Tragic Legacies:
Antigone and Oedipus in Literature, Philosophy and Psychoanalysis

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Organized by **Anette Schwarz** (Cornell German), "Tragic Legacies: Antigone and Oedipus in Literature, Philosophy and Psychoanalysis" was a two-day international conference exploring the uncanny persistence of the tragic figures Antigone and Oedipus across the human sciences. Schwarz's opening remarks emphasized not only the multiple valences and interpretations of this tragic legacy – from questions of kinship to Idealist aesthetics – but also its on-going role in shaping the humanities today, a fact reflected in the diverse fields of the specialists she invited to participate.

Andrea Krauss (Johns Hopkins University) gave the first presentation of the "Tragic Legacies" conference. Her talk, entitled "Allegories of Kinship: Book 2 in Goethe's *From My Life: Poetry and Truth*" looked at the "New Paris" fairy tale in Goethe's autobiographical text. The fairy tale had previously been read as an allegory for antiquity regained; in Krauss' reading, the shedding of clothes marks a turning away from the rococo and towards antiquity, inasmuch as the fairy tale cites and thereby revives the ancient myth of Paris. The rhetoric of the rococo is discarded as part of an aesthetic coming of age in Goethe's discussion of his youth. Krauss, however, expressed skepticism about whether such a process of shedding the rococo plays out in this way, given the implication of forward progress that does not overlook the larger hermeneutic problems posed in the story.

According to Krauss, Goethe seeks to move beyond the rococo in his desire for the figure of Alerte, but in the fairy tale the old man puts the rococo clothes back on the boy and sends him back to the beginning of his kinship enterprise, because his desire is merely a matter of selfish possession. Krauss then noted that the second book of the autobiography is actually

determined by discontinuous kinship relations: the Seven Years War, in particular, has split apart the family as everyone takes different sides. Instead, kinship in the fairy tale becomes less a question of biological reproduction and more a matter of mediation: in one instance, the boy seeks to track down his noble grandfather by looking at pictures, hoping to establish a sense of kinship through a semiotic network based in a theory of physiognomy. This quest fails simply because the boy discovers so many similar traits that he is left with a grotesque network of unlimited kinship. The lack of linearity is also inscribed into the space of the garden in which the boy sheds his clothes. The garden paths are characterized by a convoluted indeterminacy recalling the late Baroque, i.e. the rococo, and the boy's path to the poetic purity of antiquity is constantly thwarted.

Crucial for Krauss' argument against a reading that posits that the text is an allegory of antiquity regained is Goethe's critique of allegory itself. For Goethe, allegory is a kind of intellectual game that reduces the aesthetic object. Unlike the symbol, allegory forces us to make use of arbitrary signs, challenging understanding and making it a temporal act. We see this skepticism towards allegory within the story, as the boy wishes to return to the garden and take up the circle that leads back to antiquity, without subjecting it to interpretation. (Alexander Phillips)

In his talk on "Idealist Genealogies," **Joshua Billings** (Yale University) traced the origins of German Idealist thought on tragedy back to two separate strands: first, a long-standing tradition that takes *Oedipus the King* as the paradigmatic tragic drama; second, a new approach modeled on *Antigone* that only emerges with Hölderlin and Hegel. If the first strand tends to negotiate freedom as an epistemological

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question of the limits and possibility of knowledge (the relation of Oedipus' ignorance to his responsibility), the second understands freedom in social, political, and historical terms (Antigone as a rebel).

The first tradition enters Idealist thought via Schiller's Kant-inspired reading of *Oedipus the King* as suggesting a negative proof of freedom. According to this reading, Oedipus demonstrates his freedom by freely consenting to his fate and thereby turning natural necessity into a free act. In the famous tenth letter

of the *Philosophical Letters on Dogmatism and Criticism*, Schelling adopts this conception and interprets Oedipus' free acceptance of fate as the point of indifference between freedom and necessity. This 'Stoic' conception of tragic freedom as self-sacrifice also becomes the model for Hegel's and Hölderlin's early Christological reflections on tragedy. Working together in Frankfurt, Hölderlin and Hegel develop accounts that converge in seeing individual self-sacrifice as leading to collective resurrection in the spiritual life of the community.

Billings then argued that Hölderlin's *Antigone* translation in 1804 prompts a reorientation in Hegel's and Hölderlin's thought on Greek tragedy. Turning away from earlier epistemological and theological concerns, they now see the question of tragic freedom as rooted in the social and political life of the ancient Greeks. Billings listed two genuinely new ideas that Hegel and Hölderlin contributed to modern reflection on tragedy. The first concerns the connection between tragedy and political transformation. Hegel and Hölderlin read Antigone's revolt as negotiating the historical emergence of a new form of individualism, qualifying tragedy as a model for working through the violence of the French revolution and other political transformations. Second, and relatedly, Hegel and Hölderlin emphasize the historical specificity of Greek tragedy. Tragedy becomes for them the paradigm for reflecting about antiquity and modernity, and for understanding each through the

other. Billings concluded his talk by arguing that, in contrast to the a-historical, universalizing tendencies predominant in Schelling, Hegel and Hölderlin introduce a new, paradoxical form of universalism: according to this model, Greek tragedy is pertinent to modern questions not despite, but because of its rootedness in the Greek historical-political situation and its specific difference to modernity. (Johannes Wankhammer)

In her lecture, "Antigone's Choice for the Destiny of Niobe: Hölderlin's 'Remarks on Antigone' in the Writings of Paul de Man," **Cynthia Chase** (Cornell University) explored the role of Hölderlin's reflections on Sophocles' *Antigone* in the works of Paul de Man. Chase began her lecture by focusing on the unusual role of Rosseau in both Hölderlin and de Man. In essays he wrote in the 1950s, de Man describes Rousseau as Western as Antigone is Greek. Understanding what de Man can mean by this was the guiding thread of the subsequent investigation.

The key to understanding why Rousseau is the Western Antigone lies in rethinking the accepted narrative that Hölderlin saw antiquity through nostalgic eyes as a time of simple unity in which humans and gods dwelled together. Rather, Chase argues that Hölderlin makes two fundamental claims regarding historical consciousness that complicate this picture. First, Hölderlin claims that it is the chief tendency of any age to represent in poetic language that which is foreign. For the Greeks, what this means is

that their poetic language actually moves away from that which is their own, i.e., sensual unity, towards that which is foreign, i.e., clarity, distance, and objective thought. Second, it is hardest, according to Chase's reading of Hölderlin, to appropriate what is actually one's own. This appropriation goes against the trend and in doing so constitutes a renunciation. In this sense the Greeks were not superior to the

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moderns because they experienced a pantheistic unity, as Schiller would have it, but because, for Hölderlin, they had the courage to appropriate what was their own. Sophocles' Antigone is exemplary in this respect, for in unifying her fate with Niobe and choosing to become a stone, Antigone accepts and appropriates what is her own: the dark density of substance, represented by the stone. In choosing to become stone, she does not flee herself, but appropriates what is her own.

What de Man means when he says that Rousseau is the Western Antigone, Chase argues, is that Rousseau, too, appropriates what is his own. Western poetry,

too, translates what is foreign to its spirit, that is, the sensuous and the immediate. For de Man, Rousseau, like Antigone before him, opposes the trend of poeticizing the foreign in an act of renunciation. In being the writer of simple clarity, Rousseau steps in for both Hölderlin and de Man as a figure who appropriates his own in an act of renunciation. (Stephen Klemm)

Kathrin Rosenfield (Federal University of Rio Grande do Sul in Brazil) gave a reading of Hölderlin's *Antigone* translation while discussing her own stage production of the play. Rosenfield explained how both her academic and creative work have been inspired by the musical tradition in Brazil. While the Portuguese and Brazilian traditions did not include tragedy and instead were described by Rosenfield as a pendulum between the comical and the lyrical, she found that there is still a living tradition of art forms in Brazil that she only knew from medieval culture, including the *peleja*, oral transmission of texts, and the carnival. She was also inspired by the movement of Brazilian *Concretismo*, which was dedicated to the re-creation (as opposed to translation) of canonical texts from the Bible to Goethe's *Faust* and including the works of Homer.

This environment caused her to rethink the concept of tragedy, and inspired an approach to Hölderlin's translation of *Antigone* that differed from the academic interpretations with which she was familiar. She suggested that Hölderlin's text was not a particularly

loose translation, but – quite the opposite – proof of a better and deeper understanding of classical tragedy as compared to other interpretations of the classical texts.

Rosenfield pointed out that Hölderlin's translation was the only one that used the word "bacchic" in reference to the battle between the brothers Eteocles and Polyneice, suggesting that their fight is not one between order and chaos, but rather evinces a sacrifice and a fight between equals. On the other hand, the dispute between Antigone and Creon is portrayed as a political conflict between the royal and the non-royal lineage in Theban genealogy – rooted in the institution of the epiclerate – which made Antigone the successor to the Theban throne after her brother's death and gave her cousin and fiancé, Creon's son, access to the throne only as her husband. For Rosenfield, Hölderlin shows an emphatic understanding of the Greek tradition that other translators are lacking and thus manages to capture the ironic and polysemic nature of the Greek text. This explains why, for her stage production of *Antigone*, Rosenfield chose to use a Portuguese retranslation of Hölderlin's text, which focused on the similarities between the fighting brothers and the representation of Antigone as a fierce and strong woman. (Hannah Müller)

The first day of the conference ended with a roundtable discussion on the contemporary relevance of Greek tragedy with **Elisabeth Anker, Cathy Caruth, Paul Fleming** (Cornell University) and **Elisabeth Strowick** (Johns Hopkins University). The roundtable began with introductory statements by all four participants.

According to Elizabeth Strowick, Greek tragedy offers a model for rethinking kinship relations: the uniquely tragedy-prone House of Labdacus (which includes Oedipus and Antigone) is, after all, constituted by the

Strowick, Fleming, Anker, Caruth

speech act of a curse. Based on this model, Strowick suggested understanding kinship as "serially performative" – as constituted by the performative force of cursing that gets transmitted among the members of a kinship series and thus constitutes the kinship in the first place. Presenting four related theses, Paul Fleming criticized that (1) the words "tragedy" and "tragic" are overused in American political discourse, as they (2) are used indiscriminately for all horrific events. Tragedy, however, specifically implies (3) a catastrophe brought about by constitutive internal contradictions that can be understood and that therefore suggest "legible loss" rather than randomly terrible events. The current inflationary usage is problematic not least because it (4) tends to cloak political and structural causes of catastrophic events. Next, Elizabeth Anker described *Antigone* as a conflict between (uncodifiable) ethics and (universalizable) morality and legality. Building on Agambenian concepts, she presented the tragedy as a struggle between Creon as a "Schmittian" sovereign and Antigone as an example of "bare life" stripped of all legal rights. Anker proposed that Antigone's defiance of legal authority should serve as a model for the "law-less" literary imagination, and that humanistic inquiry has a responsibility to keep the defiant spirit of Antigone alive. Finally, Cathy Caruth suggested that *Oedipus Rex* is not only central to classical Freudian theory, but can also help us understand the structure of trauma and repetition compulsion as well as their role within the Freudian oeuvre. Oedipus' name famously commemorates the piercing of his ankles as a child and the resulting life-long limp; this figure of external wounding thus challenges classical Freudian readings of the Oedipus complex as a conflict internal to the psyche. Caruth also related this figure to Freud's theoretical self-wounding through later revisions of his classical theory, as well as to the need to bear witness to the

devastating historical wounds of the twentieth century.

Two focal points emerged in the ensuing discussion: the political significance of tragedy, and its relevance for thinking and writing psychoanalytic theory. The first strand of the discussion critically examined the uses and abuses of tragedy (as a structure that implies necessary suffering) for political discourse, exploring comedy as a possible alternative. The second strand identified various links between tragedy and the Freudian concept of repetition compulsion. Linking both strands

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was the suggestion that if the tragic has the form of repetition, then literary figurations may be able to break up repetition and introduce difference (thus wrenching a life drive from the death drive, and heralding political change). (Johannes Wankhammer)

Ulrike Vedder's (Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin) paper, "Trauma and Myth: Antigone in Postwar Literature," examined literary adaptations

of Sophocles' *Antigone* written by Bertolt Brecht, Elisabeth Langgässer, Nelly Sachs, and Grete Weil after 1945. Though Antigone served as the preferred character to depict constellations of power, violence, war, and resolution after World War II, scholars such as Käte Hamburger argue that, after National Socialism, we can no longer identify with the form of resistance for which she stood in antiquity.

This in mind, Vedder probed indexes of the afterlife of the text and its resonances as late as the 1980s. In Brecht's 1948 adaptation "Die Antigone des Sophokles," based on Hölderlin's translation, Antigone serves as a literary model for making violence rational and political after the war. Brecht's combination of epic and dramatic form produces a reflective distance from the contemporary power struggles indexed in the play, while literal correspondences with the Nazi era foreground the play's historical over its mythical context. This "Durchrationalisierung" of the literary model is thus, according to Heiner Müller, less about appropriating the classical work than putting it to work in a contemporary context. In contrast, Langgässer's "Die getreue Antigone" (1947) shifts the Antigone story to an explicitly Christian context that erases specific political tensions among social roles and universalizes Antigone as a symbol of fidelity. Transformed into a story about redemption through religion, love, and nature, Langgässer's work closes the potential of the literary adaptation as an engagement with history through a gesture of universal humanism. Nelly

Sachs's 1957 poem "Und niemand weiß weiter" weaves together Antigone's story and the biblical story of Rizpah through concepts and images related through juxtaposition and intersection. The telescoping of ancient and recent past encompasses both the trauma of the Holocaust, marked by belatedness and repetition, and the circular, repetitive simultaneity of the living and the dead. In Sachs's poem, ashes of concentration camps resonate with the dust of Antigone's struggle so as not to elide the historical specificity of Nazi persecution, but rather to recognize the desire for survival or a solution to tyranny, despite its impossibility.

Vedder concluded with readings of Grete Weil's novels *Meine Schwester Antigone* (1980) and *Generationen* (1983). The former parallels its narrator's discussion of her failure to write a novel about Antigone as the protagonist falls apart in the course of the novel with Antigone's own fate. Weil takes up the figure to both order traumatic memories through identification and to mythologize the story, but it doesn't quite work. Weil's Antigone carries out her desired act – shooting an SS officer – but her action comes too late. Inverting the line "not in your hate, but in your love I'm there," Weil's novel shows how Antigone's path to the ancient land of the murderers, enabled through love, is possible in dreams but not on earth, where only survival, not yet redemption, is possible. In *Generationen*, a narrator now distanced from the historical trauma relates her inability to process what she thought and heard at the time. However, the series of

textual engagements with Antigone from antiquity through the postwar period preserve the trauma through the iteration of its form. (Katrina Nousek)

In his talk entitled "Myth of the Father: Psychoanalytic Perspectives on Fatherhood," **Erik Porath** (Zentrum für Literatur- und Kulturforschung Berlin) offered a rich account of the mythic, historical and theoretical influences of Oedipal tragedies for Freud's psychoanalytic work. Porath's talk attempted to show how and why Freud draws on ancient tragic constellations in *Oedipus Rex* for his conceptualization of the late nineteenth-century bourgeois subject.

As Porath demonstrated, Freud's personal biography figures decisively in his emphasis on the Oedipal tragedy, not least in the role played by the death of his own father for the development of the psychoanalytic method of dream analysis. Freud finds a model for a son's ambivalent relation to his father – the son's death wish against the father coupled with the son's veneration of him – in the Oedipus tragedy, which then becomes a shibboleth and founding myth for Freud's psychoanalytic theory. Porath's account emphasized that the dramatic material of the myth as a text is equally important for Freud as a medium for self-analysis: the spectator moved by Oedipus' destiny in the ancient tragedy becomes aware of her own impotence in a way that modern drama fails to achieve. As Porath suggested, Freud sees in the ancient myth an enduring tragic effect on contemporary audiences that stems

from the tragic material's universal, anthropological dimension, from the fact that Oedipus' destiny might have been one's own.

Yet, as Porath made clear, an important historical and ontogenetic difference between the ancient protagonist and the contemporary spectator lies in the disgust experienced by the audience in seeing the drama. If the audience shrinks back with the full force of repression upon viewing the tragedy, the aversion nevertheless leads to the

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acquisition of self-knowledge, which, as Porath explained, is made accessible for Freud through dreams and literature. As a primal myth of father-son relations, the tragedy of Oedipus is fundamental to Freudian psychoanalysis not only for its dramatic presentation of self-knowledge and the loss of godly authority, or for the conflict it stages between freedom and destiny with its drama of succession and lineage, but most significantly because it establishes a patrilineal genealogy as the basis of Freud's psychoanalytic project reflective of his own biography. (Nathan Taylor)

In her talk, "Oedipus' Universal Tragedy," **Miriam Leonard** (University College London) retraced how *Oedipus the King* has been mobilized as a paradigm for the relationship between freedom and necessity. In the wake of thinkers such as Schelling and Freud, tragedy functions as an inescapable reference point for modernity, providing political and philosophical discourse with various models of humanism and universalism. Yet the particular distribution of gender roles dictated by Freud's theorization of the Oedipal complex already complicates the universalist aspirations of classical tragedy, a point explicitly raised in Freud's later thought and present in his work from the beginning.

In an early letter to Wilhelm Fliess, Freud first foregrounds his own experience of maternal sexual attraction, and only later replaces this with the putatively universal structure contained in Sophocles' play. For Freud, if playgoers continue to enjoy it, this is because it speaks to something universal and can thus function as a model of subjectivity. And indeed, Schelling had already drawn on *Oedipus* to work through a fundamental dilemma in human subjectivity: namely, the difficulty of reconciling freedom and necessity. If Greek tragedy posed a paradox for Greek reason, *Oedipus* is also able for precisely this reason to show how one proves one's freedom by losing it. In choosing to suffer for a crime he didn't willingly commit, Oedipus simultaneously asserts his autonomy. In this sense, art is able to think in a way that is useful for philosophy, yet despite these insights, Oedipus'

aporia demonstrates that art cannot but "go down fighting." Schelling invokes tragedy as a way to understand reason itself, and not just Greek reason – *Oedipus* provides him with a model for philosophy, subjectivity, and humanity. Despite the difference between Freud's and Schelling's uses of *Oedipus*, they thus both see the tragedy as revealing the universal structure of an opposition between necessity and freedom; both share the Oedipal conviction that Greek tragedy holds the key to existential concerns of modernity.

Later thinkers have since problematized or reworked the universality of *Oedipus*. If Foucault sees the tragedy as a particularly social, political representation of tyrannical power and not as a universal model for humanity, Judith Butler's Antigone is both universal and political to the extent that the family is always a political question. While untangling the relationship between tragedy, humanism, and universalism remains a project still in the making, Leonard closed her talk by again invoking Schelling: we should rejoice that we have at least reached the crossroads of these concepts. (Carl Gelderloos)

In her presentation titled "Tragic Paternity," **Silke-Maria Weineck** (University of Michigan) argued that fatherhood itself is tragic, claiming that tragedy consists of a combination of kinship and politics, both of which are often ascribed to fatherhood. The tragedy within paternity itself is based on these two features. Regarded as an institutional, affirmative role, fatherhood becomes associated with political authority, whereas any biological

or ideological approach allows for a more flexible understanding of paternity as such. The result is a competing claim to legitimacy between fatherhoods.

Turning to the Greek myth of Laius, Weineck elucidated her claims through the example of an invisible father: a father who never speaks for himself, but rather only speaks through others. He therefore needs to be understood as an absent father in the Freudian

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and Lacanian sense: a mere product of sonhood. Admittedly, paternity is always linked to and created by the naming of the word, but the father's own voicelessness calls his status as father into question. Modernity, however, has not shown interest in the myth even though it can be regarded as the purest literary instance of the power of absence and presence at once. Only Pasolini and Hofmannsthal have reactivated the dark figure of Laius as a paradigm of the bad father.

Weineck then took up the story of Oedipus, Laius' son, as yet another example of the Aristotelian idea of kinship as the representation of paternal government. Growing up

without any parental caregiver, Oedipus' self-image is self-made; nevertheless, he aims for absolute autonomy to restore the social order – just like his father. By establishing paternity as a legal state, Freud was primarily responsible for Oedipus' reception as a kind of political father. Accordingly, Greek mythology identifies patricide as the foundation of relational murder – even if Laius' attempt to murder Oedipus failed – used as a political means, while the Bible establishes filicide. Abraham, the perpetrator of the most famous near-infanticide of the Old Testament, represents paternal power, tyranny, and child abuse; the analogy to Laius is thus not so far-fetched. Instrumentalized and bound by a covenant with God, Abraham shifts from being the biological father of his sons to being the political father of many. Even if Abraham's fatherhood is anything but self-evident, it testifies to two conclusions of the presentation: first, there cannot be one single model of paternity; and second, the father is incomplete without absolute power – he is tragic. (Anna-Sophie Koch)

Olga Taxidou's (University of Edinburgh) presentation "The Mother Trope in Greek Tragedy" touched as much on issues of Greek tragedy as on those of modernist performance. The beginning of Taxidou's paper foregrounded the mother trope as less related to reproduction and more to theatricality, through which this trope functions on stage. Discussing the stage as an artistic medium, Taxidou further elaborated on it by setting up Plato's account of the inferiority of imitation

against the stage as "a dark mirror" where tragedy functions as an intellectual intuition – a conceptualization of the stage for which she argued.

Evoking Artaud's and Brecht's aesthetics of cruelty, Taxidou began her analysis of Euripides' *The Bacchae*. In the play, Dionysus wants to punish the family of king Pentheus who dishonored him. Having detected the desire of King Pentheus to see the raging Bacchants, he disguises Pentheus as a woman and, having taken him to the Bacchants, he tells them about the guise; they then tear Pentheus apart. Agave, Pentheus's mother, collects the king's severed head and, under the spell of Zeus, takes it home, mistaking it for a head of a mountain lion that she herself has killed; further killings and banishment ensue. There is pointless but no sacrificial violence in *The Bacchae*, Taxidou commented. The play's Dionysian violence does not correct the world that is out of joint by means of a sacrificial system of calculation: the sole benefactor of the violence in *The Bacchae*, Taxidou concluded, is thus theater. *The Bacchae* is about the birth of tragedy, bridging the distance between theater-as-philosophy and theater-as-theater. As such, the play hinges between mythical violence, which Taxidou identified as tantamount to a demand for sacrifice, and divine violence, which she described as the law-making, pure power based on trauma and performance. It is, she argued, the relationship to the divine that makes the play especially cruel. It has been argued that Euripides' rendition of the divine betrayed his atheism (as a critique of the divine); Taxidou, however, contends that this is more about reflection on theater. By representing a type of divine violence, Dionysus embodies theater itself, giving rise to an aesthetics of cruelty, which resists its dissolution into an orgy of emotion and reflects on the potential of the tragic experience itself.

Having started as a tragic playwright, the older Plato later burned the tragedies he had written at a younger age. The Platonic critique of theater is tied to the medium's spectacularization of democracy, and as Taxidou pointed out, evidence exists that the play led to Plato's figure of the rhapsode. Written in Euripides's self-imposed exile, *The Bacchae* has been often understood by critics as a response to this critique. (Anna Horakova)

In her keynote address, entitled "How Do You Solve a Problem Like Medea? Parental Positions in Euripides and Freud," **Rachel Bowlby** (University College London) considered the status of parenthood in *Medea* to suggest that Greek tragedy might still have much to teach psychoanalysis. Although Euripides is often relegated to a secondary status relative to Sophocles and Aeschylus, he offers crucial insights for psychology precisely because of the analytic, rational cast that earned him the opprobrium of Nietzsche and Freud.

For Bowlby, Euripides' analytic, reflexive explorations of parental feeling could have benefitted Freudian psychoanalysis, which foregrounds the perspective of the child and dismisses parenthood and the wish for a child as secondary phenomena. The parent-child relationship is asymmetrical; where childhood is a temporally bounded state one grows out of, the end of parenthood has a different significance. "Childlessness," in turn, most often refers to not yet having a child, and is thereby bound up with the wish for having a child, a wish that cannot be reciprocal. Even in *Oedipus*, the vexed nature of parenthood is modeled by Oedipus' two sets of parents, a dimension of the play Freud ignores in favor of the Oedipal perspective. *Medea*, by contrast, foregrounds the contradictions of parenthood. The chorus sings of the death of a child as the worst possible human life event, but Medea brings this about by killing her two children to avenge her husband's faithlessness. For Bowlby, this demonstrates overlapping and competing feelings between erotic and parental love: in killing her boys to remind Jason of his love for them and thus for her, Medea is able to kill them as the children of her faithless lover, but not as her own children. Similarly, she kills them by means of the same thing – *pharmakoi* – with which she administers a fertility treatment to the king of Athens early in the play.

What *Medea* ultimately suggests in this context is that childlessness and the wish for a child may be a separate, primary phenomenon in its own right. While Freud used *Oedipus* as a model for human sexuality and subjectivity grounded in the child's perspective, *Medea* still has much to tell psychoanalysis about the relationship between subjectivity, desire, and parenthood. (Carl Gelderloos)

Barbara Köhler
Artist in Residence 2013

On April 4, 2013, **Barbara Köhler** read from a selection of her published and unpublished multimedia poetic works. She began the reading with an unpublished piece on "Schriftstellen" that probed temporal, spatial, grammatical, and subjective possibilities of language. By taking variations of the words *Schrift* and *stellen* as a point of departure, Köhler's text wove semantic and non-semantic relationships through literal and phonetic combinations. She accompanied her reading with projected images of thick, building-block-like letters "V O R" and "H E R" set upright, turned, and set sideways, suggesting the prefixes to *vorstellen* and *herstellen*. Both the series of images and the poem became cites of linguistic play for the material manipulation of language by hand (as pictured) and by mouth, as Köhler's musical delivery compellingly foregrounded the constant, but never repetitious rhythm of her works.

Köhler then turned to selections from *Neufundland. Schriften, teils bestimmt* (2012), a collection of poetry, prose poems, and short essayistic works from which she read the preface, "Zum Beispiel," "Elf ½," and "The Most Beautiful." "Tor Differenz," a photo series depicting soccer goals collected on her various walks around Duisberg, accompanied her reading of "Zum Beispiel." Köhler concluded with selections from *Niemands Frau. Gesänge.* (2007), a contemporary version of *The Odyssey* that integrates literary and historical figures in complex, intertextual relationships spanning antiquity and modernity. A short film of superimposed waves and water formed the backdrop for Köhler's recitation of "Nachwort" and "Muse: Polytrop."

Following the reading, members of the audience posed questions regarding the relationship between rhythm and music in Köhler's works, which Köhler insisted were different but also related. The constellation could best be understood, she suggested, as that of music constituting the basis for language and rhythm. Music can strengthen a work of poetry, but often songs are successful without having lyrics that would stand alone by virtue of their poetic merit. Much of Köhler's published work includes CD recordings of her own poetry. When asked if she changes the rhythm of her speech while reading, or if it maintains a regular pulse, she noted that the form of the poem is a sort of organization of resistance also to be found in the musicality of the phonemes. As such, the emergent rhythm has nothing to do with a bodily pulse (supplemented by the reader), but rather with a mechanical pulse contained in the words. With respect to the role gender plays in her works, Köhler replied that she views gender primarily as a paradigmatic variation of difference; she is less concerned with problematizing notions of maleness and femaleness than with finding possibility in the play between the categories. Köhler understands her poetic work to be exploring the degree to which ways of working with language might be discursively possible. She seeks to set the text in space (*Raum*) and, in so doing, to evoke a response. As such, the realization (*Vergegenwärtigung*) of her texts assumes primacy in her creative production. (Katrina Nousek)

The Institute for German Cultural Studies was pleased to hold this year's Cornell Lecture on Contemporary Aesthetics on April 16, 2013, an annual lecture devoted to new critical and artistic perspectives on aesthetics given by the year's artist in residence. This year's lecture was given by the acclaimed German poet and translator **Barbara Köhler**. Köhler's own work – which includes poetry collections such as *Deutsches Roulette* (1991) and *Blue Box* (1995) as well as translations of Gertrude Stein and Samuel Beckett – has continually emphasized associations between signs and meanings in and between language systems, and her lecture, entitled "Some Possibilities for Sailing in a Friendship und Weitere Weitere Möglichkeiten," did so in turn. But to call Köhler's presentation a "lecture" is, perhaps appropriately, itself to challenge the conventional boundaries of linguistic signification. In a multimedial, performative tour de force, Köhler discussed and embodied the often surprising fluidity of relations between words, both at the concrete level of their presented form and at the abstract level of referred significance.

The dominant figure in her performance was that of sailing, which

captures both the notion of semantic movement as well as her particular emphasis on intercultural transference, or, put simply, translation. This double meaning – both linguistic translation and physical movement – is captured in the German verb "übersetzen," which can mean both translation or the movement – for example, by ferry – across a body of water. The very fact that the German word for translation contains this double signification, while the English word does not, itself instantiates what is commonly understood to be the central problem of translation: the inter-lingual incompatibility of words.

For Köhler, however, this irreconcilable difference is far from a problem. Rejecting the poet Robert Frost's dictum that "poetry is what gets lost in translation," Köhler demonstrated, through continually morphing often beautiful and unexpected iterations of linguistic signs across languages, the endless poetic possibilities of these differences. In so doing she illustrated the difference between what she termed "formal languages" – the conventional rules and meanings of language systems that necessarily reduce complexity – and "natural languages" – languages in their ever-morphing, ever-moving lived use. It is only in the former sense (as a clearly defined system of meaning) that a language is not *translatable* in the double sense of *übersetzen*: not movable, that is, in meaning. In the latter, as her lecture so elegantly demonstrated, language is the object of horizonless movement and reconfiguration, even beyond the borders of a single language. (Matteo Calla)

Visiting Scholar from Göttingen

Es ist uns eine große Freude, Prof. Dr. Claudia Stockinger von der Georg-August-Universität Göttingen willkommen zu heißen, die im September 2013 als Visiting Scholar am Institute for German Cultural Studies zu Gast sein wird. Claudia Stockinger hat in Regensburg Deutsche Philologie, Geschichte und Philosophie studiert und 1999 an der Universität Karlsruhe mit einer Arbeit über *Das dramatische Werk Friedrich de la Motte Fouqués* promoviert. Von ihren zahlreichen Publikationen seien hier nur erwähnt: *Das romantische Drama. Produktive Synthese zwischen Tradition und Innovation* (hg. zus. mit Uwe Japp, Stefan Scherer, 2000); *Das 19. Jahrhundert. Zeitalter des Realismus* (2010); *Ludwig Tieck. Leben – Werk – Wirkung* (hg. zus. mit Stefan Scherer, 2011); und der Artikel "Karl Philipp Moritz: Publizistik" in *Sämtlichen Werke. Kritische und kommentierte Ausgabe* (hg. von Anneliese Klingenberg, et al.; 2013). Prof. Dr. Stockinger ist u. a. Mitglied der Redaktion der Zeitschrift *Text+Kritik* und Gründungsmitglied des *Internationalen Zentrums für Klassikforschung* der Klassik Stiftung Weimar.

Prof. Dr. Stockingers Aufenthalt an der Cornell University steht im Zusammenhang mit einer Buchpublikation, die sie derzeit für den transcript-Verlag in Bielefeld vorbereitet und die den Arbeitstitel *Die Republik im Fadenkreuz. Die ARD Reihe 'Tatort' im Spiegel der bundesrepublikanischen Gesellschaft 1970-2000* trägt. Im Fokus des Buchprojekts steht die mediale Aufbereitung sozial- und mentalitätsgeschichtlicher Verhältnisse der Bundesrepublik Deutschland am Beispiel der Geschichte des *Tatorts* seit Beginn der Reihe im Jahr 1970. Zum einen spielen thematische Konjunkturen eine Rolle: von den politischen und sozialen Konflikten, die sich etwa in der Psychologie, Charakterzeichnung und Gender-Codierung der Ermittlerfiguren widerspiegeln, bis hin zu diversen Formen der Selbstreflexion des Mediums (z. B. Kritik an den Massenmedien, Spiel-im-Spiel-Strukturen u. a.). Zum anderen geht es insbesondere darum, medienästhetische Fragestellungen im historischen Wandel zu untersuchen; Gesichtspunkte wie Schnitt-Techniken, Geschwindigkeit, Kinoeffekte im Fernsehen u. a. sind hierfür zu berücksichtigen, um auf diese Weise die paradigmatische Funktion dieses Sendeformats für die Film- und Fernsehgeschichte der Bundesrepublik Deutschland aufzuzeigen.

Am 12. September lädt das IGCS zu Prof. Stockingers Vortrag „ Die ARD-Reihe Tatort – Serie und/oder Werk?" ein, der um 16:30 Uhr in 181 Goldwin Smith Hall stattfinden wird.

Barbara Köhler, Artist-in-Residence, Spring 2013, Cornell University
Cornell Lecture on Contemporary Aesthetics (16 April 2013)

SOME POSSIBILITIES FOR SAILING IN A FRIENDSHIP UND WEITERE WEITERE MÖGLICHKEITEN

NO. It is no error, no mistake, no failure, kein fehler, you needn't fall at all for allite-ration – there's no *failing* in that friendship, or failing is not the subject; the subject is sailing with an S: es ist ja nicht das Subjékt, das segelt, es sind Freunde, und auch wenn die das Súbjekt, das eine, im Satz sein könnten, sind es zwei oder drei, vielleicht ja auch neun; aber neun ist nicht nein – but nine can be neun, can be *nueve*, can be *neuf*, can be *devjat* or *kilenc*… 9 is NINE, but NEIN is NO, just one letter is changing places, and there is no nine, there are not nine, just two, two false friends: NINE and NEIN. Die fal-schen Freunde, les faux amis, so-called in many languages – but why should the first friends one finds in learning a foreign language always be *false*? And what would be the right way of falsification for friends? That one cannot count on them? Or that one doesn't want to be counted on your facebook-account? And on the other hand: are digits, numbers, numerals and countable things the only true friends one could find? – And would you define a relationship in which one part is supposed to stay always the same and never changes its meaning or his or her mind, would you define this as a friendship? Is it just »wordplay,« plain pun and fun, to board a ship in a relation-, in a language where »-ship« is a common suffix and countless vessels of that kind could be launched? What is shipped by it, what could be the cargo? A content? A message? Two friends? Or nine? Is this transportable, translatable at all? Or should it at last be just poetry – »what gets lost in translation« as Robert Frost said? What could it be worth, the value of things one can neither translate nor count? Or shouldn't shipping be another way of translating: movement on moving ground?
Or do you think broad roads are the only ways to go abroad?

If not: Welcome aboard! Welcome on sea, on water, in the Big Between, zwischen Land und *land*, betwixt and between; zwischen *language* und Sprache. Auch im Deutschen ist ja vom ÜBERSETZEN die Rede, und der Grund ist in Bewegung, hörbar, auch wenn es sichtbar gar keinen *Unter*schied gibt zwischen *Über*setzen und Über*setzen*. Doch ist beim *Über*setzen das Wasser schmaler, man setzt mit einer Fähre über, mit einem Boot, man setzt über, wo man das feste Land nicht aus den Augen verliert, ein anderes Ufer schon im Blick hat, where you can already see the other shore. Man übersetzt einen Text

und man setzt über mit einem Schiff: über einen Fluss, einen Strom, einen See sogar, über *den* See (a pond, a lake), aber nie über *die* See, the sea, das Meer; das geht nicht mit einem Satz, hinüberzusetzen mit einem Sprung. Es braucht eine Weiterung schon im Wort, etwa wie Yoko Tawada ÜBERSETZUNGEN ausdehnt und weitet, mit einer winzigsten Änderung nur, small change: one single letter, zu ÜBERSEEZUNGEN, overseas tongues, or in Portuguese: línguas ultramarinas. La língua, la langue, the language oder die Sprache, die immer mehr als eine ist, *the tongue*, die Zunge, die Zungen, *tongues*, die sie sprechen – die eine, die vielen, the German SIE (and caution! notorious false friends in that case: SEE and SEA!). The German pronoun SIE can be either singular, feminine: SHE, or plural, can be THEY; but *YOU* could be SIE in German too, all of you, in a formal, polite form of address – and YOU could also be IHR or in the singular DU. (But IHR in that case would be an informal, familiar plural form, and no possessive of HER.)
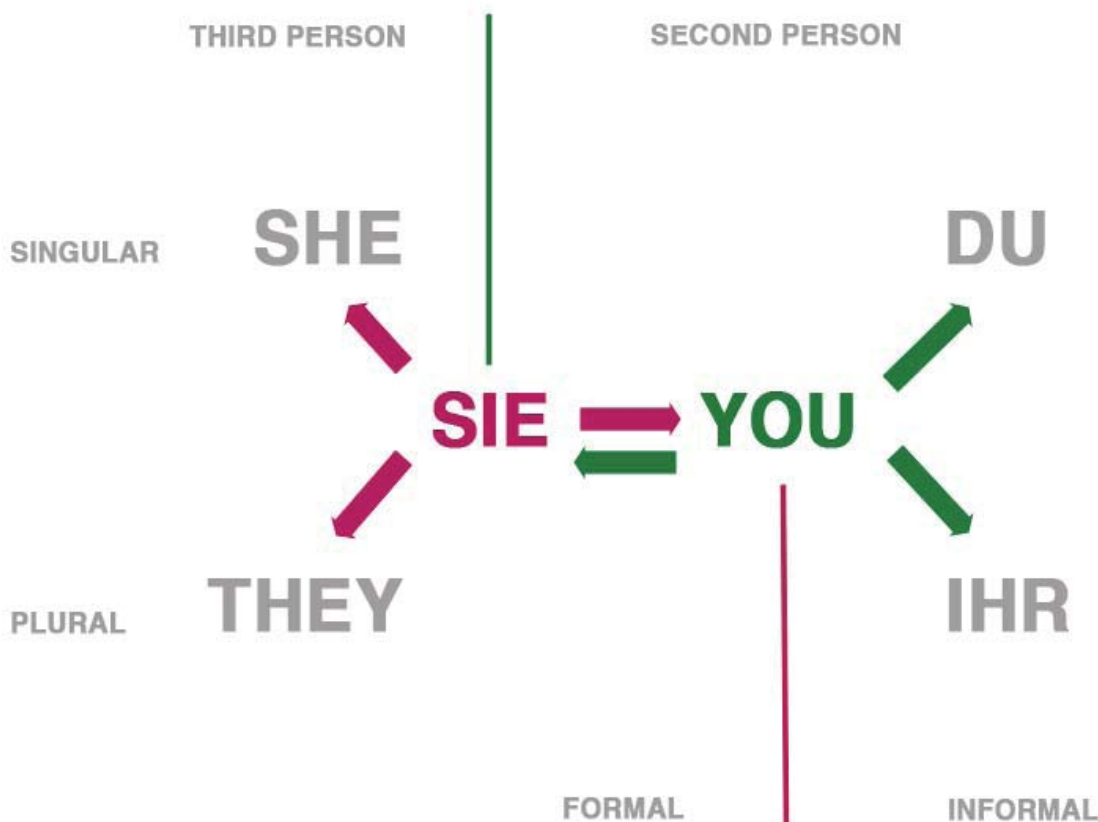
Language is an item, a being one can communicate with, one can interact with, right?
– So let's speak with language.

Manchmal antwortet SIE. Manchmal antworten SIE.

SIE: DIE SPRACHE, SIE: DIE SPRACHEN, the languages or SIE, DIE SPRACHEN: they, those who spoke. *[Is disambiguation needed?]* Or AND: all natural languages, one could say, keep the presence of those who spoke. Traces, flavours, a light change in stress, slight imprints, which intensify or weaken the particular use of a word, show it in another light, change the direction in which it points, the possibilities of linking between words, phrases and sentences: the chemistry of grammar. So-called *natural* languages can also be seen as living, moving beings – at least I prefer to see them that way: as a sort of »ecosystem« by their own rights, that we can observe and describe. We can try to find out rules, we do use and could manipulate them – but we shouldn't forget that we are living on their terms, we are thinking in and think with them, are parts of a system, in which every action is interaction, *Wechselwirkung* in German and in physics, and not just in a one-directional way, a line of cause-and-effect. A system that is self-organizing, non-linear, complex, highly self-referential and redundant. In other words: languages are not just dead objects, words aren't mere things, man-made tools to form other things with, as sometimes imagined by the ideologies of the bygone heroic industrial age. The only really man-made languages are formal ones, such as programming languages. Formal languages are built to explore, to understand, recreate / construct and manipulate structures: they try to reduce complexity and avoid the ambiguity that characterizes natural languages. One idea is: they ought to be universally understandable, and fully translatable. The idea is EINDEUTIGKEIT.

You cannot imagine how much I like this word; it's so funnily German. And it gives wonderful examples of how-and-what can be *found* in translation. In its core it bears the root DEUT, which leads directly to the language: DEUTSCH, German. The supposed Indo-European root *teuta* refers to »people, land«, so that DEUTEN could mean and was used as »*explain, declare* something to the people,« and in that way it includes also an idea of translation, clearly shown by translations such as »to construe« or »to interpret.« On the other hand it shows a corporeal gesture: to point at something, to move the

index finger, the pointer, to indicate something. A gesture pointing out one single point, a gesture that creates BEDEUTUNG: significance (meaning, sense), importance. And by the way – another possible translation for DEUTEN is »to portend.« In English that could point at: what is important is what comes from outside, what is *imported*. Whereas German gives importance rather to the person who is pointing: the one who is BEDEUTEND; someone who gives significance must own some. The ONE: in English you have at least the *possibility* to think of that as neutral. But the EIN- in EINDEUTIGKEIT seems to be quite neutral too; just ONE, one jot or not one jot: EIN DEUT, worum man sich nicht scheren, nicht kümmern muss, – war eine kleine Kupfermünze in Holland und am Niederrhein, small change on both sides of a border. As small as the DOT on the i, auf dem Jot, one single point. To point at.

But a big change will happen if you try to translate the whole word. Some dictionaries suggest CLARITY, which would be an equivalent rather to KLARHEIT; UNIQUENESS is more EINZIGARTIGKEIT and refers to another concept: of a single, incomparable specimen; EINDEUTIGKEIT means that one element of a set matches, or is equivalent to, would be exactly the same as one element of another set. This comes close to the concept of IDENTITY. Two languages, two words – one meaning: thus simple to translate. *Numbers* are EINDEUTIG as seen above in the example of NINE. Numbers that we usually call REAL, which can be called *irrational* and *transcendental*, like π, but can be infinitely precisely defined, up to billions and trillions of digits. But the most frequently used translation for EINDEUTIGKEIT is the strangest word to me: UNAMBIGUITY. Seen in relationship to EINDEUTIGKEIT it looks a bit paradoxical, like a sort of counterpart: an affirmation by denial of the contrary – what could it mean? An interpretation may be that in English the concept of AMBIGUITY is thought of as normal, and EINDEUTIGKEIT as an exception of rather low probability, while in German things are thought of as being – or at least wished to be – EINDEUTIG, UNAMBIGUOUS; and AMBIGUITY is seen more as a threat, a cause of *dis*order, *in*security, *in*stability, *un*certainty and other such negative things – bad by prefixation. German is (or can be) an extremely precise language (nevertheless PRECISION is also not the right word for EINDEUTIGKEIT – one can be very precise in ambiguity). German is famously used by philosophers like Kant and Hegel, and in the first part of the 20th century it served as the *lingua franca* of science generally; great discoveries were

made and described in those days by Austrians, Germans and in Switzerland – just think of Hilbert's program, think of Schrödinger, Einstein or Gödel. Discoveries connected with relativity, incompleteness, complementarity … and it was even a German, Heisenberg, who found the *uncertainty* principle for quantum physics. And actually one could say: German might have been the language in which the possibilities of EINDEUTIGKEIT were thought and brought to their limits, their borders.

In classical logic and mathematics (and all formal languages that are based on them) the basic DIFFERENCE is between ONE and ZERO, both so-called *neutral* or IDENTITY *elements* – which leave other elements unchanged when combined with them – ZERO for addition, ONE for the multiplication of real numbers. ONE and ZERO, something or nothing, true or false. Or at least more or less true or false: on a line, a scale between ZERO and ONE. Less or more, bigger or smaller: the basic FIGURE is the line, a one-dimensional object on which one can place and sort items like numbers in a relation (with no ship at all in that case), in every kind of comparison, of competition, of ranking: plus or minus, better or worse. The basic number, the divine number of truth, of IDENTITY is ONE, and ZERO means NOTHING or *false*. Everybody can count with ONE: one and one and one and one, and so on and on and on and on … on the line: up to infinity. It's so easy, so einfach, so simpel, quite simple, it's *natural*, es sind Zahlen, die *natürliche* genannt werden und die Einheit ist Eins, THE UNIT, eine eindeutige, gegebene Größe, der »Urmeter«, von dem alle anderen Größen abgeleitet sind, als Teile oder Vielfache: THE ONE. The only ONE?

In German every ONE is gendered, must be either male or female or neutral, ist einer, ist eine oder eins – ist ein ES, ein ER oder SIE. And – which is also the case in English and most of the other languages: every First Person is a third one (or a third ONE?), every ME becomes, seen from outside, a SHE or a HE (but in Hungarian for instance there's just one third person, no difference marked, just Ö), and every WE is for others a THEY. Others are other ONES, right? ONE means »SAME as ME«, right? I am one: am I, you are one: I, two are II, three are III. But am I the right ONE? Or the left? Just left of the right ONE? Or left by the right ONE? Am I ALONE? On the ONE hand or on THE

OTHER hand? Ich bin eine, bin SIE. Who or what could I be, when ME's not a HE? I is another: Je est un autre – ou est *une* autre? ER ist EINER, DER EINE, einfach ein ER, eindeutig ER, ein EINDEUTIGER, und selbst als ANDERER – ER ist signifikant, zweifelsohne. (Maybe there is just a little doubt about how to write »signifikant,« with a small or a capital S, as an adjective or a noun. – *Is disambiguation needed?*) SIE kann viele sein, EINE sein, Ich sein und Sie sein, YOU or THEY, SHE and ME. SIE kann EINS sein (und das sogar mit IHM) und UNEINS, SIE *kann* sein und *können* sein, wo ER *ist* oder *nicht ist.* IHRE Differenz (this HER-YOUR-THEIR-difference; or even the difference between HER and HIM, too?), IHRE Differenz ist eine andere als SEINE (HIS), is another ONE. An OTHER ONE. Is HE the ONE that counts? Or the one *who* counts? Is disambiguation needed? Is it possible? And should SHE as SIE be the ONE that doesn't count, even if she is one who counts? – A vast number of historical examples for that could be enumerated spontaneously … But my question would be: what is this SIE in the relationship, in relation to ONE: is SIE ZERO – or NO-ONE – NOTHING (of course SIE is no thing), NOBODY or something-or-somebody ELSE? Jemand anders? SOMEBODY sounds good. (And ELSE in German is a female first name, ANDERS a male one.) But SOME-ONE seems to me even more precise. SOMEONE: irgendwer, vielleicht ja auch jemand, der – im Deutschen leider gleich zu EINEM wird, zu einem ER; here we have the figure of the so-called generic masculine that generalizes the male as prototype of humankind in (GerMAN) grammar. SOME is another case, one could also translate it into »einige.« EINIGE means SOME, but EINIG also means: to be agreed or united, EINIGE: some who are united – they are ONE. SOME ONE. More than just 1 ONE. And without excluding that ONE.

But could one explain that in mathematics, when she finds herself not able to translate it into German? Well, maybe exactly that would be helpful. But for that we'll have to do something impossible: to extract a root from a negative number or search for a solution of the equation $x^2+1=0$, which seems hopeless on the infinite line of real numbers: there's no answer. Maybe elsewhere? Could there be an elsewhere, beyond the so-called REAL? Beyond the infinity of the line? The idea of another sort of numbers arose in the 16th century and was developed in the 18th and early 19th by the Swiss mathematician Leonhard

Euler and the German Carl Friedrich Gauss. Euler introduced the imaginary unit **i** (a little i, not the big ONE) as the number, that when squared yields −1: the OTHER ONE. He also found a formula for −1, that became famous as *the most beautiful theorem in mathematics*, called Euler's identity: $e^{i\pi} + 1 = 0$ (**e** is the base of the natural logarithm, π you know from geometry, both are important mathematical constants and so-called *transcendental* numbers). This little **i** furthermore is ambiguous: like every »normal« square root of a positive number it, too, has two solutions, two figures: a positive and a negative one. Like ONE for the real numbers, perhaps it could count as the multiplicative identity of the IMAGINARY numbers, but that I don't know − it could give a strange kind of *double* identity. I think there's not so much known in general about imaginary numbers; they're still suspected of being purely fictitious figures, just invented as a sort of expedient to deal more comfortably with real and complex numbers: useful but meaningless. Named as a contrary to the REAL they enable the erection of a second line perpendicular to the real, creating thus a 2-dimensional coordinate system, the complex plane, an area, ein Areal, where *complex numbers,* composed as pairs with an imaginary part and a real one ($a + b$**i**), are co-ordinates, placed on that plane. Seen this way, the so-called real numbers are complex numbers with the imaginary part ZERO. One dimension less: an exclusion of the imaginary makes it possible to sort things like numbers in less or more, bigger or smaller − And: to see DIFFERENCE just as the result of a subtraction. In one, one simple, single dimension: on line. Shouldn't we actually consider once again what we're used to calling real and reality?

*

Weiter. Wie weiter? Wie übersetzt man WEITER? In eine Dimension, in zwei oder dreien? Farther or further or more or forward or wider? Or just ON? On a line, on a surface or in − or *into* space? Areal oder real? Or real, on an areal? O bien reàl: rey y reina? Spanish queens and kings? Or black or white kings and queens as figures on a chessboard? On positions, figured as a combination of letters and figures: d2 − d3. But in what kind of relation to the players, in which number or sort of dimension? In German this could even depend on the verb: WEITER GEHEN oder WEITER WERDEN? − WEITER DENKEN?

WIE WEITER? On what line, what surface, on – or rather in – which sort of plane or place – or space? Which space? In which language?

ON, said Beckett, SAY ON, at the beginning of »*WORSTWARD HO*,« one of his last books, written in 1983, now thirty years ago: BE SAID ON. SOMEHOW ON. TILL NO-HOW ON. SAID NOHOW ON. *WORSTWARD HO* is a text that strictly explores a counterdirection to the West- and Bestward, the way of competition, infinite progress, improvement, plus and surplus: it moves resolutely and bravely into the inverse – the minus. SAY A BODY. WHERE NONE. NO MIND. WHERE NONE. THAT AT LEAST. A PLACE. WHERE NONE. FOR THE BODY. …and so on. On and on. Weiter und weiter. In one direction or two or three, many? One direction could be the way, the direction of a first person singular, the ME. Could everybody identify with it – or just every ONE? Could there be a difference, and *what* could be the difference between everybody and everyone? Manifold starts with 3. Or two? – With a pair, mit einem Paar? EIN PAAR could mean: SOME, too. It depends how PAAR is written – with small or capital p. (Or how two/too is written – with double o or w…) Can you hear a difference? The difference between »ein paar« and »ein Paar,« between indeterminately many (or few) and two? Could you?

The Beckett text starts with ON and goes on to ONE, which is NONE, just a ONE in the void, in a voided space, and avoids any circumstances: NO WORDS FOR HIM WHOSE WORDS. HIM? ONE. NO WORDS FOR ONE WHOSE WORDS. ONE? IT. NO WORDS FOR IT WHOSE WORDS. IT turns out to be a skull. The hardware of the head we are thought to think with, without any properties – for instance sex or gender: NO HANDS. NO FACE. SKULL AND STARE ALONE. SCENE AND SEER OF ALL. By emptying, by avoiding it becomes space, the space of a language and in a language, an open space *by excluding everything that would exclude something else*. That's Beckett's ONE. The Minus ONE: NONE BUT THE ONE WHERE NONE. No other than, no other ONE, but others – it goes on with THE TWAIN: ONE OLD MAN AND CHILD. That could be two, but it could be ONE, too. They could be ONE and could be two. A man in different ages. Or a childish old man. He could be two, could be one. And CHILD

could be girl or boy. – Can you see the ship in this relation? It's moving just like EIN PAAR, but in another way in another language. Beckett's TWAIN is in a movement too: BACKS TURNED. BOTH BOWED. JOINED BY HELD HOLDING HANDS. PLOD ON AS ONE. ONE SHADE. ANOTHER SHADE.

Schatten: ohne Licht, und doch nicht ohne Licht. Licht: eine Bewegung, wellenförmig, deren Geschwindigkeit wir als absolute sehen. Das heißt: diese *Bewegung* sehen wir nicht; wir sehen das Licht und Schatten, die sich bewegen, sich zu bewegen scheinen im Lichtschein. Oder nur einen, den Schatten, der sich bewegt? Der Schatten, die Schatten? Schatten in Bewegung: im Licht. So wenig wie möglich davon bei Beckett; keine Dunkel-heit, nur soviel, so wenig Licht, dass Schatten darin gerade eben möglich sind. MERE MINIMUM. Jenes Minimum Licht, das Schatten ermöglicht, jenes Minimum Zwei, das Mehrzahl ermöglicht, ein Anderes ermöglicht zum Einen, aber so uneindeutig wie nur möglich, zum andern. DER EINE nicht und nicht DER ANDERE; bloß anders, bloß eins, vielleicht ja. Just one, and only else. Ohne bestimmten Artikel, ohne irgendeine nähere (oder auch weitere) Bestimmung überhaupt: MERE MINIMUM. Als handle es sich um eine Probe auf Heisenbergs Unbestimmtheitsrelation: miteinander korrelierte Größen be-obachten, a relationship. The uncertainty principle of quantum physics states that certain pairs of physical properties of a particle cannot simultaneously be measured precisely; the more exactly THE ONE, for instance the position, is determined, the less THE OTHER – the momentum in that case – can be known, and vice versa. Maybe there is a possibi-lity for both, a degree of uncertainty, both can be observed, but not measured; couldn't this be that minimum? AT MOST MERE MINIMUM. MEREMOST MINIMUM. DER EINE bestimmt nicht (does not ascertain or rule or determine, for sure not), DER ANDERE ist nicht bestimmt, wird nicht bestimmt – ganz bestimmt nicht. Beide, gleich und anders, gleichzeitig, simultaneously, contemporary. A pair, JOINED BY HELD HOLDING HANDS, two, together in the – or rather: a – same space, same time, same tense but maybe: a different sense. SOME ONE.

During the last third of Beckett's text there emerges a third: SHADE THREE FROM NOW. […] AN OLD WOMAN'S. The *tertium-non-datur*, the third, that (or who) is excluded by

the »law of the excluded middle,« in person: a shade. NOTHING AND YET A WOMAN. OLD AND YET OLD. SIE – die ist und die sind, die sein kann und die sein können: who is, who are: who could be. Could be SHE, could be YOU, could be THEY, remember. NOTHING AND YET A WOMAN.

A word, one word, together with others, could have different EIGENSTATES (and that's also a word I'm extremely fond of) usually and commonly called *meanings* (»senses« in that case would make sense just in the singular, right?). EIGENSTATE is a cute German-English bastard, conceived under the circumstances of quantum physics, becoming some-what popular by a thought-experiment from 1935 called »Schrödinger's cat.« Quantum theory stated that quantum systems would exist in a superposition of different eigenstates, in a simultaneity of states, which all are possible for the system, but »normally« (meaning: measured) exist just discretely and would exclude each other; the decision which state becomes »real« is produced first by an act of observation, of measurement. This is directly connected to Heisenberg's uncertainty principle. Erwin Schrödinger undertook to translate that into what we are used to calling REALITY: think of a cat in a box, where the life or death of the cat depends on a random event, the state of a subatomic particle. As long as the box is not opened, that cat would be, by the terms of quantum physics, dead-AND-alive, both at once, in a superposition. And everybody knows cats are either – or?

But back to the EIGENSTATES of words: in English the word EIGEN could be either OWN or STRANGE or SEPARATE or PROPER or PECULIAR or DISTINCT or (as a friend's student translated it) A LAW UNTO ITSELF – and STATE could be translated into German as STAAT, ZUSTAND, STATUS, and a long list of verbs, where my favourites would be FESTSTELLEN and ERKLÄREN (the latter clearly comes close to the semantic field of DEUTEN). EIGENSTATE is a word both German and English, and with obviously different possible EIGENSTATES: a pure-bred Schrödingercat.

What is light? And should something that is heavy also be dark? It could, but it needn't be – just one possibility. Light is the element of possibilities, of probabilities and plurabi-lity, it is not so *easy* to understand, nicht einfach, but is light: ist leicht, ist hell, ist LICHT

mit großem L oder kleinem, adjective or noun. And it leads us, lights us to the basics of quantum physics. – But that's the moment when I first have to say: I really admire these possibilities of plurality in the English language, that's speaking as a matter of course of BASICS, PHYSICS, MATHEMATICS, AESTHETICS, ARTS and so on, in a plural form, and not like German insisting on the singular. (Sometimes I feel tempted to suspect that large parts of German philosophy and science are driven just by an excessive use of the singular – and the definite article on top.) I was scared stiff when I heard that I'd have to do this lecture ZUR ÄSTHETIK DER GEGENWART: DIE GEGENWART! DIE ÄSTHETIK! Only ONE: only the right ONE! And no light one left over, just reft … I felt awfully relieved by translating the subject into its local circumstances as CONTEMPORARY AESTHETICS – both singulars vanished without any trace. Not only did the possibility of more-than-one idea of aesthetics arise as absolutely normal; the idea of GEGENWART, of PRESENT or/ and of PRESENCE became wider, weiter: more spatial, not just linear or plane. An Idea became a con-cept: something that can be »caught together,« zusammen gefasst. CON-TEMPORARY could be translated into German also as ZEITGENÖSSISCH or ZEITGEMÄß. The latter sets a focus on ZEIT, THE time, according to which ONE ought to behave, act or be: UP TO DATE and on line, on the timeline. ZEITGENÖSSISCH refers rather to a plural form: ZEITGENOSSEN, CONTEMPORARIES; people, or things or ideas or what-ever (all with lots of possibilities to be different), sharing the same space of time, existing in co-existence, together – in relationships. This difference may also be a question of perception, of *aisthesis*, aesthetics, right? (Or left??)

But back to light. Or shouldn't we have left it at all? Light that leads us, as I said, to the basics of quantum physics. In the third of his famous *Lectures on Physics* Richard P. Feynman spoke of »a phenomenon which is impossible … to explain in any classical way, and which has in it the heart of quantum mechanics« – the double-slit experiment. It was first performed in 1802 by Thomas Young, who showed with it the wave-character of light, vs. the Newtonian corpuscular theory accepted in those days. There is light from a single source, passing through a plate pierced by two parallel slits, and observed on a screen behind. Without any disturbance you would see on the screen an interference pattern, a rhythm of shadows and light that's typical for superimposing *waves*. But in case you'd

suppose that light consists of particles, or the source is emitting particles, electrons or molecules, and you wish to find out, to detect through which of the slits one particle is passing, to decide for left or right, to make sure, to measure, to *objectify*, to produce EINDEUTIGKEIT, in that case this interference pattern will collapse, it will vanish. Following the Copenhagen interpretation of quantum physics it shows that light *can be seen* both, with particle OR wave properties, but not simultaneously (and this holds for particles, too). This interpretation was also, you see, a sort of translation: mathematical equations into principles, into words like »complementarity,« »uncertainty,« »probability,« »correspondence« or »entanglement,« all referring to relationships, relativity, plurality. And thus the act of observation and the state of THE OBSERVER became a problem, a topic: the subject. The POINT OF VIEW – is this an abstract point with dimension ZERO or one point on a line or a place on a plane or a being in space, the point of one second person: of YOU – or a point of FEW? – Or just one point of a few? – How to consider, imagine DIFFERENCE, how to say? This is a question of language, too, and of different languages – of the *difference of languages*: THE ONE we have internalized and which we name our mother-tongue (and most of you have other ones than I have), the ONE we think is natural, the ONE we are speaking in, thinking and dreaming, and all THE OTHERS we can learn; and that could teach us what makes our way of speaking, thinking and dreaming EIGEN, makes it *different.*

DIFFERENT actually would be a very good translation for EIGEN, meaning *other than others.* Even what Feynman called »the *only mystery*« of quantum physics could be named as just DIFFERENCE, and how we look at it. And how we speak: ABOUT it or ON or IN it, from an inside, conscious that we are inside, are parts of that difference. As if science were or could be possible as con-science, conscience, an awareness of being together and different: of GEGENWART, contemporaneity. ONE AND together with OTHERS: singular and plural. Movement on moving ground, possibly sailing a friendship.

By contrast, I would describe the »classical« place of the observer as *Chessplayer state*: the position of GOD, THE scientist or THE author: in another dimension, somewhere »outside,« above the board, where down below the wars were fought, the battles. Speaking

ABOUT the *things*, above, not reachable from below, in a space of absence, somewhere IN GENERAL. Moving the figures: as a general, as an observer or manipulator, a creator of minor creatures, of objects and objectivity. A ONE, a single point, that allows no difference except THE OTHER: an enemy to be defeated – the black or the white ONE, the left OR the right. To checkmate means to reduce the possibilities of movement of THE OTHER to ZERO; a pretty German word for this would be FESTSTELLEN, which one could also translate as *to detect, to fix, to declare, to ascertain, to determine*. But chessboards are – like maps or pictures – two-dimensional and solid, stable ground, not moving. And figures are … just figured.

Computers, Turing machines were invented, constructed by considering chess problems (at least pioneers like Alan M. Turing or Konrad Zuse did so). And since Deep Blue defeated Kasparov in 1997 they are definitely the better players. In relation to them, in the logic of computability, failing is the only thing human beings can still do. (Nice example for failing see also: Kramnik vs. Deep Fritz in 2006 or »blunder of the century.«)
An example for encouragement, see Beckett: ALL OF OLD. NOTHING ELSE EVER. EVER TRIED. EVER FAILED. NO MATTER. TRY AGAIN. FAIL AGAIN. FAIL BETTER. Or to translate a bit of the untranslatable: NICHT VERZAGEN. BESSER VERSAGEN. And this text IS indeed untranslatable – it moves inside the English language and IN a difference to others, which Beckett also spoke, like French or German. Beckett's very own, his *eigen* writing started, when he started to write in French in 1945, and an important part of this writing was further: to translate his own texts in a very *eigen* way. In the late 1950s he began to write texts in English again, translating them later into French. But »WORST-WARD HO« is (besides some media-scripts like FILM, BREATH, QUAD and NACHT UND TRÄUME, two longer French texts and some tiny poems called MIRLITONNADES) – WORSTWARD HO is the only text he did *not* translate himself.

And in trying to translate it, one actually can do nothing but fail. Beginning with the first word ON: a preposition that can be translated into German in more than 7 ways – and every one would show another position in relation to a supposed object: AUF, AN, BEI, IN, ÜBER, ZU und WEITER (WEITER, remember: in how many dimensions?), a one-

syllable-two-letter-word, a MEREMOST MINIMUM, that is furthermore a palindrome, a literally connected counterpart of NO, a negative of denial. And so on …

I started this lecture with NO, so I'll end it with ON. And in the end the subject, as it turns out, is failing. It becomes a different, a failing one: by failing ONE – and failing to WIN. And could it do anything but fail? Maybe furthermore sail: beyond the line, a coastline, in a wider sense, in difference, in a friendship? I've (hopefully, too) failed – or have missed the point – to tell you something ABOUT some commonly-so-called contemporary aesthetics, like fashionable subjects, books-of-the-season and up-to-date-authors ONE has to know; but eventually you've observed or just felt some strange sort of movement that might be or might show the wave nature, the light nature of language; possibly as poetry. Something that has the power to move us: moving ground. Etwas, das nicht zu fassen ist, doch zu zeigen, zu sehen: ein Muster aus Licht und Schatten, ein Rhythmus, a pulsing pattern of shadows and light: something you cannot grasp, but see, but sense – but you cannot count it. Something that is perhaps not computable.

A text, whether it is 30 years old or 3000, can be contemporary to us: it can speak to us, it's able to touch and to move us, and that also means it does all this in a language which is not just *spoken* (in past tense and passive voice) – but is speaking, in a kind of continuous present: a gift. It's ours: to imagine.

The second talk of the Spring 2013 Immigration & Democracy Series sponsored by the Cornell Institute for European Studies, Cornell Law School, Latino Studies Program, Institute for the Study of Social Issues, and Institute for German Cultural Studies was given by **Inés Valdez** (Ohio State University). Her talk was entitled "What Part of 'Illegal' Don't We Understand: Political Judgment on the Issue of Immigration," which addressed anti-immigration hostility.

Based on her upcoming book "Deporting Political Judgment: Hierarchy, Sovereignty, and the Politics of Immigration," Valdez offered a framework for understanding judgment about immigration in developed democracies. Basing her conclusions on Immanuel Kant's political writings – or more specifically, the Kantian system of Right – and Hannah Arendt's writings on judgment and fabrication, she argued that domestic judgment on immigration is limited by a dominant position in the international sphere. As a result, three phenomena arise: a truncated perception of responsibility, civilizational and racialized discourses, and an instrumentalized view of states and individuals in the developing world. For Valdez, three conditions of judgment in do-

mestic politics are central: first, the limited perception of transnational responsibility by dominant polities; second, the hostile discourse about immigrants; and third, the dominance of an economic discourse of profitability. She links these features to the hierarchy that pervades the international sphere. Truncated responsibility means, for Valdez, that immigrants are seen as a simple or even individual phenomenon. By civilization and racialization she refers to the hostile discourse that links immigrants to crime. And by invoking states and individuals from the developing world, she pointed to a language of profitability to discuss migration. The combination of these factors narrows judgment on the issue of immigration and shields the argument from critical examination.

In closing, Valdez suggested that political activism and participation of immigrants could revitalize political judgment and open roads for political inclusiveness. As an example of the political activism of immigrants Valdez drew the audience's attention to the "No Papers, No Fear - Ride for Justice" of the so called *UndocuBus* Tour from July to September 2012. (Giulia Comparato)

Randall Hansen's (University of Toronto) presentation titled, "Expulsion, Citizenship, Statehood: Germany, Palestine and India, 1945-1951," provided keen observations about the complex history of forced migration, state formation, immigration, and citizenship in three very different conflicts. Hansen organized his presentation around political and analytic approaches to the major events associated with each conflict, which allowed him to bring out similarities across the different border conflicts while highlighting significant differ-

ences between them. Through the analytic approach Hansen sought to address the question of how relations between borders and populations broke down across generations. He argued that there is a strong contingent relationship between borders and the presence of nation states with respect to refugee movements. Hansen's political approach sought to reveal the question of how borders have been invoked and disputed by various groups steeped in their respective conflicts.

In the case of the conflict between Israel

and Palestine, Hansen claimed that the tendency of political discourse to abstract from what actually happens on the ground can distort ideas about where borders exist. Language coming from the Israeli side of the conflict that emphasizes building new communities can mean displacing significant populations of Palestinians, whereas language coming from the Palestinian side of the conflict that mentions a "response" can mean rocket attacks. Through this approach to border conflicts, Hansen made the stakes of the presentation clear, and his next move was to go through particular events, showing how terror tactics deployed both by state-run organizations and radical sectarian groups forced migration and destabilized borders. Hansen thus described the period between 1944 and 1951 in Germany to be particularly unstable for native German populations under allied occupation. Many Germans fled south to escape from the brutalities of the Red Army, only to be met by other hostilities orchestrated by the government of Czechoslovakia. The result of these hostilities eventually led to the Potsdam Conference, which, according to Hansen, aimed to give institutional structures to expulsion in order to make it appear more humane.

Hansen concluded his presentation by questioning the value of his comparison. He argued that the comparisons show how the "usual" national narratives have failed, and that different forms of violence have led to the consolidation of power, which, in turn, has been used to establish borders. (Matthew Stoltz)

In his lecture, "The Freedom to be Racist," **Erik Bleich** (Middlebury College) asked how liberal democracies in the United States and Europe have struck a balance between two core values: freedom and anti-racism, and in what way the various countries differ from one another and why? Bleich's primary thesis was that the differences are a function of the history of that individual country and a convergence of factors which lead to the passing of a law at a given time. Bleich argued that there is no single overarching trend or model of explanation, such as a gradual movement in legislation towards restricting racist language, for example, but that the balance between these values must be understood in terms of context and confluence.

In order to support this thesis, Bleich analyzed the development of anti-racist legislation in the United States, Germany, and England, finding that the trends were surprisingly different. In terms of outlawing racist speech acts, the United States in 1952 was where Europe is today; the former possessing fairly severe anti-racist speech act legislation, which gradually became less strict over time. The reason for this, Bleich argued, is not because of a push towards increasing civil liberties or a gradual increase in the general acceptance of racist speech, as one might suspect. Rather, the laws governing freedom in the domain of racist speech were gradually expanded in the 1960s when white people from the south were using anti-racist speech laws to block the rights of African-Americans to assemble and protest. The increase in the right to be racist, Bleich argues, is actually the result of a liberal movement to facilitate the political development of a minority.

Germany, by contrast, possesses some of the strictest anti-hate speech laws among European democracies and the United States. The difference between the United States and Germany can be understood in terms of context: the strict anti-hate speech laws in Germany emerged in the 1970s in response to Holocaust denials and a rise in racist activity at that time. The legislature then moved quickly to propose laws to make such statements illegal. It is in this context that the strict anti-hate speech restrictions in Germany are to be understood. In both cases, however, Bleich concluded, it is thus context and confluence and not a single theory or trend that explains the difference. (Stephen Klemm)

In the context of the speaker series "Immigration & Democracy" at the Mario Einaudi Center for International Studies, **Dominik Hangartner** (London School of Economics and Political Science) presented his paper "Does Direct Democracy Hurt Immigrant Minorities? Evidence from Naturalization Decisions in Switzerland" on April 15. Hangartner presented two studies about naturalization in Switzerland, which he had conducted with his colleague Jens Hainmueller (MIT). He suggested that while measures of direct democracy are on the rise in both Europe and different US states, evidence showed that relative to representative democracy, direct democracy hurts the rights of minorities with greater regularity. Since naturalization in Switzerland is decided on a local level, Hangartner and Hainmueller analyzed naturalization cases in 1,400 Swiss municipalities between 1990 and 2010, comparing municipalities that used direct democracy to vote on naturalization with municipalities in which the local representatives decided over the applications.

Their research showed that in a group of similar applicants, the factor that mostly influenced the candidate's acceptance or rejection was his or her country of origin, regardless of voting mechanism. Immigrants from Western Europe and, to a lesser extent, Southern Europe were more likely to be accepted than immigrants from Turkey and the former Yugoslavia. Another

Dominik Hangartner

finding concerned the transition from direct democracy to regulative democracy that many municipalities had undergone between 2003 and 2005, a reaction to rulings of the Swiss Federal Court, which declared secret ballot voting in naturalization referendums to be unconstitutional. The study showed that the switch to representative democracy led to a 50-75% increase in naturalization rates in the respective municipalities. Furthermore, the country of origin of the applicant turned out to factor less into the decision after the municipality began to decide over naturalization by means of regulative democracy, whereas factors like language skills and integration became more relevant. The researchers also conducted interviews with local politicians to try to determine the reasons for those developments. The data led them to believe that the higher naturalization rates were mostly due to the fact that the members of the town council could be held accountable for their decision afterwards, whereas secret ballot voting made that impossible and therefore had allowed people to vote without having to give a justification.

These findings thus not only indicated that direct democracy would hurt minorities with greater regularity; in the case of naturalization in Switzerland, they also suggested that the most marginalized minorities in the most xenophobic municipalities benefited the most from the transition to representative democracy. (Hannah Müller)

Jacob Gould Schurman Professor of German Studies **Leslie Adelson** presented work-in-progress on the German author and filmmaker Alexander Kluge's "cosmic and global miniatures" by focusing on literary form and futurity, a term that has attracted recent attention both within German Studies and the humanities at large. Underscoring her claim that "futurity is pressing," Adelson situated her readings of short prose from Kluge's *Tür an Tür mit einem anderen Leben* [*Door to Door with Another Life*] (2006) vis-à-vis a broad theoretical landscape that included figures such as Walter Benjamin, Ernst Bloch, Miriam Hansen, Arjun Appadurai, David Harvey, David Herman, Reinhart Koselleck, Jacques Derrida, Jodi Dean and Andreas Huyssen. Kluge himself is best known for his multimedial attention since the 1960s to alternative modernities in Europe.

Leslie Adelson

Adelson invoked 1989 as a pivotal moment in modern German and world history that has raised questions about the "future of the future" and various threats to human survival since the fall of state-sponsored communism in Europe. Ours is a moment, Adelson continued, in which futurity becomes an acute "problem of thought." This can be considered both with and against what systems theorist Niklas Luhmann once identified as an essential feature of European modernity, namely, the "open" structure of its orientation to the future. Also drawing on the work of Rüdiger Campe, Adelson stressed that today's challenges to longstanding concepts of modernity and futurity alike can best be understood in terms of widely varying and rapidly changing "uses" of the future. In this sense, Adelson suggested, futurity is not a fixed concept but a "protean abstraction" that lends itself to differentiated analysis.

Adelson next turned to Kluge's *Tür an Tür*, a collection of "350 New Stories" united by their small forms, hence her chosen moniker: miniatures, a term she adapts from Huyssen's work on the "modernist miniature" that emerged in the aftermath of World War I. Adelson first gave a close reading of Kluge's "Hoffnung bei Sonnenaufgang," which describes a hospital patient's change in disposition from hopelessness to hopefulness ostensibly tied to seeing the red of sunrise reflecting off medical instruments in her room. Under the influence of morphine the patient dies in the morning. Pointing to a semantically and grammatically ambiguous sentence fragment halfway through the text, which places its narrative authority into question and opens onto a temporal complexity informing the narration, Adelson asked if this is indeed a hopeful text, as the title suggests. In her assessment, the temporal complexity of this narrative intervention allows us to answer the question in the affirmative. The future in this case is not open and undecidable in the modern sense but becomes accessible to experience in reading Kluge's prose.

In the next phase of the talk, Adelson proposed that Kluge's miniatures, with their "floating" dialogues and temporal shifts, constellate notions of hope (as distinguished from utopia), time (both human and cosmic), and narration in unusual and productive ways. These literary experiments amount to a type of "puttering," or working on futurity, hope and destruction in ways that resist closure and stasis.

If Kluge's *cosmic* miniatures give accounts of extraterrestrials and commingle astrophysics with human affect, his *global* miniatures continue to problematize distance, proximity, and time. The global miniatures addressed in this talk revolve around "revolutionary horizons" since 1989, resisting what Natalie Melas has called a "terminal presentism" in contemporary discussions of globalization. Whether these miniatures describe a fictional encounter between Karl Marx and Wilhelm Liebknecht about the lag time of revolutionary "locomotives," a hapless ex-Soviet adjunct at Stanford concerned with planetary change and revolution, or a Chinese film about a man who runs "faster than fate," they all contain forms of counter-logical narrative. Invoking Derrida's reading of Marx, Adelson suggested that the interlocution of "ghosts" in these stories can be interpreted in terms of an ethical responsibility to both the past and the future. However, Kluge's miniatures do not simply challenge or build upon inherited notions of the future; to engage their particular forms of storytelling is also to work on "future-making" as a distinct narrative practice that addresses Marxist as well as communist horizons in new ways. (Ari Linden)

Patrizia McBride (Cornell) presented a lecture entitled "Mimesis and Storytelling in the Art of Constructivism" on March 5, 2013, as part of the Visual Culture Colloquium series this past spring. Referencing the work of the Weimar-era photographic artist Hannah Höch, McBride's talk focused on the particular ways in which the notion of storytelling was influenced by montage practices at the time.

Patrizia McBride

While montage during the inter-war period is often understood to be one of the central artistic innovations of the avant-garde, McBride suggested that it was appropriated for more constructive uses after 1925. It is in the context of debates concerning narrative, photography, and montage's relation to them at the time that she situated Hannah Höch's work – in particular her "Album" (1933). Bauhaus artist László Moholy-Nagy emphasized the way in which Höch's photomontages appear divorced from the typical context in which they would be given meaning, forcing the reader to imbue these isolated parts with allegorical significance. Such a gesture denotes more than a simple disruption of narrative; it does so in the interest of rupturing perception from meaning in order to show how the two might be divorced from one another. Montage's relation to photography was also a topic of debate at the time. Siegfried Kracauer referred to the photo as an "optical sign" whose blank precision replaces the faculty of memory. Above all, the photo's use in the newspaper conceals the rhetorical character of the medium: images therein claim the validity of fact.

Montage intervenes in the automaticity of these assumptions, de-structuring the medium to reveal the component parts hidden in the naturalized whole. Using examples drawn from Hannah Höch, McBride next demonstrated the means by which montage techniques of juxtaposition force the reader into active analogic play. For example, discordance between image and caption troubles the connection between image and meaning hidden in contexts such as the newspaper. It divests the image of contextually-acquired meaning, transforming its signs understood to mean something particular into blank signs that confront its readers with the task of assigning meaning themselves. By presenting vertically- and horizontally-arranged assemblages of potentially related images on the page – placing, say, a sumo-wrestler next to a ballerina – Höch's "Album" empowers the reader to make multiple and often surprising connections, not between the images and their referents in a caption, but analogically between the images themselves. The work thereby invites us to perform acts of singular regrouping apart from the context in which its erstwhile meaning, as a collection of signs, had once been fixed.   (Matteo Calla)

Call for Submissions
The Peter Uwe Hohendahl Graduate Essay Prize in Critical Theory

The Institute for German Cultural Studies is pleased to announce its 2013 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. The author of the winning essay will be awarded a prize of $250.

Essays may be up to 25 double-spaced pages in length and should be submitted under an assumed name. Authors must indicate their primary fields of study on the essay and submit a sealed envelope containing the author's identity, including student ID number, local address, telephone, and Cornell e-mail address. The title of the essay submitted for prize consideration must be entered on the outside of the envelope. 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>. IGCS offices are located at 726 University Avenue on the third floor (tel. 255 8408).
The Peter Uwe Hohendahl Graduate Essay Prize in Critical Theory is made possible by a generous gift from an anonymous donor.

Co-sponsored by the Institute for German Cultural Studies, Cornell Cinema screened **Christian Petzold**'s 2012 film *Barbara* on May 14 and 15, introduced by ACLS Faculty Fellow **Brían Hanrahan** (PMA). Set in 1980 in the GDR, the film narrates the story of a young pediatric surgeon who, having applied for an exit visa to the West, is punished and sent away from Berlin to work at a hospital in a province. At first, Barbara expresses nothing but disdain for her oppressive surroundings; her West lover Jörg is already planning her escape. But when she develops feelings of responsibility for her patients and love for her team leader Andre, it becomes difficult to decide whether to leave or to stay.

In his introduction, Hanrahan situated director Petzold and his film within the so-called Berlin School, the European art cinema tradition, and a contemporary global trend of cinemas of "the long take." He contrasted *Barbara* against the big budget historical dramas produced for the export market: unlike *Good Bye Lenin!* (2003) or *The Lives of Others* (2006), Petzold's film does not fetishize GDR emblems, such as hammers and sickles, the Berlin Wall, or military parades in brown and grey, in order to narrate history; rather, it focuses on the ways in which mistrust and watchfulness under state surveillance filter into people's everyday lives. Nina Hoss' amazing performance aside, Hanrahan also underlined the role of love in *Barbara:* the film does not simply posit love as a humanist counter-force to an evil totalitarianism, but rather shows love to be inextricable from the social and political situation in which it springs to life.

Petzold's film strongly evokes the claustrophobia of life in the late GDR, reinforced by provincial narrow-mindedness: Barbara attempts to get away on long bike rides through the countryside, but her lunch apart from her work group is interpreted as "separation," and when invaded in her home and strip-searched by a female Stasi officer, not even the inside of her body is conceded as her own, private property. But the film simultaneously challenges the meaning of freedom in the capitalist West, especially in the context of heterosexual relationships: whereas Andre treats Barbara as a companion at work, her bourgeois lover Jörg courts her with cigarettes and stockings from the West, and promises the devoted doctor that she will never have to work again after her escape. Petzold's film *Barbara* thus succeeds in questioning received notions of freedom on either side of the Wall. (Jette Gindner)

Film Screenings

The PG Kino Spring 2013 film series "East German Cowboys: Westerns from the Communist GDR" concluded on April 15 with a screening of *Apachen* (Apaches), directed by Gottfried Kolditz in 1973. The series included two other films from then DEFA collection: *Die Söhne der grossen Bärin* (*The Sons of Great Bear*), Dir. Josef Mach, 1966, and *Chingachgook, die grosse Schlange* (*Chingachgook, The Great Snake*) Dir. Richard Groschopp, 1967. The screening of *Apachen* was preceded by **Evan Torner**'s (University of Massachusetts, Amherst) introduction, read by a surrogate reader, **Matteo Calla** (Cornell), the PG Kino Spring 2013 series organizer.

Apachen was the eighth film produced by the "Roter Kreis" group for the DEFA series of so-called *Indianerfilme*; the film marked the debut of the fourth sub-cycle in the series. The first three sub-cycles included: literary adaptations (the two films previously shown in the PG Kino series fall under this category) intended as responses to adaptations of Karl May novels in the West; screenwriter Günther Karl's *Entwicklungstrilogie* (purely fictitious *Indianerfilme*); adaptations of real Native American chiefs' biographies signaling a shift from kitsch to historical materialism; and finally a turn to the Italo-Western with the fourth sub-cycle. *Apachen*, DEFA's most violent film, is based on the Santa Rita del Cobre massacre of Apache chief Juan José Compá and his fellow Apaches executed by the scalp hunter James Johnson.

While for GDR audiences, Johnson's mass homicide certainly resonated, on a surface level, with the image of nineteenth-century America as the arch-capitalist enemy, the film never explicitly engages with this problematic from a Marxist-Leninist standpoint. Torner concluded his introduction by drawing attention to the formal techniques deployed by the film as well as to its appropriation of the image of the noble savage in order to humanize the Apaches and build structures of sympathy with the oppressed. (Andreea Mascan)

Reading the Writing: A Conversation between
Toni Morrison and Claudia Brodsky

Nobel Prize-winning author **Toni Morrison** returned to Cornell for this collaboration between the IGCS and the Africana Studies and Research Center. After opening remarks by **Gerard Aching** (Director, Africana Studies), **Leslie Adelson** (Director, IGCS), and Cornell President **David Skorton**, Morrison's friend and collaborator **Claudia Brodsky** (Princeton University) opened "Reading the Writing: A Conversation Between Toni Morrison and Claudia Brodsky" with questions about Morrison's time at Cornell, where she received a Masters of English in 1955 and was an A.D. White Professor at Large from 1997 to 2003.

The conversation then turned to Morrison's recent lecture at Harvard University, which she gave in 2012. Summarizing Morrison's lecture, Brodsky referred to the predominance of literary representations of evil over portrayals of goodness. But evil's theatricality, Morrison explained, makes it "too easy"; while goodness often appears as simple, trivial, or silly, Morrison described it as complicated and difficult, so difficult indeed that the entirety of her work can be described as an effort to find a language for goodness. What interests Morrison in *Beloved* (1987), then, is not the act of a mother killing her daughter, but the goodness that follows — the rest of Morrison's work, from *The Bluest Eye* (1970) to *Home* (2012), likewise engages not with evil but with goodness.

Morrison situated her work within a tradition of African-American women's literature that refuses to engage with the white oppressor, arguing that removing the white gaze opens up a new space of freedom for her characters. A recent example of this strategy can be observed in Morrison's play *Desdemona* (2011), which re-tells *Othello* by shifting the focus to Othello's wife. Morrison eliminates the character of Iago, *Othello's* white antagonist, thereby allowing Desdemona to speak for herself.

Brodsky and Morrison ended the discussion by invoking Morrison's latest work, *Home* (2012), which tells the story of a black soldier returning home from the Korean War. With *Home* Morrison memorializes an underrepresented experience: instead of the familiar idyllic image of the decade, Morrison's 1950s is a decade of war, anti-communism, and racism. But instead of representing the racial environment with an evil antagonist or a personified gaze, Morrison shows the landscape itself to be inscribed with racial markers; racism appears when the main character uses one door but not another, when certain paths toward home are inaccessible or blocked. With *Home*, Morrison continues her engagement with a past that, she claims, is "always present," and the conversation concluded with Morrison reading select passages from this novel and a few questions from the audience. (Leigh York)

Isabel Hull wins international research support prize

Isabel V. Hull, the John Stambaugh Professor of History, has won the inaugural International Research Support Prize of the Max Weber Stiftung and the Historisches Kolleg. The prize includes a 30,000 euro stipend and a residency and research seminar at the Historisches Kolleg in Munich.
The foundation cites Hull as "a highly qualified and innovative historian as well as an outstanding intermediary between the scholarly cultures of the USA, Great Britain and Germany."
Hull is acting chair of the Department of History and a member of the graduate fields of Germanic studies, history, and lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender studies. Her interests include sociopolitical, military, legal, administrative and political theory in Germany from 1700 to 1945. She is a member of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences, a John Simon Guggenheim fellow and an Alexander von Humboldt-Stiftung research fellow.
Hull is author of the forthcoming "The Struggle for International Law in the First World War," "Absolute Destruction: Military Culture and the Practices of War in Imperial Germany" (2004) and "Sexuality, State and Civil Society in Germany, 1700-1815" (1996).
Cornell Chronicle, Feb. 12, 2013
http://news.cornell.edu/stories/2013/02/isabel-hull-wins-international-research-support-prize

Wo beginnen die Dinge: Poetics of the Thing

(March 29-30, 2013)

This year's German Studies Graduate Student Conference, "Wo beginnen die Dinge: Poetics of the Thing," took place on March 29th and 30th at Cornell's A.D. White House. The first panel, entitled "Body, Thing, Poetics," opened with a talk by **Natalie Adler** (Brown University). "Throwing, Leaping, Turning" investigated Heidegger's thinking of the body in relationship to things. Adler first observed that although Heidegger consistently mentions movements of the body, such as *werfen, stoßen, springen, greifen*, he rarely addresses the phenomenology of the body directly. Closely examining Heidegger's writings on Hölderlin, in particular on Hölderlin's famous line "Nah ist / und schwer zu fassen der Gott," she read Heidegger's thinking of the body in terms of nearness and distance, at once presence and absence.

Next, **Silvia Cernea Clark** (Brown University) presented her paper "The Body-not-there: A New Look at Heidegger's Things." Clark argued that in Heidegger's account of things, the being-there (*Da-Sein*) of the thing presupposes the presence of the human body as a silent, enigmatic not-there (*Nicht-Da*). The body as *Nicht-Da* makes possible the presencing of *Da-Sein* and can therefore be described as a silent witness to the unfolding of things, such as the jug or the bridge. Clark then read those encounters with things in Heidegger's late work as a call to experience the thing in its "thingness" rather than as a (scientific) object. Drawing on Jean-Luc Nancy's

understanding of "hearing," Merleau-Ponty's notion of "flesh," and Jane Bennett's vital materialism, Clark suggested that such an experience of the thing could inform encounters with the other and thus have an ethical dimension.

Simone Rowen (DePaul University) concluded the panel with her presentation on "Frantz Fanon and a Language that Razes: Poetics as a Reply to the Reification of the Colonial Body." This paper offered a reading of Fanon's 1967 work *Black Skin, White Masks*, in which Fanon articulates the condition of the black subject as being "sealed into thingness," a corporeal objecthood having replaced personhood in the aftermath of colonialism. Despite identifying its reification, Fanon nevertheless affirms the body as the locus of liberation. In the first part of her paper, Rowen investigated the relationship between the poetic and the traumatic in Fanon's writing; she concluded by positing Fanon's account of desire as an alternative to the model of reciprocal recognition one finds in Hegel's *Phenomenology of Spirit*. (Jette Gindner)

The keynote speaker at this year's German Studies Graduate Student Conference was Professor **Tobias Wilke** (Columbia University). In his presentation, titled "The Language of Things: Gadamer, Balázs, and Kafka," Wilke explored how the thing has been conceived in the works of these three authors, giving numerous examples of how different configurations in philosophy,

Tobias Wilke

film, literature, and photography problematize the discourse surrounding the thing.

Wilke first identified a key problem that runs through these authors' and artists' works: what it means to name, or not name, a thing. He offered an analysis of Kafka's short story, "The Cares of a Family Man," to help illustrate this problem. The story's protagonist, a spool of thread named Odradek, occupies a unique position in literature insofar as he is simultaneously a thing and a non-thing. Linguistically, the name Odradek is said to have uncertain origins, yet it is a worthy object of study because there is a creature that corresponds to the name. Odradek as both thing and non-thing thus occupies a liminal position within language. According to Wilke, Kafka uses the unstable status of Odradek to show the inability of language to name exactly what Odradek is. Within the story, the figure of Odradek quickly starts to assume

human characteristics, showing, for example, an impulse to relate things to an anthropocentric standpoint. Throughout his presentation Wilke emphasized how different media technologies also aid in representing the thing. Accordingly, he showed a picture by Jeff Wall titled *Odradek* to exemplify how this literary figure has been represented in photography. The picture shows a woman descending a poorly maintained staircase to the lobby of an apartment building, striking an interesting balance between dark, dilapidated spaces and the richness of color, especially of the woman's clothing. The photo both communicates a sense of foreboding doom and has a dream-like quality. What remains unclear in the photo is where Odradek is "lurking" and what object is supposed to represent him.

Wilke then turned to early twentieth-century film and the writings of Balázs to address the status of the thing in media theory, arguing that Balázs considered film to be a medium that was able to satisfy a growing demand for things to be experienced more concretely, insofar as film provides access to things otherwise not immediately available. Wilke's expertise on the topic of the conference created a stimulating environment for audience members and presenters to question the many different figurations of the thing across discourses and fields of study. (Matthew Stoltz)

Nick Reynolds (University of Oregon) opened the panel "From Thing to Poem" with his paper entitled "Rilke's 'Ur-Geräusch': An Impasse of the Senses." Reynolds began by looking at the relationship between senses, objects, and poetry in Rainer Maria Rilke's essay "Ur-Geräusch," in which Rilke reflects

on his childhood experience with a phonograph. For Rilke, the phonograph is an object that speaks, but his audible memory of the sound of the phonograph is inextricably paired with a latent visual memory: not only does he hear the phonograph speak, but he sees it inscribe signs onto wax with a stylus. Reynolds argued that this pairing of an audible memory with a latent visual memory exemplifies a collision of and tension between the senses. It is this tension that, for Reynolds, creates the space of poetry. Poetry in turn acts upon the senses: Reynolds thus concluded that Rilke's senses are not static or finished entities but are always in motion, and that poetry can act upon the senses to transform them and to produce new relations between them.

Reynolds, Kosick, Schweiger

In the next presentation, "Word-Things in Space-Time," **Rebecca Kosick** (Cornell University) argued that though language and objects are often understood to be separate and competing realms, Concrete Poetry from the mid-twentieth century undermines this opposition and provides an alternative way of understanding this relationship. While language is usually seen as something that represents or stands in for objects, in Concrete Poetry language constructs *itself* as an object. Kosick did not thereby claim that language ceases to be representational or to mean

anything, but rather that the language of Concrete Poetry maintains an existence that is autonomous from its representational relations or meanings. Kosick used examples from the Brazilian poet Augusto de Campos to show that in order to approach the world of things, language does not need to strive to better represent objects, but instead should discover the ways in which it already is an object. According to Kosick, Concrete Poetry opens the door to an object-oriented poetics that sees the realms of language and objects as coextensive.

Franziska Schweiger (University of Colorado, Boulder) returned to Rilke with her paper, "The Significance of Artistic Perception in Rainer Maria Rilke's *Dinggedichten*." Schweiger began by distinguishing artistic perception, which she described as "thing-oriented" and reflective, from everyday perception, which depends on "individual cognitive processes" and is colored by subjective experience. Schweiger then argued that aesthetic perception approaches things as autonomous from their everyday subjective associations. Schweiger's talk focused on Rilke's "Der Tod des Dichters," in which, Schweiger claimed, the poet serves both as the described object and as the describing subject. Following this reading, the poem describes the poet's death as a kind of overcoming of subjectivity and an entry into the autonomous world of the thing. Schweiger finally used her reading of this poem to produce a conception of Rilke's process of artistic perception within the broader context of the *Neue Gedichte*. (Leigh York)

In his paper "Gödel, Kafka, Guilt: When Logic Creates Things,"

Tobias Kühne (Yale University) investigated the logical structure of Kafka's famous letter to his father, where he tries to announce his innocence to his father. Kühne argues that despite Kafka's insistence on his innocence, a logical analysis of the letter shows otherwise. Kafka's proof of his innocence is contradictory; the proof itself *engenders* and *betrays* Kafka's guilt, and Kafka deliberately turns the deadly combination of his logic's rigor and failure on his father to ascribe guilt to *him*. In constructing a proof of innocence, the letter reveals Kafka's guilt as a discursive product, inherently distributed between the interlocutors. The *Letter* ascribes guilt to Kafka's father by drawing him into this treacherous discourse, inexorably leveling the playing field against an otherwise invincible father.

In her paper, "China Sets and Crystal Cups: Material Traces of the Communist Past in Romanian Homes," **Maria Cristache** (Universität Giessen) looked at the transformation of the consumption of china and crystal table sets and decorations originating in the last decades of communism. Her objective was to follow the trajectory of these possessions in order to determine what made them so important back then and what they represent now for Romanians. In the first part of her analysis she looked into the sources of acquisition and the uses of these items. Her analysis of the means of procurement was intended to show the prevalence of social capital over economic capital, and how acquiring these objects was a tactic for differentiation in a supposedly

Visiting Scholar from Berlin

Das IGCS freut sich sehr, Prof. Dr. Steffen Martus von der Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin im September an Cornell begrüssen zu dürfen. Steffen Martus hat in Regensburg Deutsche Philologie, Philosophie, Sozialkunde und Soziologie studiert und 1998 an der Humboldt-Universität in Berlin mit einer Studie zu dem Aufklärungsdichter Friedrich von Hagedorn promoviert. Danach war er als Postdoctoral Fellow am Graduiertenkolleg „Codierung von Gewalt im medialen Wandel" sowie als wissenschaftlicher Mitarbeiter am Institut für deutsche Literatur der Humboldt-Universität tätig. 2002 wurde er dort Juniorprofessor für Neuere deutsche Literaturwissenschaft und habilitierte sich 2006 (*Werkpolitik. Zur Literaturgeschichte kritischer Kommunikation vom 17. bis ins 20. Jahrhundert mit Studien zu Klopstock, Tieck, Goethe und George*). Er folgte Rufen auf Professuren an der Universität Erlangen (2006), Universität Kiel (2007) und an die HU/Berlin (2010).

Steffen Martus ist Mitherausgeber der Periodika „IASL-online" und „Zeitschrift für Germanistik" sowie Redaktionsmitglied von „Text + Kritik". Er schreibt für die *Berliner Zeitung*, die *Süddeutsche Zeitung* sowie für die Wochenzeitung *DIE ZEIT*. Seit 2012 gehört er dem literaturwissenschaftlichen Fachkollegium der Deutschen Forschungsgemeinschaft an. Er ist universitärer Kooperationspartner des am Deutschen Literaturarchiv in Marbach situierten *Suhrkamp Forschungskollegs* und Leiter des Teilprojekts „Pluralisierung von Antike in der deutschen Literatur des 18. Jahrhunderts" am Sonderforschungsbereich *Transformation der Antike*.

Neben den genannten Monographien hat Steffen Martus Studien zu Ernst Jünger (2001) und eine Biographie der Brüder Grimm verfasst (2009, 4. Aufl. 2014). Aktuell verfolgt er drei Forschungsschwerpunkte:

- Im Rahmen des SFB „Transformation der Antike" arbeitet er zu den gattungsspezifischen und lokalen Varianten der Antikentransformation in der deutschen Lyrik des 18. Jahrhunderts.

- 2013/14 entsteht eine Kulturgeschichte der Aufklärung, die nach Möglichkeiten einer aktuellen Epochengeschichte fragt.

- Sein wissenschaftstheoretischer Schwerpunkt liegt auf einem Projekt zur *Praxeologie der Literaturwissenschaft*, bei dem es u.a. um Übertragungsmöglichkeiten des „practice turn" in die Geisteswissenschaften geht.

Im Rahmen des Fakultätsaustauches zwischen Cornell und der Humboldt-Universität wird Steffen Martus vom 2. September bis zum 15. September an Cornell zu sprechen sein. Am 6. September lädt das IGCS besonders gern zu seinem German Studies Kolloquium zum Thema „Anfänge der Aufklärung" ein. Die Textvorlage ist Anfang September in 183 Goldwin Smith Hall erhältlich.

homogeneous society. The inquiry into the use of these objects reveals "museification" and adaptation to the present needs and habits as patterns of utilization. It also points, Cristache argued, to the connection between the role of these objects and the possibility of spending leisure time during communism.

In her paper, "Queer Threads: (Re)Orienting the female body in Nineteenth-Century Women's Writing," **Simone Pfleger** (Washington University) explored

Tobias Kühne

the importance of knitting, sewing, and stitching in women's lives, specifically in regard to education, at the end of the nineteenth century in Germany. Luise Otto's essay "Nadelarbeiten" provided a point of departure for Pfleger's examination of the subject-object and subject-subject relationships in regard to women's engagement with various kinds of needlework. Pfleger argued that the emergence of the mass produced novel in the late nineteenth century enabled women to read while doing their needlework. This addition of the book into the working process not only allowed the women of the time to reorient themselves intellectually; it also forced them physically into the "queer" position of straining and careening their necks to read a page. The introduction of the novel thus reoriented women both physically and intellectually towards their work and roles. (Stephen Klemm)

Jonathan Monroe (Cornell University) delivered the plenary address entitled "The Thing Is," in which he traced the trajectory of dominant trends in modernist and contemporary American poetry. Monroe's presentation outlined these different trends in light of their use of abstract language poetry, on the one hand, and image based poetry, on the other, asking to what extent these trends have been invested in questions of language and representation.

American poetry, Monroe argued, has developed in the legacy of Ezra Pound and his programmatic dismissal of abstract language, captured in the declaration, "Go in fear of abstraction." Tied to this cautionary incentive, Pound championed the "image" as a building block of modernist poetics. Pound's declaration has since informed American poetry's preference for, as well as critical engagement with the use of images, and the ramifications of this for questions of language, representation, and material reality. What image-based poetry to a large extent inhibits is an investigation into the workings of language as a medium that can capture, present, and edit the material world. Dominant cultural trends have further contributed to the endorsement of image poetry as a poetic ideal. Monroe cited poetry anthologies, comparing their publishing formats and exposing how editorial decisions advance certain interpretations of, for example, William Carlos Williams' poetry as both image-based and non-abstract— thus championing his own dictum, "No ideas but in things." To that end, anthologies have published Williams' well known "The Red Wheelbarrow" outside of his 1923 anthology of poetry and prose *Spring and All,* which titles this poem "XXII" rather than "The Red Wheelbarrow" and embeds it into a longer set of poems that experiment with format and page layout. "The Red Wheelbarrow"

therefore cannot only be read as a conclusive image, but needs to be understood within the larger context of experiments with genre and form.

Monroe also presented the audience with poetry from the American school of LANGUAGE poetry, which has been central for advocating experimental poetic forms. These forms make legible important potential within abstract language

Simone Pfleger

poetry: its critical attention to uses of language in social, political and literary discursive communities. Poets such as Adrienne Rich employ abstract language in order to question language as an accepted and stable currency for signification and therefore to profess how poetic language has no fixed referent in things. Language is, rather, a pivotal agent in poetic perceptions of material objects. (Christine Schott)

Out of Order
The Music of Re-invention after Darmstadt
April 2013

The symposium and concert series "Out of Order: the Music of Re-invention After Darmstadt," organized by **Andrew Zhou** and **Xak Bjerken** (Cornell), offered an insightful mixture of music theory and composition. The three concerts, performed by a number of talented musicians and composers, along with the lecture series aimed to complicate relationships between sound and image. Composer **Walter Zimmermann**'s presentation, entitled "Translating Visual Emblems into Sound Emblems," offered fresh insights into how music can capture abstract thought. Among Zimmermann's points of departure was the Freudian concept of *Wiederholungszwang*, or repetition compulsion. In terms of music, Zimmermann interprets the compulsion to repeat as an accumulation of clichés that are acquired throughout one's formal education. According to Zimmermann, the *Wiederholungszwang* thereby stifles self-expression. His musical composition titled "Geduld und Gelegenheit," or "Patience and Opportunity," seeks to overcome this problem. He described how he began the project by looking at Roman images that seem to capture the discrepancy between *Wiederholungszwang* and self-expression. Chief among those images is the idea of *festina lente*, or the paradox of hastening slowly. Zimmermann then described how the unison of "Geduld und Gelegenheit" performs this paradox.

The next speaker, **Benjamin Piekut** (Columbia University), gave a presentation entitled "Experimental Drift in the Years of Desert Plants." Piekut challenged conventional understandings of experimental music by introducing the idea of "drift," a particular kind of music associated with American culture of the 1970s. The emergence of drift music provides a basis for reevaluating the assumptions that underlie how we categorize music as experimental. According to Piekut, drift music complicates the idea of "experimental" by broadening the discussion beyond a common set of styles or forms. Drift music helps to amplify the idea of experimental in terms of its relation to the larger social forces that affect the process of selection and categorization. Piekut's presentation was organized around Zimmermann's time in the US and his work called *Desert Plants,* which documented Zimmerman's collaboration with American experimental musicians.

The final speaker, **Tyran Grillo** (Cornell), offered meditations on how to listen to Zimmermann's music. Grillo began his talk by questioning if listeners must be passive receptacles to what is first being intuited and then reflected on the "sign-posts" that accompany Zimmerman's music. According to Grillo, these signposts imply that the act of listening is also an act of seeing. He concluded his talk by challenging the relationship between the audience and the music, claiming that harmony must find its origins and expression in the audience. (Matthew Stoltz)

Neighbourhoods: Franz Kafka and the Films in the Museum

February 1, 2013

On February 1, 2013, **Rembert Hüser** (University of Minnesota) presented his paper, "Neighbourhoods. Kafka and the Films in the Museum," which explored the organization of attentiveness through textual practices devised around the museum and the cinema between 1910 and 1917. The paper pivoted around Franz Kafka's tourist excursion to Paris, which he undertook with Max Brod in September 1911. During this trip, Kafka recorded a number of diary entries, particularly from his strolls around the Louvre, which pit the flattening gaze of the tourist-*dilettante* against the waning conventions of approaching cultural heritage. Through strips of images "working towards/against each other," references to the sounds of, and reflections on the cinematic experience of travel, the perceptual upheavals of the early twentieth century become incorporated into the diary's textual fabric, impressing each line of each entry with poetic innovation.

Kafka and Brod's visit to Paris coincided with the theft of Leonardo da Vinci's *Mona Lisa* from the Louvre, and the subsequent release of the popular short film *Nick Winter and the Theft of the Mona Lisa* (1911), which Kafka and Brod watched at a Parisian movie theater that fall. The film turns the missing specter of the *Joconde* – a metonymy of the Louvre and a key building block in the construction of national identity – into slapstick that caricatures the bourgeoisie, taking full advantage of the liberty granted by the upended socio-cultural order. With the empty spot at the Louvre quickly becoming a tourist attraction, the painting's absence within the public imaginary is soon filled with actresses and cabaret stars whose bodies are used to reinscribe the lost cipher of the Mona Lisa smile. The theft, Hüser argued, proves disorienting for the critic, whose *Bildung* consists in the knowledge of established contiguities and configurations, rather than ekphrasis – an insight which Hüser related to the larger implications of Kafka's prose piece "The Neighbor" written in 1917.

The figures of the erudite critic, lost in a world devoid of description, and the lay tourist, himself reliant on signs and curatorial labels to navigate the Louvre's displays, thus become conflated, Hüser concluded. The closing remarks referred to Winsor McCay's cartoon *Gertie the Dinosaur* (1914), which reconceptualizes the space of the institution and its representations by coupling animation and live action by means of a "showdown of [medial] practices." (Anna Horakova)

Conversion, (Dis)Honor, and Narratives of Redemption in Early Modern Germany

February 15, 2013

In a paper entitled "Conversion, (Dis)Honor, and Narratives of Redemption in Early Modern Germany," **Duane Corpis** (Cornell) examined the ways in which a vocabulary and rhetoric of honor and dishonor were constitutive in shaping different meanings of the act of religious conversion, as well as the issue of the politics of conversion after 1648. On these grounds Corpis challenges the common view on toleration and coexistence as formulated by the Peace of Westphalia by highlighting their limits and arguing that the post-Westphalian religious pluralism allowed tolerance to become instrumental in institutionalizing conflict rather than ending it.

Instead of the structural model proposed by anthropologists and anthropologically informed historians of Early Modern Germany – a model based solely on a series of binary oppositions – Corpis thinks of honor and dishonor as two conjoined objects. Honor can be circulated and exchanged, gained and lost. Dishonor was often regarded as contagious and, in extreme cases, as something that could be transmitted from a dishonorable person to an honorable one. Furthermore, it was a violation of custom and formal city decrees. Neither honor nor dishonor was considered to be an essential quality of a person.

Corpis observes that over the course of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, a shift occurs in the meaning of honor away from monetization to itself being an object of transaction that can be taken away as a form of punishment. Concomitant with this shift was the establishment of a link between (dis)honor and crime. While in the aftermath of 1555 conversion was officially decriminalized, it continued to constitute a source of social hostility at the levels of the family, community, church, and even state; often, conversions were viewed as dishonorable at the local and sometimes state level. By labeling them as such, an oblique link to crime was established.

Based on an analysis of different cases of conversion and the legal discourse constructed around them, Corpis argues that post-Westphalian religiosity continued to be both a public and a political phenomenon. The Peace of Westphalia did not relocate religious debates from the public into the private sphere and thus should not be regarded as having laid the foundations for a secular, tolerant society. (Andreea Mascan)

Beziehungen in der Fremde-Gaben, Gastlichkeit und Macht in Christoph Martin Wielands späten Romanen

March 1, 2013

In her paper entitled "Chancen und Grenzen der Willensfreiheit: Subjektkonstituierung und Reiseerfahrung in den späten Romanen Christoph Martin Wielands," **Peggy Piesche** (Hamilton College) analyzed various metaphors of travel, wandering, and flight in Wieland's late philosophical novels through the lens of gift exchange. In particular, Piesche's discussion of these novels as engaged in intertextual dialogue emphasized their contribution to conceptualizing shifts in subjectivity amidst a changing social landscape towards the end of the 18ᵗʰ century. Against the predominant focus on aspects of "otherness" in scholarship on travel literature, Piesche drew on poststructuralist theorizations of gift exchange as socially symbolic in her analysis of the protagonists' intersubjective practices and relations, their constitution as subjects, and their interactions with their social environment. For Piesche, notions of gift exchange explain conditions of possibility for the protagonist's gestures of giving in *Peregrinus Proteus* (1787/88) or the sorts of symbolic relations that underlie Appolonius's desire to bestow his story to the world in *Agathodämon* (1796/97).

As Piesche demonstrated, subjects withdrawn from the social order – whether as an ascetic like Appolonius or a wandering philosopher like Peregrinus Proteus – find themselves in a variety of socially symbolic situations characterized by gift exchange or hospitality. Peregrinus Proteus's interlocutions with Lucian invite reflection on who occupies the positions of host guest, an issue complicated by, among other things, Peregrinus Proteus's attempts at fashioning himself as guest. Piesche's reading of Peregrinus Proteus's suicide as self-sacrifice further highlighted the act as a gesture of giving, as a *Gastgeschenk* that holds open the possibility of giving forward (*Weitergabe*). Life as a gift in the form of sacrifice becomes realized through the fictitious editor in *Peregrinus Proteus*, who, in Piesche's reading, participates as a third protagonist in the story, a witness charged with the task of giving the story forward. The fictitious editor's self-reflective position as chronicler and ordering instance of the story compromises, as Piesche, following Derrida, argued, the possibility of the gift. In *Agathodämon*, a similar issue is raised by Appolonius's desire to offer his life story as a gift though Hegesias, who visits Appolonius in his Elysium. Hegesias's role as guest is more stable in *Agathodämon* than Pegerinus's, since Hegesias is explicitly, if deceptively invited to Appolonius's hideout and cast as the recipient of Appolonius's biography. Ultimately, Appolonius's retreat from social life fails as Hegesias's role as chronicler is compromised.

For Piesche, both novels figure a mode of subjectivity and life as social retreat and absence that, in their failure, reflect on the conditions of possibility for contributing to the betterment of social life and the subject's role in contributing to the good of others. (Nathan Taylor)

Beyond Borders: Seal Imagery and Cultural Identity in Late Medieval Europe

April 5, 2013

In his talk entitled "Beyond Borders: Seal Imagery and Shaping Cultural Identity in Late Medieval Europe," **Markus Späth** (Justus-Liebig-Universität Gießen) was concerned with shifting the perspective of art history, which traditionally considers its subject as a characteristic product of specific artistic landscapes shaped by political borders. Späth, by contrast, discussed the relationship between a work of art and its geographical setting by shedding light on phenomena of spatiality in the visual cultures of medieval Europe.
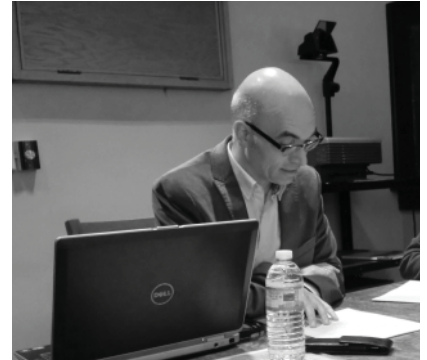
Späth opened with a brief overview of how the term *Kunstlandschaft* has been used in German scholarship, and how after 1989 the relationship between a work of art and its place of origin was reconsidered by replacing the term *Kunstlandschaft* with *Kulturlandschaft*. This led to new approaches towards the geography of art by assuming that art can be situated in various dimensions of space beyond the geo-political, such as the social, the economic, the religious, or even the imaginary. Seals served as a vital tool of authentication within the legal discourse of medieval Europe, both in the Latin West and the Byzantine East. Späth argued that the spatiality of seal imagery went far beyond aspects of style and iconography, extending to the issue of materiality. Since the 1980s, seal iconography has been increasingly regarded as an indicator of the social dimension of space, often referencing a holder's identity within a social order. Moreover, seal impressions are often more firmly anchored in a specific historical context than other artistic objects from medieval Europe because they are generally attached to deeds and, as material objects, bear witness to a multitude of spatial dimensions that clearly exceed traditional concepts of *kunstlandschaftliche Verordnung*.

Späth offered two case studies from the medieval Rhineland, and demonstrated how seals from distinct artistic landscapes such as the Meuse Valley, the Middle Rhine region, and even Westphalia were unified in a particular time and place. Therefore, Späth argued, the question of situating a reproducible medieval artwork within a spatial dimension is limited neither to iconography nor to style as parameters of traditional localization. In the case of the Speyer city, the pairing of bodily and artificial matrices continuously created a visible and tangible polarity of the individual and the collective in order to run a commune and thus index the spatial dimension of a corporate identity. Through the seal's materiality, new institutional landscapes could be shaped and mapped in the charters, which were, however, subjected to permanent change. (Giulia Comparato)

The Werther Effect

May 3, 2013

Andrew Piper (McGill University) presented current research on Johann Wolfgang von Goethe's *Die Leiden des jungen Werther* (1774) and its status within Goethe's corpus, which he argued can be mapped out using computational models for intertextual reading practices. Such computational reading models can profile and search digitized editions of literary works and trace lexical similarities between them. For his current project, Piper was interested in lexical similarities between Goethe's early epistolary novel and his other works, including those from later periods and different genres. To that end, Piper generated maps that visualized the degree of similarity between *Werther* and Goethe's other works based on the occurrence of the 91 most frequent and significant words in *Werther* within Goethe's corpus.

Such topological mapping, Piper explained, can expand on traditional hermeneutic practices and expose how literary analysis hinges on different and, at times, unquestioned technologies of reading and intertextual argumentation. By understanding literary circulation in horizontal (as in epistolary culture) or vertical-genealogical terms, computational reading methods can provide different insights into intertextuality. For example, they can help situate texts within larger discursive fields, including within a corpus, across genres, and across historical or national boundaries; they can therefore map social fields of reading and the reception of literary works in new ways.

The aim of Piper's paper was to situate Goethe's *Werther* within his body of work and therefore expose how "Wertherian" language – contrary to Goethe's denial of Werther's lasting influence on his practice and thought – surfaced in Goethe's other writing, including the biographical and scientific writing of his late period. A topographical mapping of one central word and motif in *Werther*, the "hand," revealed how this word recurred in Goethe's later artist biographies. Meditations on the work of the artist as found in *Werther*, articulated through a particular set of words and motifs, therefore remain central in Goethe's later writings on artistic practice. "Hand," as one word that helps articulate artistic knowledge in *Werther*, appears in Goethe's later scientific writing as well. Wertherian vocabulary, as Piper showed, becomes central for Goethe's subsequent theorizing of the overlap between artistic and scientific knowledge. The "Werther-effect" therefore manifests itself in much of Goethe's later writing in what Piper calls "uncanny" ways. (Christine Schott)

Visiting Scholar from Cologne

The IGCS is pleased to welcome Dr. Christiane König, a film and media scholar from the University of Cologne and currently a DAAD fellow in the Department of Performing and Media Arts. Her main fields of academic interest are feminist film theory, Gender and Queer Studies, and digital media. Her approach to film and media is primarily based on cultural theory and history. She works on media archaeologies and on the material and subject effects of different media. At the moment she is finishing her habilitation on early German cinema as a media archaeology of queer masculinities at the Department of Media, Culture, and Theatre at Cologne University. She has co-written and co-edited the anthology „What Can A Body Do? Practices and Figurations of the Body in Cultural Studies" (Frankfurt a.M./New York 2012) and is currently editing a book on new historical perspectives on feminism (forthcoming, November 2013). The IGCS invites you to Dr. König's colloquium presentation "Of Doubled Men and Deceased Souls" on November 22 at 3:00 pm in Goldwin Smith 181. Her paper will be available a week in advance.

INSTITUTE FOR GERMAN CULTURAL STUDIES
FALL 2013 COLLOQUIUM SERIES

FRIDAYS @ 3PM
181 GOLDWIN SMITH HALL

September 6
Steffen Martus Institut für deutsche Literatur, Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin
Anfänge der Aufklärung

September 20
Jane O. Newman Comparative Literature, University of California, Irvine
Auerbach's Worlds: Dante's Poetical Theology as a Point of Departure for a Philology of World Literature

October 18
Jonathan Boyarin Anthropology & Near Eastern Studies, Cornell University
Mann Professor of Modern Jewish Studies
Jewish Trouble: Reading Butler Reading Arendt, Scholem, Benjamin

November 22
Christiane König Film & Media Studies, University of Cologne
Of Doubled Men and Deceased Souls: A German Media Archaeology of Queer Masculinities (1895-1933)

December 6
Alexander Phillips German Studies, Cornell University
Environmental Depredation and Aesthetic Reflection in Wilhelm Raabe's Late Fiction

Fall 2013
Calendar of Events

Sept. 12 *DIE ARD-REIHE TATORT – SERIE UND/ODER WERK?*
Lecture presented by Claudia Stockinger
(Seminar für Deutsche Philologie, Georg-August-Universität Göttingen)
4:30pm 181 GOLDWIN SMITH HALL
Reception to follow

Oct. 4-5 *RADICAL THOUGHT ON THE MARGINS*
Theory Reading Group conference - Cornell University / Princeton University
Organized by Bécquer Seguín (Romance Studies)
and Facundo Vega (Comparative Literature)
258 GOLDWIN SMITH HALL

Oct. 25 *NEW DIRECTIONS IN INTERDISCIPLINARY GERMAN STUDIES*
Institute for German Cultural Studies Symposium
12:30-6pm AD WHITE HOUSE
Reception at 6pm

PRESENTERS:

SUMAN SETH *Difference and Disease:*
Alexander von Humboldt and the Problem of Seasoning

ISABEL V. HULL *Rethinking World War through the Lens of International Law*

ELKE SIEGEL *Nulla Dies Sine Linea:*
Einar Schleef's Diary Project (1953-2001)

AMY VILLAREJO *Critical Theory, Cultural Studies, and the Death of Television*

HIROKAZU MIYAZAKI *TBA*

Institute for German Cultural Studies
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www.arts.cornell.edu/igcs

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

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

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