arts in his earlier *Laokoon* (1766) to his religious writings of the 1780s in which a similar antipathy towards the image can be detected. In his paper, Stoltz delineated some of the major differences between Novalis' and Lessing's theories of religious education. Whereas Lessing's *Erziehung des Menschengeschlechts* develops an evolutionary scheme of religious education that dispenses with the need for sensible forms of mediation like images, Novalis's *Die Christenheit oder Europa* worked to recuperate the role that material mediation plays in sustaining religious experience. Making use of Birgit Meyer's assessment of modern “mentalistic attitudes” of religion, which privilege the “inside (concept, ideas, beliefs, worldviews) above the ‘outside’ (rituals, objects, pictures, etc.),” Stoltz showed that Novalis, in general, and vis-à-vis

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.

Collecting. A Poetics

November 30, 2018

On November 30, 2018, Professor **Samuel Frederick** (Penn State University), a graduate of Cornell's graduate program in German Studies, brought this year's colloquium series to a close with his talk on "Collecting. A Poetics," which drew on his current book-project tentatively titled "The Redemption of Things: Collecting as a Poetics in German Realism and Modernism." The paper, which spurred a lively discussion, focused on collecting as a theory and praxis of poetics. In his introductory remarks, Frederick noted how one of his theoretical points of departure was the Aristotelian claim that "man is the living being to which collecting belongs." While Frederick's focus was on the phenomenon of collecting as represented in literature, the reference to Aristotle made it clear that his concern with a poetics of collecting also has more fundamental anthropological implications. According to Frederick, the study of collecting "moves away from the sphere of the museum, archive or bourgeois interior, where actual objects are gathered from safe-guarding and memorialization," and extends instead "to the combined and conflicting logics of gathering and conservation as they are worked out in a number of different areas of human activity." In sum, Frederick stressed collecting as an



Lessing in particular, redeemed the "outside" as an integral part of modern theology and aesthetics. The paper's focus opened up terms that sparked a lively debate about the differences and similarities between Lessing and Novalis, as well as the status of the image within different faith traditions. The relation between materiality, mentality and medium (the image) was an especially rich constellation that brought Stoltz's project in dialogue with colloquium participants, faculty and graduate students. (Søren Larsen)



activity and a practical endeavor that moves beyond a narrow focus on the collected objects as the exclusive site of meaning.

During the event graduate students and faculty responded to Frederick's paper with a number of critical questions and remarks, especially about the political stakes of Frederick's project in a larger cosmopolitan framework. At issue was how collecting relates to political discourses that inform and guide not just the choice of objects that make up the collected archive but also the ways in which collecting itself operates. This in turn raised the question of how theories and practices of collecting might provide insight into the ways in which communities engage with and imagine the past, present, and future. (Søren Larsen)

Retrospective: Spring 2019 Colloquium Series

Rethinking 1970s Political Modernism

January 25, 2019

On January 25th, 2019, **Jette Gindner** (Cornell University) opened IGCS's Spring Colloquium Series with a paper titled: "Rethinking 1970s Political Modernism: Critical Reflexivity and the Feminization of Labor in Tatjana Turanskyj's *Eine Flexible Frau/A flexible Woman* (2010)." By using the film by Turanskyj as a case study, Gindner analyzed job markets and labor conditions in the pressurized post-2008 context, arguing that the film rethinks 1970s feminist art cinema for a critical visual aesthetics after postmodernism. While the film has been read as a portrayal of current labor conditions for women, Gindner maintained that Turanskyj redeploys the formal device of critical reflexivity to create estranging perspectives on a "new normal"—what Gindner described as the "feminization of labor, and ultimately the end of waged work in capital's present, structural crises."



Drawing on her expertise in both economics and German Studies and working through Marxian critical perspectives that focus on post-socialism, deindustrialization, and issues of race and gender, Gindner's research explores recent moments of economic crises: the post 1989 East Germany, the dotcom crash in 2000, and the lingering effects of the 2008 financial crisis. Gindner's overall work contributes to scholarship on a variety of subjects, including visual aesthetics, Marxian criticism, and practices of material and aesthetic culture. The lively discussion

her paper generated revolved around the film as a site for reflecting on questions of Marxism and aesthetic form, as well as visual aesthetics and gender. (Søren Larsen)

Air: For a Cultural History of Climate

March 8, 2019

On March 8, 2019, Prof. **Eva Horn** (University of Vienna) joined our Spring Colloquium series with a paper entitled: "Air: For a Cultural History of Climate." The essay built on work published in Fall 2018 in the journal *Grey Room* ("Air as Medium"). Starting from her landmark monograph on *Zukunft als Katastrophe* (Fischer, 2014), Horn sought to reorient current debates on the Anthropocene by focusing on questions concerning the ontology of air as a diaphanous, all-enveloping medium. Her essay discussed the history of cultural and literary engagement with the medium "air" prior to the scholarly negotiation of environmental concerns that animates the environmental humanities. As she pointed out, because of its ephemeral quality air has traditionally been considered magic or quasi-sacred, sharing its nature with celestial and ethereal bodies. This has made it a perennial, if elusive, object of fascination—a fascination that art and literature capture in



in-chief, Martin Sonneborn, ever since.

Prof. Wirth's project investigates the party's strategies of satirical distancing from current political circumstances, as well as their connection to comedy, by drawing on Bertolt Brecht's "Verfremdungseffekt" (estrangement effect). His analysis was framed through an exploration of the relation between Walter Benjamin's notion of "pure fun" and our everyday, colloquial use of the term "fun." The ensuing discussion centered around the blurry boundaries between satire and reality, as well as questions of what satire actually references when it is understood as a form of speech.

unique ways. Horn pleaded for learning from the ways contemporary art engages with the mediality of air, pointing to the aesthetic as a fruitful arena that goes beyond the science- and data-driven thrust of current debates to dwell on the singularity of the experiences framed by our relation to the environment. (Mariaenrica Giannuzzi)

Reiner Spaß? Komödie als Real-Satire/Pure Fun? Comedy as a Reality Satire

April 12, 2019

On Friday, April 12, **Uwe Wirth** (University



of Gießen) gave a colloquium presentation on the performative gestures of quotations deployed in the political campaign of the German party "Die Partei" (The Party). This political organization was founded in 2004 by editors of the satirical magazine *Titanic* and has been led by its former editor-

The following morning Professor Wirth met with graduate students for a more informal workshop on the unfolding of the so-called Böhmermann-Affäre, which involved the blistering satire of Turkish leader Recep Tayyip Erdoğan by comedian Jan Böhmermann in March 2016. The satire prompted Ankara to summon the German ambassador to take action against Böhmermann. Drawing on this case, workshop participants discussed specific definitions of satire as a form by drawing on readings by contemporary comedian Jesko Friedrich and by Kurt Tucholsky, Weimar Germany's most celebrated satirist. The discussion then turned to what should count as a legitimate target for the satirist, especially in light of the controversial aspects of Böhmermann's satire, as well as the role the audience is called to play in the process. (Sophia Léonard)

Goethe's Stalker Snails

May 3, 2019

On Friday, May 3rd Prof. **Barbara Nagel** (Princeton University) closed the IGCS's Spring Colloquium Series with a paper titled "Goethe's Stalker Snails." The paper was part of a larger project that brings together rhetoric, affect theory, and gender and literature, building on Nagel's previous work about the literalization of language in *Der Skandal des Literalen: Barocke literalisierungen bei Gryphius, Kleist, Büchner* (Wilhelm Fink, 2012). Nagel has also edited the collection *Flirtations: Rhetoric and Aesthetics This Side of Seduction*, published by Fordham University Press in May 2015.

Her second monograph, *Ambiguous Aggression in German Realism and Beyond: Flirtation, Passive Aggression, and Domestic Violence*, will appear in October 2019 with Bloomsbury Academics' *New Directions in German Studies* series.

In the colloquium Nagel pursued the figure of the snail as a disturbing detail in Goethe's writing, focusing on what she termed the 'staggering materiality of the haunting snail.' Nagel pointed out how in his *Faust* Goethe describes Gretchen with metaphors invoking the snail, which he also used in reference to his own youthful lover. While the snail has often been associated with the feminine and 'virgin pregnancy' in the Christian tradition, Nagel argued that in Goethe's work this trope takes on a peculiar character of queerness and a-sexuality, giving rise to images that are located in a realm of 'slimy' materiality. Drawing on Samuel Weber's work on the detail as both divine and devilish, Nagel pleaded for reading the many details of the snail occurring in Goethe's writing in terms of parataxis and queer materiality. Much like the motif of the snail, Nagel's paper itself featured stylistic circles of 'sluggishness' and haunting images of 'stickiness.' Much of the



conversation considered further implications of Nagel's work in a larger historical context that includes Goethe studies, gender studies and German studies. (Søren Larsen)



Faculty Profile: Erik Born

The Department of German Studies welcomes a new addition to the faculty: Erik Born. Working at the intersection of German studies, media studies, and medieval studies, Born brings insights from contemporary media theory to bear on the history of media in diverse contexts, especially the German Middle Ages, Late Imperial Germany, and Early European Modernism.

Born hails from St. Petersburg, Florida, though he spent his early childhood traveling with his family along the Eastern Seaboard of the U.S. on a small sailboat. After receiving a BA from The University of Chicago in a “Great Books” program formally known as “Fundamentals: Issues & Texts,” Born spent several years serving as an English-language teaching assistant at a secondary school in Vienna, Austria. Upon returning to the United States, he entered a doctoral program at the University of California, Berkeley, and earned a concurrent PhD in German Studies and Medieval Studies, along with a Designated Emphasis in Film & Media Studies. During his doctoral studies, Born returned to Vienna for a year-long Fulbright fellowship at the Internationales Forschungszentrum



Kulturwissenschaften (IFK). After coming to Cornell as a Mellon Postdoctoral Fellow at the Society for the Humanities in 2016,

he was a Visiting Assistant Professor in the Department of German Studies.

Born is the co-editor of a volume on the figure of the neighbor in German modernity, and the author of articles on medieval media theory, early German science fiction, and the media history of cinema and television, as well as translations and book reviews on topics in film & media studies. His current book project examines the emergence of wireless media in Germany around 1900, a transitional moment, much like our own, when possibilities for future development still seemed wide open. In addition to teaching German language, literature, film, and culture, he looks forward to teaching “Thinking Media” for the Media Studies Program in Spring 2020.

A Conference of the Institute for German Cultural Studies (IGCS)

RE-IMAGINING THE DISCIPLINE

**German Studies, the Humanities,
and the University**

A.D. White House
Cornell University

Friday, Sept. 13, 2019

Saturday, Sept. 14, 2019

Fall 2019 Colloquium Series

181 GOLDWIN SMITH HALL*
except Nov. 11

FRIDAYS @ 2:30PM*
except Nov. 11

SEPTEMBER 6

Mark-Georg Dehrmann

(Modern German Literature, Humboldt University, Berlin)

Dimensions of the Modern Epic.

The Example of Phantasmatic Orality

OCTOBER 18

Patchen Markell (Government, Cornell University)

Rereading Hannah Arendt's *The Origins of Totalitarianism*



MONDAY, NOVEMBER 11, 4:30pm, 160 GSH*

Jens Schröter (Cultural Media Theory, University of Bonn)

Money and Media Theory

NOVEMBER 22

Inka Mülder-Bach (Modern German Literature, Munich)

**The Prose of Society. Narrative Forms and Social Communication
in Goethe's *Conversations of German Refugees***

DECEMBER 6

William Krieger (German, Cornell University)

Cogito ergo dumm: The Dilettante Humor of Dieter Roth's Prose

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).

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).

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