
German Studies Association

Newsletter

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Letter from the President

In honor of the twentieth anniversary of German unification, and of the *Wendezeit* more generally, I thought it might be worth pondering the interest we historians take in turning. Turns are, in some simple-minded sense, the very essence of what we study. Historians generally devote themselves to explaining how and why things change rather than how and why they stay the same, even though the latter requires at least as much explanation as the former. After all, energy and entropy (a term coined by German physicist Rudolf Clausius, from the Greek “turning” and “toward”) form the basic content of the universe, and thus of human experience. So staying the same might also be construed as a kind of turning. It too takes the conversion of energy into action; it too involves wastage and loss. Still, the eye of the historian is drawn to action, and insofar as we serve a public function, the public expects us to explain happening stuff. The key tools in our tool chest concern the measuring and assessment of change, that is to say, turning. Take, for instance, periodization, and consider the amount of effort we expend thinking and rethinking the time scales of change, comparable amounts of time that musicologists, for instance, expend on discussing stylistic categories, like, for instance, what makes music modern (or modernist).

Perhaps the interest we take in turning accounts for all the turns we take, in what we study, in how we study it. Once upon a time we took the linguistic turn (rather later than other non-philosopher humanists, to be sure) and since that time there has been no turning back from turning. Soon the use of non-linguistic evidence—paintings, cartoons, photographs, etchings, *things* as such—earned the name the visual turn (see the excellent contributions to the 2006 H-German Forum, “German History Beyond the Visual Turn”), and to that turn might be added a transnational turn, a spatial turn, a subjectivity turn. Perhaps it is time to announce an acoustic or aural turn, since one can hardly imagine an aspect of the sensual world less integrated into our explanations of the past than the noise of it. Music would be part of this, to be sure, and we have made a good start on that methodological turning. But there are more sounds in heaven and earth than are dreamt of in our musicology, however renovated it may be. “Where ever we are, what we hear is mostly noise,” wrote John Cage in his manifesto “The Future of Music—Credo” (1937). To which he added, “When we ignore it, it disturbs. When we listen to it, we find it fascinating.”¹

But given that one gets dizzy from so much turning, I wonder if we might instead call a brief moratorium on turning, especially since the metaphor carries with it the implication of leaving less progressive people behind. (Why is it that the idea of progress lives on almost entirely unchallenged among historians considering the past of their own fields of study?) Abandoning the turning

¹ Quoted by Wesley Stace in a review of several new works on noise, “Hush Now,” *Times Literary Supplement* (Oct. 15, 2010).

metaphor also means leaving a little space in our increasingly corporate, team-player, play-together-nicely-in-the-sandbox academic world for scholars who hunt alone. At least until something comes along so big, so all-encompassing that we all have an incontrovertible need to know it (and I simply don't believe there will be such a thing), I will continue to sing the praises of a disciplined eclecticism.

Speaking of turning, it is autumn, and the leaves are turning, and I now turn over a new leaf, officially turning over my symbol of office (a gavel liberated from a GSA conference hotel many years ago) to Stephen Brockmann. I turn over the reins, the rudder, the wheel in full confidence that he will steer us, as I can only hope, in many directions—new and tried and true.

Celia Applegate
President, GSA

Letter from the Executive Director

Dear Members and Friends of the GSA,

With an attendance of 1139 persons from 27 countries in 315 sessions, the Thirty-Fourth Annual Conference of the GSA in Oakland, California, was the largest in the Association's history. Exactly 800 colleagues participated from the United States, followed by 178 from Germany, 53 from Canada, 34 from the United Kingdom, and 22 from Austria. The range of topics this year was extraordinarily varied, though not surprisingly a great deal of attention was devoted to the twentieth anniversary of German unification and to the historical and cultural experience of the GDR.

We were delighted as well to participate in the German Foreign Office's "Echo 2010" project, part of its "German B Language of Ideas" initiative designed to show why learning the German language is both fun and important. "Echo 2010" is sending a single suitcase to German missions around the world to collect objects symbolizing this project, and on October 7 the Foreign Office suitcase found its way to the DAAD reception at the Oakland Marriott City Center, where we were delighted to add a copy of the 2010 conference program to the many items already included in it. The suitcase had already traveled to Johannesburg, Shanghai, São Paulo, Rio de Janeiro, Recife, New York, Los Angeles, and San Francisco. It is continuing to Tokyo, Cairo, Melbourne, and Novosibirsk before it returns to Berlin.

We not only observed the twentieth anniversary of German unity but other important anniversaries as well, with the Austrian Cultural Forum and the Austrian Fulbright Commission celebrating the latter's sixtieth birthday with a memorable film showing and a reminiscence by Professor Gerald Kleinfeld, our founding Executive Director and himself a 1959 Fulbright *Stipendiat* in Vienna. We also started something new, as we officially launched our new GSA

Spektrum book series in collaboration with Berghahn Books and welcomed the Institut für Zeitgeschichte München-Berlin, the Goethe-Institut New York, and the Gerlind Institute in Oakland to our conference. The latter sponsored a special roundtable discussion by Holocaust survivors who now live in the East Bay, and who talked about their feelings regarding their native German language and their native culture.

We are grateful as always to the other organizations that regularly participate in GSA meetings, including the American Association of Teachers of German, the Austrian Cultural Forum, the Berlin Program for Advanced German and European Studies, the DEFA Film Library at the University of Massachusetts, the Deutscher Akademischer Austauschdienst, the Deutsches Literaturarchiv Marbach, the German Historical Institute Washington, the Goethe Society of North America, the Institute for International Education, Women in German, the World War I Working Group, Young Medievalist Germanists in North America (YMAGINA), and the Zentrum für Zeithistorische Forschung Potsdam.

The GSA conference this year offered an astonishing array of panel series on a wide variety of subjects: so many, in fact, that we can't list them all here. This is a gratifying trend, and one that we support. Our commitment to interdisciplinarity is stronger than ever before, signaled by the creation of our new interdisciplinary Networks that we hope will lead to many more interdisciplinary conference proposals and publications in the future.

We all owe a tremendous debt of gratitude to the 2010 Program Committee for its outstanding efforts this year. The GSA simply couldn't exist without the contributions of such dedicated members. Many thanks indeed to George Williamson (Florida State University), Program Director; Janet Ward (University of Nevada, Las Vegas), diachronic/interdisciplinary; Jason Coy (College of Charleston), pre-1800; Jonathan Hess (University of North Carolina B Chapel Hill), nineteenth century; Agnes Mueller (University of South Carolina), twentieth- and twenty-first-century Germanistik and cultural studies; Andrew Port (Wayne State University), twentieth- and twenty-first-century history; and Louise Davidson-Schmich (University of Miami), political science. Special thanks too to Charles Fulton, our tech support coordinator; Elizabeth Fulton, our office supervisor; Craig Hendrick from ConferenceDirect; and Terry Pochert, our webmaster.

Of course, we also face problems and complexities. We fully understand and appreciate the vexed problem of extending the conference through Sunday afternoon, and the attendance and travel problems that this extension generates. But, quite simply, it was either that or reject a lot of otherwise perfectly qualified session proposals. We are thinking very seriously about polling the membership in 2011 on this and other issues, so that we can accurately gauge your own opinions on the directions that the Association should take in the future.

Speaking of anniversaries, in 2011 the German Studies Association will observe its own thirty-fifth anniversary. We have come a very long way since

the creation of the original Western Association for German Studies (WAGS) in 1976. Bearing in mind our special responsibility to remember our roots in the American West, we recently took a look at the geographic distribution of our members in the United States. Of our 1343 US members as of October 2010, 422, or 31.4 percent, live west of the Mississippi River. We are represented in all states and the District of Columbia except for South Dakota. The largest contingent (172 or 12.81 percent) hails from California, followed by New York (133, or 9.9 percent), Pennsylvania (83, or 6.18 percent), Massachusetts (78, or 5.81 percent), Illinois (65, or 4.84 percent), North Carolina (59, or 4.39 percent), Michigan (55, or 4.10 percent), Ohio (49, or 3.65 percent), Texas (43, or 3.20 percent), and Virginia (38, or 2.83 percent).

The **Thirty-Fifth Annual Conference of the GSA from September 22–25, 2011**, will thus be a very special occasion for us. And there are few better places to celebrate such an occasion than our conference venue, the **Louisville Marriott Downtown in Louisville, Kentucky**. As you'll see inside this newsletter, Louisville is one of the most attractive and interesting cities in the heart of the United States. Located on the banks of the Ohio River, it has a vibrant downtown that includes spectacular museums (among them one of the most exciting and innovative contemporary art museums in the country), excellent dining and entertainment, and easy access to such legendary places as Churchill Downs (home of the Kentucky Derby), Kentucky's famous Bourbon distilleries, and the state's world-renowned horse country. The city also has an important German-American past.

We look forward to hearing from you and to seeing as many of you as possible in 2011!

Sincerely,

David E. Barclay
Executive Director, GSA

Reports and Announcements

Planning for the Next GSA Conference, Louisville, Kentucky, September 22–25, 2011

The thirty-fifth annual conference of the GSA will take place September 22–25, 2011, at the Louisville Marriott Downtown, 280 West Jefferson, Louisville, Kentucky 40202.

This will be the first-ever GSA meeting in this vibrant and historic city located on the banks of the Ohio River. It is served by a large airport – a major hub for UPS – conveniently located only a few miles from downtown. Downtown Louisville itself has experienced a remarkable renaissance in recent years, from its riverfront park (complete with a working steamboat) to an astonishing array of museums including the remarkable 21c Museum (a museum/hotel/bar/restaurant devoted to contemporary art), the Muhammad Ali Center (honoring Louisville's most famous citizen), the Louisville Slugger Bat Factory and Museum, and many more. Louisville and its environs are, of course, renowned around the world for horses and Bourbon whiskey. Conference attendees may visit Churchill Downs, home of the annual Kentucky Derby, and enjoy the Urban Bourbon Trail in downtown Louisville. The GSA is also considering the possibility of Thursday bus tours to Bourbon distilleries in the countryside around Louisville (including the historic city of Bardstown).

As usual, the deadline for ALL submissions will be **FEBRUARY 15, 2010**.

Submissions will be accepted online after 5 January 2010. Although the GSA encourages all types of submissions, including individual papers, members and non-member participants are urged, where practicable, to submit complete session proposals, **including the names of proposed moderators and commentators**. The latter is extremely important if sessions are to be complete. The GSA also encourages the submission of thematic series that might include up to seven or eight related sessions, and it also vigorously supports interdisciplinary sessions. (See the discussion of GSA "Networks" below.)

Although the Program Committee will certainly not reject four-paper session proposals, submitters are reminded that four-paper sessions tend to inhibit commentary and discussion. On the whole, three-paper sessions are vastly preferable. Please note that, in a session with three papers, individual presenters should speak no more than twenty minutes. In four-paper sessions, it is expected that individual presenters will speak for no more than fifteen minutes. In each case, the commentary should not exceed ten minutes in order to enable as much audience discussion as possible.

As in the past, all submissions will take place online at the GSA Web site (www.thegsa.org). Please do note that all presenters, including moderators, commentators, and roundtable participants, must be members of the German Studies Association. For information on membership, please go to the GSA website (www.thegsa.org).

Call for Papers

GERMAN STUDIES ASSOCIATION THIRTY-FIFTH ANNUAL CONFERENCE

The German Studies Association (GSA) will hold its Thirty-Fifth Annual Conference in Louisville, Kentucky, September 22–25, 2011.

The Program Committee cordially invites proposals on any aspect of German, Austrian, or Swiss studies, including (but not limited to) history, Germanistik, film, art history, political science, anthropology, musicology, religious studies, sociology, and cultural studies. Proposals for entire sessions and for interdisciplinary presentations are strongly encouraged. Individual paper proposals and offers to serve as session moderators or commentators are also welcome. Programs of past GSA conferences may be viewed at the GSA website (www.thegsa.org).

Please see the GSA website for information about the submission process, which opens on January 5, 2011. ALL proposals must be submitted online; paper forms are not used. **The deadline for proposals is February 15, 2011.** Please note that presenters must be members of the German Studies Association. Information on membership is available on the GSA website (www.thegsa.org). For more information, visit the GSA website or contact members of the

2011 Program Committee:

Janet Ward, Program Director, University of Nevada Las Vegas
([janet.ward\[at\]unlv.edu](mailto:janet.ward[at]unlv.edu))

Rolf J. Goebel, Diachronic/Interdisciplinary, Univ. of Alabama in Huntsville
([goebelr\[at\]uah.edu](mailto:goebelr[at]uah.edu))

Jared Poley, Medieval/Early Modern/Pre-1800 (all fields), Georgia State Univ.
([jpoley\[at\]gsu.edu](mailto:jpoley[at]gsu.edu))

Margaret Eleanor Menninger, 19th Century (all fields), Texas State Univ.–
San Marcos ([mm48\[at\]txstate.edu](mailto:mm48[at]txstate.edu))

Sabine von Dirke, 20th/21st-Century Germanistik/Cultural Studies, University
of Pittsburgh ([vondirke\[at\]pitt.edu](mailto:vondirke[at]pitt.edu))

Randall Halle, 20th/21st-Century Germanistik/Cultural Studies, University
of Pittsburgh ([rhalle\[at\]pitt.edu](mailto:rhalle[at]pitt.edu))

Bruce Campbell, 20th/21st-Century History, College of William and Mary
([bbcamp\[at\]wm.edu](mailto:bbcamp[at]wm.edu))

Raffael Scheck, 20th/21st-Century History, Colby College
([rmscheck\[at\]colby.edu](mailto:rmscheck[at]colby.edu))

David Patton, Political Science, Connecticut College ([dfpat\[at\]conncoll.edu](mailto:dfpat[at]conncoll.edu))

2010 GSA/DAAD Prize Winners Announced

The Deutsche Akademische Austauschdienst and the German Studies Association are pleased to announce this year's prize recipients, who were recognized at the GSA's thirty-fourth annual banquet in Oakland, California, on October 8, 2010.

The 2010 GSA/DAAD prize for the best book of the last two years in the fields of Germanics or cultural studies was awarded to **Professor Anton Kaes** (University of California, Berkeley) for his book *Shell Shock Cinema: Weimar Culture and the Wounds of War* (Princeton University Press, 2009). The Prize Committee members were Professors Neil Donahue, Hofstra University, chair; Elizabeth Goodstein, Emory University; and Deborah Ascher Barnstone, Washington State University. In its *laudatio*, the committee had this to say:

Anton Kaes's *Shell Shock Cinema: Weimar Culture and the Wounds of War* (Princeton UP, 2009) depicts the German defeat in World War I, with the death or physical and psychological injury of many millions of soldiers, as the traumatic specter, the unspoken grief, haunting Weimar German society and finding expression, years later, in its cinema as a displaced reliving of that trauma in other forms and figures. Kaes combines acute textual-filmic analysis with intellectual, political, psychological, social and economic contexts in order to elucidate the inextricable connection of each film to its specific historical moment. The public reception of film as mass media in the 1920s in Germany becomes the site of mass mourning for mass death and massive destruction: Kaes demonstrates how in the aftermath of War World One in Germany the light-writing of film makes visible the unseen psychological wounds of a defeated and devastated society. With smoothly elegant prose and a sovereign synthesis and seamless interweaving of divers interdisciplinary materials, Kaes creates many insightful moments of powerful illumination that make the familiar new in nuanced ways in a compelling and complex but highly legible narrative. With major readings of Robert Wiene's *The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari* (1920), Friedrich Wilhelm Murnau's *Nosferatu* (1922), Fritz Lang's *Nibelungen* (1924) and *Metropolis* (1927), Kaes's *Shell Shock Cinema* opens up the genre and the period in many ways to both new students and to experts, and Kaes also shows how the "lost souls of Weimar cinema" migrate into "psychologically troubled characters" in postwar *film noir* in Germany and beyond. *Shell Shock Cinema* is a work of great insight and erudition with sleekly integrated scholarship from many fields of German Studies, which also makes for a very teachable text for the classroom, both for undergraduate and graduate students. The DAAD/GSA Book Prize committee would like to note that if quality of scholarship is a sign of the state of a discipline, then the field of German Studies is indeed in very robust good health, and the committee is in turn pleased and proud to select Tony Kaes's *Shell Shock Cinema: Weimar Culture and the Wounds of War* to represent the finest of many fine works published in the last two years in the Humanities division of the German Studies Association.

The GSA/DAAD article prize for 2010 was awarded to the best article in history or social sciences that appeared in the *German Studies Review* in 2008 or 2009. The prize was awarded to **Professor Maria Höhn** (Vassar College) for her article “The Black Panther Solidarity Committee and the *Voice of the Lumpen*” that appeared in volume 31, number 1 (February 2008) of the *GSR*. The prize committee included Professors Anthony Steinhoff, University of Tennessee, Chattanooga (chair); Andrew Bergerson, University of Missouri, Kansas City; and Angelika von Wahl, Lafayette College. In its *laudatio*, the committee had this to say:

With her well-crafted and insightful essay, “The Black Panther Solidarity Committee and the *Voice of the Lumpen*,” Maria Höhn has produced a masterly piece of transnational historical research that makes significant, new contributions to our understanding of German and American history. Drawing on an impressive array of both German and American sources, Höhn reveals the existence of extensive ties, personal and ideological, that linked the American “Black Power” movement with late, 1960s German student radicalism. Her pathbreaking work into the situation of African American servicemen stationed in West Germany, who joined the students as partners in the solidarity committees, also helps to address a glaring lacuna in our understanding of postwar West German society. Above all, Höhn brilliantly shows how the solidarity committees’ commingling of anti-militarist and anti-racial rhetoric reopened public discourse on race in postwar Germany. Indeed, by helping to frame the soldiers’ concerns with institutional racism as an urgent issue in German-American military relations, the committees ultimately forced German and American officials alike to proceed with comprehensive reforms. It is thus with great pleasure that the committee names Maria Höhn as this recipient of the GSA-DAAD Article Prize for 2010.

The GSA thanks the committees for their outstanding work and congratulates Professors Kaes and Höhn for their outstanding achievements.

2010 Graduate Student Prize Winner Announced

Since 2008 the GSA has supported a competition for the best paper submitted to it by a graduate student. The winning paper will be published in the *German Studies Review*. The review committee for 2010 was composed of Professors Eric Kurlander, Stetson College, chair; April Eisman, Iowa State University; and Ingeborg Majer O’Sickey, SUNY Binghamton. The prize was awarded to **Wendy Westphal**, doctoral student at Indiana University, for her essay “‘Truer than the Real Thing’: ‘Real’ and ‘Hyperreal’ Representations of the Past in *Das Leben der Anderen*.”

In its *laudation*, the committee had this to say:

The winner of this year's GSA graduate student paper prize is Wendy Westphal for her paper "'Truer than the Real Thing': 'Real' and 'Hyper-real' Representations of the Past in *Das Leben der Anderen*." Westphal is a PhD Student in the Department of Germanic Studies, Indiana University and her Advisor is Dr. Franz Breithaupt.

In "Truer than the Real Thing," Wendy Westphal examines how the widely praised film *Das Leben der Anderen*—directed by a (West) German but praised as an authentic view of East Germany—traverses the line between the real and the hyperreal in attempting to create a collective "memory" of the East German past. Her fascinating analysis addresses many of the questions that invariably accompany "Wende" films: how authentic, how verifiably truthful, how *nachvollziehbar* is the presentation of the 'lives of the Others'? At the same time, the paper interrogates the film's aesthetic choices to argue that the film itself restages these questions self-reflexively. In weaving together an expert reading of the film with an impressive sense of the wider interdisciplinary context, Westphal suggests that "*Das Leben der Anderen*" both enhances and undermines our collective understanding of the realities of East Germany.

The committee was particularly impressed by the author's clear, jargon-free prose and laudably subtle critique of some of the unexamined assumptions that undergird most popular representations of the GDR. Westphal always explains the theory and methods through which she refracts her arguments in non-specialist terms, and renders the analytical moments in the paper lucidly. It shows that she kept in mind that the GSA audience/readership comes from many fields in German Studies. We believe that the accessibility and interdisciplinary appeal of the paper is particularly important since *Das Leben der Anderen*—a fictional piece frequently perceived as a "true" picture of the GDR—is used by many educators as a vehicle for teaching "the GDR." So, please join us in congratulating Wendy Westphal on receiving the 2010 GSA Graduate Student Paper Prize.

2011 Prize Competitions

In 2011 the GSA will again make a number of awards. We hope that as many members as possible will make nominations and submissions. For the membership of the various prize committees for 2011, please see the committee appointments listed below.

In 2011 the **DAAD/GSA Book Prize** will be awarded for the best book in history or social sciences that has been published in 2009 or 2010. Inquiries, nominations, and submissions should be sent to the committee chair, Professor Donna Harsch, Carnegie Mellon University (dh44[at]andrew.cmu.edu), by **15 February 2011**.

The **DAAD Article Prize** will be awarded for the best article in Germanics or culture studies that appeared in the *German Studies Review* in 2009 or 2010. Inquiries, nominations, and submissions should be sent to the committee chair, Professor John Lyon, University of Pittsburgh (jblyon[at]pitt.edu), by **15 February 2011**.

The **Sybil Halpern Milton Book Prize** will be awarded for the best book published in 2009 or 2010 that deals with the Holocaust. Inquiries, nominations, and submissions should be sent to the committee chair, Professor Doris L. Bergen, University of Toronto (doris.bergen[at]utoronto.ca), by **15 February 2011**.

The prize for the **Best Essay in German Studies by a Graduate Student** will again be awarded in 2011. The deadline for nominations and submissions is **15 February 2011**; they should be sent to the committee chair, Professor Joy Calico, Vanderbilt University (joy.calico[at]vanderbilt.edu).

Finally, the **SDAW/GSA Award for Best Paper by a Social Scientist within Five Years of the Doctorate** will also be awarded in 2011. Funded by the Stiftung für Deutsch/Amerikanische Wissenschaftsbeziehungen (SDAW), the award provides a stipend of € 1000, and the paper that is chosen will be published in *German Politics and Society*. Please see the guidelines in the Spring 2008 issue of this newsletter (available online on the GSA website in .pdf format). Submissions should be made to the committee chair, Professor Dolores Augustine, St. John's University, New York (augustin[at]math.sunysb.edu), by **15 February 2011**.

GSA Committee Appointments for 2011

2011 Program Committee (Louisville)

Program Director: Janet Ward, University of Nevada, Las Vegas
 Rolf J. Goebel, Interdisciplinary, University of Alabama in Huntsville
 Jared Poley, Medieval/Early Modern/Pre-1800 (all fields), Georgia State Univ.
 Margaret Eleanor Menninger, 19th Century (all fields), Texas State University–San Marcos
 Sabine von Dirke, 20th/21st-Century Germanistik/Culture Studies, University of Pittsburgh
 Randall Halle, 20th/21st-Century Germanistik/Culture Studies, University of Pittsburgh
 Bruce Campbell, 20th/21st-Century History, College of William and Mary
 Raffael Scheck, 20th/21st-Century History, Colby College
 David Patton, Political Science, Connecticut College

Archives Committee

Chair: Rainer Hering, Schleswig-Holstein State Archives
 Gerhard Weinberg, University of North Carolina (emeritus)
 Norman Goda, University of Florida
 Astrid Eckert, Emory University
 Will Gray, Purdue University
 Hal Rennert, University of Florida

Nominating Committee

Chair: Mary-Beth O'Brien, Skidmore College
 Gary Cohen, University of Minnesota
 April Eisman, Iowa State University

Prize Committees:

DAAD book prize (for History/Social Science):

Chair: Donna Harsch, Carnegie Mellon University
 Peter Fritzsche, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign
 Dan Hough, University of Sussex

DAAD article prize (for Germanics/culture studies)

Chair: John Lyon, University of Pittsburgh
 Daniel Gilfillan, Arizona State University
 Carol Poore, Brown University

Graduate Prize

Chair: Joy Calico, Vanderbilt University
 Kevin Amidon, Iowa State University
 Eli Rubin, Western Michigan University

Milton Prize

Chair :Doris L. Bergen, University of Toronto
 Amir Eshel, Stanford University
 Gavriel Rosenfeld, Fairfield University

SDAW Prize

Chair: Dolores Augustine, St. John's University, New York
 Jonathan Olsen, University of WisconsinBParkside
 Katie Sutton, University of Melbourne

Interdisciplinary Committee

Chair: David Sabeen, University of California, Los Angeles
 Nancy Collins, Columbia University
 Timothy Guinnane, Yale University
 Roe-Min Kok, McGill University
 Jonathan Sheehan, University of California, Berkeley
 Marc Silberman, University of Wisconsin, Madison
 Janet Ward, University of Nevada, Las Vegas

Berlin Program Committee

Walter Frisch, Columbia University, 2010–12 (Musicology)
 Sabine Hake, University of Texas, Austin, 2010–12 (Germanics)
 Helmut Walser Smith, Vanderbilt University, 2011–13 (History)
 Jonathan Sperber, University of Missouri, Columbia, 2011–13 (History)
 Liliane Weissberg, University of Pennsylvania, 2009–11 (Germanics)
 Nicholas Ziegler, University of California/Berkeley, 2009–11 (Political Science)

GSA Representatives to Friends of the German Historical Institute

Celia Applegate, University of Rochester (2008–2010)

Second member to be named

ACLS/GSA delegate

Patricia Herminhouse, University of Rochester (emerita), 2010–12

GSA Investments Committee

Chair: Gerald Fetz (statutory)

Celia Applegate (statutory)

David E. Barclay (statutory)

Steven Brockmann (statutory)

Patricia Herminhouse

Katherine Roper

Interdisciplinary Committee and Interdisciplinary Networks Initiative

The interdisciplinary initiative of the German Studies Association will be experimenting with the establishment of a series of “networks,” designed to foster exchanges around broadly conceived themes across disciplines and to provide continuity of discussion from meeting to meeting and to encourage workshops and conferences beyond the GSA annual meeting.

Networks should be conceived so as to be open to several disciplines and to encourage discussions that break with traditional periodization schemas. Each network should have one or two coordinators and a dedicated GSA discussion forum.

Initial proposed networks:

Law, Culture and Society: Coordinators Jonathan Sheehan (Sheehan[at]berkeley.edu) and Timothy Guinnane (timothy.guinnane[at]yale.edu)

Family and Kinship

Transnationalism

Religious Culture: Coordinators Christopher Wild (wild[at]uchicago.edu) and John Smith (jhsmith[at]uci.edu)

Urban Society and Culture

Visual Culture: Coordinators Gavriel Rosenfeld (groosenfeld[at]mail.fairfield.edu)

Memory Studies

Individuals who would like to act as coordinators for the Family and Kinship, Transnationalism, Urban Society and Culture, Visual Studies, or Memory Studies networks should contact the chair of the standing Committee for Interdisciplinary Initiatives, David Sabeen: dsabeen[at]history.ucla.edu. If you wish to be part of the networks where there are coordinators already in place, please contact them directly.

***Spektrum* Book Series Launched**

The GSA is pleased to announce that the new series *Spektrum: Publications of the German Studies Association* has been launched with the appearance of its first two volumes: Jason Philip Coy, Benjamin Marschke, and David Warren Sabean, eds., *The Holy Roman Empire, Reconsidered*; and Kathleen Canning, Kerstin Barndt, and Kristin McGuire, eds., *Weimar Publics/Weimar Subjects: Rethinking the Political Culture of Germany in the 1920s*. The series is published on behalf of the GSA by Berghahn Books. More volumes are scheduled for publication in the near future.

Spektrum represents the culmination of four long-standing trends within the Association. The first is the growing tendency among members of the GSA to organize their work around common topics and to present their collaborations in series of panels at the Association's annual conference. The second is an effort both to expand the GSA's sponsorship of scholarly work into a broader array of disciplines and historical periods and to strengthen thematic connections between them. The third is the increasing collaboration at the GSA among scholars from around the world who share interests in the society, politics, and culture of the German-speaking peoples, from the Middle Ages to the present day. The fourth is the GSA's burgeoning role as a venue for the introduction of state-of-the-art research and scholarship on the German-speaking peoples to an Anglophone audience.

Spektrum seeks to promote these trends by providing a venue for the publication of scholarly monographs and collections of papers originally presented at the Association's annual conference. Our hope is that the volumes of *Spektrum*, taken as a whole, will reflect the dizzying variety of GSA members in terms of scholarly discipline—cultural anthropology, musicology, sociology, art, theology, film studies, philosophy, art history, literary criticism, history, and political science—as well as methodology, subject matter, and historical period.

Inquiries can be directed to the series editor, Professor David M. Luebke, University of Oregon (dluebke[at]uoregon.edu).

Grants and Awards

The Max Kade Center for Contemporary German Literature at Washington University in St. Louis is offering several grants in 2011:

--**Thirty travel grants** (Euro 650 each) for advanced U.S. or Canadian graduate students and assistant professors participating in the weekend seminar from **June 2–4, 2011** in the Deutsche Literaturarchiv in Marbach: *“Die Poetik des Albums. Momentaufnahme und Erzählverfahren im deutschsprachigen Gegenwartsroman,”* taught by Professor Annegret Pelz, Universität Wien, on books by Marcel Beyer, W.G. Sebald, Wilhelm Genazino, Ilse Aichinger, and Reinhard Jirgl. Marcel Beyer and Wilhelm Genazino will do readings during the seminar. Further lectures by the translator Christiane Buchner (Munich) and the publishing expert Petra Hardt (Suhrkamp, Berlin). The seminar is organized in cooperation with the Deutsche Literaturarchiv in Marbach and is supported by the Robert Bosch Stiftung in Stuttgart.

--**Two DAAD Summer Grants** (Euro 2500 each) for U.S. or Canadian professors (all levels) or dissertation candidates working in the field of contemporary German literature to do research in the Contemporary German Literature Collection at Washington University’s Olin Library for a period between 4 and 6 weeks (between the middle of May and the middle of August, 2011).

--**One Max Kade Summer Grant** (\$3500) for a U.S. or Canadian Ph.D. candidate working on a dissertation in the field of contemporary German literature to do research in the Contemporary German Literature Collection at Washington University’s Olin Library for a period between 4 and 6 weeks (between the middle of May and the middle of August, 2011).

The application deadline for all of these grants is March 15, 2011. Please send a CV and a short description of your interest in the weekend seminar. Ph.D. candidates applying for the Max Kade Grant or the DAAD Grants, please send a CV, an outline of your dissertation, and a recommendation of your dissertation advisor. Colleagues applying for the DAAD grants please send your CV and an outline of your research project. Email all applications and requests for more information to:

Prof. Paul Michael Lützeler at Washington University in St. Louis.

Email address: [jahrbuch\[at\]wustl.edu](mailto:jahrbuch[at]wustl.edu)

Aktuelles aus dem deutschen Archivwesen GSA Archives Committee Report 2010¹

Rainer Hering
Landesarchiv Schleswig-Holstein

1.) In den Medien ist der nahezu vollständige Einsturz des Historischen Archivs der Stadt Köln am 3. März 2009 nach wie vor präsent, wenn es um das deutschsprachige Archivwesen geht.² Dieses Archiv ist das bedeutendste kommunale Archiv nördlich der Alpen, dessen Bestände inhaltlich weit über die Stadt und die Region hinausreichen, z.B. zur Hanse. Noch immer lässt sich nicht exakt sagen, welche Unterlagen gerettet werden konnten, doch wird nach wie vor davon ausgegangen, dass ungefähr 85 bis 90 Prozent der Dokumente geborgen werden konnten. Die Bergung der im Grundwasserbereich befindlichen Archivalien ist nach wie vor problematisch. Hier laufen umfangreiche bauliche Maßnahmen, um bis in 30 Meter Tiefe zu gelangen. Darüber hinaus werden die oftmals in viele Teile auseinander gerissenen und jetzt auf unterschiedliche Magazinstandorte verstreuten Akten mühsam wieder zusammengeführt. Die einzelnen Stücke an den jeweiligen Lagerungsorten werden erfasst und identifiziert, damit man einen Überblick erhält. Für diese Aufgabe werden zwei bis drei Jahre veranschlagt. Anschließend müssen die auseinandergerissenen Akten und Bestände zusammengeführt werden. Bis auch alle restauratorischen Maßnahmen abgeschlossen sind, werden vermutlich noch viele Jahre, wenn nicht Jahrzehnte, vergehen.

Das Historische Archiv der Stadt Köln blickt trotz dieser Katastrophe offensiv und optimistisch nach vorn: Seit dem 22. Juni 2009 ist im Rathaus in Köln-Deutz, dem provisorischen Sitz, ein Lesesaal mit drei Plätzen eingerichtet worden, in dem es nach Voranmeldung möglich ist, die vorhandenen Mikrofilme der Kölner Bestände einzusehen. Dies betrifft inhaltlich vor allem die Alte Abteilung bis 1815. Das Land Nordrhein-Westfalen und die Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft (DFG) haben Mittel zur Verfügung gestellt, damit diese Filme digitalisiert werden können. In einer Publikation des Archivs wird ausführlich auf den Einsturz und die danach getroffenen Maßnahmen eingegangen.³

2.) Auch wenn der Einsturz eines kompletten Archivs sicherlich eine spektakuläre Ausnahmesituation darstellt: Mutwillige Zerstörungen von

¹ The Archive Committee consists of Astrid M. Eckert, Norman Goda, William Gray, Hal Rennert, Gerhard Weinberg, and Rainer Hering (chair).

² Vgl. Rainer Hering: Anmerkungen zur Situation des Kölner Stadtarchivs nach dem Einsturz. In: German Studies Association Newsletter Vol. 34 No. 1 (Spring 2009), 39-42; James M. Brophy: Cologne's Catastrophe. In: German Studies Association Newsletter Vol. 34 No. 1 (Spring 2009), 43-46.

³ Gedächtnisort. Das Historische Archiv der Stadt Köln. Hrsg. von Bettina Schmidt-Czaia; Ulrich S. Soénius. Köln; Weimar, Wien: Böhlau, 2010. – 197 S., sw. Abb.: € 19, 90.

Archivunterlagen durch Kriege oder Bürgerkriege, oder auch Feuer oder (Hoch-)Wasserschäden kommen vor. Jüngstes Beispiel war das Stadtarchiv Düsseldorf. Am Tag der geplanten Wiedereröffnung (1. Juli 2010) strömten in den Archivbau ca. 10.000 Liter Wasser über zwei Stockwerke in den Keller, wo sich das Magazin mit den Archivalien befindet. Ursache war ein Defekt in der Sprinkleranlage der im selben Gebäude befindlichen Probenbühne des Schauspielhauses. Vorwiegend seien ca. 150 Regalmeter Akten aus dem 19. Jahrhundert und Straßenverzeichnisse in Mitleidenschaft gezogen worden. Das beschädigte Material werde vom Restaurierungszentrum des Landschaftsverbandes Rheinland in Brauweiler gefriergetrocknet und anschließend, soweit erforderlich, restauriert.

3.) Besonders gefährdet schien im letzten Jahr die Überlieferung des Stadtarchivs Augsburg. 200.000 Archivalien sind vom Brotkäfer (*Stegobium paniceum*) angefressen, der aus Hülsenfrüchten und Brot des benachbarten Stadtmarktes stammte und im Jahr 2009 massenhaft auftrat. Der Leim der historischen Amtsbücher im Stadtarchiv zog die Tiere an. Darüber hinaus gab es weitere gravierende Probleme, u. a. im Bereich des Brandschutzes, die einen Archivneubau erforderlich machten. Da dies zunächst von der Stadt Augsburg nicht konsequent verfolgt wurde, kam es zu internationalen Protesten. Auch die Präsidentin der German Studies Association hat einen entsprechenden Brief an den Oberbürgermeister verfasst, um auf dieses dringende Problem hinzuweisen. Diese Aktionen waren erfolgreich. Inzwischen wurden die Unterlagen evakuiert und Maßnahmen zur Schädlingsbekämpfung begonnen. Darüber hinaus ist der erforderliche Archivneubau in Angriff genommen worden – im Jahr 2013 soll das neue Gebäude eingeweiht werden. Ein provisorischer Lesesaal wird eingerichtet. Eine zeitweise angedachte Rückführung der Unterlagen in das geschädigte Gebäude wird aus konservatorischen Gründen ausgeschlossen.

4.) Das Goethe- und Schiller-Archiv in Weimar wird bis zum Sommer 2011 saniert und erweitert. Es ist die erste Grundsanierung des 1896 eröffneten Archivs. Geplant ist auch ein unterirdisches Depot. Die neuen klimatisierten Magazinräume werden mit neuester Sicherheitstechnik ausgestattet, die gegen Feuer, Wasser und Diebstahl schützen soll.

5.) Nicht vergessen werden darf über spektakuläre Einzelfälle hinaus, dass gerade durch das säurehaltige Papier tagtäglich konservatorischer Handlungsbedarf in den Archiven (und Bibliotheken) gegeben ist. Schadensprävention ist die wirtschaftlichste Methode der Bestandserhaltung, aber sie ist unspektakulär und findet daher in der Öffentlichkeit nur wenig Aufmerksamkeit. Doch sie ist notwendig, wenn wir unser Kulturgut, unser historisches und juristisches Gedächtnis bewahren wollen. Bislang sind die dafür zur Verfügung gestellten öffentlichen Mittel völlig unzureichend. Wenn sich das nicht massiv ändert, und damit ist angesichts der wirtschaftlichen Situation im Moment nicht zu rechnen, droht bereits mittel-, erst recht aber langfristig ein Verlust einer einmaligen Überlieferung.

6.) Das Archiv des Internationalen Suchdienstes in Arolsen (ITS) ist das weltweit größte Archiv über zivile Opfer des „Dritten Reiches“ und enthält

26.000 laufende Meter Unterlagen über Konzentrationslager, Inhaftierungen und Zwangsarbeit, die über 17,5 Millionen Menschen Auskunft geben. Digitale Kopie der Daten befinden sich derzeit im US Holocaust Memorial Museum in Washington sowie in Israel (Yad Vashem in Jerusalem), Polen (Nationales Institut des Gedenkens in Warschau), Belgien (Archives Générales du Royaume) und Luxemburg (Centre de Documentation et de Recherche sur la Résistance). Bislang wurden etwa 85 Millionen Abbildungen und ungefähr 6,5 Terabyte an Daten an diese Einrichtungen überreicht, darunter Dokumente zu Konzentrationslagern, Ghettos und Gefängnissen (ca. 18 Millionen Abbildungen), die Zentrale Namenskartei des ITS (ca. 42 Millionen Abbildungen), Registrierungskarten von Displaced Persons (ca. 7 Millionen Abbildungen) sowie Unterlagen zum Thema Zwangsarbeit (ca. 13 Millionen Abbildungen), zu DP Camps und zur Emigration (4,5 Millionen Abbildungen). Auf Beschluss des Internationalen Ausschusses, der die Arbeit des ITS überwacht, kann jeder der elf Mitgliedsstaaten eine digitale Kopie der in Bad Arolsen lagernden Dokumente anfordern. Derzeit werden die Schriftwechsel des ITS mit Opfern und ihren Familienangehörigen gescannt (ca. 3 Millionen Korrespondenzakten). Derzeit sind etwa 85 Prozent der beim ITS lagernden Dokumente digitalisiert.

Darüber hinaus wurden Archivare eingestellt, die an einer virtuellen Provenienzrekonstruktion arbeiten. Leistungsfähige Findmittel werden erstellt. Die Forschungs- und Öffentlichkeitsarbeit ist nachhaltig intensiviert worden, so dass die Nutzungsmöglichkeiten auf vielfältige Weise erhöht wurden. Neben dem Lesesaal und besonderen Arbeitsräumen steht auch eine wissenschaftliche Bibliothek zur Verfügung. Besonders herausgestellt werden die vielfältigen Potentiale der Arolsener Unterlagen für unterschiedliche Forschungsvorhaben.

Der Internationale Suchdienst in Bad Arolsen untersteht den elf Staaten des Internationalen Ausschusses für den Internationalen Suchdienst (Belgien, Frankreich, Deutschland, Griechenland, Israel, Italien, Luxemburg, Niederlande, Polen, Großbritannien, USA). Grundlage sind die Bonner Verträge von 1955 und das Änderungsprotokoll von 2006. Im Auftrag des Ausschusses wird der ITS vom Internationalen Komitee vom Roten Kreuz (IKRK) geleitet und verwaltet. Finanziert wird die Einrichtung aus dem Haushalt des Bundesinnenministeriums. Geplant ist, dass die Zuständigkeit für diese Unterlagen auf das Bundesarchiv zu übertragen.

Nähere Informationen sind im Internet zu finden: www.its-arolsen.org.

Ein vom Archives Committee veranstalteter Roundtable auf der GSA Jahrestagung 2010 in Oakland widmet sich ausführlich dem Bestand des ITS, seiner Zugänglichkeit und den Forschungsmöglichkeiten. Dabei wurden auch die Ergebnisse aktueller Besuche in Bad Arolsen mitgeteilt.

7.) Die Bundesregierung hat eine Neuregelung der Verschlusssachenanweisung verabschiedet, die die Freigabe von Geheimakten regelt. Allein im Bundesministerium des inneren befinden sich etwa 100.000 derartiger Vorgänge, in denen rund 1,5 Millionen VS-Dokumente enthalten sind. Ähnlich hohe Zahlen sind im Bundeskanzleramt und im Auswärtigen Amt sowie im Verteidigungsministerium zu erwarten. Darüber hinaus befinden sich VS-Akten

in weiteren zentralen Bundesbehörden sowie in den Landesbehörden. Diese so genannten VS-Akten werden stufenweise freigegeben. Die VS-Akten der Jahre 1949 bis 1959 werden bis Ende 2010 frei gegeben. Die VS-Akten der Jahre 1960 bis 1994 werden ab 2013 schrittweise (drei Jahrgänge pro Kalenderjahr) frei gegeben. Verschlussachen, die ab 1995 erstellt wurden, unterliegen einer dreißigjährigen Schutzfrist.

8.) Nach wie vor wirken sich die knappen Haushaltsmittel gerade in einzelnen Bundesländern negativ auf die Lage der Archive in Staat, Kirchen und Kommunen aus. Dabei bereiten vor allem die Kürzungen im Personalhaushalt den Archiven große Probleme. Archive sind durch den permanenten Zuwachs an Unterlagen Wachstumsverwaltungen, die jährlich mehr Aufgaben erhalten, auch durch die gestiegenen Benutzerzahlen. Zugleich wachsen die Anforderungen, die die Kunden an die Archive stellen. Dem stehen die sinkenden Finanzmittel gegenüber. Als Konsequenz wird vereinzelt sogar erwogen, die bestehende gesetzliche Grundlage der archivischen Arbeit zu ändern, was die Sicherung der Überlieferung massiv gefährden würde. Insbesondere die kommunale Archivarbeit wird offenbar aus finanziellen Gründen als entbehrlich angesehen. Eine Umsetzung dieser Überlegungen würde für die historische Identität der Bevölkerung wie für die wissenschaftliche Forschung fatale Konsequenzen haben. Im Bereich der Sicherung kirchlicher Unterlagen verhindern sinkende Kirchensteuereinnahmen einen adäquaten Ausbau des kirchlichen Archivwesens.

9.) Die Library of Congress meldete, dass sie die über Twitter verschickten Meldungen digital speichern will, um sie für die Nachwelt zu Archivieren. Dadurch erhoffen sich Kommunikationswissenschaftler neue Erkenntnisse für die Verbreitung von Nachrichten und die Entwicklung der öffentlichen Meinung im Internet. Diese Nachricht erinnert daran, dass die Archivierung von ausschließlich im Internet befindlichen und häufig kurzfristig aktualisierten Informationen nach wie vor ein Problem darstellt. Insbesondere der historischen Forschung entgehen so viele Informationen über die Arbeit von Behörden, Firmen, Vereinigungen und das Handeln einzelner.

10.) Die Entwicklungen im internationalen Urheberrecht wirkt sich auch auf Archive aus. Vor allem Fotos und Filme können nicht mehr so einfach vorgelegt und zur Reproduktion bzw. zur weiteren Nutzung zur Verfügung gestellt werden. Hier müssen neue (gebühren-)rechtliche Regelungen erarbeitet werden. Dadurch kann es, vor allem bei den verwaisten Werken, dessen Rechteinhaber nicht bekannt sind, zu Nutzungseinschränkungen kommen.

11.) Grundsätzlich steht das Archives Committee für Fragen, Probleme und Hinweise zum Archivwesen im deutschsprachigen Bereich zur Verfügung. Auch Anregungen und Vorschläge für Veranstaltungen auf GSA-Konferenzen werden gern entgegengenommen.

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Report on the 2010 Meeting of the American Council of Learned Societies

Andrew Lees
Rutgers University, Camden

Having been asked by President Celia Applegate to serve in place of Patricia Herminghouse, who was unable to attend this year's meeting, I was honored to represent our association in Philadelphia on May 6–7 as the acting delegate of the GSA, one of seventy associations that sent delegates. In so doing, I gained a strong impression of the breadth of humanistic scholarship and of the energy and the thoughtfulness of individuals who help to advance it institutionally in a wide range of disciplinary and interdisciplinary groups in which they play leading roles.

Enjoying the company and the guidance of GSA Executive Director David Barclay, who continued to represent our association as a Chief Administrative Officer, I renewed old associations and made new acquaintances in several areas, among them representatives of associations that focus on areas both to Germany's west and to its east: the North American Conference of British Studies, the Association for the Advancement of Baltic Studies, and the Society for the Advancement of Scandinavian Study.

On Thursday evening, there were concurrent sessions on "New Directions in Humanities Scholarship in Africa Today" and on "ARTstor's Platform for Image Sharing." I attended the first of these sessions, which was led by eminent Africanists from the University of Pennsylvania, Sandra Barnes and Steven Feiermann. They reported on a program supported both by the ACLS and the Carnegie Corporation through which forty fellowships are awarded annually for both dissertation and postdissertation work at African universities in Ghana, Nigeria, Tanzania, Uganda, and South Africa.

The first part of Friday morning was given over to reports and to voting. Jessica Irons of the National Humanities Alliance reported on efforts to secure increases in federal funding for the National Endowment for the Humanities and six other programs which the Alliance represents. We also heard a report from Nicole Stahlmann, who directs ACLS fellowship programs. She pointed out that although numbers of applications had risen steeply in recent years—to about 4,000 last year—the number of grants had also increased quite substantially, amounting to 260 (only seven of which, alas, supported research that had to do with German Central Europe or contacts between Germans and non-Germans). A substantial number of grant recipients received money under the terms of the ACLS New Faculty Fellows Program, which provides support for recent recipients of the Ph.D. who have been unable to secure full-time employment. After voting to elect three new members to the ACLS Board of Directors, after voting to approve an application by the Society for Military History for membership in the ACLS, and after approving a treasurer's report that indicated a strong rebound in ACLS finances during the past year,

we heard an address from the ACLS president, Pauline Yu. A specialist in East Asian languages and cultures who has headed the ACLS since 2003, she emphasized the need for increased numbers of fellowships, particularly for the purpose of supporting younger scholars. She underlined the difficulty of raising extra money by pointing to the questionable reputation of research in the humanities even among people who believe in the importance of familiarity with humanistic traditions. Following her address, three recent recipients of ACLS fellowships spoke about their work: John North Hopkins discussed his study of archaic Roman architecture; Christa Salamandra spoke about her research on Arab drama; and Edward J. Balleisen reported on his work on the history of fraud in America.

The first order of business in the afternoon was a lunch-time talk by James Leach, the Chairman of the National Endowment for the Humanities. After pointing to ways in which decision making by a recent president (who remained unnamed) might have been improved by familiarity with such classical texts as Thucydides's *History of the Peloponnesian War*, he launched into a denunciation of what he saw as the deleterious effects on public discourse of the recent Supreme Court decision that permits corporate spending on political campaigns.

The longest session of the day featured presentations by four individuals with regard to the implications for scholarship of the Google Book Settlement: Daniel Clancy, who is the engineering director of Google Books; James Grimmelmann, a law professor at New York University; Helen Cullyer, an associate program officer in the area of Scholarly Communications at the Andrew Mellon Foundation; and James O'Donnell, who is both the provost at Georgetown University and secretary of the ACLS Board of Directors. Attended by well over 100 persons, not only Clancy's presentation but also the other three presentations were generally upbeat with regard to the ways in which the proliferation of Google books is likely to enhance the democratization of research opportunities via enhanced accessibility of texts that are currently available only at a handful of major libraries. Clancy also emphasized that very few authors of books that are out of print but still in copyright are likely to object to having their works placed in the public domain. To the contrary, they want their works to reach as many people as possible, regardless of whether they make any money from the dissemination of these works or not. Concerns were expressed about the possibility that an "evil Google" might someday charge extortionate prices for access to works to which it alone possessed rights, but most of those who were present in the room did not seem to be greatly concerned about the likelihood that such a development would take place.

The main intellectual event of the evening was the delivery of the Charles Homer Haskins Prize Lecture, by Nancy Siraisi, Distinguished Professor Emerita of History at Hunter College of the City University of New York.

The meetings that took place on Saturday morning were attended only by Chief Administrative Officers. I was not there. David Barclay was, shoring up our relationships with leaders of other scholarly associations and seeking, I am sure, to advance our interests with his customary energy, enthusiasm, and skill.

Issues and Discussions in German Studies

[The Thirty-Fourth Annual Conference of the GSA featured many important highlights; but two of the most important and memorable were Professor Celia Applegate's Presidential Address and Steffen Mensching's luncheon address, each presented on October 8, 2010. It gives us a great deal of pleasure to publish them here.

Celia Applegate is Professor of History at the University of Rochester. She was educated at Bryn Mawr College and Stanford University, where she studied with Paul Robinson and James Sheehan. She is the author of *A Nation of Provincials: The German Idea of Heimat*, *Bach in Berlin: Nation and Culture in Mendelssohn's Revival of the St. Matthew Passion* (winner of the 2007 DAAD/GSA Prize), as well as numerous articles on issues concerning German regionalism, nationalism, and musical culture. She has been the recipient of fellowships from the Fulbright Foundation, the Social Science Research Council, the Woodrow Wilson National Fellowship Foundation, and the National Endowment for the Humanities and has been a resident fellow at the Stanford Humanities Center and the Shelby Cullom Davis Center for Historical Studies at Princeton University. She serves on the boards of the Oxford University Press's series on *The New Cultural History of Music*, the University of Rochester Press, and the Friends of the German Historical Institute Washington.]

The Importance of Culture GSA Presidential Address 2010

Celia Applegate
University of Rochester
President, GSA

For those of us in the humanities and the interpretive social sciences, reading the *Chronicle of Higher Education* these days is like reading the opening of Malinowski's *Argonauts of the Western Pacific*, where he writes about the tragic position of the ethnographer, at work as "the material of . . . study melts away with hopeless rapidity . . . , dying away under our very eyes." These writers in the *Chronicle* are the ethnographers of what increasingly feels like our own vanishing, dying culture—that of the pursuit of scholarship and teaching in the humanities, via jobs that bring a living wage—work that now seems as doomed as the "enterprises and adventures" of the Trobriand islanders.¹

Dire predictions. Malinowski made a dire prediction at the end of the *Argonauts*, that the study of ethnology, as a means of developing "wisdom, tolerance, and generosity," might have no future at all, at a time when "prejudice, ill-will, and vindictiveness" were "dividing each European nation" from the other. But he was writing in 1922.² I'm saying this at a time when even as

¹ Malinowski, *Argonauts of the Western Pacific* (London: G. Routledge & Sons, 1922), xv, 10.

² Malinowski, *Argonauts*, 518.

I speak thousands of messages from H-Soz-U-Kult and H-German, about conferences, books, and projects have accumulated in my email in-box, and that just since this morning; at a time when there have never been more means of disseminating one's research to the world, never more journals, books, and blogs that you don't have time to read. Look at all of us here at this conference. . . . What could possibly be wrong

Yet evidence like that—us, here—suggests that we have responded to institutional structures demanding that we be *producers* of vast amounts of scholarship; what is less readily apparent to us, amidst the proliferation of knowledge, is that we do not really have reliable *consumers* of our work, even among ourselves. And in the sober light of morning, when those of us who do have jobs are writing letters of recommendation for those who do not, it is hard to ignore what one *Chronicle* writer characterized as “all the key drivers [of the academic job market for humanities PhDs] simultaneously pointed in the wrong direction.”³

I know you are all familiar with what the indicators are: the extraordinary expansion of adjunct faculty, now as many as seventy percent of the teaching jobs in higher education, the declining level of state support even before the current economic crisis, the rapid growth of enrollments in for-profit higher education and community colleges, where majors in the humanities as scarce as are the jobs, the decline of humanities majors in even private, not-for-profit universities, the growing number of faculty members who just don't retire, the disappearance of jobs, the fact that forty percent more humanities PhDs were awarded in 2007 than twenty years earlier – during a job market in steep decline. In the German Studies Association, we are aware of what this means for German programs, which have been on the chopping block in recent years, but history departments are not rushing to fill German history positions as they come open with retirements (which is not very often), so more disguised than in the public drama of a department abolition, positions are vanishing.

I am not here with any solutions, or to announce what measures the German Studies Association is taking to combat this situation. We are not large enough to institute the kinds of broad-gauge efforts the American Historical Association and the Modern Language Association are trying, though we try to support them. What we *can* do is to be clear and honest and passionate in articulating the importance of the humanities to those who own a piece of this problem, the stakeholders as they call themselves—academic administrators, trustees, legislators, journalists, *students*. Above all students—undergraduates—because administrators of the corporate university are increasingly managerial, because journalists reduce an already simplified message to the point of absurdity, because the for-profits are *killing* the non-profits with

³ Peter Conn, “We Need to Acknowledge the Realities of Employment in the Humanities,” *The Chronicle of Higher Education* (April 4, 2010).

the amount of money they spend, effectively from the perspective of their bottom line, on lobbying. Some among us *are* lobbying but I'm not here to talk about that either, though I salute the AATG for its work—its president, Carole Anne Costabile-Heming, and its Executive Director, Helene Zimmer-Loew.

But being clear and honest about our role as teachers and the significance of our work as scholars of Germany is not as straightforward as it sounds. I know we do not have consensus on what we should teach our students or what we should say to those with influence who doubt the importance of a liberal arts education for modern people in a globalizing world. So I'd like to direct my remarks today to a few things I regard as important to say and to teach, things which we at best neglect and at worst disown.

For even while scholars of Germany have extended their reach across an enormously broad range of subjects, theories, places—and I applaud the achievements of the last decades, though I am not here to celebrate them; I am here to ponder our impact, or lack thereof, outside of these self-reinforcing circles—even while we have extended our reach, we have responded to this crisis in the humanistic disciplines, this slow decline in their broader cultural authority, in ways that may seem to make sense in the short term but in the long term will not be sufficient and are shutting down other possibilities. I will call these responses, polemically, presentism, populism, and moral instrumentalism, though all might be encompassed under a single word, Relevantism. (That's a lot of neologisms.) And please note, before I proceed any further, that I'm commenting on what I take to be responses to our sense of marginalization, and I would be very sorry if these remarks were construed as an attack on our scholarship as such; I just want us to toot a few more horns than those that are currently being heard.

Let me start then with the striking movement we see toward the present in all our scholarly undertakings. (I am excluding here our political scientists and economists, whose recent PhDs are not, in any case, afflicted by this employment crisis.) A year ago after our annual conference in Washington, a member of the German embassy suggested to David Barclay and me that our program did not have enough about contemporary Germany in it, the culture he, of course, represents in the United States. His impression stuck in my mind, since it was exactly the opposite of my own, so I went back and counted, this year too. Giving due consideration to the panels with papers on several time periods, the results were unequivocal. Over half of this year's presentations are exclusively concerned with the post-1945 period and another quarter deal with the years 1914–1945. We are, to a great extent, an organization of scholars of the twentieth century, especially its latter half.

To be sure this emphasis reflects the hard work of the program committee, with these dazzlingly serried ranks of panels (and I salute them). *And* it reflects the vitality of fields, especially DDR studies, in their restless adolescence, as well as the restless, shape-shifting nature of culture. Finally it reflects the

prominent role that memory studies play in our consideration of the past, though one would not necessarily have predicted that almost all the papers and panels devoted to memory studies concern the period after 1945. Our commitment to the investigation of the contemporary world expresses our intellectual curiosity and sense of global civic responsibility, the teaching of which is what Martha Nussbaum thinks will save us.⁴ I am not so sure.

All this would be fine were it not accompanied by a growing inattentiveness, even indifference, a signal *lack* of curiosity about deeper histories of the culture, politics, and societies that have shaped the present—or sometimes left no traces at all. It is as though some Grand Inquisitor has decreed that You Shall be Relevant, and added, almost as an afterthought, Relevant means something that happened yesterday. And if it did not, if it took place in, say, the early nineteenth century, that dead zone of German studies in North America, then it should be consigned to what a colleague of ours called, in one of those pieces of aggression passed off as wit, the Journal of Irrelevant Studies. We seem able to consider earlier periods when centenaries or bi-centenaries crop up—in other words, only when we can trick people into paying attention.

Let me suggest that all this attention to the present is at least in part a response, conscious or not, to some felt need to please students—our *customers*, as we are so often reminded—or administrators, or legislators. I have no evidence one way or another on that, just a gut feeling, based on hearsay—but this is a polemic not a trial, so hearsay is admissible.

In any case, the effort, sometimes sincere, sometimes desperate, to appeal to a narrow definition of what is relevant has produced other deformations as well. And that brings me to my second subject, what I earlier called *populism*, or (to be ruder) our knee-jerk anti-elitism. I did not go through GSA programs totting up panels on Dead White Males and I have no interest in riding, Valkyrie-like, into battle to raise these fallen Heroes up to Valhalla. My target is rather the whole idea of cultural hierarchy. As scholars, we should be skeptical of categories like high and low culture, serious and entertainment culture. Instead we not only import them into our analytical apparatus, but feel compelled take sides. Mostly we take sides on behalf of popular culture, as though that is the only one that reflects and expresses real people's lives—an attitude with unacknowledged affinities with nineteenth-century romanticism. And while busy romancing popular culture we are seduced into the embrace of mass culture, thumbing our collective nose at Adorno/Horkheimer, celebrating the market as a more democratic, inherently anti-hierarchical mechanism for cultural production and distribution.

Why do we do this? For historians, there are disciplinary reasons: the whole endeavor of what used to be the “new [now middle-aged] cultural

⁴ See her recent Not for Profit: *Why Democracy Needs the Humanities* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2010).

history” in the anthropological mode developed a tendency to neglect and even to dismiss the vast store of cultural treasure that we human beings have amassed over thousands of years. Lawrence Levine’s foundational text in these matters, *High-Brow, Low-Brow: the Emergence of Cultural Hierarchy in America*, argued that judgments of beauty did not measure intrinsic merit but promulgated gender, racial, and class stratifications; they were a kind of mutant and coercive ideology of socially dominant groups. Works like his relied on a rather crude sense, then, that cultural hierarchies were a weirdly perfect reflection of social and political hierarchies, an assumption that grants the arts so little capacity for their own development that a history of the arts seems entirely superfluous—and certainly elitist.

Or take a recent collection of essays on *Popular Music, Identity, and Place*, which has the admirable goal of taking music on a spatial turn.⁵ But its editors suggest that only “*Popular music is spatial*”; popular music is “linked to particular geographical sites ... and a part of the movements of people, products, and cultures across space.” And what about art music? Still trapped in the concert halls of Europe, it would seem.

Or consider an odd characteristic of our pursuit of interdisciplinarity. Disciplines in search of interdisciplinarity often neglect the high-brow stuff. We historians like to bring context to the formalists, which has often meant cutting the canon down to the size of whatever social or political interests allegedly created it. And the disciplines with which we have partnered, eager to throw off their own elitist past, have been happy to participate.

It is worth reminding ourselves, though, that the more important strands of Marxist interpretations of art, starting with Marx and Engels, have been very interested in art culture, aware that novelists and poets often saw things more clearly than did politicians and journalists, aware that, in the words of Maynard Solomon, a “disproportion” existed between artistic achievements and almost anything else we might wish to connect them to—an excess of effort, as it were, resisting alienation and the disenchantment of the world.⁶ But combine presentism and anti-elitism, and add the quest for relevance *and* for a red-hot-chili-pepper on Rate-My-Professor-Dot-Com, and we initiate an often pretentious engagement with the most commercialized, the most mass-produced, the most manipulative, the most profoundly anti-intellectual, anti-individual, *transient* forms of cultural production to be found—and worse, justify our attention to it in our classrooms as some kind of socially useful unmasking of manipulation and commercialization.

Now I like *Mad Men* as much as the next person, but I do not think that red hot chili peppers will save the humanities; and the political imperative for

⁵ John Connell and Chris Gibson, eds., *Soundtracks: Popular Music, Identity and Place* (London and New York: Routledge, 2002), 1.

⁶ Maynard Solomon, ed., *Marxism and Art* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1973), 11.

the study of popular culture—the retrieval and defense of lost and marginalized and forgotten voices—has in any case lost much of its force because of the sheer ease of mechanical production and reproduction in our modern times. This leaves our study of contemporary popular culture and our neglect of art culture, old or new, in the position of collaborating, wittingly or not, with market forces that are quite indifferent to the survival of humanities departments in American universities. I find that disturbing.

And there is a third aspect of our well-meaning efforts to raise our profile in the public eye—what I have called moral instrumentalism, but what might more vulgarly be identified by the old newspaperman’s quip, “if it bleeds, it leads.” As we seek to save our German programs or increase our enrollments, the biggest weapon in our arsenal is and has long been the Third Reich. We all exploit this: I teach courses on Hitler’s Germany, on the Holocaust, on postwar reconstructions and struggles with the past, and I do not teach courses on the *Sattelzeit* or the revolutions of 1848 or localism or anything about music and musical culture, *except* an occasional course on Richard Wagner and his afterlife. My department likes it that I teach these courses, and so do the deans—these are the only courses in the department for which they authorize replacement teachers. I also like teaching these courses—not least because the students make it clear they find the so-called “lessons” of this period *relevant*, though if pressed, they are not at all clear about what these lessons might be.

There is in one sense no problem here. Indeed the excellence of the scholarship on this era in German history, which in breadth and in depth sustains and enriches our teaching, does ensure that we will teach these subjects well. But what makes me uneasy is the possibility that we in German studies have become too dependent for our enrollments, and our place among the liberal arts, on the sheer horror of the Third Reich, which has brought with it the unassailable moral imperative to study it and thereby, apparently, protect us from future genocides (a task in which we have failed as spectacularly as have the economists in staving off economic collapse). We are the academic decoration to campus organizations like the Holocaust and Genocide Awareness Committee, whose members approach me every year for what is in essence a pep talk, to keep their concern and outrage fresh. As early as 1974 Susan Sontag wrote scathingly about the close relationship between undergraduates’ avid interest in courses on what she quaintly called fascism and courses on vampires. Ever since the US Holocaust Memorial Museum opened there has been a steady stream of critiques of what Philip Gourevitch called “genocide pop.”⁷

We as scholars know there is more to German history and culture than the Third Reich; and we probably know that we can only take its measure if

⁷ Susan Sontag, “Fascinating Fascism,” *New York Review of Books* (Feb. 6, 1975), <http://www.history.ucsb.edu/faculty/marcuse/classes/33d/33dTexts/SontagFascinFascism75.htm>;

we study it in the fullness of the times that preceded it—and followed it. But the awful temptation remains to say to our customers and our paymasters in today's corporate educational environment that the reason that they need us is the Holocaust, the Third Reich, and the knowledge of them that we offer. But is this all we have to teach our students or the larger public? Is this the grounds on which we want to survive as scholars of Germany in the academy?

Well why not? Why not confine our gaze to the twentieth century, so filled with action, so well-supported by documentaries and movies and TV shows, all of them popular when shown in class, why not if that's what our customers want? Why not present ourselves as experts on the state of the world as it has existed in living memory? Why not analyze the Eurovision Song Contest, if that's what the customers want?

One short answer is that because in each of these cases, others do it better, or are at least better at getting attention. Murry Sidlin, for instance, with his multimedia “re-performance” (as he calls it) of the Verdi *Requiem* as performed by the inmates of Theresienstadt. I've been to one of these events and there was not a dry eye in the sold-out house. Such figures are better at getting funded, better at earning money, better at claiming such cultural authority as this knowledge bestows and we wish we still had.

But the issue is more serious than being upstaged by showmen, even ones taken as seriously as is he. It is the matter of what higher *education* in the humanities has to offer Americans today, a question posed most starkly by Frank Donoghue in his recent *Chronicle* article, “Can the Humanities Survive the 21st century?”⁸ His answer is ‘yes but not in academe.’ “Curricula change over time,” he observes, “and the humanities simply don't have a place in the emergent curriculum of the 21st century.” But then he suggests that's okay because others are taking care of them. The humanities have a home out in the world, where they are flourishing, among “intelligent popular novelists,” among “humanists who defy disciplinary affiliation” (he mentions Thomas Friedman, Malcolm Gladwell, and Garry Wills), and among “brilliant independent films” (he cites *Slumdog Millionaire*).

Judging from the flood of responses to this article, we are not all as ready as is he to gaze into this abyss and shout “whoopee.” I am not. What is missing from Donoghue's article is a sense of what—besides our livelihoods—will be lost, to people, to humanity, if the *academic* study of the humanities all but disappears in this country. And that is, in my view, intellectual honesty, thoroughness, and complexity, above all, complexity.

I am not saying such qualities are absent from the world outside institutions

Philip Gourevitch, “Behold Now Behemoth: The Holocaust Memorial Museum, One More American Theme Park,” *Harper's Magazine* (July 1993): 55-61.

⁸ Frank Donoghue, “Can the Humanities Survive the 21st Century?” *The Chronicle of Higher Education* (Sept. 5, 2010).

of higher learning and education, but they are *not* structurally supported, they are not the dominant values, and they tend to be in even shorter supply than they are within academia. Indeed I would go so far as to say that the people who by and large embody such qualities outside of academia—like Garry Wills, or the late Stephen Jay Gould—are or were in fact academics. If we are to defend such qualities, and I hope we will, we will need to mount a defense of slowing down and thinking well and hard, a defense of difficulty. And the great challenge of education in our American capitalist democracy (as Tocqueville knew, as Max Weber knew) has always been to defend difficulty—difficulty seemingly without practical application.

Intellectual honesty, thoroughness, complexity: these are the qualities we prize as scholars and these are the qualities we need to teach. This means that we need to keep to the fore of our work, as teachers and as scholars, longer historical perspectives, broader cultural horizons, and more varied, more unexpected subject matter. Humanists are, among other things, teachers of culture, and from here on out, I will be confining myself to our role as interpreters of serious art culture.

An anecdote: I have a friend, a poet and a literary critic named James Longenbach. He teaches a semester-long course on Joyce's *Ulysses* at the University of Rochester, to which students flock in large numbers. One day, working in his yard, he and his next-door neighbor, an anaesthesiologist, fell into conversation and she asked him, hardly more politely than this, "what's the point of *that*," to which he answered, "I want my students to appreciate the liability of their own confidence."

Another anecdote: Hans Nossack, in his account of the destruction of Hamburg in 1943, *Der Untergang*, writes three times of music remembered, music heard before the destruction—and then reports that, following the destruction, he and his wife were "still unable to listen to music, we have to stand up and go away; When I say music I mean Bach's Air or something like that. There is something consoling in it, but it is precisely this consolation that makes us feel naked and helpless, at the mercy of a force that wants to destroy us."⁹

The point of both anecdotes: serious culture is not just a defense against the world, an effort to escape it, to *endure* it. It is also our entrée into complicated feeling; it articulates our consciousness of emotion, of thought, it brings them out into the world. It is an exploration of human potential. And as all these things, it is an imperfect creation. As Nossack and Longenbach want us to see, its very imperfection is not a marker of its irrelevance but of its essential entanglement in our lives. As Lawrence Kramer has written, beautifully, we *want* art, "in both senses: lack and desire."¹⁰

We need it and we desire it. These astonishing, endlessly rich treasures of

⁹ Hans Erich Nossack, *The End: Hamburg 1943*, trans. Joel Agee (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004), pp. 9, 52, 53-54.

human creation equip us for living and prepare us for death, as nothing else can or will. They are complicated and difficult and beautiful and frightening, and they sometimes convey meaning with seeming effortlessness, like the illusion of flight achieved by a ballet dancer performing a *grand jete*, and sometimes with great and obvious effort, like Thomas Mann writing *Doktor Faustus* or anything by Wagner. But they are always human achievements, which do not emerge without effort.

But what do we *do* with them? How do we place ourselves in meaningful relation to them? “Sonata, what do you want of me?,” the French man-of-letters Fontanelle is said to have remarked sometime in the 1750s—though his phrase—*Sonata, que me veux-tu?*—could also be translated as “Sonata, what do you mean to me?” Both are fair questions, without obvious answers, and that is where we come in. Most people know how to appreciate a really great baseball player or soccer player or bullfighter (pick your sport), and they also know the value of being, like Jake Barnes, an aficionado. But what about artistic creations? As early as the 1920s, music critic Virgil Thomson derided the “music-appreciation racket” for pushing on people the idea that to understand art was to be morally better than those who did not.¹¹ But higher education especially has mostly gotten out of the “music-appreciation racket” without putting much else in its place.

We are good at mocking the appreciation racket, at self-ironizing everything we do, but we are not so good at learning, or admitting to having learned from, things that are not parodic or satirical. Indeed I am not sure we teachers of the humanities are the followers or the leaders in this great game of living ironically. I really do not know how much we are teaching our students that some things are hard to read and good to think, hard to understand and good to know, because with effort and training, they will find in them a bottomless well of insight, intuition, and empathy.

Yet *that* is the message we need to convey, not just that art is a wondrous thing but that its meanings are not right there on the surface, waiting for the consumer to pluck them off the shelf and consume them. This too is what my friend Jim was trying to say with that phrase, “teach them the liability of their own confidence”—their confidence that everything is out there for the surfing, their mistaken belief that multi-tasking is possible and that technology radically expands their exposure to more experiences, when instead it radically limits it.

A couple years ago, the *Washington Post* and violinist Joshua Bell staged a little stunt, which you may have read about—the subsequent article about it, by Gene Weingarten, won a Pulitzer Prize.¹² Bell stood at the top of the escalator in the L’Enfant Plaza station during morning rush hour, clad in jeans, T-shirt, baseball cap, and Stradivarius, and played the best, most difficult,

¹⁰ Lawrence Kramer, *Why Classical Music Still Matters* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2007), 12.

¹¹ Kramer, *Why Classical Music*, 4.

most beautiful music he knew, starting and ending with the most difficult one of all, Bach's *Chaconne* in D-minor. Most of the thousands of people who walked by never even looked over, ear buds in their ears, cell phones in their hands, morning anxieties in their heads. Only six adults stopped; one recognized Bell, one had been a violinist in his youth and recognized that this person was playing really really well.

Every child who walked by tried to stop and listen but all were dragged along by rush-hour parents. Now that's a fact about the kids, but it is a fact that needs to take us beyond the romance of some in-built capacity for beauty, to a more complicated understanding of what there is in common between Bell's experience in the metro and our experience as representatives of what seems to be a dying skill, that of understanding what Bell does. What both have in common is the experience of doing difficult cultural work in these United States, work that truly has little to do with buying and selling stuff.

In Bell's case, that's true despite his millionaire status (a complicated historical phenomena in its own right, the way that classical music ever since the decline of court patronage has used celebrity to leverage itself a place in commercial society). And it is true for us if we consider our role as humanist scholars to consist, at minimum, of the effort to understand Bach, and Bell playing Bach, and to communicate that understanding to others, so that these achievements will be vital in all our lives. That communication too is difficult cultural work, and we should be more conscious and above all, more outspoken about it.

One music critic has said of Joshua Bell that what his playing does is "nothing less than tell human beings why they bother to live."¹³ Of Bach's *Chaconne*, Brahms wrote to Clara Schumann that "it is for me one of the most wonderful, incomprehensible pieces of music. On a single staff, for a small instrument, the man writes a whole world of the deepest thoughts and the most powerful feelings. If I were to imagine how I might have made, conceived the piece, I know for certain that the overwhelming excitement and awe would have driven me mad."¹⁴ Why did these people say those things about Bell's performances, about that piece of music? We can help our students to answer those questions.

Last week's *New Yorker* has an article by Alex Ross, who belongs on the list of people doing humanistic work outside of academia, an article on the silences and sounds of John Cage. It is a wonderful piece, but as Ross would be the first to acknowledge, it could not have been written without the work

¹² Gene Weingarten, "Pearls Before Breakfast," *Washington Post* (April 8, 2007).

¹³ Quoted in Weingarten, "Pearls before Breakfast."

¹⁴ Brahms was writing to Clara Schumann in June of 1877 about his piano transcription of the piece, which their mutual friend, violinist Joseph Joachim, had brought back into the concert repertoire. See *Johannes Brahms: Life and Letters*, selected and annotated by Styra Avins, trans. Styra Avins and Joseph Eisinger (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007), 515.

of scholars in academic positions—like the musicologist Kyle Gann, on the payroll of Bard College, whom Ross quotes on Cage’s famous piece 4’33; like emeritus professor of English at NYU Kenneth Silverman, whose exhaustive biography gives Ross this remark of Cage, that “art is a sort of experimental station in which one tries out living.”¹⁵

And while Ross is famous, we should not forget that we as teachers of humanities collectively reach millions through our teaching. We too have an audience, at least for now; and we should *know* that and teach people the complicated and difficult things that will stay with them all their lives.

I have one final thing to say about how we might assert the importance of what we humanists do. Today the most important public conversation among *Wissenschaftler* that humanists are not taking part in is the public conversation about the human brain—what it is, what it can do, how it has evolved over time and continues to evolve. It is now fifty years since C.P. Snow’s *Two Cultures and the Scientific Revolution*, and the situation he sketched, of supercilious literary intellectuals looking down their noses at ill-read scientists while boasting of their ignorance of physics, has been almost completely reversed. Today scientists, especially those in the biological sciences, have the prestige, the funding, the attention of the general public, and very often the supercilious attitude.

At the same time—to make matters worse, though potentially better—the great findings of the last couple decades of work on the mind have brought them right to the heart of what humanists do, that is, explain human beings, their creativity, their individuality, their communities, their consciousness. And brain scientists have not been shy about laying claim to this territory—from E. O. Wilson to Steven Pinker to Oliver Sachs to people you probably haven’t heard of who write books called things like *The Smart Swarm: How Understanding Flocks, Schools, and Colonies Can Make Us Better at Communicating, Decision-Making, and Getting Things Done* or *The Perfect Swarm: the Science of Complexity in Everyday Life* or *This is Your Brain on Music* or (my favorite) *The Singing Neanderthals: the Origins of Music, Language, Mind, and Body*.

So what do they have to say about, for instance, music? Music, it seems, is one of the few traits of living creatures unique to human beings. Chimpanzees make tools and understand relational syntax and might even be able to write Renaissance-era drama but they “cannot keep to a beat, even with training”; they may have language but they don’t got rhythm (unlike parrots and elephants). Amidst a lot of talk about oxytocin and endorphin surges, one comes to understand that music is necessary because it is in our biologies. It is how we first expressed emotion, and emotion is an essential aspect of how we (over millennia) have achieved the kind of cooperation needed for social groups to function. So music is necessary. It is a very ancient, cheap, and easy form of interaction and communication that demonstrates “a willingness to

¹⁵ Quoted in Alex Ross, “Searching for Silence,” *The New Yorker* (Oct. 4, 2010).

cooperate” and to be helpful, that helps form groups that work together.¹⁶

All quite intriguing, but do we who for a very long time have been analyzing and interpreting music, art, literature, and the people who create them and the groups who perform them, do we have anything to learn from this? And perhaps more important, do they have anything to learn from us? The answer to both questions is yes, of course. But the enormous challenge we face is getting in on the conversation. A few literary and art historians are doing so, musicologists as well—though the ones most vigorously engaged are music theorists who, like linguists, are pretty much already mathematicians and computer programmers. What strikes one most about the conclusions these cognitive scientists have come to about music—defending territory, attracting mates, forming communities—is their breath-taking generality. Their conclusions are thought-provoking, but not something one can easily translate into historical explanation. Seeing which part of the brain lights up when someone listens to music does not, in other words, take you in one easy leap to why we make music or why music is the way it is.

What seems to be missing is what that old Marxist Ernst Fischer called “the magic inherent in art” and what I referred to earlier as the disproportion between artistic achievements and almost anything else we might wish to connect it to.¹⁷ Evolutionary psychologists and biologists *do* have an explanation: they talk about how a measure of the sophistication of the human organism is our capacity for development and variation in excess of any particular trait’s importance to reproductive success. The residue of refinement is what we call culture. This is a characterization of art just begging for a constructive response from humanists, but we are not by and large providing it. Worse, we are making it possible for public scientists like Steven Pinker and E. O. Wilson to say things, publicly, about how the humanities are self-destructing, do not know what they are doing any more, do not believe in truth anymore—not exactly friendly overtures to join in the conversation.

Still, this conversation about the brain is not—to change metaphors midstream—a train that has left the station. It represents an on-going, lively area of research in a variety of fields and we should take its measure; indeed it may help us. The result, as I imagine it, would be something truly interdisciplinary. By that I mean that our goal need not be the creation of a whole new field like biological anthropology, but rather the pursuit of debates among disciplinary communities on topics of mutual concern, debates that can take place in public places or, more likely, in collaborative teaching, with doctors, scientists, engineers—all realms of professional education that show signs of wanting such collaboration in order the better to prepare their students

¹⁶ Steven Mithen, *The Singing Neanderthals: the Origins of Music, Language, Mind, and Body* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2006), 218.

¹⁷ Ernst Fischer, *The Necessity of Art*, trans. Anna Bostock (Harmondsworth, Middlesex: Penguin Books, 1963), 14.

for work in a complex and demanding world.

But in order to participate in such debates and teaching, we need precisely what we are currently in danger of underplaying, even forgetting. To engage with the evolutionary psychologists and biologists, as they write about human communities, we should offer not just short term perspectives but—as Daniel Smail has recently urged—very long term ones, on how the bonds among humans are made and broken and remade.¹⁸ We should offer deeper histories. To engage with network/swarm biologists, we should emphasize not just our research on modern transnational and global networks but our understanding of smaller networks and older ones as well. To engage with brain scientists on how people perceive color or hear sound or respond to art and music, we should offer our own accounts of the full range of artistic and musical expression, from cave paintings to the ceiling of the Sistine chapel, from drum riffs and rolls to string quartets. We should play with scales, as Jacques Revel has suggested, looking at the very small communities that humans form through music-making (salons and amateur string quartets and garage bands) as well as the big ones, achieved with big, monumental music (rock concerts, performances of Beethoven's 9th).

In a recent interview with the on-line *Seedmagazine*, a kind of forum for hipster scientists, E. O. Wilson said, apropos of how we humanists needed to get with the program, that we had to offer scientists such “wonderful problems to work on,” and I couldn't agree more.¹⁹ Because everything we have to offer will be a problem for them; everything we have to offer will complicate their explanations and perhaps show that they are not answering the questions they think they are. In return they offer us, with all their provocative generality and scary technicality, the possibility of fuller, more complicated explanations.

We live in a culture of cultures, wrote Marshall Sahlins in 1999, “a world cultural system made up of diverse forms of life, an organization of diversity rather than a replication of uniformity,” and in it the continuity of our cultural traditions consists in the different ways we have changed.²⁰ “Culture is not only a heritage, it is a project,” wrote Paul Hountondji in 1994, “an inexhaustible reservoir of responses to the world's challenges.”²¹ We would do well, as we change, to bring along with us as much of it as we can, by whatever means, because if we have learned anything from centuries of trying to engineer nature, it is that no reservoir is inexhaustible without skilled

¹⁸ Daniel Smail, *On Deep History and the Brain* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2007).

¹⁹ E. O. Wilson, as well as Steven Pinker, Rebecca Goldstein, and others, can be found in embedded video interviews, chatting about whether we are “beyond the two cultures,” at this website, <http://seedmagazine.com/twocultures/index.html>.

²⁰ Marshall Sahlins, “What is Anthropological Enlightenment? Some Lessons of the Twentieth Century,” *Annual Review of Anthropology* 28 (1999): x, xii.

²¹ Hountondji quoted in Sahlins, “Anthropological Enlightenment,” xxi.

maintenance workers—in the case of this reservoir, maintenance workers such as ourselves.

And if western art music has taught us anything, it is our capacity not just for triumphant or elegant resolutions but for development, complexity, and infinite variation.

[Steffen Mensching is an acclaimed poet, writer, songwriter, cabaret artist, and director. He was born in East Berlin in 1958, and at the age of twenty-six, he won the Debut Prize in Poetry for his first book, Erinnerung an eine Milchglasscheibe. From the mid-1980s through the early 1990s he worked together with Hans-Eckardt Wenzel to produce the most important and hard-hitting cabaret work coming out of the late German Democratic Republic. Jörf Foth's film Letztes aus der DaDaeR (1990) is a fascinating documentation of Mensching's and Wenzel's work at the moment of the GDR's dissolution. In the past decade, Mensching has worked primarily as a writer; his powerful autobiographical novel Jacobs Leiter (2003) weaves together German, Jewish, and American history, and fact and fiction, in an ingenious way. In the plot sequence around which the novel is structured, the protagonist, a German author spending several months in New York City, purchases a library of four thousand German books, most of which once belonged to German Jews who had left Germany. The purchase of these books, and the protagonist's curiosity about the books' former owners, leads him to a wide-ranging exploration of his own, and other people's histories; in the process the past and the present, and Germany and America, are connected in a complex and surprising textual web. Mensching is currently managing director of the Theater Rudolstadt in Thuringia.]

Vorwärts und alles vergessen: Wieviel DDR steckt in der deutschen Einheit?

Steffen Mensching

Ladies and Gentlemen,

gestatten Sie, dass ich mich Ihnen kurz vorstelle. Ich wurde 1958 in Ost-Berlin geboren, bin Kulturwissenschaftler, kann Sie aber beruhigen, ich habe nie in diesem Beruf gearbeitet. Ich bin Autor, Schauspieler und Regisseur und seit zwei Jahren Theaterintendant. Das Theater liegt in Rudolstadt und zumindest die Klassik-Kenner unter Ihnen wissen, dies ist ein bedeutender Ort. Schiller traf dort seine spätere Ehefrau und, was zumindest für uns noch wichtiger ist, Goethe, 1788. Goethe war später in Rudolstadt Theaterintendant. Jetzt, wie gesagt, bin ich dort. In die USA kam ich vor zwanzig Jahren

das erste Mal, noch als DDR-Bürger. Damals gab es auf dem JFK noch Aschenbecher. The times they're changin'. Ich erinnere mich, im Sommer des Jahres 1990 in der New York Times Fotos aus Berlin gesehen zu haben. Ostberliner holten sich ihr erstes Westgeld ab, in einer Sparkassenfiliale am Alexanderplatz. Sie streckten die Hände aus, als forderten sie Brot. Ich muss gestehen, das Foto war mir peinlich. Ich verstand den Wunsch meiner Mitbürger nach der harten Währung, aber die Aufnahme erinnerte mich an andere Bilder, wo ausgemergelte Menschen die Hände durch Stacheldraht streckten. Ich fand schon damals bestimmte Vergleiche unangemessen. Das war vor zwanzig Jahren. Seitdem bin ich oft in die USA gereist, ich habe hier sehr gute Freunde gefunden. Ich bin froh, heute zu Ihnen sprechen zu dürfen und danke der GSA und dem DAAD ausdrücklich für diese Gelegenheit.

Ich habe, um nach Oakland zu reisen, einen Umweg über Denver gemacht. Lassen Sie mich mit diesem Umweg beginnen. Ich besuchte dort eine Freundin, Hilde Olsen, geborene Berger, die ich einige Jahre nicht gesehen habe, weil sie von New York nach Colorado übersiedelte. Sie wurde 1916 in Berlin geboren, war in ihrer Jugend Zionistin, Kommunistin, schließlich Trotzkistin. Sie überlebte mehrere Konzentrationslager und tippte als Sekretärin von Oskar Schindler in Plaszow die Liste, die tausend jüdischen Häftlingen das Leben rettete. Ihr eigener Name steht auf der Frauenliste auf Platz 5. Als ich vor einigen Jahren über Hildes Leben schrieb, wollte sie nicht, dass ich ihren wirklichen Namen benutzte, ich sollte ihn anonymisieren. Verwirrt fragte ich, weshalb. Ich möchte nicht, erklärte die beinahe Neunzigjährige trotzig, dass hier irgendjemand erfährt, dass ich Kommunistin war. Aber das ist doch mehr als 60 Jahre her, entgegnete ich, wen interessiert das noch? Du hast keine Ahnung, gab sie zurück, du hast McCarthy nicht erlebt.

Es ist immer dasselbe. Monate vor dem Ereignis, bekommt man die Frage gestellt, über welches Problem man sprechen möchte. Man verdrängt den Termin, hat anderes im Kopf, dann gibt man leichtsinnig einen Titel an und erst wenn das Thema schwarz auf weiß in einer Ankündigung steht, realisiert man, was für ein unerfreuliches oder unergiebiges Arbeitsfeld man sich gestellt hat. Wie viel DDR steckt in der deutschen Einheit? Was soll man dazu vernünftiger Weise sagen, wo doch alle, die sich nur flüchtig mit der Fragestellung befasst haben, die Antwort längst wissen: Wenig, bis gar nichts, steckt von ihr, der DDR, in der deutschen Einheit. Das ist eine Aussage, die man, je nach Standpunkt bedauern oder begrüßen kann. Nur wegre-den wird man sie nicht können. Glücklicher Weise hat unser Bundespräsident Christian Wulff am 3. Oktober eine Grundsatzrede zum 20. Jahrestag der deutschen Einheit gehalten. Von der will ich mich ein wenig anregen lassen.

In meinen Ausführungen werde ich – und ich bitte Sie, es mir nachzusehen – gelegentlich Begriffe wie Sozialismus oder Kommunismus benutzen. Im vergangenen Jahrhundert waren dies handelsübliche Worte. Inzwischen weiß kaum noch jemand, was man sich darunter vorstellen soll. Sie z.B.

haben einen Mann im weißen Haus sitzen, dem seine Gegner sozialistische Ambitionen unterstellen. Da sind wir in Deutschland weiter. Bei uns scheint das Problem im Augenblick gelöst. Christian Wulff hat in seiner Rede den Begriff gemieden wie der Teufel das Weihwasser. Er schaffte es auch, die Bezeichnung des Landes, das vor 20 Jahren nach § 23 des Grundgesetzes der Bundesrepublik beigetreten ist, kein einziges Mal zu erwähnen. Er machte sich nicht die Mühe, im Einigungsvertrag nachzublättern. Da hätte er den Namen des Vertragspartners lesen können: DDR. Sie mutierte inzwischen zu einem geographischen Phänomen: Ostdeutschland oder zu Kampfbegriffen: SED-Regime, Unrechtsstaat, zweite deutsche Diktatur. Bei Sportsendungen taucht die Abkürzung DDR mitunter noch auf, wenn an vergangene Weltrekorde erinnert wird. Auch können Sie, wenn sie gesenkten Kopfes durch ostdeutsche Städte schlendern, auf den Deckeln der Kanalisation lesen: Made in GDR. German Democratic Republic. Diese gusseisernen Plattformen haben ein erstaunliches historisches Beharrungsvermögen. In meiner Kindheit stand auf den Ostberliner Gullideckeln: Deutsches Reichspatent. Da war auch dieses Reich längst Geschichte und untergegangen. Jetzt lebt auch die DDR am Eingang zur Unterwelt.

Als der Redenschreiber des Bundespräsidenten sich der Frage näherte, wie er die Vereinigung Deutschlands beschreiben sollte, befahl ihm eine verräterische rhetorische Schwellenangst. Er spürte die Klippe und rettete sich in eine hilflose Formulierung, indem er seinen Chef rasonieren ließ: „Aus zwei Staaten wurde einer. Das war nicht ohne Probleme.“ Nähme man der Aussage die Verneinung, würde sie lauten: „Das war mit Probleme.“ Sie müssen, als Germanisten, zugeben, dass diese Satzkonstruktion in ihrer klippschulhaften Schlichtheit die Würde des Staatsoberhauptes verletzt. Auch in Deutschland steht derlei unter Strafe. Glücklicherweise fuhr der Redner fort: „Aber es gab ungeheuer viel Solidarität.“ Hier kommt Brechts „Soldaritätslied“ ins Spiel, in der korrigierten Fassung, die da heißt: Vorwärts und alles vergessen.

Wulffs Festansprache war von befreiender, ja entwaffnender Ehrlichkeit. Der Einigungsvertrag, der in der Rede übrigens auch nicht benannt wurde, war – so muss man die Sache deuten – eine bloße Formalie. Das Tamtam, die pathetischen Gesten, das Shakehands von Kanzler Kohl und Ministerpräsident de Maiziere im Jahr 1990, die ganze Zeremonie, die vorgab, es würden sich zwei Partner auf gleicher Augenhöhe begegnen, war nur schlechtes Theater. Auf der Bühne nennt man so etwas für die Galerie spielen. Natürlich hat der Bundespräsident jetzt die Bürgerrechtler gewürdigt, „die beharrlich gegen eine Diktatur Widerstand geleistet haben“. Und das ist auch berechtigt. Bloß werden Sie diese ehemaligen Heroen in der politischen Landschaft des heutigen Deutschlands vergeblich suchen. Sie wurden im Verlauf der Entwicklung entweder resignierte Aussteiger oder angepasste Apologeten der neuen Macht. Gestatten Sie, dass ich Ihnen, um meine prosaische Suppe etwas zu strecken, ein paar Verse in Heinescher Manier rezitiere.

Im sonnigen Monat Oktober war's,
 Man feierte eifrig die Wende
 Der Jubel hing allen zum Halse heraus
 Die Feiern nahmen kein Ende.

Stellte man morgens den Fernseher an,
 Was sah man? Verhuschte Gestalten
 Die Widerstandskämpfer der Ex-DDR,
 Nur grauer und mit mehr Falten.

Der Rainer, die Vera, der Ehrhard, der Gerd
 Aus Cottbus der muntere Steffen,
 Bloß Bärbel, die Mutter der Revolution,
 Kam nicht zum Vertriebenentreffen.

In jeder Talkshow, bei Brezeln und Wein
 Hockten wie Hasen die Helden,
 Sie redeten eifrig, sie redeten lang
 Und hatten nicht viel zu vermelden.

Die ollen Kamellen vom runden Tisch
 Vom Sturm auf die Stasizentrale,
 Die habt ihr in Filmen und Büchern doch schon
 Beschrieben dutzende Male.

Ich sank vor dem Bildschirm auf die Knie
 Und stöhnte, ihr Brüder und Schwestern,
 Rebellen wart ihr, das glaub ich euch gern,
 Doch was nutzt der Mut von gestern?

Es gab seinerzeit – als die Einheit vollzogen wurde – verzweifelte Optimisten, die mutmaßten, diese Maßnahme würde sich eines Tages effektiv rächen. Die BRD schluckte, so hieß es, die DDR nicht ungestraft. Das war eine sehr freie Auslegung des Begriffs Vereinigung. Ebenso könnten Sie behaupten – nach dem Dinner – mit dem Huhn, das sie sich gerade einverleibten, eine Einheit zu bilden. Nun ja. Die Auslegung des Bildes ging aber noch weiter. Man prophezeite nämlich, die geschluckte DDR würde sich für den Esser BRD eines Tages als Igel herausstellen. Ein Igel, der – ob tot oder lebendig – in den Innereien arbeitet, ist – sich das vorzustellen bedarf wenig Fantasie – keine rechte Freude.

Ich kann diejenigen unter Ihnen, die an Verdauungsstörungen leiden, beruhigen, das Ganze lief glimpflich ab. Entweder verdiente es die DDR nicht, zum Igel erhoben zu werden – der Igel, Sie erinnern sich, ist nämlich jene gewitzte Figur, die den Hasen hereinlegt, sich in der Furche versteckt und am Ende jedes Rennen gewinnt, ohne sich nur zu rühren – oder der Fresser, die alte gierige Bundesrepublik hatte, wie ihr damaliger Kanzler einen so strapazierfähigen Magen, dass er die Nahrungsaufnahme gut überstand.

Der neuen Bundesrepublik hat, möchte ich meinen, die Überwindung der Finanzkrise größere Probleme bereitet als die deutsche Wiedervereinigung. Es kam zu keinen Verwerfungen, Streiks, Aufständen. Im Gegenteil, die Macht der Gewerkschaften scheint heute geringer als 1989. Das Kapital hält Kurs und hat das Steuer fest im Griff. Vielleicht könnte man keck formulieren, die neue Bundesrepublik ist, was die Rechte der Arbeitnehmer angeht, unfreier als die alte. Nur ist für diesen Zustand nicht die DDR verantwortlich zu machen, sondern die politischen und wirtschaftlichen Kräfte, die nach dem Zusammenbruch des Experiments Sozialismus glaubten, in Zukunft die Interessen der einfachen Leute nicht mehr ernst nehmen zu müssen.

Die deutsche Wiedervereinigung stand von Beginn an unter dem Leitsatz eines forschenden Antikommunismus. Unbestritten, es gab und gibt dafür ausreichend Gründe. Thomas Manns Bonmot, der Antikommunismus sei die Grundtorheit unserer Epoche, wollte einem am Ende des 20. Jahrhunderts nicht mehr so locker von den Lippen gehen. Der Kommunismus hat durch seine Verbrechen für diese Haltung die besten Argumente geliefert. Doch beantwortet dies nicht die Frage, welche sozialen Probleme historisch zum Entwurf einer gesellschaftlichen Alternative geführt haben. Auf welche richtige, weil lebenswichtige, Frage war er die falsche Antwort. Die deutsche Einheit hat sich nicht die Mühe gemacht, nach emanzipatorischen Ansätzen zu suchen, nach Erfahrungen, die in der DDR gemacht wurden, die vielleicht bewahrenswert gewesen sein könnten; alles wurde unter ideologischem Verdikt betrachtet und a priori verworfen. Es wurden Studiengänge abgeschafft, die es in der alten Bundesrepublik nicht gegeben hatte, Erziehungsmodelle zerstört, das Gesundheitswesen ungeprüft dem westlichen angeglichen usw. Wenn so etwas nötig gewesen wäre, hätte es ähnliches ja in der freiheitlichen Ordnung längst gegeben. Das demokratische System wurde auf die DDR übertragen, es passte, weil es der alten Bundesrepublik gepasst hatte. Dass es für das neue Deutschland keine neue Verfassung, Hymne, Flagge, politische Struktur gab, sind die dazu passenden äußeren Zeichen. Unlängst las ich in der „Süddeutschen Zeitung“, die in München erscheint, eine Zuschrift, in der ein Leser erklärte, die Ausbildung zum Krankenhaushygieniker, die es in der DDR gegeben hatte, sei nach der Einigung sofort eingestellt worden. In vielen deutschen Kliniken gibt es heute Probleme mit Krankenhauskeimen. Jährlich sterben an Infektionen tausende Patienten. Aber den Erfahrungen des totalitären Staates im Umgang mit Keimen konnte man eben nicht trauen.

In seiner Rede beschwor der Bundespräsident auch einen verständnisvollen Umgang mit anderen Kulturen und Lebensmodellen. Dieser Appell gehört inzwischen zum festen Kanon der Political correctness. Wenn man diese Absichtserklärung daran misst, wie mit der Kultur der DDR umgegangen wurde, muss man befürchten, dass es sich um bloße Worthülsen handelt. Und, glauben Sie mir, wer in der DDR aufgewachsen ist, hat ein geschultes Gehör für Phrasen. Spiegelt sich vielleicht im Umgang mit der DDR-Vergangenheit eine Eigenart westlicher Politik wieder, alles und jeden nur nach

dem eigenen Maßstab zu bemessen? Sollte es uns nicht zu denken geben, dass immer wieder – ob im Fall der Wiedervereinigung oder im Irak und in Afghanistan – der Vorwurf der Arroganz zur Sprache kommt. Dahinter muss mehr stecken als menschliche individuelle Schwächen. Diese kulturelle Haltung gründet auf wirtschaftlicher Hegemonie. Der Sieger der Geschichte liefert ein funktionierendes Wirtschafts- und Gesellschaftsmodell und erwartet dafür Dankbarkeit. Die gleiche Unnahbarkeit und Unfehlbarkeit des Urteils wurde in den 30er Jahren von bürgerlicher Seite den Stalinisten nachgesagt, die glaubten, sie hätten das Rezept der Weltrettung in der Tasche. Hochmut, heißt es im deutschen Sprichwort, kommt vor dem Fall.

In der Rede des Bundespräsidenten gab es auch Töne, die man so noch nicht gehört hat. Er mahnte an, dass die Lebensleistungen der Ostdeutschen mehr Anerkennung finden sollten. Aber wer glaubt, hier würde an die Leistungen jener Deutschen erinnert, die den Osten in den Nachkriegsjahren wieder aufbauten, ohne Marshallplan und Währungsfonds im Rücken, der irrt. Wer sich für die DDR abrackerte, der verdient keinen nachträglichen Respekt. Es war die falsche Baustelle. Die DDR hat nämlich – von einigen Büchern, Filmen, Bildern angesehen – für die deutsche Kultur nichts geleistet. Nach der offiziellen Geschichtsschreibung besitzt dieser Versuch, ein anderes Deutschland zu errichten, keine Legitimation. Wulff sagte zwar den erstaunlichen Satz, es wäre im Prozess der Einheit auch Bewahrenswertes verloren gegangen. Leider blieb er in dieser Passage sehr allgemein. Man hätte gern gewusst, was er meinte: den staatlich gestützten Buchpreis; Vollbeschäftigung, Kindergartenplätze, Schulspeisung oder das marode, aber kostenlose Gesundheitswesen?

Gibt es nichts DDR-Typisches, das die Einheit überlebte? Doch, einige Waren aus dem Osten haben geschafft, die Biersorte RADEBERGER z. B., die Sektmarke ROTKÄPPCHEN oder der NORDHÄUSER DOPPELKORN. Dazu einige Zigarettensorten. Die Produkte oder ihre Namen haben überlebt, die Firmen, die sie einmal herstellten nur selten. Interessant ist übrigens, dass vor allem Waren weiter existieren, die berauschende Wirkung haben. Produkte, deren Konsum auf Sentimentalität und Suchtverhalten gründet. Es gibt im Augenblick keinen ostdeutschen Fußballklub, der in der höchsten Liga mitspielt. Diejenigen unter Ihnen, die sich für Sport interessieren, wissen, was das für die Volksseele bedeutet. Stellen Sie sich vor, in der NHL spielten ab morgen nur noch kanadische Teams. Dem gemeinen Fan tröstet es nur wenig, wenn man ihm bei solcher Gelegenheit aufmunternd zuruft: dafür gehen inzwischen die meisten deutschen Literaturpreise an Autoren, die aus dem Osten kommen. Natürlich hinkt der Vergleich mit der NHL. Canada war nie ein Teil der USA oder umgekehrt. Und der Ostdeutsche besitzt und besaß keine eigene Nationalität. An dieser Säule hat nicht einmal die DDR-Führung gerüttelt. Dass der Ossi keine eigene Ethnie darstellt, ist inzwischen gerichtlich bestätigt. Im vergangenen Jahr klagte eine ehemalige DDR-Bürgerin auf Schadenersatz, weil ein Arbeitgeber in Stuttgart auf ihre

Bewerbungsmappe geschrieben hatte: Ossi. Die Klage wurde abgewiesen, die Richter sahen in der Bemerkung keine „ethnische Diskriminierung“.

Tatsächlich war das Leben des durchschnittlichen DDR-Bürgers peinlich genau vorprogrammiert, Geburt, Kindergarten, Schulbesuch, Ausbildung, Arbeitsjahre, Rente, erste Westreise, Tod. Diese traurige Mechanik gewährte die Sicherheit, die heute mancher vermisst und die vielen damals unerträglich gewesen ist. So etwas nennt man Dialektik. Die erfolgreichen Ostdeutschen haben diese Lethargie überwunden. Aber nicht alle, die erfolglos blieben, waren lethargisch. Viele sind neue Wege gegangen, weil die alten nicht mehr existierten oder ihnen versperrt wurden. Viele mussten bei Null anfangen. Und es sind nicht immer die sensibelsten, sozialsten, reflektierenden, die es geschafft haben. Es klingt vielleicht nach einer späten Anleihe an Herbert Spencer, aber wer nach der Wende erfolgreich sein wollte – gegen die Konkurrenz aus dem Westen, die hungrig war, gut trainiert und Markt erfahren – musste kräftige Ellenbogen oder einiges im Kopf haben. Am erfolgreichsten waren wohl jene, die das eine mit dem anderen verbanden.

Meine Damen und Herren, nicht dass Sie mich missverstehen. Die deutsche Einheit hat viel im Osten verändert. Nicht wenige ostdeutsche Städte haben sich in den vergangenen 20 Jahren zu wahren Schmuckstückchen gemausert. Dagegen wirkt manche Weststadt inzwischen geradezu verkommen, früher hätte man gesagt: ostdeutsch. Diese Entwicklung hat logischerweise im Westen nicht nur freudige Anteilnahme hervorgerufen, sondern auch Neid. Vor allem bei jenen Unwissenden, die noch immer dem Irrtum unterliegen zu glauben, der Solidaritätsbeitrag sei eine Steuer, die nur im Westen erhoben würde. Was vielen ebenfalls entgeht, ist die Tatsache, wem denn die schönen Häuser und Grundstücke im Osten zum großen Teil gehören. In den Grundbüchern stehen nur selten die Namen der Ostdeutschen, die darin wohnen, sondern die jener, die nach der Wende die Mittel hatten, diese Immobilien aufzukaufen und – oft mit staatlichen Fördermitteln – zu sanieren. In Russland nennt man diejenigen, die sich die Ressourcen und ehemaligen Staatsbetriebe unter den Nagel gerissen haben, Oligarchen. Es sind quasi Vertreter des gut organisierten Verbrechens. Seitdem sie aber auf dem Weltmarkt eine gewisse Rolle spielen, hat sie der Westen längst geadelt und in seine Clubs aufgenommen. In der ehemaligen DDR konnten solche Oligarchen nicht entstehen. Der bundesdeutsche Staat hat mit der Treuhandanstalt dafür gesorgt, dass das Volkseigentum in die richtigen Hände kam. Die richtigen Hände waren jene Banken, Konzerne, Industrieketten, Aktienvertreter, die in der alten Bundesrepublik etwas zu sagen hatten. Es wäre aufschlussreich, deren Kapitalentwicklung zu prüfen. Diese dürfte Anfang der neunziger Jahre eine exponentielle Steigerung genommen haben.

Im November 1989 schrieb ich – von der Zeitschrift *Neue Deutsche Literatur* befragt, was das nächste Jahr bringen werde – einen kleinen Text, der hieß: *It's money that matters*. Ich berief mich dabei auf den amerikanischen Sänger Randy Newman, der diese schöne Zeile ersonnen hat. *It's money that*

matters, Now you know that it's true It's money that matters, Whatever you do. Mein zweiseitiges Papier ließ wenig Zweifel daran, was ich mir für die Zukunft ausmalte. Heute hört man im Osten immer wieder die Meinung, man wäre aus der Diktatur der Partei unter die Diktatur des Geldes gefallen. Man machte es sich zu einfach, würde man diese Stimmen als ewig gestrige, resignierte Bürokraten des alten Regimes abtun. Meine Mutter, die niemals in der Partei war, dem Staat DDR nicht viel abgewinnen konnte – weil ihre Eltern in den 50er Jahren im Gefängnis und Zuchthaus hatten sitzen müssen und sie nur eine bescheidene Ausbildung absolvieren durfte – meiner fast achtzigjährigen Mutter entweicht mitunter der Stoßseufzer: wenn man so sieht, was die – gemeint sind die Politiker – mit diesem Land anstellen, könnte man glatt zum Kommunisten werden. Für viele Ostdeutsche war die Demokratie eine wirkliche Verheißung. Man hatte hohe, vielleicht zu hohe Erwartungen.

Was hat die deutsche Einheit den Westdeutschen gebracht, die nicht genug Kapital besaßen, um es gewinnbringend im Osten zu investieren? Bei vielen kleinen Leuten im Westen herrscht das Gefühl vor, die alte BRD sei stabiler, sozialer, besser gewesen, als die erweiterte. Aus ihrer Perspektive haben sie wohl Recht. Doch wird häufig übersehen, dass diese Veränderungen eher Auswüchse der Globalisierung sind als eine Folge der Vereinigung. Man darf jetzt auch in westdeutschen Städten bei Rot abbiegen, wenn an der Ampel ein grüner Pfeil angebracht ist. Diese revolutionäre Idee der Verkehrsbeschleunigung stammt aus der DDR. Sie ist neben dem Sandmännchen, einer Fernsehuppe, die die Kinder am Abend ins Bett begleitet, eigentlich die einzig augenscheinliche Errungenschaft, die Ostdeutschland in die Einheit einbrachte. Das ist erstaunlich. Gerade im letzten Jahr – aus Anlass des Mauerfalls – wurde so oft und herzlich an die friedlichen Revolutionäre erinnert. Warum nur – wenn sie so Hervorragendes leisteten – wurden die neuen Formen zivilgesellschaftlichen Engagements nicht in der neuen deutschen Republik fortgeführt? Immerhin wurde die Wende in der DDR durch nichts Geringeres als zivilen Ungehorsam erzwungen. Da hätte man anknüpfen können. Aber derlei passt in keine konservative Revolution. Und dass es sich um eine solche handelte, kann man auch an der Rede des Präsidenten erkennen. Ich weiß nicht, wie es Ihnen geht, die Sie es gewohnt sind zu hören: God save America. Ich zuckte als alter Laizist erschrocken zusammen, wenn das Staatsoberhaupt einer Republik, in der die Trennung von Kirche und Staat in der Verfassung festgeschrieben ist, seine Rede beendet, in dem er höhere Weihen einklagt: Gott schütze Deutschland. Es tut mir leid, aber an dieser Stelle bin ich geneigt mit meiner radikalisierten Mutter chorisch zu singen: Es rettet uns kein höheres Wesen, kein Gott, kein Kaiser, noch Tribun, uns aus dem Elend zu erlösen, können wir nur selber tun.

Die DDR war – und vielleicht ist dies ihr furchtbarstes oder fruchtbarstes Erbe – ein Staat der Gleichmacherei. Die sozialen Unterschiede waren marginal, jedenfalls im Vergleich mit anderen Ostblockstaaten und auch mit der

westlichen Welt heute. Es gab Privilegierte – die Nomenklatura, Künstler, Sportler, Menschen mit betuchten und großzügigen Westverwandten, es gab Einkommensunterschiede, die lächerlich waren. Die Politbüromitglieder lebten in ihrer Wandlitzer Siedlung in Hütten, über die jeder bundesdeutsche Mittelständler müde hätte lächeln können, würde sich damals ein Lächeln nicht verboten haben. Ein Oberarzt hatte wohl 2000 Ostmark mehr als eine Krankenschwester, aber die gleichen Probleme, sich Ersatzteile für sein Auto zu besorgen. Die Angleichung der Lebensverhältnisse spiegelte sich auch im Umgang miteinander wieder. Die Hierarchie war geringer, der Tonfall zwischen Chef und Untergebenen lässig bis nachlässig. Eine Bekannte, die jahrelang als Gynäkologin einer ostdeutschen Universitätsklinik arbeitete, beschrieb mir, dass nur wenige Wochen nach der Besetzung der Chefarztposition durch einen Westprofessor an ihrer Klinik das bürgerliche Sie wieder Standard wurde.

Es sollte nicht unerwähnt bleiben, dass diese Gleichheit keine Errungenschaft, sondern ein Abfallprodukt allgemeinen Mangels war. Die Ostdeutschen wussten, was sie davon zu halten hatten. Aber ebenso skeptisch muss es einen stimmen, wenn ein Bundespräsident die gesellschaftliche Teilung als Vielfalt preist. „Die Lebenswelten in unserem Land driften eher auseinander: die von Alten und Jungen; von Spitzenverdienern und denen, die vom Existenzminimum leben; von Menschen mit und ohne sicherem Arbeitsverhältnis; von Volk und Volksvertretern; von Menschen unterschiedlicher Kulturen und Glaubensbekenntnisse.“ Diese Einschätzungen Christian Wulffs sind leider wahr. Ärgerlich ist nur, dass er meint, uns diese Entwicklungen als Segnungen verkaufen zu müssen, die zum System gehören. Als wäre Ungleichheit und Freiheit direkt proportional. Das Auseinanderklaffen von Arm und Reich bringt keine Beförderung der Demokratie, sondern gefährdet ihre Grundlagen.

So absurd es klingt, die Unfreiheit in der DDR hat den Westdeutschen über viele Jahre ein mehr an Freiheit eingebracht. Nicht nur der Osten stand ja im Systemvergleich. Manchen Ostdeutschen erinnert heute die Atmosphäre in der neuen deutschen Republik an die Agonie der DDR. Die politischen Rituale scheinen erschöpft, der Rückzug der Bürger und der Eliten aus der gesellschaftlichen Diskussion ist offensichtlich. Reformdiskussionen ziehen sich über Jahre hin. Das kenne ich schon, denkt der Ostdeutsche, das habe ich schon einmal erlebt. Vielleicht ist gerade diese Erfahrung ein bislang zu wenig genutztes Kapital der deutschen Wiedervereinigung. Dass Millionen Bürger, Einsicht in zwei verschiedene politische, wirtschaftliche und kulturelle Systeme gewonnen haben. Damit meine ich nicht nur die Ostdeutschen, die jetzt im Westen leben, sondern auch die Westdeutschen, die sein Jahren im Osten arbeiten. Immerhin hat es eine Ostfrau bis nach ganz oben geschafft. Manchen, der in Angela Merkel eine Marionette Helmut Kohls sah, hat sie eines besseren belehrt. Sie ist mehr als das, sie führt seine Politik konsequent und erfolgreich weiter. Und da Sie jetzt grübeln, ob ich diese Einschätzung

ironisch oder ernst meine, füge ich hinzu, sie ist die ostdeutsche Gallionsfigur am neuen flotten deutschen Staatsschiff. Deswegen soll auch sie eine kleine poetische Würdigung erfahren.

Der Berliner Himmel war preußisch blau,
Die Frauen nur leicht bekleidet.
Ich wollte die Bundeskanzlerin sehn
Oder jemanden, der entscheidet.

Ich kam ja nicht als Tourist in die Stadt,
Zum Einkaufengehn oder Shoppen.
Es trieb mich das hehre Ansinnen her,
Den Schlosswiederaufbau zu stoppen.

Deswegen stand ich mit der Regierung
Tagtäglich im Emailverkehr.
Der Bau ist nicht nötig, erklärte ich ihr,
Und belastet den Haushalt prekär.

Was immer ich schrieb, die Antwort kam prompt,
Stets höflich und automatisch.
Zwar war der Inhalt knapp und abstrakt,
Doch der Vorgang sehr demokratisch.

Daran sah man den Fortschritt, den Unterschied
Zum früheren Eingabewesen,
Dort warteten Bürger oft wochenlang,
Um ein Antwortschreiben zu lesen.

Aber jetzt regierte in deutschem Land
Eine uckermärkische Pflanze,
Die hatte erfolgreich den Rotkohl verdrängt
Und galt als echte Emanze.

Bei ihr warn die Steuergelder bestimmt,
In verantwortungsvollen Fingern,
Sie würde die Anzahl der Schulen erhöhen
Und die der Paläste verringern.

Ich hatte am Bauplatz ein Rendezvous
Vereinbart für zwölf Uhr dreißig.
Das war die Zeit ihrer Mittagspause,
Die Kanzlerin ist furchtbar fleißig.

»Du hast mich gerufen!« Es klang ihre Stimme
So süß wie Schlagersüßtafel.
»Ich wurde«, erklärte sie, »im Parlament,
Noch abgelenkt durch Geschwafel«.

Linken wollt mich wieder die Opposition
 Und mit einem Eilantrag foppen,
 Doch konnte ich kraft meiner Mehrheit dies
 Gemeine Ansinnen stoppen.“

Ihre Mehrheit war wie ihre Figur
 Mit den Jahren gereift und gewachsen.
 Sie ist der Fels, der für Wachstum steht
 In Thüringen und Niedersachsen.

Sie ist das lebendige Beispiel dafür,
 Dass noch immer im deutschen Reiche
 Sich ein Mauerblümchen entfalten kann
 Zu einer gewaltigen Eiche.

Gezeugt hatte sie ein germanischer Gott,
 Helmutius, der kohlige Recke,
 Den Stifter der Einheit, den brachte sie
 Als er schwächelte, selbst zur Strecke.

Ich sah ihre Lippen, das volle Haar,
 Um den Hals die zierliche Kette.
 »Frau Kanzlerin«, rief ich, »wie wunderbar
 Sie zu sehn an historischer Stätte.«

»Ich hab nicht viel Zeit«, fiel sie mir ins Wort,
 »Um Details mit dir zu besprechen,
 Ich treffe sogleich Präsidenten Klaus,
 Den frechen aufsässigen Tschechen.«

Ich streckte die Hand aus, feldherrengleich,
 Im Bemühn, visionär auszusehn.
 »Es muss hier in Bälde, auf freiem Grund
 Das Einheitsdenkmal entstehn!

Falls es Fragen gibt, wie man so was baut,
 Reaktiviere man Professor Sitte.
 Doch eines ist klar, Sie, Frau Kanzlerin
 Gehören in des Denkmals Mitte.«

Sie grübelte kurz, dann rief sie: »Hurra
 Nach reiflicher Überlegung
 Zieh ich die Streichung des Schlossprojekts
 Mit Vehemenz in Erwägung.«

Zum Schluss lassen Sie mich noch einmal auf den Besuch bei meiner alten
 Freundin Hilde in Denver zurückkommen. Sie brauchte, als sie mich sah,
 einige Zeit, um mich zu erkennen. Ich spielte in ihrem bewegten Leben nur

eine Episodenrolle. Dass ich ihre Geschichte aufgeschrieben hatte, wusste sie nicht mehr. Sie selbst würde sie mir nun nicht mehr erzählen können. Wir müssen die Geschichten erfragen, solange die Zeitzeugen berichten können. Genau so verhält es sich mit der DDR. Ihre Widersprüchlichkeit wird im vereinigten Deutschland noch immer als Gefährdung des inneren Friedens betrachtet, nicht als Provokation, als Stoff, der Zukunft in sich birgt, als Teil der gesamtdeutschen Kultur. Es ist an der Zeit, auch die Irr- und Umwege unserer Geschichte auf ihr Potential zu überprüfen. Vielleicht werden in ihnen eines Tages Auswege zu entdecken sein.

In Memoriam

Bärbel Bohley, gestorben am 11.9.2010

Unsere Freundin Bärbel Bohley ist tot. Sie war das prägende Gesicht und die Stimme des Aufbruchs zur friedlichen Revolution in der DDR 1989.

Sie hatte die Angst nach Gefängnis und Ausweisung mit Möglichkeit zur „Rückkehr bei Wohlverhalten“ vor dem Regime verloren. Das war die entscheidende Voraussetzung für ihr Handeln nach ihrer Rückkehr in die DDR. Sie suchte und fand Gleichgesinnte, natürlich auch in Grünheide bei ihrer Freundin Katja Havemann.

Das Neue Forum verkündete in seinem Gründungsaufruf selbstbewusst: „Die Zeit ist reif!“ Die Eisdecke von Angst und Passivität zerbrach, die die Gesellschaft der DDR wie Mehltau überzog und so lähmte. Der SED-Staat wurde zum Dialog mit den Bürgern der DDR aufgefordert. Das Wort „Dialog“ wurde zum Auftakt des Sturzes der Diktatur. Bärbel Bohley lebte vor, wie sie diesen Dialog verstand: Wir müssen mit den SED-Funktionären nicht länger in der Sklavensprache der Diktatur sprechen, wir müssen mit eigenen Worten die Veränderung untragbar gewordener Zustände einfordern – jeder an seinem Ort, wo er lebt. Der Funke zündete. Die Staatspartei verlor zuerst die Herrschaft über die Sprache, bevor sie ihre Macht verlor.

„Wir wollen freie, selbstbewußte Menschen, die doch gemeinschaftsbewußt handeln. Wir wollen vor Gewalt geschützt sein und dabei nicht einen Staat von Bütteln und Spitzeln ertragen müssen.“ (Aus dem Gründungsaufruf des Neuen Forums, September 1989)

Die Leitlinie ihres Lebens war der Kampf zur Durchsetzung der Menschen – und Bürgerrechte, und dies nicht nur im eigenen Land. Sie war und blieb unbequem in dem vereinigten Deutschland. Scharf und unnachsichtig kritisierte sie Fehlentwicklungen im Vereinigungsprozess. Interesse an einer

politischen Karriere hatte sie nicht.

Ihr Kinderspielplatz waren die Ruinen und die Trümmerhalden Berlins; diese sah sie nun wieder in Sarajewo. Sie ging als Aufbauhelferin nach Bosnien. Hier begegneten ihr Waise und Kinder aus Flüchtlingsfamilien, die in Elend und Not lebten. Für sie organisierte sie in Kroatien Sommerferien, um ihnen wieder Lebensmut zu geben.

Bärbel Bohley verteidigte in den geschichtspolitischen Debatten über die friedliche Revolution und den Unrechtsstaat DDR nach 1990 unbeirrt ihre Motive und die der Bürgerrechtler. Entschieden trat sie allen Versuchen der Anhänger und Mitläufer der kommunistischen Diktatur entgegen, die die Aufarbeitung der SED-Herrschaft zu hintertreiben suchten, die Verhältnisse in der ehemaligen DDR zu verharmlosen und die Opfer der Diktatur verhöhnten.

Bärbel lebte die Zivilcourage, die in Deutschland allzu oft fehlt.

Berlin 11. September 2010

Karin und Manfred Wilke

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