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IN THIS ISSUE:

Mapping the Medieval
in German Culture and
Beyond

Word from the Director

The Challenge of Realism:
Theodor Fontane

Technologies of the
Human: Modern Figures
of Thought

2016 Artist in Residence
Kathrin Röggla

Profiles: Ralf Klausnitzer,
Christian Metz, Erik Born,
Tanvi Solanki

Retrospective:
Fall 2015 and Spring 2016
Colloquium Series

Hohendahl Graduate Essay
Prize in Critical Theory

Lectures and Events

Posters of this Semester's
Conferences

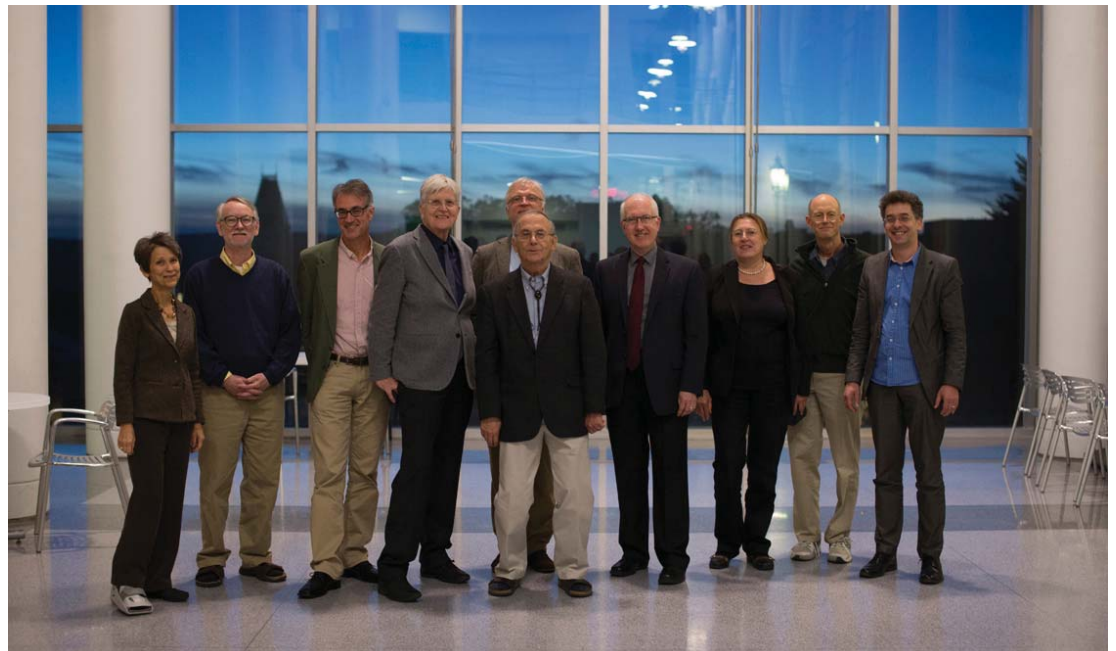
Mapping the Medieval in German Culture and Beyond

October 23-24, 2015

"Mapping the Medieval in German Culture and Beyond" (October 23-24, 2015) was organized by **Anette Schwarz** and **Patrizia McBride** (Department of German Studies, Cornell University) to celebrate the work of our distinguished colleague, **Arthur Groos**, Avalon Foundation Professor of the Humanities. The two-day event featured colleagues from throughout the world (including many long-term interlocutors and former

Classicizing Vocations." Gallo-way discussed the peculiarly selective interest in ancient writing by John Gower, a 14th century contemporary of Chaucer, to argue that his political uses first of Ovid, then of Seneca (the latter hitherto unappreciated) defined his construction of a literary identity that affirmed his authority as sage counselor to two kings. In these ways Gower paralleled the Italian "humanists" in spite of his marked aversion to nearly all other pre-Christian poetry and philosophy.

ies about fragmentation, namely that the text itself could remain incomplete by being lost or unread. Greenfield further suggested that this tangible fear of fragmentation can be understood as propelling the text's temporality. He compared the spatio-temporal structures in *Willehalm* to those of *Parzival*, noting that the latter consisted of independent scenes as opposed to a spatial whole. While in *Parzival* a disharmonious spatial structure represents a disharmonious society, the temporal disjunctures of earthly



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students) drawing on Gross' two main areas of expertise, German Medieval Studies and Music. The conference thus honored a career whose scholarly and teaching foci include Arthurian romance, courtly love lyric, medieval science, early modern city culture, and the Age of Goethe as well as issues of music and culture, text-music relations, and opera, especially Wagner and Puccini.

Andrew Galloway (Cornell University) opened the conference with a paper entitled "Gower's

John Greenfield (Universidade do Porto) gave a talk titled "gan mir got so vil der tage: On the Perception of Time and Space in Wolfram's *Willehalm*." Greenfield's presentation analyzed the spatial and temporal dissociations in Wolfram von Eschenbach's text. One of the clearest examples of this disassociation is the text's lack of intermediate travel, whereby *Willehalm* (the protagonist) arrives in a new place immediately after he has departed the first. Greenfield related these dissociations to larger anxiet-

and transcendental temporality in *Willehalm*, caused by a lack of landscape and simultaneous action, both allow for a spatial symmetry of the text and belie the comparative unimportance of earthly space. (Jacy Tackett)

Alexander Sager (University of Georgia) presented a paper on "Crusade in the Bedroom: *Carmina Burana* no. 48 and Otto of Botenlouben's 'Wie sol ich den ritter nu gescheiden'."

continued on page 3

Word from the Director

Welcome back to what promises to be another year of exciting IGCS events. I especially want to thank Leslie Adelson for assuming the directorship of the Institute this year. IGCS could not be in better, more experienced hands.

In addition to the colloquia, workshops, conferences, and other events documented in this issue of *German Cultural News* and on the IGCS website, I would also like to highlight the following news from 2015-16:

IGCS is delighted to announce its partnership in the Enhanced DAAD Thematic Network: "Literature-Knowledge-Media" (partnering with the Humboldt University Berlin as well as Harvard, Princeton, Berkeley, and Johns Hopkins). This PhD Network was approved by the DAAD for 4 years of financing and builds on IGCS's and the German Department's long-standing exchange with the Humboldt University on both the graduate and faculty levels. The Thematic Network offers travel and research money for graduate students for individual research as well as for the yearly summer workshop, featuring faculty and graduate students from all the partner institutions. In summer 2015, Patrizia McBride, Peter Gilgen, Elke Siegel, and Paul Fleming together with Matt Stoltz, Christine Schott, and Anna Horakova all attended the workshop, with Gilgen, Fleming, and Horakova presenting; in summer 2016, Patrizia McBride, Amanda Goldstein, Jacy Tackett, Jette Gindner, and Stephen Klemm attended the conference on "Resources/ Quellen" with Klemm presenting his doctoral work.

Together with the German Department, IGCS is proud to continue its graduate student exchange with the University of Cologne. The exchange partner is Cologne University's Humanities graduate school, a.r.t.e.s. (part of Cologne University being awarded an "excellence" status among German universities). *Applications for the exchange are open to all Humanities graduate students with a knowledge of German who could benefit from a semester or a year researching in Cologne.* As part of the exchange,

Cornell students receive 1,000 euros per month for up to 10 months: every year we can send either one 1 graduate student for the full 10 months, or 2 graduate students for 5 months each (it can be the same semester). If you are a graduate student in the Humanities, know German, and would like to apply to this program, please be in touch with IGCS. Congratulations to Matt Stoltz and Leigh York, PhD candidates in German, for being awarded stipends to Cologne for 2015-16.

Three years ago, IGCS together with the German Department, inaugurated a yearly graduate student forum with the University of Colorado-Boulder and Johns Hopkins University for advanced graduate students in German to workshop dissertation chapters to professors and graduate students. This past year (May 2016) we formalized the structure and added a rotating member. The forum is held annually in Boulder in May at the end of term. Each partner university brings two professors and two graduate students; in addition we invite one rotating member, whose professor offers an opening seminar for the graduate students and faculty alike; the additional university can bring two graduate students. Over the following two days, each graduate student 1) will prepare a pre-distributed 1 page dissertation abstract that all participants read in advance; 2) will present a paper for 25 minutes, with 25 minutes of discussion; 3) will have at the end of the forum three 20 minutes one-one-one meetings with faculty members from a different university. In these individual meetings, students receive detailed feedback on all aspects of their presentations (from content, to performance, to fielding questions, etc.) and/or further brainstorm on the dissertation and/or practice for the job market via a mini-mock-interview (especially for students who are going on the job market the following fall). This past May (2016), IGCS and the German Department were very happy to support the travel of two of graduate students, Matteo Calla and Jette Gindner, and two faculty members, Anette Schwarz and Leslie Adelson.

IGCS continues to sponsor a Contemporary German Literature Reading Group dedicated to the discussion of the most recent works of German literature (texts appearing in the last 5-10 years). We meet several times throughout the term; if you are interested in participating, please be in touch with IGCS.

And to kick off this term...

In August/September 2016, IGCS is delighted to welcome Kathrin Röggla as Writer-in-Residence. We are also very pleased to welcome Dr. Ralf Klausnitzer as our Humboldt University exchange professor for the last two weeks of September 2016. Please see their short biographies included in these pages as well as their multiple events listed on the posters at the end of this issue.

Overview of IGCS's fall 2016 events:

8/29 Kathrin Röggla, Writer-in-Residence, Literary Reading in German

9/2 Compact Seminar in German with Kathrin Röggla

9/6 Kathrin Röggla, Poetics Lecture in German

9/16 Ralf Klausnitzer colloquium

9/17 Theory Transfer Workshop
Cornell-Humboldt University Exchange

9/22 Eric Hayot lecture

10/14 Pál Kelemen colloquium

11/4 Doris Bachmann-Medick colloquium

11/4-5 Cornell Cinema events
with Alloy Orchestra

11/11-12 Graduate Conference,
"Endings"

12/1 Early German Music event

12/2 Erik Born colloquium

All the best for the coming year,
Paul Fleming

continued from page 1

Sager focused on the sixth stanza of *Carmina Burana* no. 48. This stanza is taken from Botenlouben's song and appears after five Latin stanzas. The status of the vernacular in this particular song of the *Carmina Burana*, Sager claimed, is crucial because here the voice of the lady reminds the knight of his worldly duties; therefore, the connection between the five Latin stanzas and the sixth, in Middle High German, is much more substantial than in similar cases. Moreover, comparison with further contemporary sources supported Sager's claim for a constellation in which the lady is not merely the figure that the knight longs for, but rather also a corrective instance that points the knight to his responsibilities, namely his devotion and his service to the lord. Sager argued that, in a parallel move to the evocation "Exurgat Deus," the lady calls on the knight: "stand uof, riter!", thereby stressing the priority of service to God over courtly love. (Matthias Müller)

Volker Mertens (Freie Universität Berlin) delivered the keynote lecture of the conference, "Minnesang – A Performative Approach," which concluded the first day's presentations. In his introduction, Mertens contextualized the performative situation of medieval Minnesang and the embodied aspects of this oral tradition. Discussing problems of contemporary medieval orality and performativity research, he argued for a performative approach. Having no access to sources of actual medieval performances, scholars have to work with current performances of Minnesang songs. Mertens presented different records of Walther von der Vogelweide's "Song of the Linden Tree" and "Song of the Promised Land," as well as Neidhart's "Winter Song 4" (also known as the "Song of the golden hen"), comparing and discussing musical and vocal parameters in order to approximate the medieval tradition. Mertens ended with a presentation of Der von Kurenberg's Falcon-Song, using his body and voice in order to show his performative approach to Minnesang. (Annika Klanke)

Ingrid Bennewitz (Universität Bamberg) kicked off the second day of the conference with an essay titled "Gendering Arthurian Romance: Enide and Enite," which examined the philology on *Erec* and *Enide* as well as several existing manuscripts and fragments of the romance as a basis for theoretical discussions. Throughout the presentation, Bennewitz showed images of these preserved fragments and manuscripts, notably excerpts from manuscript "A" at the Austrian National Library and fragments now housed at Koblenz and St Pölten. Bennewitz maintained that the characters in *Erec* and *Enide* were different and more realistic than those later adapted for opera, and the story may have not been set to music for this reason. Rather, *Erec* and *Enide* evinces an early modern prose

novel gesture, and can be considered an "Eheroman" (marriage novel), since the plot is not characterized by a short-term meeting and a long-term division. (Anna Horakova)

Markus Stock (University of Toronto) then presented a paper entitled "The Other Family in *Parzival*: Kunneware de Lalant and Her Brothers." In his reading of Wolfram von Eschenbach's Arthurian Romance, Stock examined the roles of the three Lalant siblings Kunneware, Orilus, and Lähelin, focusing particularly on the depiction of these characters in the context of Parzival's quest for the grail. Whereas the roles of Kunneware's brothers are of minor importance for the progress of the plot, their actual or assumed reactions to the events play a crucial role in counterbalancing the positions of the members of the Round Table. Kunneware, on the other hand, fulfills a key function in the story as she is introduced as the lady who never smiles, and only will once the worthy knight appears. Stock emphasized that her smile is neither the expression of an emotion nor a smile of recognition (anagnorisis). Rather, Kunneware's smile is a marker of the arrival of the grail knight and could therefore be read as a sign of recognition in the sense of *Anerkennung*. This sympathetic gesture appears again, Stock claimed, in Kunneware's crying when Parzival is scolded by Kundrie for not having asked the grail king the question, thereby showing her *compassio*. The case of the Lalant siblings in general and Kunneware in particular, therefore, offers a perspective on Parzival's story that reveals the dominant point of view of the Arthurian family. (Matthias Müller)

Claudia Lazzaro (Cornell University) presented a paper titled "Armor, Masculinity, and the Image of the Warrior-Ruler from Emperor Maximilian and his Landsknechte to Duke Cosimo de' Medici in Florence." While discussing these imposing figures, Lazzaro showed different visual representations of leading warriors in sixteenth-century Italy. Using these images of male rulers in their armor, Lazzaro demonstrated how a collective national identity could be visualized across different media and time. She addressed parallels between assumptions about nature, human gender differences and roles, and their significant political implications. Furthermore, she addressed the uses and appropriations of the past and the participation of rulers and private citizens in the dynamic process of constructing a national identity. (Annekatrin Sommer)

Charles Wright (University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign) presented a talk titled "The Music of *The Phoenix*," in which he analyzed the musical qualities of *The Phoenix* and related them to questions of embodiment. Wright began by describing several levels of

meaning on which both the text and the figure of the phoenix operate. For instance, the figure of the phoenix can be interpreted both as that of a virtuous Christian, who builds a nest of good works, as well as the allegorical forerunner of Christ. Wright further related some of the musical elements of *The Phoenix* to conceptions of music at the time. For example, he described the Celtic motif of heaven as a revolving fort (where humans must wait to hear intermittent music). He additionally appealed to the idea of inaudible music of the soul and body harmonizing the cosmic spheres, and to the notion of the ideal voice as both individual and harmonious without contradiction. In describing these musical notions, Wright raised the question of the relation of music to embodiment. For example, he described the humans' ascent to heaven as one of moving and singing, represented in the poem as embodied birds following the Phoenix (Christ) home. In Wright's interpretation, the poem can be seen as promoting the idea that embodiment on earth allows a person both to do good works and to sing praises to God, producing an audible expression of inaudible exaltation. In analyzing *The Phoenix*'s musical elements, Wright's work provides a new understanding of the medieval relationship between music and embodiment. (Jacy Tackett)

In "The Musical Bodies in Medieval Natural Philosophy," **Andrew Hicks** (Cornell University) presented an ode to the musical cosmos of Plato, Boethius, and 12th century philosophers such as Bernard of Chartres. Hicks acknowledged at the beginning of his presentation that he had searched for the common ground where his own interests and those of Arthur Groos meet. The outcome of this intersection was Hick's talk, which focused on the ancient analogy between macrocosm and microcosm, here exemplified as the relation between the cosmos and the human body. Beginning with Plato's *Phaedo* and *Timaeus*, Andrew Hicks discussed the ways in which Plato's harmony thesis – the idea that the human soul, as musical harmony, establishes a bridge between cosmos and body – influenced not only medieval theologians, but also contemporary musicologists in their attempt to come to terms with the mind/body problem. (Sander Oosterom)

The afternoon continued with a panel presentation on "Opera and the Comic Mode" featuring three distinguished colleagues from Cornell's Department of Music. The first presenter was **James Webster**, who spoke on "The Virtues of the Comic Mode – Opera included," focusing on Mozart's famous opera *Don Giovanni* (1787), a work that blends comic, melodramatic, and supernatural elements. In particular, he focused on the Aristotelian distinction between tragedy and comedy in *Don Giovanni* and the ways

in which Mozart's opera abolishes this classical distinction. Although the beginning of Webster's presentation highlighted the comic and tragic elements in the libretto, it ultimately focused on the way in which these elements found their way into performance history. By playing recorded fragments of several performances of the opera, Webster demonstrated how the blending of comic and tragic elements has been interpreted throughout history as a means of self-reflection and entertainment. (Sander Oosterom)

In "The Comic as Color in the *tragédie en musique*," **Rebecca Harris-Warrick** (Cornell University) argued that the dancing body permitted the entry of the comic into the seventeenth-century French operatic genre of the *tragédie en musique*. At a time when French neoclassicist aesthetic standards prohibited practices that violated Aristotelian norms, operatic composers overcame these prohibitions through intertwined contemporaneous dance practices. With the intrusion of pastoral modes and historically loathed characters, such as the tax collector, seventeenth-century French composers were even able to use comedy to subtly critique Louis XIV and his court. (Alex Brown)

The final panel presentation, "The Merry Wives Go to Opera: Falstaff's Crime,

Punishment, and (sometimes) Redemption," was given by **David Rosen** (Cornell University). Rosen analyzed the transmission of William Shakespeare's comedy *The Merry Wives of Windsor* in Italian and German opera. Tracing the reception of Shakespeare's play in Otto Nicolai's opera of the same name (1849) to Giuseppe Verdi's opera *Falstaff* (1893), Rosen focused on the operatic permutations of the character Sir John Falstaff across more than two centuries of musical and dramatic repertoire. More specifically, Rosen honed in on the fugal finale of Verdi's *Falstaff*. He argued that the fugal form in Falstaff's finale "Tutto nel mondo è burla" ("Everything in the World is a Joke") provides a final sense of unanimity in an otherwise "bi-textual" opera in which there is a disparity between what the audience hears and what the libretto shows. (Alex Brown)

After the panel, **Courtney Ann Roby** (Cornell University) presented "Applied Herbals: The Dioscorides Lab." Roby discussed her project of assembling a lab at Cornell to examine the effectiveness of the herbal medicine found in *De Materia Medica*, a pharmacopeia detailing the production of various medicines written by Dioscorides in the first century that enjoyed popularity for over 1500 years. While the lab used the Cornell plantations to grow the ancient

plants described by Dioscorides, the initial methodological challenge presented by the project concerned identifying the plants in the first place. Roby discussed extensively the plants assembled at the lab, the methods for analyzing them, and the results obtained by the project, noting that Dioscorides's pharmacopeia emphasized single botanical products over mixtures. Finally, she discussed the gap between the pharmacologist's own ancient scientific methodology, reliant on a notion of affinity between certain substances, and the modern scientific method her own project relied on. (Matteo Calla)

The conference in honor of Arthur Groos concluded with a talk on "The Arthurian Environment" by **Michael Twomey** (Ithaca College). Before taking the audience on a journey to Arthurian times, Twomey first paid homage to Groos by showing some unforgettable and colorful pictures of Groos' early days at Cornell in the 1970s; an amusing visual supplement to the anecdotes that were shared over the two days. Twomey's ensuing presentation then introduced his new project on the conceptions of nature and the environment in the Arthurian romance, in which Twomey seeks to combine the new field of environmental humanities with the traditional discipline of medieval English literature. (Sander Oosterom)

Call for Submissions

The Peter Uwe Hohendahl Graduate Essay Prize in Critical Theory

The Institute for German Cultural Studies is pleased to announce its 2016 call for submissions for *The Peter Uwe Hohendahl Graduate Essay Prize in Critical Theory*. This named prize honors a distinguished scholar of international renown for his many publications on German literatures of modernity, comparative intellectual histories, critical theory writ large and the Frankfurt School especially, and the history and desiderata of university education in Europe and North America. As Jacob Gould Schurman Professor of German Studies and Comparative Literature from 1977 to 2011, Peter Uwe Hohendahl taught and inspired many Cornell students on the importance of critical theory for public life and the collective good.

Essay submissions may be submitted in German or English on any topic pertaining to critical theory, and registered graduate students in any relevant field of study at Cornell University are eligible to apply. Only one submission per person. The author of the winning essay will be awarded a prize of \$250.

Essays may be up to 25 double-spaced pages in length. **Please submit your essay via email attachment. In the body of the email please include your name, the essay title, your department, and your email address.** The essay itself should have a title but not include your name anywhere. **The deadline for submission is October 15. Entries should be submitted to Olga Petrova**, Assistant to the Director of the Institute for German Cultural Studies, at <ogp2@cornell.edu>.

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

The Challenge of Realism: Theodor Fontane

September 18-19, 2015

The two day conference *The Challenge of Realism: Theodor Fontane* (organized by Peter Uwe Hohendahl) opened with a keynote address titled “Fontane and the Future Ends of Realism,” delivered by **Eric Downing** (UNC-Chapel Hill).

Downing’s presentation began with the question: what is the role of magical or divinatory reading in realist and post-realist literature? At first glance, Theodor Fontane’s final novel *Der Stechlin* appears to be neither realist nor divinatory. Devoid of any plot, consequent action or directionality, this novel has neither the plot development of a realist novel, nor the futurity of a magical or divinatory text. However, Downing argued that the novel recreates its realist and magical aspects through the role of small talk (“Plauderei”). *Der Stechlin* may not have plot or action, but it does have conversations. It is through a series of trivial, seemingly meaningless conversations that the novel introduces both realist and magical elements.

“Plauderei,” Downing claimed, has a two-fold significance for Fontane’s novel. For one, small talk allows the novel to lay claim to realism through its inclusion of the quotidian, contingent details of everyday conversation. Secondly, and more importantly for Downing’s argument, “Plauderei” establishes a “Stimmung” – a mood or an atmosphere – through which the magical realm re-enters the realist novel. Downing used the term “Stimmung” not in a psychological sense, but in a social sense. Using Georg Simmel’s theory of sociability (“Geselligkeit”), Downing argued that the trivial conversations in *Der Stechlin* create a momentary unity between the individual characters and elements of the novel. By vacat-

ing language of its communicative function, small talk enacts language in its metaphysical form, as the medium or life form that establishes the human world and its relations. The moments of small talk in *Der Stechlin* are thus moments of pure sociability – that is, of pure relation. Emptied of any material reality or psychological significance, these moments of “Plauderei” connect the novel to an invisible and immaterial realm of sociability. For Downing, this sociability is the symbolic realm of the novel – the immaterial and invisible “Stimmung” that reintroduces the magical into this realist text. (Leigh York)

The second day of “The Challenge of Realism: Theodor Fontane” began with a presentation by **Sean Franzel** (University of Missouri). In his paper “Tagesmoden, Prussian Crisis, and the Historical Novel” on Fontane’s *Schach von Wuthenow* (1882), Franzel drew a connection between Fontane’s novella and Johann Gottlieb Fichte’s “Grundzüge des

of considering vanity, egotism, and self-absorbed subjectivity merely as the product of a specific historical era, Franzel claimed that Fontane draws attention to the passing of time by showing his readers processes of empty repetition as well as their disruption.

Franzel studied Fontane’s engagement with the passing of historical time by analyzing in detail the writer’s employment of the motifs of stage performance and caricature. He discussed several scenes in which Fontane uses the image of performance to stage “observation” and expose its temporal elements: he sets up interiors as theatrical spaces, describes satirical performances like the “Mummenschanz” and also refers to the performance of actual stage plays, for instance in a discussion about Zacharias Werner’s *Martin Luther oder die Weihe der Kraft* (1806). Franzel argued that Fontane draws a connection between political life and theatrical performance by associating both with tropes of impermanence and vanity.

The caricature, Franzel suggested, fulfills a similar function for Fontane’s novella: aside from the “Mummenschanz” parade, which represents a performative caricature of Martin Luther, the caricature makes a repeated appearance in the form of different drawings throughout the text. Most noticeable is the anachronistic reference to the drawings of Fontane’s contemporary



gegenwärtigen Zeitalters” lectures (1804-1805), proposing that both Fichte and Fontane presented 1800 as a time dominated by vanity and self-obsession. Fontane’s novella *Schach von Wuthenow*, Franzel suggested, depicts the final days of Frederician Prussia as a time of crisis – a crisis that remained unnoticed by its self-absorbed contemporaries. However, he proposed that the novella does not simply depict a historical era, but is also about the phenomenon of historical time itself. Instead

Adolf Menzel, which Franzel read not simply as a nod to the readers, but as a demonstration of the constant recirculation of both political imagination and specific images throughout the 19th century. Ultimately, Franzel proposed that Fontane employs scenes of theatrical performance and caricature *both* to expose cycles of inevitable repetition and to show moments of rupture or escape. His aim is to renounce an idealist model of historical progress while nevertheless allowing for the possibility of

historical transformation. (Hannah Mueller)

In her presentation, “Ringe, Glocken, Tränen. Theatralität und Diskretion in Fontanes Roman *Graf Petöfy*,” **Prof. Ulrike Vedder** (Humboldt Universität zu Berlin) examined the relations of performativity, discretion, omission, and intrusiveness in Theodor Fontane’s *Graf Petöfy*. Theatre and performativity prefigure crucial aspects of this novel: as indicators of social status and gender roles of its characters and as modes of perceiving and interpreting its narrative. Vedder explained how objects such as rings, bells, or tears are charged with significance in a setting of performance, reference, and interpretation. The description of interior, animals, pictures, and albums functions as a narrated theatre setting in which, on the one hand, objects reveal a character’s social background and affiliation, and, on the other hand, things have significance and meaning for the narration. Sometimes the exposure of objects in the novel becomes obvious in a rather overstated or intrusive manner. Vedder argued that while certain objects almost demand interpretation, the narrator and characters in *Graf Petöfy* are often unable to read the implemented significance of things. The omission of interpretation and, more generally, the omission of stating the obvious follow the (bourgeois) rule of discretion. Omission and discretion are paradigms of Fontane’s poetology and his concept of realism. (Annika Klanke)

Anette Schwarz (Cornell University) concluded the morning session with her presentation on “Cecile, or the Invention of the Psyche in Space.” Schwarz focused on three elements of the novel: Cecile’s spatial psyche, empty spaces, and communication networks. She discussed how Cecile’s psyche is constructed spatially through language in the text, which focuses on the question “who,” and requires the space of the novel to provide an answer. She furthermore notes that Cecile is brought into a world in which the prohibition of speech is linked to illness, where she becomes an object of scientific authority – a patient to be diagnosed. Schwarz argues that the protagonists of the text are presented as readers of various signs, as they hope to make the world accessible to themselves. She further claimed that the roles of *femme fatale* and *femme fragile* are developed by characters in the novel in attempts to read the riddle of Cecile, noting how the vanishing of Cecile’s body is connected to both sickness and her reduction to these roles. Describing the process in which Cecile becomes silent and later speaks, Schwarz contends that for Cecile reading is connected to seducing. In doing so, Schwarz sets her in opposition to the other protagonists, for whom reading is an educational process. (Jacy Tackett)

The afternoon session began with a paper by **Peter Uwe Hohendahl** (Cornell University)

entitled “Eindringliche Beobachtung: Zur Konstitution des Sozialen in *Unwiederbringlich*.” Hohendahl analyzes how observation shapes the social setting of Theodor Fontane’s novel *Unwiederbringlich*. By observing others and by drawing conclusions from such observation, the characters position themselves in the novel’s social setting, which is structured by these very observations. Thus, the reader’s understanding of each figure remains fragmentary because any individual judgment about other figures is itself incomplete, always subjective, and sometimes relativized by other judgments. This fragmentary imagery also applies to the narrator, who observes the characters’ observations and, for the most part, avoids general or reflexive comments on their actions. The absence of definitive character depiction and the impossibility to abstract a character’s complete image result in a general instability of the narrated world and its social and political components, thus setting Fontane’s *Unwiederbringlich* in a liminal space between realistic and classical modern storytelling. The ensuing discussion covered important aspects of Hohendahl’s paper: the status of the characters (or the subjects) and the narrator, the role of the social versus the role of society, and the particular concept of realism that one can abstract from Fontane’s *Unwiederbringlich*. (Annika Klanke)

Elisabeth Strowick (Johns Hopkins University) then explored Fontane’s short novel *Die Poggenpuhls* as a “Realismus der Überreste” or realism of what remains. Through close-readings of several of the novel’s key passages, Strowick argued that in Fontane’s realism, it is the remainder that generates reality as a simulacrum, making reality legible as something that remains. According to Strowick, since the “useless details” (Barthes) that bring forth the reality effect in Fontane’s novel are remainders, the real thus generated is endowed with a specific temporality and a spectral dimension. Under the sign of death, of the beyond, of a ‘past’ and immemorial bygone that nevertheless brings forth the future as pending and yet to come, Strowick argued that the real itself becomes the revenant, drawing the uncanny into the everyday, and inserting the realism of the everyday again into ‘another scene’ (Freud). Strowick demonstrated how finesses, haunted *Stellen*, and toads prophesying doom—that is, details producing the reality effect in Fontane’s *Poggenpuhls*—insert the real into the dynamic of a revenant. Whereas *Die Poggenpuhls* have been referred to as “the mere ghost of a novel,” Strowick concluded that with this late work, Fontane structures the novel as a ghost in a poetic practice, making his realism of remainders decidedly modern. (Jette Gindner)

In his contribution, “Furnished Inutility: The Objects in *Mathilde Möhring*,” **Samuel Frederick** (Penn State) concluded the

conference by addressing the role that two types of objects – furniture and optical devices – play in Fontane’s posthumously published and incomplete novel (serialized in 1906). The Möhrings’ chaise lounge as well as Mathilde’s mirrors and opera glasses occasion the novel’s discourse on both the utility (as opposed to ornamental value) of objects and its implicit commentary on class – particularly regarding the petit-bourgeois family’s desire for upward social mobility. Drawing upon Walter Benjamin’s analysis of the logic of the bourgeois interior in his *Arcades Project*, Frederick suggests that the objects adorning the family’s Berlin apartment – particularly, the centerpiece of their *guten Stube*, a chaise lounge purchased at auction – hold a paradoxical status of being caught between utility and display, their functional and aesthetic values. Whereas the mother sees the chaise as an end in itself, an object of social distinction not to be used, Mathilde insists that it be a means to an end, namely her ultimately fulfilled desire to transcend her class by marrying Hugo, the “idle bourgeois” renting a room in Möhrings’ apartment. Frederick, moreover, observes that crucial



**Elisabeth
Strowick**

points in the narrative of Mathilde’s upward social movement and its ultimate reversal are marked by the use of “superfluous” optical devices that echo the paradoxical status of the chaise lounge. Mirrors signal her realization of being eligible as well as her falling into the “functionless role of the idle bourgeois” during her marriage with the sickly Hugo. Following Hugo’s death, Mathilde returns home, planning to “make herself useful” by working as a teacher in a working-class neighborhood of Berlin. Before entering the apartment, however, Mathilde attempts to use a pair of opera glasses, only to find her view blocked by closed blinds. This scene signals not only a reversal of her bourgeois status, but also of the novel’s discourse on the utility of objects, itself closely intertwined with class. While the chaise lounge represented for Mathilde a kind of decorative object made useful, the useful opera glasses are, upon her return home, rendered ornamental: a relic of a bourgeois life now past. (Will Krieger)

Technologies of the Human: Modern Figures of Thought

March 19, 2016

The workshop “Technologies of the Human: Modern Figures of Thought” on March 19, 2016, was organized by **Paul Fleming** (Cornell University) and **Carl Gelderloos** (Binghamton University) and sponsored by the Institute for German Cultural Studies and the Department of German Studies at Cornell. It featured presentations by Carl Gelderloos, Jocelyn Holland (UC Santa Barbara), June Hwang (University of Rochester), Jeffrey Kirkwood (Binghamton University), Elisabeth Strowick (Johns Hopkins University), Leif Weatherby (New York University), and Harald Zils (Binghamton University).

In his introductory remarks, Carl Gelderloos cited Joanna Russ’ 1978 text on “SF and Technology as Mystification” and proposed that rather than attempting to define precisely what technology is, one should conceive of technology as an ever-shifting constellation of discourses, tropes, and motifs that are anything but monolithic. Technology, he suggested, functions as a central “Denkfigur” that negotiates the relationship between itself and the human, and between technological progress and cultural change. Starting from this premise, the workshop “Technologies of the Human” aimed to bring together different perspectives on historical and contemporary discourses of technology.

Jocelyn Holland (UC Santa Barbara) presented an overview of German discourses on technology during the Enlightenment. In particular, she discussed Johann Beckmann’s *Anleitung zur Technologie oder zur Kenntniß der Handwerke, Fabriken und Manufacturen* (1796) and George Friedrich Lamprecht’s *Lehrbuch der Technologie oder Anleitung zur Kenntniß der Handwerke, Fabriken und Manufacturen* (1787). For the thinkers of the Enlightenment, Holland explained, technology was the “science of the arts,” with “arts” being understood in the broadest sense as all things man-made. Thus, for the 18th century scholars she discussed, technology was a theoretical enterprise, a body of knowledge, a discourse. During the discussion it was suggested that these writers’ interest in a precise definition of technology was driven by the Enlightenment’s striving for clarity. At the same time, however, the difficulties of agreeing on one specific definition of technology appeared to parallel the discourse surrounding the humanities, which emerged around the same time but remained similarly intangible.

Elisabeth Strowick (Johns Hopkins) spoke about notions of technology in 19th/20th century literature: in particular, she focused on Adalbert Stifter’s *Bergkristall* (1845). Arguing that the discourse of technology is related to the discourse on the relationship between the human and its environment, she discussed how literary realism staged



Carl Gelderloos

perception, and considered the form and organization perception assumes in literary texts. Strowick argued that the literature of realism sees reality as “perceived reality,” with perception functioning as a “medium”: in its engagement with perception, realism thus raises questions about mediality and technology. Stifter’s work, she suggested, breaks with the concept of subjective perception, and instead introduces a notion of perception as a dynamic that is not tied to the individual observer. The subject is no longer the bearer of perception, but rather the “milieu” is. She then introduced the idea of the “aggregate” as a medium of perception, and showed how in Stifter’s *Bergkristall*, the turbidity of snow, ice, and clouds works as one such aggregate. In her conclusion, Strowick posed the question whether the aggregate should be thought of as a form of technology.

In the third presentation, **Jeffrey Kirkwood** (Binghamton University) spoke about verisimilitude in the context of 19th-century technology. He discussed Ernst Mach’s theory of “Gedankenexperimente” in *Erkenntnis und Irrtum* (1906) in order to ask what conditions allow an object to claim verisimilitude. Kirkwood spoke about photography, which became the standard for mechanical objectivity in the 19th century. The mechan-

ical image-making technology introduced the idea of visual evidence, but was also thought to be able to make invisible things visible. He then drew a connection between the technology of photography and Mach’s notion of “Gedankenexperimente” by pointing out that Mach described the concept of imagination in thought experiments as an “Abbildung von Tatsachen,” that is, as the representation or image-rendering of facts. For Mach, Kirkwood concluded, this apparatus was thought of as more than merely figurative. (Hannah Mueller)

The afternoon session began with **June Hwang** (University of Rochester) offering a reading of Helmuth Plessner that focused on his tertiary structure, which allows him to emphasize positionality rather than being. Hwang highlighted the implications of this structure for questions of the human, technology, and modernity. For example, Plessner develops a way of thinking about humans that accounts for both the inability to achieve an unmediated relation to an object, and the need to feel that these relationships are immediate. In the impossibility of achieving an unmediated relationship to an object, technology is an essential and natural part of being human. But even though the human can become aware of this mediation at any point, the need to experience relationships as immediate produces a form of mediated immediacy. Hwang suggested further that, when understood in this way, technology cannot be considered a modern phenomenon. Because humans are defined by their ability to be aware of the mediation of their relationships to objects, they have always needed the artifice of technology. For Plessner, modernity is not a break or fragmentation; instead, it is a promise for a continuation of this artifice. As an example, Hwang described Plessner’s criticism of the fetishization of *Gemeinschaft* (community) as an apolitical totality. Plessner posits instead that *Gesellschaft* (society) mediates between different forms of *Gemeinschaft*, and that forms of *Gemeinschaft* are constantly in flux through *Gesellschaft*. This constant fluctuation prevents the possibility of understanding *Gemeinschaft* as a static whole. Hwang argued that what is at stake for Plessner in the continuity of artifice in modernity is his suspicion of what an appeal to authentic wholeness in society can justify politically.

Carl Gelderloos (Binghamton University) furthered the discussion of Helmuth Plessner by contrasting the idea of the human as a “Mängelwesen” (Gehlen) with Plessner’s argument for the human as naturally

artificial. Gelderloos began his reading by focusing on the distinction Plessner makes between plants, animals, and humans. Animals are different from plants in that they operate as a closed (rather than open) form. This means that animals utilize their own bodies to interact with the environment, while plants do not. What distinguishes humans from animals is their ability to recognize their own mediated interactions with the environment. Gelderloos argued that Plessner's vision of the human sees artifice as the natural outgrowth of the human's positional possibilities. Technology is thus not limited to humans, but humans have the possibility to recognize it as such. For Plessner, all living things contain an edge that marks the limit of their existence. And both these borders and their transgressions are inherent properties of those living things. The double function of the boundary – both as a spatial separation between inside and outside, and as an inherent property of a living thing – enables the development of positionality. And because humans occupy this positionality on a spectrum with other living beings, the concept of human as “Mängelwesen” is insufficient to distinguish humans from animals.

Focusing on positive images of technology by conservative writers like Ernst Jünger and Martin Heidegger, **Harald Zils** (Binghamton University) intervened in anthropological debates about the relationship of social institutions to the individual by proposing the concept of the “Mängelinstitution.” Zils began his talk by recalling Heidegger's description of modern technology as threatening Dasein with enframing. However, Heidegger also offers positive images of technology: for example, a mill that takes power from nature. In his travel journal, Jünger similarly describes positive technologies during a 1954 trip to Sardinia. In his journey southward from Germany to Italy, Jünger interprets a headstrong donkey as a kind of resistance fighter against instrumentalization. Zils argued that the forms of technology that Jünger favors are those that contain this rebellious element preventing them from being used as a resource. In comparison to modern technologies, Jünger

presents these defective “Mängeltechnologien” as almost humane and relatable. Zils argued further that, insofar as social institutions are constructed to relieve individuals of desires and needs, they can be understood as a



Leif Weatherby

form of social technology. Like modern technologies, modern institutions engage in an enframing of individuals. Zils ended his talk by proposing a concept of “Mängelinstitution,” which would have built-in glitches that could liberate the individuals that it enframes from an excessive or over-enframing.

Drawing on Gotthard Günther's work on digital metaphysics, **Leif Weatherby** (New York University) discussed the implications of this metaphysics for foreign policy decisions and narrative theories of science fiction. He began by highlighting a temporal problem of foreign policy decisions like climate change, which force actors to move between complex systems evaluations and linear actions. As such, Weatherby argued that climate change constitutes “a political problem designed to repel political intervention,” and we need an explicit digital metaphysics

in order to tackle the issue. Weatherby then turned to Murray Leinster's science fiction text “First Contact” as an example of the genre's engagement with a universal translator that would allow humans to communicate with aliens. Weatherby noted, however, that Leinster's example remains confined within Aristotelian logic, and that the universal translator depicted here remains insufficient to answer the question: can we encounter a non-human mind? Weatherby invoked Gotthard Günther's discussion of a mechanical brain that would be able to toggle between an Aristotelian (human) and non-Aristotelian (non-human) logic. He provided the example of a digital clock, which uses a series of affirmation and negation (true/false) to display the time, and an analog clock, which negates the digital clock as a whole. Here we encounter two different kinds of negation: one



Jocelyn Holland

where true is the opposite of false, and one where what they have in common is negated in favor of a third option. Weatherby argued that, in order to incorporate this ternary logic in an imagined encounter between an Aristotelian and non-Aristotelian mind, science fiction would be required to undertake a radical transformation of narrative technique as such: it would be required to narrate multiple types of negation as formal principles without unifying them narratively. (Jacy Tackett)

Incoming Visitors

A Mellon Postdoctoral Fellow at the Society for the Humanities, **Erik Born** is a recent graduate from the University of California, Berkeley, where he received a concurrent PhD in German Studies and Medieval Studies with a Designated Emphasis in Film & Media Studies. His research and teaching focus on relations between old media and new media, and particularly on questions of mobility.

Drawing on insights from the fields of

media archaeology and the study of cultural techniques, Erik's dissertation re-examines the early and pre-history of national radio broadcasting. Going wireless, he argues, means not only the elimination of wires but also the production of electromagnetic radiation, a phenomenon that had far-reaching implications for the cultural logics of German modernity. To complete this project, Erik conducted archival research in Austria and Germany, and spent

a year as the Fulbright/IFK Junior Fellow at the Internationales Forschungszentrum Kulturwissenschaften in Vienna. He is also the co-editor of a volume on the figure of the neighbor in German modernity, and the author of articles on early avant-garde films and medieval media theory, as well as translations and book reviews on topics in film and media studies.

At Cornell, Erik will work on revising his

dissertation into a book and on developing



prose text *we never sleep* (2004), based on interviews with business consultants, was awarded the SWR-Best-List-Prize and the Bruno Kreisky Prize for the best political book. Her 2010 theater piece *worst case* won the Nestroy Theater Prize. *Die alarmbereiten* (2010) was recognized with the Franz Hessel Prize. Her documentary film *Die bewegliche Zukunft. Eine Reise ins Risikomanagement* (2012) can be seen online at the ZDF online portal. Since 2015 she is the Vice-President of the *Berlin Academy for the Arts*. Röggl will premiere part of her forthcoming prose book *Nachtsendung. Unheimliche Geschichten* (fall 2016) while at Cornell.

his next research project, a media archaeology of the mechanical push-button. On December 2, 2016, Erik will present a paper at the IGCS colloquium on a work in progress called “Patent Fiction: The Poetics of Invention in Imperial Germany.” For further details and updates, please see his website: <http://www.erikborn.com/>

The Institute for German Cultural Studies is very pleased to welcome **Kathrin Röggl** as its **2016 artist-in-residence**. Röggl’s prize-winning, experimental writings span multiple literary genres, including narrative prose, theater texts, radio plays, and essays. Working in and beyond the traditions of the avant-garde, post/modernity as well as documentary prose and theater, Röggl’s multifaceted work has been recognized with

Tanvi Solanki joins the German Department as a Stanford H. Taylor Postdoctoral Fellow after receiving her doctorate in the Department of German at Princeton in May 2016. In AY 2012-13 Tanvi was the recipient of a DAAD research grant as a visiting scholar affiliated with the PhD-Net “Wissen der Literatur” at the Humboldt University in Berlin. In addition to 17th-19th century German literature, her research fields include Historical Sound Studies, Comparative Philology, Classical Reception Studies, Translation theory, Historical Prosody and Poetics, Media Studies, Digital Humanities, History of Scholarship and Cultural Studies.

Tanvi’s dissertation, “Reading as Listening: The Birth of Cultural Acoustics 1764-1803” explores how an influential network of theologians, translators, poets, pedagogues,

In addition to expanding her dissertation into a book manuscript, Tanvi is currently finishing an article on Herder’s hierarchical ethnographic arrangements in his *Volkslieder* translations (“Prosodic Hierarchies and the Foundations of Monolingualism”) for a special issue on Critical Monolingualism in the *German Studies Review*. She is also developing a project using digital tools to find patterns for analyzing and comparing Herder and his contemporaries’ descriptions of the sonic, tonal, and prosodic aspects of their (German) translations of Classical and ‘oral’ poetry in their critical apparatuses, prefaces, and reviews.

IGCS very pleased to welcome **Dr. Ralf Klausnitzer** as our Humboldt University exchange professor for September 15-29, 2016. A specialist in the reception of German Romanticism, the relation between literature and knowledge, computer based philology, and paths and practices of the transfer of knowledge, Dr. Klausnitzer has published widely across epochs, genres, theories, and media, including digital humanities. Among his many monographs and articles, a few of the key books include: *Blaue Blume unterm Hakenkreuz. Die Rezeption der deutschen literarischen Romantik im Dritten*



Reich (1999); *Poesie und Konspiration. Beziehungssinn und Zeichenökonomie von Verschwörungsszenarien in Publizistik, Literatur und Wissenschaft 1750-1850* (2007); and *Wissenstransfer. Konditionen, Praktiken, Verlaufsformen der Weitergabe von Erkenntnis. Analyse und Erprobung von Konzepten wissenschaftsgeschichtlicher Rekonstruktion (II)* (2013). At Cornell, Dr. Klausnitzer will be offering a colloquium on the complex question of the conditions and problems of theory transfer across languages and cultures entitled “Wege des Wissens und ihre Rekonstruktion. Konzepte und Verfahren zur Beschreibung epistemischer Wanderungen” on Friday, September 16, at 3:00 p.m. in Goldwin Smith 181 (papers pre-distributed). His colloquium inaugurates the conference on the following day, Saturday, September 17: *Theory Transfer: The Fate of German Theory in the United States* (401 Physics Building).

photo by Karsten Thielker



numerous awards, including the Italo Svevo Prize, the Anton Wildgans Prize, and the Arthur Schnitzler Prize. *really ground zero* offers a series of reports from New York City in the months after September 11th. Her

and orators revolving around Johann Gottfried Herder sought to deploy acoustic techniques from oral cultures in order to model a new form of silent reading – and, consequently, new, coherent forms of German sociability. She recently published a related article, “Rhythmus Gegen den Fluss: Herder, die Oralität der Griechen und das ‘Meer der Gelehrsamkeit,’” in the volume *Materialitätsdiskurse der Aufklärung* as well as the article “A Book of Living Paintings: Tableaux Vivants in Goethe’s *Die Wahlverwandtschaften* (1809)” in the *Goethe Yearbook*.

Retrospective: Fall 2015

Colloquium Series

Nur über seine Leiche: Literaturgeschichte der Männerfreundschaft

September 4, 2015

The IGCS Fall 2015 colloquium series opened with the presentation of a paper by **Andreas**



Krass (Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin) titled “Nur über seine Leiche: Literaturgeschichte der Männerfreundschaft.” Krass, who spoke from Berlin via video conference, excerpted selections from his current project *Ein Herz und eine Seele: Geschichten der Männerfreundschaft*. The project traces examples of male friendship throughout literary history and analyzes them through the lens of gender and queer theory. Krass argued that the motif of male friendship is highly charged with affective potential because the bond between men, which undergirds the homosocial patriarchal order, invokes homosexual desire as a possibility within male friendship while at once vehemently repressing this possibility.

In the paper, Krass reads *The Epic of Gilgamesh* as a passion narrative, in which Gilgamesh’s mourning of the death of his male friend Enkidu converts into grief the affective energy of homoerotic desire. The latter is a cultural taboo that informs the intimate relationship between men. Krass argues that the death of the friend functions as a resolution of a dilemma that secures the precarious line between intimacy and sexuality, which structures the virtual continuum of male homosocial desire. Yet the death also marks the beginning of a timeless joy for the surviving Gilgamesh. More precisely, the moment of death and its aestheticization allow him to direct his full affective energies towards his friend. By erecting a memorial

in Enkidu’s honor, Gilgamesh can preserve the full range of affective attachment, including the possibility of a homoerotic desire he

would otherwise have had to deny. It became clear in the discussion that Gilgamesh’s zeal ought to be read as a negotiation of his own desire. The moment of death secures and preserves a timeless inner bond between him and the friend. On his deathbed he is allowed to express his unlimited passionate affections, which had earlier been prohibited by the patriarchal order. Krass made it clear that the erotic aspect – which scholarship has hitherto generally overlooked – is a crucial one. He additionally showed how the narrative addresses questions of difference between gods and men, humans and animals, men and women and the fundamental desire to overcome these differences, raising further question regarding identity and the status of the subject in a symbolic order. (Annekatriin Sommer)

Genealogy Trouble: Secularization and the Leveling of Theory

September 25, 2015

In his paper “Genealogy Trouble: Secularization and the Leveling of Theory,” **Kirk Wetters** (Yale University) analyzed the uses and abuses of genealogical reasoning in the context of the German secularization debates of the 1950s and 1960s.

Wetters began by differentiating between three different modes of genealogical reasoning. The first type, termed “weak” genealogy by Wetters, is characterized by (often simplistic and partisan) claims about historical continuity and intellectual affiliation made on the basis of an unexamined metaphysics of paternity and succession. The second type of “strong” or traditional genealogy bestows legitimacy on established forms and institutions by furnishing them with a historical pedigree that emphasizes their antiquity and originariness. The final type differentiated by Wetters, “critical” genealogy in the mode of Nietzsche and Foucault, functions as an antidote to weak and traditional genealogies by highlighting the contingency, discontinuity, and uncertainty of all historical derivations.

The German secularization debates, Wetters argued, were pervaded by questions con-

cerning genealogy in all three senses at the level of the historical phenomena in question (modernity’s Christian legacy) as well as at the level of the discussion itself (the question of the “legitimate inheritance” of Max Weber’s intellectual legacy). As a prime example of such a debate, Wetters analyzed the controversy between Hans Blumenberg and Karl Löwith on the status and scope of the secularization thesis. Wetter’s comparative analysis of Löwith’s *Meaning in History* and Blumenberg’s *The Legitimacy of the Modern Age* revealed that, while their accounts of modernity as a legacy of Christianity are marked by a number of differences, these differences can hardly explain the critical animus with which Blumenberg opposed and attacked Löwith’s work. What was really at stake in the Blumenberg-Löwith debate, Wetters proposed, were thus less the historical details of the secularization thesis than the status of “weak” genealogy. According to Blumenberg’s critical diagnoses, the popularizing style of Löwith’s book facilitated the overgeneralizing claims of “weak” genealogy that dominated the discussion on secularization at the time. Although Löwith intended to debunk the dogmatism of progress-oriented philosophies of history, his claim that such philosophies are secularizations of the belief in divine providence had, in Blumenberg’s eyes, solidified into a new kind of dogmatism (which then became the target of Blumenberg’s own intervention).

In an epilogue to his paper, Wetters presented the outlines of a reading of Italian theorist Giorgio Agamben’s *The Kingdom and the Glory* against the background of the German secularization debates. One of Agamben’s innovations is his understanding of secularization as a “signature” rather than a descriptive concept – a term that migrates between different disciplines and functions in a hermeneutic rather than a strictly social-scientific register. In conversation with Agamben, the paper then concluded with reflections on the contemporary uses of genealogical claims. Wetters agreed with Agamben that genealogy in the critical mode can serve to unsettle the supposed self-evidence of established forms and institutions, but was more skeptical about Agamben’s redemptive hope that genealogy can thereby render such institutions “inoperative.” Instead of looking to genealogy for solutions, Wetters finally suggested, we should see it as another operation at the level of signature – of the displacements, shifts, and reconfigurations of historically established meanings. (Johannes Wankhammer)

Newsletter summaries of Institute-sponsored events are generously provided by graduate students in various stages of doctoral study in the interdisciplinary field of German Studies at Cornell University. These summaries are customarily written by students with a general audience in mind and highlight selected aspects of complex presentations by specialists.

Before-Truth: Walter Benjamin's "Epistemo-Critical Prologue"

October 16, 2015

On October 16, **Kristina Mendicino** (German, Brown University) presented a paper entitled *Before-Truth: Walter Benjamin's "Epistemo-Critical Prologue"* as part of the IGCS fall colloquium series. Mendicino examined Walter Benjamin's distinction between truth and knowledge in the prologue to his "Habilitationsschrift" *Ursprung des deutschen Trauerspiels* (1925/1928, *The Origin of the German Mourning-Play*) and discussed the consequences of the problem of presentation for Benjamin's own work. This problem is formulated in the first sentence of the prologue: "It is proper to philosophical writing to stand, with every turn, before the question of presentation anew" (Transl. Mendicino). Mendicino read the famous passage in the context of the numerous philosophical and aesthetic influences that distinguish Benjamin's text and stressed the importance of Benjamin's textual montage for the composition of the *Trauerspielbuch* in general. Yet, Mendicino argued, the text calls for a philological commentary that takes the role of the remarks on truth and representation seriously and invests in an intensive reading of the prologue itself. Truth is, in Benjamin's thought, what presents itself as a constellation of ideas. Thus, it can neither be possessed nor questioned, nor can it be pursued: it exists solely as "ein aus Ideen gebildetes intentionsloses Sein." Tracing back this notion – which is emblematic of Benjamin's categorical break with the truth-claims of the empirical sciences – to the introductory remarks on the problem of presentation (*Darstellung*), Mendicino discussed the fundamental self-referentiality of Benjamin's text. The prologue refers to the philosophical tractate as the mode of presentation that renounces notions of unity and the "unabgesetzten Lauf der Intention" in favor of the detour. However, detour as method is not an appropriate means to make truth appear. Mendicino addressed precisely this problem as a problem of the *Epistemo-Critical Prologue* itself by pointing out that despite its fragmentary character and composition, it does not evade the quest for truth, which in turn slips away from a mode of presentation that talks about something that is already present within what is said. Whereas commentators often have read Benjamin's mode of writing throughout the *Trauerspielbuch* as an attempt to reconcile the epistemological challenges of philosophical writing by offering a Benjaminian mode of presentation, Mendicino argued that the prologue inevitably fails to provide this reconciliation due to its own status as philosophical writing that cannot overcome its generic and epistemological constraints. (Matthias Müller)

Mosenthal's Deborah and the Politics of Compassion: Anatomy of a Tear-Jerker

November 6, 2015



On November 6, 2015, **Jonathan Hess** (UNC, Chapel Hill) presented "Mosenthal's *Deborah* and the Politics of Compassion: Anatomy of a Tear-Jerker." Professor Hess's paper is a draft of the opening chapter of a monograph currently in progress, concerning the transnational performance history of the nineteenth-century stage hit, Salomon Hermann Mosenthal's *Deborah* (1849), a play translated into fifteen languages and performed around Europe and North America.

Hess's paper examines the manner in which productions of the play adhere to a goal popularized in the latter half of the eighteenth-century by G.E. Lessing: to incite communal tears of compassion for a character on stage. Such an aim was conceived by Lessing as serving a social function, unifying an audience under a common feeling of humanity. Although denounced by the literary patriarchs of the Romantic age, Goethe and Schiller, the dramatic tear-jerker nonetheless continued to enjoy popularity into the nineteenth-century.

Mosenthal's *Deborah*, Hess argued, represented a twist on Lessing's goal of transforming the theater into a training ground for universal compassion: it seeks to generate compassion specifically for an exotic Jewish woman, wielding the theatrical apparatus of tragic compassion in the interests of a new form of secular tolerance.

The play opens outside a church on Good Friday, where two distinct groups of villagers assume opposing stances towards Deborah and a group of Jewish refugees fleeing from violence in Hungary: one distinctly anti-Jewish, complaining about the newcomers, and the other – the priest and his niece – who preach Christian compassion. Deborah enters the stage followed by the bigoted villagers jeering at her. Yet she refuses the Christian compassion presented by the village priest as well.

Hess's analysis details the manner in which the plot of the play proceeds to take the audience on an affective ride, through compassion

as even the more liberal villagers turn on Deborah in Act II, through to fear and excitement in Acts III and IV as she undertakes a markedly old-testament curse on those who betrayed her, on to her return and reconciliation years later. Giving up on her hatred, she embraces a secular form of compassion transcending the divide between Jews and Christians. In this way, the apparatus of the tear-jerker becomes a means of consolidating an affective investment in a new form of liberal community.

For Hess, however, it is not simply – as Lessing would stress – the plot that constitutes the "anatomy of a tear-jerker." Instead, as he continually emphasizes in his paper, it is the theatricality of particular scenes in *Deborah* that give them their affective force. Thus, he emphasizes the manner in which the actress Kate Bateman would practice the opening scene, to connote Deborah's simultaneous chastisement by and defiance of the villagers chasing her onstage; or her cursing of those who betrayed her in Act III causing audience members to faint. It is these moments of embodied performance that give the play its particular effect, channeled towards new liberal ends. (Matteo Calla)

Clouded Visions: Particulate Matter in F.W. Murnau's *Faust*



November 20, 2015

On November 20, **Paul Dobryden** (Cornell) gave a presentation titled "Clouded Visions: Particulate Matter in F.W. Murnau's *Faust*" as part of the Fall 2015 colloquium series. The presentation foreshadows Dobryden's upcoming book project, tentatively titled *Vaporized: Modernity, Materiality, and the Aesthetics of Dispersion*, which will investigate the aesthetic utilization of aerosols and other airborne particles in visual media around the turn of the twentieth century. In the presentation, Dobryden focused on F.W. Murnau's *Faust* and the film's pervasive use of fog and smoke as a cinematic aesthetic. In so doing, he argued that the film's particulate matter deliberately invokes images of industrial air pollution. Dobryden's reading thus complicates conventional understanding

of the film, which typically concentrates on the contrast between darkness and light.

As Dobryden introduced salient moments of the film, he observed that the illuminated objects suggest a fundamental distinction between the realms of the earthly and the supernatural, realms connected by the obscuring smoke. Furthermore, Dobryden showed that this smoke technique was commonly used by illusionist performances of the nineteenth century, tracing the effect as far as Wagnerian opera. As such, he argued that the sensation of *Zerstreuung* produced by this particulate matter contributes to the “quasi-material, everywhere and nowhere” status of the protagonist, which is additionally extended to the partially divine viewer implied by the film.

Dobryden argued that these aerosols produce deliberate associations of industrialization in the case of *Faust*. While the city is often represented in smoke, he observed that the return to *Heimat* invariably presents a more natural and clear environment. This purity, however, deteriorates in the face of seduction, after which the film returns to the cloudy realm in between the earthly and the supernatural. Dobryden concluded that these elements suggest a dissolution of the two realms, where industrial humanity has come to occupy a similar status in the pretense of standing over nature. Accordingly, the viewer's own status as a “disembodied, God-like eye” within the perspective of the cloud is shown to contribute to the film's cinematic breakdown of the natural

and the supernatural. (David Dunham)

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

December 4, 2015



December 4, 2015, **Matteo Calla** (Cornell University) concluded the Fall 2015 colloquium Series. Calla presented a paper titled “Klopstock's *Darstellung* and the Cult of Aesthetic Experience,” which is based on an eponymous dissertation chapter. Recuperating Klopstock's communitarian project against readings that have limited Klopstock's poetics to one of proto-romantic individualism, Calla identifies moments in Klopstock's ode “Die künftige Geliebte” that serve to signify totality in their thwarting of referential signification, and draws more fundamental connections between Klopstock's poems and theoretical writings.

Calla situates Klopstock's “Die künftige Geliebte” within the author's broader poetics

of *Darstellung*. More specifically, he reads the ode through Klopstock's emphasis on the relationship between poetic temporal succession and affective absorption in the poetic text itself. It is precisely the movement from author, through the temporal medium of the poem, and within the reader that thwarts signification in subject-object binaries to establish affective commonality between individual experiences of the poetic text. This connection of the author, the poem, and the reader in a single, affective totality is crucial to understanding Klopstock's poetics of *Darstellung* as belonging to an order prior to one of individualism. Situating Klopstock in opposition to a bourgeois “prohibition against the substantial appearance of the absolute,” Calla provocatively suggests that Klopstock's theory of aesthetic experience is essentially modern for its impetus in connecting individuals through a communal experience.

Much of the ensuing discussion focused on the relationship of Klopstock to other contemporaneous figures and movements, such as Carl Philipp Emmanuel Bach, Immanuel Kant, eighteenth-century *Empfindsamkeit*, and the *Göttinger Hainbund*. One exchange focused on questions about situating Calla's reading of Klopstock's *Darstellung* vis-à-vis Kant's theorization of the sublime later in the eighteenth century. Discussants also sought to relate the concept of totality in Calla's pre-circulated paper to Calla's reading of *Die deutsche Gelehrtenrepublik* in his complete dissertation chapter. (Alex Brown)

Retrospective: Spring 2016 Colloquium Series

Medientheorien des Buches

February 5, 2016

In his colloquium presentation “Medientheorien des Buches,” **Carlos Spoerhase** (Humboldt University, Berlin) examined Paul Valéry's, Walter Benjamin's, and Laszlo Moholy-Nagy's respective theorizations of the book as a medium. These reflections, Spoerhase noted, were written during the 1920s when aesthetic considerations of print media increasingly turned to the more “ephemeral” forms of the newspaper and the poster. Following Valéry's essay “Two Virtues of a Book,” Spoerhase suggested that there were “two fundamental modes of perceiving book-formed [*buchförmige*] literature,” geometrically corresponding to the “line” and the “plane.” Books are, on the one hand,



“perfect machines” for linear, incremental reading. Another simultaneous mode, based on an understanding of the printed page as a plane, becomes possible, however, in the typography of Mallarmé's poem “Un coup de dés,” which Spoerhase related to the emerging print cultures at the turn of the twentieth century. Considered as a plane, the book lends itself to a “material intuition” of its surface, in which the reader takes in the page at a glance.

Spoerhase noted that Mallarmé and Valéry split on the question of whether the two modes could be reconciled. For Mallarmé, the “simultaneous” perception of the page both precedes and contains the linear reading, from which a discursive understanding of its text develops. In contrast, Valéry insists on a strict separation of “reading” and “seeing.” He develops a theory of the book based on two analogies: music and architecture. In the “Denkbilder” of his *Einbahnstraße* (1928), Benjamin takes up this debate, opening it to a broader media history of writing, in which the book has been rendered superfluous by the “dictatorial vertical” of other textual media (the poster, the newspaper). Spoerhase argued that for Benjamin, the book's status as an antiquated object sheds light on some of its qualities: that it is a collectible, that its high cultural status is itself an effect of high modernism, and that the silent reading it demands provides an asylum from advertising's “flurry” of letters. The book becomes an object from a closed era, inspiring nostalgia and bibliophilic desire. In Moholy-Nagy's approach, it is the poster's predominance among printed media that,

similarly to Benjamin, closes the Gutenberg era of the book. For Moholy-Nagy, however, this historical change also allows for a new conception of the book, in which communicative content is no longer merely transmitted in a “mediated” intellectual manner, but also, in an “unmediated” visual manner through its typographical materiality.

Valéry, Benjamin, and Moholy-Nagy suggest that the “massive, aesthetically motivated book problem,” with which, according to the Soviet artist El Lissitzky, modernity begins, grows out of competition with other print media, rather than radio and film. It is in relation to the book form that, according to Spoerhase, a new material aesthetics of ephemerality takes shape. (Will Krieger)

Brains: Forms of Life in German Modernism

February 19, 2016

In a colloquium on February 19, 2016, **Andreas Gailus** (University of Michigan) presented a paper titled “Brains: Forms of Life in German Modernism,” which is part of his current book project, titled *Forms of Life*. The project analyzes and critically examines the co-emergence of aesthetics and biology at the end of the eighteenth century in the context of a particularly German obsession with organicist and vitalist figures of thought.

Gailus gave a reading of Gottfried Benn’s



Rönne novellas (1916), taking the notion of the *Entformte* as the starting point of his analysis. He argues that Benn’s texts record the vanishing of the unifying agency of the mind in modernity – as suggested in Kant’s notion of the dynamic faculty of cognition – and thereby expose the material remainders: brains and words. Rather than marking an antithesis, Gailus argues, the phrase “the words and the brain” in Benn’s early work should be understood as a collocation that systematically connects the “scientific”

and the “literary” discourses or – with Canguilhem – *le vivant* (living matter) and *le vécu* (lived experience). In the novellas this connection between the discourse of pathology, on the one hand, and the utopia of a radically new language, on the other, is reflected in the figure of the doctor, Werff Rönne, who experiences a dissociation from the scripts and frames of ordinary life in terms of both the bodily and the linguistic.

Gailus illustrated these two dimensions by a close analysis of Rönne’s breakdown and of his associative deliriums. Whereas in the first case, the doctor’s hands seem to perform operations autonomously and the connection between hands and mind seems to be severed, Gailus showed that Rönne’s hand actually are “organs of the mind” that can operate without thought or reflection. Rönne’s problem, however, is that his bodily movements are dissociated from the context in which they are normally performed. With respect to language, the novellas show, in Gailus’ words, the consequences of reducing the mind to the brain. Yet they also demonstrate the emphatically transformative nature of poetic speech that can effect an ontological shift from a world of forms to a world beyond form. Rönne’s *entformte* speech thus exposes the deterritorialization of historically sedimented experience and produces a world without privileged identity. This results, Gailus claimed, in the liberation of Rönne from his embodied subjectivity and exposes that an “I” exists, or “happens,” only on paper. (Matthias Müller)

Schoenberg’s Broken Medium: Rethinking the Rule of Form after Wagner

March 11, 2016

On March 11, 2016, **Sarah Pourciau** (Princeton University) presented her paper “Schoenberg’s Broken Medium: Rethinking the Rule of Form after Wagner” in the IGCS colloquium. Carefully reading theoretical works by Richard Wagner and Arnold Schoenberg, Pourciau considered how both composers overcome teleology in their specific handling of musical form in relation to music as a time-dependent artistic medium. In creating the twelve-tone compositional technique, Pourciau argues, Schoenberg establishes an entirely new way for musical matter to attain a form in its temporal unfolding.

Pourciau’s paper is connected to a broader project in progress tentatively titled “The Austrian Idea: Catastrophe and the Poetics of

the Turning point.” In defining “the Austrian idea,” Pourciau referenced the sense at the turn of the twentieth century that Austria contained two different national modes, one defined by sovereign fiat and the other defined by ever-shifting majority opinion. She stressed that this was “not a synthesis” of these modes but instead a set of “co-existing forms.” Thus, her broader project in relationship to Schoenberg seeks to uncover the relationship between non-Hegelian temporality of the “Austrian idea” and musical time in Schoenberg’s twelve-tone works.

An interdisciplinary audience of faculty and



students from German Studies and Music made for a lively colloquium discussion. Participants posed questions, for example, about the relationship between futurity and temporality in Pourciau’s broader attempt to link musical time to ideas of the Austrian nation. Other questions focused on Pourciau’s argument in relation to other developments in music history and musicological scholarship, particularly the possibility of a return to counterpoint in Schoenberg’s work that might be related to the issue of Austrian sovereignty. (Alex Brown)

Autobiographie und Religion. Zugänge und Konzepte

April 8, 2016

The penultimate colloquium of the Spring semester was given by **Jens Kugele** (Justus-Liebig-Universität Giessen), who presented a paper titled “Autobiographie und Religion. Zugänge und Konzepte.” Kugele’s paper approached the intersection of religion and literature from a new perspective within cultural and ethnographical studies. In the first part of the paper, Kugele gave an overview on the current discourse in cultural studies on the role of aesthetic representations of religion and its practices in contemporary secular times, and showed how the specific entanglement of religion and culture has shifted in recent years. The second part of the paper offered a close reading of Ruth Klüger’s autobiography *weiter leben* (1992).

Kugele argued that Klüger's text needs to be situated among other autobiographies of Jewish survivors of the Holocaust. He elaborated on the exceptional status of her writing, which is highly aware of the thematic and formal aspects of the genre's tradition, yet radically breaks with them. Through his analysis of rare descriptions of religious cultural practices in the text, Kugele was able to shed light on the complex relation of presence and absence of religion and the question of (self-)representation in Klüger's life writing. Despite Klüger's explicit omission of religion as a theme in her writing, the importance of religion for it, Kugele argued, cannot be neglected. One has to find a new language in cultural studies to approach Klüger's text, which cannot be grasped by a reading that separates the realms of religion and culture.

The discussion focused mainly on questions of genre, memory, and autobiographical writing, and on how Klüger's departure from certain elements of this tradition can be read in dialogue with Kugele's new approach on religion and culture. The discussion then moved to the formal aspects and effects of Klüger's writing and the question of creating distance not only between text and reader, but also between collective and individualized forms of community, which are so important for practices and formations of culture. (Annekatrin Sommer)



No Future? The Anti-Teleological Experimentation of the Prenzlauer Berg Poets

April 29, 2016

In her IGCS colloquium presentation "No Future? The Anti-Teleological Experimentation of the Prenzlauer Berg Poets," **Anna Horakova** (Cornell University) discussed how the collective of writers and artists situated in Berlin's Prenzlauer Berg during the GDR's last decade played with multimedial manipulation of found poetic language in order to wrest the notion of hope away from official party politics and reclaim it for the GDR's cultural underground.

Against the commonly employed three-generational model that has tended to view the Prenzlauer Berg poets as apolitical dropouts, Horakova argued that the collective continued the work of Bertolt Brecht and Heiner Müller and thus formulated a critique of the GDR's official politics and culture from

within socialism. Horakova's paper focused specifically on the artists' critique of official teleology, that is, the party's stipulation that literature and art ought to portray social progress and advances in production as the GDR's necessary temporal trajectory. Engaging with visual poetry by Prenzlauer Berg writers, Horakova suggested a line of continuation with the GDR's earlier avant-garde dramatists Brecht and Müller and their respective critiques of teleology as well as their "superficial optimism" that nonetheless viewed the GDR as "pregnant with future" (Brecht), albeit a future that needed to be won through political and aesthetic struggle.

Horakova delineated the development of Brecht's aesthetics from his pro-avant-garde counter position to Lukács in the 1930s German Expressionism Debates, to epic theater, up to Brecht's creation of new theatrical forms for a nascent socialist society. Analyzing Brecht's adaptation of Erwin Strittmatter's 1951 "agrodrama" *Katzgraben*, Horakova showed how Brecht's critical appropriation of the *Volksstück* genre focused on future challenges rather than achieved victories, yet nonetheless tends to substitute the radical open-endedness of Brecht's earlier



plays with more predetermined outcomes. By contrast, Horakova read Müller's 1963 play *Der Bau*—polysemically evoking Franz Kafka's eponymous story, the recently constructed Berlin Wall, and the construction site as metaphor for socialism—as a more critical work: While the play affirms a communist future, the worker endlessly building, demolishing, and rebuilding the same structure on stage makes palpable that such a future is unpredictable and perhaps unachievable with the GDR's existing means.

Against the backdrop of Brecht's and Müller's works, Horakova then examined the visual poetry of two Prenzlauer Berg artists on temporality and production as examples in a final chapter of the East German avant-garde. Burkhard Wunder's *Entwerter-Oder* (1986), a work of reprinting, repetition, and thus

creative re-appropriation of an artwork from the GDR's first *Aufbau* period, was interpreted by Horakova as mourning the promised future that never arrived, also exposing wounds inflicted in the process. Horakova interpreted Bert Papenfuß-Gorek's poem *Schriftbuch* as linguistic transubstantiation that breaks open the official language of progress, de-instrumentalizing and reconfiguring it in the process. Horakova concluded that the Prenzlauer Berg avant-garde was deeply rooted within the GDR and that their artistic experimentation, while criticizing official teleology, left open the possibility of a different, communist utopia. (Jette Gindner)

Incoming Visitor

An August Feodor Lynen Fellow in the German Department for the academic year 2016-17, **Dr. Christian Metz** received his Ph.D in German Literature at the Goethe-University, Frankfurt am Main, with a dissertation entitled *Die Narratologie der Liebe. Achim von Arnims Graefin Dolores*. His just completed habilitation *Kitzel. Studien zur Kultur eines menschlichen Reizes* is forthcoming in Fischer Verlag, as his study of contemporary lyric poetry *Poetisch Denken. Die Lyrik der Gegenwart*. For many years an assistant professor and research assistant at the Department of German in Frankfurt am Main, Dr. Metz was also chairperson of the Goethe-University's retraining program „Buch- und Medienpraxis“ (2003-08). In addition, he has taught at the Humboldt-University Berlin, the University Tromsø (Norway), and been a visiting professor for Prof. Dr. Moritz Bassler at the German Department, Westfälische Wilhelms-University, Münster (2014/2015). Dr. Metz is a regular contributor of literary criticism to the *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*. At Cornell, he is working on his current research project: "Poetik der Unschärfe."



Lectures and Events

Martin Heidegger Saved My Life

September 15, 2015

“Who on earth thanks Martin Heidegger these days?” It is with these words that **Grant Farred** (Africana Studies, Cornell University) ended the discussion after his one-hour lecture *Martin Heidegger Saved My Life*. A provocative statement, to be sure. Especially at this historical moment in which the name of Martin Heidegger is more often associated with antisemitism and Nazism than celebrated for its transformative or even life-saving power. Although the current attention for the more problematic aspects of Heidegger’s life and thought is certainly justified, Grant Farred’s reading of Heidegger clearly distinguished itself through a fresh and more affirmative rhetoric that sought to overcome the philosopher’s “blindness” head-on. And how else could he? Not only is the impact of the recent publication of Heidegger’s so-called *Schwarze Hefte* (2014) still very palpable throughout the Humanities, but how could a professor in the field of African Studies ever draw naively on Heidegger’s thought; that of a thinker who remained “hostile to ‘Senegalese negroes’ like me”? Above all else, Farred’s very personal account was an attempt to confront the “unthought” of Heidegger’s thinking, demonstrating how “the brilliance of Heidegger’s ‘blindness’” opens a space in which his thought attains an affirmative, and indeed life-saving quality.

The incentive for Grant Farred’s talk was the recent publication of his short but thought-provoking book *Martin Heidegger Saved My Life*. During this one-hour session in Cornell’s Toboggan Lodge, Professor Farred read several fragments of his partly autobiographical book in which he narrates of one of his personal encounters with American racism while he was raking leaves in front of his house in Cayuga Heights. It was his response to this event, the single sentence with which he countered a white woman’s question, whether “he would like another job,” that resonated throughout the passages that Farred presented: “Only if you can match my Cornell faculty salary.” The acuteness of his response formed the backdrop of the readings presented during the lecture, leading to an extensive reflection on how his engagement with Heidegger’s thinking prepared him for this particular confrontation with American racism. All these reflections, however, were haunted by another, and maybe even more pressing question: Why is it the thought of Martin Heidegger, this highly problematic figure in 20th century

philosophy, that prompted Farred’s response, confronting the woman with her own non-thinking? The answer is that Heidegger’s stress on what it means to think makes us not only attentive to the sources of our own thinking, but also prepares us to for these pressing moments in which we are called upon to speak. His engagement with Heidegger’s thought, and unthought, prepared Farred to speak-up after the woman’s question, thereby not only rendering her speechless, but also demonstrating the liberating power that Heidegger’s thinking still has. (Sander Oosterom)



Note: all quotes are from Grant Farred’s recently published book *Martin Heidegger Saved My Life*, published by the University of Minnesota Press in 2015.

The Transition from the Infinite to the Finite: Religion and German Literature, 1700-1770

April 20, 2016

On April 20, 2016, the ICGS hosted **John H. Smith** (European Languages and Studies, UC Irvine) for a special seminar entitled “The Transition from the Infinite to the Finite: Religion and German Literature, 1700-1770.” Smith pre-circulated a paper on the role of eighteenth-century religious poetry in transforming concepts of the finite and the infinite, opening the seminar by contextualizing this transformation within the scientific and mathematic developments of the time period. Leibniz and Newton’s almost contemporaneous discoveries of calculus in 1675 raised significant philosophical questions about the concepts of the infinite, continuity, and infinitesimal that served as calculating tools for this new science. Referring to Thomas Kuhn’s “structure of scientific revolution,” Smith argued that

over the course of the eighteenth century, the concept of the infinite was transformed from a shocking anomaly into a normal science, and that much of this work of normalization was carried out by religious literature – and specifically by religious poetry.

Therefore, a central tenant of his argument is that this transformation did not occur through a process of secularization, but through normalization, in which religious and secular worldviews intertwined. Smith maintained that religious poetry played a significant role in making the infinite experienceable and manageable within the finite world. In the religious poetry of the eighteenth century, the infinite entered the finite world as the subject of playful manipulation and the source of sublime pleasure. Smith offered examples of religious poetry from Andreas Gryphius, Albrecht Haller, Barthold Heinrich Brockes, and Friedrich Gottlieb Klopstock to demonstrate this process of normalization. After his presentation, seminar participants discussed

Smith’s paper as well as a set of readings, including selections of religious poetry and excerpts from Hans Blumenberg’s *Die Legitimität der Neuzeit* and David Wellbery’s *The Specular Moment*. (Leigh York)



Walter Benjamin in Voice Land

January 28, 2016

Philosopher and broadcast director at France Culture (Radio France/Paris) as well as author of *Au microphone – Dr. Walter Benjamin*, **Philippe Baudouin** presented his current work on critical theorist Walter Benjamin and radio, “Walter Benjamin in Voice Land,” at Cornell on January 28, 2016. Baudouin discussed not only Benjamin’s theorization of the medium of radio, on which Benjamin has comparatively few writings, but also Benjamin’s career on the radio, which spanned from August 1929 to January 1935. During this period, Benjamin broadcasted journalistic work, such as interviews and literary reviews. But where Benjamin really experimented with the medium, Baudouin suggested, was with radio plays for children. With this series of radio plays, Benjamin sought to explore the power of the medium for storytelling and narration, which, as per his 1936 text “The Storyteller,” (“Der Erzähler”), he considered to be in decline with the advent of modern media such as the novel and the newspaper.

Benjamin’s radio plays for children focused particularly on stories of historically insignificant and amoral individuals – bootleggers defying prohibition, witches and bandits. Baudouin suggested that Benjamin’s focus on these characters reflected his

broader interest in awakening forgotten history – the act of “brushing history against the grain” that is central to his own work of experimental history writing, the unfinished *Arcades Project* (*Passagen-Werk*). The amoral character of these characters further offered children an awareness of moral ambiguity lacking in the ideal moral universe of the average fairy-tale: a sort of “counter fairy-tale” intended to introduce children to the real world of human behavior. Benjamin also sought to explain the difference between mechanical and manual labor to children through a description of brass manufacturing, as a kind of Marxist introduction to alienation in the industrial era. Finally, Benjamin’s broadcasts also focused on discussions of major natural disasters, such as the Mississippi flood of 1922, the Lisbon earthquake of 1755 that so troubled the moralistic worldview of Enlightenment philosophers such as Rousseau, Voltaire, and Kant, and the destruction of Pompeii by the eruption of Mt. Vesuvius. Detailing these events, Baudouin suggested, was a way to demonstrate to children that the idea of historical progress central to modernity was a myth.

Above all, Baudouin argued that Benjamin’s experimentation with radio plays was an attempt to resurrect the idea of narration and storytelling with modern technical means. Central to this attempt was Benjamin’s reliance on the genre of the fairy-tale. In contrast to the alienating nature of myth, the



fairy-tale, Baudouin claimed, has an emancipating function as a genre. Influenced by the idea of a proletarian theater for children as a means of communist education promoted by the Latvian actress and theater director Asja Lācis, Benjamin thus sought to use the power of radio and narrative to make children actively aware of the myths central to the capitalist culture in which they found themselves. (Matteo Calla)

Relationality at the Boundary: Kant’s Other-Freedom

February 25, 2016

On February 25, 2016, **Gabriela Bastera** (NYU) presented a lecture at the A.D. White House titled “Relationality at the Boundary: Kant’s Other-Freedom,” co-sponsored by the department of Africana Studies. In her talk, Bastera examined Kant’s Third Antinomy in the *Critique of Pure Reason*, arguing that Kant’s notion of freedom ostensibly maintains the integrity of the non-alienated subject over natural necessity.

Bastera began by examining the thesis and antithesis of the Third Antinomy as they relate to the interpretation of “reason” and “freedom” in Kant. Underlying this discourse is the problem of freedom’s co-existence with natural necessity, the causal chain that connects sensible appearances to the negative noumena conceptually underlying them. The thesis, she explained, proposes the existence of freedom as the explanatory foundation of the causality of appearances, whereas the antithesis denies the existence of freedom in the realm of natural causality. In relation to this antinomy, Bastera claimed that one



should conceive the concepts “freedom” and “reason” in terms of the *synthesis* of both thesis

and antithesis. As a result of this synthesis, Bastera argued in favor of an understanding of freedom that both is internal to the subject and remains simultaneously an inaccessible *other* to it. Thus, Bastera interprets the Third Antinomy as an interplay, not a cancelling, of propositions: the thesis forms the relationship of freedom to the subject, whereas the antithesis forms the subject’s boundary.

In the second part of the lecture, Bastera explored the implications of her interpretation for an understanding of Kant’s theory of autonomy. On the one hand, she proposed that the law in Kant appears to the subject as the *other* that befalls reason, while morality serves the role of fulfilling the *spirit* of the law. As a result, Bastera argued that autonomy can be similarly conceived as “believing oneself the author of a law that one has received.” Alternatively, she formulated this view as “finding something within oneself that originates from that which is external to reason.” Elaborating on this interpretation, Bastera maintained that it does not imply a conception of split subjectivity, but that this theory forms a non-alienated subjectivity in which the otherness of freedom co-exists within the subject alongside reason. (David Dunham)

The Frankfurt School on Israel

March 14, 2016

On March 14, 2016, **Jack Jacobs** (Political Science, John Jay College – CUNY) presented a paper titled “The Frankfurt School on Israel.” The lecture began with Jacobs’s explanation of the fact that the Institute for Social Research at the Goethe University in Frankfurt was never an explicitly Jewish institution. At first it concerned itself primarily with topics related to the labor movement, socialism, and economic history. From 1931 onward – during Max Horkheimer’s tenure as the institute’s director when Critical Theory also began to crystallize – the institute’s desire was to promote interdisciplinary research on major questions. Hardly any of the articles in the institute’s most important periodical, the *Zeitschrift für Sozialforschung*, touched on Jewish subjects. Nevertheless, during the years of the Weimar Republic, the Third Reich and the decades that followed World War Two, Jewish matters had a significant influence over key members of the Institute. According to Jacobs, the Jewish heritage of leading Frankfurt School members, namely Max Horkheimer, Leo Löwenthal, Erich Fromm, and Herbert Marcuse, at some point gained in relevance, and paying attention to them helps us understand not only the issues on which the leaders of the School



chose to focus, but also some of their ideas.

According to Jacobs, none of the Frankfurt School writers were sympathetic to Zionism in the period immediately after the Second World War. This basic consensus appeared in their attitudes towards the state of Israel in the decades that followed the state’s foundation. Jacobs suggested that the writers’ views on Israel were heavily influenced by their relationship to Judaism or their family heritage. According to Jacobs, the deeper the thinker’s familiarity with Judaism, the

stronger the thinker’s critique of Israel. For example, Fromm, who was the critical theorist with the strongest grounding in Judaism was also the most inclined to be critical of the state in the post-Holocaust era. Marcuse, who was the least knowledgeable about Judaism, was also the one least inclined to continue raising fundamental questions about the state. Horkheimer and Löwenthal occupy the middle ground: they were more familiar with Judaism than Marcuse, but less familiar with it than Fromm. Unlike Marcuse, both of them were uneasy about Israel’s relationship to specific Jewish religious traditions. Unlike Fromm, on the other hand, they most definitively did not oppose the continued existence of the Jewish state at any point after its creation.

Jacobs also noted that there were a number of sharp, crosscutting disagreements among the members of the Frankfurt School in the post-Holocaust era and that the issue of Israel was emotionally significant to all these theorists. Their relationships to Judaism and their heritage impacted the theorists not only in their Weimar and exile years, but also in the last decades of their lives. (Pedro Alemany)

Wrong Sex and the City: Polish Work Migration and Subaltern Masculinity

November 16, 2015

On November 16, **Dirk Uffelmann** (University of Passau) gave a presentation titled “Wrong Sex and the City: Polish Work Migration and Subaltern Masculinity.” Uffelmann’s presentation was organized by Jane Juffer (English/ FGSS) and co-sponsored by Cornell’s Feminist, Gender, and Sexuality Studies. The lecture tackled the paradoxical self-proletarianization and the intersection of gender and class in the prose by Polish migrants to Germany, Ireland, and the UK in the 1980s. Uffelmann observed that labor constitutes the founding myth of “the new Polish emigration.” One of his main theses was that work and social mobility predominate in migrant literature, independently of the country to which they migrate or the language of the texts. Literature by male and female writers portrays the low-skilled work performed by the recent wave of migrants; many Polish writers do so by means of a paradoxical self-proletarianization. These migrants, who previously completed higher education in Poland, are forced to accept low-skilled work, something that necessarily

entails a socio-economic self-demotion.

Uffelmann noted that success stories do take place in this body of literature, citing the example of, among others, Beata Martynek, a character in the novel *Londoners*. In the case of male authors and protagonists, however, the picture looks dramatically different, as the Polish migrant characters in novels such as Dariusz Muszer’s *Die Freiheit riecht nach Vanille* or Leszek Herman’s *Der Klub der polnischen Wurstmenschen* exemplify. These male migrant protagonists are forced to lower their standards in their new society. The necessity to take on employment beneath their qualifications imposes a psychological challenge. Uffelmann provided examples of characters who even compare themselves to African slaves, as some Polish migrants consider themselves the self-made slaves of the twentieth-first century. Nevertheless, these migrants are portrayed most of the time as having internal freedom of reflection, and although the contrast with alienated factory labor seems especially salient, their misery becomes transformed into a creative artistic device.

Uffelmann explained that the migrant authors’ apolitical and even anti-socialist

attitudes can be combined with fictional and/or biographical self-proletarianization. This self-proletarianization extends to the authors themselves, whom he analyzed using dust cover biographies through the paradigm of paratextuality. Uffelmann argued that the resulting theoretical challenge is to elaborate how such an apparent reproduction nevertheless goes beyond the “vulgar” Marxist concept of *Widerspiegelung*. According to Uffelmann, Marxism serves less as a theoretical inspiration than as a discursive resource for conceptualizing the mechanism of paradoxical re-evaluation that can be traced in the interrelated strategies of self-proletarianization. (Pedro Alemany)



Organized by Peter Uwe Hohendahl with Paul Fleming

Theory Transfer: The Fate of German Theory in the United States September 16-17, 2016



FRIDAY, SEPTEMBER 16, 3PM

181 Goldwin Smith Hall

Opening Colloquium with RALF KLAUSNITZER

(Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin)

Wege des Wissens und ihre Rekonstruktion.

Konzepte und Verfahren zur Beschreibung epistemischer Wanderungen

Abstracts copies of his paper will be available at the Dept. of German Studies, 181 Goldwin Smith Hall

SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 17

401 PHYSICAL SCIENCES BUILDING

9:30am Steffen Martus / Carlos Spoerhase *Humboldt University-Berlin*

Zur Lokalität des Theoretisierens

10:30am Ethel Matala de Mazza *Humboldt University-Berlin*

Critical Theory abroad. Kracauer über Massenpropaganda

11:30am Leslie Adelson *Cornell University*

Critical Theory and Narratology: Heliotropic Storytelling with Alexander Kluge

2pm Max Pensky *SUNY - Binghamton*

Trans-Atlantic Habermas; Transferring Theory, Transforming Philosophy

3pm Peter Gilgen *Cornell University*

Form and History: The (Failed) Reception of Niklas Luhmann in America

4:30pm Labor, Markets, and Dissemination: the Impact of Institutional Forces

PANEL with Paul Fleming, Kizer Walker (CUL) & Mahinder Kingra (CUP)

Moderator: Peter Hohendahl

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Institute for German Cultural Studies

2016 Writer in Residence



Photo by Kirsten Thibber

Kathrin Röggla

Monday, August 29, 4:30pm
Literary Reading
Nachtsendung. Unheimliche Geschichten
A.D. White House
Reception to follow

Friday, September 2, 3pm
Compact Seminar *
Stottern
als ästhetische Strategie
201 A.D. White House
*pre-registration required - advance readings this

Tuesday, September 6, 4:30pm
Cornell Lecture on Contemporary Aesthetics
*Literatur und Zukunft,
Literatur als Stoff des Zukünftigen*
A.D. White House
Reception to follow

Kathrin Röggla's prolific writing spans multiple genres, including narrative prose, theater texts, and radio plays. Her work has been recognized with numerous awards: *Wie Nasser Sleep* (2004) was awarded the SWR-Bestenliste-Prize and the Bruno Kresky Prize for the best political book. Her 2010 theater piece *worst case* won the Nestroy Theater Prize. *die alambanistan* (2010) was recognized with the Franz Hessel Prize. Since 2015 she is the Vice-President of the Berlin Academy for the Arts.

For additional information or to request special accommodations, please contact Olga Petrova at ogp2@cornell.edu

INSTITUTE FOR GERMAN CULTURAL STUDIES FALL 2016 COLLOQUIUM SERIES

Fridays @ 3pm
181 Goldwin Smith Hall

September 16

Ralf Klausnitzer Institut für deutsche Literatur, Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin

Wege des Wissens und ihre Rekonstruktion.

Konzepte und Verfahren zur Beschreibung epistemischer Wanderungen



October 14

Pál Kelemen Institut für deutsche Literatur, Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin

Käfige und Lauben.

Schauplätze der Bildung und Infrastruktur des Alltags (Stifter)

November 4

Doris Bachmann-Medick International Graduate Centre for the Study
of Culture, Justus-Liebig-Universität Giessen

Migration as Translation

December 2

Erik Born German Studies, Cornell University

Patent Fiction: The Poetics of Invention in Imperial Germany

Additional information about all events listed is available on our website: <http://igcs.cornell.edu>. Event listings will be updated throughout the semester. If you would like to be added to our mailing list, please contact Olga Petrova (ogp2@cornell.edu).

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

Contributions to German Culture News are welcome. If you would like an event listed or have a brief review or article to submit, please contact Olga Petrova (ogp2@cornell.edu).

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