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German Culture News
Cornell University IGCS
726 University Avenue
Ithaca, NY 14850
phone: 607.255.8408
email: ogp2@cornell.edu

Leslie A. Adelson: Director

Olga Petrova: Editor & Designer

Carl Gelderloos: Copy Editor,
Photographer

Gizem Arslan:
Photographer & Student Coordinator

Cornell-Giessen Workshop:

Transnational Approaches to the Study of Culture



In opening remarks conference organizer **Leslie A. Adelson** (Cornell University) introduced the distinguished speakers and highlighted an intellectual encounter guided by work in progress. The central questions of this encounter revolved around the identification and critique

of trends, keywords, and concepts in transnational studies and cultural studies, with the goal of interrogating a new transnational analytic of cultural phenomena and the revision of current definitions. Distinguishing current trends from previous concepts centered on nation-states, or even on globalization and an inadequate notion of hybridity, Adelson emphasized the pressing contemporary need for more refined definitions of transnationalism adequate to global networks, but also to the movements, ties, and interactions between people across the borders of nation-states as such. From this perspective, transnational models of analysis would have to take into account both national and global formations. One of the most suggestive articulations of culture as an analytical point of reference comes

from Arjun Appadurai, who defines culture in an “un-marked” sense as all differences, while culture that is “marked,” according to the anthropologist of globalization, designates only those differences “mobilized to articulate the boundary of difference.”
(Arina Rotaru)

Panel I **INSTITUTIONS AND EXPERIENCE**

Brett de Bary (Cornell University), associate editor of TRACES, focused her talk on her own introduction to a forthcoming issue of that journal entitled “Universities in Translation: The Mental Labor of Globalization,” which has at its center an experimental approach to the idea of the university and exchange, as it is engaged from an Asian and international perspective rather than the customary North American critical

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.

theoretical angle. In an epoch of precariousness, crisis, and transformation of institutional practices, the publication brought scholars together from cities as diverse as Seoul, Hong Kong and Tokyo as well as Moscow, Giessen and Merida, and invited them to talk about university reform in the context of global discourses, of knowledge production and governmental investment in higher education from the perspective of a unified academic system. The resulting discussions of the development of the university under the sign of neoliberalism and of the restratification of global labor applied a nuanced approach to possible totalitarian administrative impulses such as the erasure of boundaries between the university and the economy on the one hand, and the creation of university corporations to respond in a determined way to institutional uniformity on the other. The globalization of mental labor is linked to national productivity, neo-liberal economies, and the “mental labor of globalization.” New work is needed, de Bary concluded, to assess the global scope of restructuring in higher education.

(Arina Rotaru)

In her talk, entitled “Experiencing Experience: The Transnational Self as Cultural Iteration,” **Mabel Berezin** (Cornell University) focused on conceptualizing “events” and “experience” as core elements for a sociological analysis of political culture. She began her talk by discussing Reagan’s speech at the Brandenburg Gate in June of 1987, arguing that even if there is no direct causal relation between the speech and the fall of the Berlin Wall, as a political event, the for-

mer engaged collective imagination and altered public perception, making the possibility of the Fall visible. Berezin defined events as “templates of possibility.” They are politically and sociologically important because they render visible a nexus of relations which pertain to the broader macro and micro level of social processes and offer variants of paths, even if those paths are not pursued. In contrast to historical institutionalism, she argued that events make manifest what might happen rather than predict what will happen. Experience, the second pivotal concept, was defined as a way in which collectivities process events; it functions both on an individual as well as on a collective level, it has an emotional and cognitive dimension and it is both conservative and transformative. As a temporal cognitive phenomenon it draws on the past to access the future, creating a tension between imagined possibilities and perceptions of constraint. What al-



Leslie Adelson (Cornell University)

lows for the reformulation of events and their experience in historic and analytic terms is collective evaluation. In discussing several examples

of political events in an attempt to map out a “topology of events” that matter – inasmuch as they changed collective cultural and political perception – Berezin argued for a comparative analysis.

(Andreea Mascan)

Panel II **HYBRIDITY AND TRANSLATION**

Doris Bachmann-Medick (Sr. Research Fellow, International Graduate Centre for the Study of Culture, Justus-Liebig-Universität Giessen) opened the workshop’s second panel, “Hybridity and Translation,” with her paper, “From Hybridity to Translation: Reflections on ‘Travelling Concepts.’” Bachmann-Medick’s central premise concerned the study of culture as the study of travel, or as “translation” conceived in its broader etymological sense. Bachmann-Medick’s paper drew on the work of cultural historians Edward Said and James Clifford, asking how “travelling concepts” might be reevaluated in a way that allows for the reintroduction of history into globalized situations, and whether the study of culture as travel might lead to a sort of “nomadic criticism.” However, noting that concepts and theories are also generated through a type of physical travel, she proposed that the study of culture as a whole could be productively understood instead in terms of “travelling relations.” The notion of the study of culture as translation, as a series of transformations, detours, and displacements led her to posit the study of culture as “translation or translocation studies” rather than merely as travelling concepts. Departing from Said, she emphasized

that in this process a type of historical grounding in contextualization is necessary, that a kind of spatial specificity is required to replace the “worn out concept of hybridity in the manifestation of travelling theory.” In this way, Bachmann-Medick hoped that historical subjects would become more visible and that marginal voices will be figured in dominant discourses. She warned against the “placelessness” of hybridity and argued that we need to move away from theories such as Bakhtin’s notion of polyphony, holding that hybridity as a theoretical concept must be liberated in a manner that would lead “travelling theories” through a process of translation that reclaims the centrality of historical concepts. This would also entail a process whereby “metaphors” are “made accessible through practices of translation” and would moreover call for an “interdisciplinary translation turn in the humanities” which emphasizes a “poetics of location” and a “situation of concepts.”

Naoki Sakai (Cornell University) joined in the second panel’s discussion with a paper entitled “Image and the Unity of a Language: Translation and the Indeterminacy of National Language.” Sakai took as his point of departure an essay by Yoko Tawada, the Writer-in-Residence at the Institute for German Cultural Studies during the spring semester. Sakai reads Tawada’s essay as looking at the imposition of an optic on the trope of the gate and locating the position of the transla-

tor as “me vs. you.” He suggested that in Tawada’s essay, she locates a transitory movement rather than a stationary position, symbolizing a “situation of refraction” via the trope of the gate and the “choreographic potentiality” of a graphic phoneme. Sakai went on to discuss the grapheme’s particular capacity to enable multiple constructions of other characters through its components, while not necessarily sharing the same meaning or even connota-

the basic structure of the language’s syntax. He further asked whether the “ideography serves to order and classify the confusing Japanese syntax” and to illustrate that it is impossible to define what is Japanese without “foreignness.” Sakai then returned to Tawada’s example of the gate trope in order to clarify his idea of the indeterminacy of national languages, that “it is impossible to find unity of language just in words; you have to look at syntax” and that the “belonging of a word to a specific language has to be found in upper levels of syntax.” He emphasized that the unity of national language is “fabricated while still remaining part and parcel of cultural contexts.” It cannot be an “empirical unity” and this has “implications for other categories such as translation.” (Grace Gemmell)



Yoko Tawada
2009 Writer-in-Residence

tions. He tied this in to the problem of translation, particularly in connection with the move from graphemes to phonemes, noting that because of the inherent double register of exclusion and inclusion, in Japanese ideography in particular “the translator must recognize what was already unrecognizable in the original.” Sakai drew on these particular aspects of Tawada’s essay in order to ask “what is in accord or discord with a proper national language” such as Japanese where there are ambiguities in meaning due to the coexistence of foreign and native elements which frame

Panel III **LITERATURE AND LETTERS**

The ICGS Writer-In-Residence for 2009 **Yoko Tawada** delivered the Cornell Lecture on Contemporary Aesthetics as part of the Cornell-Giessen workshop. In her lecture, called “The Letter as Literature’s Political and Poetic Body,” Tawada contemplated the relationship of script and textual form to the manner in which a text is received and read. Common visual practice is altered in response to the presentation of textual media and conversely, text, as it is produced and distributed, is often also refashioned in

response to developments in visual habits. Tawada presented a narrative of the historical development of Japanese textual media, considering the spectrum of reading and seeing involved in the consumption of each form. The lecture began with depictions of recent developments in Japanese print culture, along with the consideration of contemporary reading habits that accompanied their inception. The prominent example was a comparison of two translations of Fyodor Dostoyevsky's *Brothers Karamazov*, the first from 1927 and the second a recent release. Tawada considered the contribution of manga, Japanese illustrated books with a tradition reaching back into the 18th century, to the development of reading habits. Intergenerational differences in textual reception include such factors as reading speed and the degree of freedom of imagination that the reader is given in various textual forms and the types of reading or seeing that they promote. Examples from other national histories and languages expanded the political stakes for the practices of reading and seeing in relation to various textual traditions. Some political movements construct a hierarchy of scripts or alphabets, favoring the Latin alphabet over the Cyrillic alphabet, or vice versa. The use of a writing style can identify sympathizers of a political persuasion even when the content of the text is not understood, as was the case with the shorthand used in 1955 by those sympathetic to the government of the New People's Republic of China. The political connotations of scripts sometimes lead to the imposition of one script over another, complementing or

contradicting the organic development of languages, or resulting in the awkward transcription of a phonetic language in an inappropriate script. Such dictates may also eliminate the freedom of choice of textual or scriptural style employed for subjective expression. Tawada ended her presentations with examples from her own poetic work in which she experiments with the presentation of text in order to encourage innovative modes of seeing, reading, and the construction of meaning in the consumption of text.

(Miyako Hayakawa)

Panel IV

EUROPE AND IMAGINATION

Andreas Langenohl (Universität Konstanz) began the panel "Europe and Imagination" with a paper on transnational imaginaries in Europe entitled "The Imagination of Europe: Rethinking Political Culture in the European Union." Langenohl set out to examine the collective perceptions of community in Europe, balancing a theoretical analysis of the imaginary of a transnational political culture in Europe with a more "hands on" approach that included helping sell Glühwein at a Christmas Market. Langenohl began his presentation with a critique of certain methods of research into political culture, such as surveys. Drawing on Charles Taylor, Langenohl defined the "imaginary" as an implicit understanding of the moral nature of society embodied in common practices which in turn reinforce said imaginary. The notion of the imaginary combines the idea from modernization theory that modernity carries col-

lective notions of representation as well as the notion that these have something imagined about them. The imaginary of a transnational political culture could therefore be useful in shedding light on social practices as well as collectivities, such as the nation, or, in the case of the E.U., the supra-national. He applied this definition to the practice of sister cities, looking particularly at the partnership between a town in Hesse and a town in Italy. This partnership involved a circulation of goods and delegates, establishing a circulation of social and cultural capital. Langenohl ended his talk by pointing out that despite the transnational political imaginary embodied and reinforced by this partnership, exemplified in a speech given by the vice-mayor of the Hessian town in the Italian partner town on the circulation of food within the E.U., this particular imaginary nevertheless helps construct a transnationalism with certain limits. The list of foods was notable as much for what it left out as for what it included, leading Langenohl to conclude that the event, in spite of its international theme, hinted at barriers between both E.U. members and possible future members, thereby legitimizing exclusion.

Leslie A. Adelson (Cornell University), the second speaker of the panel, introduced a new project she is currently developing with the title "Experiment Mars and Turkish Migration: Imaginative Ethnoscapes and a New Futurism in Contemporary German Literature?" Pointing out that the literature of migration does not always fulfill the implicit expectation of a preservationist

project in which the possible loss of idioms, stories, etc. in migration might be stopped, Adelson examined an orientation towards the future, rather than the past, in the works of Alexander Kluge, Berkan Karpat, and Zafer Şenocak. By examining the works of Kluge, Karpat, and Şenocak through a lens of futurity, Adelson found that resonances between the aesthetic projects of all three began to appear. Adelson discussed futurity in open-ended terms of a range of literary forms and investments pointedly concerned with the future in some way. Referring to works by Kluge, Karpat, and Şenocak, she stressed literary forms of labor concerned with a new future constituted from disaggregated bits and pieces of the past. In these cases stylistic features and thematic motifs that may suggest a new futurism entail both distinct allusions to the futurism of the historical avant-garde in its Russian and Italian variants on the one hand, and significant differences from these historical precedents on the other. If communities cohere on shared remembrances, as proposed by Max Weber, who underscored subjective perceptions in the construction of “ethnos,” Adelson asked what would happen if the ties that bind hinged not on remembrances, but on possible futures? Adelson then turned her attention to Nazim Hikmet, a Turkish writer heavily influenced by the Futurist movement, one whose influence on Karpat and Şenocak is apparent in broken quotations in their own works. Here the voice of human suffering registers not as a memory in Karpat and Şenocak, but rather as leftover material recycled in their own works.

(Alexander Phillips)

Panel V CULTURE AND MEDIA

Patrizia McBride (Cornell University) focused on the use of montage techniques as the media of transmission of knowledge about other cultures in her paper, “The Virtues of Resemblance: Negotiating Cultural Difference in Weimar-Era Photography.” McBride began with a brief introduction to issues of truthfulness based on resemblance in photography through Siegfried Kracauer’s *On Photography*, in which Kracauer demonstrates how the repetition of images through the media can allow the image, regardless of content, to replace other memories – he takes one’s grandmother as his example – and become elevated as truths. As opposed to notions that the value of photography lies in the fidelity of the representation to an outside referent, photobooks such as those of László Maholy-Nagy and Hannah Höch exploit the similarity of visual patterns to defamiliarize typical ways of viewing photography and produce unconventional ways of seeing. Turning first to Maholy-Nagy’s photobook *Malerei Fotografie Film*, McBride demonstrated how the manipulation of scale and temporal and spatial planes in pairs of images reorganizes the structure of the visual field. Furthermore, using montage techniques, Moholy-Nagy is able to foreground the moment of the work’s construction and enhance the narrative depth of the ‘instant’ moment in the photographs. Having demonstrated what is at stake in an aesthetics of resemblance, McBride

focused on close readings of two spreads from Höch’s photobook to demonstrate how the juxtaposition of photographs and their obvious construction inspires unsuspected relationships across images that are grounded in analogy rather than resemblance. As such, the truthful potential of the photograph no longer lies in its equivalence to a particular referent, but rather its provocation of a manifold analogy. Discussions of photography often revolve around the issue of how one should orient oneself in a world of mechanically produced images. Montage, considered as a response to this question, is a technique that can be used to train a type of seeing no longer bound to the recognition of a photograph’s referent, but rather receptive to a different type of meaning.

Peter Gilgen (Cornell University)



framed his discussion of the need to consider the specificity of aesthetic judgment in his paper entitled “Contemporary Aesthetics and Its Discontents” by noting a return of/to aesthetics in cultural theory in

the developing influences between continental philosophy and cultural studies. In the 1980s and 90s a trend against aesthetics erupted among figures such as Pierre Bourdieu. Bourdieu, through a scientific response to Kant's third critique, dismissed aesthetic judgment as an ideological category. Judgments of taste, according to Bourdieu, have social origins that strongly correlate with factors such as social class and educational level. Other cultural and literary theorists have found different relationships among aesthetic or sensual, bodily judgments that are not necessarily rational or culturally-inflected phenomena. Here Gilgen cited Tony Bennett's institutional view of literature and Terry Eagleton's recognition of the body as an absolute limit to any system or theory. The increasing ambiguity of "culture" and "aesthetics" proceeds in tandem. At stake in all of these discussions is the extent to which aesthetic judgment can be considered an autonomous system. Is aesthetics purely in the dominion of the body – as in Baumgarten's reasoning, which distinguishes judgments made on the grounds of the senses and those on the grounds of the intellect – or does it also in-

volve a psychic savoring of art that would be prone to socialization? To shed some light on the terminological ambiguity, Gilgen suggested a return to Kant's discussion of aesthetic judgment in the third critique. According to systems theory, which can examine claims of autonomy for an aesthetic system by understanding its operation with respect to the other systems within which it is embedded, there is no consistent judgment between what is beautiful and what is agreeable. The key to Kant's aesthetics lies in his discussion of how the merely agreeable relates to taste. Pleasure being incommunicable, both a bodily and a rational component are necessary to perceive aesthetics. Gilgen concluded by returning to Luhmann's attempt to better articulate the importance of communicability to aesthetic judgment and emphasized the need to first think aesthetic judgment in its specificity before bringing it to bear on social and political practices. (Katrina Nousek)

Panel VI
MEDIA AND EVENT

Friedrich Lenger of the Inter-

national Graduate Centre for the Study of Culture at the Justus Liebig University in Giessen presented a paper entitled "Transnational Media Events from 1848 to 1914." Lenger defined a transnational media event as an event which sparked intensive discussion beyond one nation's borders, while not necessarily sparking a global discussion. Iconization, when a series of events is brought together in a single image (the burning towers of September 11, 2001 being a prime example), often plays an important role in such events. Lenger placed the rise in transnational media events in the context of social and technological changes occurring after the Revolution of 1848. When the revolution broke out in Paris, for example, the news, carried largely by pigeons and by rail, took several days to reach Cologne. By the time of the Crimean War, newspaper reporting was still hindered by technological limitations, in spite of development. Photographs were available, but long exposure times made action shots impossible, while the inability to print photographs forced newspapers to rely on woodcuts. However, according to Lenger, by the 1880s the newspaper landscape was shifting, as improvements in printing technology allowed for papers to be printed in larger numbers, giving rise to a press seeking profit rather than the advancement of a certain political agenda. This meant a turn towards local news and sensationalism in many newspapers. Lenger then discussed two case studies of transnational media events: the case of Jack the Ripper and the sinking of the Titanic. The contemporary press sensationalized both the brutal mutilations and



Patrizia McBride (Cornell University)

the police's failure to identify the killer, thus increasing circulation, as the fascination with the murders crossed national boundaries and elevated the killings to a transnational media event. Similar sensationalism was behind much of the reporting on the sinking of the Titanic, according to Lenger. The excesses of the first-class passengers reinforced class-based narratives in left-wing papers. National stereotypes also colored the reporting of the event. In reporting on how Italians donned women's clothing to escape the sinking ship, for instance, newspapers mixed gender aspects with negative stereotypes of other nations.

(Alexander Phillips)

In his presentation entitled "Transnational Media Scandals," **Martin Zierold** (Justus-Liebig-Universität Gießen) explored scandals as indicators and catalysts of cultural change. He thus challenged the predominant notion that scandals are signs of declining moral values and argued instead that scandals have socializing as well as destructive effects.

Zierold suggested that scandals do not pre-exist to be "found," but are "made/constructed in the process of successful scandalization." Drawing on Jacob Burkhardt's model of



a "scandal clock," Zierold explored the climaxes and normalizations in the process of scandalization, where implicit and invisible norms become observable in explicit discourse. According to Zierold, transnational media scandals are cultural seismographs that both offer possibilities of productive socialization, and enable us to understand and compare different cultures. Zierold then performed a qualitative discourse-analysis of

two contemporary transnational media scandals: the Muhammad caricature scandal and the international release of German-English author Charlotte Roche's book *Wetlands*

in order to illustrate how the study of scandals can contribute to transnational approaches to the study of culture. According to Zierold, these two scandals both presented opportunities to reflect upon cultural and national reputations and particularities, upon stereotypes, and upon interculturality and integration.

(Gizem Arslan)

Honoring Dominick LaCapra

The IGCS is pleased to co-sponsor an interdisciplinary conference scheduled for Sept. 25-26, 2009, "Repetition with Change: The Intellectual Legacies of Dominick LaCapra." For almost four decades, this distinguished colleague has challenged the disciplinary and normative assumptions of scholars throughout the humanities. He helped to inaugurate and interpret the "linguistic turn" in the historical profession, exploring the relevance of literary theory for historical inquiry, while simultaneously making a case for careful historical study within literary and critical theory. This conference will gather together LaCapra's former students and intellectual interlocutors who have taken up in their own work one or more of the theoretical challenges he has posed over the years. Papers will be grouped according to some of LaCapra's chief preoccupations that have persisted through the decades: historiography and critical theory, secularization, trauma and repetition, excess and normative limits, and animal-human relations. Together the papers will illustrate the vast range of work that LaCapra's theoretical reflections have inspired in European intellectual history and beyond.

Spring Lectures

In his lecture “Memory and Memorial,” current Frank H. T. Rhodes Class of ’58 Professor, architect and Cornell alum **Peter Eisenman** spoke to students in Sage Chapel about his work designing the *Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe* in Berlin. Eisenman spoke about the four-year process required to make the memorial happen, including the metamorphoses of the design through three phases of contests, the complications caused by artistic differences with design partner Richard Serra, the political ramifications of Chancellor Helmut Kohl’s failed campaign for reelection, pressure from the Jewish community, and the representation of the project in the press. Eisenman foregrounded the difficulty of trying to represent in physical form the scope and horror of the Holocaust, as well as that of navigating the complicated politics of the subject and meeting

Eisenman

the expectations of groups who would visit the site. Additionally, he discussed his decision to make the experience of visiting the memorial a disorienting one, a design reflected in the varying heights and angles of the 2,711 pillars, as well as the decision to include an information center underneath the memorial field. Eisenman related how Jürgen Habermas visited the memorial and praised it for including spaces for different types of memory: for the unrepresentable (the field) and for the archival (the information center). Finally, Eisenman previewed his newer proposals for a Museum of Nazi History on the former site of Hitler’s *Braunhaus* in Munich, and presented several student drafts of potential designs and their significance. (Megan Eaton)

In his lecture entitled “Der Streit um das Prinzip Menschenwürde” **Alexander Dietz** (Universität Heidelberg) gave an overview of current debates in Germany over the concept of human dignity. In part a reaction against the atrocities that resulted from National Socialism, Article 1, Paragraph 1 of the 1949 German Basic Law codified the concept of human dignity. Since then, many discussions in Germany over ethics, government policies, and civil lawsuits have referenced human dignity, in attempts to determine whether a particular practice violates this basic principle. Dietz held that there had recently been an inflation in such debates trivializing the concept and raising the question whether human dignity might be violable in particular ways and in certain contexts. Dietz then turned to recent interventions into the debate by contemporary German philosophers, who

Dietz

have introduced some provocations. Franz Josef Wetz, for instance, argues that the concept of human dignity is often instrumentalized as a discussion stopper, trivialized and rendered cliché. He suggests that the concept of human dignity might not be a good legal and/or philosophical category, arguing that it favors the human species over others, and is a product of western cultural imperialism. Despite these shortcomings of the concept of human dignity, Dietz held that it would still be worth maintaining. He argued this on the grounds that the concept of human dignity implied the following indispensable values: the human claim to be recognized and treated as a person and not as mere instrument, the right to live, the right to autonomy, and the inseparability of the concept of human dignity from human rights. (Gizem Arslan).

In his talk, “The Devil’s Handwriting: Precoloniality and the German Colonial State in Qingdao, Samoa, and Southwest Africa,” George Steinmetz (University of Michigan) addressed two interconnected questions – how to make sense of the diversity of German colonial practices in the 19th century, and how to understand the disciplinary formation of sociology against the backdrop of empire. Interpreting the colonial state as a field in Bourdieu’s sense, Steinmetz reviewed previous interpretations of the wide range of German colonial policy, which included the Herero genocide on one end and the deliberate preservation of the traditional Samoan ways of life on the other. A Marxist account would attribute this to economic interest, but colonial projects often run counter to economic interest. Turning to a cultural studies account, Steinmetz quoted Said’s claim that “from travelers’ tales ... colonies were created,” or “The Devil’s Handwriting thesis.” Namely, one should expect a correlation between ethnographic depictions of a people and colonial policy towards them. Indeed, this is borne out in the cases of Southwest Africa and Samoa but founders in the case of Qingdao, where the variety of colonial representations of China proves too polysemous to uphold the thesis. However, a closer inspection of the case of China, where sinophilic academics competed for ethnographic capital with sinophobic merchants, indicates a way to account for German colonial practices in general. Across the German colonies, native policy intended to restrict the colonies to a less fluid conceptualization of their own identities in an active process of cultural stabilization. Different social groups in the colonial power structure held different, often opposing, views of the local popu-

lation, which informed divergent colonial practices. Steinmetz pointed to the example of the competing policies of Leutwein and Von Trotha, who each based their decisions on their own understanding of the Herero, and suggested that had von Trotha not been locked into a struggle for symbolic capital with Leutwein, he may not have escalated his campaign to a genocidal level.

Steinmetz then emphasized the need for an analysis that would both reverse the prevailing causality thesis in order to account for the influence of colonial practice on metropolitan culture and include a field analysis that would account for the relative autonomy of fields. Turning to the rise of sociology and the example of Max Weber, he asked why Weber, in his analysis of China, ignored most

Steinmetz

of the material that was available to him, thus coming to a narrowly cultural interpretation of China’s lack of full-scale rationalization. The reason for this, Steinmetz suggested, can’t be seen as stemming purely from Weber’s social position, but must be understood in the context of his attempt to mediate between two major camps in contemporary German academic life. (Carl Gelderloos)



Alexander Dietz (Universität Heidelberg)

The IGCS very much regrets an unintended omission in the Fall 2008 issue of German Culture News (Vol. XVIII, No. 1). Because of student illness no coverage of Geoffrey Waite’s important contribution to the DAAD Weekend in 2008 was provided. The first lecture of the conference “Got Art? Intersections of Art and Politics in German Culture” was in fact Geoffrey Waite’s “Got Vision? Blindness in Politics and Art.” The IGCS apologizes for this unfortunate blind spot in last fall’s newsletter.

Graduate Student Conference: “Nothing beside remains”:

Glimpses of Ruins in German Thought, Literature, and Art

(February 27-28, 2009)

The weekend of February 27-28 saw the Department of German Studies' annual graduate student conference take place in the A.D. White House. The conference, ““Nothing beside remains’: Glimpses of Ruins in German Thought, Literature, and Art,” brought together participants from universities in America and Europe to consider the question of ruins across a wide range of media, periods, historical situations, and textual traditions. Speakers were invited to confront ruins as trope, topos, and textual artifact in order to reexamine literary and cultural appropriations of the past, varying understandings of space and time, and the shifting conceptual emphases loosely contained in their broken forms. The aim was to think about ruins both in their various textual manifestations but also more generally, as representing the problematic of a certain kind of relationship between present and past, as ruins are not only art's frequent subject matter, they are also deeply embedded in the very question of the possibility of art.

Carol Jacobs (Yale Uni-

versity) delivered the keynote address, and the department's own Anette Schwarz gave the plenary address.

(Carl Gelderloos)

Carol Jacobs (Yale University) delivered her keynote lecture, “Ruins are in the Eye of the Beholder,” on perception amongst ruins in W.G. Sebald's *Austerlitz* and *Air War and Literature*. Jacobs showed how both works suggest as an aesthetic imperative the need to learn a new way of reading. Turning first to *Air War and Literature*, Jacobs noted the importance to Sebald of a correct way of witnessing the ruins left in Germany after the air raids of World War II. In this text Sebald discusses Alexander Kluge's gaze on Halberstadt through a comparison to Walter Benjamin's famous angel of history. Just as the angel views history from a position frozen in horror, Kluge's removed irony, which makes it possible for him to maintain a distance from his knowledge, also, according to Sebald, freezes his critique in horror. The *Unentwegtheit* of this viewing position refuses

the process of learning that could perhaps allow for a space of human autonomy such that human history must not simply collapse into a natural history tending toward destruction. Jacobs stressed the central importance of the performative aspect of Sebald's citation of Kluge which, by transforming the text through its insertion into a new historical moment, might be able to intervene when autonomous human history threatens to revert to natural history.

In *Austerlitz*, the potential restitution of history lies in the narrator's perspective on Austerlitz's recollection of his life. As Austerlitz recalls his history, the chronological events become layered and photographs interspersed throughout the text provoke allegories or reorganized relationships between the text and the images. The condition of possibility lies not so much in what Austerlitz says, but in what the narrator performs as he perceives the story and his reception of it connects disparate events. This type of perception could perhaps offer clarity at the limits where a network of interconnections forms – if the reader knows how to read them. Jacobs concluded with the suggestion that the

boundary conditions demand a new type of reading in which causal logic no longer limits the strokes of a potential alphabet: a type of reading that could resist the course of natural history. (Katrina Nousek)

Panel I

The first panel of the conference, "Ruined Temporality," was comprised of three papers exploring the peculiar relationship between ruins – whether as guiding metaphor, hypothetical vantage point on presents past, or site of competing historical temporalities – and time, across the media of the digital archive, the film, and the novel.

In "Digital Ruins: Media Archaeology, the Internet Archive, and Our Future Memory of the Internet's Past" **Marcus Burkhardt** (Justus-Liebig-Universität Gießen) took on celebrations of the world wide web as the great hope of archival storage. These celebrations place a naive faith in an indestructible and infinitely vast digital architecture, one that could store any and every piece of virtual information without decay or ruin. Following Michel Foucault and several of his German interlocutors (Kittler and Ernst), Burkhardt argued that archaeology is the proper methodology for rethinking this archive, one that finds in the past not a perfectly retained trace of living history, but only a monument of a past moment's silence, its decay over time. Foucault's approach is borne out in contemporary discussions of the digital archive, which already reflect a massive, ceaseless destruction of information. Focusing on the so-called Internet Archive, Burkhardt suggested that the very notion of a universal archive should itself be considered nothing more than a ruin, a brief and momentary desire that cannot

maintain itself against temporal flux.

Alan Itkin (University of Michigan) began his "Thinking in the Future-Perfect: Ruins-to-Be in W. G. Sebald and Werner Herzog" with an entertaining analysis of the sci-fi classic, *Planet of the Apes*. Departing from that film's famous last scene, Itkin went on to analyze the literary form of the future-perfect, a way of speaking about the future as if it had already happened in a usually apocalyptic past. This form has definitive examples in the works of W.G. Sebald and Werner Herzog. In the former, Itkin focused on several texts (in-

of Antarctica. Though such visions of the future-perfect may be unnecessarily pessimistic, Itkin concluded that in both these artists we find a complex temporality with rare moments of intense vibration among past, present and future.

In "The Ruins of Rationalization: Placing Death in the Economy of Elective Affinities" **Brian Jones** (University of California, Santa Barbara) focused on the role of space in the landscape, architecture and territory in Goethe's novel. Reflecting a vital transition point from a feudal form of governance to rationalistic, bourgeois land management,

Elective Affinities stages the increasingly contradictory relations that involve the nascent middle class and its private property and land. From Eduard and Charlotte's moss hut to their friend the Captain's estate map to the interior space of Otilie's crypt, land is less a natural, given environment and

more a site for competing, contradictory forms of historically-mediated life. Attempts to visually order the land through maps, windows, and architectural designs reflect this contestation and demonstrate, for Jones, that Goethe's modernity not only breaks off from a feudal legacy, but that it too is internally broken, alternating between an organic subject's productive rationalism and a reified subject's attempt



Miyako Hayakawa, Anne Hillenbach, Alexander Phillips, and Shannon Connelly

cluding *Vertigo* and *Austerlitz*), using Walter Benjamin's concept of Natural History to articulate a vision of time corrupted by inevitable ruin, gazing upon the present from the imagined vantage point of a future catastrophe. Likewise in Herzog's film *Encounters at the End of the World*, Itkin locates an apocalyptic future of the world, this time visible at the extreme limits of both the human and natural world. in the frozen isolation

to escape this cycle of life and death for an interior world of ever-fixed images.
(Paul Flaig)

Panel II

The second panel, “Structures Decayed, Ruins Reclaimed,” approached structures that have been identified as ruins, examining the motivations behind such classification, the manner in which decay occurs, as well as the implications that this designation had for the historical context in which it was made.

The first panelist, **Anne Hillenbach** (Justus-Liebig-Universität Gießen), presented a paper titled “Former Glory, Today’s Decay: The Importance of Ruined Hotels in W.G. Sebald’s *Die Ausgewanderten*.” Hillenbach provided a reading of the hotels that serve as the settings for the four narratives in Sebald’s text, in which four Jewish men suffer in the wake of WWII

and the Holocaust. For these men the hotels provide a location where they are able to access the past; the hotels are steeped in memory and history, however it is the absence of boundaries at these points of transit that is comforting to the travelers. The process of decay observed in these hotels defies the conventions of aesthetically pleasing Romantic ruins. Rather than nature appropriating the structures, it is another sort of decay that marks these hotels – that left in the wake of either capitalism or the violent destruction of war, in which mankind destroys the structures which it itself has built. Such decay reflects the conception of history in Sebald’s narrative, in which WWII is viewed as a caesura, after which historical events follow a consistent pattern of human self-destruction and decline. According to this view, Europe and its history constitute ruins in and of themselves.

Hillenbach also elaborated upon the manner in which the hotels are depicted as ruins in the

narratives and the relevance of this textual process to broader debates on the construction of meaning between text and image. By themselves, the photographs of the hotels reproduced in Sebald’s text do not convey the status of the buildings as ruins; rather, it is the text that depicts them in a state of decay.

In a paper titled “Ein Bild von Teutschland: The Cologne Cathedral as a Ruin in the Writings of Joseph Görres,” **Alexander Phillips** (Cornell University) depicted the Cologne Cathedral through the lens of Joseph Görres’ publications from 1814, 1824, and 1842, demonstrating how the cathedral was read as a ruin in its state of incompleteness, symbolic and symptomatic of the German people’s apathy and dispirited *Volksgeist* during the early stages of national unification. Görres was a scholar and publisher of the *Rheinische Merkur*, and was influential in drawing public attention to the incomplete cathedral. In

Visiting Scholar from the Humboldt University (Sept. 1-22, 2009)

WOLFGANG KABATEK studierte Theaterwissenschaft, Germanistik und Publizistik an der FU Berlin. Promovierte über die Imagerie des Anderen im Weimarer Kino (Bielefeld 2003) als wiss. Mitarbeiter an der Philipps-Universität Marburg (1997-1999) und arbeitete als wiss. Assistent am Lehrstuhl für NDL, Literatur- u. Kulturwissenschaft/Medien der HU zu Berlin (2000-2006). Seit 2007 ist er mit einer von der DFG finanzierten eigenen Stelle an der HU zu Berlin tätig. Arbeitsschwerpunkte und Veröffentlichungen zu: Neuer Deutscher Film; Literatur- u. Mediengeschichte der Weimarer Republik u. nach 1945; Fotografie (Geschichte, Theorie, Ästhetik, Intermedialität); Großstadtrepräsentationen in Literatur, Film, Fotografie und Bildender Kunst; mediale Wahrnehmungsmodi des Anderen; Medienreflexivität; Lektürekonzepte in den Wissenschaften. Jüngste Publikation: RWF - Revolte Weltanschauung Fasching. R.W. Fassbinders RAF, In: Stephan, Inge/Tacke, Alexandra (Hg.): NachBilder der RAF, Weimar, Wien: Böhlau, S. 135-148. Das IGCS freut sich auf seinen anstehenden Besuch und ganz besonders auf sein Kolloquium zum Phänomen „Oberfläche“ in Literatur und fotografischen Medien (11.9.2009).



its “trümmerhafte Unvollendung,” Görres wrote that he saw a “Bild von Deutschland.”

The Cologne Cathedral stood only partially built for nearly three hundred years, damaged under French occupation and, in Görres’ opinion, an embodiment of the ruined state of the German *Volksgeist*. Görres viewed the Middle Ages and the initial stages of the cathedral’s construction as a time when a cohesive German culture flourished. Prior to the creation of the German Confederation in 1820, he therefore advocated a return to medieval social institutions not out of nostalgia or a preference for their functions, but because he considered them to be German and a product of the German *Geist*. Görres’ Romantic understanding of the cathedral led him to see it as an expression of a national character and the work of a visionary master builder. Interpreted as a ruin, the cathedral embodied the glory of the past and the destitution of the present but, more importantly, the promise of a new beginning, a return to eminence in the future. The restoration of the German *Geist* was the motivation behind Görres’ founding of the *Rheinische Merkur*; his interest in the cathedral throughout his entire career and the national transformation that he believed would be necessary for its completion were therefore central to his political engagement.

The final presentation, by **Shannon Connelly** (Rutgers

University), was titled “Skein of Memory/Skin of Suffering: the Isenheim Altarpiece in Munich, 1989-19.” The Isenheim Altarpiece was brought from French Alsace to Munich’s Alte Pinakothek for restoration in 1917, where it remained for two years and was enthusiastically integrated into public life and memory. Connelly focused on the reception of Grünewald’s depiction

by Matthias Grünewald and was commissioned for the Monastery of Saint Anthony in Colmar to raise awareness for the treatment of degenerative skin diseases. Connelly traced the iconography of the image of the crucifix as the body of Christ was replaced with the violated body of a German soldier, which in turn was a locus of transference in the eye of the viewing public, represen-



Carl Gelderloos, Shannon Connelly, and Katrina Nousek

of the brutally maimed and decaying body of Christ after WWI in Germany in textual and visual media and the public sphere. In the image of Christ on the cross, the public saw reflected the sufferings of victims of brutal warfare as well as the privations of the German body politic following its defeat in war. While on display in Munich the altarpiece became a secularized destination of pilgrimage and a site for the construction of collective memory.

The Isenheim Altarpiece was painted in the sixteenth century

tative of the nation’s degradation. During its two-year stay in Munich, Grünewald’s altarpiece, and the figure of Grünewald himself, were appropriated as figures in the conceptualization of Germany as a suffering victim and in the construction of the nation’s post-war memory. (Miyako Hayakawa)

Panel III

The third panel, “Post-war Reflections,” dealt with manifestations of ruins in literature and film, with a shared interest in the ways ruins are evoked not

just to demonstrate a radical rupture but also to connect to other discourses or forms, whether by seeing the translator as interlocutor, interrogating discredited figurations of God, or reappropriating a Romantic aesthetic.

Opening the panel, **Leeore Schnairsohn** (Princeton University) presented his engagement with reading and translating poetry in a paper called “The Horseshoe-Finder: Paul Celan reads Osip Mandelstam.” Schnairsohn used Celan’s translation of Mandelstam’s poetry as a starting point to analyze the position of the translator-reader as an interlocutor. He invoked a host of scholarship on both authors as well as the entanglement of their works to develop his view on dialogism in poetic discourse and one of its most controversial issues – that of imagining the addressee as an absent interlocutor participating in a dialogue with the author.

Stella Isenbuegel (University of Wisconsin-Madison) presented a talk entitled “Finding and Losing God among the Ruins: Selected Texts from the ‘Literature of the Rubble.’” Isenbuegel began her presentation by pointing out that elements of the divine seem to be typically represented in *Trümmerliteratur* in one of two ways: either within the context of the institution of the Church, or as unified in a personified God. Her analysis focused on the literary occurrences of the latter. This God has become alienated from and even victimized by those who at one time secured his existence through faith, devotion and even fear. While some texts represent him as a helpless and powerless out-

cast or a benign but ignorant father figure, others go even further by unceremoniously burying his dead remains altogether. Such provocative depictions of God as incompetent, outdated, ignorant or even deceased force into question fundamental views on human existence, life, and death. Isenbuegel addressed this topic in a contextualized analysis of two key texts from the immediate postwar period, namely Wolfdietrich Schnurre’s *Das Begräbnis* and Wolfgang Borchert’s *Draußen vor der Tür*.

Martina Moeller’s talk, titled “Ruins in Rubble Films: a visual element of an aesthetic opposition?” focused on the immediate postwar genre known as the rubble film. Moeller (Université de Provence) observed that almost every rubble film employs the setting of ruined and destroyed German cities in the aftermath of World War II: ruins appear as an element of decoration or are referred to in a metaphorical way. These ruins indicate an aesthetic of fragmentation and crisis that expresses feelings of defeat, loss, and despair and serves as an allegorical representation of the traumatic memory of the National Socialist past and its influence on the aftermath of war. Using the example of the rubble film *The Murderers are Among Us* by Wolfgang Staudte (1949), Moeller suggested that many rubble films revert to a Romantic aesthetic of ruins such as that found in the paintings of Caspar David Friedrich. During the occupation of Greifswald and Pommern by Napoleon (1806-1810), Friedrich used the motif of Gothic ruins as a major visual element of an aesthetic of opposition against the victor Napoleon. Moeller’s

talk showed how these intermedial references function and affect the meaning of ruins in rubble films. (Claudia Schmidt)

Panel IV

In the panel entitled “Fragmentary Philosophy,” philosophical reflections (or investigations) were merged with other categories relevant to the conference. How different philosophers, literary critics, and poets alike have defined and delimited the ruin qua fragment was the central theme of this panel.

Zakir Paul (Princeton University) delivered a talk entitled “Blanchot’s Athenäum,” in which he defended Blanchot’s engagement with romanticism against Tzvetan Todorov’s accusation that Blanchot was a romantic ideologue incapable of seeing beyond this totalizing horizon. Paul defended Blanchot, however, not by countering the facticity of this claim, but by showing how it rests on a faulty understanding of the romantic project, by questioning whether one can even speak of such a project in the singular. Drawing on both selected fragments by Schlegel as well as passages from Blanchot’s *Writing the Disaster*, Paul showed that if there is indeed a “tendency” inherent to the romantic project, it is that of the eternal self-questioning of the entire apparatus of writing “in all of its protean forms.” Romanticism cannot be reduced to a political or poetic doxa, but rather must be understood as providing a legitimate challenge to any literary theory that endeavors to render the relationship between word and world, or text and reality, unproblematic.

Working with similar texts,

though from a vastly different perspective, **Andreas Hjort Møller** (Aarhus University, Denmark) delivered a talk entitled “Homer Ruined: The Impact of Analytical Philology in German Klassik and Early Romanticism,” in which he attempted to articulate a relationship between Goethe and Schlegel based on the findings of the contemporary philologist Friedrich August Wolf.

Wolf was the first to deconstruct Homer, as it were, by suggesting that his epics were not as “whole” as had been previously thought, but were rather composed of fragmentary episodes, assembled much later by the “classicist” Greeks of the literate era. Goethe’s and Schlegel’s reactions to this discovery, according to Møller, are particularly revealing when trying to understand the differences between the so-called classical and romantic periods in German literature. Goethe, while initially open to this discovery, eventually rejected Wolf, a gesture that was epitomized by his attempt to combine the tragic ethos of the story of Achilles with an epic “Gestalt,” thereby reestablishing a mythic unity of forms that was devoid of fragmentary character: the result was Achilleïs. Schlegel, on the other hand, welcomed Wolf’s theory wholeheartedly, and used it as a way to justify his elevation of the fragment to the highest possible form of writing, as “more whole than the whole.” These diverging tendencies, Møller argued, shed significant light on the complex relationship between Weimar Classicism and Romanticism.

The third and final panelist



Leeore Schnairsohn and Stella Isenbuegel

Jacob Brogan (English Department, Cornell University) shifted the focus to the twentieth century philosopher Ludwig Wittgenstein. Specifically, Brogan examined how the form of the latter’s *Philosophical Investigations* engages in a struggle with its stated project. Brogan essentially argued that Wittgenstein is not ultimately concerned with “concrete objects,” but rather with the linguistic conditions of possibility that allow one to say anything at all. His is a fragmentary philosophy not because he was not capable of writing in the form of an essay or treatise, but because his methodology necessitated this form of writing.

Each new “language game,” or “form of life” in the text, Brogan suggested, must be read in the context of those other paragraphs which frame it, and by doing so, reveal its limitations. If truth as a metaphysical concept is alluded to at all in the text, it is only negatively, that is, only by unveiling the “limits of each new account of language the book offers.” In the various images of language that the text produces, Wittgenstein is constantly reminding the reader of the “perpetual

incompleteness” of language, of its ability to generate new meanings every time it is used. For Wittgenstein, language is not a thing but rather a social activity that binds us together and creates a community that is resistant to any form of exclusivity because its boundaries are never fully articulated. (Ari Linden)

Panel V

The final panel of the conference, “Present Ruins, Diverted Memories,” traced varying relationships in literature between ruins, memory, and narrative.

Caroline Kita (Duke University) opened the final panel of the conference with a paper entitled “Breaking Down the Historical Gaze: Reevaluating Projects of Memory through Architectural and Literary Space in Goethe’s *Die Wahlverwandtschaften* and Sebald’s *Austerlitz*.” Drawing on Svetlana Boym’s distinction between a “restorative” and “reflective nostalgia” and on Walter Benjamin’s “archaeology of memory,” Kita proposed a rethinking of the projects of memory in both novels. Kita traces in Otilie’s reflections on the chapel as a monument of memory and Austerlitz’s thoughts on the Antwerp Central Station a “self-conscious suspension of the historical gaze” signaling a shift in the

very stakes of the anamnestic process. Memory and spaces of memory cease to function as devices for recuperating or restoring the past. Architectural and literary spaces become sites for anamnestic and narrative negotiation and elaboration. Under negotiation is memory itself.

The second paper of this panel was given by **Dania Hückmann** (New York University). Entitled “The Ruin as Distraction – Jean Amery’s *Lefeu oder Der Abbruch*,” the paper discussed the function of the ruin in both Jean Amery’s *Lefeu* and Walter Benjamin’s *Ursprung des deutschen Trauerspiels*. Hückmann showed how Benjamin’s conceptualization of the ruin as a “signifier of the past and future,” as a commemorative space, undergoes a process of deconstruction in Amery’s text. His ruin functions as a substitute for an absent site of the past and textually as a “metaphor of loss.” Metaphors function in *Lefeu* as placeholders for a loss he fails to articulate outside of metaphoric language. In this sense, Amery’s metaphors figure differently from Benjamin’s allegories, as they only function as fragments and never develop into a way of reading the world.

Jessica Riviere (Vanderbilt University) concluded the panel with a paper called “Goethe’s *Campagne in Frankreich and Belagerung von Mainz* as Attempts at a Literary Ruin.” Riviere began her talk by foregrounding the fact that what would seem to be narration of historical events in both texts actually builds on a bracketing of “historical immediacy” and at the same time tends towards aestheticization. Riviere argued that by choosing to

aestheticize historical events and his experience of these events in order to retell them from a position of temporal distance and renounce the claim of historical accuracy, Goethe engages in a project in which war as a scene of destruction is raised to the status of a ruin. By undermining the sense of immediacy typical to the diary as a genre and by building his narrative project on the omission of events, Goethe constructs the texts themselves as aestheticized ruins. (Andreea Mascan)

Anette Schwarz, chair of Cornell’s Department of German Studies, gave the plenary address, entitled “Do We Need Ruins?” In beginning, Schwarz noted that she had rethought her paper’s title, concluding that yes, we do need ruins, but for different reasons. Schwarz linked ruins and states of ruination to times of radical change and uncertainty, because of ruins’ ability to define a relationship between people and decline. Specifically, Schwarz cited the ruin as an emblem of the Baroque and went on to examine how this motif functions in a different way but with no less urgency in modernity, drawing examples from the work of Georg Simmel and Walter Benjamin. In Simmel’s 1911 essay *Die Ruine*, the ruin represents nature’s supremacy over man’s claim to power, vengefully putting man in his place in a cycle that, though violent, is still harmonious. Ruins construct a work of art in nature by petrifying the conflict between nature and man, by performing a nostalgia-inducing “cosmic tragedy,” and by eventually becoming a peaceful part of the surround-

ings. The nostalgic nature of ruins offers man a feeling of “homecoming via destruction,” a mood Simmel equates with decadence.

Schwarz then turned to Benjamin for examples of non-conciliatory ruins. Unlike Simmel, Benjamin views ruins as frozen unrest rather than petrified peace. Benjamin’s melancholic ruins insist on finality, denying transcendence. Schwarz cited Benjamin’s line that “allegories are in the realm of thoughts what ruins are in the realm of things”; under the gaze of the melancholic, the ruin loses its own meaning and gains significance only as projected by the allegorist as a form of self-preservation, much as in the Baroque preoccupation with libraries and archives. Schwarz additionally touched on Benjamin’s writing on the ruined state of language after the Fall, concluding that while the ruin is a permanent reminder of imminent decay, it also holds, as a site for the collection of dispersed memory of pre-ruined times, hope for rescue and rebirth. (Megan Eaton)



Anette Schwarz (Cornell University)



Yoko Tawada

Yoko Tawada

Institute for German Cultural Studies
Artist-in-Residence Spring 2009

Corneller Vorlesungen zur Ästhetik der Gegenwart

Cornell Lectures on Contemporary Aesthetics

The Institute for German Cultural Studies was especially pleased to initiate its artist-in-residence program in 2003 under the directorship of Peter Hohendahl. Visitors to date include Oswald Egger, Stefan Beuse, Monika Treut, Holger Teschke, Christine Rinderknecht, and Yoko Tawada. We also look forward to hosting Heiner Goebbels as our first composer in the series in spring 2010. Visiting artists always present their own work, conduct compact seminars on related subjects, and interact with students and other members of the Cornell community in a variety of other ways. Beginning in 2008, the IGCS additionally invites visiting artists to present new critical reflections on contemporary aesthetics from their particular artistic perspective. Christine Rinderknecht inaugurated this lecture series in 2008, and Yoko Tawada continued it on April 3, 2009, with multilingual reflections on letters, ideograms, alphabets, and other writing systems in modern literature. "The Letter as Literature's Political and Poetic Body" was rendered in English translation for this occasion by Susan Bernofsky. The aesthetics lecture by Yoko Tawada and all future lectures on contemporary aesthetics will be published in the IGCS newsletter (German Culture News) and can be electronically accessed through both the IGCS Website and Cornell University's e-repository <http://ecommons.library.cornell.edu/handle/1813/10777>. Individual artists retain the copyright to their work.

Yoko Tawada, *Writer-in-Residence, Cornell University*

Cornell Lecture on Contemporary Aesthetics (3 April 2009)

“The Letter as Literature’s Political and Poetic Body”

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*In November 2006 a new translation of Dostoevsky’s *The Brothers Karamazov* appeared that soon had sold 500,000 copies. I knew the translator, Ikuo Kameyama, as the author of a fascinating book on Stalin and the artists of his time.*

*Just as in other countries, people in Japan have been lamenting since the 1980s (if not much longer) that young people no longer read the classics of world literature. First it was the culture of mangas and television that was seen as the culprit; later it was the internet, computer games and obsessive text messaging. The number of books sold each year has actually been rising, because mangas, the autobiographies of TV stars, internet literature and even text-message literature come out in book form—but nonetheless people have been complaining that the old canon of world literature is no longer being taken seriously. And so this new *Karamazov* boom was a pleasant surprise. But I asked how this new translation of the novel could be so different that suddenly hundreds of thousands of Japanese readers were in such a hurry to buy it and were reading it with such enthusiasm. Even in times when literature supposedly had many more readers than today, Dostoevsky was never on the bestseller list.*

*When I was in high school, I read *The Brothers Karamazov* in the translation done by Masao Yonekawa. I also bought a Russian edition as a first-year university student, but it was too difficult for me linguistically, and so I continued to rely on the Japanese translation. This didn’t make me sad, I enjoyed the Japanese words and expressions I hadn’t known before. This translation dating from 1927 was linguistically far more unfamiliar to me than, say, the stories written by Yasunari Kawabata around the same time. It seemed to me as if the translator had collected Japanese words from a number of regions, classes, times and places and masterfully assembled them to translate a foreign culture. Therefore this translation made the potential range of the Japanese language appear much larger than the Japanese literature of the time did. But this quality of the translation also demanded patience, calm and persistence on the part of the individual reader. I would try to extract a cultural concept unfamiliar to me from an unusual combination of two adjectives. Certain concepts would appear in unexpected places and glow. I learned a great deal about the uncompromising nature of a competent translator. Reading a bestseller, on the*

other hand, I never had the feeling that there was something I couldn’t immediately understand. Indignantly I rejected the secret that a bestseller sometimes offered the weary reader as a pick-me-up. I was interested in more radical drugs and looked for them in the Dostoevsky translation, which was difficult to digest.

*Can the novel *The Brothers Karamazov* be translated in such a way that it reads smoothly and fluidly like a bestseller? I bought the new translation, read the first hundred pages, and concluded that each phrase used in it appeared easily accessible and had a good rhythm. In this book, the odors and dust of a foreign society are suppressed. All the characters—their inner contradictions notwithstanding—can be easily distinguished from one another. Regardless of whether one values these attributes of the new translation, the difference between the new and old translations seemed to me insufficient to explain this explosive boom. Several months later I happened to have a chance to chat with a young editor from a Japanese publishing house about this new translation. He said that readers today have developed a manga or text message way of seeing, meaning that their eyes grasp one entire section of text as an image and then go on to the next. For this reason, the sections cannot be too long: ideally, no longer than would fit on the screen of a cell phone or in a single manga picture.*

It’s well known that the pre-war generation can read today’s mangas only with effort, they’re like a foreign language for these readers. An experienced manga eye, on the other hand, can move swiftly from one image to the next, but this same eye might have difficulty reading a long text passage without paragraphs.

The editor told me that in his opinion the secret of this new translation was that an unusually large number of paragraph breaks had been added to the novel. Manga readers can read the novel by passing from paragraph to paragraph as if from one manga image to the next. They are no less intelligent than their grandparents, but they have a different organ of vision, or a different cable connecting their retinas to their brains.

*A Japanese translator I spoke with several weeks later confirmed the editor’s theory. She was just translating a book for the world literature series in which the new *Brothers Karamazov* had also appeared, and her editor kept repeating the same sentence: Give me more paragraphs!*

You can read a Japanese manga more quickly than most Belgian or French comics because the dialogue is always kept to a minimum and the individual images don't contain so much information. I sometimes have the feeling that a manga picture can be read like an ideogram. Perhaps this is why it isn't considered particularly desirable to print mangas in color. The pictures have to be printed in black and white so the eye can automatically read them as script.

Mangas are more enjoyable when you hurry from one section to the next than when you study each image like a painting in a museum. This naturally doesn't apply to the picture series by Hokusai (1760–1849), which are known as Hokusai manga. Unfortunately I have to leave them out of account here, since they don't contain a sustained narrative and therefore are poorly suited to explain the Karamazov phenomenon. I'm thinking more of the genre of the kibyōshi (yellow covers) that were produced for an earlier version of manga eyes. A particular sort of entertaining literature written between 1775 and 1806 is called kibyōshi to distinguish it from its predecessors, the picture books akabon (red books), kurobon (black books) and aobon (blue books). Kibyōshi literature is more than just picture books, but the concept of the illustrated novel doesn't adequately describe kibyōshi either, as far as I'm concerned, because it's obvious that the pictures came first—then the text was written in wherever there was space left over. The lettering becomes crooked and thin where space is tight, and the images don't take the text into consideration at all. The text isn't being written on the surface of a depicted object, and thus it also isn't subject to the physical rules of the three-dimensional world. Rather, every available surface in the picture is being used as a two-dimensional space for writing.

Kibyōshi is supposed to be entertaining, but it presupposes the reader's knowledge of Confucianism and traditional literature. Much as manga artist Osamu Tezuka (1928–1989) refers to Goethe's Faust in his Neo Faust, kibyōshi author Harumachi Koikawa (1744–1789) tells, for example, the story of a man's life using as a model a well-known Chinese story that had already been incorporated into Japanese yōkyoku literature. To understand the parody of the Confucius quotes often found in kibyōshi stories, you have to know Confucius's sayings. And so we can assume that the kibyōshi readers knew Confucius, just as the readers of Tezuka's manga have at least some idea who Goethe was or are themselves potential Goethe readers. If manga readers don't like reading classical world literature, it's more because of preferring text in a graphic form than because of the contents of the stories.

The first time I read a kibyōshi story, I experienced a difficulty similar to that of the pre-war generation trying to read the new manga. I saw the direct quotes floating beside or above the image of the speaker. The narrative voice drifts around in the air. Where do I start reading, and where do I go from there? I don't know whether I myself have manga eyes or not. Sometimes at a manga café in Tokyo I see young men flipping

through a manga incredibly quickly. I could never read so fast. At home I secretly measured the amount of time it took me to read a page of Tezuka's manga. Ten seconds per page. Then I measured how long it took me to read the new edition of Karamazov: twenty seconds a page. The old translation, on the other hand, took me nearly sixty seconds. The difference between the manga and the new Karamazov was much smaller than the difference between the new and old brothers.

Speed readers grasp a text a whole chunk at a time. This technique was surely not developed with Dostoevsky in mind. There's no point speed-reading Kafka either. The same new book series that had brought out the new Karamazov had already published a new "Metamorphosis," the editor told me, and it was selling well.

In the 1980s I moved to Germany and began to read Kafka again. I read him more slowly than before, not only because it was a foreign language I was reading, but because I read it aloud. The I that was reading split into two persons: the I that was reading the text aloud to me and the I listening to the voice and understanding what it said.

I tried to reduce the organ of sight to a mere entryway for hearing. In order to understand the text, I had to banish the alphabet from the screen of my retinas. Sometimes this made the letters furious, and then they would return as ghosts and disturb me as I was reading.

I ordered the new translation of "The Metamorphosis" and compared it with the German editions I had at home. The translator Osamu Ikeuchi didn't add any new paragraph breaks, but he did start each line of dialogue on its own line.

The rhythm of manga reading is produced in part by the circumstance that the images alternate artfully with the dialogue. It occurred to me that in this sense I could easily imagine the new translation as a manga. The first picture shows a beetle. In the second picture I see a speech bubble containing Gregor's question: "What has happened to me?" Someone wakes up and realizes that he has a different body than before: a typical manga scenario, familiar from "Astral Boy" or "Blackjack." The third picture is a sketchily drawn view of the room: a wall, a table and textiles. All the pictures are printed in black and white. The fourth picture is a picture inside a picture, which you often see in manga. Gregor has cut the portrait of a lady out of a magazine and framed it.

By way of comparison, I took out the translation by Yoshitaka Takahashi, which appeared in 1952. There the lines of dialog aren't even framed by quotation marks, much less set off on lines of their own. Book pages printed without gaps, covered in a small, delicate typeface, making a restrained and at the same time inaccessible impression. Katakana script, one of the two phonetic Japanese forms of writing, is ordinarily used only for foreign words and thus rarely appears. And so the text is composed primarily of hiragana, the other phonetic script, and ideograms. The new translation, on the other hand, makes conspicuously frequent use of katakana script for

onomatopoetic expressions. This makes the optical impression given by the text more expansive and varied, which is more comfortable and familiar for manga eyes.

When the legs of the monstrous insect flail about, for example, the old translation uses the common word “mozomozo,” tidily written in hiragana script, while the new translation has “wayawaya,” in katakana—this is a more unusual word that is generally not used in this sense, but it works well here in context. In general, mangas invent onomatopoetic expressions much more freely than literature. The word “wayawaya” has a manga feel to it, not only because it’s a neologism but because it’s written in katakana and therefore looks as if it’s freed itself from its adverbial corset.

There are many pictures in mangas that are accompanied only by an onomatopoetic expression like “wayawaya.” Maybe manga no longer requires nouns. An insect, a table or a lady can be represented in images. Of course, I don’t want a manga to tell me what Kafka’s insect looks like. The freedom to create one’s own images for every concept at all times is guaranteed by the principles of democracy. The freedom is there. But who is able to make use of it?

I always loved the unfocused, unfinished images that rise from a literary text like steam and then vanish again. They can’t be pinned down. But I am finding it ever more difficult to keep the screen in my head free to make space for such images. It’s true that this screen was never perfectly free, but now it has been all but destroyed. Two or three years ago I happened to see a science fiction movie on an airplane in which a large number of garish-looking metal beetles were attacking human beings. I didn’t like the movie, but I couldn’t get this image of the beetles out of my head. It was as if it had made electronic contact with my brain using a technique unknown to me. I had no chance to say no. Like the traces of a chemical dependency that remain with you for a lifetime, this image was burned into my brain. Ever since, I can’t help thinking of this image whenever I hear the word “beetle.” What should I do. Perhaps I should turn into a monstrous insect and creep across Kafka’s text to read it with my two feelers and my many thin legs. I might acquire the ability to stumble over every tiny rip, to strike my head against the ground and thereby set off flashbulbs of my own inside my head.

2

The letters lie there like delicate, dangerous fish bones long after the reader has consumed and digested the contents of the text. The useless bones should probably be thrown away, but somehow they look significant. I stare at a letter on the page I’ve just read and wonder: what are these strange figures here before my eyes? Are they shadows or footprints? They gaze back at me wordlessly, as if they wanted me to remember something. It’s no longer the meaning of the text that’s at stake. The question, rather, is how to respond to the unsettling presence of the bodies of these

letters. Maybe they are the bars of a cage. Who’s on the other side of these bars? Am I a prisoner, or is it the other person? And who is this person on the other side?

The notion that written language aligns itself with the politics of a country while the spoken language changes along with the culture—a view that no longer really seems self-evident—is something I first heard as a child, it reflected the way the map of the world looked back then. In the Soviet-influenced Mongolian Republic, for instance, the Cyrillic alphabet was used, whereas the same language was written in the Mongolian part of the People’s Republic of China using Mongolian script, which was derived from the Uyghur alphabet. After Perestroika, Mongolian script became the norm in the Mongolian Republic as well. Is the way a language is written simply a uniform that can be easily changed when a new government comes to power?

The system of writing in Japan was reformed after the Second World War. The argument for simplifying the ideograms was that they were burdensome and had slowed the country’s technological development. There were intellectuals who criticized the reform and rejected it, but most people accepted it without complaint. Usually we associate sudden changes in a country’s language with colonialism or government force, but in fact spelling reforms and new ways of writing are quite normal in a democratic society. No one thinks about using legislation to correct the logical flaws in a grammatical system and instituting better rules, but many people do believe there is a more logical way of using letters to express the sound of a word.

The ideograms in the People’s Republic of China were simplified as well. This reform, which took place in 1955, was much more radical than the one in Japan, with the result that the new “shorthand” used in China can no longer be read by the Taiwanese and Japanese without special study. People in Japan who sympathized with Chinese Communism used this shorthand, and so I was able to recognize their handwritten political posters even at a distance. I’ve long since forgotten what these posters said, but the impression this uncanny writing made on me has stayed in my memory ever since.

My first trip abroad in 1979 included a visit to Poland. As a student of Slavic Studies, I found Cyrillic more practical than the Latin alphabet for writing all Slavic languages, including Polish. I had difficulties with the combinations of consonants that frequently appeared in Polish, for example RZ, SZ or DS, and also with the diacritical marks, the slashes and little hooks that modified the letters. If you used Cyrillic, you generally only needed a single letter for one of these sibilants. There were even German words I would have preferred to write with Cyrillic letters than using the Latin alphabet. The cabbage soup with beets will be cold by the time you finish spelling the word “Borschtsch.”

Nevertheless, the Latin alphabet used in Polish was a more suitable wrapping paper for me than the Cyrillic in which I preserved my first memories of this country. I saw no icons of the Russian Orthodox church there; instead, I saw many people going to services at Catholic churches on Sundays. Here and there I saw interiors and facades that filled me with a longing for Paris.

Is it a happy fate to have as a neighbor a country whose culture of writing was highly developed very early on? To the west of Japan lies China; to its east, the alphabetless Pacific Ocean. If Japan lay not to the east but to the west of China, there wouldn't be any culture now like what we call Japanese culture, but Japan wouldn't have had to develop an unnecessarily complicated system of writing. Japanese would probably have been written either with the Latin alphabet or in Arabic script. The Chinese never forced the Japanese to accept their form of writing, and it isn't actually advantageous to write the Japanese language using Chinese characters, but there was no other choice.

In the old Japanese collection of poems Manyōshū (8th century) the ideograms were primarily used as a phonetic form of writing. This meant reading the sound of a sign and ignoring its meaning. Somewhat later, a Japanese phonetic script was developed, but the Japanese did not completely make the shift to a specifically Japanese phonetic writing, instead they went on writing certain Chinese concepts in ideograms just as in the original and combined them with the phonetic writing.

Theoretically one could write any language, even German, using Chinese ideograms: For example you would write an ideogram that means "mountain" and then simply pronounce the word "Berg." An ideogram doesn't tell us how we have to pronounce it. But how would we mark the distinction between "mountain" when used as a subject and as an object, or between "sleep" and "slept"? Similar problems arise when you write Japanese with ideograms. Therefore all the grammatical connectors and markers that are unnecessary within Chinese grammar have to be written using Japanese phonetic script and inserted.

And so there's no point accusing Japanese linguists of being Eurocentric if they claim it would have been better had Japanese been written in the Latin alphabet. By now people have understood, even in Japan, that Chinese culture isn't the only advanced culture in the world, but it's too late: Over the past one thousand years, the Japanese language has been so strongly influenced by the process of importing the ideograms that separating the language from this originally foreign script has become unthinkable. A separation would be as if you were suddenly to remove half the plants from a biotope just because they'd been added to the others one thousand years later. In the course of history, there have been many attempts at purifying national languages. The Turkish language attempted to remove all the Arabic words from its body. The French and especially the Norwegian language police their borders carefully to prevent too many foreign words from immigrating.

During the Second World War, the use of English-based words was prohibited in Japan. The Japanese inferiority complex vis-à-vis Chinese culture was apparently eliminated and forgotten about in the explosion of military force against China. No one in Japan would have thought about removing the ideograms and the Chino-Japanese words inseparable from it from the Japanese national language, *kokugo*. This wouldn't have been possible, even if the nationalists had wished to take such a measure, because concepts like "state," "nation," "military," "populace" and even "Tenno" (Japanese emperor) were always written using ideograms rather than the Japanese phonetic script. If these words had been written out phonetically, they would have lost their authority. Ever since the Middle Ages, when Japanese phonetic writing was reserved for women, this form of writing has been considered feminine and private. Female authors in the eleventh century like the court ladies Murasaki and Sishonagon used this writing, which made it possible for them to describe their feelings and thoughts more individually and concretely. Their male colleagues, on the other hand, were forced to use Chinese writing, which had not yet been integrated well enough into Japanese. Therefore their works remained insignificant imitations of Chinese literature and were soon forgotten. Female authors in the middle ages were officially excluded from instruction in the classics of Chinese literature. But we know that they sometimes unofficially sat in for their brothers in class and thus learned both the classics and the script in which they were written. Sometimes they were better students than their brothers, and so they wrote the phonetic script with a knowledge of ideograms.

Like the Japanese, the Koreans used Chinese ideograms mixed in with their own phonetic writing until the country was occupied by the Japanese. During the occupation, they were forced to use Japanese exclusively. After the country was liberated, they returned to their own language and Korean writing was declared to be the country's sole official form of writing. There wasn't much interest in ideograms anyhow, since they represented a characteristic shared with the Japanese language. Increasingly nationalistic sentiment required the elimination of the ideograms so as to achieve liberation from the longstanding Chinese influence. In North Korea, the ideograms were definitively eliminated in 1948 when the country was founded. At first the North Koreans appeared to be more radical and consistent than the South Koreans, who preferred a more gradual transition. But in 1968 North Korea reinstated the study of ideograms as a required subject in school. People in South Korea started saying that the ideograms should be reintroduced. In 1998 a monthly magazine described the endless debate surrounding the ideograms as the "Fifty Year Writing War." The example of Korea shows us that the shift from ideographic to phonetic script isn't a natural process of development, and therefore it is possible to reverse it.

When you think of all these debates surrounding the choice of script in the wide swath of land between East Asia and Turkey, it seems rather astonishing that people who use the Latin alphabet never seem to question their own choice of script. I am surely one of the few authors in Europe who often asks herself whether European languages couldn't also be written using different forms of writing. Writing with European ideograms would be an art project I haven't yet put into practice, but it's already had an influence on my writing.

In 2003 I heard a lecture in Sofia about the debate over the form of writing used in Bulgaria. In the aftermath of Perestroika, people have been wondering even in the birthplace of the Cyrillic alphabet whether they shouldn't switch to a Latin writing system. The lecturer provided two reasons for this. His first reason struck me as being one of those suspect arguments that use modern technology as an alibi to cover up a political agenda or business plan. This argument claimed that in the Internet Age it was a disadvantage to use any form of writing other than the Latin alphabet. I didn't find this convincing, since it's long been possible to send e-mails and text messages in Japanese. I have no idea how a couple thousand characters could possibly have been crammed into a tiny cell phone, but there'd definitely be enough space for the Cyrillic alphabet.

The introduction of the computer in Japan gave rise to a new ideogram boom. The historical ideograms that had almost been consigned to oblivion began to be used more frequently, since one could now instantly load even the most rarely used, complex character which beforehand had to be laboriously looked up in a thick, dusty dictionary. In school you learn approximately two thousand characters; some people learn many more than this. It's easy to forget the characters that aren't often used—but a computer never forgets any of them. Until the use of computers became widespread in Japan, there was a growing tendency to use fewer and fewer ideograms. But the computer helps support older people's memory and increases the pleasure that young people in particular take in the visual side of these characters.

Back to Bulgaria. The second reason for changing to the Latin alphabet, the speaker claimed, was that Cyrillic writing could call up associations of Communism to one's international business partners.

Indeed it's true that a foreign form of writing can activate a certain combination of memories in us and influence our emotions before we've thought things over critically. It's difficult to fend off the effects of a foreign script. It's similar to the way we might react to a person's clothing. Certain geographical, historical or class-specific associations in the observer's head can prompt him to pass a snap judgment on the person. The problem isn't necessarily in the speed with which we take in an image, it has more to do with the complexity of the image. When the

alphabet itself is foregrounded, the text becomes an image.

A few years ago, a Japanese journalist told me that newspaper readers in Japan are no longer able to read lengthy articles. Articles in the papers are becoming ever shorter, while the characters they're printed in get larger and larger and the color photographs take up more and more space. It can be assumed that these readers are increasingly seeing not only the photographs but the text itself as images, particularly the headlines. The fonts used for headlines are now so subtly differentiated that they can influence a reader's attitude toward an article even before he's read the first sentence. A certain font can be instantly recognized as having to do with earthquakes, while a second one suggests poverty in the so-called Third World, and a third awakens readers' curiosity because it's used to recount sweet little stories, for example about young schoolgirls saving the ducks in an industrial canal. Right from the start, the reader is forced to become part of an audience united by a particular mood: witnesses to a natural catastrophe or a political event. Most readers find this not coercive but helpful. The information is perfectly presented in graphic form and therefore makes a sealed-off impression. I try to find a weak spot in this wall of typefaces in which I can insert the first sentence of my text, but there isn't one.

Even textbooks in Japan are becoming more colorful and less text-centric every year. They give visual form to the material being taught, working to fit in with the culture of manga, anime and Nintendo. At first glance, the pages of the books look welcoming, easily accessible to children, but I find it difficult to actually read the text once my eyes have accustomed themselves to manga mode.

Back in the 1980s, people in Germany often asked me why the Japanese hadn't yet eliminated ideograms. Some saw all systems of writing not based on the Latin alphabet as symptoms of an illness. A country, they thought, had to be archaic, fundamentalist or Communist if it didn't accept Latinized writing. Some people are simply convinced that the Latin alphabet is more practical and easier for children to learn than ideograms. One counterargument you heard a lot in Japan in the 1980s was that children who have to learn so many ideograms get used early on to spending an hour alone each day sitting at their desks. This made them do better in all their school subjects. Besides which, it was argued, Japan had the lowest rate of illiteracy anywhere in the world. And so illiteracy couldn't be combated by simplifying the writing system. This conviction remained prevalent as long as the economic system seemed to be flourishing. But even back then linguist Katsuhiko Tanaka was saying that the Japanese should do away with the ideograms. Tanaka, a scholar of the German language who had studied Linguistics and Philosophy in Bonn and explored the Mongolian language in the Soviet Union, found it regrettable that the Japanese language remained inaccessible for most foreign students because it was clothed in ideograms. He wrote that the people who used the

Mongolian language were lucky that they quickly abandoned all attempts to incorporate Chinese ideograms in their system of writing. The Uyghur script that was used instead shared the same cultural basis as the Mongolian language, which therefore retained its ability to accommodate neologisms well into the modern period. And so new words were created based on agricultural or religious roots, to signify "Socialism," "capital" and "business." In Japan, on the other hand, words like this were cobbled together out of Chinese ideograms, not using older Japanese vocabulary. As a result, these newer concepts can still be felt as foreign elements in the body of my mother tongue.

It's been ten years now since I've had a European ask me why the Japanese still haven't given up their ideograms. Instead, I've noticed a growing interest in ideograms. The children at the German schools where I've given readings have shown far more interest in the Chinese characters than my texts. Maybe this has something to do with the texts. Even when I write in German, image-based script in the broadest sense is still present in my texts. I don't know if the growing interest in ideograms can be explained more by the interest in manga culture or China's economic growth. No matter whom I come in contact with—employees at a computer store, academics, people at arts organizations or the artists themselves—everyone wants to know more about ideograms. Perhaps this is part of a global process in which visual thinking is taking on a more central role.

When I'm writing, I've often found myself inspired by German words like "Stern-kunde" (star-science, or astronomy), "Schriftsteller" (script-placer, or writer) or "Fern-seher" (distance-viewer, television). It always seemed to me as if two ancient Germanic ideograms were being joined together to make a new word. Romanic languages surely sound more melodious and colorful than German. English has a spare, modern elegance that German sometimes lacks, and my love of Slavic languages will never vanish. But for me the building blocks of German words have an ideographic character that seems to be crucial for my writing.

When I write Japanese, it disturbs me to see how many Anglicisms and stiff Sino-Japanese words have crept into the language, but this doesn't mean I would want the Japanese language to be completely pure. On the contrary. The Japanese spoken today seems to me like the garbage can of linguistic history, and this is one reason why I like the language so much. A garbage can is an important source of inspiration, because often we throw away what is most important. Without making the acquaintance of the German language, I never would have noticed that I am in possession of a garbage can that can be my treasure chest.

Translated by Susan Bernofsky

**Oct. 27, 7pm
Cornell Cinema, Willard Straight Theatre
film screening and discussion with director to follow
The Halfmoon Files
Philip Scheffner (Germany, 2007, 87 mins)**

The crackling words of Mall Singh, an Indian POW, are heard as he spoke into the phonographic funnel on 11th December 1916 in the city of Wünsdorf, near Berlin. Such recordings were produced as the result of a unique alliance between the military, the scientific community and the entertainment industry. In his experimental documentary "The Halfmoon Files," Philip Scheffner follows the traces of these voices to the origin of their recording. Like a memory game - which remains incomplete right until the end - he uncovers pictures and sounds that revive the ghosts of the past. Scheffner's haunting film transforms a previously obscure episode in Indo-German history into a compelling meditation on the recorded voice, the archive and cultural memory.

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Colloquium Series

Spring 2009

Wim Wenders and Topographies of German Identity

January 23, 2009

Lawrence Shapiro (History of Architecture and Urban Design, Cornell University) opened the Spring colloquium series with a paper entitled “Wim Wenders and Topographies of German Identity.” Shapiro’s talk, supplemented by filmic images, centered on his recent work concerning the different respects in which the German landscape was reinscribed with meaning after the Second World War. Shapiro explored the ways in which topographies in Wim Wenders’ films are presented with a critical yet reverent respect and sought to understand what particular role the frequent images of dead ends and impasses assume in this context. Shapiro thus presented his paper as a part of his larger research interests, which aim to tease out the “linkages between ethnographic fieldwork, documentary photography, and art historical formalism in the writing and rewriting of German space and culture, and especially the mechanisms of recognition and identity formation across the time period 1890-1975.”



Lawrence Shapiro (Cornell University)

(Grace Gemmell)



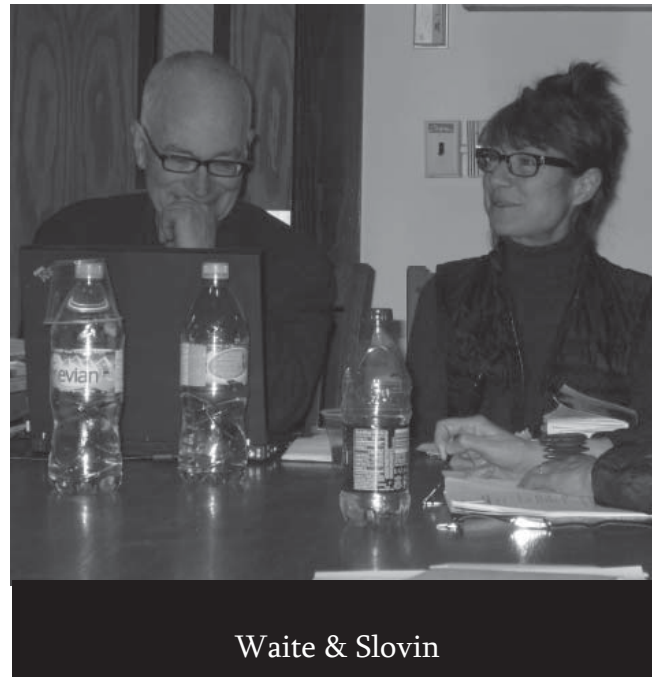
Gradiva, the Woman Who Walks: Reincarnated in Literature, Psychoanalysis, and Art History

February 6, 2009

On February 6th **Francesca Cernia Slovin**, an independent scholar based in New York City, presented her paper “Gradiva, the Woman Who Walks: Reincarnated in Literature, Psychoanalysis, and Art History.” The paper developed out of a collaboration with Geoff Waite (Cornell University), who was a discussant at the colloquium, commenting on the paper, presenting slides and taking questions along with Slovin. In her paper Slovin situated a close reading of Wilhelm Jensen’s 1903 story *Gradiva* (and its famous analysis by Freud in 1907, *Delusion and Dream in Jensen’s Gradiva*) at the

intersection of psychoanalysis, etymology, and art history, particularly Aby Warburg's iconology. The paper (supplemented by the discussion) posed the question, in Waite's words, of the visual equivalent of etymology, by interweaving an analysis of the incestuous etymology of proper names in Jensen's text with the image of a woman's gait (initially glimpsed in a bas-relief) that obsesses the protagonist of Jensen's story (not to mention Freud himself). Moreover, by connecting that same image of a woman's gait to Warburg's obsession with a woman's gait (from Ghirlando's *Birth of St. John the Baptist*), Slovin and Waite showed how a visual image can function as a "primal word," and the joint discussion and presentation of slides (of Ghirlando's painting and of images mentioned in Jensen's text) revealed the dizzying interrelations between, as Slovin put it, "archaeology, ideology, literature, politics, philosophy, psychoanalysis, art history, memoirs, and anecdotes," all of which constitute the "spider web we today call the 'humanities.'"

(Josh Dittrich)



Waite & Slovin

FORCED MOTION: KINEMATICS AND NARRATIVE IN THE 19th CENTURY

March 6, 2009

Helmut Müller-Sievers (Northwestern University), in his paper "Forced Motion: Kinematics and Narrative in the 19th Century," presented research from a current book project, and, following an account of the rise of kinematics as a science, laid down an argument for the interpretive potential kinematics can offer to a rereading of 19th century prose. The science of kinematics, born in the 1830s but largely unacknowledged as a discipline, would contribute, in Sievers' vision, to the explanation of connections between disciplines and would help link technological phenomena with modes of interpretation, while unraveling those phenomena in the light of a discipline that transcends the classical, anagogical, or moral interpretive patterns of the 19th century. Sievers' project takes its cue from Kleist's well-known short text, *Über das Marionettentheater*, a prose piece featuring the machines' potential for unrest and resistance against the rules of "grace, motion, or subjectivity" characteristic of the Weimar classical ideals. Sievers claimed that Kleist's text goes even beyond the scope of polemical engagement with the Weimar models by opening up venues for an interpretation of the future of mechanisms and their role in the aesthetics of the 19th century. An analysis of marionettes or machines

from the perspective of their meta-textual presence would reveal them as the very principles of textual construction, tools of transmission and prototypes of textual kinematics. Sievers' approach would have the reader understand Kleist's text beyond the scope of traditional hermeneutics or ethics and engage with the marionettes' anticipation of cinematic grace as a textual operating principle, present in such later realist novels as those by Dickens or Balzac.

(Arina Rotaru)

Notes from the Tenure Track

March 27, 2009

John Namjun Kim (University of California, Riverside) gave his take on the state of the profession in his colloquium talk entitled "Notes from the Tenure Track." In a convivial discussion, Kim, a recent PhD of Cornell's Department of German Studies, shared insights and experience from his first years as an assistant professor. In addition to the three standard requirements for tenure (teaching, research, and service), he emphasized the importance of a fourth, underacknowledged factor: collegiality. In his own experience, research had to be put on hold for the first couple years because of the demands of teaching, service, and just "learning how to be faculty." Although challenging, these initial years can also be very rewarding, according to Kim, especially interactions with students. He recounted how he has encouraged his students to explore new projects, study abroad, and apply for (and receive) fellowships, among other things.

Besides tips on what to expect in the first few years of a tenure-track position, Kim also had advice for the students in the audience on how to get there in the first place. He detailed the benefits of attending conferences, of participating in interdisciplinary writing groups, and of making and maintaining institutional connections. Above all, he indicated the importance of writing a good dissertation and actively participating in Pandaemonium Germanicum, the organization of German graduate students at Cornell, in order to get experience organizing and collaborating with other students. The discussion centered around questions such as the relationship between the intense focus of graduate school and the demand for breadth as faculty, the pedagogical and performative differences between teaching a lecture and a seminar, and the need to engage closely with one's new department, both with students and with other faculty.

(Carl Gelderloos)



John Namjun Kim (U of CA)

UNVERMEIDLICH UND NICHT ZU FASSEN. DAS REALE ALS PROBLEM IN DER WISSENSCHAFTSGESCHICHTE UND LITERATUR

April 17, 2009

In his paper entitled “Unvermeidlich und nicht zu fassen. Das Reale als Problem in der Wissenschaftsgeschichte und Literatur,” **Albrecht Koschorke** (Universität Konstanz) focused on problems of writing the history of science, and more generally on the epistemology of modernity.

Koschorke presented two texts by Adalbert Stifter, *Nachkommenschaften* and *Aus dem bairischen Walde*, as representative of the oscillations of realist aesthetics: striving toward a reproduction of “wirkliche Wirklichkeit” on the one hand (*Nachkommenschaften*) and an inundation of the senses by the real (*Aus dem bairischen Walde*) on the other, both tendencies can be represented in language only as a negation of language’s ability to represent or articulate. Koschorke presented this, however, not as a problem specific to a literary period, but as generalizable to an epistemological problem in modernity. The real can take the form of an epiphany, an aesthetic experience of the sublime, or of horror, as in the Gothic novel. In all three cases, Koschorke claimed, the real takes the form of a massive presence which eludes representation and which seems to occupy a realm neither within nor beyond symbolic order. As in *Nachkommenschaften*, attempts to capture and represent it result in fragments of representation ripe only for destruction.

Thus Koschorke situated his project against postmodern, and in particular poststructuralist cultural critique, which holds that reality cannot be discovered, but only constructed in sign systems. Referencing methodological debates between cultural constructivists and realists, Koschorke suggested the more fruitful alternative of an ambivalent position better able to capture the ambivalences within modernism and modernity, one which would allow more space for reflections on modernity’s treatment of the real, where the elusiveness of the real by no means forecloses quests in search of it.

(Gizem Arslan)



Albrecht Koschorke
(Universität Konstanz)



RESSENTIMENT as Corrective: JEAN AMÉRY and the Duty of Unforgiving

May 1, 2009

Melanie Steiner Sherwood, a PhD candidate in German Studies here at Cornell, concluded this semester's colloquium series with a paper entitled "Ressentiment as Corrective: Jean Améry and the Duty of Unforgiving," which centered on Holocaust survivor Jean Améry's use of the term "ressentiment" in his polemical book, *Jenseits von Schuld und Sühne* (1966). Steiner Sherwood's paper was excerpted from a longer chapter of her dissertation that addresses how Améry and Wolfgang Hildesheimer employ the respective concepts of resentment and melancholy in their work as a corrective to what they perceived was a morally vacuous (or tenuous) West German post-war society vis-à-vis its relationship to the Holocaust. Steiner Sherwood argued that Améry's use of resentment took specific aim at what, since Nietzsche, had been primarily thought in negative terms: resentment as merely reactive, affective, symptomatic of a physical weakness in the face of an oppressor, and vengeful. For Améry, resentment had, on the contrary, a deeply ethical dimension, one that had been obscured by Nietzsche but had been somewhat rehabilitated by certain twentieth-century philosophers of ethics. Rather than positing a morally dubious and merely affective response, Améry places the term squarely within the realm of justice. For Améry, only through a conscious unwillingness to either forgive or forget on the part of a victim could it be possible to reconcile the present with the unfinished past. Steiner Sherwood's talk was followed by an engaged discussion centering around Améry's possibly problematic appropriation of the Nietzschean term and the status of resentment as rhetorical, literary, and political practice.

(Ari Linden)



Oct. 27
Sage Chapel
8pm

Haydn Concert

Les Petits Violons
The Haydn Project
Dorian Komanoff Bandy, Conductor

Concert featuring music from Joseph Haydn's early and middle periods, including symphonies, concertos, and opera scenes, semi-staged



FACULTY PROFILE:

MELANIE DREYER-LUDE

Department of Theatre, Film and Dance

This fall Melanie Dreyer-Lude begins her second year as a new member of the professorial faculty in Theatre, Film and Dance at Cornell University. She comes to Cornell from the University of Pittsburgh, where she directed a graduate program in performance pedagogy and supervised the undergraduate performance curriculum. At Cornell she will teach acting and movement for the stage and direct productions for the Schwartz Center season. Dreyer-Lude's research concerns international theater collaboration. Specifically, she uses theater as a vehicle for bringing together artists from different cultures in order that they might learn more about one another by creating art together. The artists then take the information they've gathered on cultural difference and share their stories with the audience through post-show talk backs, radio interviews, and visits to various organizations. While at the University of Pittsburgh, Dreyer-Lude produced and directed an international bilingual theater production entitled *Outside Inn*, which featured German and American actors. During preview performances in Pittsburgh, the actors performed their roles in German for two nights and in English for three. One of the discoveries the actors shared with the audience was that although the play and roles were the same and only the language differed, it was as though they were performing in two completely different productions. In September 2007 and June 2008 this bilingual production appeared at Theater Rampe in Stuttgart, Germany, where the actors performed using a mixed language version of the play. In October 2008 *Outside Inn* moved to New York City and played in mixed language format for 59E59 St. Theaters using an innovative series of subtitles to assist the American audience. More information about this production is available at www.intlculturelab.org. Dreyer-Lude is currently creating a project with Turkish artists that will focus on the sociopolitical identities of Turkish women. This production will premiere at the Schwartz Center at Cornell University as part of an International Performing Arts Festival during the summer of 2011. She hopes to involve faculty members from multiple departments who share an interest in culture and language.

Dreyer-Lude began learning German in the late 1990s as a component of her research while directing a production of *Cabaret*. She continued her language studies and attained fluency after three years. In order to acquire the discipline-specific vocabulary she knew she would need when working in theater in Germany, Dreyer-Lude volunteered to direct a production of Brecht's *Der Ozeanflug* in German for the German department at Northwestern University using German language students as actors. The production was a great success, and Dreyer-Lude continues to cultivate her interest in combining language learning and theater. In May 2008 she directed a mixed language production of *Autobahn* with students at the Universität Augsburg, providing German theater students with American acting training as a part of their experience. Dreyer-Lude has translated eight contemporary German plays for production and has directed two of them herself. Her translations continue to be produced in the United States and Canada. Her translation of Roland Schimmelpfennig's *Push Up 1-3* will be published in the *Performing Arts Journal* in October 2009. She regularly serves as a guest at universities in the U.S. and abroad, demonstrating the latest trends in American acting pedagogy. She shares her life with her German husband, Peter, who loves many things about living in the United States but hates the short vacation time. Their son Cassidy provides his own version of mixed language at home. She looks forward to getting to know and work with other members of the extensive German Studies community at Cornell.

Conference Announcement

1989 in Europe and the World

November 19-20, 2009

Cornell University



To mark the twentieth anniversary of the watershed events of 1989, the Cornell Institute for European Studies and the Luigi Einaudi Chair program are sponsoring an interdisciplinary conference on *1989 in Europe and the World*. The conference seeks to broaden our perspective on the watershed year 1989 by discussing what came before and what happened after, in the broader European as well as in the global context. Too often discussion of 1989 is limited to the events themselves and their legacy in East-Central Europe. While these were indeed significant, the conference seeks to connect the events in East-Central Europe to broader movements and ideas in Europe and around the world from a variety of disciplinary perspectives (Political Science, Literature, German Studies, Economics, Anthropology, History, and Sociology).

The conference will open with a keynote speech by Professor Valerie Bunce of the Department of Government at Cornell on Thursday, November 19, with discussion panels throughout the day on Friday, November 20

The conference will include participants from other universities as well as Cornell professors and graduate students. Three thematic panels will feature (1) reflections on/memories of 1989, wherein participants share their experiences of 1989 and how the changes brought on by the events of the time affected scholarship in their field; (2) 1989 in Eastern and Western Europe; and (3) 1989 in the World.

The conference is co-sponsored by the Cornell Institute for European Studies and the Luigi Einaudi Chair program, the East Europeanist Circle, and the Institute for German Cultural Studies. More information and exact times/locations can be found on the Institute for European Studies events calendar: <http://www.einaudi.cornell.edu/Europe/calendar/>



Photo by Wonge Bergmann

Heiner Goebbels
IGCS Artist-in-Residence
March 7-17, 2010

The Institute for German Cultural Studies greatly looks forward to welcoming Heiner Goebbels as Artist-in-Residence next spring (March 7-17, 2010). An extraordinarily talented musical composer and theatre director known for his creative mix of avantgarde and tradition, Heiner Goebbels belongs to the most important exponents of the contemporary music and theatre scene in Europe. He lives in Frankfurt am Main (Germany), where he studied Sociology and Music. His compositions, for ensemble and large orchestras alike, are performed worldwide by many contemporary music ensembles and orchestras, including the Berlin Philharmonics, Ensemble Modern, Brooklyn Philharmonic New York, London Sinfonietta, and more.

Since the early 1990s Heiner Goebbels has composed and directed his own music theatre plays, which are presented at most major music and theatre festivals in Europe, the United States, Australia, and elsewhere. These include works such as *Ou bien le débarquement désastreux* (1993), *Black on White* (1996), *Max Black* (1998), *Hashirigaki* (2000), *Landscape with Distant Relatives* (2002), *Eraritjaritjaka* (2004), *Stifters Dinge* (2007), *I went to the house but did not enter* (2008), among others.

Heiner Goebbels has received many distinguished international awards in recording, radio arts, theatre, and music, among them the Prix Italia, the European Theatre Prize, and the Binding Culture Prize in Germany. Composer in Residence at the Lucerne Festival, he is also a member of several academies of arts, Honorable Fellow at the Dartington College of Arts and at the Central School of Speech and Drama in London, and recently a Fellow at Berlin's Institute of Advanced Studies (Wissenschaftskolleg). Numerous recordings by this distinguished artist, whose work has twice been nominated for a grammy, have been released by ecm-records.

President of the Theatre Academy of Hesse since 2006, Heiner Goebbels has been Professor and Managing Director of the Institute of Applied Theatre Studies at the Justus-Liebig-University in Giessen (Germany) since 1999. Cornell University will be very fortunate to host him on its Ithaca campus next spring, and the Insitute for German Cultural Studies will work closely with the Departments of German Studies, Music, and Theatre, Film & Dance to organize his visit. A composers forum, small concert, aesthetics lecture, and compact seminar are being planned. Updated details will be posted on the IGCS Website as they become available <<http://www.arts.cornell.edu/IGCS>>.



Institute for German Cultural Studies
FALL 2009 COLLOQUIUM SERIES

August 28

Paul Buchholz

German Studies, Cornell University

'Maimed to Monologue':

**Realism, Reproduction and
the Making of Thomas Bernhard's FROST**

Fridays at 3:00pm
181 Goldwin Smith

September 11

Wolfgang Kabatek

Institut für Neuere Deutsche Literatur, Humboldt Universität zu Berlin

Topos und Tropos:

**Marginalia zum Phänomen 'Oberfläche'
in Literatur und fotografischen Medien**

October 23

Suman Seth

Science & Technology Studies, Cornell University

Mystik and Technik:

Weimar Culture and the Craft of the Quantum

November 6

Barbara Hahn

Distinguished Professor of German, Vanderbilt University

Dreams in 20-th Century German Literature:

Interpretations After Freud

December 4

Gisela Brinker-Gabler

Comparative Literature & Philosophy, Literature, and the Theory of Criticism

Binghamton University

Images and the Politics of Invention:

Lou Andreas-Salomé and Benjamin

Advance copies of each paper are available from
the Department of German Studies-183 Goldwin Smith

For more information, please contact Olga Petrova: ogp2@cornell.edu

1989 for the 21st Century

DAAD Weekend in German Studies

September 26 - 27, 2009

Hollis E. Cornell Auditorium, Goldwin Smith Hall, Cornell University

Saturday, September 26

10:30am Check-In/Registration, 144 Goldwin Smith Hall

11:00am **Welcome** (Leslie A. Adelson, Professor of German Studies, Cornell University)

11:15am **"Does November 1989 Matter for German Politics?"**
(Thomas Zittel, DAAD Professor of Government, Cornell University)

12:15-1:30pm Lunch Break

1:30pm **"German Unification and the Culture of Memory"**
(Barton Byg, Professor of German and Scandinavian Studies, Founding Director of the DEFA Film Library, University of Massachusetts-Amherst)

2:30pm **"Time for the Past: Durs Grünbein and German Poetry After the Wall"**
(Anna Glazova, Mellon Fellow in German Studies and the Humanities, Cornell University)

3:30-4:00pm Coffee break

4:00-5:00pm **"borderless and brazen: The Fall of the Berlin Wall and the Black German/European Experience"**
(Peggy Piesche, Visiting Instructor of German Studies, Vassar College)

6:00-8:00pm Dinner courtesy of "Freedom Without Walls"

Sunday, September 27

10am **"Virtual Crossings and Virtual Walls: The Digital Art of Tamiko Thiel"**
(Matthew W. Smith, Assistant Professor of English, Boston University, Author of *The Total Work of Art: From Bayreuth to Cyberspace*)

11am **"Popular Music in the GDR: Electronic Media & Global Politics Before & After 1989"**
(Edward Larkey, Associate Professor of German Studies and Director of the Program in Intercultural Communication, University of Maryland-Baltimore County)

12pm Concluding remarks

This event is sponsored by the Dept. of German Studies at Cornell University and made possible by generous funding from the DAAD (German Academic Exchange Service).

Conference Organizer: Leslie A. Adelson <laa10@cornell.edu>

Bildquellen:

http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Berlin-former_Potsdamer_Platz-1982.jpg

<http://www.flickr.com/photos/fiahless/2716340071/>

New Directions in Postwar

Conservative Thought

A GERMAN-AMERICAN DIALOGUE AD WHITE HOUSE

FRIDAY (OCT 2nd)

9:00am Light Breakfast

9:30 am Introduction (Peter Hohendahl, Cornell University)

Education and the University

Moderator: **Peter Hohendahl** (Cornell University)

9:45 am

"Conservative and Neo-Liberal Trends in American Higher Education after 1945"

Davydd Greenwood (Cornell University)

10:15 am

"Back to Innocence: Conservative Reconstructions of Children's and Young Adult Literature in Postwar West Germany"

Rüdiger Steinlein (Humboldt Universität Berlin)

11:00 am Coffee Break

11:15 am

"Allan Bloom's Plato"

Peter Gilgen (Cornell University)

12:00 pm Lunch (provided)

Political and Social Theory

1:30 pm

"James Burnham and Postwar German Conservative Thought"

Stephen Brockmann (Carnegie Mellon University)

2:15 pm

"Marx or Bismarck? The German Origins of Postwar US Realist International Thought"

William Scheuerman (Indiana University)

3:00 pm Coffee Break

3:15 pm

"The Political Translation of Philosophy:

The Case of Leo Strauss in the United States"

Peter Hohendahl (Cornell University)

History, Memory

4:00 pm

"The Politics of Memory: German Wartime Memoirs and the Reconstruction of the German Military in the Nineteen-Fifties"

Manuel Köppen (Humboldt Universität Berlin)

4:45 pm Coffee Break

5:00 pm

"Machiavelli Among the German Historians (Meinecke, Ritter, Dehio)"

William Rasch (Indiana University)

SATURDAY (OCT 3rd)

9:00 am Light Breakfast

Law and the Political

9:30 am

"The Hitler/Holmes Controversy and the Crisis of Postwar Jurisprudence"

Casey Servais (Yeshiva University)

10:15 am

"Is there a Straussian Constitutionalism?"

Jason Frank (Cornell University)

11:00 am Coffee Break

11:15 am

"Carl Schmitt and Revolutionary International Law"

Isabel Hull (Cornell University)

12:00 pm Lunch (provided)

Culture, Religion and Philosophy

1:30 pm

"Religious Configurations of American Conservative Thought"

Reinhard Isensee (Humboldt Universität Berlin)

2:15 pm

"Carl Schmitt's Political Theology"

Tracy McNulty (Cornell University)

3:00 pm Coffee Break

3:15 pm

"Grownup Germans or 'die Faust in der Tasche': Conservative Attitudes toward Postwar US Culture"

Erhard Schütz (Humboldt Universität Berlin)

4:00 pm

"Carl Schmitt and Leo Strauss Read Heidegger"

Geoff Waite (Cornell University)

4:45 pm Roundtable Discussion

Max Pensky (Binghamton University)

Joseph Vogl (Humboldt Universität Berlin)

The Swedish Program and Cornell Scandinavian Club present a symposium

SWEDEN and SCANDINAVIA

in their European and International Contexts

sponsored by the Swedish Institute, the Institute for European Studies,
the Society for the Humanities, and the Department of German Studies

September 4, 2009
A. D. White House
Free and Open to the Public

Program

10:30 - 11:00 Danielle Cudmore, Medieval Studies
The idea of North: Scandinavia, real and imagined in *The Golden Compass*

11:00 - 11:30 Prof. Magnus Fiskesjö, Anthropology
Museums, globalization and the nation state: Lessons from Sweden

11:30 - 12:00 Prof. William Sayers, Comparative Literature
Where was Strindberg on James Joyce's mental map?

12:00 - 12:30 Prof. Lars Rudstam, Natural Resources
Environmental issues in the Baltic Sea and the Great Lakes:
What we can learn from each other

12:30 - 1:30 Lunch with Scandinavian music in the garden

1:30 - 2:30 Prof. Anna Westerståhl Stenport, Scandinavian Studies
Keynote: Regional, European, and global in contemporary
Swedish film: Cinematic landscapes in *Show Me Love*,
Let the Right One In, and *The Girl With the Dragon Tattoo*

2:30 - 3:00 Prof. Fredrik Logevall, History
Swedish-US relations and neutral statehood in the Cold War and afterwards

3:00 - 3:30 Prof. Thomas Hill, English and Medieval Studies
Thor's travels to Utgårdaloki and the European riddle tradition

4:00 - 5:00 Curator Patrick J. Stevens, Fiske Icelandic Collection
Special exhibit: Daniel Willard Fiske in Scandinavia (in Kroch Library 2B48)





Fall 2009

Calendar of Events



- SEP. 4 *Sweden and Scandinavia in their European and International Contexts*
SYMPOSIUM 10:30 am -- 5pm
A.D. WHITE HOUSE
- SEP. 25-26 *Repetition with Change: The Intellectual Legacies of Dominick LaCapra*
A.D. WHITE HOUSE
- SEP. 26-27 *DAAD Weekend in German Studies- "1989 for the 21st Century"*
Hollis E. Cornell Auditorium, GOLDWIN SMITH HALL
- OCT. 2-3 *New Directions in Postwar Conservative Thought - A German-American Dialogue*
Cornell-Humboldt CONFERENCE
A.D. WHITE HOUSE
- OCT. 27 *The Halfmoon Files*
Film Screening with Director Philip Scheffner
7pm WILLARD STRAIGHT THEATRE
- OCT. 27 *Les Petits Violons - The Haydn Project*
Dorian Komanoff Bandy, Conductor
8pm SAGE CHAPEL
- Nov. 19-20 *European Studies Conference "1989 in Europe and the World"*
for times and locations go to <http://www.einaudi.cornell.edu/Europe/calendar/>



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 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).