

# German Culture News

Cornell University Institute for German Cultural Studies

Spring 2006 Vol. XIV No. II

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## Conservative Thought in West Germany After 1940: Martin Heidegger Carl Schmitt Ernst Jünger

*Our question here, which I think defines not only Peter and me, but many of the speakers at this conference as belonging to one and the same generation, is simply this: What do we know about Heidegger's, Jünger's, and Schmitt's thought before, during, and after the Second World War? What did they think about the crimes of the Nazi regime? How did they judge their own political past? And how did they cope with both the occupation after '45, and the new political realities in Germany under the conditions of the Cold War? These questions seem all the more important as Heidegger's, Jünger's, and Schmitt's thought keeps haunting us at a time of new global conflicts and wars.*

—Wolf Kittler

Constantin Goschler of the Ruhr-University Bochum opened the conference with his talk entitled "Intellectual Constellations in the Early Federal Republic." Goschler proposed to answer two main questions: In what manner did conservative intellectuals adapt to post-war Germany, and how and to what extent did they shape the intellectual constellation of the Federal Republic? Focusing on Heidegger, Schmitt, and Jünger's attitudes towards liberalism, political science, German guilt after the Holocaust, and Jews in Germany, Goschler sought to locate these three thinkers in the framework of the post-1945

German "success story" referred to as the "Umkehr," in which liberalism seemed to rise from the ashes of the Third Reich. In what Goschler referred to as a "double-faced discourse," these three thinkers assembled adherents of their self-cultivated elitist positions in closed circles, even while publicly adapting to the new political atmosphere. However, after German military defeat and in the political climate of the "Umkehr," they owed much of their influence to their attitude of dissidence. Goschler recalled Schmitt and Jünger's criticism of Karl Jaspers's willingness to accept German guilt after 1945, their caustic criti-

cism of the "licensed public sphere," and their refusal to fill out the denazification questionnaire. Goschler then explored German conservative thought in the ensuing decades. In conclusion, he directed attention away from the idea of these three thinkers as keys to the "dirty little secrets" of German conservative thought, suggesting that one study them with the aim of better understanding intellectual constellations in Germany and in the world today.

Michael Geyer of the University of Chicago gave a talk entitled "Humanity in an Age of Total Destruction: Jünger and Jünger, Heidegger and Arendt,



*Born within the time span of only one decade, between 1885 and 1895, Heidegger, Schmitt, and Jünger belong to a generation of intellectuals whose work is fundamentally marked by the experience of the First World War, the revolutions that followed in its wake, and the political situation of the first republic on German soil in the 1920s. Jünger, the decorated war hero, established a reputation as an acclaimed author, based on his experiences in the trenches of the first technological war in history. Schmitt, the scholar of jurisprudence, started his career with fierce attacks on the legal status of the Weimar Republic constitution. And Heidegger, the thinker, included in his book, *Being and Time*, a clear reference to the infantry tactics of the German offensive in the spring of 1918, "running-forward-into-death".*

*All three had ties to the National-Socialist movement, and each of them had to bear the consequences of this political choice after the German defeat in 1945. Jünger was offered a position as head of the Nazi Writer's Union, but refused. His novel *On the Marble Cliffs* has been read as an—albeit veiled and ambivalent—attack on the Nazi regime. Like many Germans, both Schmitt and Heidegger joined the party on May 1, 1933, after the so called Enabling Act, which abolished the democratic nature of the state. Although they both withdrew from politics after growing tensions with the party, they never univocally distanced themselves from their involvement with the National Socialist movement. After 1945, Jünger was banned briefly from publishing, but was quickly rehabilitated. Schmitt was captured by the Americans, spending a year in an internment camp, but returned to the typical life of a private scholar. Heidegger lost his *venia legendi*, the right to lecture, but the decision was rescinded in 1951.*

*All three thinkers had a wide following after World War Two. When Jünger died in 1998, at age 102, he was a celebrated author, decorated by Helmut Kohl with the Bundesverdienstkreuz. Schmitt's students had a decisive influence not only on the constitution of the Federal Republic of Germany, but also (through his student Leo Strauss) on legal theory in the U.S.—some have argued not only in the lofty realm of theory, but also in the very politics of the current Bush administration, in its claim, for instance, that the President is not bound by the Constitution in times of war. Heidegger, finally, looms large in the Humanities because of the imprint of his work on the writings of such authors as Foucault and Derrida.*

*—Wolf Kittler*

Schmitt and Anders on Omnicide.” Geyer first launched an extensive discussion of Friedrich Georg Jünger’s book *Perfektion der Technik*, written before World War II but not published until after it. In this text, Jünger rejects an uncritical acceptance of technology, describing technology as “rapacious” and as a “violent act of consumption.” According to Jünger, this rapacious progress of technology follows the law of entropy: The more advanced the technology, the greater the destruction it allows, setting in motion “an unbounded calculus of destruction.” Ever more total war negates the idea of war gains, promotes a constant sense of insecurity, and thus induces states of fevered action unaccompanied by thought.

Geyer then drew attention to the parallels between Jünger’s text and Heidegger’s “Die Frage nach der Technik,” in which Heidegger famously equates mechanized agriculture with the destruction of human life in the Nazi death camps. Geyer raised Hannah Arendt’s objection to Jünger and Heidegger’s reasoning, namely that their arguments lacked what St. Augustine called “caritas:” love for human beings and appreciation of human bonds. This, Geyer argued, helped explain why German conservative thought regarding technology erred in the context of the Cold War, which illustrated a persistent gap between the

human capability to annihilate and the desire to do so. He concluded that the conservatives’ challenge of accounting for this gap between technology and political judgment remained unmet. —G.G.

Saturday afternoon’s talks commenced with **Christian Jäger** (Humboldt University), whose paper was entitled “Adjusting (to) the Federal Republic: The Geopolitical Turn in Heidegger’s Aesthetics after 1945.” In the years leading up to World War II, Heidegger discussed the role of the poet as that of a demigod who set the borders of the “Heimat” as a “Führer.” In this respect, poets were like rivers in that they demarcated a “Lebensraum” as a space for Being and thereby participated in the creation of a dwelling. This view altered as the disappointed philosopher turned away from National Socialism and commented on an altered state of affairs in which the poet has lost his prophetic function and is no longer understood at all. In this scheme, there arises a need for the poet to return home. This movement homeward, in turn, requires developing a sense of home, which occurs by thinking poetically. Accordingly, Heidegger attempted to rescue poetic language as a last refuge for the people, a move Jäger characterized as a form of reterritorialization. Language, in Heidegger’s view, was coming under attack by the effects of technology, such as those

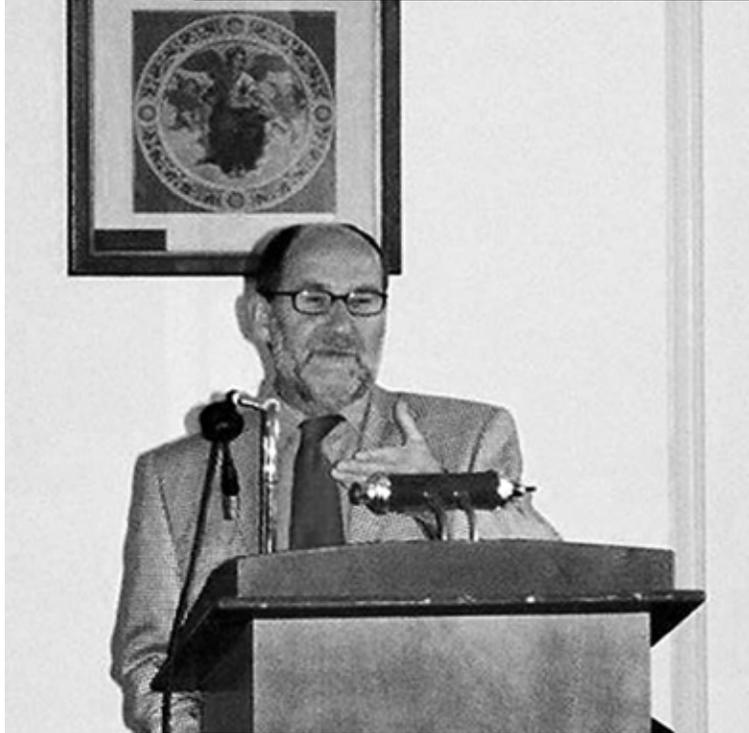
inherent in the metalinguistics of analytic philosophy (which for Heidegger was not at all distinct from the formulaic thought of rocketry). Such a technological understanding of language did, however, stand in opposition to the movement homeward. Jäger concluded his remarks on Heidegger’s geopolitical turn by commenting that the turn constitutes a merely apparent shift: Throughout the developments described, Heidegger’s thought retained the same basic structural elements, a fact that raises important questions about the nature of the post-war Federal Republic in which this thought fit just as well as it had in the climate of pre-war Germany.

**Wolf Kittler** (Cornell University), in his talk entitled “From Gestalt to Gestell: Martin Heidegger reads Ernst Jünger,” discussed the possibility of reinterpreting Heidegger’s later work in light of the newly published volume in his collected works that consists of his notes on the writings of Ernst Jünger. Kittler began by pointing out that Heidegger’s “Question Concerning Technology,” Jünger’s *Der Arbeiter*; and Benjamin’s “The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction” share a remarkable conceptual interrelatedness. More concretely, as far as Heidegger’s later work is concerned, *Der Arbeiter* represents a junction of the thought of Lenin and Nietzsche. In this regard,

Jünger’s total mobilization against an old world order is connected to the end of metaphysics; it is in fact the last stage of the forgetting of Being. Heidegger saw communism and fascism as lining up to destroy the world and criticized Jünger not only for his exaggerated pathos, but, more significantly, for his participation in this destructive process. In keeping with this view, Heidegger found *Der Arbeiter* to be an exceptionally accurate description of contemporary history, although he also found that it offered little or nothing other than this mere description of the surface of events. Jünger’s participation in history constituted not so much a moment of mastery and creation as a form of enslavement. Indeed, Heidegger’s “Question Concerning Technology” can be read as an attempt to overcome the notion of the worker as an agent of modern technology. In contrast to such a conception, Heidegger’s proposes his own notion of man as a guardian of Being. —T.H.

In his talk on “Conserving Esotericism, or, Justifying the High Hand of Violence,” **Geoff Waite** approached Heidegger and Schmitt by looking closely at the How of their public, or “exoteric,” saying and writing. Only in this way, Waite insisted, can we hope to reach anything resembling the What—the esoteric content, that which is not said—of their pronouncements.

**Erhard Schütz (German Literature, Humboldt University)  
during his presentation, *Waldgänge*—Before 1945 and After**



Waite began by remarking that “conservative” is not the word he would have chosen to describe any one of the triumvirate of German thinkers whose “conservatism” the conference set out to explore. Waite instead appropriates the word to speak of the conservation of the practice of esotericism. As thinkers who used silence to articulate (themselves, the What), and as thinkers engaged in the “authentically philosophical (and authentically Greek) conservation of esotericism,” neither Schmitt nor Heidegger (Jünger is left aside) could acknowledge “1945” as “anything like an authentic event.” (The war’s end was merely a military defeat, seen as a “liberal or conservative phantasm.”) Aside from a shift in the balance of global power, 1945 did not ultimately change any-

thing in terms of the larger capitalist economy and its superstructure. The question, then, comes down not to the What of fascism as a symptom of capitalism, as Slavoj Žižek puts it, but to the How of this fundamental connection: namely, “How is fascism coincident not just with capitalism but also with esotericism and its conservation?”

Heidegger and Schmitt, the answer begins, did not just damn any possible alternative to capitalism by never once even mentioning such a possibility, by excluding such an alternative from their discourse; they left us with no real discourse at all—only silence. The real doctrines of their thought (though Waite makes clear that Heidegger, not Schmitt, was the consummate practitioner of esotericism) needed to be left unsaid. In Heidegger’s

words: “The ‘doctrine’ of a thinker is what is unsaid in his saying.”

Waite ended his talk by turning to a recently published handwritten text found in Heidegger’s literary remains called “Meine Beseitigung.” Waite reads the text’s final reflections on silence and the necessity of “‘existing’ without engagement” as a reminder that it is “all the more necessary” to engage with Heidegger and conservative thought, but also, he stresses, with capitalism. For all he has been saying, Waite concludes, *is fíor dóibh*, an Irish phrase that he translates “It is true for them [only because] they have the power [for Time Being].” —S.F.

**Erhard Schütz** (Humboldt University) opened the second day of the conference with his talk “*Waldgänge*—Before 1945 and After,” which discussed the various aspects and implications of the figure of the forest walker (Waldgänger) and of the action of walking the forest in the thought of Ernst Jünger. Schütz first explained that for Jünger the forest walker cannot be half-hearted but is, rather, a solitary heroic figure. Given Jünger’s experiences of the forest during war, it became determined as a site of brutality. Walking amidst this brutality thrust a profound loneliness and isolation on the forest walker. In this

regard, the figure of the forest walker can be considered as a parable for one of the great *Gestalten* of modernity. That is, insofar as the forest can also be thought of as a metaphor for urban existence, the modern subject is found to be isolated and abandoned to the destruction and the desert that surrounds him/her. Nonetheless, walking the forest is not a retreat into the interiority of the subject. Rather, the forest functions as a metaphor for political space; it is a public privation. So, too, the retreat into the forest belongs to the activity of an author. One withdraws into the forest in order to be able to write at all. Even as the forest threatens or promises isolation, though, walking the forest is a movement to a relief headquarters. That is, the forest insures freedom and a clear head for the forest walker.

**Marcus Bullock** (University of Wisconsin – Milwaukee) followed with his talk entitled “A Dialectician of Treason: Ernst Jünger between Ethos and Polis.” Bullock focused on questioning the status of Jünger’s legacy by critically engaging the history of Jünger reception. Some facets of Jünger’s works are undeniable: One cannot deny the existence of a celebration of military heroism as well as clear connections to fascism. Nevertheless, by relating the story of Jünger’s son, who was punished for critical remarks concerning Hitler, Bullock

implied that Jünger himself must have encouraged and participated in such critical conversations within the home. Given this scenario, the legacy of Jünger is far too complicated to map simply onto the Left/Right axis common to political discourse. By citing Foucault, Bullock argued that any such placement would tend to serve the purposes of the person reviewing Jünger's work and not contribute to honest scholarship. Furthermore, Jünger extricated himself from being placed on a Left/Right axis in that he questioned the division of the polity into parties for the purposes of exercising power. According to Jünger, it was necessary to preserve the body politic as a unit. So, too, Jünger defined himself very broadly and rarely in univocal fashion. Focusing rather on the "Ich" as an evolving and inconsistent entity, he left himself open to easy misreadings. Such is the case with some conservative interpretations of Jünger that seek to reduce his texts to a single dimension. In order to counter such one-sided appropriations, Bullock suggested, we must suspend and reconsider the conceptual apparatus with which we approach the texts of Ernst Jünger.

—T.H.

In a paper entitled "Reflections on War and Peace after 1940," conference co-organizer **Peter Uwe Hohendahl** (German Studies) offered a detailed comparative analysis of

Carl Schmitt and Ernst Jünger's evolving views on geopolitics. Both Schmitt and Jünger, Hohendahl indicated, abandoned their earlier orientation towards the nation-state as the basic political unit—Schmitt by developing the concept of the *Großraum*, and Jünger by insisting on the necessity of a world state. These changes in both men's thought, Hohendahl argued, arose out of their observations of changes in the way wars were fought.

Hohendahl's analysis of Schmitt initially focused on the texts *Land und Meer* and *Der Nomos der Erde*, both conceived and written in the 1940s. In these texts, Schmitt

gives an account of the breakdown of the system of European international law, a breakdown that leads to the disappearance of traditional legal constraints on the conduct of war and makes possible the modern "war of extermination" (Vernichtungskrieg). Symptomatically, Schmitt does not attribute any responsibility for this development to the practices of the German *Wehrmacht* or to Nazi Germany's own conduct of a war of extermination, instead accounting for the breakdown of the traditional European laws of war solely in terms of the intrusion of "non-European" actors, especially the United States.

Ernst Jünger, according to Hohendahl, shared

Schmitt's view of World War II as a war that had "gotten out of hand;" his reflections during and after the war, however, focused on imagining the nature of a desirable peace. Starting with his 1943 essay "Der Friede," Jünger suggested that peace could only be achieved by overcoming the obsolete framework of the nation-state. Unfortunately, most of Jünger's suggestions for how the postwar world could be peacefully organized remain on the level of poetic discourse, offering little in the way of realistic analysis or concrete solutions.

Schmitt's 1963 *Theorie des Partisanen*, Hohendahl argued, can be read as a kind of rejoinder to Jünger's (in Schmitt's view) utopian schemes. In this text, Schmitt pointed to the increasing significance of irregular and guerilla wars as evidence of an ongoing "global civil war" that needed to be contained. Because Schmitt saw the revolutionary movements of his day primarily as threats to order, and hence as something to be ruthlessly suppressed (as was done by the French in Algeria), he did not consider the possibility that the *success* of

**Marcus Bullock (English, University of Wisconsin – Milwaukee), responds to questions after his presentation, A Dialectician of Treason: Ernst Jünger between Ethos and Polis**



these revolutionary movements might itself be the precondition for “order,” or even for peace.

In his paper “Carl Schmitt and the Road to Abu Ghraib,” which has since appeared in the journal *Constellations*, **William E. Scheuerman** (Political Science and Law, Indiana University) applied Carl Schmitt’s 1963 book *Theorie des Partisanen* to an analysis of contemporary US foreign policy. This book by Schmitt, Scheuerman argued, is “disturbingly relevant to the political and legal world in which we now find ourselves, in which the US government has responded to 9/11 by placing accused terrorists outside the Geneva Convention’s category of ‘legal combatants’ and outfitting the executive with a stunning array of discretionary powers to determine their fate.” More specifically, Scheuerman demonstrated

the manner in which many recent legal positions adopted by the Bush administration reproduce positions developed by Carl Schmitt. Like the administration, Schmitt aggressively argues that “irregular combatants” are undeserving of, or incapable of receiving, legal protections. Irregular combatants are, for Schmitt, necessarily consigned to a legal black hole—which is where the Bush administration has sought to put them. Reconstructing the three main arguments Schmitt presents for his view—first, that “authentic” politics necessarily elides legal regulation, second, that irregular fighters don’t fit into a system of international law based on nation-states, and third, that the rapid rate of technological innovation characteristic of modern warfare renders legal regulations obsolete—Scheuerman countered each of them in turn. From here,

he moved to an analysis of the Bush administration’s famous “torture memos,” showing how their reasoning mirrored that of Schmitt and hence was susceptible to the same critiques. —C.S.

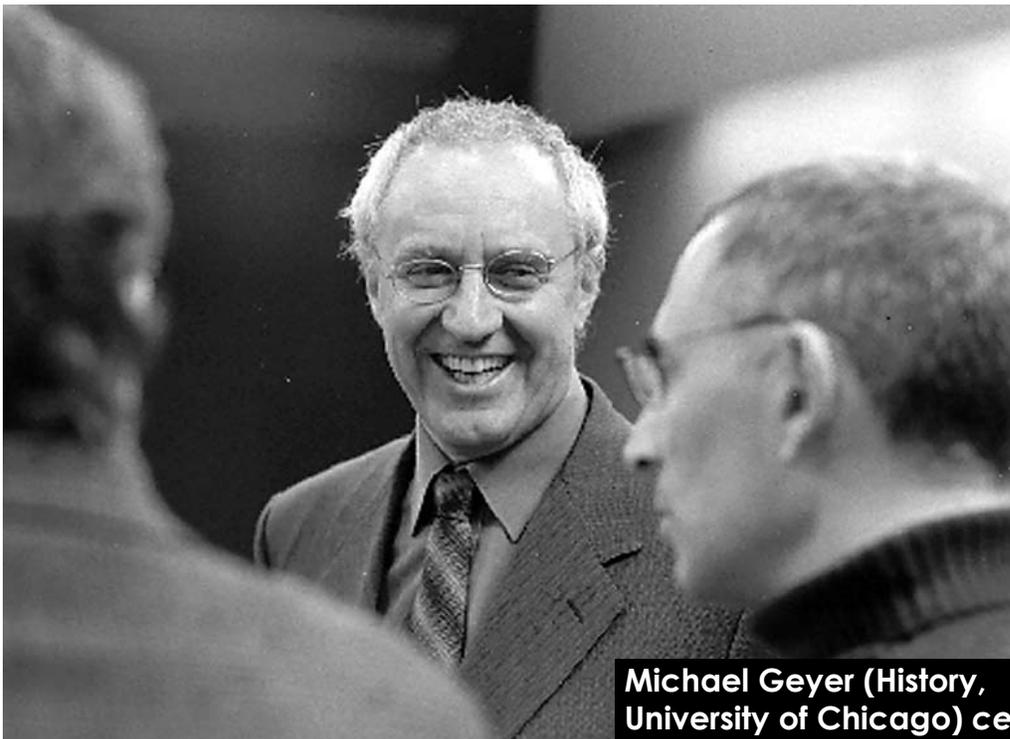
Professor **Susan Buck-Morss** closed the conference with a presentation entitled “C. Schmitt, W. Benjamin, and G. W. Bush: A Tragic Drama.” In her presentation, Professor Buck-Morss drew on Carl Schmitt’s 1950 book *Der Nomos der Erde* to challenge the dominant rhetoric surrounding the events of September 11, 2001, stating that the attacks of that day were not attacks on America or American society, but rather on the nomos of American power. The attacks were shocking not because a state attacked another state, but because a group attacked the very concept of the state.

Professor Buck-Morss used images in addition

to words to challenge her listeners’ preconceptions about the meaning of 9/11, juxtaposing faces and pictures we would not usually have connected with one another. Her presentation opened with a screenshot of CNN coverage of the collapse of the World Trade Center, which was immediately followed by the title page of Hobbes’s *Leviathan*. Timothy McVeigh’s photo preceded that of Mohammed Atta, and the audience was challenged to contemplate their similarities and differences as the culprits of terrorist attacks.

Carl Schmitt re-appeared when the audience was shown his photo alongside that of Karl Marx to demonstrate differing understandings of the phenomenon of the state, with Marx’s understanding of the state as an epiphenomenon contrasting with Schmitt’s belief in its necessity. Buck-Morss’s final discussion centered around the viability of the nation-state as we understand it today when faced with the challenge of a non-state-based political unit. Is the nomos of the Earth in a state of flux? Buck-Morss offered no concrete answers, but did paint a troubled picture of the United States’ eroding power to establish legitimacy for its actions—moral, economic, and political—around the globe. —D.L.

Grace Gemmell, Tim Haupt, Sam Frederick, Casey Servais, & David Low are graduate students in German Studies.



**Michael Geyer (History, University of Chicago) center**

# Can the EU Survive?

## The New Germany & the Future of Europe

On April 21, a debate took place between **Andrew Moravcsik** (Director of Politics and EU Program, Princeton University) and **Jeremy Rabkin** (Government, Cornell University) on the topic “Can the EU survive? The New Germany and the Future of Europe.” Organizer **Hubert Zimmermann** (Government, Cornell University) opened the event by outlining the situation that prompted this question. Given the recent expansion of the EU and the possibility for the integration of more new member states of diverse and sometimes conflicting histories, what will the future function of the EU be, and will it be able to sustain itself as an institution given the radical diversity of new and potential members?

Jeremy Rabkin began by defining the EU not as a trade organization but as an organization with substantial influence on the international scene. Rabkin’s skepticism that the EU will survive was based on its lack of features that he, as an American, assumes to be requisite for a nation-state, namely, an army an executive, and a system to enforce law. Given that the EU has none of these features, Rabkin argued that it is merely a cooperative organization of different states, and there has been no historical example since the eighteenth century of such an organization successfully maintaining its existence across time. Rabkin also pointed out that Europe has a long tradition of allowing institutions of minimal necessity to linger on long past any use that they might meaningfully have served. He offered the monarchy as a prime example. Further, the EU faces three challenges that it will not be able to overcome.

The first is an economic challenge: Once prosperous European countries have, for the past decade, suffered a stagnant economy. Second, the EU member states have been unable to reach any unity in relation to questions of security, for which their divisions

over the US invasion of Iraq serve as an example. Finally, the EU member states all currently suffer an unacceptable level of domestic instability rooted in the problem of Muslim segments of the population being poorly integrated into the rest of society. Whereas Europe appeared quite stable in a peaceful and prosperous world, a somewhat grimmer outlook looms on Europe’s horizon for the imminent future.

Andrew Moravcsik offered a more optimistic view of the future of the EU, affirming that the EU is a mature polity that is here to stay. According to Moravcsik, constitutional systems must reach a certain level of stability in order to maintain unity while allowing for dissension among their members; the EU has reached this level. It is in fact the most successful example of voluntary international cooperation in history, which offers an explanation as to why the organization is continually attracting new members. Moravcsik argued that Europe will be able to play its international role effectively regardless of the fact that it has no army, because the most successful form of foreign policy is influence by means of economic activity and not by military invasion or coercion.

Moravcsik concluded his discussion by considering the reasons for which the EU constitution was not ratified in 2004. Given that the EU doesn’t collect or spend tax revenue, the majority of voters have difficulty recognizing the institution’s significance for their lives. In this regard, the EU needs a new ideology based on its decentralized form of governance, which can then appeal to local political discourse and thereby gain support from the diverse groups that must vote on its constitution.

*Tim Haupt is a graduate student in German Studies.*

# Schmittian Traces in Žižek's Account of Christianity (& some Derridean Specters)

On February 27, Erik Vogt, Associate Professor of Philosophy at Trinity College, presented a lecture entitled “Schmittian Traces in Žižek's Account of Christianity (and some Derridean Specters).” Vogt framed his discussion of the treatment of Christianity in Slavoj Žižek's recent work (*The Fragile Absolute: Or, Why is the Christian Legacy Worth Fighting For?*; *On Belief*; and *The Puppet and the Dwarf: The Perverse Core of Christianity*) in terms of Žižek's larger project—heavily influenced by the political philosopher Carl Schmitt—of overcoming the “foreclosure of the political” in the contemporary world through a mobilization of “proper political hatred directed at the common political enemy.” According to Vogt, Žižek's Schmittian project

proceeds by condensing “the specters of liberalism, communitarianism, multiculturalist politics, identity politics, deconstruction, postmodern dispersionism,” and “risk theory” into the “concrete figure of the enemy.” All of these “spectral” ideologies, which collectively constitute the anti-political “enemy” of Žižek's effort to revive the political, fail to recognize the necessity of an absolute decision based, ultimately, on illusion, or rather blind faith. As in Schmitt's original *Concept of the Political*, Žižek emphasizes that the revival of the political necessarily entails the “real possibility of physical, violent wagers” and accordingly advocates “undermining the complacency of our daily routine by introducing meaningless sacrifice and destruction.” Žižek, on Vogt's

account, is fully aware that his embrace of Schmitt's decisionism may lead to the charge of *Linksfaschismus* from those Žižek calls “bleeding-heart liberals,” to which Žižek responds: “so be it.”

Along with Schmitt's political theory, Vogt argued, Žižek adopts elements of his political theology. In his essay “Carl Schmitt in the Age of Post-Politics,” for instance, Žižek “forcefully formulates the decisive task of preserving the Christian faith” as a supplement to Marxism. Abandoning Marx's own scientific methods in favor of a kind of decisionist neo-Leninism, Žižek presents Marxism, like Christianity, as being founded on unconditional faith. Vogt went on to insinuate that Žižek's account of the relationship between “Christianity” and

“Judaism” recapitulates implicitly anti-Semitic elements of the Hegelian philosophy of history and Schmittian political theology on which it draws. Žižek, for instance, tends to identify what he calls the “dangerous residue of liberal-democratic, abstract universalism” with “Judaism,” “Jewish religion,” and “Jewish thought.” “Judaism,” for Žižek, is associated with liberal notions of the rule of law (or, in Jacques Lacan's terms, Law), whereas “Christianity” is valorized as the overcoming of such notions in the lawless state of exception. On Vogt's account, the “new community” to which Žižek aspires is one ruled by Christian “love” rather than Jewish “law,” “love” for Žižek being defined as “authentic revolutionary violence” or as “the violent gesture of discarding, of establishing a difference, or drawing a line of separation.” Far from embracing the anarchic tendencies of early Christianity, Žižek, according to Vogt, affirms Christianity “in its properly dogmatic and institutional aspect.” This valorization of the “Church as Army,” Vogt seemed to imply, held the danger of evolving into “a politicized claim of self-legitimation holding the potential of fanaticism.”

Professor Vogt concluded his lecture by outlining some elements of a possible critique of Žižek based on the work of Jacques Derrida and Hent de Vries.

Slavo Žižek  
courtesy of zeitgeist films



# Alle reden von Pop.



## Wir Auch.

### Amusement total... Sans regret?!

#### New and Erratic Inquiries into the Nature of Pop

*"The only reasonable way to talk about Pop is to point, captivated, at the captivating, hey, super." So claims Rainald Goetz with apodictic aplomb in his 1986 essay collection "Hirn." What if this statement were literally true—this claim that the mode of blissful affirmation is the only appropriate register of speech regarding all matters Pop? Should we despair because there is no room for an analytical position—inside or outside of Pop? Or should we simply be content to celebrate that Pop is the most beautiful thing on earth?*

*But what if Pop were only graffiti on a prison wall, as Dick Hebdidge famously insinuated? How could we verbalize such a notion? It seems as if we still lack the language necessary to vivisect Pop, as if to analyze Pop would mean killing its essence. The purpose of this conference is to explore ways to overcome the position of ecstatic incommunicability that Goetz seems to postulate—but without falling prey to dry theoretical reductionism either.*

*The concept of Pop has been pervasive throughout the 20th century and into the 21st—nonetheless all attempts at giving a concise definition of the term have been surprisingly futile. That might be because Pop knows no article—there is no such thing as "a" Pop or "the" Pop—and, consequently, we shouldn't waste our time trying to invent what doesn't exist. Instead we should play with the word, apply it, probe its promise and limitations.*

—Jens Schellhammer

## Mix I

**Nathaniel Hansen** of the University of Chicago opened the Pop conference with his paper “Haute Banal: Introducing a New Aesthetic Concept for the Everyday.” Having encountered the term “haute banal” in the writings of Dave Eggers, Hansen sought to clarify the usage of this concept by way of an analysis of one important instantiation of an “haute banal” aesthetic, namely the music of the Talking Heads. Hansen’s

boredom is produced and then questions whether it is possible to perceive that space/time without its being transformed by our act of perception. Here, his discussion turned to the lyrics of the Talking Heads, which illustrate the ubiquity and banality of the everyday. Hansen concentrated on three songs: “Don’t Worry about the Government,” which he read as an



Conference organizer **Jens Schellhammer** (left) with keynote speaker **Eckhard Schumacher** (Ludwig-Maximilians-Universität)

analysis drew on a number of French theorists (specifically Maurice Blanchot), as well as on the affirmative account of bourgeois society in the writings of Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel. Hansen characterized the “haute banal” as a celebration of the completely quotidian aspects of our everyday lives, arising from the expansion of the middle class and the universalization of urban experience. Hansen asks us to direct our attention to the “space/time” where

endorsement of the everyday and as a “Hegelian love song,” “Found a Job,” and “The Big Country.” The final conclusion of the presentation was that “haute banal” actually depicts a bourgeois fantasy which amounts to a (Hegelian, rather than Marxian) “reflective endorsement of the everyday,” one which exhibits bourgeois utopianism and is thus not necessarily available to everyone.

## Keynote Address

**Eckhard Schumacher** (Ludwig-Maximilians-Universität München), author of the book *Gerade eben jetzt: Schreibweisen der Gegenwart* (Suhrkamp 2003), offered the conference’s keynote address. Dr. Schumacher oriented his thoughts on pop culture temporally, beginning with a consideration of what he depicted as a near-ubiquitous phrase: “Be Here Now.” He traced this phrase from Ram Dass’s 1971 book of that title to the phrase’s most recent manifestation

Dr. Schumacher observed that “Be Here Now” can “mean virtually anything, but intends to mean absolutely everything.” The nature of pop culture or pop phenomena is that they occupy an undefined moment, immediate and always passing into the past. However, through their infinite reproducibility, they defy the oblivion of the past and attain a sort of constant simultaneity, a “now” that is the eternal present but is also eternal transience. Noel Gallagher of Oasis illustrated this point well when he claimed that the band’s album *Be Here Now* was the perfect music for the moment it arrived, which for any listener is the present. —D.L.



## Mix II

**Geoffrey Cox** (University of Washington) opened the first afternoon panel on Friday with a presentation entitled “Signal Processing: Of

on the pop culture stage as the name of the 1997 album by the British pop group Oasis. He then analyzed the crucial appearance of this phrase in Benjamin von Stuckrad-Barre’s 1998 “pop” novel *Soloalbum*. In this manner, Schumacher uncovered the complex interplay of music and writing in contemporary culture.

Mix Tapes & Narrative in ‘Popliteratur.’”

According to Cox, mix tapes as a cultural phenomenon occupy a fairly defined historical period, from about 1979 to 1996. As artifacts of “pop,” mix tapes represent a relatively uncomplicated subjectivity—unlike postmodernity—where legibility is the primary purpose. Through

quotation, one arrives at a new work: a personal message mediated by professional musicians for what is customarily an audience of one. The construction of this message and the reception of meaning are central in this process. The compiler's task is to organize songs into a cohesive array. They represent a "now made from the then" (i.e. an already existent record collection); the author is at the same time present and not present; tapes are necessarily historical; there is intimate engagement with the recipient at the time of making the tape, yet there is also a narcissistic moment—a tape is a gift with strings attached.

Cox reviewed the use of mix tapes in three novels: Nick Hornby's *High Fidelity*, Ulrich Plenzdorf's *Die neuen Leiden des jungen W.*, and Andreas Neumeister's *Gut laut*. In Hornby's text, the choice and arrangement of songs is key, and any explanations are tautological. The songs comment on each other, and the message, or narrative, unfolds itself as they are played. The tapes in the novel serve as a means of making contact with people; even non-musicians can participate in this activity, introducing both themselves and new music to others. However, in Cox's view, the tapes also show a malfunction of communication.

In Plenzdorf's 1975 novel, Edgar Wibeau leaves behind tapes of passages

from Goethe's *Werther* and his own literary and musical creations. An important aspect of these "mix tapes" is that they contain Wibeau's own work, but no signposts of its meaning—which is why Willi does not understand them. Edgar has failed to master the medium: He does not channel others' work to make legible his own meaning. Still, the device of the mix tape allows the author a certain satirical play with the material.

Neumeister's *Gut laut* (1998) presents the most radical incorporation of mix tapes. It is a collage of pop music references employing various techniques of quoting. Cox refers to this as a "surplus of allusion" characteristic of the DJ culture. Neumeister mimics the mix-tape method, but on another level: The compiler is elevated to the position of a professional "text jockey." Cohesion is achieved through association, offering a picture of the cultural landscape. It is partially a reconstruction of youth, but the emphasis lies on collage and citation. Message is both related to and constructed from a growing accumulation of clues. Mix-taping is

transposed to the text and, like a record collection, the tape-as-novel helps make sense of the world.

**Sofie Nielsen** (Roskilde University) discussed "Pop & Aestheticization, or, The Terror of Aesthetics & the Aesthetics of Terror." She specifically referred to Joachim Bessing's novel *Wir Maschine* to illustrate the relationship between pop and aestheticization.

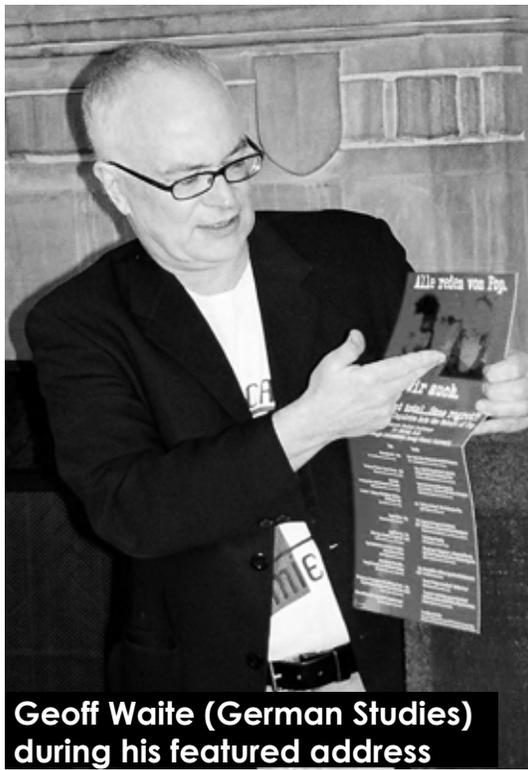
Pop can stand for lifestyle, superficiality, and the "now." It continues the 300-year process of modernization and has many predecessors (such as dandyism). Aestheticization can serve as enlightenment, but it acts dialectically: It can both construct cultural norms and rid us of them. For some, aestheticization represents the new face of capitalism, while Bessing sees a positive function of freeing one from reason. Pop depicts both consumerism and its problems, and hedonism can be construed as both liberation and a coping strategy.

*Wir Maschine* can be read as "anti-pop": It

aestheticizes consciousness, emancipates one from norms and values. The use of brand names becomes branding, literally. A certain jumble of discourses prevails, where the signified is lost and only the surface of a word-mass remains. As a parody of "lifestyle literature" (e.g. Stuckrad-Barre), this could be seen as cultural criticism, or even cultural pessimism. Violence, destruction, and terror occur in space, not time. Juxtapositions supplant the plot. The destruction of cities represents the triumph of art over consumption. Terror is represented as a momentary experience, purely aesthetic, without meaning. The terrorists' dream community is realized through this aestheticization. The destroyed world offers a new order—a new aesthetic of beautiful new colors and shapes. It is also a counterpart to individualization.

**Stefan Mesch** (University of Hildesheim) presented a paper on the satiric columnist Max Goldt ("Mostly Harmless? Max





**Geoff Waite (German Studies) during his featured address**

Goldt—Turning the Everyday into a Battlefield of Meanings”). Goldt can be considered the “guru” of the pop litterateurs of the mid-1990s.

The aftermath of the industrial revolution also provided the means and technology for delivering “cultural dope.” A tension between “high culture” and “pop” evolved, particularly in Germany. Seriousness was a long-standing norm of the German literary establishment, which avoided entertainment and everyday banality. Sociologically, the erstwhile gap between “high” and “low” culture corresponded to the rift between upper classes and the masses, yet with mass distribution, entertainment became available to all. The representatives of the Frankfurt School focused on the significance of mass culture; for Walter Benja-

min, everything indicated the tip of an iceberg that could lead to a greater picture of human culture. These leftist perspectives, however, also suspected mass culture of being a kind of “opiate” and distraction.

Max Goldt emerged in the 1980s along with a new generation of writers, and as part of a group

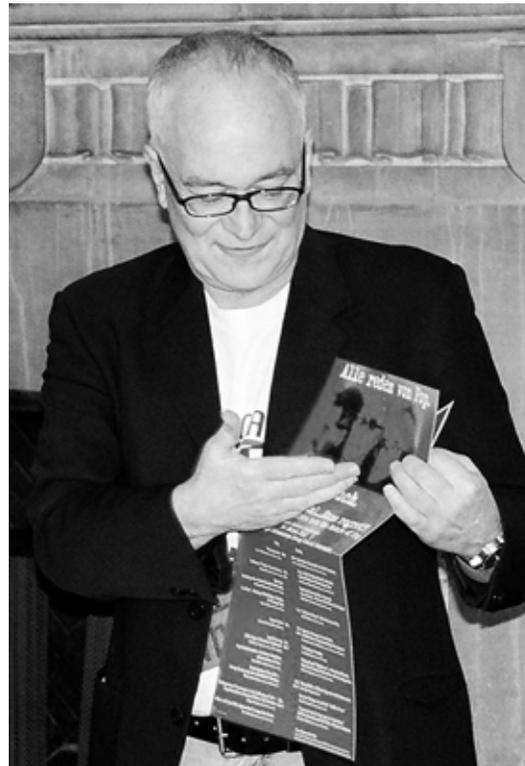
calling itself *Die Neue Frankfurter Schule*. Goldt

could be seen as replacing the old *Kabarett* tradition. Starting in 1989, he wrote for the mainstream satire journal *Titanic*, which was known for its sharp mockery of the Kohl regime. Yet Goldt, as the collector of empty media phrases, acted more as an educator and enlightener in the spirit of the earlier Frankfurt School. His columns made use of simple culture and attempted to debunk stereotypes. His criticism was relatively mild-mannered and record-

ed German history through a chronicle of language. Mesch designates this as “meta-pop” and as a tactic of the Frankfurt School—“everything is culture.” Mesch compared Goldt to Harald Schmidt, another modern-day “dandy” on the German scene. Whereas Schmidt’s approach is more deconstructionist, however, Goldt’s method has an edifying quality.

### Mix III

**Weijia Li** (Ohio State University) opened the third mix with a paper on the topic of “The Expansion of Consciousness & the Sadening of Soul: Intoxication in German & Chinese



Pop Literature.” He used a historical and comparative approach to track the significance of drugs in German and Chinese pop literature.

In the 1960s, drug use in German literature had the function of provoking the bourgeois lifestyle, and it adhered to a certain program or theory of the expansion of consciousness. In the 1990s, drug use no longer represented a provocation or utopian longings, but rather belonged to the dandy lifestyle—designer drugs, for example, were an integral element of partying.

Chinese “pop literature” is a relatively new phenomenon. It belongs to the post-Communist youth culture and represents a certain Western orientation. Alongside uses of brand names and English-language words, drug use also figures prominently. The popularity of the genre owes in part to a government ban. The approach to the drug theme, however, differs in Chinese pop literature. In this context, drugs represent a means of withdrawal, numbing, forgetting—in Li’s terms, *Seelenbetäubung*. The types of drugs used (heroin in the Chinese novels) partly account for this function, but it can also be explained by China’s specific geography and history.

Li summarized the difference between the treatment of drug use in German and Chinese pop literature under the headings of *Kokainpopliteratur* and *Heroinpopliteratur*, respectively. The differences between the two types of literature reflect the biological effects of the drugs used, the corre-

sponding flow of language (agitated versus ponderous, sad, and weightless), and a transcendental/metaphysical versus an a-metaphysical quality to the texts.

**Ken Roon** (Binghamton University) concluded the day with a paper called “A Room with Some Dolls: Virginia Woolf & Jacqueline Susann.” In his presentation, Roon wanted to explore the distinction between “high” and “low” literature and how gender often plays a role in such designations—that is, the standards are set by men.

In fact, Susann was effectively the “queen of 1960s pop literature.” Her novel *Valley of the Dolls* is the best selling fiction work in history, with 50 million copies sold. According to Roon, such sales figures imply the importance of a text.

Susann’s life and work reflect the main concerns of Virginia Woolf’s *A Room of One’s Own*: the exiling and neglect of women writers. A large segment of the population is thus ignored. In terms of its themes and impressive sales figures, however, Susann’s novel can also be seen as a partial circumvention of male-established structures. The development of mass media afforded new possibilities for the

promotion and distribution of *Valley of the Dolls*. In a way, men could be viewed as ironic distractions for women. —M.M.

#### Mix IV

The theme that unified the fourth “mix” of the pop conference was the ambiguity of popular culture as both a reproduction of, and resistance to, the dominant ideology.

The first paper, delivered by **Daniela Bute** of the University of Western Ontario and entitled “Popular Music in Romania after the Fall of Communism,” showed how this problem manifests itself in the transition from communism to capitalism in Romania. Under the repressive Communist regime, certain genres of popular music, notably the “Pan-Balkan” genre, became associated with subversive thinking and populist resistance movements. After the collapse of the regime, the music ap-

pears to be losing its critical momentum, to be tending toward its own commercialization, and to be giving way to a purely commercial brand of “Euro-pop.”

In the second paper, the Latino pop phenomenon of “naco” illustrates a similar structural problem. The paper “¿Naco es chido? (It’s hip to be naco?): Authenticity and Cultural Production of the Meaning of Naco,” given by **Ana Perez** and **Mateo Muñoz** of the University of Maryland, showed how a T-shirt company has capitalized on the ambiguity of the word naco. Exhibiting a range of meanings such as low-class, uncouth, lewd, macho, racist (as well as the campy reversal of all those connotations, not to mention their ironic reappropriation as well), “naco” is a fundamentally overdetermined pop phenomenon, whose interpretations proliferate as rapidly as each new T-shirt is produced. One

further aspect of “naco” is the bilingualism inherent to its spread; each new T-shirt creates a hybrid cultural background that draws from Central American, Latino and North American culture.

The final paper of the mix was “Popular Latin American Outlaws Popping Up Across the Border—The Case of Peter Neissa’s *The Druglord*,” presented by **Pablo Martínez Diente** (Vanderbilt University). The paper showed how a similar cultural hybridity (what Diente referred to as a “Big Bang” of “continental consciousness”) and ambiguity informs the pop icon status of the figure of the Central and South American outlaw and druglord.

#### Featured Address

In his remarks entitled “‘Pop Goes the Weasel’: After the Question of Pop,” Cornell German Studies Professor **Geoff Waite** at-



tempted to infiltrate precisely the aforementioned ambiguity of the word “pop” (understanding the word as both a cultural movement and a linguistic signifier) and to explode it from the inside. “Pop” refers to the *populus*, considered as both the revolutionary class of the *multitudo* and the repressed, exploited masses of the *vulgus*.

“Pop” is also the sound a spindle makes during the production of textiles, a slang word for the pawning of goods in exchange for quick cash, and a euphemism for murder owing to the popping sound of a gunshot. Any question of pop, therefore, inevitably brings together the problems of production, the market, and violence, in relation to the two poles of popular revolution and economic exploitation. The conclusion of Professor Waite’s remarks (which ranged from medieval Latin to a film adaptation of Chester Himes, with detours through Spinoza, Cockney rhyme slang, and Italian cinema) tended toward the difficulty of situating the “pop cultists” (namely, among others, the present gathering of intellectuals talking about pop) in relation to this complex of problems. Given the conviction (performed in the talk itself) that the necessity of posing the question of pop also necessitates overdetermining and undermining the question as much as possible, the audience would have been mistaken to expect hard and

fast—and easy-to-summarize—answers, once Professor Waite had popped the question. —J.D.

## Mix V

**Demetrios Jason Lallas** from the University of Wisconsin, Madison opened the fifth mix with a paper entitled “Japanoize: Contemporary Avant-Rockism & Global Vectors of Experimental Pop Art Development.” The paper traced Japan’s changing role in the global culture of pop music. Whereas in the 1970s Japan registered in global pop consciousness primarily as a market/audience for “Western” pop music (e.g. Cheap Trick’s famous shows at Budokan), and in the 1980s Japan figured in a number of pop hits as the object of xenophobic paranoia (“Mr. Robot”) or crude racial stereotyping (“Turning Japanese”), Japanese “noize” bands (Ruins, The Boredoms, Cosmos, etc.) now figure as some of the most highly-regarded and sought-after producers of pop music on the global scene. Lallas sought to account for the particular prestige Japanese bands currently enjoy among the musically hip by delving into the history of the music. Describing the manner in which Japanese musicians combined Krautrock, free style jazz, psychadelia, and numerous other musical influences to create a unique hybrid, Lallas concluded by talking about the intriguing, paradoxical nature of “Japanoize”: a

type of music at once truly global and distinctively Japanese.

In the second paper of the mix, “The Ontology of Sampling,” **Zed Adams** (University of Chicago) raised the seemingly simple question: What *is* sampling? Adams began by contrasting two dominant views about the nature of this phenomenon (i.e. the use of pre-existing recordings in hip hop music and production). On the first of these views, which informs most of US copyright law, unauthorized sampling is literally “theft,” and hence any use of a sample requires the permission of the “original” artist. The second view shares with the first the premise that sampling is theft, but it gives this premise an affirmative twist by declaring, with Igor Stravinsky, that “great artists steal.” On this view, which draws its authority from the use of collage and pastiche techniques in modernist artworks (Picasso, T.S. Eliot, etc.), “theft” is essential to the creative process, and hence should not be prohibited. Adams moved from his account of these two dominant views to the presentation of his own, novel view, namely that sampling is not a form of “theft” at all, but rather a form of representation, namely a representation of the experience of listening to old records. Adams used a recording (“Transmitting Live from Mars”) in which hip hop artists De La Soul sample a 1968 recording by

the Turtles to illustrate his point.

**Paul Cook** from the University of South Carolina presented a paper on “Playing through ‘Pla(y)giarisms’; or, Repeating Differently: Digital Audio Sampling in Hip-Hop Music as Rhetorical Opposition.” His analysis, which focused on the Grandmaster Flash album *Adventures on the Wheels of Steel* and invoked Brian Massumi’s book *Parables for the Virtual: Movement, Affect, Sensation*, overcame the traditional treatment of sampling as a spurious appropriation of content and concentrated instead on the effects of the sample on the listener. The paper borrowed and critically employed notions such as “intensity” (from Gilles Deleuze) and *kairos* (a term from Greek rhetoric signifying the “opportune moment for speech”) in order to describe sampling as an art in which listeners’ expectations are continually created and disrupted, and which does not conform to the logic of signification. The affect, the effect, and the event were the coordinates that shaped Cook’s interpretation, which emphasized the idea of “repetition with a difference” in its various shapes—the pastiche, the parody, and the movement from aesthetics to ontology.

## Mix VI

In the sixth and final mix, **Christian Kumpe**, a Berlin-based ethnographer

and musician, suggested a different approach to rock hermeneutics and backed his argument with an attempt at a phenomenology of gestures. The paper embraced a history of psychedelia, focusing on such indexical musical moments as those represented by The Doors, Pink Floyd, and Einstürzende Neubauten. Kumpe also discussed the early experimental albums of Kraftwerk and the progressive music of Tangerine Dream. Even after the heyday of psychedelia, Kumpe suggested, the psychedelic revival of New Wave music, the British independent acts of the mid 1980s, and the rave scene of the early

1990s secured the continuation of the psychedelic gesture.

**Alan Tormey** of Princeton University provided a detailed musicological analysis of the narrative strategies in Lou Reed's "Satellite of Love." This song, Tormey argued, creates meaning through its strategic deviations from the standard formal conventions of the pop song (more specifically, by means of an extra measure added at the end of the chorus). Tormey read the song as a (failed) attempt to mediate between human emotion (represented by Reed's voice) and the dehumanizing effects of modern technology (rep-

resented by the voice of David Bowie). The detuned piano in the recording also played an important role in Tormey's analysis, representing a decadent bourgeois humanism, disfigured by technology.

The final paper of the conference was **James Reaves's** (University of Florida) commentary on Dick Hebdige's groundbreaking 1981 study of punk, *Subculture: The Meaning of Style*. Reaves's analysis employed Althusserian concepts to make sense of punk culture and its resistance to hegemonic culture through style. The music of disaffected immigrants and the subcultures'

construction of style was interpreted, in Jean Genet's manner, as the refusal of hegemony and as rebellion through style. Punk is not only pure style, but also refusal of style, in the spirit of a riot movement which loves to be hated. Reaves called Hebdige's reading of punk a "sad reading of subculture," as it didn't oppose vehemently enough the commodification of punk as pop and its neutralizing appropriation through mainstream culture. —A.R.

*David Low, Martins Masulis, Josh Dittrich, & Arina Rotaru are graduate students in German Studies.*

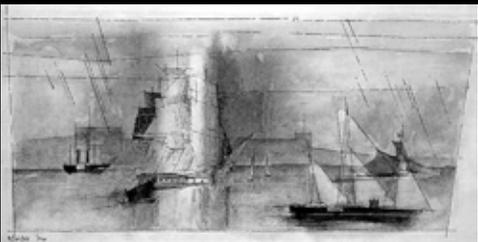


## Museum Exhibit: Watercolors by Lyonel Feininger

In 1887, Lyonel Feininger (1871–1956) sailed from New York City to Germany and enrolled in Hamburg's Kunstgewerbeschule. A year later he was attending the Kunstakademie in Berlin and, in 1893, he embarked on a fifteen-year career as an illustrator. He drew regularly for a number of Berlin's satirical journals, and by the turn of the century he was recognized as one of the leading caricaturists in Germany.



As Feininger's style evolved into the angular and light-filled aesthetic for which he is perhaps best known, he remained at the heart of the avant-garde in Germany. He exhibited with *Der Blaue Reiter* and was close to the artists of *Die Brücke*. In 1919 he was invited to Weimar by Walter Gropius to join the inaugural staff of the Bauhaus, where he was placed in charge of the graphic workshop and served as an artist-in-residence until the school closed in 1933.



The watercolors that he produced during these productive years first found their voice in what he called *Naturnotizen*, sketches generated while working directly in nature. These studies, shorthand notes made to later prompt his visual and emotional memory to be later realized in charcoal or ink. Alternatively the sketch would form the foundation for a watercolor, which he felt could stand alone as an independent statement.



*A collection of Feininger's watercolors was exhibited at the Johnson Museum of Art in March.*

# DISSEMINATIONS

## **Thoughts on the Founding of a Catholic Science: Science, Society and the Syllabus of Errors in German Catholicism, 1820–1869**

**Richard Schaefer (2005, Advisor: Dominick LaCapra)**

This dissertation investigates how, between 1820 and 1869, German-speaking Catholic scholars developed a new and critical sensibility as theorists of Catholicism. It evaluates theological, philosophical, and other texts for how they made “Catholicism” the measure of theoretical and normative authority in a sustained campaign against the Enlightenment, German cultural nationalism, and especially modern science. It shows how, by responding to what they perceived to be the corrosive subjectivism of Protestant reason latent in these aspects of secular society, Catholic scholars affirmed the confessional community as the relevant frame of reference for articulating an alternative vision of academic scholarship. This dissertation thus examines a mode of Catholic differentiation from secular society, not as a set of discrete ideas, but in terms of a discourse of self-articulation that enabled a range of statements on the nature of Catholicism. This perspective on Catholic theory as a discourse of self-articulation undercuts the current tendency to evaluate Catholic intellectual history as either “liberal” or “ultramontane,” and shows how these tendencies were part of a much more complex spectrum of opinion that was severely curtailed only with the appearance of the *Syllabus of Errors* and the dogmatization of infallibility in 1870–71.

## **The Kroll Opera and the Politics of Cultural Reform in the Weimar Republic**

**Rachel Nussbaum (2005, Advisor: Michael Steinberg)**

This dissertation deals with changes in cultural policy during the Weimar Republic and how they affected the structure of the German opera public. The expansion of the opera public to include social groups who had previously been excluded was here combined with an attempt to reform opera aesthetically, to create an “everyday opera” which would do away with kitsch and make opera a viable art form capable of speaking to a modern audience. The ideas of the Volksbühne centered on community (*Gemeinschaft*) which involved using the theater as a way of uniting German society. However, as the opera audience actually expanded to include the working class and white-collar workers, conflict surrounding the idea of *Bildung* (self-formation) was inevitable. What would have to change

about operatic culture? Its form, its content, or simply its price structure? The decline of the old bourgeois culture which had supported opera before 1914 meant that its heritage was placed in question. Would “an opera for every day” still be opera? Sources include the files of the Prussian state theater administration; the files of the Ministry of State; the records of Volksbühne annual meetings, as well as the organization’s published journals; and contemporary newspapers and music journals.

## **The Cunning Lust: Aesthetic and Political Perspectives on Masochism**

**Torben Lohmueller (2005, Advisor: Anette Schwarz)**

While the works of Alphonse Donatien de Sade have widely impacted aesthetic and critical discussions in 20th-century avant-garde art and critical theory, the supposed ‘inventor’ of masochism, Leopold von Sacher-Masoch, has been largely neglected by scholars and critics alike. Only in recent years and in a tardy response to Gilles Deleuze’s *Presentation de Masoch* (1969) have Sacher-Masoch and the subject of masochism received some attention within debates in both German and Cultural Studies. *Die verschlagene Lust* expands the contexts in which Sacher-Masoch’s work has hitherto been treated to problems in philosophy (master slave dialectic), confessional writing (Rousseau, recent queer studies), history (Sacher-Masoch’s historical and political writings), art history (strategies of visual appropriation), and performance studies (Nietzsche, Cansinos Asserts, performance art of the 1960’s). Examined under these cross-disciplinary perspectives, masochism proves to be both a political and an aesthetic strategy, circumventing the dialectical impasses of transgression (as in Sad(e)ism and the early avant-garde) by operating through disavowal, seduction, and experimental reconfigurations of the given. While in existing research Sacher-Masoch’s work has been predominantly classified as a phenomenon particular to the late nineteenth century, I argue that we must consider its refusal of artistic authorship and destabilisation of the reality principle as prefiguring post-modern theory and aesthetics.

## **Echoes of Expression: Text, Performance, and History in Mozart’s Viennese Instrumental Music**

**Thomas Irvine (2005, Advisor: Neal Zaslaw)**

This dissertation begins with a source-critical problem with consequences for performance: the many differences between

autographs and disseminated sources of Mozart's Viennese instrumental music. This problem serves as a foil for two lines of inquiry: the notion of 'performance' in the late-eighteenth century and the place of performance in historical scholarship. The first chapter traces the recent history of Mozart scholarship in the context of wider debates about writing history—is there a *musical* way to write music history? The second chapter compares traditional musicological techniques of textual editing with more recent developments in the fields of 'performance studies'. In the third chapter, the growing interest in the expressive qualities of human language in German aesthetic thought beginning around 1770 serves as background to an examination of shifts in thinking about the place of expression in musical performance. The fourth chapter appraises two performances, one by the composer himself and one in Wilhelm Heinse's 1795 novel *Hildegard von Hohenthal*. In the fifth chapter an instance of 'multi-textuality' in the String Quintet K. 593 is studied in detail. Finally, a short epilogue suggests that the arrival of both new theories of linguistic expression and the birth of 'historicism' around the time Mozart was active as a composer is no coincidence.

### **Kant's Noisy Neighbors: The Experience of Music and Community in the Critique of Judgment**

**Marianne Tettlebaum (2004, Advisor: Annette Richards)**

This dissertation examines the role of music in Immanuel Kant's *Critique of Judgment* and asks why Kant attaches so little aesthetic value to the experience of music at precisely the moment his contemporaries begin to celebrate it. In order to answer this question, we must recover a particular moment in the history of music and music aesthetics in which musical experience was unthinkable without a concept of community. This moment is represented by a particular nexus of late eighteenth-century thinkers. According to Reichardt and Herder, musical experience attains meaning as the experience of a community rather than of a single individual. Kant's problem with music is that he cannot tolerate the kind of community that it fosters, for that community is based on feeling rather than on the exchange of ideas and concepts. This largely historical consideration of community and aesthetic experience provides a theoretical foundation for an aesthetics of musical experience that can, via the community, bring *feeling* into the academic discourse on music.

### **From Perpetual Peace to Imperial War: "Violence" in Kant, Kleist, Hegel, Miki and Tanabe**

**John Kim (2004, Advisor: Geoff Waite)**

This dissertation examines philosophical and literary configurations of 'violence' in discourses of human freedom and imperial subjugation in Germany and Japan. Without a definition in itself, 'violence' serves the critical function of disclosing norms orienting social and political life. Chapter

one examines Kant's *Zum ewigen Frieden* in the historical context of its writing. Kant engages in a performative argument for publicity in his critique of Prussian imperialism and the censorship of revolutionary views. Whereas Kant's essay has been conventionally read apart from its historical context, Kleist's *Die Hermannsschlacht* has been interpreted strictly in terms of the historical moment of its writing. Chapter two argues instead for a rhetorical reading of Kleist's play in which language emerges as both the central theme of the text and an agent of anti-imperial violence. Chapter three turns to an alternative conception of human freedom grounded in opposition. In his *Phänomenologie des Geistes*, Hegel produces a performative narrative of the development of subjectivity in relations of violence. Chapter four examines the appropriation of Kant and Hegel by the Japanese wartime philosophers Kiyoshi and Hajime. Both defend Japanese imperialism by arguing for a form of freedom in which the subject negates its attachment to the imperial state.

### **Masculinity, War, and Refusal: Vicissitudes of German Manhood before and after the Cold War** **Steven Gardiner (2004, Advisor: Davydd Greenwood)**

Over the last two centuries, Germany has experienced several shifts in "the war system," an important determiner of masculinity. The total surrender in 1945, combined with the association of the Nazi regime with heroic masculinity, opened the door in post-World War II Germany for new forms of masculinity. The new configuration increased the importance of refusal and decreased the importance of obedience. Until 1990, Germany remained a nation both divided and occupied, leading to the valorization of refusal. In an occupied society, the relationship of masculinity to the nation-state is shifted. At the same time, market pressures led to a more individuated society—though refusal became more common in all Western societies, none of the other traditional military cultures became so accommodating to the idea of refusal. This is attributed to the institutionalization of refusal within the *Bundeswehr*, and its valorization as subsequent generations encounter the failed refusal of the Nazi period. These trends can be understood through an analysis of changing masculinity as demonstrated through a variety of forms of evidence. Finally, the relationship between war and masculinity itself should be seen in a longer evolutionary perspective, and assumptions about inevitability should be challenged through comparative ethnography and review of the archeological evidence.

### **Claiming Honor: Injury, Honor, and the Legal Process in Saxony, 1650–1730**

**Eileen Crosby (2004, Advisor: David Sabeau)**

This dissertation examines the practice of lodging suits for *Ehrverletzung* (damage to honor) in the law courts of early modern Germany. Most suits in Saxon courts employed a

simple, oral complaint process in which a litigant's ability to provide credible proof in the form of witness testimony or personal oath often determined the outcome of a case. The result was a legal process that permitted litigants to engage in reciprocal rituals of non-violent, legal confrontation. This perpetuated the link between honorable status and legal capacity that had once been explicit in medieval European law.

Contemporary views of the phenomenon of *Ehrverletzung* reveal a disjuncture between the discourse of honor expressed in the laws of an early modern territorial state and the practice of honor by that state's subjects. By the early eighteenth century, a body of educated opinion had emerged that sought to curtail uses of the *Ehrverletzung* complaint, especially its use by peasants, artisans, laborers, and the poor. This desire came into conflict with the normative understanding of early modern society, which saw an inclusive social hierarchy, in which (nearly) everyone had a claim to honor, as the foundation of social stability.

### **Haydn's Vocality and the Ideal of *True String Quartets*** **Nancy November (2003, Advisor: Neal Zaslaw)**

This dissertation offers new perspectives on Haydn and the string quartet, proposing that there was no unified conception of this music at that time. 'Truth' in this music was considered a function of equality and homogeneity, ideals that were being upheld for instrumental music in general. However, another idea of truth, which resided more in the affective, immediate, and 'songful' properties of music in performance, was also theorized and extolled for chamber music. The study focuses on this latter strand of the dialectic, exploring an idea of 'vocality,' as a particularly 'truthful' or 'authentic' mode of experiencing music. The eighteenth-century idea of instrumental vocality is explored in detail here in the case of Haydn's chamber music, the string quartets in particular. The earlier listeners' conceptions of Haydn's 'vocality' are investigated in two studies of his quartets, which explore eighteenth-century notions of aria as a sonic *tableau*, and the concept of melancholy song. These provide contexts for works that are both marginalized (the earlier quartets) and privileged (later quartets) in accordance with the ideology of 'Classical' string quartets. 'Vocality' encompasses characteristic features of Haydn's quartets that are not subsumed by this ideology; it provokes further ways of experiencing these works.

### **Contested Conceptions: Experiences and Discourses of Pregnancy and Childbirth in Germany, 1914–1933**

**Patricia Stokes (2003, Advisor: Isabel Hull)**

This dissertation analyzes how discursive and institutional changes in the context of World War I and the Weimar Republic reshaped women's experiences with pregnancy and

childbirth. In so doing, it traces connections between the political, social, cultural, and experiential levels. The dissertation argues that long-term social forces, in particular medicalization, reconstructed the way women experienced pregnancy and childbirth and subjected women's bodies to new forms of social discipline. However, medicalization proceeded less smoothly than its proponents desired, for older notions—such as folk theories about the power of the maternal imagination—persisted. Ordinary women were active participants in these processes of change, both driving them forward and resisting them, and thus, in turn, influenced broader discourses on population policy, social hygiene, the state, and the family. Women's experiences were both shaped by and helped to shore up two problematic concepts: a notion of the body politic, the *Volkskörper*, that was taken literally in German political discourse; and 'sacrificial motherhood,' the exclusive celebration of suffering, duty, and self-abnegation in maternity at the expense of love, joy, and other positive qualities. Both of these notions cast women (and their babies) as mere means to an end and laid the groundwork for fascist policies after 1933.

### **"Of Course the German Woman should be Modern": The Modernization of Women's Appearance during National Socialism**

**Yvonne Houy (2002, Advisor: David Bathrick)**

This interdisciplinary dissertation analyzes discourses about female beauty in Germany between 1928 and 1945 in order to understand the interwoven and at times contradictory political and economic functions of the National Socialist female beauty ideal. Chapters 1 and 2 analyze discourses among the National Socialist elite (and within the cultural policies of their institutions) who advocated the modern-looking woman as the National Socialist female beauty ideal. They argued that a modern-looking female ideal attracted urban women to the party and benefited the German economy. The visible characteristics of the modern National Socialist female beauty ideal were based on international fashion trends that emerged between 1929 and 1931 and continued until 1945. Chapters 3 and 4 analyze discourses about fashion in popular women's magazines, which argued that urban women should wear German-made modern fashions and use cosmetics to beautify Germany, contribute to the nation's economy, and support National Socialism. To maximize profits and minimize censorship, the private film industry negotiated between *völkisch* and pro-modern discourses about female beauty. Chapter 5 analyzes the narratives and mise-en-scène of entertainment films that staged positive modern-looking female characters displaying Hollywood-style glamour but not the visual characteristics of 'decadence.'



On April 26, Eric Santner, Philip and Ida Romberg Professor in Modern Germanic Studies and Department Chair at the University of Chicago, presented the Heinrich and Alice Schneider Distinguished Memorial Lecture in German Studies. His talk was entitled “Neighbors and Other Creatures” and sought to bring the methodology of psychoanalysis to bear on the problem of alterity as it is manifested as neighborly love and creaturely life in the spheres of religious experience (revelation), politics (sovereignty), and literature. The key structural concept that unites these spheres for Santner is “signifying stress,” namely the physical and mental stress that the subject experiences in response to the desire of the other. Since that desire is articulated through a claim to validity in excess of meaning, the subject is captivated by the other’s desire, but incapable of finding a meaningful, adequate response. Such stressful suspension in a state between animal need and human communication constitutes the subject as a creature. Santner applied this structure of validity in excess of meaning to the “Nichts der Offenbarung” in the writings Gershom Scholem, Walter Benjamin’s concept of “Kreatürlichkeit” as developed in relation to the work of Franz Kafka, and to Giorgio

Agamben. In the latter’s work, the problem of political sovereignty is haunted by the captivating excess of the state of exception, and creaturely life emerges as an analog to bare life. Whereas the method of cultural studies only understands alterity as difference, Santner maintains that psychoanalysis can approach alterity more productively as proximity to the creaturely and thereby locate deep analogies between the religious, the political, and the literary.

—Josh Dittrich is a graduate student in German Studies.

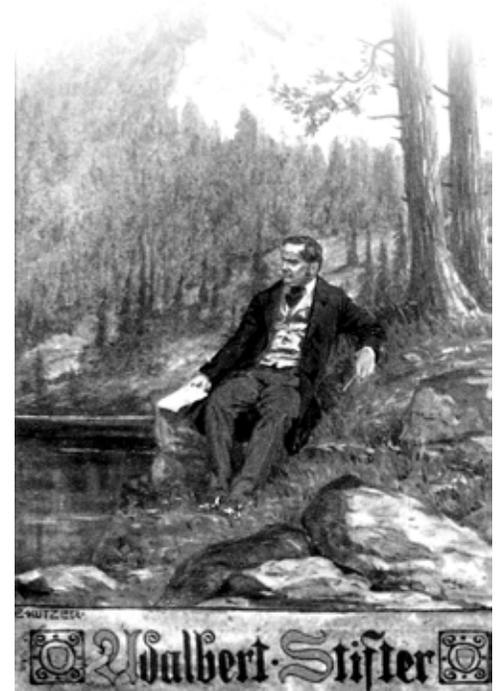
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## Adalbert Stifter at 200

### *An International Symposium*

Organized by: Ute Maschke  
20 - 21 October 2006

The Department of German Studies and the German Cultural Studies Institute will hold a joint international symposium on the Austrian writer Adalbert Stifter (1805 – 1868). Adalbert Stifter has long been viewed as the natural heir to the Great Classical Tradition; especially in Europe, he is seen as an important precursor of modern writing from Franz Kafka to Thomas Bernhard to W.G. Sebald. On the occasion of his 200th birthday last year, major universities and university presses both in Austria and Germany held widely noticed conferences and published materials challenging existing literary scholarship on the 19th-century; in the U.S., however, these events have remained almost unnoticed. This symposium will be the first event of note in the U.S. for nearly 15 years; it will provide an opportunity to re-read the German-Austrian and the Austrian-American dialogue from a particular and exceptional angle. We hope it will revive the cross-Atlantic dialogue and contribute to a major re-evaluation of the writer and his writing. The symposium will serve as an initial stage for the edition of an essay collection to be published with a leading journal in German Studies.



# Colloquium Series Spring 2006

## Epic, Document, and the Verbal World Picture

This semester's colloquium found an impressive *Auftakt* on January 27 with a paper by Mellon Postdoctoral Fellow **Devon Fore**, who recently received his doctoral degree from Columbia and is presently teaching for the German Studies Department. His paper, entitled "Epic, Document, and the Verbal World Picture: Döblin and Mauthner," is a revised chapter of his dissertation on Weimar documentary and Soviet reportage, which analyzed Soviet influences on the German movement from modern to "post-futuristic factography" against the backdrop of nineteenth-century realism. Fore's presentation offered a first glimpse into a book project that focuses, albeit not exclusively, on Alfred Döblin and the status of realism after modernism.

By introducing a documentary piece of Döblin's, *Die beiden Freundinnen und ihr Giftmord* (1923), Fore draws attention to the challenge of documentariness in literature, which destabilizes the distance between fact and fiction. The solution to the problem, he argues, is found in Döblin's magnum opus, *Berlin Alexanderplatz* (1929), which collapsed "the distance between artistic work and extratextual experience" by merging the author's writing with

his living, thus producing embodied writing.

Döblin arrived at the "embodied" style after an engagement with Fritz Mauthner, a philosopher of language, who insisted on the link between somatic experiences and the development of the *Zufallssinn* language. Döblin experimented with a literary technique to "reintegrate cognition with embodied experience," which resulted in a graphosomato-logical aesthetic that uses *erlebte Rede* as its main stylistic device.

Mauthner further influenced Döblin in the latter's decision to draw a "verbal world-picture," in which the world—Döblin's Berlin—is constantly in a state of becoming. Merging first, second, and third persons together in *erlebte Rede*, the boundaries between the narration and the narrator collapse, producing an epic presentness that simultaneously includes the writer, the narrator, the characters, and the reader. Avoiding the "theological" writing of the realist project, Döblin discarded most of the structures of "plot" in favor of an embodied writing that is always in the process of becoming. The resulting montage of Döblin's very own Berlin is thus less the documentation of an event than the event itself.

Fore's well-received presentation stimulated an engaging discussion among the members of the audience. —M.S.

## Klezmerizing the Holocaust: Music, Memory Politics, and the New Germany

**Rita Ottens** of the University of London presented the second colloquium paper on February 10, entitled "Klezmerizing the Holocaust: Music, Memory Politics, and the New Germany." Her paper focused on the work of klezmer clarinetist Giora Feidmann and its role in creating a united Germany after the Second World War. What had not been possible on a political level after the war, namely a dialogue between Jews and Germans, is symbolically acted out by Feidmann on the stage, Ottens claimed. His music itself remains secondary to the public response to it and the effect this has had in delineating a relationship between Germans and Jewish culture in the postwar period.

Much of Ottens's talk served to create an understanding of Feidmann's role in Germany through an account of her twenty-two year acquaintance with both music and musician. She presented vivid descriptions of Feidmann's personal charisma and concert personality, highlighting the near-religious tone of his concerts and the fervor of his audiences. This, said Ottens, was a result of Feidmann's performance style—the dramatic ges-

tures he makes as he plays and the understanding of his melodies as handed to him by God—rather than of any virtuosic talent. Her paper, Ottens suggested, attempts to uncover why Feidmann is shrouded in this sort of mystery, why there are few critical studies of his music, and why his audience is so religiously protective of him.

Questions about Ottens's paper focused on developing a more precise discussion of the klezmer phenomenon in Germany and the role it has played in German–Jewish tensions. According to Ottens, the reception of klezmer music continues to play a central role in the postwar German–Jewish dialogue. —C.H.

## A Slap and Its Echoes: Theatre Scandals as Cultural Dreamwork

Theatre leaves behind frustratingly few visible traces for researchers of the present to examine, and **Peter Marx** (Theatre Studies, Johannes Gutenberg University) acknowledged at the outset of his colloquium that histories of theater that rely on physical remnants such as torn tickets and program leaflets are embarrassingly inadequate for addressing the social status and transformative role of theater—in this case, during the period of the Weimar Republic in Berlin.

The structuring question of Marx's paper was, in his words: How can we conceptualize the idea of a collective imaginary? Marx attempted to answer this question by looking back to Freud's writings on the dream-work, understood, in Marx's account, as a means to "cope with the desires and anxieties of the day."

In Marx's paper, the *Urszene* that needed to be coped with and collectively addressed was Veit Harlan's onstage physical attack—a slap—on his former friend Fritz Kortner, whom he accused of making "an inappropriate approach" toward his wife. Because Kortner was Jewish, the collective reaction to this scene, particularly in the Berlin press, brought forth contemporary anxieties and racial attitudes in a particularly sharp and disturbing way. Marx sees this release of passions as a dream-work occurring on the cultural, collective level. What sets this event and the public reaction to it apart, however, is the fact that the two persons involved were judged not only in light of their avowed political views, but also of their onstage performances, which were in any case their most crucial countenances in

the public eye. Kortner's portrayal of the brutal, animalistic Dr. Schön in Frank Wedekind's *Erdgeist* led to a collective conception of Kortner as a non-German villain, and racist readings of Kortner's performance abounded in right-wing newspapers such as *Der Angriff*. Marx suggested that Harlan's onstage punishment of Kortner seemed to forebode the punishment of the Jew in Harlan's later, infamous film, *Jud Süß*, as if the closing execution scene of that film were dormant in the German unconscious, waiting to be given form.

However, if Kortner's biography was reflected in his onstage appearances, then it was his portrayal of Shylock one month after the Harlan scandal that served to reestablish him as an autonomous subject through a "very concrete act of revolting," namely his recitation of the famous line: "If you prick us, do we not bleed?" —P.B.



**Devon Fore (Mellon Postdoctoral Fellow)**



## Robert Walser's Digressive Tactics and the Narrativity of Antinarrative

At the April 7th Colloquium, **Sam Frederick** (Ph.D. Candidate, German Studies) discussed the first chapter of his dissertation, entitled "Robert Walser's Digressive Tactics and the Narrativity of Antinarrative." Frederick's paper raised questions as to the structure, function, and significance of various literary devices employed by Robert Walser to undermine traditional narrative structure. Frederick maintained that Walser's disregard for conventional narrative structure can be seen as a central structural and thematic force in his prose, which so often displaces the story in order to foreground the desire to narrate and the act of narrating itself.

Designating Walser's mode of narration as antinarrative, given its narrative-subversive qualities, Frederick examined digression as a constitutive element in Walser's prose. Narrative digression disrupts the goal-oriented, tension resolving sequentiality of traditional plot development. Frederick likens this non-productive, meandering activity to walking with no particular destination. In Walser's prose, there is thus a deferral of any fulfillment that might otherwise be associated with the desire to

tell a story. As such, digression functions to prolong the pleasure of anticipatory, unfulfilled longing. So too, digression allows Walser to shift his focus from story to discourse and create meaning precisely by virtue of this otherwise non-goal-directed activity. That is, narrative digression allows the narrator to turn from that which is represented in a story to the process of representing itself. In so doing, the reality of the represented world gives way to the need to create illusion. Interestingly, this turn to the act of narration must itself reintegrate narrative elements subverted by the very mode of narration utilized in these texts. —T.H.

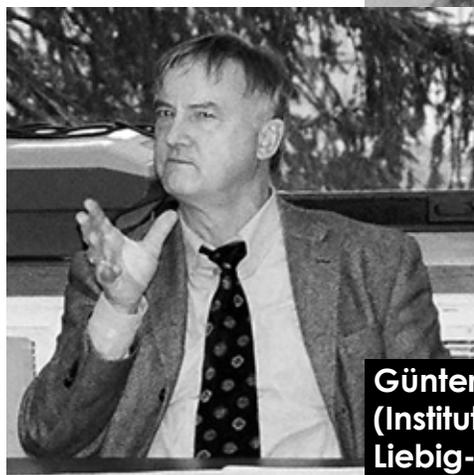
## Schiller im Streit und Widerstreit

On March 3, **Günter Oesterle** (Institut für Germanistik, Justus-Liebig-Universität Gießen) delivered an animated and insightful paper entitled "Schiller im Streit und Widerstreit." In his discussion, Oesterle developed a character sketch of Friedrich Schiller and addressed the question of why Schiller constituted a model and counter-model for the development of Romantic poetry. Oesterle

engaged these themes with the aid of three organizing categories. First, he discussed the "literary field" in existence at the time Schiller began to write, which was dominated by Enlightenment thought. Secondly, he used the term "Konstellation" to delineate a set of philosophical-aesthetic problems and themes central to Schiller's work and that of his contemporaries. Finally, Oesterle appropriated the term "Netzwerk" in order to reveal the simultaneity of various discourses circulating around 1800.

Oesterle characterized

Schiller as provocative and polemical, yet also a classicist. The provocative aspects of Schiller's works are grounded in his attempts to explode boundaries by experimenting, being polemical, and attempting to have particular dramatic effects on his audience. Schiller attempted to be a trend-setting authority in that he did not seek to maintain traditional dramatic forms but rather collapsed distinctions between poetry and philosophy, medicine, and history. Because he integrated contemporary and topical material into highly-developed artistic forms, though, Schiller must be considered a classicist. Oesterle concluded his discussion of Schiller by drawing attention to the fact that while the romantic critics of Schiller understood much



**Günter Oesterle**  
(Institut für Germanistik, Justus-Liebig-Universität Gießen)

of Schiller quite aptly, they also, for that very reason, missed decisive aspects of his work. —T.H.

## **New Art—New Vision: Ottomar Domnick's 'Other' Cinema of the Adenauer Era**

**John E. Davidson**, Associate Professor of Germanic Languages and Literature at Ohio State University, closed the spring semester's colloquium series with his paper "New Art – New Vision: Ottomar Domnick's 'Other' Cinema and the Adenauer Era." The paper addresses "the troubled relationship between psychological and cinematic realism in German film," in particular by focusing on a rarely-viewed film created by the psychiatrist and experimental filmmaker Ottomar Domnick, *Jonas*. Davidson notes that the film was initially received as controversial, yet ultimately became "critically-acclaimed as mapping out new possibilities and marking a renewal for German cinema in the late 1950s."

Davidson argues that Domnick's work offers "unique insights into Germany in the Adenauer period" and, further, that it breaks in very distinct ways with the conventions of psychologically-realistic narrative in cinema. For instance, Davidson points out that Domnick's

films place emphasis upon visual composition, focusing especially on such elements as signs and symbols, facades and exteriority. They often replace dialogue with "asynchronous voice-overs" and "minimizing narration," and they "employ a strikingly associative but not psychologically expressive sound-track."

Domnick's films, Davidson notes, focus on the tensions between external collective experiences and the internal, private experiences of individuals. Davidson's paper also includes a brief biographical sketch of Domnick's life, which emphasizes that Domnick continually asserted that his primary profession was psychiatry and that filmmaking was only one of his "Nebenwege." Davidson argues that, among other things, it is Domnick's delineation between the "visual, aural and 'character' portions in cinema," as well as his "aesthetically charged visualization of th[e] modern dream of classlessness under the endless revolutions of the capitalist machines," that makes his work unique and particularly helpful in understanding the "physical reality of the Adenauer period." —G.G.

*Melanie Steiner, Cassandra Henry, Paul Buchholz, Tim Haupt, & Grace Gemmell are graduate students in German Studies.*

# Colloquium Series

## Fall 2006



**September 8**

**Cassandra Henry, PhD Candidate, German Studies**  
*Das Lied von der Erde & the Mahlerian Interplay of Song & Symphony*

**September 22**

**Birgit Neumann**  
Professor, Justus-Liebig-Universität Gießen  
*Fictions of Memory & Meta-Memory in Contemporary Literature*

**October 13**

**Ross Halvorsen, PhD Candidate, German Studies**  
*Recognizing the Game in "Dantons Tod"*

**November 3**

**Jochen Schulte-Sasse**  
Professor, German, Scandinavian & Dutch, Minnesota  
Title TBA

**November 17**

**Yuliya Komska, PhD Candidate, German Studies**  
*Visual Nostalgia*

**December 1**

**Walter Hinderer**  
Professor, German, Princeton University  
*Seinsausstand als Lebensfeier: Anmerkungen zu Heinrich von Kleists romantischer Todesauffassung*

# Taking Exception with the Exception

Friday 29 September & Saturday 30 September  
Law School Lounge, Myron Taylor Hall

10:00-11:00

**Bernie Meyler**

(Law School, Cornell University)  
Economic Emergency

10:00-11:00

**Jason Frank**

(Government, Cornell University)  
Paradox and Popular Constitutionalism

11:00-12:00

**Andrew Norris**

(Political Science, University of Pennsylvania)  
On the Exceptional and the Normal

11:00-12:00

**Susan Buck-Morss**

(Government, Cornell University)  
Sokurov's Sovereign Trinity

12:15-1:15

**Bonnie Honig**

(Political Science, Northwestern University)  
The Miracle of Metaphor:  
Pluralizing Political Theology

12:15-1:15

**Erik Vogt**

(Philosophy, Trinity College / University of Vienna)  
Exception in Slavoj Žižek's Political Thought

2:45-3:45

**Tracy McNulty**

(Romance Studies, Cornell University)  
The Commandment Against the Law:  
Benjamin and Kant

2:45-3:45

**Kam Shapiro**

(Political Science, Illinois State University)  
Politics is a Mushroom: Immanent Sources of Exception and  
Decision

3:45-4:45

**Gil Anidjar**

(Middle East & Asian Languages & Cultures, Columbia University)  
The Anti-Semitic Exception

3:45-4:45

**Dominiek Hoens**

(Jan Van Eyck Academy, Maastricht)  
Above and Beneath Classification: On Bartleby and Michael K

5:00-6:00

**Jeffrey Librett**

(German, University of Oregon)  
Sovereignty and Liminality

5:00-6:00

**Bruno Bosteels**

(Romance Studies, Cornell University)  
States of Grace:  
On León Rozitchner's Critique of Subjection

The exception, Carl Schmitt wrote in *Political Theology*, is more interesting than the rule. The rule proves nothing; the exception proves everything. In the exception the power of real life breaks through the crust of a mechanism that has become torpid by repetition. Contemporary theoretical discourses across multiple fields and disciplines—law, political theory, theology, history, literature, and philosophy—would seem to concur with this high estimation of the exception. And this high estimation has assumed political urgency in the wake of 9/11, with the contested legal status of enemy combatants and the invocation of executive privilege and discretion in waging purportedly new forms of warfare against a new kind of enemy. If theorists are not engaged explicitly with the language of norm and exception, then they address its dynamics through analogous discourses of event and miracle. The contemporary theoretical imagination is arguably captivated by the logic of the exception, in its absolute purity. To paraphrase Wittgenstein, a certain picture of law and normativity seems to hold us captive, and our theoretical vocabularies seem to repeat this picture to us inexorably.

How do we best account for the hold of the exception on the contemporary theoretical imagination? This conference will at once diagnose the hold of these preoccupations with the exception across the disciplines, while also inquiring into the costs of this captivity. Without falling back on a lost normativity, formalism, or legalism, we hope to raise a number of pressing political and theoretical questions: What conceptual rubrics are maintained and reiterated by the seemingly inexorable logics of norm and exception? What kinds of theoretical investigation are authorized and precluded by this preoccupation? How do they structure our political discussions, and direct and constrain our political options?

## Institute for German Cultural Studies

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Ithaca, NY 14850

[www.arts.cornell.edu/igcs](http://www.arts.cornell.edu/igcs)

Additional information about all events listed is available on our website: [www.arts.cornell.edu/igcs](http://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 Robin Fostel ([rff8@cornell.edu](mailto:rff8@cornell.edu)).

Contributions to *German Cultural News* are welcome. If you would like an event listed or have a brief review or article to submit, please contact Paul Buchholz ([pjb45@cornell.edu](mailto:pjb45@cornell.edu)).