Concepts of culture. 29th Wisconsin Workshop 1999

Wisconsin Workshop (29th : 1997 : Madison, Wis.)
New York: Peter Lang, 1999

https://digital.library.wisc.edu/1711.dl/LOXTFASAQAWDG8V

Concepts of Culture

Edited by
Hans Adler
& Jost Hermand

German Life and Civilization

Peter Lang

M. Silberman

Concepts of Culture

German Life and Civilization

Vol. 28

PETER LANG
New York • Washington, D.C./Baltimore • Boston
Bern • Frankfurt am Main • Berlin • Vienna • Paris

Concepts of Culture

Edited by
Hans Adler
& Jost Hermand

PETER LANG
New York • Washington, D.C./Baltimore • Boston
Bern • Frankfurt am Main • Berlin • Vienna • Paris

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Concepts of culture / edited by Hans Adler and Jost Hermand.
p. cm. — (German life and civilization; vol. 28)
Papers presented at the 29th Wisconsin Workshop
held Nov. 14–16, 1997 in Madison, Wis.
Includes bibliographical references.
1. German philology—Study and teaching (Higher)—Congresses. 2. Culture—
Europe, German-speaking—Study and teaching (Higher)—Congresses.
I. Adler, Hans. II. Hermand, Jost. III. Wisconsin Workshop
(29th: 1997: Madison, Wis.). IV. Series.
PF3066.C59 430'.71'1—dc21 98-46161
ISBN 0-8204-4141-4
ISSN 0899-9899

Die Deutsche Bibliothek-CIP-Einheitsaufnahme

Concepts of culture / ed. by Hans Adler and Jost Hermand.
–New York; Washington, D.C./Baltimore; Boston; Bern;
Frankfurt am Main; Berlin; Vienna; Paris: Lang.
(German life and civilization; Vol. 28)
ISBN 0-8204-4141-4

The paper in this book meets the guidelines for permanence and durability
of the Committee on Production Guidelines for Book Longevity
of the Council of Library Resources.

Printed in the United States of America

Contents

Preface

Faced with the general process of social democratization and the ever increasing impact of technological modernization, older concepts of culture – based on religious, national, moral, or class-oriented ideals – have yielded over the last one hundred years to new ones. These seem more in line with our society's emphasis on individuality as it tries to strike a balance between purely subjective notions and the gradual levelling of older values as the trend toward globalization accelerates. This process, sometimes given the label "postmodernization," is highly complex and has opened up an array of still unresolved questions.

It was the aim of the 29th Wisconsin Workshop to discuss at least some of these emerging developments and contradictions, particularly in so far as they are manifested in the realm of the university-based humanities, in our case the field of German studies. Following the gradual disappearance of *Germanistik* in the older form, still concerned as it was with religious, moral, national, and class-oriented ideals as reflected in the masterpieces of German literature, the new field of German Studies is less concerned with "great works" of literature than with a far wider range of cultural phenomena, from the most elitist to the most trivial, i.e., culture with or without a capital "c." This shift of focus has entailed a general reorientation in the field of literary scholarship, which is responding to the many changes in the ongoing process of cultural centripetalization. While this trend has produced a dazzling array of various subcultures or *Teilkulturen*, current scholarship is tending in two main directions: to an growing emphasis on the perceived necessity of interdisciplinarity on the one hand, but on the other to an ever narrower specialization as a result of dealing not only with literature but with theory, film, gender questions, the other arts, and so on.

This split in focus and methodology makes conflict in the area of German studies almost unavoidable. In addition, changes in our

social reality and in the humanities are occurring so rapidly that individual differences among scholars in terms of age, national origin, ideological orientation, gender, schooling, and so forth lead not only to different opinions, but at times to open confrontations. It can only be hoped that these debates will not result in unyielding siege mentalities, but will instead allow for a productive clarification of the underlying cultural contradictions that arise from the many political, social, economic, and ideological shifts taking place at the moment.

These questions and others were discussed at the 29th Wisconsin Workshop held in Madison (Wisconsin) on November 14-16, 1997, leading not only to heated confrontations, but also to many enlightening discussions. The presenters who addressed issues posed by the conference topic were Hans Adler (University of Wisconsin-Madison), Sander L. Gilman (University of Chicago), Jost Hermand (University of Wisconsin-Madison), Peter Uwe Hohendahl (Cornell University, Ithaca), Erik Jacobsen, Lisa Rainwater van Suntum, and Peter van Suntum (University of Wisconsin-Madison), Nancy Kaiser (University of Wisconsin-Madison), Helmut Peitsch (University of Wales, Cardiff), Gerhard Richter (University of Wisconsin-Madison), and Sara Lennox (University of Massachusetts, Amherst).

The lively discussions over the course of the Workshop made it obvious that the tension between theory and practice, fundamental reflections, and the steps undertaken to institutionalize the field of German Studies will determine the future of this area in the coming years. One final observation may point toward a perspective that might help to assess future developments. It is striking to realize the extent to which the long tradition of cultural theory and philosophy has been neglected in recent publications – an omission that is mirrored in the workshop essays presented here. We mention this fact not to tout tradition as a means to consolidate the new Culture Studies but instead to point out that many of the problems dealt with at the Workshop had already surfaced in previous stages of the discussion. While we cannot embrace the old

positions, we can and should take a close look at how cultural studies were defined in the past. In other words, it makes sense to contextualize modern German Studies historically in order to avoid slipping into solipsist absolutism. The very openness which German Studies claims for itself is necessary not only within the synchronic field of contemporary activities but also for the diachronic dimension of cultural studies. Cultural identity is impoverished if it does not confront its own past. This is true not only for the *experience* of cultural identity but likewise for the *discourse* on cultural identity.

The editors are above all indebted to the Anonymous Fund of the University of Wisconsin-Madison, which generously contributed funds to cover the travel and expenses of the Department's guests, and to the William F. Vilas Fund, which made possible the publication of this volume.

Madison, April 1998 The Editors

Peter Uwe Hohendahl

The Quest for Cultural Studies Revisited

Ten years ago, when the discussion about Cultural Studies had just begun, a proposal to transform Germanistik into a Cultural Studies program would have created quite a lot of commotion. While the defenders of the literary tradition would have expressed their dismay in strong terms, those who were dissatisfied with the status quo were ready to embark on the new and clearly promising project. A decade ago, many of us felt that Cultural Studies could offer the solution to the dilemma of German Studies.[1] The vision of an approach that would go beyond the interpretation of canonical literary texts encouraged many younger scholars and teachers to embrace some version of Cultural Studies. While the impetus of the movement had considerable force, its direction and goals were not necessarily a matter of consensus. Under the umbrella of Cultural Studies a number of different but related projects could be pursued, stirring up the dust of time-honored procedures and practices.[2] In the 1980s the pursuit of Cultural Studies was an adventure; today it has become almost a mainstream project, as a mere glance at the more recent literature on this topic makes abundantly clear.

The broad discussion in the academy that has taken place since the early 1990s should be seen as an indication that, first of all, the project is very much alive and, second, that the original enthusiasm was possibly premature.[3] The initial success of the movement, i.e., the dramatic revisions in literature departments (the historians have, by and large, remained much more cautious), have resulted also in more fundamental methodological and theoretical questions which have emerged from the actual work of the Cultural Studies project.[4] In fact, the belief that we were dealing with a single project turned out to be misleading from the very beginning. Cultural Studies, I would argue, has always been an aggregate of

overlapping and somewhat competing projects. This has been the strength of the movement, but at the same time a potential liability since these particular projects had their individual epistemologies, which were frequently not really compatible. What we can observe right now is the second phase of the movement, namely, a critical re-assessment of the theoretical presuppositions connected with the claim that we should examine literature as cultural artifacts or as part of cultural procedures. The redefinition of German Studies as Cultural Studies will have to take note of this ongoing critical evaluation, especially when this field is becoming a mainstream discipline.

As important as these reconsiderations are – I will come back to them – they represent a typical academic in-house debate. The more pressing issues of the 1990s, I feel, lie somewhere else. The legitimacy of Cultural Studies will not be exclusively decided at conferences and workshops; it will be just as much an administrative decision that ultimately will far transcend the level of a departmental program. The future of Cultural Studies depends, I would argue, on the way it can relate to and be part of the new structure of the American university. The ongoing restructuring of the university in terms of its mission and its organization will, I suspect, in the long run be more decisive than the present epistemological debate. This process concerns, among other things, the place and role of traditional disciplines as they were defined in the late nineteenth or early twentieth century. The rise of the American research university led to the emergence of scientific philological studies, Germanics among them.[5] While German departments were always more than places for the pursuit of rigorous philology, the claim for methodological rigor also legitimized the procedures of the German curriculum. Its legitimacy was partly guaranteed by the quest for scientific knowledge within the larger frame of an academic institution devoted to the training of young scientists and scholars. While the specific legitimation of Germanics through philological studies has clearly lost its valence, the idea of scholarship as part of the

academic mission is still very much part of our professional self-understanding.

It seems, however, that this form of self-legitimizing work is no longer self-evident since the public at large has voiced serious questions about the structure of the academy in the name of accountability.[6] Accountability, as it is defined by public critics and university administrators, means that the measure for success or failure of a project does no longer lie within the definition of its content. Rather, success is determined by criteria imposed from the outside, such as the satisfaction of the clients/consumers or the satisfaction of the outside world. A strictly functionalist approach to academic work, be it research or teaching, puts pressure on traditional definitions of academic disciplines. It raises the question of service not only as a practical consideration but as *the* central issue of the new university. In other words, disciplines and departments are no longer seen as ends in themselves but as means to accomplish goals that are defined by the central administration of the university or by outside agencies.

This transformation will affect the sciences no less than the humanities. In fact, one could argue that research in the hard sciences has been redefined in these terms for some time already. The emergence of the state as a major *Auftraggeber* for research after World War II has shaped the development of that section of the research university. But the link between the state and the scientific research community still respected the concept of pure science, while the new corporate university is consumer-oriented. The university understands itself as a place for "human resource development";[7] it is, therefore, logically tied to the market. In this model the idea of culture as *Bildung*, to use the older German term, is no longer central for the conception of the university. It has been replaced by formal descriptions of achievement, such as excellence or enrichment through communication.

It seems to me that this transformation has ultimately rather fundamental consequences for the humanities and German Studies among them. One of them is a tendency to downgrade or even

eliminate cultural and literary traditions in the name of efficient job training. The deregulation of the traditional discipline, as it has occurred during the 1980s and 1990s, confronts us with the task of redefining the mission of the German or the French department. In this context the move towards Cultural Studies can be seen as embracing a project that provides a new, so-to-speak updated version of a cultural defense of the university, the difference being that Cultural Studies does not propose a normative ideal for teaching and scholarship. Instead, cultural objects and practices become the object of study, and it remains to be seen what purpose the project receives in the new corporate university. Bill Readings, for instance, has argued that Cultural Studies "presents a vision of culture that is appropriate for the age of excellence."[8] To put it succinctly, in Readings' view Cultural Studies represents a trend at the new university which fits well into an academic environment where efficient business management is the natural approach to responsible university administration. Hence Cultural Studies and the corporate university seem to be made for each other.

For those of us who have been involved in the project of Cultural Studies, Readings' critique, which does not refer to the traditional idea of disciplinary coherence and closure as a decisive criterion but focuses instead on the larger picture, raises serious questions. Has Cultural Studies become the hegemonic model in the 1990s because of the transformation of the American university? Has its initial critical impetus vis-à-vis the conventional understanding of the humanities disappeared? Or, even worse, was this cultural force never more than the illusion of the practitioners and advocates of Cultural Studies? And, finally, has Cultural Studies helped to subvert the very foundations of a cultural project that we would need to challenge the corporate university? The fact that traditional humanists, especially literary scholars, would probably answer these questions in the affirmative, could not immediately persuade me to drop the project, but I want to argue that the challenge from Readings and other critics has to be taken seriously.

It is interesting to note that Readings perceives Cultural Studies as a field of related and competing programs rather than a single and monolithic project. Hence for him the analysis cannot be carried out at the level of a common methodology or an overriding theory. Instead, Readings argues that the modern European idea of culture/*Bildung* had been linked to the idea of the nation state, an idea that lost its relevance under the conditions of global capitalism. Under these conditions there are, according to Readings, three option, namely: (1) the forceful return to the ideal of a national culture, (2) the possibility to reinvent the concept of culture in such a way that it responds to the impact of global migration, or (3) to abandon the notion of a specific cultural mission of the university, to abandon, in other words, the search for cultural identity as a political project. For Readings, both the old project of a national culture and the new project of multi-culturalism are inseparable from the concept of identity and identity politics, as they emerged during the 1980s. More specifically, Readings believes that the second option, i.e, the search for a new and different concept of culture, as it was developed in Cultural Studies, is ultimately without normative force. Primarily because of this, the idea of multi-culturalism is more suitable for the corporate university than old-fashioned notions of national culture. The argument Readings presents for his strong claim runs like this: "The new paradigm [of Cultural Studies] is characterized above all by resistance to all attempts to limit its field of reference. All manifestations of culture are signifying practice, and all signifying practices are manifestations of culture."[9] We are talking, therefore, about an ensemble of cultural objects without a center. There are, according to Readings, two aspects missing from Cultural Studies, namely, the specificity of a referent and, to use an Adornian term, truth content (*Wahrheitsgehalt*). It is the emphasis on signifying procedures that encourages a formalization of the study of culture without a traditional commitment to the object of study. This results in an academization of culture within the new model of the corporate

university. As Readings claims: "Culture ceases to mean anything *as such*; it is dereferentialized."[10]

It is not only the moment of dereferentialization that worries Readings; he is equally concerned with the lack of a concise conception of the academic work or research that falls under the rubric of Cultural Studies, i.e., the lack of a clear and distinct disciplinary map. Yet ultimately these methodological and theoretical issues are less important for Readings' analysis than the metalevel: the function of Cultural Studies within the new university of excellence. The point of his critique is the unintended but disturbing parallel between Cultural Studies' critique of traditional national culture (as a value) and the attack of global capitalism on the nation state. On this level, the project of Cultural Studies is read as symptomatic for the larger issue of the contemporary university, which again stands in for the broader issue of the consequences of global capitalism and its subversion of traditional formations of culture. In this configuration, Cultural Studies' quest for a coherent understanding and a rigorous general theory are secondary compared with the evolutionary argument that foregrounds the transition from a national to a global social and cultural project. But how convincing is this argument? How great is the plausibility of Readings' evolutionary scheme?

My critique of Readings' claim will take two forms: first, I will argue that the thesis of Cultural Studies' symptomatic status is less convincing than assumed, and, more specifically, that the link between dereferentiality and globalization is, historically speaking, not as cogent as assumed. Second, I will offer a narrative in which the components of Readings' argument are put together differently.

While I agree with Readings that the American university has been significantly transformed during the 1990s, I would be much more cautious in assuming that these changes moving toward a university organized like a business corporation have a global dimension. Nor does it seem plausible to me that the nation state has simply been replaced by international corporate structures for which national norms and values are increasingly meaningless.

Hence the rise of Cultural Studies in Europe and the U.S.A. cannot be explained simply as a phenomenon that reflects or articulates the lack of a specific cultural commitment. Of course, Readings concedes that in Great Britain, Cultural Studies as it grew out of the postwar Left, was very much connected to a national project, namely, the affirmation of British working-class culture.[11] However, Readings claims that the rise of Cultural Studies in America during the 1980s has a rather different meaning. In the United States the movement supposedly supports an agenda of an internationalist critique that consciously subverts national cultural values; hence the general argument of dereferentialization. But the logic of this argument is convincing only when one assumes that a process of emptying out culture actually took place and that this process was causally connected with the globalization of corporate capitalism and the demise of the national state. While one can observe tendencies that would support Readings' strong claim, they are not dominant enough to support his theory as a whole.

Therefore, I would like to offer a different narrative that would make use of Readings' ideas but puts them together in a different way. In my opinion, Cultural Studies is very much a national preoccupation in the United States, related to specific academic developments as well as to more general social and cultural problems. It evolved out of a number of more specific projects that were concerned with issues for which the traditional university with its conventional organization of disciplines had no or only marginal space. In this country the question of popular culture was never the only problem, and possibly not even the more important topic of Cultural Studies. The rise of feminism, gay studies, queer theory, communications and media studies, cultural anthropology, etc., foregrounded unresolved problems of the American society. The culture wars of the late 1980s and early 1990s made this very apparent.[12] The resistance of conservative critics to the rapid emergence of new cultural projects which claimed disciplinary or interdisciplinary status within the university indicated that these projects grouped under the umbrella of Cultural Studies were

dealing with "real" problems, although frequently in the form of normative constructs or ideal types in Max Weber's sense. Thus Readings' claim that Cultural Studies can be defined as an approach to culture which has lost the referent seems to miss the point. On the contrary, what unites the various projects of Cultural Studies is the search for a referent where previous research had downgraded or eliminated it. Cultural Studies reacted, among other things, against the dominance of high theory of the 1970s, specifically its claim to sublate empirical reality completely.[13] Consequently, I would understand the rise of Cultural Studies as a return to specific cultural and social issues, but this move did not imply a return to an epistemology of realism. Instead, the theoretical advancements of the 1970s were reconfigured and utilized in different ways in the 1980s. Readings, I believe, misunderstands the function of signifying procedures when he argues that Cultural Studies remains located in the cage of a dereferentialized theory where the specificity of cultural objects and practices does not matter.

The problem of Cultural Studies lies elsewhere: it concerns precisely the use of theory and, more specifically, the compatibility of heterogeneous theoretical models. The more Cultural Studies became part of the academic mainstream during the 1990s, the more it has been exposed to the danger of theoretical eclecticism. From the point of view of a distinct theoretical position, such a Marxism or Lacanian psychoanalysis or deconstruction, the practices of Cultural Studies look messy because they are borrowing the conceptual tools wherever they can find them. Put differently, the involvement in particular thematic projects, frequently transdisciplinary by nature, for which a worked-out methodology is not immediately available, results in conscious eclecticism. The various projects under the umbrella of Cultural Studies are driven by their subject matter rather than purely theoretical considerations; yet this does not mean that they define themselves in terms of an application of already existing theories.

Rather, methodological problems lead to the contact with and reconsideration of given theoretical models.

Of course, Readings is entirely correct when he locates American Cultural Studies within the university and emphasizes the peculiar symbiosis between the new corporate model and its potentially radical projects. I would agree that the university of excellence, because it is primarily interested in satisfying its consumers, can more easily embrace radical projects than the ideologically defined university of the Cold War, which felt a stronger allegiance to official state ideology. But this does not mean, as Readings suggests, that the state is no longer part of the picture. I want to argue that the state has shifted both its form of support and its mode of control. By cutting back the funding of higher education, the Federal Government has encouraged privatization according to the model of the market.[14] By the same token, older control mechanisms have been replaced with notions of efficiency that would encourage experiments in teaching and research. To some extent at least, Cultural Studies has benefitted from these trends, as long as its programs have attracted students. The question remains, however, as to whether Cultural Studies can unfold a critical potential in the transformed academic environment. Is there a critical public sphere that can be addressed, or is Cultural Studies contained by and limited to the academic public sphere? And to what extent does this specialized public sphere transcend the conception of a consumer culture? Clearly, Readings would deny such a possibility since for him the idea of a reasoning public sphere has been eliminated from the contemporary university by privatizing the relationship between students, faculty and administration via the market.

I would argue that the answer to these questions is ambiguous when one looks at the academic landscape of the United States. While we can observe a strong tendency towards restructuring individual universities and colleges, this process is still incomplete. However, we would have to distinguish between the situation of the 1980s, when Cultural Studies programs emerged, and the

1990s, when Cultural Studies became part of the mainstream. The mainstreaming of Cultural Studies, I would maintain, has changed both its nature and its function. It has been increasingly integrated into the standard academic program and thereby lost its original subversive force. The conception of Cultural Studies as an academic discipline, which is comprised of a number of projects such as Gender or Colonial Studies or Visual Studies, is potentially just as marketable as a more traditional program defined in terms of customary ideas of high culture. Today the difference seems to matter less than a decade ago. This is, I suspect, one of the reasons why Cultural Studies has recently become the target of criticism from a number of epistemological and political positions.

In a 1996 essay in *Partisan Review* Alan Wolfe has charged Cultural Studies with a lack both of intellectual seriousness and political commitment. For him the advocates of Cultural Studies, such as Andrew Ross and Michael Bérubé, have abdicated their social and cultural responsibilities as intellectuals by embracing and celebrating mass culture as such. "In so doing," Wolfe notes, "cultural studies brings to a close an era in which intellectuals felt a responsibility to serve as the opposition party to capitalism in lieu of a working class which chose to shun the job."[15] Although a movement coming out of the left, in his opinion, Cultural Studies has failed to develop a "vantage point from which capitalism can be criticized [...] (and) thus becomes an apology for the very capitalism against which its favored constituents are presumed to be struggling."[16] While Wolfe does not claim close affiliations with the cultural criticism of an older generation, for instance that of Dwight Macdonald, he strongly objects to a theoretical position that results in a compromise with the very mass culture it presumes to analyze. The style and rhetoric of Cultural Studies is, Wolfe charges, "not an effort to study the mass media but to imitate it."[17] Not surprisingly, then, Wolfe comes to the conclusion that Cultural Studies is a "profoundly conservative" project.[18]

This frontal critique touches on sensitive points in the area of academic politics. It exposes, I think, some of the illusions of some

critics of mass culture who have equated a populist position with political opposition by limiting the field of Cultural Studies to the study of mass culture. But this approach fails to grasp the complexity of the movement. Wolfe's criticism reduces Cultural Studies to a form of cultural criticism that went wrong and thereby fails to ask crucial questions: first, what is the connection of mass culture studies with fields such as gender studies or minority studies; second, is it possible to develop an epistemological ground that could be shared by these different projects, and, third, is the kind of oppositional politics that Wolfe favors still to be recommended in the 1990s? These questions would also lead us to a closer examination of the potential interaction between epistemology and politics that Wolfe seems to take for granted.

These questions bring into focus the underlying problem of Cultural Studies as a discipline that consists of a number of different and by no means homogeneous projects. Because of the thematic urgency of these projects the practitioners of Cultural Studies have typically deferred the discussion of a common epistemological ground and relied on a more pragmatic approach to a definition of Cultural Studies, frequently openly pointing out that Cultural Studies, especially the American version of the 1980s and 1990s, cannot be defined in terms of a discipline bound by rigid methodological rules. The editors of the volume *Cultural Studies*, for instance, note: "Indeed, cultural studies is not merely interdisciplinary; it is often [...] actively and aggressively anti-disciplinary – a characteristic that more or less ensures a permanently uncomfortable relation to academic disciplines."[19] As long as Cultural Studies remained a field at the margin of the academy, this anarchy was a sign of radical opposition that propelled the movement. A decade later, however, this issue has to be confronted again since the marginal position from which the editors still claim to speak in 1992 has significantly changed. Cultural Studies has become part of the regular academic curriculum – whether it is a discipline or not. Hence its relation to more established disciplines has to come under scrutiny. To give

an example for the need of such a renewed interrogation: we will have to ask ourselves what the link between German as a field of literary studies and German as a field of Cultural Studies can and should be.

In his recent study *Professional Correctness* (1995) Stanley Fish has outright challenged the feasibility of Cultural Studies as a cohesive superdiscipline, as an umbrella under which various cultural projects can be investigated with methodological rigor. His claim is not that specific aspects of modern culture which transcend traditional literary studies can not be theorized and thereby defined as scholarly projects. Instead, his argument is specifically directed against the larger claim of Cultural Studies that "we can put all the jobs of work – all the so-called disciplines – together and form one large and unified field of knowledge (call it cultural studies) to replace the fractured and fragmented knowledges now given us by separate departments and schools."[20] The development of a general field theory would indeed be the logical academic conclusion in the search for Cultural Studies as an umbrella discipline in distinction from a more specific project confined to the study of mass culture. But what about the traditional disciplines? Is their methodological and theoretical coherence above suspicion? Has traditional Germanics been more than an amalgam of loosely put together disciplines such as philology, literary criticism and history of ideas?

Against the plausible argument that traditional disciplines are no less social constructs than Cultural Studies Fish holds the fact of disciplinary differentiation in the nineteenth and twentieth century. In this argument literary studies (Fish's preferred field of study) is defined by what it is not – for instance history or sociology. Separating literary texts from other kinds of text is, therefore, the mark of a professional discipline: it foregrounds its distinction from neighboring disciplines. Hence Fish is ultimately unsympathetic even to literary theories such as those of Terry Eagleton or Tony Bennett, which argue for the social embeddedness of the literary text.[21] He is even more hostile to

Patrick Brantlinger's much larger claim that Cultural Studies "aims to overcome the disabling fragmentation of knowledge within the disciplinary structure of the university and [...] also to overcome the fragmentation and alienation in the larger society which that structure mirrors."[22]

For two reasons Fish wants to resist the construction of a "cultural text" as a condition for the interpretation of a literary text: first, this approach cannot, he insists, escape the flaw of an infinite regress (there is always yet another cause behind the cause elucidated by a specific historical analysis); second, and more importantly, even if one assumes the methodological feasibility of reconstructing the cultural context, this new text, i.e., the cultural text, "has no epistemological or ontological superiority over the texts [...] it displaces."[23]

It is interesting to observe how Fish's argument begins to shift. While his initial critique turns against the construct called Cultural Studies, he later pursues a more specific argument against the contextualization of literary texts. But in doing so he grants what he initially denies: that it is possible to construct a cultural text (and view the literary text as part of this cultural text). He correctly observes that this shift does not logically provide a deeper understanding of the literary text but only a different one. Thus, following Fish, we can make the argument that developing a cultural text would constitute a new and different critical practice from performing a literary reading. Using Fish's metaphor of the map, one might stress the difference between the gestalt of a cultural from a literary map as well as the need for a cultural map precisely because it highlights features that the literary map does not show. To expand the metaphor, the crucial question, as Fish would formulate it, would be if these two maps are in some form compatible, if they could be placed on top of each other, thereby producing a third map. Interdisciplinary Cultural Studies, then, would be a practice of combining more specialized maps in such a way that a new map would come into view. Fish is willing to concede this argument, but only in support of a particular map,

which cannot claim deeper or broader knowledge. He notes: "To say that the cultural text is partial is not to criticize it or to deny its usefulness in certain circumstances; it is merely to deny its claim to be representationally superior to other partial texts that are doing other jobs."[24] In sum, Fish ultimately acknowledges the feasibility of a cultural map as a particular map that is equal to other maps. In this argument Cultural Studies would finally emerge as a particular discipline with its own methodological rules for producing knowledge.

However, this was not the original question. That question concerned the possibility of a broader discipline bringing together a variety of different fields of investigation. Against this possibility, however, Fish develops a different argument, namely, the perspectivism of all human knowledge. Since all human knowledge depends on a specific perspective (of space and time), it is impossible, he maintains, to create a complete cultural map, the all-embracing discipline of Cultural Studies. But this limitation holds true for all possible disciplines, for legal or literary studies as well as Cultural Studies. It can, therefore, not serve as an argument against the construction of a cultural map. According to his own premise, Fish can only insist that the cultural map is not a total representation of reality; it is just as much bound by its perspective and its rules of construction as other fields of knowledge. When Fish claims that the questions that one can ask are always specific to a particular discipline and, therefore, not automatically transferable to another one – one cannot be a literary critic and a political analyst at the same time – he does not really, as he maintains, undermine the possibility of Cultural Studies. Rather, he correctly points out that Cultural Studies as a discipline would have to develop its own set of questions, its rules of procedures and, finally, its theories, which it could not simply borrow from other disciplines.

I am sympathetic to Stanley Fish's call for disciplinary distinctions, but only up to a point. His position is helpful for two reasons: first, it forces us to clarify the claims of Cultural Studies,

and, second, it helps us to rethink the relationship between Cultural Studies and traditional disciplines, especially literary criticism. The claim would be that Cultural Studies needs its own set of methodological rules; furthermore, it should not consider itself a superdiscipline that can replace all other disciplines. It would have to develop arguments why its perspective, the kinds of questions it asks, are important and valid. Epistemologically, then, the call for Cultural Studies would not replace existing disciplines. In fact, it would add another discipline to the array of existing fields. Put under close scrutiny, the search for Cultural Studies would yield a new discipline rather than an interdisciplinary project. In view of the ongoing debate in which the interdisciplinary character of Cultural Studies plays an important role, this would be a somewhat surprising outcome. One would have to distinguish, then, between the grounding of Cultural Studies, on the one hand, and the problem of interdisciplinarity, on the other. And it seems to me that the lack of that distinction has partly added to the confusion of the present debate.

I want to stay for a moment with the problem of Cultural Studies as a new and distinct field of inquiry. According to Fish, this discipline would have to develop its distinct set of theories rather than borrow its elements from other fields. Such a demand strikes me as unrealistic and unnecessary. Practitioners of diverse disciplines have learned from each other by transferring theories or elements of theories, frequently adapting and reshaping them. Cultural Studies should not be prevented from using this strategy. Yet we should keep in mind that this strategy would not be the same as developing an interdisciplinary project which is based on the relationship between two or more existing disciplines with their separate protocols for the search of knowledge. The mark of distinction would be the idea of disciplinary cohesion within the project, whereas interdisciplinary work creates bridges between already defined disciplines.

How, then, have the practitioners of Cultural Studies proposed to understand their work? I will present a very abbreviated form of

an outline of the available positions. One of them, for example, the editors of the volume *Cultural Studies* (1992), foregrounds the amorphous nature of Cultural Studies and suggests that the new discipline consists of a number of more specific fields, thereby gesturing towards the interdisciplinary character of the area of Cultural Studies. They assume a multiplicity of (overlapping) paradigms rather than a single model. In fact, for them the notion of a single disciplinary paradigm seems not only unavailable but also undesirable. In sum, Cultural Studies presents itself as an interdisciplinary project – open in many directions and constantly shifting its focus and program. This approach is clearly distinct from those practitioners and theorists who either call for or claim the existence of Cultural Studies as a newly emerged discipline with a distinct scholarly and professional agenda. Among them is Fred Inglis, who defines Cultural Studies "as the study of human values, and describes form and method as these have taken shape from the history of the subject."[25] In other words, Inglis wants to present a historical argument in which the emergence of Cultural Studies is closely linked to a more general paradigm shift in the human sciences. Drawing on Saussure's work, he then argues that the foregrounding of culture corresponds to the foregrounding of language in the field of linguistics. By asking for an "organizing structure of concepts"[26], Inglis also announces that he is attempting to define a discipline rather than an interdisciplinary project. This goal is further illustrated by the way he places the concept of value at the center of his discipline. Claiming a multiple genealogy for Cultural Studies, Inglis goes on to stress a dialectic of negation as the crucial methodology. To what extent his use of Max Horkheimer and Theodor W. Adorno is true to their understanding of dialectics remains outside of my line of inquiry. What I want to emphasize is the claim that Cultural Studies can and ought to be thought of as a discipline.

In this respect, but in this respect only, Inglis concurs with John Frow, for whom Cultural Studies is a project that calls for specific disciplinary boundaries, but not as a replication of traditional

disciplines. As Frow notes: "Cultural studies is the symptom of a problem in so far as, in defining itself by means of a renunciation of the aesthetic concerns of literary or cinematic or art-historical studies, and in adopting some of the rhetoric and some of the founding assumptions, if not the instruments, of the social sciences, it tends to repeat, and so to be caught within, that opposition of fact to value which has always haunted the latter."[27] Frow is clearly conscious then that a discussion of the disciplinarity of Cultural Studies in terms of its internal logic or its professional goals would not address the underlying structural question of the place of Cultural Studies in the general production of knowledge within advanced capitalism. Neither would it, as Frow stresses, address questions of value insofar as it moves culture to the side of the objects to be studied. This separation – we find the identical observation in Readings' critique – tells us something about the problem of knowledge, on the one hand, and the knowledge about social groups, on the other. As an epistemological quest it contains the desire to overcome the specialization of traditional disciplines, to possibly create organic totality; as a social question it is involved in the construction of the *Other* through a process of mirroring in which both sides rely on a system of references that alienates the other.

For Frow the concern with value, therefore, is located both on the social and the epistemological level; it refuses, in other words, an abstraction of the concept of value from an analysis of the problems of social structure (classes). Drawing on the work of Bourdieu, Frow proposes to look at culture in terms of its social frame. By choosing this frame he tends to focus on the classic distinction between high and low culture, culture of the elite and mass culture. To put it differently, for Frow Cultural Studies is concerned with cultural stratification or the use of cultural capital. He critically investigates the discourse about popular culture without much reference to other fields of inquiry, such as gender studies, feminism, colonial studies, etc. By restricting his interrogation to a critical reconsideration of popular culture, Frow

can without much difficulty sustain an understanding of Cultural Studies as a more or less cohesive discipline. Put differently, his idea of the cultural map does not confront the problem of interlinking extensively.[28] It is also noteworthy that Frow, precisely because of the focus of his analysis, considers Cultural Studies as an unproblematic concept – possibly in need of more rigorous definition, but fundamentally unproblematic.

If one takes the framing of established disciplines such as musicology or literary studies as the point of departure (as Stanley Fish does), then the notion of an already existing general discourse on popular culture disappears. The production of a cultural map emerges as a distinct epistemological problem for which there are no firmly established and generally accepted rules or procedures. As I suggested before, we are faced with two different models. Either, following Fish's argument, one can assume that the construction of a cultural map is in principle possible although rather difficult as a practical task, or one can proceed from the assumption that Cultural Studies is by definition an interdisciplinary project. In the latter case, one can again distinguish between those who think of this task as forms of negotiations between existing disciplines and their methodologies and those who search for or claim to have an overarching field theory enabling the building of Cultural Studies as a hegemonic superdiscipline.

It is my sense of the present situation that those critics who argue for a single discipline of Cultural Studies frequently think of mass or popular culture as the content of this discipline. Critics, on the other hand, who believe in the need for a wider range of cultural analysis tend to emphasize multiple disciplines and, consequently, interdisciplinarity or, in rare instances, the possibility of a general theory. Both approaches are fraught with unresolved problems that have been deferred by practitioners of Cultural Studies as less pressing than the need for directly addressing those cultural questions that traditional disciplines either studiously avoided or were unable to perceive.

The creation of multiple overlapping cultural maps has sometimes resulted in a blurred vision caused by incompatible points of reference and theoretical inconsistency. Hence we are confronted with the danger that a broad vision of cultural analysis that was established to ascertain critical insights has not necessarily produced reliable and sharply focused knowledge. The tentative and suggestive nature of these critical insights stands potentially in contrast to demands for disciplinary rigor backed up by methodical procedures and theoretical models. Thus, after discussing the potential of Cultural Studies in the classroom, Henry A. Giroux concludes: "At stake here is the attempt to produce new theoretical models and methodologies for addressing the production, structure and exchange of knowledge."[29] But how can this be accomplished? On what ground do we create these models and methodologies? While Giroux fully understands the politics of Cultural Studies in the present debate about the future of higher education and argues persuasively for the pedagogical use of Cultural Studies in the classroom (high school and college), he is silent about the fundamental epistemological issues he brought up. When discussing the educational value of Cultural Studies for a democratic society, he relies on an implicit understanding of the ground of his project. By stressing the pedagogical advantages of Cultural Studies for raising political consciousness, he contrasts his project with the conservative pedagogy of traditional disciplines without reflecting on the progressive potential that these disciplines offer when they are subjected to radical revision. However, Giroux' suggestion that the concept of "theory" should not be fetishized or essentialized is helpful insofar as it locates the work of theorizing, i.e., the labor of producing the tools for the cultural map, within the cultural experience of those who partake in the project of cultural analysis rather than assuming a basic separation between the observing subject, the theoretical model and the cultural material. This redefinition of theory, with an emphasis on "small theory," developed out of specific social and cultural contexts, holds at least the promise of advancement

beyond the present stalemate. It offers a perspective for the inevitable search for a revised conception of Cultural Studies.

Given the fact that a general field theory is presently not in sight, the more immediate task would be to work out specific interdisciplinary projects in theoretical and methodological terms. There is obviously no lack of such projects; in fact, research in German and English studies has, to a large extent, shifted from literary to cultural analysis. To ban this new orientation in the name of traditional disciplinary rules, as Stanley Fish suggests, seems to be a counterproductive strategy since it merely imposes restriction. A call for theoretical reflection and methodological awareness, however, is an entirely different issue, one that deserves our full attention. It may be prudent to have another look at Cultural Studies, to perceive it not as a discipline that is already fully established but rather as a field that is still in search of an epistemology.

What does all this mean for German Studies? Epistemologically and strategically, the present configuration means two things: first, it contains a warning for the practitioners of Cultural Studies that the mainstreaming of this approach (to use a loose term) does not dispense them from the task of continuously reflecting on the methodological questions raised in the field. As the ongoing discussion in the United States clearly demonstrates, there is neither a general field theory nor a single established methodology available that can simply be applied to German culture. If the "Americanization" of German Studies is understood primarily as the application of Cultural Studies to German texts, it will not receive the attention outside the German Department that some of us may have hoped for since it could not offer fundamentally new and striking insights. Only if our work with and appropriation of German texts also involves considerations of a particular methodology, only if, in other words, our work considers the dialectic between methodology and material and, therefore, also strongly emphasizes theoretical issues, is there a chance to produce knowledge which would feed back into the general

discourse of Cultural Studies. Second, it offers encouragement to participate in the larger American debate from the perspective of our own discipline, i.e., its particular material as well as its own disciplinary history, which includes the task of mediation on a number of levels. I am referring in particular to philosophical traditions from Kant to Blumenberg and Luhmann that should be part of an intervention coming out of German Studies.

Looking at the most recent volume on Cultural Studies in German, entitled *A User's Guide to German Cultural Studies*, edited by Scott Denham, Irine Kacandes, and Jonathan Petropoulos,[30] I would argue that German Studies has made considerable advances in terms of defining its project. The volume not only contains numerous attempts to construct the new cultural map that Stanley Fish still invoked as an impossible task, it simultaneously provides a more advanced discussion of Cultural Studies than was possible a decade ago. The editors are fully aware of the ongoing theoretical controversies, which they negotiate with prudence and a strong commitment to the political aspect of their own intervention. After reviewing the present Cultural Studies debate Kacandes addresses the more specific issue of German Studies and comments on the methodological issue that I have raised in my talk. For her, the distinguishing mark of the new approach to Cultural Studies is interdisciplinarity as opposed to multidisciplinarity in the 1980s.[31] Yet her discussion of this concept, which is based on the work of Stuart Hall, Cary Nelson, and Graeme Turner, among others, remains tentative and, I believe, incomplete since it seems to take the defense of disciplinarity not very seriously. Those who adhere to disciplinary boundaries are exclusively seen as a conservative rearguard. As long as the conception of Germanistik stays connected to the notion of the literary canon and the idea of a normative literary culture (*Bildung*), a more radical concept of rigorous disciplinarity remains occluded, one can speak about the urgent need for Cultural Studies in the field of German Studies – and Irine Kacandes does it eloquently – but such an agenda does not in itself solve the

question of theory and methodology. There are three possible responses: We can claim victory and declare that the problem has been resolved, but we would not speak the truth; we can defer the question and hope that the future will bring the solution; or we can face the present aporias in order to confront the incompleteness of the project.

Notes

1 See the special issue of *German Quarterly* 62, 2 (1989), "Germanistik as German Studies," ed. Paul Michael Lützeler and Jeffrey Peck; also Frank Trommler, "The Future of German Studies or How to Define Interdisciplinarity," *German Studies Review* 15, 2 (1992), pp. 210-17.

2 See *The Cultural Studies Reader*, ed. Simon During (London, 1993); *Relocating Cultural Studies. Developments in Theory and Research*, ed. Valda Blundell, John Shepherd, and Jan Taylor (London, 1993); John Storey, *Cultural Studies and the Study of Popular Culture: Theories and Methods* (Athens, 1996).

3 For a model coming out of the British discussion, see *German Cultural Studies. An Introduction*, ed. Rob Burns (Oxford, 1995). A broad spectrum of opinions on the present situation of Germanics in the United States can be found in *The Future of Germanistik in the USA: Changing our Prospects*, ed. John McCarthy and Katrin Schneider (Nashville, 1996).

4 For a helpful introductory discussion of the genealogy of Cultural Studies and its potential global function, see David Bathrick, "Cultural Studies," in *Introduction to Scholarship in Modern Languages and Literatures*, ed. Joseph Gibaldi (New York, 1992), pp. 320-40.

5 See Gerald Graff, *Proposing Literature. An Institutional History* (Chicago, 1987), pp. 55-80); also Frank Trommler's introduction to *Germanistik in den USA. Neue Entwicklungen und Methoden* (Opladen, 1989), pp. 7-45.

6 See Bill Readings, *The University in Ruins* (Cambridge/Mass., 1996), especially pp. 1-43.

7 Readings, p. 12.

8 Readings, p. 17.

9 Readings, p. 98.

10 Readings, p. 99.

11 By the way, I would argue that the discovery of popular literature in Germany during the 1970s had a similar function. This project served as an important critique of the focus on canonical literature by traditional literary studies.

12 See John Guillory, *Cultural Capital. The Problem of Literary Canon Formation* (Chicago, 1993), pp. 3-83.

13 See Alan Wolfe, "The Culture of Cultural Studies," *Partisan Review* 63, 3 (1996), pp. 485-92.

14 For a discussion of funding in Higher Education, see A Struggle to Survive: Funding Higher Education in the Next Century, ed. David S. Honeyman, James L. Wattenberger, and Kathleen C. Westbrook (Thousand Oaks, Calif., 1996); Sheila Slaughter and Larry Lesie, *Academy Capitalism. Policies, Politics, and the Entrepreneurial University* (Baltimore, 1997).

15 Alan Wolfe, "The Culture of Cultural Studies," p. 486.

16 Wolfe, p. 486.

17 Wolfe, p. 490.

18 Wolfe, p. 492.

19 *Cultural Studies*, ed. Lawrence Grossberg, Cary Nelson, and Paula Treichler (New York, 1992), p. 1-2.

20 Stanley Fish, *Professional Correctness. Literary Studies and Political Change* (Oxford, 1995), p. 73.

21 Fish, p. 76-7.

22 Patrick Brantlinger, *Crusoe's Footprints. Cultural Studies in Britain and America* (London, 1990), p. 16.

23 Fish, p. 79.

24 Fish, p. 81.

25 Fred Inglis, *Cultural Studies* (Oxford, 1993), p. ix.

26 Inglis, p. 109.

27 John Frow, *Cultural Studies and Cultural Values* (Oxford, 1995), p. 1.

28 The same applies to *Cultural Studies and the Study of Popular Culture*, by John Storey (1996), which focuses on forms of popular culture such as film, television, and popular literature. Again, the cohesion of the field is assumed. What the author treats as a problem is the method of studying phenomena of popular culture.

29 *Counternarratives. Cultural Studies and Critical Pedagogies in Postmodern Spaces*, ed. Henry Giroux et alii (New York, 1996), p. 45.

30 *A User's Guide to German Cultural Studies*, ed. Scott Denham, Irine Kacandes, and Jonathan Petropoulos (Ann Arbor, 1997).

31 Irine Kacandes "German Cultural Studies: What is at Stake?," *A User's Guide*, pp. 3-28, here p. 15.

Helmut Peitsch

British Cultural Studies – European Studies – German Studies: A Non-Relationship?

During the 1990s British Cultural Studies acquired the brand-name status of an export commodity. Since the international conference in Urbana, Illinois, in 1990, there has been an unending series of conferences bearing the title "Cultural Studies": a conference in 1995 in Berlin,[1] one in 1996 in Helsinki, and this year the conference venue was Budapest. However, as some of the papers at the Urbana conference established, the internationalization of a British invention has not taken place without reservations on both sides of the Atlantic. The volume of conference proceedings, "Cultural Studies", reveals a dilemma. On the one hand, it includes British representatives of Cultural Studies who see in the dissemination of Cultural Studies beyond Great Britain the risk that the original project might become diluted, something which Stuart Hall regards as a "moment of profound danger".[2] On the other hand, non-British critics claim to be overcoming an inbuilt English nationalism within the Cultural Studies tradition. While other non-Britons also emphasize what is to some extent the reflection of Hall's concern, namely that the overseas institutionalization of the discipline is likely to dissolve the political engagement which has hitherto characterized British Cultural Studies, the African-American Cornel West worries that institutionalized Cultural Studies could threaten indigenous traditions of radical criticism.[3]

Absent, however, from the debate on 'exportability' was the fact that it was confined only to the English-speaking world – as some individual voices in Urbana pointed out: Europe is missing.[4] However, along with Britain's implicit exclusion from Europe, this objection corresponded to the fact that only former British colonies were present when Cultural Studies was discussed in 1990. In a

comprehensive review, Fredric Jameson counted up the participants: US-Americans, Canadians, Australians, New Zealanders, Chinese Hongkanese, Indians.[5] The two reception problems already addressed within this English-speaking world – the export of political engagement or nationalism – might provide a reason as why in the EU country of the Federal Republic of Germany there can be no discussion of reception, beyond that conducted by specialists in English studies. Two contemporary examples: in Rowohlt's recent encyclopedia volume, "Literatur und Kulturwissenschaften", a lecture series organized by Hartmut Böhme and Klaus R. Scherpe at Humboldt University, there is not a single mention of either Cultural Studies or of the three founding fathers, Raymond Williams, Richard Hoggart and E. P. Thompson, let alone of the foremost contemporary representative in the field, the aforementioned Stuart Hall. For the very reason that both Berlin critics so vehemently insist upon the internationalization of traditional philologies as a means of transforming them into interdisciplinary "Kulturwissenschaften", this silence on the subject of Cultural Studies can only be conspicuous: "The internationalization of the humanities has dissolved its ties to the constrictive German tradition – or it will do so. This also means however that the homogeneity of the humanities will cease to exist."[6] The same eloquent silence is articulated by a programmatic review in the *Frankfurter Rundschau*: under discussion was a special issue of *New German Critique* dealing with "Cultural History/Cultural Studies". Here, literary critics, historians and philosophers from the United States expressed their ideas about the future development of German Studies in the US, with the contributions making much reference to British Cultural Studies. The *Frankfurter Rundschau* review turned this into an exclusively US-American model of a "new understanding of culture: namely, culture *as* politics": "its interest is aimed at [...] collective identities, the everyday micro-structures of power relations, as well as the flexible, but also fragile discursive forms of 'domination' and 'emancipation'."[7] The reviewer could have read almost the

same thing in the introduction to Chris Weedon and Glen Jordan's book, *Cultural Politics*, a book which appeared two years ago, not in the United States but under Blackwell's imprint in Oxford, England.[8] By way of example, despite three requests, the publisher did not manage to send a reviewer's copy to the "Referatedienst zur Literaturwissenschaft" in Berlin. Even though the size of the English book market might explain such self-sufficiency, it only serves to further exclude British Cultural Studies from the academic market in the Federal Republic: Thompson's classic was only translated into German some twenty years after its original publication; Hoggart's has never been translated; most of Williams's books, amongst which, *The Country and the City* – generally considered to be his best work –[9] are unavailable in German. Nonetheless, two volumes of essays by Hall appeared in the Federal Republic, but put out by a small press external to the centers of scholarly publishing, the Argument Press of the West Berlin Journal for Philosophy and Social Sciences – something which in turn points to the export problems that are at stake: it is a very English brand of Marxism – thus might run the prejudice which a reception interest would have to counter. To return once again to the examples of the Humboldt University lecture series and the *Frankfurter Rundschau* review: "There is always somewhere in the world where innovation is taking place",[10] wrote the editors. Yet in the Federal Republic this seems to be something which is expected rather of the United States than Britain, and the injunction that the latest "theoretical shifts", "re-evaluations or new foundations" should be "adopted sooner rather than later",[11] is hardly designed to cultivate an interest in something as seemingly old-fashioned as Marxist Cultural Studies, which in any case has a tradition of its own. In the index of the Berlin positions on Kulturwissenschaft a mention of Nietzsche exceeds that of Marx by thirteen times; in other words, 'internationalized' is here applied to the reimportation of Nietzsche via his French and US reception, or the replacement of one German with another.

However, British Cultural Studies does not just have an inter-cultural communication problem, it is also beset by problems within Britain. The three concepts – Cultural Studies, European Studies and German Studies – denote disciplines, departments, schools or courses of studies at tertiary institutions around the country. It was of lasting consequence that they were set up at different times during the course of the last thirty years. That is to say, the series is inverted in terms of the historical perspective: first came German Studies (or French, Italian, Spanish, etc.), then European Studies and only then Cultural Studies.

Relative to other European countries, the modest expansion of the tertiary sector in the British education system took place during the 60s. It was due to the founding of the polytechnics (from 1966 onward) that the traditional discipline German-"Germanistik" was superceded by the development of "Germany-studies", as the DAAD defined it. This process met with "subtle resistance"[12] from the universities, which are still hierarchically ordered and whose age corresponds to their rank.

It may sound ironic, but European Studies were the product of the Thatcherite restructuring of tertiary institutions during the 80s. A drastic politics of austerity served the cause of, as Hall has put it,[13] an authoritarian liberalism as a means to two ends: firstly, a centralization of university politics, and secondly, the introduction of market forces within and between the universities themselves. Closing language departments for reasons of cost resulted in the opening of schools of European Studies, in which several languages were combined with Politics departments.

Cultural Studies has only been an undergraduate course of study since the end of the 80s, when an attempt was made to compensate for the axing of posts with a 'new blood' program. On the one hand, new positions were created for the up-and-coming generation – hitherto excluded –, and on the other hand, they were created in response to new demands being made by students. At the same time, however, the Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies in Birmingham was disbanded which – under the directorship of

Hoggart, Hall and finally Richard Johnson[14] had been confined to research and postgraduate teaching only. If one does not take these institutional realities into consideration then one cannot hope to grasp the various ways in which the question of culture is dealt with in Cultural Studies, European Studies and German Studies, nor will it be possible to locate the genesis of the inter-cultural communication problems.

The unequal weight attached to the three subjects is apparent not only from student numbers and the number of teaching and research positions. This is not a point I will elaborate upon, although it is decisive when it comes to funding. The unequal weight attached to the three disciplines is also apparent from the research journals and the textbooks which are vital to a tertiary system that is far more course work-based than it is in the Federal Republic of Germany. What I would like to do in this paper, is to look at the three subjects by focusing on journals and textbooks in order to bring out how different concepts of culture have been institutionalized.

The journals that Hall's overview – presented at the Urbana conference – includes in the Cultural Studies tradition make two things clear: firstly, until recently Cultural Studies's position in the academy could be described as marginal, secondly, (and these two things are related), Cultural Studies was conducted as a conglomeration of disciplines. Ephemerality, irregular appearances or relative novelty underline this institutional instability: only after the dissolution of the Birmingham CCCS in the Department of Sociology did the journal *Cultural Studies* make its appearance in 1991 – and this in a very provisional form (compared with the US American counterpart of the same name). However, since as early as 1982 *Theory, Culture and Society* has shown the same connection to university sociology, while the similarly constructed title of *Media, Culture and Society* (which first appeared in 1979) underscores the presence of Cultural Studies in academic Media Studies. Yet, for the Cultural Studies journals that are not affiliated with universities, the institutionalized attention in the three

academic journals stands on the one hand for popular culture, increasingly understood as the everyday or consumption, on the other hand, for the media. In 1987, *New Formations* appeared. It is published by a press of the former CPGB, Lawrence and Wishart, where, since 1995, Hall has been the co-editor of *Soundings: A Journal of Politics and Culture*, a journal that wants to limit itself even less to the universities. In view of the fact that most of the contributors teach at universities it would however seem an exaggeration to say that in Cultural Studies in general there is a movement afoot which is based on the "little magazines".[15] Nonetheless, the fact that such links are being forged with social forces beyond the confines of the academic is something which should not be underestimated. They have after all played an important role in the history of Cultural Studies: without CCCS's funding by Penguin – from the sale proceeds from Hoggart's bestseller – and the support of the British film industry's subsidiary British Film Institute – together with the journal *Screen* – Cultural Studies in the 60s and 70s would never have been possible, just as little as it would have been possible during the 80s without the Open University of the BBC.[16] If these external relationships bolstered the treatment of popular culture within the framework of sociology and media studies, attention was focused in a different direction as a result of another connection within the university. In the case of Williams, Cultural Studies developed within the field of 'English'. However, what he later called Cultural Materialism did not see itself as being under an obligation to the great tradition of the canon, so much as to the working class outside of the university. Nevertheless, the fate of the journals which located Cultural Studies within the sphere of 'English' demonstrates the problem with this split. Not long after they first characterized themselves as *Journal of Cultural Materialism* in the subtitle, the *News from Nowhere* went under in 1991. They had started as the *Oxford Literary Opposition* under a name which played on the British socialist tradition. Characteristically, the penultimate volume of the self-published journal was devoted to the *Futures*

for Critical and Cultural Theory. Another "English"-based journal, *Literature Teaching Politics*, edited in Brighton, was discontinued in 1987 and became – without anticipating this – the predecessor of *Textual Practice* founded in the same year. This journal has been published by the Cardiff Centre for Critical and Cultural Theory, the name of which corresponds perfectly to the future foreseen in the *News from Nowhere.* In her editorial, the editor of the *News from Nowhere* had already alluded to the fact that the "pressures of both professionalism and academic enterprise culture"[17] endangered the project, which she defined by appealing to Ernst Bloch, namely to unite the warm and the cold strands of socialism in the field of English: "High theory versus the 'English tradition' is an increasingly sterile dichotomy".[18] The attempt to counteract this "split" was opposed by the privileged state funding of centers of excellence on the one hand, and by the market forces of multinational "publishing combines"[19] on the other. For the Cardiff Center, whose journal is distributed to the English-speaking world by Routledge, Catherine Belsey described the break with the "native tradition" of Cultural Studies in favour of the appropriated "French tradition" in the sphere of Literary Criticism.[20] The result of this reception – a "crash course" which brought together Marxism, Psychoanalysis and Linguistics – was characterized as "textual analysis", something which has in turn had an effect on other disciplines: history, art history, sociology, psychology and philosophy.[21] If the orientation towards the text has made the demarcation from 'English' less clear than that from Cultural Studies, up until today there exists in the strict predilection for theory an abiding provocation for traditionalist English departments; the orientation towards the theories of above all Derrida and Foucault also brings with it the claim to do more than just 'English': "Theory has become interdisciplinary".[22] By 'Critical Theory' what is meant is basically French Post-structuralism – although to German ears the name 'Critical Theory' might seem a misnomer. Combining 'Critical and Cultural Theory' marks the break with traditional Cultural Studies in yet another

fashion: as a farewell to the principle of the 'contemporary'. In the teaching practice of an English Department, Critical and Cultural Theory presents itself as Cultural History, as Belsey set forth in a manifesto article of *Textual Practice*. From this it emerges in all clarity that culture is equated with textuality and history with the indeterminacy of the meaning of texts.[23] In this manner, the treatment of the traditional canon of English literature can be legitimated. From the political project of British Cultural Studies after the compromise with English[24] in matters of textualism and the canon in actual fact only the theoretical rhetoric of anti-humanism remains – a rhetoric, which indefatigably opposes the subject as the origin of truth and history – mostly characterized as liberal humanism – as conservative, male and white ideology.

The on-going boom of Cultural Studies in the British book market shows the same tendencies as the journals: on the one hand, differentiation according to areas which link up with disciplines, on the other hand, a certain homogeneity through the theoretical: "Theory, bugbear of the right as far back as any of us can remember, [...] turns out to sell like hot cakes."[25] The explanation for the student demand for courses and thus textbooks oscillates between the desire on the part of the victims of the Thatcher years 'to make sense'[26] out of what is happening to them and their future, in other words an oppositional motive, and the desire to adapt in the cleverest possible way to a fundamentally altered postmodern everyday culture. For this reason, one of the Cultural Studies representatives now teaching in Birmingham emphasizes the employment possibilities – in leisure, management and consultancies – which Cultural Studies thereby opens up, that there no longer exists an "adversary relationship with organizations and institutions in positions of power."[27] Without a doubt however there also exists a correlation between the student demand for Cultural Studies and the students' socialization, firstly, through the media, secondly, in the revised school curricula, which in the languages, for example, decreased or abolished the role of literature and placed the accent on the present – so too in history.

As early as 1990, eight of the large US American-British publishing houses brought out special prospectuses for Cultural Studies.[28] These not only advertized their own textbooks, but also made available material for further reading. The largest publishing houses have produced dictionaries of terminology – without exception placing the accent on literary theory; they have also published series dealing with those theorists who, as the embodiment of Critical Theory, can then in turn be institutionalized on the reading lists. Thus with Harvester Wheatsheaf, under the series title *Modern Cultural Theorists*, one finds volumes on Lacan and Barthes as "Key Contemporary Thinkers". Polity sells Baudrillard, Foucault and Barthes; forthcoming are, de Certeau, Irigaray, Ricoeur, Lacan, Derrida, Cixous, Lyotard; Routledge assigned Christopher Norris the series, *Critics of the 20th Century:* as such figure Lacan, Deleuze, Guattari, Barthes, Kristeva, Ricoeur, Derrida; Blackwell has specialized in "critical readers" with several articles given over to critics, volumes such as "Blackwell Readers" have since appeared devoted to Foucault, Althusser, Derrida and Deleuze. This listing makes clear that at present the reception possibilities (including those for German-speaking Critical Theory) are starting to improve, albeit after a certain lag. Nonetheless, the theoretical balance of trade with other European countries remains extremely uneven, as the case of European Studies reveals. It is to this which I would now like to turn, again limiting the focus to journals and textbooks.

In Britain, the field of European Studies has two journals. Their disparate orientations already make clear the problematic integration of modern languages and politics within the departments. Since 1992, the *Journal of Area Studies* published in Loughborough has been self-published as the New Series, after having undergone a crisis; the considerably older *Journal of European Studies* is published in Brighton, since as early as 1971. While Loughborough's Area Studies journal was from the outset oriented towards the social sciences, with its subtitle, "Literature

and Ideas from the Renaissance to the Present", the Sussex journal betrays its origins in that broadening of the national philologies to regional studies, a process which occurred during the late 60s. This ensued as a deepening of the relationship to history and philosophy as well as an opening up to the present. As addressees during the 70s, the journal had only the Modern Languages departments and those few – up until today three – Comparative Literature departments (Norwich, Warwick, Oxford). Associated with the weakness or absence of a comparative point of departure is the fact that even subsequent to the institutionalization of European Studies at the level of journal publications the separation of political science and literary studies has not been abolished; this has happened just as little in the realm of textbooks where there exist only political science-oriented comprehensive comparative portrayals of the individual countries. In European Studies's treatment of culture there arises in other words not only the problem of linking politics and literature, but also the problem of the relationship between individual languages. It is only in terms of a greater openness towards non-canonical texts that the *Journal of European Studies* differs from the almost one-hundred-year old *Modern Language Review*, whose prestige towers above the journals specializing in respective national literatures – not least of all because it is directed at a larger segment of the academic community which is also covered by an organization, the University Conference of Modern Languages. Two years ago, this organization discussed the problem of Cultural Studies, with a characteristically negative result.[29] The conference presentation dispensed with the British tradition of Cultural Studies with a brief reference to the end of Marxism in 1989-90 and confirmed the indispensability of having independent national philologies – against the models of media studies, comparative literature and anthropology. The decisive argument concerned the defense of scholarly reputation – on the one hand against English, on the other, against the philologists of the target languages. Only if literature was firstly treated as autonomous and secondly taught

and researched as a complete heritage, could British Romanists, Germanists, Slavists, etc. on the one hand expect parity with their colleagues in English and on the other be able to assert their international standing. The peculiar contradiction of a concept of literature which on the one hand divorces literature from history and society, and on the other asserts that it can discover the true nature of a foreign nation in the 'untranslatability' of poetry adequately accounts for the resistance to potential enlightenment through Cultural Studies. In renouncing any reference to the present, the decision of the Conference stands in stark contrast to reality, as I will show later in this paper using the example of German Studies. However, this is also true as far as resistance to any real Europeanization of European Studies is concerned since Europeanization is supported by the institutional reality of the once created field and the newly introduced central evaluation of departments according to, among others, the criterion of coherence. Yet, it is precisely because the conservative position is hostile to reality that it should be taken very seriously, since, being the bearer of nationalistic ideology, it harbors real power. One consequence of the on-going power of the national literatures within European Studies can be seen in the post-graduate programs on offer in European Literary Studies. Their growing number is firstly a result of the fact that the British Academy no longer gives doctoral fellowships to applicants who have not completed a taught MA course; secondly, within in the context of the Research Assessment Exercises, departments are evaluated according to the number of their post-graduate students and the timely completion of their PhDs – something which has direct consequences for funding. In terms of content, the European Literature MA courses seem to transcend the national literature confines of the disciplines. Yet, closer scrutiny of the MA courses offered under slightly different titles by 13 universities reveals that there is not a single master's course in European Literature which could be considered to be truly integrated. As a rule one finds that there is a compulsory theory module and several options which can be selected from the

different national literatures – varying according to the languages represented in the particular department. In Cambridge for example, students can choose between French 'textuality' in the Middle Ages, the German concept of Enlightenment from Leibniz to Habermas, 'gender' in Spanish literature and 'identity' in Italian literature; in Hull, love and marriage in French literature compete with 19th-century Italian poetry, the German novella, and society and politics in Mexico; the brochure put out by Manchester promises a free selection from "most areas of literature and other cultural topics" in French, German, Italian, Portuguese, Russian, Spanish, Ancient Greek and Latin. The colourfulness of such markets of options is still sometimes perpetuated in the compulsory theory modules. In Swansea, for example, it occurs under the Thatcherite title *Proliferating Theories*; within the context of a weekend seminar there is a crash course which covers – in alphabetical order – Deconstruction, Feminism, Hermeneutics, Marxism, New Historicism, Phenomenology, Post-structuralism, Reception Aesthetics and Structuralism – each 45 minutes in length and, because they are offered in parallel sections, with the emphasis placed on "choice" of, for example, either Feminism or Marxism. Granted this is not the rule; by the same token, however, it is also less pluralistic. Theory is generally reduced to "modern critical theory", which is post-structuralism and some US extension, for instance in Oxford, Deconstruction, "lesbian and gay theory (Butler)", as well as "'race' and Deconstruction (Gates)".

Finally, I would like to address the journals and textbooks of German Studies in Britain. *Oxford German Studies* is the title of a year book which first appeared in 1966. From the beginning, its editors insisted upon a middle-of-the-road brand of literary history, with an openness to "related subjects such as philosophy, art, and social history"; the journal made a further point of distancing itself from merely "antiquarian interest".[30] Nonetheless, the ensuing 20 volumes have shown a striking continuity in terms of the topics treated therein: dealt with in No.1 are the Hildebrandlied, J. G. Schnabel, Kleist, Büchner, Kafka, Thomas Mann, the 'entire

heritage' from the Middle Ages via the 18th century, the 'Age of Goethe', the 19th century up to classical modernism, while No. 20/21 contain articles on the Nibelungenlied, Goethe, Schiller, Kleist, Stifter, Ebner-Eschenbach and Schnitzler; the 1992 and 1966 volumes covering Johnson and Wolf incorporate the still-missing post-war and contemporary literature. The same picture of a canonical German literary history you will find looking into *German Life and Letters*, the Germanistik journal published by Blackwell that has financial-organizational ties to the University Conference of Teachers in German (UCTG). Until recently, anyone teaching German or European Studies at a Polytechnic was precluded from becoming a member of this professional organization whose center is the London Institute for Germanic, rather than German Studies.[31] In cooperation with "German Life and Letters", the Institute publishes the annual overview of research conducted by British Germanists.

Comparing the first 50 volumes of *German Life and Letters* and the latest overview of research topics makes the aforementioned contrast all the more striking. Grouping authors according to the frequency with which they have been treated, one finds that the following receive the greatest attention: allocated approximately the same large number of articles are Goethe, Schiller, Kleist, Nietzsche, Rilke, Thomas Mann and Brecht. In the second group one finds authors representing the 18th century, Lessing and Herder, from the Goethe period, Hölderlin, from the 19th century, Grillparzer, Heine and Fontane, as well as modern classics like George, Hofmannsthal, Hauptmann, Kafka and Broch. In terms of frequency, it is only in third place that, along with Dürrenmatt and Frisch, Böll and Grass, as well as Christa Wolf, one also finds post-war authors. However, the statistics also reveal that they are not treated any more frequently than contemporary authors of a present that has since receded into the past: Hans Grimm and Jünger in the 30s, Wiechert, Carossa and Bergengruen in the 40s and 50s.

Quite different is the image of current research: if publications for the year 1995 are broken down into language, literature and 'history/society/institutions', in a ratio of 1:3:1.5, post-war literature is accorded almost 35% of the literary studies publications (in comparison with 20% Classical Modernism and Exile Literature, and 15% 18th century and Goethe period). Even more marked is the trend towards contemporary literature exhibited by the dissertations completed in 1995: here the ratio of language to literature to 'history/society/institutions' is 1:9:2; of the literary studies PhDs, 55% deal with literature since 1945, 5% with the Goethe period, 10% with the 19th century; almost 50% of the dissertations dealing with 'Landeskunde' focus on the media. That the research in German Studies is moving away from the canon of the 'entire heritage' institutionalized in the journals, is something which has also been underscored by the founding of four Research Centres during the 1980s: Birmingham and Aston cover the German present from a political, economic and cultural point of view. Birmingham emphasizes the media, Aston the political culture;[32] in Reading "East German Studies" and in Sussex "German-Jewish Studies" have been established.

One of the editors of *Oxford German Studies* was also the editor of the first textbook for German Studies, the *Companion to German Studies* appearing in 1972 with the simple title *Germany*. Comparing this textbook with its predecessor, a book which came out in 1932, Malcolm Pasley articulated the difference as being predominantly a quantitative one, in so far as he made reference to an addition – "present-day institutions" – and an abbreviation: there would be less treatment of literature that was limited to the "essential pattern of literary development" "by means of continuous accounts which concentrate on the major authors".[33] In other words, the transformation from Germanistik into Germany Studies which took place in the 60s has, in this textbook, had the effect that the canon has been grasped more rigidly than ever. What pertained to history and philosophy as fields related to literature was something that Pasley saw as being simply the perpetuation of

a tradition. That this was not seen as being problematic follows from his qualitative differentiation from the earlier work: "a far greater hesitation in accepting Germany's interpretation of herself".[34] What he alluded to here was that the sympathies of some British Germanists, especially those publishing in *German Life and Letters*, lay with Nazi Germany.[35] This resulted in the journal being discontinued for a time and the re-numeration of the volumes after the Second World War. It is worth noting that Pasley does not comment on why it is that students had to get by without a textbook for 40 years. An explanation for the lack of textbooks is to be found in the strict orientation towards a canon: a relatively small number of authors and works were subjected to the practice of 'close reading' – only partially comparable to the West German 'immanente' or 'Werkinterpretation' – something which did not strictly preclude either the biography of the author or the moral sensibility of the critic questioning the present.[36] However, this Germanist tendency to conform to the Leavisism of English departments categorically ruled out any interest in literary theory. German Studies' "hesitation" – a quality lauded by Pasley –[37] must, in other words, be seen as a double and therefore rather ambiguous thing: on the one hand, with regard to German self-definitions, and, on the other, to any reflection of one's own interpretation practice. The reluctance to come up with a frame of reference for the reading of German texts was taken as self-evident – a self-interpretation that even can be linked to xenophobic stereotypes against typical German or typical French theory.

The dominance of this anti-theoretical orientation does not only explain why German theoretists like Adorno and Benjamin only appear in *German Life and Letters* at the end of the 80s, after all the heroes of 'Werkimmanenz' had already been dealt with in a comprehensive and especially timely fashion. It also accounts for why the British Cultural Studies is absent in the pages of the journal. It is only as a result of the pressure applied by English Departments attempting to modernize the indigenous tradition of literary criticism through post-structuralism that has led to the

inclusion of a Critical Theory section at the UCTG. Presented here, at the very first meeting of the new section, in 1991, was a paper dealing with the "absence of literary theory from German studies in this country."[38] One of the editors of *Oxford German Studies* answered with the typical alternative "Communicating or Theorising?" Having charged Andrew Bowie with being illiberal because of his thesis that "without theory literary studies cannot legitimise themselves", T. J. Reed insisted upon the established practice of close reading: "The best defence of literature is through lively, open-minded, enjoyable practice. I wish the new Group at the Annual Conference much fun in their theorising. But I shall be somewhere else trying to communicate."[39]

In confirming this gentlemanly notion of the literary critic, for whom the strict demand to be scholarly is something foreign and suspicious, Reed's polemic favors US American horror stories (when in doubt, the critic would rather go to the pub than discuss theory) – the Oxford professor points to the opposition lurking in the closet. In the case of Bowie's untimely criticism, this meant that "humanist appeals to civilised consensus simply [would] not do".[40] The consensus which refused to engage in theoretical reflection is, in my opinion, neither humanist nor civilized. Despite coming in for such harsh criticism, Bowie had done nothing more than point out that the German theoretical traditions do not play a role in British German Studies. This is true even of those traditions which have been incorporated into English departments in Britain, having made the detours via France and the USA – by way of example, he mentions Barthes, de Man and Derrida.[41] "The work of Nietzsche, Heidegger, Walter Benjamin, Adorno, Gadamer", Bowie says, "gives a significance to literature and art [...] far above that granted by the dominant intellectual traditions in this country".[42] The example of the Bowie-Reed controversy shows that both parties refer to indigenous traditions and their treatment of literature. Bowie and Reed agree in so far as the text is privileged over the context and the canon of the past over the contemporary. Whilst Bowie seems more open to a foreign

tradition, with his brand of Critical Theory he nonetheless remains outside of the realm of British Cultural Studies.

German Cultural Studies, however, is the title of a textbook put out in 1995 by Oxford University Press. Series-volumes on *French Cultural Studies* and *Spanish Cultural Studies* followed in rapid succession. This year the Italian counterpart appeared, and for next year, a corresponding series has been announced by the competitor, Cambridge University Press. In spite of their titles, none of the four existing volumes are part of the tradition of British Cultural Studies. First they present the material in terms of a historical continuity without privileging the principle of the contemporary; then they back themselves up methodologically by drawing on the cultural theories of their target cultures. It is only in the relatively strong emphasis placed on popular culture and the media that these volumes bear any relationship to sociology and media studies, in other words to Cultural Studies which is established outside of the literary criticism tradition. By the same token, all three volumes share a doubly negative similarity to Cultural Studies: none of them take into consideration that the respective country belongs to the EU; none of them reflects at all on the specificity of its relationship to Britain.

The volume entitled *German Cultural Studies*, put together mostly by members of staff from the German department at Warwick, differs from those dealing with French, Italian and Spanish in so far as that the name Raymond Williams appears at all. This could be attributable to the fact that Germanistik done at Warwick has been strongly shaped by R. Hinton Thomas. At the time of the founding of the CCCS in Birmingham, R. Hinton Thomas and Roy Pascal were advocates of a Marxist orientation within British Germanistik – if this was not as true as it was during the forties and fifties, R. Hinton Thomas was still one of those who took a very public stance on social and cultural history. His inaugural lecture of 1965, "The Commitment of German Studies", is still worth reading, then, it was prophetic.[43]

However, compared with the way in which Williams is invoked once in Rob Burns's collection, the frequent reference to Adorno/Horkheimer, on the one hand, and Habermas on the other, is something which plays a much more decisive role. The "culture industry" thesis of the "dialectic of the Enlightenment" is attributed with having provided the "main impetus for the development of Cultural Studies in Germany"[44] – in a direction contrary to Williams's Cultural Studies. But it is not this dichotomy, but rather the refutation of the totalizing culture industry idea through Habermas's theorization of the public sphere as space of critical opposition what structures the historical argumentation of the volume. By placing the emphasis on the "unfulfilled democratic aspirations"[45] of the modernization of Germany, the portrayal integrates the limitations, interruptions and detours in this process into a story with a happy ending: "It [Germany] will now be able to develop a pragmatic sense of itself as a nation which embraces a variety of traditions and identities. As it does so, the opportunity should be there for cultural developments of increasing richness and diversity."[46] Nevertheless, what becomes apparent is that it is in precisely those passages which report on this happy outcome that the concept of identity is given scanty treatment. In short, the concept is used simply in passing.

However, comparing the German volume with *French Cultural Studies* makes this seeming deficiency almost look like a virtue. Identity is the one word used obsessively in the French volume edited by Michael Kelly and Jill Forbes. There is thus a contradiction between the French theories to which the editors refer and the use to which they are put in the practice of representing French cultural history. If the former calls into question the very notion of identity, the latter makes repeated attempts to define what French is. This unintentional essentialism is only avoided in those chapters which resist the fascination of the topic of national identity. These deal instead with localized constructions of identity by social groups and their contradictory criteria of class, gender and 'race'. However, the author's own

interest is disguised – without any comparisons which might serve as a frame of reference – as a characteristic of the topic: "The noticeable prominence of Frenchness is perhaps one of the distinguishing features of French culture, just as conversely an attachment to culture is a distinctive signal of Frenchness."[47]

Whereas the theoretical framework of the German volume is based on Critical Theory, the French one rests on post-structuralism and the Italian on a post-marxist reading of Gramsci. The Spanish volume edited by Helen Graham and Jo Labanyi, on the other hand, is to some extent the exception which proves the rule that the target culture provides the theory in the light of which the cultural history of the country is then written. In the introduction and conclusion, the editors polemicize vigorously against two versions of Spanish cultural theory, the traditionalist version of Ortega y Gasset and the post-modernist version of the post-Franco present – yet do not mention any names when dealing with the latter.[48] Of the four volumes, only *Spanish Cultural Studies* has a subtitle, "The Struggle for Modernity", one which nevertheless highlights the periodization of the whole undertaking: all four volumes structure their narrative according to the sequence of industrialization/crisis/reconstruction. Comparing the implicit value judgements, German culture fares the best because it in some ways seems to embody a middle ground between the more traditional assertion of identity (France) and the post-modern loss of identity (Spain). The polemicizing attitude some authors fall into when trying to write wittily on both France and Spain, is absent from the German volume. This is probably owing less to the fact that the image of the Other is linked to an idealized self-image of being British (although one might remember the 'happy ending' of a pragmatic sense of oneself as a nation which embraces a variety of traditions and identities) than to a definition of the role of the critical intellectual. There are ample examples which demonstrate the attraction which this feature of the culture of the old FRG exercises on British Germanists.

The appropriation of German theory in the interdisciplinary work of the Warwick authors is at the same time proof of a genuine comparative interest. Their concern with West German cultural theory as social criticism is in line with, for instance, Hamish Reid's monograph on Böll, Keith Bullivant's series of edited and authored books on the development of West German literature since the 1960s, and the conference series on contemporary German literature organized by Arthur Williams at the University of Bradford. Reid made the point they have in common clear in the introduction to his study on Böll by stating, "Heinrich Böll was an intellectual of the European rather than the British variety. [...] many of the controversies described in this book would be unlikely in a British context, simply because British writers do not usually intervene in the day to day business of politics. There are of course exceptions. Böll thought highly of Graham Greene".[49]

What Reid's legitimation of his interest in Böll highlights, is the more often implicit rather than explicit nature of the comparison between British and German culture which is necessarily at work in British German Studies on literature. Only over recent years has the concern with making the comparative dimension of literary studies explicit gained momentum, in particular since the UCTG decided to give one of the annual sessions to Anglo-German literary relations.[50] However, it is to be hoped that the working-out of the comparative dimension will become more explicit by studying German literature within a European cultural context – which includes the United Kingdom – in an interdisciplinary manner.

Notes

1 Cp. Martin Conrads, "Star-Trek. Theorie-Kongreß Differenz, Peripherie, Otherness," in *zitty* (1995) no.16, p. 216; Thomas Medicus, "Wenn sich Fenster ins 21. Jahrhundert öffnen. Kulturwissenschaftliches Zapping und Surfing," in *Der Tagesspiegel*, 14 August 1995.

2 See Stuart Hall, "Cultural Studies and Its Theoretical Legacies," in *Cultural Studies*, eds. Lawrence Grossberg et al. (New York, 1992), p. 285; cp. the collection of essays by and on Hall: *Stuart Hall: Critical Dialogues in Cultural Studies*, eds. David Morely, Kuan-Hsing Chen (London – New York, 1996).

3 Cornel West, "The Postmodern Crisis of the Black Intellectual," in *Cultural Studies*, eds. Grossberg et al., pp. 694, 698.

4 Angela McRobbie, "Post-Marxism and Cultural Studies," in *Cultural Studies*, eds. Grossberg et al., p. 721.

5 Fredric Jameson, "On Cultural Studies," in *Social Text* (1993), no. 34, p. 25.

6 *Literatur und Kulturwissenschaften. Positionen, Theorien, Modelle*, eds. Hartmut Böhme, Klaus R. Scherpe (Reinbek, 1996), p. 9.

7 Christian Geulen, "Große Erzählung oder Diskursanalyse: Zwei Sonderhefte zum Streit über die 'Paradigmen der Kulturgeschichte'," in *Frankfurter Rundschau*, 17.9.1996.

8 Glenn Jordan, Chris Weedon, *Cultural Politics. Class, Gender, Race and the Postmodern World* (Oxford, 1995), pp. 5-8.

9 See Perry Anderson, "A Culture in Contraflow II," in *New Left Review* (1990), no.182, p. 86.

10 *Literatur und Kulturwissenschaften*, eds. Böhme, Scherpe, p. 9.

11 Ibid., p. 9.

12 Geoffrey Butler, "Deutschstudium contra Deutschlandstudien: Großbritannien und das elfte Pferd," in *Deutschlandstudien international 1. Dokumentation des Wolfenbütteler DAAD-Symposiums 1988*, ed. Hans-Joachim Althof (Munich, 1990), p. 40.

13 Hall's contribution to Lawrence Grossberg and Cary Nelson's anthology *Marxism and the Interpretation of Culture* (London, 1988) was one of the key texts in the German edition of his 'Selected Writings': Der Thatcherismus und die Theoretiker, in Stuart Hall, *Ausgewählte Schriften* (Berlin, 1989), pp. 172-206.

14 See Richard Johnson, "What is Cultural Studies Anyway?," in *Social Text* (1987) no. xx, pp. 38-80; id., "Frameworks of Culture and Power: Complexity and Politics in Cultural Studies," in *Critical Studies* 3 (1991), no. 1: Cultural Studies: Crossing Boundaries, pp. 17-61.

15 See Michael Denning, "The Academic Left and the Rise of Cultural Studies," in *Radical History Review* 54 (1992), pp. 21-47.
16 See Richard E. Miller, "'A Moment of Profound Danger': British Cultural Studies away from the Centre," in *Cultural Studies* 8 (1994), no. 3, pp. 417-437.
17 Editorial: "Thirty-Something," in *News from Nowhere* (1990), no. 8, p. 7.
18 Ibid., p. 8.
19 Ibid., p. 6.
20 Catherine Belsey, "Theory in Cardiff," in *News from Nowhere* (1990), no. 8, p. 76.
21 Ibid., p. 77.
22 Ibid., p. 77.
23 Catherine Belsey, "Towards Cultural History – in Theory and Practice," in *Textual Practice* 3 (1989), p. 166.
24 Cf. the following criticism of the affiliation with EngLit: Jonathan Dollimore, Alan Sinfield, "Culture and Textuality: Debating Cultural Materialism," in *Textual Practice* 4 (1990), p. 91, 99. Sinfield criticizes above all Belsey's "abstracting of texts from conditions of reading and writing" (p. 99): "Englit. has been a textual practice" (p. 97).
25 Belsey, "Towards Cultural History," p. 75.
26 Ibid., p. 76.
27 Michael Green, "'Cultural Studies!', Said the Magistrate," in *News from Nowhere* (1990), no. 8, p. 35.
28 Ibid., p. 28.
29 See conference paper: Cultural Studies, no date and place given.
30 *Oxford German Studies* 1 (1966) title page.
31 See John L. Flood, "The Institute of Germanic Studies and Its Library," in *London German Studies* 4 (1992), pp. 269-279.
32 Nigel Reeves, "German Area Studies: Legitimität, Theorie und Pädagogik," in *Deutschlandstudien international 1*, ed. Althof, p. 54.
33 *Germany. "A Companion to German Studies,"* ed. Malcolm Pasley (London, 1972), p. vii.
34 Ibid., p. viii.
35 See Wolfgang Brenn, "British 'Germanistik' and the Problem of National Socialism," in *German Life and Letters* 42 (1989), pp. 145-167.
36 Cp. the contemporary comments by W.H.Bruford, *Literary Interpretation in Germany* (Cambridge, 1952).
37 *Germany*, ed. Pasley, p. viii.
38 Andrew Bowie, "The Presence of Literary Theory in German Studies," in *Oxford German Studies* 20/21 (1992), p. 186.

39 T.J. Reed, "Communicating or Theorising? Some Thoughts for Andrew Bowie," in *Oxford German Studies* 20/21 (1992), p. 212.
40 Bowie, "Presence," p. 186.
41 Ibid., p. 186.
42 Ibid., pp. 200-201.
43 R. Hinton Thomas, *The Commitment of German Studies. An Inaugural Lecture delivered in the University of Birmingham on 14th October 1965* (Birmingham, 1965).
44 *German Cultural Studies*, ed. Rob Burns (Oxford, 1995) p. 2.
45 Ibid, p. 59.
46 Godfrey Carr, Georgina Paul, "Unification and its Aftermath: The Challenge of History," in *German Cultural Studies*, ed. Burns, p. 347.
47 Michael Kelly, "Introduction: French Cultural Identities," in *French Cultural Studies. An Introduction*, eds. Jill Forbes, Michael Kelly (Oxford, 1995), p. 2.
48 *Spanish Cultural Studies. An Introduction. The Struggle for Modernity*, eds. Helen Graham, Jo Labanyi (Oxford, 1995), pp. 69, 127-128, 199, 287, 308.
49 J.H.Reid, *Heinrich Böll. A German for His Time* (Oxford,1988), p. 4.
50 See for instance *Common Currency? Aspects of Anglo-German Literary Relations since 1945. London Symposium*, ed. John L. Flood (Stuttgart, 1991).

Sara Lennox

Beyond the Last Instance: Postmodern Marxism and Culture

> World politics is entering a new phase. [...] It is my hypothesis that the fundamental source of conflict in this new world will not be principally ideological or primarily economic. The great divisions among humankind and the dominating source of conflict will be cultural.
>
> Samuel Huntington[1]

Writing in a recent issue of *Argument*, Frigga Haug began her commentary on a conference on the "Politics and Languages of Contemporary Marxism," held in December 1996 at the University of Massachusetts in Amherst, by remarking:

> In Ursula LeGuins Roman *Das Wort für Welt ist Wald* ist der Übersetzer ein Gott. Er hat nämlich die Fähigkeit, zwischen den Kulturen so zu vermitteln, dass Verstehen möglich wird. Diese Aufgabe als wirklich schwierig zu begreifen, war eine der Lehren auf dem diesjährigen Marxismus-Kongress in der weitläufigen Universität von Amherst. Das war nicht nur eine Frage der Sprache – inzwischen ist Englisch in der enger zusammenrückenden Welt das Gelände, auf dem sich alle irgendwie zurechtfinden, – es galt vor allem für die geschlossenen Gewohnheiten, einzelne Worte als Codes für größere Theoriegebäude zu verstehen, dass eine ernsthafte Auseinandersetzung schnell an Grenzen stieß.[2]

The "postmodern Marxism" of my paper's title, an approach very prevalent at that Amherst conference, may be a term that demands such translation. Though the designation may strike many of us within the German leftist tradition as an oxymoron, a range of "postmodern Marxisms" have nonetheless increasingly emerged within other U.S. and international contexts, terming themselves variously "post-Marxism," "radical democracy," "materialist feminism," and "postmodern materialism," among many other terms. Though each of these current tendencies deserves investigation, in this paper I want to remain close to home, focusing on a group that some commentators have termed the "Amherst Althusserians"[3] and that calls itself the Association for Economic and Social Analysis (AESA), centered in the Economics Department of the University of Massachusetts at Amherst, publishers of the journal *Rethinking Marxism* and organizers of the conference on which Frigga Haug commented.

Founded in 1988, *Rethinking Marxism* swiftly became an organ that featured luminaries of the U.S. and international left, including Fredric Jameson, Cornel West, Sheila Rowbotham, Stuart Hall, Frigga and Wolfgang Haug, Samir Amin, Sandra Harding, Etienne Balibar, Cindy Patton, Pierre Macherey, Immanuel Wallerstein, Paul Sweezy and Harry Magdorf, among many others. Its inaugural issue declared that the journal was intended to "serve as a forum for the current resurgence of interest in Marxism,"[4] an interest rekindled in the United States during the previous twenty years. Though its editors recognize the "current proliferation of Marxisms," regard Marxism as "a rich tradition of multiple and often contending theories and strategies,"[5] and open the journal's pages to all those who want to "extend, debate, and elaborate the similarities and differences, the preconditions and consequences, of the many developing strands of contemporary Marxism," they emphasize that they themselves are "especially committed to a non-determinist Marxism: a Marxism that does not claim to have found the essence of social life in one or another social activity or grouping."[6] As a consequence their journal will recognize "no

grouping."[6] As a consequence their journal will recognize "no privileged object(s) of analysis for Marxist theory": "We are," they declare, "interested equally in treatments of the production and reading of literary texts and those of the falling rate of profit."[7] It is this posture that has led me to the thesis of this paper. It is precisely "postmodern Marxism"'s abandonment of the economic realm's determining power over cultural production even in the always-notorious last instance, I want to maintain, that has been responsible for an increased attention to the cultural arena on the part of scholars with a commitment to the left, new methods of reading cultural products, and a conviction among those scholars that their interventions into the realm of culture matter. The recent turn to cultural studies in literature departments is thus not just, I want to argue, a remedy for sagging enrollments or a repudiation of canonical works now considered to be contaminated by their society's structures of domination, but and more positively, also an attempt on the part of engaged scholars to focus their intellectual work on aspects of culture that they now, in the wake of postmodern Marxism and related theoretical transformations, conceive to be politically relevant. Of course the postmodern Marxism of AESA and *Rethinking Marxism* represents only one strand among the many "post-al politics," as Teresa Ebert terms them,[8] of the past decade. Nonetheless, by examining their work as symptomatic of a shift in left academic analysis over the past decade, I hope to show how a notion of culture could emerge that made a focus on cultural studies increasingly central to fields of literary study such as our own.

What makes the Marxism of the AESA group specifically "postmodern"? In the introduction to their collection *Postmodern Materialism and the Future of Marxist Theory*, Antonio Callari and David F. Ruccio, members of the editorial board of *Rethinking Marxism*, note first that recent "really occurring social transformations" mean that Marxism confronts the "world without center" of a postmodern era: "A number of new forces – the emergence of new political identities and subjects, such as the

'new social movements' in both Western and non-Western societies; the failure of the experiences of (really existing) socialism; the collapse of the simple opposition between capitalism and (really existing) socialism that stood at the center of the cold war; the ongoing reorganization of patterns of accumulation and attendant (national and global) changes in the division of labor and the distribution of wealth and resources – speak clearly to the transformations that are currently taking place."[9] The heterogeneity of these new social and political developments can simply no longer be contained within a single grand Marxist narrative of class struggle between the working class and the capitalist antagonists at the point of production, as Callari and Ruccio explain:

> The failure of a single hegemonic suturing of the social order manifests itself in the emergence of a wide variety of *irreducible* (but not fixed or given) social subjects. Because these subjects are multiple and irreducible, social spaces (economic, political, and cultural) are characterized not as homogeneously structured spaces, radiating out from a presumed center and entirely defining positions of agents, but as spaces or sets of processes punctuated by states of contingency, fragmentariness, and decentering. Moreover, from the point of view of a social space discursively identified with a set of practices (e.g. "the economy"), the subjects of these practices will not have singular identities, expressions of functional positions, but rather multiple identities, coalesced and condensed in no fixed way.[10]

For Callari, Ruccio, and their collaborators, the fact that such states of contingency, fragmentariness, and decentering, phenomena that the term "postmodern" is taken to define,[11] are increasingly constitutive of the present social order means that Marxist theory must reconceive its own terms and categories if it is to be able conceptually to comprehend the contemporary era.

Moreover, Callari and Ruccio argue, Marxist theory itself is a contradictory discursive production simultaneously manifesting both "modernist" qualities that seem increasingly discredited in the current era and postmodern elements that draw what they regard as the essentialism and teleology of classical Marxism, its economic determinism and its reductionism, into question. Like most contemporary theorists, Marxist or otherwise, postmodern Marxists find of course that they can no longer justify a nineteenth-century version of Marxism premised upon notions of a predetermined historical trajectory, laws of history that can be scientifically discovered, change as progress, or the inevitability of the transition from capitalism to socialism. But postmodern Marxists' critique of classical Marxism is more far-reaching yet: they reject as well any conception of Marxism as system that views the economic as a homogeneous space inflecting processes in all other social realms and the working class as the primary agent of historical transformation. For postmodern Marxists no developmental tendencies whatsoever inhere within particular economic systems, whether capitalist or socialist: "postmodern marxism sees all outcomes in either social formation as always and everywhere contingent."[12] Nor, in the view of postmodern Marxists, will the advent of socialism finally lay the foundation for human self-realization; on the contrary, the subject as postmodern Marxists conceive it is, as Ruccio and Jack Amariglio put it at a 1993 conference sponsored by *Rethinking Marxism,* "constantly being constructed anew (and in multiple and contradictory ways), the resulting construction of which has no 'center.' This notion of the 'open' subject serves to challenge the difference between capitalism and socialism that modernist Marxism tends to draw between the 'really' fractured and alienated subject of capitalism and the potentially holistic and unalienated 'socialist man.'"[13] Indeed, postmodern Marxists attribute the political failings of classical Marxism in some part to its failure to break with such humanist notions of subjectivity, alleging that "because it operated with certain entrenched forms of essentialism and of teleology and so relied on the manifest destiny

of class as a privileged agenda of historical change, Marxism did not produce theories of politics and of subjectivity that could produce narratives and imaginaries beyond the horizons of bourgeois discourse."[14]

Like good deconstructivists, postmodern Marxists instead read the classical texts of Marxism in postmodern fashion, discerning their ambiguities, inconsistences, and contradictions. They emphasize, and attempt to elaborate, what they consider Marxism's *anti* systematic aspects: thinkers like Gramsci, Lukács, Lenin, C.L.R. James, Althusser, who in their view worked at the "edges" of Marxism; Marx's break, as they term it, with humanism; Marxism's critique of the homogenizing tendencies of capitalism, its deconstruction of bourgeois knowledges; its heterogeneous forms of resistance; its dreams of liberation. A Marxism reconceived as a theory adequate to the postmodern age, they argue, would concede the existence of "both open (because conjunctural) historical processes and equally open (because heterogeneous) social spaces" and grant a new importance to questions of historical agency and of ideology and consciousness. For, Callari and Ruccio argue, "if in fact there are no structurally preassigned places, if in fact the identities of social agents do not need to conform to such places but are rather always negotiated at the margins of the given [...], then the role of ideology and consciousness is implicated in the very process of constituting such places and identities."[15] Exactly such foregrounding of the processes of ideological production and the constitution of consciousness provides the opening for cultural producers and critics of culture that leads in the direction of cultural studies, as I will illustrate in detail later in this paper.

Callari, Ruccio, and other members of the *Rethinking Marxism* editorial board – that is, the Amherst Althusserians – proudly trace the lineage of their postmodern Marxist approach, as their name suggests, to the work of Louis Althusser – Callari and Ruccio, for instance, subtitle their collection *Essays in the Althusserian Tradition* – and it is from Althusser's writing that their rejection of

Marxist economism and emphasis on the importance of ideology and culture derives. As Richard Wolff and Stephen Resnick, the *éminences grises* of *Rethinking Marxism*, stressed in their 1987 study *Knowledge and Class: A Marxian Critique of Political Economy*, several key categories of postmodern Marxism derive from Althusser. Prime among them is the concept of "over-determination." a term that Althusser borrowed from Freudian dream theory. To Althusser all aspects of a social totality are overdetermined; thus, as Wolff and Resnick explain, no "one social aspect, such as the economic, can be ultimately determining or determinant in some last instance of other social aspects." Rather, this version of Marxian theory "focuses not on the relative importance of economic versus noneconomic social aspects but rather on the complex 'fitting together' of all social aspects, their relational structure, the contradictions overdetermined in each by all."[16] Rejecting both empiricism – the notion that truth exists "out there," the identical goal of all theories – and rationalism – the belief that concepts are "the essences of which reality is an expression,"[17] Althusser sees the distinctive epistemological contribution of Marxist theory in its insistence that neither thought nor reality can be "conceived as the essence, origin, or determining subject vis-à-vis the other. Rather, each is an effect of the other in a particular way whose specification (via the key concept of over-determination) is the definition of Marxian epistemology of 'dialectical materialism.'"[18] Althusser's conception of contradiction provides another perspective on his understanding of overdetermination. Each social process, Althusser maintains, is 'the site of [...] the complex contradictoriness inseparable from its overdetermination." "That is, because each distinct social process is the site constituted by the interaction of all the other social processes, each contains 'within itself' the very different and conflicting qualities, influences, moments, and directions of all those other social processes that constitute it."[19] Moreover, Althusser also maintains that the social processes of the sphere that classical Marxism might have called the superstructure are

"relatively autonomous" from the economic base. To be sure, Resnick and Wolff argue, Althusser does not entirely succeed in jettisoning the ballast of economic determinism: though in his 1962 essay "Contradiction and Overdetermination" he asserts: "From the first moment to the last, the lonely hour of the 'last instance' never comes,"[20] in other essays he situates himself more closely to a classically Marxist position, and it is in their move beyond Althusser to a wholesale repudiation of any last vestiges of economic determinism that, in 1987, marks Resnick's and Wolff's assumption of the position now represented by the contributors to *Rethinking Marxism*. However, in an interview given in 1988, only two years before his death, Althusser himself renounced the economic last instance, instead declaring his allegiance to an "aleatory materialism." Now, Althusser maintained, "everything can be determinant in the 'last instance.'"[21] To J.K. Gibson-Graham, writing in the Callari/Ruccio volume, the concept of over-determination is of absolute centrality to the emergence of the analysis of postmodern Marxism that find its expression in the journal *Rethinking Marxism*:

> Althusser's overdetermination can be variously (though not exhaustively) understood as signaling the irreducible specificity of every determination; the essential complexity – as opposed to the root simplicity – of every form of existence; the openness or incompleteness of every identity; the ultimate unfixity of every meaning; and the correlate possibility of conceiving an acentric – Althusser uses the term "decentered" – social totality that is not structured by the primacy of any social element or location. It is perhaps not too much to say that the concept of overdetermination was a key moment in generating an antieconomistic and antiessentialist body of Marxist philosophy and analysis in the years since the first publication of Althusser's work.[22]

Likewise, it is also from Althusser that these postmodern Marxists draw, and then extend, their conception of ideology. In earlier essays Althusser's own work still maintains the classical Marxist distinction between science and ideology; but postmodern Marxists have jettisoned any notion of science and any conception of a truth exterior to its social construction as inadequate to their own purposes, while eagerly embracing Althusser's definition of ideology, formulated in part under the influence of Lacan, as "the imaginary relation of individuals to their real conditions of existence." That is to say, there is no unmediated access to the real, and all human perception, experience, action, is ideologically – other theorists might say "discursively" – constructed. In that sense, as Althusser put it, "ideology is eternal," that is, omnipresent throughout history. Nonetheless, in more classically Marxist fashion Althusser also conceives of ideology as functioning to reproduce exploitative relations of production, and in a 1971 essay he distinguishes between Repressive State Apparatuses (the army, the police, the courts, prisons, and so on) and Ideological State Apparatuses (termed "ISAs" in Althusser's and his followers' texts), public or private institutions that function to reproduce class rule (churches, schools, trade unions, the media, and other forms of civil society), the means by which the ideology of the rulers becomes the ruling ideology. (Althusser defined the effects of the ISAs as material, thereby staving off potential charges of idealism.) Expanding upon Gramsci's notion of hegemony, Althusser postulates ISAs as the means by which the ruling class secures the consent of the exploited classes so that the rulers will only rarely need to resort to violence to achieve the compliance of the exploited. Via a mechanism that Althusser terms "interpellation" (usually explained as meaning "hailing" – "Hey, you!"), a member of the exploited classes is induced to assume his/her place in the subject positions the ISAs provide for him/her, becoming in Althusser's words "a subjected being, who submits to a higher authority and is therefore stripped of all freedom except that of freely accepting his submission."[23]

Postmodern Marxists concede that, to a greater degree even than the concept of overdetermination, such passages seem to underwrite readings of Althusser as a functionalist who allows no space for independent human agency (the "bleakness" of Althusser's "vision," Terry Eagleton calls it[24]). But, though Althusser has frequently been criticized by Marxists of other tendencies for formulating a theory of Marxist social change without agency, for Wolff and Resnick at least that accusation is altogether unjustified. On the contrary, they maintain, "[Althusser] certainly does not and cannot see [human subjectivity and intersubjectivity] as passive, as merely socially determined, without also seeing them as determining in their own right. Precisely because he conceptualized them as aspects/processes of persons and hence of the social totality, they are both overdetermined by and participate in the overdetermination of all the economic, political, and cultural aspects of the social formation in which they occur."[25] Postmodern Marxists prefer to stress the ambiguities and contradictions of Althusser's formulations on agency, arguing instead that "ideological interpellation necessarily produces heterogeneous effects," at times thus coercing subjects to comply and other times inducing them "to act and think 'otherwise,' that is, contrary to the objectives inscribed in the apparatuses that interpellate them."[26] In the Callari/ Ruccio volume the Italian theorist and activist Antonio Negri (at present imprisoned in Italy for leadership of a radical group in the seventies) stresses what is most important for my argument here. First, Negri points out that in a posthumously published essay Althusser defines the nature of the postmodern "as the continuous expansion and increasingly intense contiguity of the totalitarian functioning of the ISAs." Secondly, Negri stresses that in his conception of the increasing power of the ISAs Althusser definitively turns the relationship of structure/superstructure upside down. And thirdly, Negri underlines that, when combined with Althusser's emphasis on the role of the "aleatory" or chance, Althusser's theory provides "open possibilities for the constitutive

intervention of subjectivity." Drawing upon such concepts, cultural workers thus find the authorization to conceive their own activities directed against the ISAs as forms of political struggle. As Negri somewhat jubilantly puts it:

> Here there is no longer class struggle in theory. Here there is no longer theoretical practice in ideology. Rather, there is still all of this, but above all, there is the search for an open subjectivity that would construct theory and struggle together, that is to say, a concept of practice in which to resolve philosophy. Now philosophy as *Kampfplatz* is here fully recognized.[27]

The theoretical justification for such interventions into the realms of ideology and culture can no longer be legitimated via recourse to untenable notions of Marxist science or truth, but rather on the basis of what political purposes they serve, as Wolff observes: "The point about theories is not whether they conform to some absolute standard or test of truth; rather it is that they reflect and transform society *differently*. On that difference rests their value and their significance for Marxists. Upon their differences Marxists must base their decisions to support, reject, attack, or transform alternative theories."[28]

How do such post-Althusserian notions of the functioning of ideology translate specifically into a postmodern Marxist theory of culture? Though AESA members themselves are mainly economists and social scientists of other sorts and thus not especially competent to deal with cultural questions, on various occasions they have tried to sketch out their own ideas about the functioning of the cultural realm. In their contribution to the 1983 University of Illinois conference on "Marxism and the Interpretation of Culture" and the subsequent volume collecting that conference's papers, Amariglio, Resnick, and Wolff attempt to situate culture within their Althusserian-based framework. Culture here is understood in the anthropological sense, as comprising all

the "processes of the production and circulation of meaning."[29] The authors emphasize of course that culture does not derive from "a single determining social process within the social formation," "the necessary effect of a base-superstructure model that presents cultural processes as the epiphenomena of a social essence," and they also reject the notion that concrete cultural processes can be logically deduced "from a general concept of social totality."[30] Like every other aspect of society, they argue, cultural processes are complexly overdetermined, varying as a consequence of the specific conditions under which they emerge: "The specific forms in which art, music, literature, and history exist are the combined result of forms of economic processes (including the class processes) and forms of political processes (including the ordering of social behavior. Similarly, the *concept* of culture is equally conditioned, and it emerges as a specific discursive field only by virtue of its overdetermination by concepts of other social processes and by nondiscursive processes."[31] Cultural processes are the vehicle whereby social agents are "subjectified," permitting "the inscription and participation of these 'selves' in social processes and subjugat[ing] them to the demands, restrictions, rules, and obligations that are enunciated in the processes."[32] Such cultural processes can have uneven effects on the individuals on which they operate; they "do not uniformly stamp agents with the capacity for *either* subjection or insubordination" but rather "help to produce, in the same set of agents, varying capacities to be subjected and 'revolutionized.'"[33] Less usefully for our purposes here, however, the authors illustrate these productive insights via an examination of the functioning of kinship systems in primitive communist societies (the topic of Amariglio's dissertation). Certainly kinship is a key system of signifying and other practices inserting subjects into particular relationships, but Amariglio, Resnick, and Wolff here fall back into their own discipline of economics by mainly investigating how kinship processes affect the distribution of the products of surplus labor rather than

showing how each social sphere impacts upon and overdetermines the other.

Within the pages of *Rethinking Marxism* Wolff focuses more specifically on high culture in his examination of similarities between the writing and painting of René Magritte, briefly a member of the Belgian Communist Party, and the positions of Althusser: "A Painter Brushes with Overdetermination" is the subtitle of the essay. Maintaining that Magritte's paintings "can contribute in important ways [...] to the development of Marxism"[34] if they are read through the lens of overdetermination, Wolff argues that Magritte's art functions to rupture the hegemonic naturalization of particular forms of perception and to assist his viewers "to see seeing itself in a new way. All objects are objects-seen-by-subjects and, since those subjects are endlessly different in their constitution as subjects, they forever see differently. However, in modern bourgeois society the wonder of differently seeing – grasping and engaging the limitless possibilities of what objects can mean or be – is repressed in favor of an acceptable "common sense" of every object. Magritte rebels: "For me," he writes, "the world is a defiance of common sense."[35] This is, according to Wolff, how Magritte's paintings and the theoretical stance that underlies them correspond to Althusser's thought:

> From the perspective of overdetermination, words and images, texts and paintings, like all other social events, have no determinate, ultimate core or reality or meaning. Any meanings or 'realities' assigned to them in a particular society at a particular time depend on (1) how the context of these events presents them to subjects' gazes and (2) how that context shapes the subjects, the subjects' thoughts, and the subjects' gazings. In Althusser's formulation, any meaning or any reality is always a particular subject-object interaction overdetermined by everything happening in that interaction's socio-natural context. That context varies ceaselessly and endlessly. It is experienced and internalized

> differently depending on each subject's and each object's contextually overdetermined positioning in time and space.[36]

Though few other essays published in *Rethinking Marxism*'s nine-year run attempt to elaborate a comprehensive theory of culture, from other essays in the journal it is possible to tease out further specifics of this theory of culture that clarify both its relationship to classical Marxism and its indebtedness to postmodern analysis. First, on one side of its family tree the lineage of postmodern Marxism's notion of culture is, beyond its evident indebtedness to Althusser, also impeccably marxist. Like many other Marxist-influenced paradigms of cultural analysis, it originates in Marx's examination of commodity fetishism in the first chapter of *Capital*, though here, too, Marx is read through a postmodern Marxist lens. In an examination of "Marxian Value Theory and the Problem of the Subject," Amariglio and Callari criticize most accounts of commodity fetishism as still "embedded in, or at least infected by an economic determinism"[37] that locate subjectivity and culture upon the terrain of material relations by alleging them ultimately to be a product of the economy at least in the last instance – a solution Amariglio and Callari obviously find unsatisfactory. Some other Marxists, they observe, argue for the "autonomy of cultural and ideological realms from economic activities and institutions,"[38] a formulation they mostly find likewise problematic, since such strategies frequently privilege some other determinant – culture, ideology, power, etc. They themselves maintain that Marx's presentation of commodity fetishism displays his own commitment to the overdetermination of all social elements in precisely the ways they themselves espouse: "Commodity fetishism is Marx's device to show just how economic relations influence subjectivity, ideology, discourse, politics, and so on, and, most importantly, to show how economic relations are themselves the 'articulated' and overdetermined outcomes of the combined effects of these 'superstructural' and

other processes."[39] Though economic determinists maintain that (as a consequence of commodity fetishism) commodity producers manifest "false consciousness" and are unable to recognize how their socially productive labor is organized to meet socially constructed needs, Amariglio and Callari argue that a careful reading of Marx's text shows that commodity exchange would be impossible if the "confluence of cultural, political, and economic processes" had not effected "the constitution of social agents as individuals, agents who recognize each other as equals, who objectify human activity, and who act as rational (economic) beings."[40] In order to exchange commodities that represent equal amounts of socially necessary labor time (though potentially *un*equal amounts of actual labor time), the exchanging individuals must be so socially constituted that they possess a notion of equal exchange. Thus, Amariglio and Callari argue, "Commodity exchange, then, is an effect of the social constitution of individuals and cannot be used – as it is in economic determinism – to derive functionally the consciousness of individuality. [...] Commodity fetishism, therefore, allows Marxist discourse to conceptualize the political and the cultural, as well as economic constitution of individuality as a form of social agency."[41] It is the economic reductionism that refuses to comprehend the socially constituted individual as a precondition for Marxist value theory, the authors conclude, "that continues to deprive Marxism to this day both of a theory of subjectivity founded on the premise of the 'relative autonomy' of forms of consciousness and action, and of a theory of value in which social agency is a necessary and constituent aspect of the depiction of the economic practices of market capitalism."[42]

Perhaps surprisingly, Georg Lukács also counts among the progenitors of postmodern Marxists' theory of culture. Though they clearly reject his notion of a "false consciousness" that is lifted only when the standpoint of the most advanced segments of the proletariat is assumed, postmodern Marxists frequently refer to the theory of reification Lukács elaborated in *History and Class Consciousness*. In a fine article on situationist theory, for instance,

Bradley Macdonald shows that for the situationists the concept of reification, defined as "the process whereby the commodity form now occupies the whole of capitalist society creating an objectified and rationalized world seemingly empty of human agency,"[43] prefigured their own understanding of what they termed the "spectacle," their description of the ways sociocultural processes (e.g. advertising, entertainment, and information transmission) compelled individuals to passively reproduce the system. Gramsci is a more obviously forebear of postmodern Marxism: Marcia Landy, writing about socialist education in capitalist societies, shows how Gramsci's "discussions of the relationship between coercion and consent, the nature of hegemony, and the relationship of civil society and the state"[44] help contemporary Marxists to refine their understanding of how ideology functions. Gramsci's conception of knowledge as "common sense," for instance, can be read as a critique of conceptions of ideology as monolithic, as false consciousness, and completely retrograde, and substitutes for it an understanding of culture and ideology as multiple, heterogeneous, and fragmented, derived from a range of different public and private discourses. Because of its contradictions, "common sense" knowledge serves "to perpetuate existing social practices," but "it also contains the potential for different conceptions of society and of subjectivity."[45] In an examination of Gramsci's theory of trade unionism Frank Annunziato argues that Gramsci's work represents an attack on economic determinism like that of postmodern Marxism's:

> "The economic struggle," Gramsci wrote, "cannot be separated from the political struggle, and neither the one nor the other can be separated from the ideological struggle." In Gramsci's discourse, no site of human activity, be it economic, political, or ideological, can be separated from any other site of human activity; rather, all sites contain within them tensions and contradictions arising from all other sites. Each site acts and interacts with all

> other sites and, through this dynamic and continual interaction, changes the other sites and is changed as well. In truth, each site contains within it the causes and effects of itself and of all other sites.[46]

Reading Gramsci through the lens of Althusser, Richard Wolff attempts to reconstruct from isolated comments "Gramsci's quest for a specifically Marxist philosophical and epistemological position"[47] and arrives at a formulation of Gramsci's ideas that is virtually indistinguishable from Wolff's own. Finally and not at all surprisingly, a major influence on postmodern Marxism's conception of culture is Brecht. In a charming and incisive essay contrasting the influence of musicians Charles Seeger's (Pete's father) and Hanns Eisler's influence on left musical culture in the United States during the 1930s and 1940s, R. G. Davis takes a Brechtian perspective to argue that the Seeger-dominated strain of folk music is a "feel good" music that "presents no atmosphere of debate because it provides only one side of a complex set of questions," while Eisler's music is complicated, serious, and, in Brecht's own approving words, "makes possible a certain simplification of the toughest political problems, whose solution is a life and death matter for the working classes."[48] Commenting on the film *The Cook, the Thief, His Wife, and Her Lover*, Allan MacNeill and Ted Burczak praise the explicit attention of director Peter Greenaway to the film's theatricality and constructedness. Greenaway, they argue, "purposefully distances the viewer, as he wants to prevent his audience from lapsing into a complacent, uncritical setting. The film calls for a critical aesthetic, an aesthetic that, it is hoped, will elicit a metacritique of consumerist society."[49] In Lee Baxandall's translations, twelve "Tales of Herr Keuner" initiate the second issue of *Rethinking Marxism* in Summer 1988.

Yet postmodern Marxism's theory of culture equally betrays its filial resemblance to its other parent, postmodernism, as well as – to overtax this metaphor – what we might consider postmodernism's midwives, well-known structuralist and poststructuralist

theorists like Lacan, Foucault, and Derrida. Amariglio and Ruccio argue that the transformation of a subset of the field of economics that led to the project of *Rethinking Marxism* was occasioned by an encounter between their discipline and postmodern theory: "it is our view that the discursive forms and timing of their critiques have been made possible mostly as a result of the spread of postmodern theory and culture in the West during the past twenty-five years. Each of these projects exemplifies a shift away from debates about the 'growth of scientific knowledge' and the meaning of 'falsifiability' and toward an investigation of the discursive elements of the production of economic theories and the social conditions implied in 'reading' economic writers; and certainly such a shift has been stimulated by postmodern concerns with textuality and power as well as a fundamental disbelief in the self-professed disinterestedness of positive economic analysis."[50] In a fascinating essay on postmodern architecture Enid Arvidson terms a Marxist cultural analysis modernist that first, claims to be able to perceive an essential capitalist reality independent from or obscured by other descriptions of it, secondly, maintains that that capitalist reality underlies and determines its cultural representations, and finally argues that the relationship of capital to labor, i.e. class, is the single social relation relevant to understanding cultural production. (Such positions characterize the Marxist architectural theorists she calls the L.A. School.) On the other hand, the cultural analysis of the "Amherst Althusserians" is, she claims, postmodern because it understands that society and all its products are heterogeneous and diverse and that its own understanding of that society and its culture is also a contradictory overdetermined product that can not justify a claim to truth status. Finally, the Althusserians focus on class not because it is s single privileged standpoint but because it is a "lacuna," an aspect not considered by competing theories and an additional category helpful to understanding the situation of an individual "contradictorily conditioned by the multiple class as well as multiple nonclass positions which that individual occupies."[51] Such an

understanding of individuals as "interpellated" into multiple subject positions derives from Althusser's essay on ideological state apparatuses, which was very fundamentally shaped by Lacan's understanding of the constitution of the psyche via language. Though Althusser took issue with some of Lacan's later formulations, he continued to praise what he saw as central to Lacan's effort to draw out what was most revolutionary to Freudian theory: "the subversion of the subject, the subordination of consciousness to a 'system' of which it is not the center, and finally the impossibility of a position external to the unconscious and beyond its effects."[52] Raised from the level of psychoanalytic practice to a philosophical precedent, this notion of the subject continues to underwrite the antihumanism of postmodern Marxism. As well, essays in *Rethinking Marxism* put Lacan to use in other, more specifically cultural ways: David Mertz maintains that Lacanian theory can help to explain contemporary European racism if the "Racial Other" is understood to represent for the white European subject "the impossibility that grounds the symbolic order within which she/he necessarily locates herself/himself;"[53] that is, it is that which it is necessary for the European subject to exclude in order to constitute his/her own identity as "not that." In quite a different register Bradley Macdonald claims that something like Lacanian desire – "which emerges when satisfaction of need is not enough, when there is a doubt or gap which cannot be closed"[54] – can be conceived as the source of the revolutionary impulse, which thus, in contrast to, say, Marcuse, "is not lodged within a pre-existing biological realm."[55] Though the Amherst Althusserians undertake a great deal of theoretical sniping at Foucault for his very diffuse notion of power, his influence clearly underlies their emphasis on the polyvalent and dispersed nature of determinations as well as their understanding of how ideology serves to produce rather than merely to repress the subject. There are many similarities between Foucault's conception of discourse and Althusser's understanding of ideology that pass over into postmodern Marxism; as Philip Goldstein underlines, Althusser stresses that,

like Foucauldian discourses " levels of the ideological apparatus develop unevenly, not as coherent wholes,"[56] thus cannot impute a coherent unity of ruling class interest, and the two share similar notions of changing scientific paradigms, not universal norms. As well, authors in *Rethinking Marxism* can put Foucault's theory to work at more specific levels of the production of culture: Ron Sakolsky, for instance, alleges that Foucault's notion of "disciplinary power" can be particularly useful for understanding the relationship of new information technologies to the labor process and how the new laboring subject is constituted as a site of both domination and resistance.[57]

In recent years, however, the poststructuralist thinker most fertile for postmodern Marxism has been Derrida, particular since the publication of his book *Specters of Marx*, comprising two lectures given at a colloquium entitled "Whither Marxism?" organized by Bernd Magnus and Stephen Cullenberg, a *Rethinking Marxism* editorial board member, at the University of California at Riverside in April 1993.[58] Derrida's lectures, deconstructive readings of Marx, had focused on those passages where his references to ghosts, apparitions, and specters become crucial explanatory concepts, "bringing in," as the *Rethinking Marxism* editors underline, "the impossible but irrepressible relations between appearance and reality, materiality and ideality, spirit and 'the real.'"[59] The contradictory responses by the authors of *Rethinking Marxism* to Derrida's presentation in the pages of the journal enacts the complex response, simultaneously critical appropriation and repudiation, of postmodern Marxism to poststructuralism. Writing in the Winter 1995 issue, Pierre Macherey, a colleague of Althusser, lauds Derrida's rupture with ossified interpretations of Marx and praises his invocation of the "materiality of the idea;"[60] but he also postulates that the Derridean deconstruction of Marx leaves as a remainder "Marx without social classes,without the exploitation of labor, without surplus value, risks, in fact, no longer being anything but his own ghost."[61] In the same journal number J.K. Gibson-Graham's deconstructive essay

celebrates Derrida's retrieval of the messianic spirit of Marx as an image of future possibility and also hails Derrida's attempt to distinguish "predeconstructive" moments in Marx, for instance his attempt "to distinguish definitively between real and unreal."[62] But she faults Derrida for not being deconstructive enough in his portrayal of an omnipowerful capitalist new world order after 1989, which itself becomes something of an ontological force in his text. Gibson-Graham insists on the heterogeneity of contemporary economic formations, which also include noncapitalist noncommodity productions (for instance in the household) and nonmarket exchange. "There is no capitalism, pure and simple," argues Gibson-Graham, "but only capitalisms, irreducibly different from one another."[63] She maintains that deconstruction could also "'deontologize' the presumptively capitalist economy"[64] – with the tools for doing so available in both Marx's and Derrida's texts. Finally, in the Fall 1996 issue of *Rethinking Marxism*, Tom Lewis launches a flat-out attack on Derrida's book. Though, Lewis remarks, the desire to see Marxism reconciled with deconstruction prevailed through the seventies and eighties, "now may be as good a time as any to abandon such hopes." Lewis sees Derrida's text as "an elaborate philosophical rationale for the abandonment of *revolutionary* socialism."[65] Clearly Marxism for Derrida does not constitute a living tradition or repertory of practices to which he wishes to attach himself, but belongs instead to the realm of the undead. What Derrida calls "hauntology" (in French a homonym for "ontology"), Lewis claims, merely asserts his belief that every core concept of Marxist theory and practice deserves burial. Indeed, Lewis continues, in Derrida's text "Marxism's drive to establish an (its) ontology is held responsible for the rise of Stalinism, as well as for the emergence of every copycat Stalinist regime in the present century."[66] Pure metaphysics, is Lewis's rejoinder, and he concludes by asserting: "'The time is out of joint': Derrida repeatedly works this line from Hamlet in in order to suggest that socialist revolution is impossible because of the metaphysical

limitations of marxism. Our present time may indeed be out of joint, but not because of metaphysics."[67]

What may finally clarify how the "Amherst Althusserians" combine Marxism and poststructuralism to arrive at a postmodern Marxism so different from the German Marxist-influenced tradition of cultural theory is an examination of their own analyses of one of the foremost representatives of that theory, Theodor Adorno. Essays in *Rethinking Marxism* treat Adorno with great respect but also differentiate themselves decisively from his positions. (What is at issue here is obviously not whether they are right in their assessments – a question I consider myself not qualified to adjudicate – but how their treatment of him illuminates their own stance.) In a quite elegant essay on "The Mandarin Marxism of Theodor Adorno," Carl Freedman and Neil Lazarus find the major contrast between his conclusions and their own to lie in his continued adherence, despite his disclaimers, to a Hegelian notion of totality. They observe, for instance: "While rejecting the expressive totality as found in Hegel or as Marxianized by Lukács – 'The whole is the untrue [...]', as he writes in what is probably his single most famous sentence – there is an important sense in which he continues, as it were, to play in the Hegelian ballpark: indeed, he can unabashedly refer to Hegel as the thinker 'whose method schooled that of *Minima Moralia* [...]'"[68] It is this flaw in Adorno's thinking, they argue, that makes it impossible for him to conceptualize resistance of any sort except in arcane realms as distant as possible from the total administration that rules elsewhere: "Here we encounter the problem of totality, of monocausal determinism as against overdeterminationism, from a different angle: for Adorno's construction of a coherent theory of world history is achieved at the price of attributing an overwhelming transhistorical agency to his negative version of the Hegelian world spirit, that is, to the dialectic of enlightenment. [...] History, for Adorno, is not only a story with (to put it mildly) an unhappy ending: even more importantly, it is, in the basic sense, only *one* story, with progressively more complete domination the

only protagonist."[69] On the other hand, their own conception of a heterogeneous social totality decisively not of a single piece makes it possible for Freedman, Lazarus, and their comrades to acknowledge *both* a theoretical and practical space for acts of opposition to domination: "it is for this reason that radical critics today tend to prefer to operate with the Althusserian concepts of contradiction and overdetermination – or with the Gramscian categories of residual and emergent, which also mandate an irreducibly flexible and open-ended dialectic – than with Adorno's sometimes manichean perspective. For the Gramscian and Althusserian approaches allow precisely what is both necessary and disqualified in advance by Adorno: namely, a theorization of the various means through which, within the overriding context of a 'structure in dominance,' meaningful acts of resistance still take place and genuine psychic needs are still gratified."[70]

In a more recent essay, Michael Parkhurst, on the other hand, finds significant parallels in the realm of theory between Adorno and Althusserianism, first of all in their respective critiques of positivism and empiricism: "Whereas Adorno's own epistemological inquiry is oriented around an objectivity that is not identical with the concepts humans use to describe it, his definition of the 'nonidentical' makes it scrupulously clear that we have no access to it but through those very concepts."[71] Parkhurst also maintains that, like overdetermination, "Adorno's notion of causation is so complex that it is impossible to determine which elements are primary. In *Negative Dialectics* and *Aesthetic Theory* too, Adorno successfully brings to life a dialectical materialism that emphasizes the mutually conditioning and defining *tension* that binds together concepts and exploitation, works of art and social classes."[72] Finally, in his essay on the situationists, Macdonald contrasts their attitude towards the relationship of artistic production to everyday life to that of the Frankfurt School. While the Frankfurt School's "discussion of the importance of the art work in developing a critical consciousness has the initial merit of actually recognizing the importance of aesthetic practices in

politics, their position is ultimately consumed by the seemingly 'mystical' way in which such practices will provide real potentialities for political change. It is hard to understand how a good work of art will provide the possibilities they describe. Ultimately, part of the problem is the way in which they conceive of the limitations of cultural struggle in the face of the totalizing character of technological reality: with everyday life inevitably closed to collective action, there is only the individual sphere of bourgeois culture that has inherent critical capacities."[73] What seems to emerge from these rather different Althusserian assessments of Adorno is that, first, given Althusserian Marxism's understanding of ideology, no form of culture ever escapes ideology even in part, so that there is no possibility of conceptualizing high culture, i.e. literature, classical music, or art, as a privileged realm preserving a moment of truth and beauty that partially escapes domination. This is still a concept of culture that predominates among certain segments of the German left, as evidenced, for instance, by a speech Oskar Negt held at the University of Bremen in 1996, later published in the on-line journal *glossen*, on the topic "Was ist das: Kultur?" "An *diesem* Kulturbegriff möchte ich zunächst festhalten, daß Kultur nicht bloßes Etikett der Wirklichkeit ist, sondern ihrem Wahrheits- und Substanzgehalt nach wie vor etwas Wider-Sinniges, Eigensinniges, Antizapatorisches bezeichnet, was gerade Wirklichkeit sprengt. Und in den stimmigen, d.h. wahrheitshaltigen Gebilden kultureller Produktion sehen Adorno und Benjamin [...] im Grunde eine Verflechtung, eine innere Verflechtung von Fortschritt und Barbarei, Wahrem und Falschem."[74] Doubtless postmodern Marxists would consider the very appeal to something true exterior to what exists as itself a manifestation of essentialism. But, on the other hand, postmodern Marxists also refuse to consider cultural products all of a piece, and certainly not an expression of a single all-encompassing system of domination. Pierre Macheray, for example, "claims that the absences, gaps, and inconsistencies of a text betray its conditions of production, which include diverse

philosophies, their influential proponents, the acceptable literary forms, or the writer's education, social ties, or important readers."[75] This conception of the cultural product as contradictory, heterogeneous, and complexly overdetermined allows moments of opposition and resistance to emerge from the encounters of ideologies themselves.

Let me finally conclude this examination of postmodern Marxism's conception of culture by exploring how it is manifested in an examination of "Socialist Realism and East German Modernism" published in *Rethinking Marxism* in Fall 1994 by three eminent younger Germanists, Julia Hell, Loren Kruger, and Katie Trumpener. Without pressing these three scholars entirely into the framework of the Amherst Althusserians, I want to argue that their analysis is premised upon some of postmodern Marxism's fundamental assumptions, allowing them to advance what seem to be exceptionally productive proposals for rereading the texts of the former GDR. First of all, though these three scholars distance themselves decisively from the orthodox Marxism of the GDR, they explicitly conceive their cultural analyses as a "critical intervention"[76] into debates around the political and literary legacy of the GDR, even, as their subtitle has it, as "Another Historians' Debate," and the title of the organ in which they chose to publish their dossier suggests that they would not be averse to calling their own approach "Marxist" as well. But if the approach is to be termed Marxist, it is a Marxism that repudiates the simpler Marxist paradigms of earlier days, rejecting, for instance, a narrative of the GDR's development "predicated on a 'narrowly conceived reflection theory' and a thoroughly progressivist and teleological literary historical model." That, they maintain, characterizes both the GDR's official account of itself and those of many of its West German critics, recently including even Wolfgang Emmerich himself, formerly a sensitive and nuanced West German commentator on cultural production in the East. (It goes perhaps without saying that these three young scholars are similarly dismissive of "an equally teleological schema

of a triumphant capitalist culture that treats any socialist alternative as an aberration or a joke."[77]) Rather, all phenomena within their paradigm are indeed complexly overdetermined, so that, for instance, they refuse to allow the stance of East German intellectuals to be reduced to "the binary opposition of resistance and complicity" but instead explore "the complex articulation of critique and consent that characterized East German intellectuals' negotiation of the border country between resistance and complicity."[78] As well, their understanding of political subject formation refuses a concept of the subject of socialism as primarily determined by experiences at the point of production. Thus Trumpener argues that, with the consciousness of the protestors in Anna Seghers' "Auf dem Wege zur amerikanischen Botschaft" "moments of solidarity or sympathy among several marchers who find themselves side by side alternate continually with indifference, bewilderment, fear, lust, and boredom, moments of political anger alternate with recurring feelings of exhaustion, depression, isolation, and disorientation."[79] Instead, Trumpener argues for a similarity between the positions of Seghers and Wilhelm Reich on the question of class consciousness: "Both Reich and Seghers lay out the problem of 'false consciousness' in a way that presupposes *not* a proletariat whose perennial oppression has led to internal cohesion or unity but instead something like a heterogeneous, fragmented group of decentered subjects, separated by gender and age, their subjectivities built out of and shattered by disparate experiences of a shared oppression. Their ontological mooring and their common ground lies in everyday practices they do not even fully realize they share. And their hope for solidarity and a joint front can only come from a politics that understands (and a representational practice that records) all that their consciousness is built on and impeded by."[80] Kruger similarly argues that in *Der Lohndrücker* Heiner Müller "resists the socialist realist temptation to sublate the workers' alienation from their labor in the Leninist assertion that *they* are the state. Instead, he dramatizes the contradictory and uneven development of their sense of entitlement,

ownership, and responsibility, which does not always coincide with the uneven attempts of engineers and party officials to set aside their privileges."[81] Hell as well maintains that, though *Der geteilte Himmel* is supposedly an example of Christa Wolf's early adherence to socialist realism norms, "[a]ll through her story of becoming socialism's subject, Rita is both (conscious) subject and (unconscious) desire. Not-being-conscious is also involved in the tenuous status of the collective voice in the novel's prologue and epilogue. [...] Rita and the collective 'we' are just as 'divided' at the end of *Der geteilte Himmel* as at the beginning."[82]

These three scholars' treatment of their texts similarly accords with the new Marxist understanding of the components of cultural production this paper has explored. On the one hand, they understand these texts to be themselves interventions into struggles of definition within the GDR, first around conceptions of an appropriate socialist aesthetic and later against the hegemonic impositions of GDR authorities. But, like all social phenomena, these texts and their authors are themselves contradictory and polyvocal, incapable of being forced into the socialist realist frame that both the SED and Western Cold Warriors wanted to impose on them. In Seghers' text, Trumpener shows, "its narrative perspective actually shifts back and forth continually, and sometimes bewilderingly, among people in the crowd, between precise description and impressionist stream-of-consciousness, [...] a montage of several synchronous narrating subjectivities."[83] Surprisingly, she concludes that "[f]rom today's standpoint Seghers's 'realism,' especially, looks more like a political postmodernism, of a kind both similar to and crucially different from the one in which we now find ourselves. If the provisional 'eclecticism' of its method does not lead to the finally sublating totality advocated by Lukács, it does not lead, either, to the pastiche and anarchic dispersal of much current postmodernism. Instead, like much of the Popular Front writing that follows it in France and America, it tries to find a way of politicizing and popularizing, thinking through, going beyond, and regrounding the modernist examination of ontology,

identity, and aesthetic form to tackle what it sees as even more complex issues of consciousness, collectivity, and commitment."[84] Kruger reads *Der Lohndrücker* as a work that transgresses "not only in its emphatically modernist deployment of abruptly juxtaposed scenes and schematic treatment of character but also in its exposure of the cracks in the foundations of official socialism;"[85] Hell considers Wolf's text to "clearly work against the containment strategies of realism [...] The novel's frequent repetitions of Rita's erotic fantasies alludes to the established topos of (feminine) sexuality as a potentially disruptive power in the traditions of both surrealism and a certain variety of Freudo-Marxism."[86] Reading GDR literature through a lens that looks for disunity, heterogeneity, and disruption rather than unity, Hell, Kruger, and Trumpener are thus able to propose a new understanding of GDR literary production that opposes the efforts of Western critics to eradicate the accomplishments of GDR writers by advancing a new reading of the tradition of German socialist writing that may reveal it to be its own form of political modernism. Using new methodologies inflected both by Marxism and postmodernism, they advance the project of their so-called dossier of East German Modernism: "By bringing critical textual and political strategies to bear on seemingly monological texts, the dossier hopes to demonstrate the productivity of approaches that refuse not only the dominant Western notions of literary excellence, but also the SED's definition of socialist realism as a closed artistic system."[87]

Certainly I do not wish to overstate the affiliations of all the new practitioners of cultural studies in German and other literary disciplines to postmodern Marxism – though I have been frequently surprised at the degree of (often theoretically unarticulated) agreement among younger U.S.-trained scholars about the appropriate strategies for interrogating texts of high or popular culture. Though I believe struggles in the ideological realm to be of crucial importance in the current era, I also do not wish to entertain elaborate fantasies about the political efficacy of studies like

Hell's, Kruger's, and Trumpener's dossier – after all, how many conservative West German critics will ever read *Rethinking Marxism*, and what difference would it make if they did? And it is always possible that this entire theory is an elaborate rationalization on the part of comfortably-situated academics who want to convince themselves they have not lost their political edge. In his introduction to a special issue of *Socialist Review* focused on postmodern Marxism, René Francisco Poitevin in fact suggests something of this sort: "The academicization of radical politics demands self-reflexivity about the complicity of the micropolitics of academia with the broader narratives of late capitalism. The present academic landscape makes one wonder if the debates between Marxists and poststructuralists (in their different permutations) have more to do with intro-middle-class struggles that with the well being of the disenfranchised. That there is a huge gap between, say, radical low-income grassroots campaigns and linguistic categories of analysis should be clear by now. One need only attend any event sponsored by a radical, low-income grassroots organization to notice that names like Foucault and Derrida, and analytical categories such as *linguistic turn*, *turnover time*, and *subject-positions*, are simply absent from the day-to-day strategizing and interventions of people working on radical issues outside university corridors."[88] But I want to continue to insist that the phenomenon of cultural studies in our and other disciplines, though itself of course complexly overdetermined, is among other things a consequence of the emergence of new theoretical paradigms like that of postmodern Marxism that argue for the political relevance of scholarly work and provide new methods with which to undertake it. After all, if Samuel Huntington argues that culture is now the preeminent terrain of political struggle, can leftist Germanists do less? Cultural studies might then be postulated to be the solution that engaged literary scholars have devised to respond to Marx's Eleventh Thesis on Feuerbach, their scholarly endeavors directed not just to understanding an

overdetermined postmodern world, but also, in a nonessentialist, nonteleological manner, trying to change it.

Notes

1 Samuel Huntington, "The Clash of Civilizations?" *Foreign Affairs* 72.3 (1993), pp. 22-49, here p. 22.
2 Frigga Haug, "Politics and Languages of Contemporary Marxism," *Argument* 39.1 (1997), pp. 100-102, here p. 100.
3 Enid Arvidson, "Cognitive Mapping and Class Politics: Towards a Nondeterminist Image of the City," *Rethinking Marxism* 8.2 (Summer 1995), pp. 8-23, here p. 18.
4 Editorial Board, "Introduction to *Rethinking Marxism* ," *Rethinking Marxism* 1.1 (Spring 1988), pp. 5-13, here p. 5.
5 Ibid.
6 Ibid., p. 8.
7 Ibid., p. 9.
8 See Teresa Ebert, "The Knowable Good: Post-al Politics, Ethics, and Red Feminism," *Rethinking Marxism* 8.2 (1995), pp. 39-59.
9 Antonio Callari and David F. Ruccio, "Introduction: Postmodern Materialism and the Future of Marxist Theory," in *Postmodern Materialism and the Future of Marxist Theory: Essays in the Althusserian Tradition.* (Hanover, 1996), pp. 1-48, here p. 4.
10 Ibid., p. 6.
11 Ibid., p. 5.
12 Jack Amariglio and David F. Ruccio, "Postmodernism, Marxism, and the Critique of Modern Economic Thought," in *Marxism in the Postmodern Age: Confronting the New World Order*, ed. Antonio Callari, Stephen Cullenberg, and Carole Biewenger (New York, 1995), pp. 13-23, here p. 20.
13 Ibid., p. 21.
14 Ibid., p. 15.
15 Ibid., p. 23.
16 Stephen A. Resnick and Richard D. Wolff, *Knowledge and Class: A Marxian Critique of Political Economy* (Chicago, 1987), p. 49-50.
17 Ibid., p. 85.
18 Ibid., p. 86.
19 Ibid., p. 88.
20 Louis Althusser, *For Marx,* trans. Ben Brewer (New York, 1974), p. 113, cited in Resnick and Wolff, pp. 92-93.
21 Callari and Ruccio, p. 25.
22 J.K. Gibson-Graham, "Althusser and Capitalism: An Encounter in Contradiction," in *Postmodern Materialism*, pp. 212-30, here p. 214.
23 Louis Althusser, "Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses," in *Lenin and Philosophy* (New York, 1971), pp. 127-88, here p. 182, cited in

Warren Montag, "Beyond Force and Consent: Althusser, Spinoza, Hobbes," in *Postmodern Materialism,* pp. 91-106, here p. 94.

24 Terry Eagleton, *Ideology* (London, 1991), cited in Montag, p. 94.

25 Resnick and Wolff, p. 91.

26 Montag, p. 103.

27 Antonio Negri, "Notes on the Evolution of the Thought of the Later Althusser," trans. Olga Vasile, in *Postmodern Materialism,* pp. 51-68, here p. 59.

28 Richard Wolff, review of *Is There a Future for Marxism?* and *Marxism and Philosophy*, by Alex Callinicos, *Rethinking Marxism* 1.2 (Summer 1988), pp. 178-184, here p. 182.

29 Jack Amariglio, Stephen A. Resnick, and Richard D. Wolff, "Class, Power and Culture," in *Marxism and the Interpretation of Culture*, ed. Cary Nelson and Lawrence Grossberg (Urbana, 1988), pp. 487-501, here p. 487.

30 Ibid.

31 Ibid. p. 488-89.

32 Ibid., p. 491.

33 Ibid., p. 492.

34 Richard Wolff, "Magritte: A Painter Brushes with Overdetermination," *Rethinking Marxism* 8.1 (Spring 1995), pp. 27-47, here p. 29.

35 Ibid., p. 31.

36 Ibid., p 32.

37 Jack Amariglio and Antonio Callari, "Marxian Value Theory and the Problem of the Subject: The Role of Commodity Fetishism," *Rethinking Marxism* 2.3 (Fall 1989), pp. 31-60, here p. 32.

38 Ibid., p. 33.

39 Ibid., p. 35.

40 Ibid., p. 41.

41 Ibid., p. 51.

42 Ibid., pp. 57-58.

43 Bradley J. Macdonald, "From the Spectacle to Unitary Urbanism: Reassessing Situationist Theory," *Rethinking Marxism* 8.2 (Summer 1995), pp. 89-111, here p. 93.

44 Marcia Landy, "Socialist Education Today: Pessimism or Optimism of the Intellect," *Rethinking Marxism* 4.3 (Fall 1991), pp. 9-23, here p. 13.

45 Ibid., p. 10.

46 Frank R. Annunziato, "Gramsci's Theory of Trade Unionism," *Rethinking Marxism* 1.2 (Summer 1988), pp.142-164, here p. 147.

47 Richard Wolff, "Gramsci, Marxism, and Philosophy," *Rethinking Marxism* 2.2 (Summer 1989), pp. 41-54, here p. 53.

48 R. G. Davis, "Music from the Left," *Rethinking Marxism* 1.4 (Winter 1988), pp.7-25, here p. 24.

49 Allan MacNeill and Ted Burczak, "The Critique of Consumerism in *The Cook, the Thief, His Wife, and Her Lover*," *Rethinking Marxism* 4.3 (Fall 1991), pp. 117-124, here p. 118.
50 Amariglio and Ruccio, p. 14.
51 Arvidson, p. 19.
52 Warren Montag, "The Emptiness of a Distance Taken: Freud, Althusser, Lacan," *Rethinking Marxism* 4.1 (Spring 1991), pp. 31-38, here p. 35.
53 David Mertz, "The Racial Other in Nationalist Subjectivations: A Lacanian Analysis," *Rethinking Marxism* 8.2 (Summer 1995), pp.77-88, here p 80.
54 M. Sarup, *An Introductory Guide to Post-Structuralism and Post-modernism* (Athens, GA, 1989), p. 25, cited in Macdonald, p. 96.
55 Macdonald, p. 95.
56 Philip Goldstein, "Communism and Postmodern Theory: A Reevaluation of Althusser's Marxism," *Rethinking Marxism* 9.2 (Summer 1996/97), pp. 79-98, here p. 96.
57 Ron Sakolsky, "'Disciplinary Power,' The Labor Process, and the Constitution of the Laboring Subject," *Rethinking Marxism* 5.4 (Winter 1992), pp. 114-26.
58 Jacques Derrida, *Specters of Marx: The State of the Debt, the Work of Mourning, and the New International*, trans. Peggy Kamuf, introd. Bernd Magnus and Stephen Cullenberg (New York, 1994).
59 Editors, "In this issue," *Rethinking Marxism* 8.4 (Winter 1995), pp. i-viii, here p. ii.
60 Pierre Macherey, "Marx Dematerialized, or the Spirit of Derrida," trans. Ted Stolze, *Rethinking Marxism* 8.4 (Winter 1995), pp. 18-25, here p. 21.
61 Ibid., p. 24.
62 J. K. Gibson-Graham, "Haunting Capitalism . . . in the Spirit of Marx and Derrida," *Rethinking Marxism* 8.4 (Winter 1995), pp. 25-39, here p. 26.
63 Ibid., p. 33.
64 Ibid., p. 36.
65 Tom Lewis, "The Politics of 'Hauntology' in Derrida's *Specters of Marx*," *Rethinking Marxism* 9.3 (Fall 1996/97), pp. 19-39, here p. 22.
66 Ibid., p. 30.
67 Ibid., p. 37.
68 Carl Freedman and Neil Lazarus, "The Mandarin Marxism of Theodor Adorno," *Rethinking Marxism* 1.4 (Winter 1988), pp. 85-111, here p. 98.
69 Ibid., pp. 100-01.
70 Ibid., p. 110.
71 Michael Parkhurst, "Adorno and the Practice of Theory," *Rethinking Marxism* 8.3 (Fall 1995), pp. 38-58, here p. 52.
72 Ibid.
73 Macdonald, p. 106.

74 Oskar Negt, "Was ist das: Kultur?" *glossen* (electronic Journal), No. 3, distributed electronically 26 October 1997.
75 Goldstein, p. 89.
76 Julia Hell, Loren Kruger, and Katie Trumpener, "Dossier: Socialist Realism and East German Modernism – Another Historians' Debate," *Rethinking Marxism* 7.3 (Fall 1994), pp. 36-79, here p. 37.
77 Ibid., p. 41.
78 Ibid.
79 Ibid., p. 46.
80 Ibid., p. 48.
81 Ibid., p. 60.
82 Ibid., p. 72.
83 Ibid., p. 46.
84 Ibid., p. 48.
85 Ibid., p. 51.
86 Ibid., p. 73.
87 Ibid., p. 40.
88 Rene Francisco Poitevin, "Introduction to Reimagining Capitalism: Explorations in Postmodern Marxism," *Socialist Review* 25.3/4 (1995), pp. 1-8. here pp. 2-3.

Nancy Kaiser

Who Cares? Cultural Studies, Feminist Literary Criticism, U.S. *Germanistik*

Discussing concepts of culture rarely takes place on neutral or purely conceptual grounds in German Departments in the late 20th century. Linked to discussions of courses, majors, enrollments, disciplinary and departmental identity, jobs for graduate students, teaching loads for faculty and staff, culture covers a multitude of sins. The concept lends itself to hope, with "authentic" texts in language courses mediating the foreign culture and courses on cultural topics bolstering sagging enrollments in literature courses. The concept of culture is equally fungible in the service of despair, depending upon how one regards the loss in status of literature as the focus of German departments or the rise in status of theoretical issues and texts as part of cultural studies.

Imbricated with fear and desire, current discussions of culture as a concept are inextricably linked to institutional contexts. Thinking about culture for a conference sponsored by a German department, a conference in which half of the lectures specify an institutional or national context in their titles, I find myself confronted with the quandaries and dilemmas currently preoccupying German departments in the U.S. I perceive four central issues in those dilemmas: 1) anxiety regarding disciplinarity, with or without prefixes such as inter-, multi-, post-, cross-, or anti-; 2) alarm regarding enrollments, both at the graduate and undergraduate levels, with the concomitant implications for the allocation of institutional resources; 3) uncertainty regarding the role of literature, especially vis-à-vis "culture"; 4) developments in the nature and position of language instruction.

The issues are interrelated with a complexity that sociologists of academic institutions probably admire. I shall not attempt a map. What I offer is an inquiry into selected aspects of the current

state of affairs. My argument has three sections: 1) Within the field of *Germanistik* in the United States, a coincidence of creative disciplinary revision, intellectual trends of historic moment, demographic changes, institutional pressures, and economic exigencies has wrought a distinct form of German Studies, also termed German Culture Studies. The revision thus characterized expands traditional disciplinary constraints, thereby breaking down their definitional and constraining force. Such a process corresponds in part to the self-characterization of cultural studies within the U.S. academic context. It is thought-provoking to analyze the similarities. It is sobering to do so with Bill Readings as a guide. The first section of my paper draws on the incisive insights of Readings's *The University in Ruins* (1996) in offering a critical perspective on German culture studies, the replacement of literature by "culture," and curricular practice (or practical curricula) in our present situation.

2) Within the field of *Germanistik* in the United States, feminist literary criticism is both well established and often blithely disregarded. In the second section of my argument, and with a considerable debt to the astute chroniclers of feminist *Germanistik* among my U.S. colleagues, I review briefly the force, shape, and fate of the practice of feminist literary criticism. At stake is the relationship between the practice of feminist literary criticism and German culture studies. My emphasis on "practice" highlights micro-pedagogical as well as intellectual and institutional arrangements. The second section ends by using discussions within feminist *Germanistik* for a transformative refocusing on literature within the disciplinary practices of German Studies, albeit with a "schielender Blick."[1]

3) Uneasy with the result of section 2, which might be seen as postulating academic feminism as the new revolutionary subject, I return in the concluding section to the quandaries and dilemmas with which I began. Eschewing the rhetoric of crisis, I want to think instead about the literary text as a site of resistance and

critical practices, speculating on the "difference of literature" in our present situation.

I. German Culture Studies and Cultural Studies

The fall 1996 issue of *German Quarterly* is entitled "Special Issue on Culture Studies," and in his editor's column Marc Weiner states: "By now it is clear that the predominant paradigm in German Studies, the one that has for the most part replaced, and where it has not yet done so, at least certainly enhanced the study of canonical literature, is culture studies."[2] Acknowledging that "the term, of course, encompasses a variety of methodological models," he refers to culture studies as a paradigm, as a term, as an intellectual endeavor, an intelligible historical phenomenon, an oppositional reaction to the former model of the literary canon as the organizational principle of departments of German in the U.S., and as consciously external to its object of study: "Germany specifically and German-speaking Europe in general." Noticeably lacking is a specific content for the new, predominant paradigm. In this brief introduction to the special issue of *German Quarterly*, the term German culture studies would appear to encompass anything concerned with the predominant German-speaking country in Europe, perhaps including its neighbors. I wish to question whether such a broad frame of reference might actually be termed "dereferentialization" for *Germanistik* as a discipline, a point to which I shall return.

That issue of *German Quarterly*, as well as the spring 1989 issue entitled "Germanistik as German Studies: Interdisciplinary Theories and Methods," the summer 1992 issue of *Monatshefte* on New Historicism, and the spring/summer 1995 issue of *New German Critique* on "Cultural History/Cultural Studies" we might regard as programmatic debates in the field.[3] A number of universities and colleges in this country have designated German Studies Programs (Duke, Cornell, Brown, Stanford, University of Michigan, University of Chicago, among others), and there are

numerous individual scholars teaching German Studies courses or engaged in inter- or cross-disciplinary research. The intellectual exploration of German culture studies, leaving aside for the moment the institutional context, has been carried up to now primarily by Germanists (both U.S. and European born) with a previous commitment to the theoretical tradition of *Ideologiekritik* as well as to a mode of literary analysis that read literary texts (both high and low) within the totality of a historical moment (either of production or reception). I think that most feminist Germanists, up to now, have shared this background. I also agree with Azade Seyhan, who has made the critique eloquently on several occasions, that U.S. *Germanistik* fairly consistently resisted the theoretical debates of the late 70s and 80s around poststructuralism and deconstruction, remaining receptive to New Historicism and more recent anthropological models of culture. I'm not sure I can pinpoint all that blind spot might mean, but I surmise at least three things: attenuated discussions of subjectivity, a lack of practice in rhetorical readings of texts, and an unwavering belief in the primacy of writing the narrative of literary history, usually with a social-historical foundation. In her essay in the 1996 issue of *German Quarterly*, Seyhan assesses: "The allergy to theory in *Germanistik* (and German Studies?) led, for the most part, to a dismissal of the challenge of the paradigm shift from 'pure literary study' to cultural study."[4] She then goes on to characterize briefly cultural studies, both the weighty tome edited by Lawrence Grossberg, Cary Nelson, and Paula Treichler in 1992 and more generally the U.S. version of this multidisciplinary field of inquiry.[5]

Her assessment of a slippage between German culture studies and cultural studies in the U.S. interests me, as they often are conflated. The more statements I consume of what cultural studies is, the more perplexed I become. The more statements I consume of what German culture studies should be, the more I think we must reflect on the possible institutional contexts and ramifications. I am not against either endeavor. I actually endorse them

both rather enthusiastically and have toiled to incorporate their challenges into our graduate program at the University of Wisconsin-Madison. What compels me to critical reflection is their status and possible unintended function in the university at century's end. I also think we need to distinguish between cultural studies and German culture studies. As an interim understanding of cultural studies in the U.S. academy today and without going into the history of the Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies at the University of Birmingham or the often evoked dual traditions of "culturalism" and "structuralism," I will combine three characterizations which make sense to me as a common denominator for current usage of the term in the United States:

1) A preliminary definition may be found in the introduction to the volume *Cultural Studies*, edited by Grossberg, Nelson, Treichler. Recognizing that cultural studies resists a general, generic definition, but that "it would be arrogant not to identify, as a starting point at least, some of the recurrent elements of the field," they offer the following:

> Cultural studies is an interdisciplinary, transdisciplinary, and sometimes counter-disciplinary field that operates in the tension between its tendencies to embrace both a broad, anthropological and a more narrowly humanistic conception of culture. Unlike traditional anthropology, however, it has grown out of analyses of modern industrial societies. It is typically interpretive and evaluative in its methodologies, but unlike traditional humanism it rejects the exclusive equation of culture with high culture and argues that all forms of cultural production need to be studied in relation to other cultural practices and to social and historical structures. Cultural studies is thus committed to the study of the entire range of a society's arts, beliefs, institutions, and communicative practices.[6]

2) A more specific delineation of the exact focus of study is provided by the introduction to Russell Berman's *Cultural Studies of Modern Germany:*

> Cultural studies is the examination of the symbolic orders in which intersubjective meanings are constituted and contested, and this pertains to literary works, to other artistic materials, and to nonartistic, but nevertheless symbolic materials, e.g. modes of political representation, the organization of private and public spaces, and codes of gender distinction.[7]

3) David Bathrick's essay on "Cultural Studies" in the MLA volume *Introduction to Scholarship in Modern Languages and Literatures* stresses the insurgent force of cultural studies within the university:

> What marks a recent departure is the extent to which, in addition to its marginal status as a "subfield" within or between existing disciplines, the rubric *cultural studies* has come to suggest a remapping of the humanities as a whole around new contents, new canons, new media, and new theoretical and methodological paradigms. [...] It functions as a permanent border action, at once within and yet seeking to dissolve the institutional and discursive formations that have been necessary to its emergence and survival in the first place.[8]

From these statements I draw the following thumbnail sketch for my current purposes: cultural studies identifies itself as a challenge to traditional scholarly disciplines and entails an analysis of the workings of a broad range of social and cultural activities, understood as contested modes of symbolic representation.

Such a definition probably immediately provokes disagreement because it is not theorized or elaborated. But in a pared-down form,

cultural studies appears to be a broadly inclusive field of analysis. And, to phrase my point polemically, if nearly everything is culture – then perhaps the "culture" in cultural studies actually has no referent. If we can study everything under the rubric of cultural studies, then the amorphous "field" can replace any and/or all of the traditional disciplines in the humanities. Which may be a liberating and exhilarating development – or not.

I choose to explore the "or not" side in this paper, in the interests of providing one possibility for contextualizing the academic (and publishing) boom of cultural studies in the U.S. I do so in an attempt to gain a critical perspective on the three major models for German Studies within the university: within German departments, as an interdisciplinary unit severed from the vestigial language and literature function of the German department, within an area studies model. And I do so with reference to the assessment of the university and the study of culture offered by Bill Readings in his book *The University in Ruins*.[9]

In *The University in Ruins*, Bill Readings provides an analysis of the function of the university as an institution in the late 20th century, a period he regards as characterized by a process of economic globalization accompanied by a "relative decline of the nation-state as the prime instance of the reproduction of capital around the world."[10] The end of the Cold War, the restructuring of Europe, also further effect an effacement of national boundaries. These changes are obviously of prime concern to those of us whose profession is institutionally defined by departments of national language and literature, regardless of whether the nation-states are singular or plural – and they are plural for most foreign-language departments in the U.S.

In our globalized situation with decreasing significance of nation-states, the social role of the university transmutes from being an institution of national culture turning out subjects for a nation-state to functioning as a bureaucratic corporation oriented toward students as consumers. This is the shift that Readings's book analyses. The modern university in the West emerged in the

late 18th century, a product of Enlightenment ideology and the producer of a specific social subject tied to the development of the modern nation-state. This trajectory has a familiar ring for scholars of German culture. In Reading's words:

> The University becomes modern when it takes on responsibility for working out the relation between the subject and the state, when it offers to incarnate an idea that will both theorize and inculcate this relationship. This is its dual mission of research and teaching.[11]

In Reading's analysis, the Kantian regulatory idea of reason was originally the organizing principle for all the academic disciplines. For Kant, the university was to unify reason and the state, knowledge and power, by producing a subject capable of rational thought and civic participation.[12] In the 19th century, culture supplants reason as the unifying force: Wilhelm von Humboldt's 1810 reform of the German university, the concept of "Bildung" in the German tradition, the influence of Herder's model of linguistically distinct, historically generated cultures would immediately come to mind. In the course of the 19th century, literature comes to stand in for culture, and the discipline of literary scholarship comes to supplant philosophy as the key inculcator of national subjecthood. Again, this is a process we can trace with ease in the history of *Germanistik* on into what becomes Germany in 1871.

However, we do not teach at German universities – I use the example merely as a shortcut illustration. But in U.S.-American universities and colleges, the study of literature is institutionalized in the 19th century in "explicitly national terms and [with] an organic vision of the possibility of a unified national culture."[13] "German" literature is obviously not the central discipline in creating "Americans," but the departments of foreign literatures and languages are institutionalized analogously into national groups, and the study of literature is anointed as queen. And within

the linguistically-defined groups, there emerges a dominant literature – in our case German and not Austrian or Swiss.

When the function of the university shifts in an increasingly globalized economy, so does the state of the disciplines. Composition courses migrate out of English departments and become "writing across the curriculum programs," and the status of literature as a nationally unified and unifying object of research and teaching declines.[14]

What can this have to do with Germanists engaged in German culture studies? We certainly define ourselves as espousing a critical and not an affirmative concept of culture (or literature, as in the prior commitment to *Ideologiekritik* in literary scholarship). Or we view our enterprise with a discriminating distance from any monolithic definition of national culture, seeing ourselves instead as engaged in what Hinrich Seeba terms German Studies as "an intercultural critique of identity formation and thus as a contribution to international cultural anthropology."[15] The decline in the status of literature in the university might simply be read as the institutional corroboration of our own scholarly forays into the world of the future, a world in which our cultural criticism will retain a redemptive critical quality. Anthony Easthope, in the 1991 volume *Literary into Cultural Studies*, takes this tack. For Easthope, cultural studies is pan-disciplinary (my word) in encompassing any and all cultural phenomena into a "study of signifying practice."[16] In Bill Readings's caustic and perhaps not-quite-fair rendition of Easthope's argument: "All manifestations of culture are signifying practice, and all signifying practices are manifestations of culture."[17] Readings designates this definitional circularity within the claims of cultural studies for critical and institutional legitimacy "dereferentialization." He is suspicious of an academic endeavor which would read everything as its potential object of study and claim this actual lack of a focus as a possible focus to retain (or regain) the critical force of intellectual work.

Readings's point is not to criticize the often excellent, engaging, and engaged work being done under the rubric of

cultural studies. But he does analyze the breadth and resultant dereferentialization of the disciplinary (or "field") self-understanding of cultural studies within the U.S.-American university in conjunction with the shift in the position and function of the university. As the inculcation of national culture, distilled in the study of literature, declines in importance under globalization, departments of national literatures lose a traditional rationale, and (at least according to enrollment statistics) also a clientele. The university becomes a bureaucratically organized, consumer-oriented corporation, and a techno-bureaucratic notion of "excellence" supplants culture as the heart of what the university sees itself as producing. "Excellence" names a non-referential principle which allows the maximum of internal administration.[18] The coincidence of this process with the emergence of cultural studies in the humanities, not merely as a "border action," but as a counter-discipline or field or instructional unit (department or more loosely structured program) is striking. There may be hidden costs in establishing a cross-disciplinary field corresponding to the administrative logic of the post-modern university. The intellectuals engaged in cultural studies see themselves – as we see ourselves in German culture studies – as preserving a critical social and political function. What Readings's analysis forces me to attempt to think about is who or what else might be invested in such new, interdisciplinary formations within the university. I need to know more about who cares.

The suggested parallel of German culture studies and cultural studies should immediately elicit the justifiable protest that German studies or German culture studies indeed has a referent: Germany or the culture of German-speaking Europe. My set of questions then has to do with how we institutionalize. I will formulate them as questions. Do Departments of German become German Studies programs? If so, whom do we hire? Scholars from other disciplines, because we are now interdisciplinary? If they cannot teach German language courses, do the "disciplined Germans" do the language instruction? Do we disarticulate

German Studies from language instruction? Is German Studies a separate, perhaps a graduate, program on campus? It then might consist of historians, sociologists, economists, political scientists, art and music historians, – and Germanists. What is the disciplinary contribution of Germanists? Many of us here today wear more than one hat. I, for example, have a budgeted joint appointment in two instructional units within my university. Are we shifting toward working with graduate students who are equally versatile? Is there a shift in university structures toward interdisciplinary clusters? And if so, is it a progressive idea – or a downsizing measure, or both?

For this workshop I set myself the task of answering these questions, if only in my own mind. I find that I cannot. So, prompted by Bill Readings's book, I raise them. Readings's *The University in Ruins* does not offer a jeremiad; it is the exact opposite of the volume *What's Happened to the Humanities?* edited by Alvin Kernan.[19] If the traditional disciplines of the humanities have become defunctionalized in the university as bureaucratic corporation, an attempted restoration of their traditional disciplinary configurations is both a lost cause and a not particularly savory cause anyway. The critiques of the exclusionary nature of the canonical literary tradition as well as of the traditional definition of literature (itself a historical discursive formation) have a compelling validity. In this country, the Civil Rights movement, the women's movement, the critique of imperialism as a legacy of the anti-Vietnam War movement, and the altered demographics of the college population in the post-war period are not reversible. A return to traditional literary history and criticism as the center of a national language and literature department is simply not possible. Tempering my endorsement of Bill Readings's *The University in Ruins* is a large question mark regarding the functionalism of his argument. Structural economic shifts appear to determine all parameters for action. His book does offer a number of suggestions for what we might still do here in the ruins, and I would endorse some form of German Studies as a proactive

enterprise. With full recognition of the caveats, we need to work toward creative, responsible options. Indeed, the question of agency in university and/or disciplinary restructuring preoccupies me, and I take the case of feminist literary criticism to be instructive.

II. Feminist Literary Criticism

The 1990 issue of the journal differences. *A Journal of Feminist Cultural Studies* admits to being haunted by the following statement by Derrida: "As much as women's studies has not put back into question the very principles of the structure of the [nineteenth-century German] model of the university, it risks being just another cell in the university beehive."[20] Rather unsurprisingly, the editors inform us in the preface that, indeed, "all the contributors to this issue are convinced that feminism has largely lived up to its promise of interrogating the Germanic model of the university organized around disciplines and periods, and that it can, indeed should, serve as a model for elaborating emergent programs."[21] The editors also emphasize clearly the centrality of questions of pedagogy as well as of content and methodology to feminist academic work: "The question of the production of knowledge cannot be separated from its transmission, from questions of students and teachers."[22] Or, as the literary scholar Margaret Ferguson put it several years ago: "changes in the content of the curriculum [...] [should] be correlated with changes in the forms of instruction."[23]

Women's Studies or women's studies in relation to cultural studies is not my topic in this section, although I have given some thought to the feminist critiques historically internal to British Cultural Studies. There may be a way in which one might glean from those debates and discussions relevant questions for the constitution of German culture studies.[24] My focus here is on feminist literary criticism in the beehive of German departments and on the relationship of pedagogy to paradigms of knowledge.

One should keep in mind as background the connection of feminist literary criticism to a specific social movement external to the university. The phenomenon of cultural studies has no such clear political motivation as the women's movement provided for the beginnings of feminist literary criticism within the teaching and research missions of the university.

The early history of feminist literary criticism in U.S. *Germanistik* is inseparable from the members and evolution of the organisation Women in German, and a formal foundational moment was a newsletter sent out by women from the University of Wisconsin, Madison in 1974.[25] The collaboration of graduate students and untenured faculty established the field in this country, and early feminist projects in German were similar to those in other literary fields: a critique of images of women and sexism in the German literary tradition, followed by the "spade and shovel work" of excavating the women writers themselves. The labor of excavation necessary to rediscover and read female authors in German literary history was fundamental. They had been more thoroughly buried than in British or U.S.-American literature, and a major task for feminist Germanist scholars was editing primary sources and compiling historical documentation. This work continues to be central, including making texts available in translation or on-line. U.S.-American scholarship and European feminist work have taken somewhat different routes, albeit with collaboration and mutual inspiration. In the U.S., the syllabi collections published by WIG (Women in German) attest to the incorporation of feminist scholarship throughout the 1980s into departmental curricula through courses on women authors, women and film, etc. The focus and methodology corresponded roughly to what Elaine Showalter has termed "gynocriticism" in English criticism, the analysis of women's writing.

Instead of once again retelling the story of WIG or of feminist work in *Germanistik*,[26] I want to indicate briefly the manner in which German feminist literary criticism in the U.S. becomes German culture studies of a certain variety, partly presciently,

partly accompanying the developments of the last years in the field. Then I want to perceive, or perhaps fantasize, some differences. Early feminist work in *Germanistik* rapidly expanded the notion of literature, not only to dispute the boundary between high and popular literature (that boundary had been ideologically critiqued by non-feminist Germanists as well), but to include other varieties of texts altogether. Partly motivated by an attraction to the lives of female authors, a scholarly attention to the practices of everyday life developed, and writing the narrative of literary history became only one critical activity among others. Feminist work in *Germanistik* was never restricted by the methodology of literary formalism. Feminist scholars read texts for ideological subtexts, for the manner in which gender subtends the structuring of both texts and social formations alike. Extending beyond the limits of gynocriticism, the notion of gender became a central category of analysis. Gender did not only designate difference, but also a form of power which structures personal identity and social formations. The concept of gender in feminist criticism came to be read more complexly as always already inflected by race, ethnicity, class, and other factors. What began as a revolt against sexism in both the beehive and its literary tradition evolved into a intricate series of investigations of identity – of subjects, texts, social and cultural formations – with an insistence on complexity and diversity. It is not legitimate to limit feminist work in *Germanistik* to WIG, although reflecting on the organization, its yearbook, yearly conferences, WEB-site, internet discussion list enables a certain historical trajectory. It is also not possible to tell the history of feminist work as a streamlined development, as perhaps now more than ever a plurality of methodological approaches and objects of investigation characterize the field. This contemporary trait of methodological plurality is shared to a certain extent by German Studies. What I sense on the horizon in WIG, and this may be wishful thinking on my part, is a more critical reflection on multidisciplinarity, on the very "disciplinarity" of the other disciplines with which we in German departments are so currently

merrily "multi" and on what *Germanistik* as a discipline brings to that merriment, to German studies.[27]

What I hope that feminist work contributes to the reflections on multidisciplinarity in German studies – the changes it has made in the beehive beyond the insistence on gender in its complex intersectionality with race, ethnicity, class, and other factors of social stratification as a primary category of literary analysis – is the following:

1. a loyalty to the integration of foreign-language instruction into our discipline.[28]
2. a commitment to alternative models of pedagogy.

Feminist academic work has long explored the power relations, tensions, opportunities for transference and counter-transference, the benefits of cooperative learning, the importance of antagonism and conflict in discussion, the necessary end to "Frontalunterricht" without abandoning the position of legitimate (or useful) authority in the classroom, the necessity of professional training and guidance for graduate students without making our graduate classrooms into job-skills-centers.

3. a certain resistance to defining German Studies as being mainly about the national identity of Germany.
4. continued reflection upon what makes Germanistik a discipline after the end of the reign of literature.

The final point is shared, I believe, by all Germanists, feminists and non-. If *Germanistik* either is or is a part of German culture studies, and culture is defined broadly enough to include, as Sara Lennox suggested in her paper reviewing the journal *Rethinking Marxism*, "kinship as a key system of signifying and subjectivity," then perhaps disciplinarity exists only at the level of individual scholar or collaborative scholarly project. In attempting my own reflection, I, as an overdetermined Germanist of a certain

generation, cannot avoid the question: "Whatever happened to literature?"

III. The Difference of Literature

I will phrase this concluding section in a personal tone, as they are very individualized reflections. I believe that the project of writing and rewriting German literary history has outlived its central function in our field, although it still exists in coverage models in some graduate and undergraduate programs in this country. I also think that the type of formalist inquiry that deprives a literary text of its embeddedness in social-historical or discursive networks lost its hold in *Germanistik* with the generation committed to ideological criticism. Their challenge subordinated the literary text to the notion of the totality of a culture, viewed in historically determined epochs. Cultural studies in other literature departments at times seems to be still fighting the battle of formalist criticism, along with the related one of high versus popular culture. In *Germanistik*, the notion of literature is not construed to refer solely to a high canonical tradition. However, Germanists have retained an allegiance to writing ever more refined versions of literary history.

When we say that literature is no longer what we do or what our students are interested in, I sometimes think that we mean "high" literature, formalist criticism, or the grand inclusive story of literary history. And that is fine with me. Feminist literary criticism, among other factors, taught me suspicion of canons and master narratives.

So what else is there?

In our discussion on the opening evening of this workshop, Sabine Gross characterized one aspect of her work with literary texts as the investigation into the cognitive process of reading. She depicted teaching literature in the foreign-language classroom as exercising a set of skills: an attention to the language and structure of texts.

In his paper entitled "Ethics and the Rhetoric of Culture," Gerhard Richter demonstrated as well as advocated a set of reading practices. The audience at this workshop then engaged with his practices. One of Hans Adler's questions had to do with the position of enunciation; one of Klaus Berghahn's points dealt with the rhetoric and figures of transgression for Ernst Bloch. Marc Silberman asked about the entire communicative situation, addressee as well as reader of the cultural text. I suggested we should remember Nancy Fraser's reading of Habermas as an example of reminding us of what Sara Lennox termed the situatedness of process.

I submit that we were engaging disciplinarily – that these were discussions sociologists or political theorists might not have in quite this form. It is our training as literary scholars which occasioned that discussion. And it seems to me that in our discussion of Richter's "Ethics and the Rhetoric of Culture," we were insisting on both discursivity and materiality. This vital connection, in my view, is one that Germanists can accomplish skillfully. In her contribution to the spring 1989 issue of *German Quarterly*, Arlene Teraoka emphasized the reading of texts, not "textualized situations or 'texts' in quotation marks," as what a German Studies conceived as cultural studies might do.[29] Practicing and honing the critical skills necessary to such analyses is something that can be taught, learned, shared, practiced. And in inter-, multi-, cross-disciplinary contexts, with debates on questions such as the discursive construction of multiple and shifting identities and the complex play of material power across and through bodies and social formations, both those critical skills and the texts we practice them on (texts with their own material reality and historical location) may well characterize a disciplinary self-understanding, however partial and open-ended.

An example of this type of work is Leslie Adelson's book *Making Bodies, Making History* – where carefully nuanced readings of literary texts explore historically specific representations of cultural heterogeneity and subjective agency,

investigating engendered, racialized, historicized bodies of experience.[30]

IV. In Place of a Conclusion

I would like to conclude with an anecdote from the realm of praxis. In the complexity of a globalized world, the lines of political responsibility and accountability are not as clear as was perhaps once hoped. It seems a grandiose self-delusion to claim political efficacy beyond the academy for our work as scholars in cultural studies, German culture studies, or feminist *Germanistik*. Not that there is nothing to be done outside the walls of academe, but such activism is not necessarily congruous with our professional identities and scholarly activities.

Which does not mean that there is nothing to be done. I illustrate and conclude with an anecdote from my current class in German conversation and composition.

On the first day of the semester, the class engaged in an introductory exercise to get acquainted. Each student, as well as the professor, filled out a "Steckbrief" with information about him- or herself, including a self-drawn portrait. The wanted posters were then all placed on the floor, and the students (and the professor) had to pick a partner for a get-acquainted conversation.[31] One of the questions was "Was ist Ihnen am wichtigsten im Leben?" The twenty-two students had, for the most part, predictable answers: "meine Familie," "Zulassung zum Medizinstudium," "gute Noten," "meine FreundInnen."[32]

One student had a unique answer. What mattered most to her in life was "die Wahrheit." In a gesture of respect as well as gender-bending betrayal of both Friedrich Schiller and traditional *Germanistik*, I conclude today with the thought that, whatever we decide regarding cultural studies, German culture studies, and feminist *Germanistik*, it does indeed matter. In my opinion and in my experience, we dare not forget that . . . "der Frau kann geholfen werden."

Notes

1 The term "schielender Blick" was a central category in German feminist literary criticism. It characterizes the necessity of existing both within and beyond dominant discursive practices. See Sigrid Weigel, "Der schielende Blick. Thesen zur Geschichte weiblicher Schreibpraxis," *Die verborgene Frau. Sechs Beiträge zu einer feministischen Literaturwissenschaft* (Berlin, 1983), pp. 83-137.

2 Marc Weiner, "From the Editor," *German Quarterly* 69:4 (1996): v-ix. Quotations here from v.

3 *German Quarterly* 62:2 (1989); *Monatshefte* 84:2 (1992); *New German Critique* 65 (Spring/Summer, 1995).

4 Azade Seyhan, "Lost in Translation: Re-Membering the Mother Tongue in Emine Sevgi Özdamar's *Das Leben ist eine Karawanserei*," *German Quarterly* 69:4 (1996): 415. See also Azade Seyhan, "Prospects for Feminist Literary Theory in German Studies: A Response to Sara Lennox's Paper," *German Quarterly* 62:2 (1989): 171-177.

5 Lawrence Grossberg, Cary Nelson, Paula Treichler, eds., *Cultural Studies* (New York, 1992).

6 Grossberg, Nelson, Treichler, p. 4.

7 Russell Berman, *Cultural Studies of Modern Germany. History, Representation, and Nationhood* (Madison, WI, 1993), p. 10.

8 David Bathrick, "Cultural Studies," *Introduction to Scholarship in Modern Languages and Literatures*, ed. Joseph Gibaldi, 2nd ed. (New York, 1992), pp. 320, 322.

9 Bill Readings, *The University in Ruins* (Cambridge, MA, 1996). Peter Uwe Hohendahl provides a detailed, thoughtful reading of Readings's analysis and a measured response in his essay in this workshop volume. His paper, and the discussion after my paper regarding the extent of Readings's knowledge of the land-grant universities in the United States and their historical function in the social mobility of the U.S.-American populace provide a reassuring perspective, but do not diminish the rigor and import of Readings's appraisal.

10 Readings, p. 3.

11 Readings, p. 53.

12 Readings, p. 15.

13 Readings, p. 16.

14 For an interesting analysis of what this process means for the field of comparative literature, see William Moebius, "Lines in the Sand: Comparative Literature and the National Literature Departments," *Comparative Literature* 49:3 (1997): 243-258.

15 Hinrich Seeba, "Critique of Identity Formation: Toward an Intercultural Model of German Studies," *German Quarterly* 62:2 (1989): 151.

16 Anthony Easthope, *Literary Into Cultural Studies* (New York, 1991).

17 Readings, p. 98.

18 One of the excellent examples Readings gives for the internal administration of "excellence" is the trend toward standardized forms for student evaluation of courses. These forms, which are supposed to be uniform across a college or university, effectively erase distinctions in pedagogy appropriate for specific departments, disciplines or even individual courses or situations. Readings, pp. 130-131.

19 *What's Happened to the Humanities*, ed. Alvin Kernan (Princeton, 1997). An accusatory tone, as in "who killed the study of literature?" also characterizes Kernan, *The Death of Literature* (New Haven, 1990).

20 Jacques Derrida, "Women in the Beehive: A Seminar with Jacques Derrida," *subjects/objects* 2 (1984): 7. Quoted here from *differences: A Journal of Feminist Cultural Studies* 2.3 (1990): v.

21 Naomi Schor and Elizabeth Weed, "Preface," *differences* 2.3. (1990): v-vi.

22 Schor/Weed, p. vi.

23 Margaret Ferguson, "Teaching and/as Reproduction," *The Yale Journal of Criticism* 1.2 (1988): 219. Elaine Rooney quotes Ferguson and uses women's studies to query the political position of cultural studies in the U.S. in her article "Discipline and Vanish: Feminism, the Resistance to Theory, and the Politics of Cultural Studies," *differences* 2.3 (1990): 14-28.

24 Particularly two volumes addressing the issues of women, feminism, and cultural studies in the British context form part of the development of British cultural studies: Women's Study Group, Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies, *Women Take Issue: Aspects of Women's Subordination* (London, 1978); *Off-center: Feminism and Cultural Studies*, eds. Sarah Franklin, Celia Lury, and Jackie Stacey (London, 1991). An excellent overview of the relationship of feminism and cultural studies may be found in Anne Balsamo, "Feminism and Cultural Studies," *Journal of the Midwest Modern Language Association* 24:1 (1991): 50-73.

25 The early years are well chronicled by Jeanette Clausen, "The Coalition of Women in German: An Interpretive History and Celebration," *Women in German Yearbook 1*, eds. Marianne Burkhard and Edith Waldstein (Lanham, MD, 1985), pp. 1-27.

26 Selected sources in addition to footnote 23 for reviewing those histories are: Jeanette Clausen and Sara Friedrichsmeyer, "WIG 2000: Feminism and the Future of *Germanistik*," *Women in German Yearbook 10*, eds. Jeanette Clausen and Sara Friedrichsmeyer (Lincoln, NE, 1995), pp. 267-272; Sara Friedrichsmeyer and Patricia Herminghouse, "Towards an

'American Germanics'?: Editorial Postscript," *Women in German Yearbook 12*, eds. Sara Friedrichsmeyer and Patricia Herminghouse (Lincoln, NE, 1996), pp. 233-239; Marilyn Sibley Fries, "Zur Rezeption deutschsprachiger Autorinnen in den USA," *Weimarer Beiträge* 39:3 (1993): 410-446; Ruth-Ellen B. Joeres, "'Language is Also a Place of Struggle': The Language of Feminism and the Language of American *Germanistik*," *Women in German Yearbook 8*, eds. Jeanette Clausen and Sara Friedrichsmeyer (Lincoln, Nebraska, 1993), pp. 247-257; Sara Lennox, "Feminist Scholarship and *Germanistik*," *German Quarterly* 62:2 (1989): 158-169; Biddy Martin, "Zwischenbilanz der feministischen Debatten," *Germanistik in den USA*, ed. Frank Trommler (Opladen, 1989), pp. 165-195.

27 The 1995 conference of Women in German concentrated on the question of cross-disciplinary work. Scholars were invited from three "cognate disciplines": the historian Atina Grossman, the sociologist Myra Marx Ferree, and the political theorist Joan Cocks. Their essays, plus an introduction by Sara Lennox to the issues of the conference, may be found in *Women in German Yearbook 12*, eds. Sara Friedrichsmeyer and Patricia Herminghouse (Lincoln, NE, 1996) pp. 1-51.

28 To a certain extent, this loyalty reflects the number of women engaged in language instruction. Yet it is part of the larger debate regarding the integration of language teaching and the literature or culture courses as the mission of a German (Studies) department. Russell Berman has written convincingly on the necessary integration on several occasions: "Global Thinking, Local Teaching: Departments, Curricula, and Culture," *Profession 95* (New York, 1995): 89-93; "Reform and Continuity: Graduate Education toward a Foreign Cultural Literacy," *Profession 97* (New York, 1997): 61-74.

29 Arlene Teraoka, "Is Culture to Us What Text is to Anthropology? A Response to Jeffrey M. Peck's Paper," *German Quarterly* 62:2 (1989): 190.

30 Leslie Adelson, *Making Bodies, Making History. Feminism and German Identity* (Lincoln, NE, 1993).

31 I wish to thank my colleague Charles James for providing me with this opening activity.

32 The question was: 'What matters most to you in life?" The predictable answers were: "my family," "admission to medical school," "good grades," "my friends." The "deviant" answer was "truth," and my closing sentence is a gender-rearranged version of the final line of *The Robbers* (1781), Schiller's drama of epochal revolt and historical change. The original, in my English translation, read: "That man may yet be helped."

Eric Jacobsen, Lisa A. Rainwater Van Suntum, Peter Van Suntum

How to Make an American *German Studies* Quilt: Choosing Patterns; Redefining Borders

> You need a large wooden frame and enough space to accommodate it. When you choose your colors, make them sympathetic to one another. Your needles must be finely honed so you do not break the weave of your fabric. Embroidery thread is required to hold the work together for future generations. It is comprised of remnants of material in numerous textures, colors; actually, you could not call the squares of a Crazy Quilt squares, since the stitched-together pieces are of all sizes and shapes.
>
> *How to Make an American Quilt*
> Whitney Otto

I

From the onset of our research, the nature of our topic has proven to be problematic. As most in the field is aware, a vast number of differing views, approaches, and issues floods the publications and secondary literature; definitions, theories, pedagogical methods, and concepts of identity continue to be discussed, yet a fundamental predicament prevails within the field of American German studies in the United States: unity. Ironically, this seems to be the one concept on which all scholars can agree. After nearly 20 years of collecting data in the field, Valters Nollendorfs, in 1995, laments that professional "discussion must address both practical and theoretical aspects of German studies with the aim of establishing a firm paradigm out of the formative chaos still in

evidence."[1] And Steven Taubeneck writes, "although there is considerable agreement about the most important areas to be included in German studies, no consensus on a comprehensive framework has been achieved."[2]

While the original theme of our paper focused primarily on recent trends in *Germanistik*, it was difficult to overlook this central debate within the discipline: an intellectual, perhaps psychological, drive which seeks harmony rather than tolerating a discord of otherness. Thus, in discussing trends, the concept of unity and consensus has inadvertently become the focus of our paper, for this is by far one of the most discussed subjects in our field in recent years. In the 1980's, the question was raised: How do we curb the decreasing numbers of enrollment in German departments? Do we need to define the aims of German studies? During the last ten years, numerous conferences and special issues of journals have addressed the question how professionals should unify both themselves and their subject matter within the realm of German studies.[3] It has also been suggested that in unifying the field of German studies, greater attention to and a better understanding of German culture will proliferate in the United States (and by implication prevent diminishing enrollments in German Departments).

While much debate has centered on the possible ways we can unify German studies, another important concept continues to surface: conflict. A preliminary analysis of the two concepts may suggest that conflict itself is causally linked to the perception of a lack of unity or a need for unity within the field. In the late 1960's and the 1970's an overall politicization was instrumental in destabilizing the borders in German studies–it was one of the first steps toward coming to terms with German history and culture. While US soldiers were sent to war in Vietnam, civil rights movements, anti-war demonstrations, the sexual revolution, and Flower Power erupted across the country. The ever-growing need for acceptance and investigation of the "Other" came to the forefront of discussion: this actualization of the "Other" focused on

the empowerment of women, American blacks, and political leftists. Departments such as Women's studies and Black studies slowly began to emerge on university and college campuses.

This trend carried over to *Germanistik* as well. Privileged attention was no longer given to the white, middle class male German writer but also given to other voices from German speaking countries whom had not yet been heard: women, Jews, leftist writers, and ethnically diverse minority groups. The very borders which had held these individuals at bay from scholarly inquiry had now become new topics for undergraduate and graduate courses and dissertations across the United States. Out of *Germanistik* grew German studies.

Consequently, the ideological and theoretical repercussions of this period in history led not only to a critique but also to an attrition of the dominant, postwar, conservative approach to literature secured by New Critics in the 1950's. In other words, it could be argued that if there had not been such a conflict, the illusory unity would yet remain in *Germanistik.* Upon closer analysis, however, we argue that it is precisely this dialectic relationship between unity and conflict which could and should bring the discipline of German studies into a new phase of development: one which emphasizes tolerance, recognizes the "Other", and agrees to live within contradictions.

It must be noted that the difficulty of this type of collective paper itself is one of unity and differences. Three advanced graduate students (two natives of the United States, one native of Germany, two males, and one female), each with his/her own ideas and approaches to German culture worked together in order to develop a unifying concept which in the end would bind the paper together. After many lively discussions, it has become clear to us how difficult it is to develop one concept by which a collective may discuss German culture. We have together, however, created a concept of German studies and a theoretical apparatus which we propose as a model.

One may define German studies loosely as the investigation *of*

things that are German. An explanation of what we mean by "things German" and why it is important to understand the word "things" as a plural rather than a singular noun, will follow. This loose definition may serve to *unify* one's concept of German studies and to separate it from other fields (such as English or French studies, or, more broadly, Philosophy or History), but it does not go far enough so as to distinguish German studies from its disciplinary ancestor, *Germanistik.* Exactly how and why *Germanistik* changed into German studies is a large part of the subject of our paper, and our discussion of it will follow. At this point, let us state that German studies, in contrast to *Germanistik,* distinguishes itself by its *critical* approach. By this we mean that the preferred focus of German studies is always one of many distinct historical periods in which a conflict has occurred. Such a conflict can be political, social, and/or economic. We say that the attitude of German studies is *critical* because its goal of inquiry is not to affirm the manifestations of German culture but rather to study them with scrutiny, with a quest for understanding and acceptance of the diversities in German culture, and with an awareness of one's own perspective. There is more than one way to be critical; therefore, we shall describe some critical perspectives and approaches that have emerged in recent years and which constitute the *diversity* of German studies. We believe that at both the elementary levels (language learning) and the advanced levels of both undergraduate and graduate instruction the concept of culture must be considered not affirmatively but rather from a critical approach like the ones that we shall describe here.

Our concept is not necessarily our own invention. Other scholars, to whom we will later refer, have also argued for this type of analysis. What we offer as new, perhaps, is the much needed *unity in diversity* that is still lacking in German studies. In the scope of this paper, we will first comment on the various shifts of the 1960's and 1970's and their effects on German studies thereafter. We will then turn to the aforementioned unity conflict with regards to theoretical, methodological, and pedagogical issues

in German studies. In conclusion a new approach to German studies will be offered. The end product resembles a North American quilt in which each square of the quilt, each theoretical approach, remains an individual entity, but which also contributes to the final creation: German studies.

II

> Save your opinions for your quilt. Put your heart and voice into it. Cast your ballot; express your feelings regarding industrialization, emancipation, women's suffrage.

Among all the changes that have accompanied the study of culture, the ones most likely to have permanently transformed our understanding are those changes that proceed from the recognition that there exists no one typical German, but many; no one German culture, but many; no one authentic German voice, but many. This is a fundamental shift in the history of North American German studies. It can be situated somewhere in the 1960's–a time of growing social and political awareness. The division of German studies into progressive, conservative, *and* reactionary tendencies was one of the first symptomatic fissures that erupted in the unitary notion of Germanness which had prevailed in North American German scholarship and teaching in the early sixties. Using the German Department at the University of Wisconsin-Madison as an example, we will first observe those transformations which resulted in new course offerings and spawned provocative, controversial Wisconsin Workshops. Later we will broaden our study to all North American universities (United States and Canada), in order to examine those dissertation titles, dating from 1970-1996 written in German departments, which show an upsurge of interest in topics formally beyond the borders of *Germanistik.*

The German Department at the University of Wisconsin-Madison has undergone many changes in the last four decades. A

prime example of such transformations is illustrated in an undergraduate course title (offered at Madison since 1931). In 1962 Jost Hermand changed the original title, "Deutsches Volkstum" to "Deutsche Kulturgeschichte."[4] The term "Volkstum" was deemed problematic, for at this time a unifying concept of Germanness had come into question.

The search for understanding and recognition of the various identities which make up a national culture erupted in the late 1960's and early 1970's. Emancipation became the goal not only of the new student left, but also of ethnic groups fighting racism, of women fighting patriarchy, and of Gays and Lesbians fighting heterosexist bigotry. The way to reach this goal was not only to rediscover the voice of one's own group in the present and in history but also critically analyze the old histories which had condemned these voices to obscurity. Many of the leftist or liberal democratic tendencies in German-speaking regions were now examined with new interest and intensity, or perhaps even for the first time altogether. Among the German courses at UW-Madison that illustrate this tendency is the first course to carry the name of "Brecht" in its title, offered in the spring of 1965.[5] Additional courses on Post-Brechtian drama, such as works by Heiner Müller were offered by Jost Hermand in subsequent years.

The question of ethnicity in the study of German culture came abruptly into focus in the spring of 1971 in Madison in a seminar taught by Reinhold Grimm entitled "The Black Man in German Literature."[6] Interest in Jewish communities in Germany is reflected by many courses offered in the seventies whose titles contain the word "Jewish" or "Yiddish." "Yiddish Literature in Translation," a course offered annually by Evelyn Torton Beck, is one example of these.[7] Coinciding with the growing interest in women's rights and concerns, German women writers, and the representation of women in German works written by men also became the focus of scholarly attention and discussion in the seventies. At the UW, the first course to feature the word "Women" in its title was offered by Torton Beck in the spring of

1977: "Women Writers since 1945." [8] She, James Steakley and others were also co-founders of "Women in German," (WIG), a nationwide organization of feminist scholars in German studies.[9]

The early seventies were the time of *Ostpolitik* and of the official diplomatic recognition of the GDR by the Western nations. To the new "German studies" scholars, the existence of two German political and economic systems underscored their point that there is more than one kind of Germanness. At a conference in 1972 named "Teaching Postwar Germany in America" at Indiana University, Louis Helbig, one of the conveners, stated that the political division of the *Frontstaaten* allows us to view Germany" as a group of "German cultural areas" and to treat Austria and Switzerland as separate areas in their own right.[10] At the Indiana conference, guests from East and West met and often clashed in discussions about what, or which, are the real "Germanies."

Such an East-West confrontation was not to the satisfaction of another group of American "German studies" scholars whose desire was to examine the GDR in the spirit of the New Left of the seventies, that is, with the understanding that no political system is static, but rather is subject to change in history – as indeed the word "New" in the term "New Left" implies. These scholars included David Bathrick (UW-Madison), Anson Rabinbach (a history student of George Mosse, UW-Madison), Andreas Huyssen (UW-Milwaukee), Jack Zipes (UW-Milwaukee). Together they founded the scholarly journal *New German Critique*,[11] which appeared early in 1974 with the announcement of a conference to be held that spring in St. Louis, Missouri.[12] The introduction to the second issue of *New German Critique*, which focused on the GDR, reflected the purpose of the St. Louis conference: "In the same way that western capitalist societies do not exhibit unilinear lines of development, German socialism [...] demands an analysis which takes as its starting point the real historical conditions of socialist development, and not an abstract standpoint of 'models of socialism.'"[13] The conference proceeded to discuss different stages in the historical development of the GDR, thus affording a more

highly differentiated view of this part of Germany than had often been recognized or appreciated before. Not surprisingly, due to the participation of Wisconsin scholars at the St. Louis conference, the UW German Department also began to proceed from the concept of separate "German culture areas," in history and geography, as course descriptions from the 1970's confirm.[14]

Once a concept is understood as divisible, it is no longer a problem to divide it into any such parts as may serve to illuminate contradictions and conflicts. All of the "German culture areas" – geographical or otherwise – discussed thus far can be divided by class systems as well. Occasionally, the problem of social hierarchies and the cultural artifacts produced and consumed by them is the focus of a cultural studies course. Once again, evidence of concern with this problem appears in the seventies. A seminar entitled "Trivialliteratur" appeared in the spring of 1972 in preparation for a Wisconsin Workshop conference held later that year, entitled "Popularität und Trivialität."[15] Later, the focus shifted to literature written by or about industrial workers. In the spring of 1978, a course offered by Jost Hermand, "Work and Literature" was in preparation of that year's Wisconsin Workshop conference, which carried the same title.[16]

Another example which signifies an extension of cultural borders is the study of film. The maturing of scholarly film criticism can be understood as an ideological breakthrough–the acceptance of films, and not only highbrow "art" films, as the object of scholarly inquiry within German studies followed the notion that there are always at least two different "classes" of culture: "elitäre" E-Kultur and "unterhaltsame" U-Kultur,[17] the latter of which includes many if not most films (and literature). At the UW-Madison, David Bathrick held positions in both the German department and the Film studies department. His course "Literature and Film," offered in the fall of 1975, was the first in the UW German Department to carry the word "film" in its title.[18] Bathrick's course entitled "German Film," offered in 1980, grouped films not according to an aesthetic hierarchy, but rather

according to historical time periods, so as to reflect the cultural development of German film making during the Weimar Republic, the Nazi dictatorship, and the Postwar era.[19]

One of the most recent differences to emerge as a fault line in the crumbling unity of German culture rarely has appeared in course titles or course descriptions: difference in sexual orientation. This does not mean that Gay and Lesbian studies have not made inroads here as elsewhere. On the contrary: with a 1975 course taught by Jost Hermand entitled "Sex and Love in German Literature," the topic of sexuality became the focus of attention, and in 1977, James Steakley, now an internationally known scholar of the history of the homosexual liberation movement in Germany, was hired to direct the development of the undergraduate degree in cultural studies in the German Department at the UW. Steakley's cultural studies courses are broad in scope, but owing to his expertise often delve into issues of sexual orientations and the liberalization of attitudes toward them in German history.[20]

From GDR studies to Queer studies, each of the new social movements that emerged in the United States during the 1960's and 1970's has drawn attention within German studies. The post-Earth Day 1970 ecology movement is no exception, despite the difficulty in introducing into a department within the Humanities an ideology whose adherents often condemn "anthropocentrism."[21] Approaches to literature and culture that are shaped by ecological concerns are quite new, but there is evidence that they have been present at least since the 1980s, paralleling interest in the West German Green movement; at UW-Madison, for example, Jost Hermand offered several courses that expressly mentioned ecology as a component or even a focus of interest.[22]

German studies has expanded its disciplinary base perhaps as far as possible, to include not only the study of literature but of visual art, music, film, and mass media, drawing "cultural background" information from political science, women's and ethnic studies, political science, history, psychology, sociology, and – with ecology – geography and various environmental

sciences.[23] Clearly, a fascination with interdisciplinarity has established itself within the discipline. The rise in popularity of an unabashedly interdisciplinary journal, the *German Studies Review*, testifies to the growing interest in multidisciplinary research in departments of German in America.[24] The journal's founding organization, the Western Association for German Studies, which started publication of the journal in 1978, broadened its name in 1985 to "German Studies Association," reflecting its growth in membership.[25]

III

Until now, we have examined changes in the UW German department, arguing that these reflected changes in German departments. A wider search is needed, however, to measure the true breadth of the development of German studies in America. We shall therefore proceed with an examination of the experiences and the works of students themselves. Let us first share the reminiscences of Biddy Martin, which appeared recently in her article "Teaching Literature, Changing Cultures" in the PMLA Journal.[26] Martin was a student of German at the UW Madison during the seventies and a participant in the new social movements and intellectual upheaval of that time. Summarizing her experiences as a graduate student and her exposure to cultural investigation in the 1970's, she writes that she and her fellow students and professors, Jost Hermand, Klaus Berghahn, Evelyn Torton Beck, David Bathrick, and Elaine Marks shared

> a strong sense of the historical and political implications of literature but debated openly with one another over the relations among historical context, political investment, and aesthetic values. The lively disputes convinced many of the students that these questions were complicated, irreducible to any final solution, and worth discussing forever.[27]

While Biddy Martin and others were studying at the University of Wisconsin-Madison, other students in North America were also analyzing the "Other" in German culture. Perhaps the greatest evidence of this can be found when one surveys the dissertations written during these formative years.

In the early 1970's, the titles of German dissertations[28] produced in the USA and Canada slowly began to reflect the increasing interest in "other" Germans. In 1971 three dissertation topics dealt with women's issues and one dealt with Jewish identity. By 1975 nine additional dissertations had addressed the role of "women" in German literature and/or culture and six had focused on Jewish identity. It is interesting to note that while attention to these new topics continued to rise during the next ten years, it was actually not until 1986 that a large number of "cultural" dissertations (those which dealt with film, with women's issues, with Jewish identity, and with the "other Germany" – the GDR, its politics, literature, and film) flooded the field of German studies. Between 1986 and 1990 thirteen dissertations focused on representations of "women," four dealt with Jewish identity, eight addressed German films, ten focused on issues of the GDR, and another ten named "culture" within their titles. An explosion of similar types of dissertations occurred between 1991 and 1996, with a total of 112 dissertations focusing on the aforementioned subject groups. One need only compare this with a total of 26 written between 1970 and 1975 (13 of which would fall under the category, "Women's studies"), in order to understand the burgeoning interest in the "other" in the aftermath of the tumultuous 1960's and 1970's. What can be understood from these data? How does it relate to the field of German studies? And finally, did this first shift, one which questioned the identity of the German-speaking peoples, bring about positive or negative effects?

First, the expansion of traditional literary studies to include the discussion of the "other" in the classroom had a great impact on the subsequent development of German studies. The splintering of the unquestioned, unifying German identity opened the way to an

investigation of new identities, which could no longer be classified within the borders of one country and one language. Instead, gender, race, political diversities, and socio-economic factors would come to the forefront of discussion and debate. Singularity had surrendered to plurality.

Also, German studies, as it was now called, no longer focused only on literature and language: new forms of media, among other topics, were included in the discussion. Admittedly, other media such as paintings and sculpture, operas and music dramas, and in specialty language courses for students in other fields, even newspapers, had been utilized in German departments before. In the last few decades, however, new methods of reading a wider variety of "texts," most notably feminism, deconstruction and New Historicism, made these formerly marginal genres acceptable as objects of literary criticism. Nearly thirty years after Siegfried Kracauer, Rudolf Arnheim, and forty years after Walter Benjamin, the study of films, and not only "art films" but popular films, gained its own recognition in the field. No longer could such things as newspapers, magazines, television, or radio, escape scrutiny by literary critics, for critics now argued that the "high" literary genres – epic prose, drama, and lyric poetry – no longer held the exclusive privilege of a "master key" to culture, but rather placed them among other keys in an expanding ring, each of which had its own cultural secrets to unlock.

The inclusion of all this subject matter is without a doubt an enormous benefit to the former field of *Germanistik*. The borders of the traditional literary canon have been transcended. In the field of German studies, the canon has not disappeared, but it is no longer the subject of uncritical adoration that it once was. As Peter Uwe Hohendahl[29] writes, the traditional canon has always been used so as to limit literature to so-called *masterpieces*. These masterpieces were read purely for their aesthetic value, grouped arbitrarily into literary movements that left out "literarisch subversive Momente."[30] Another problematic aspect of the long-established German canon is the general absence of women

writers. As already indicated, the women's movement of the 1970's was instrumental in focusing on, if not discovering for the first time, the voices of women as the "Other." According to Sara Lennox, one of the main goals of German studies must be the continued discovery and research of lost women writers in German literature and, subsequently, their integration into a new curriculum.[31] Due to this shift of interest, the traditional canon and the teaching of its literature has often been replaced by an exploration of those writers who are a part of German culture but had, for the most part been omitted from the traditional canon, and hence also from intellectual debate surrounding it. While the fields of interest grow ever larger, the classical authors have not necessarily been omitted from discussion. Rather texts by Lessing, Goethe, and Schiller are criticized from standpoints that lie beyond the borders of aesthetic value.[32] In the 1970's, both professors and students embarked on an exploration which led them to question and scrutinize the cultural atmosphere, the political and economical structures, and the sociological aspects within which these "classic" authors had lived and written. The traditional notion of literary criticism as a purely aesthetic exercise, practiced from the standpoint of assumed – because not examined – non-partisanship, was uprooted in order that a new kind of criticism could flourish in its place, one that always reflects upon one's own political perspective and those perspectives which can be read from – or into – the works that one examines. Courses structured in this way appeared at the University of Wisconsin in 1970; Reinhold Grimm's and Jost Hermand's "Klassiklegende" workshop was intended precisely to provoke discussion among students and instructors of socio-political aspects of the literature. [33] In the following section, we will relate some of the history of this particular aspect of this conflict in the German studies: the move from an "affirmative" approach to an approach from a particular perspective informed by political awareness and self-reflection.

IV

> Do not underestimate the importance of the carefully constructed border in the quilt. Its function is to keep the blocks apart while binding the entire work together both literally and thematically. Do not be hesitant in devising new, different ways to link the patches to each other; what works for one quilt may not be successful for another.

The traditional desire for a unified, all-encompassing affirmative approach to German culture is basically an outgrowth of the Wilhelminian period. At the German Conference of the Wisconsin Teachers' Association held in Milwaukee, November 1907, John Eiselmeier addressed his audience with the following guidelines for teaching German:

> There must be created and cultivated in the future teacher of German in the course of his training a sympathetic attitude, which enables him to appreciate the valuable cultural elements which German possesses. Antagonistic and critical inclinations toward German life must be eliminated. The teacher must learn that by teaching the German language he is not only to impart to his pupils a new language, but to open to them a wide vista; to open to them channels thru which new cultural elements may flow into their being; that while acquiring a knowledge of the language, they may also absorb German thuroness, German love for beauty and order; the German spirit of research for its own sake, German idealism, and above all that characteristic German "Gemüt", for which we have not even a commonly accepted designation in the English language; and that by absorbing these valuable elements they may enlarge and improve their own culture.[34]

Ninety years old, this definition strikes us as chauvinistic and overly zealous. It warns that "antagonistic and critical inclinations" must be "eliminated." Granted, this definition mirrors a time before the devastating events of World War I. and World War II., two catastrophes for which two ruling governments of Germany, with their imperialist orientation, are to be held responsible. But the underpinnings of the 1908 definition were not necessarily altogether *eliminated* from the concept of German culture after 1919. In 1989, Hinrich Seeba argues that during the 1930's and 1940's many German exile immigrants in fact turned to these idealistic traits of Germanness in order to distract attention from and/or deny the political events of their homeland. German bourgeois love for beauty and order, for the German *Geist*, and for German *Gemütlichkeit* represented for them the peaceful past, to which many of the exiles hoped to return.[35] It also offered them a cultural identity to which they could aspire: the "better Germany." The only political cause for which these exiles fought was the struggle against Hitler and national socialism, but as Seeba notes, "when the opposition to Nazi Germany lost its political impetus after the end of the Third Reich, the traditional concept of German culture, robbed of its moral mission, slowly moved into a social and political vacuum."[36] While Seeba's remarks may be correct, he fails to mention the fact that not all German immigrants to the United States fell into a political and social vacuum.

Coming as emigrants to the United States in the 1950's and 1960's, such scholars as Jost Hermand, Peter Uwe Hohendahl, Reinhold Grimm, and Frank Trommler, to name but a few, found it not only responsible but also necessary to contest the prevailing "affirmative" treatment of German culture which justified itself with the post-war theories of New Criticism, employing the "New Critical" method of conservative, close readings of the classics. In other words, they fought for the differentiation of political perspectives rather than an affirmative adulation of the culture and works of a nation, in which the Nazi regime had ordered and successfully carried out the murder of untold millions of people. In

the Introduction to their co-authored work, *Die Kultur der Weimarer Republik* (1978), Hermand and Trommler reject the affirmative reading of a "Perlenkette sogenannter Meisterwerke" and instead call for an understanding of art that the "Ansprüche des *Demokratischen*, das heißt Massenhaften dieser Republik wirklich ernst nahm und sich zugleich gegen alles bloß Reaktionäre wandte."[37] Weimar Germany serves as an example of a nation torn apart by contradictions–contradictions that are similar to those present in U.S. society even today, but which in Germany played themselves out to such extremes, and with such disastrous consequences, that they provoke discussion about what could happen elsewhere, even here in the United States, under similar political and social circumstances. German history is filled with conflicts, and each is reflected in the literature, the works or art, and in more recent times in the mass media. It would seem a waste to examine exclusively "master works" for their aesthetic value alone, when a critical examination of a variety of media produced before, during, and after times of conflicts could deepen our undestanding of the political, social, and economic conditions that prevailed in those days, or better still, provoke reflection upon our own time and its similarly worrisome tendencies.

Twenty years later, we find that the main idea which draws almost all theoretical writings of German studies together is the desire to establish precisely this type of critical approach towards teaching German culture: an examination of the cultural history of Germany which provokes comparisons with other cultures, including our own. Seeba writes, "obviously the comparative model of German studies can be reached only through the replacement of an affirmative concept of culture with a critical one."[38] Culture is no longer seen as an unchanging construct; it has become, in theory, a field of contradictions, power struggles, and domination. It has been noted that the affirmative, non-critical teaching of German literature has led one into a political vacuum. Another consequence of the old approach was the expectation that the American teacher of German develop a "German" persona for

his or her students. The purpose of the *new* approach is not merely to show the exemplary German, but to draw connections between the good and the bad in German culture and our own.[39]

V

The most difficult problem of German studies today is to create a unified approach to German studies, while not sacrificing diversity *to* unity but rather maintaining diversity *in* unity. As stated earlier, our concept of unity is not a limiting notion but rather an all-encompassing one, which draws the various interests and fields of German studies together with one like thread: *things German.* Thus, no individual is restricted from how or what he/she approaches, as long as it relates to or corresponds to German speaking peoples of any given culture. This is not to dispute the importance of interdisciplinarity but rather to stress that within interdisciplinarity *things German* cannot be forgotten. Among the different approaches to German studies, we can identify among others: anthropology, feminism, New Historicism, and psycho-analysis.

We will begin with a discussion of the anthropological approach to cultural studies. Its main emphasis focuses on identity and the creation of identity within a culture. Identity, as Seeba points out, is a sliding movement of attempts to achieve a stable construct. In the end, he states we must acknowledge that "there is no German identity than the very search for identity."[40] The relationship between social background and literature is seen as indirect; fiction in literature contains hopes, dreams, and conditions that are absent in reality. Culture becomes, from an anthropological viewpoint, a substitute for identity and the critic's task becomes one of analyzing its forms. The target of cultural studies, the German text, is seen as a field of domination, absence and utopian visions. Standing between two cultures and languages, German and American, it is the hope that the critical teachers of German studies will find their way back to the native culture of the American

student; the student will discover his or her own culture anew–familiar things will become estranged, new concepts will become familiar. Within an anthropologically inflected approach to German studies, the position and role of the critic is being criticized and reevaluated as well.

Women studies addresses identity within a given culture as well. The feminist appeal to German studies, as it has been outlined by Sara Lennox, promotes "an historically-based feminist criticism"[41] which differentiates between social roles of omen and which views gender, but not only gender as a culturally constructed distinction. The Marxist based/superstructure concept is being revised; culture is no longer seen as a mere reflex of economic development, "but itself as a locus of domination and resistance."[42] Under this perspective culture becomes a field of constant struggle. Following anthropological research, which maintains that all known societies construct gender and power asymmetries, feminist German studies examines the different degrees of female subordination under male rule, the women's position in their cultural struggle, and their women's publications. The focal point of feminism in German studies should therefore be a critical reading of texts under the aforementioned concept, to provide a historical background for such readings and to establish contact with women in so-called third world countries, in order to research social differences within the gender conflict.

Although feminist theory calls for a historical investigation of the power struggles through which the woman defines her position within a cultural hierarchy, the approach of New Historicism, also investigating history, examines the hierarchical relationships between high and low culture. This inflection of German studies displays how the lines between so-called "high literature" and other cultural documents fade, whenever the text is compared to other discourses of its time. In connecting the art work to its historical background, the proponents of New Historicism hope not only to expand the variety of literature but also to create a historical background which challenges the canonical view of historic events.

As Anton Kaes maintains, New Historicism "has become a catchword for all recent tendencies that focus on the dynamic interplay between the literary and the social world."[43] This approach to German studies views the written text as a communal creation rather than as an autonomous work of art. New Historicism calls for interdisciplinary research and contextual readings. It holds the view that historical facts are unable to provide a full understanding of literary texts; the historical background and the manner in which it is represented become the target of research. The hierarchy between historical documentation and literary works slowly disintegrates through the comparison and contrast of these texts. Although this is one of the goals of New Historicism–to dissolve the distinction between "high" and "low" literature, the difference between fictional and non-fictional elements of literature still plays an important role. Fiction always exceeds the reality of the material world; with its visions and hopes, fiction turns literature into a social document. The central goal of New Historicism is therefore the investigation of the relationships between literature and social power, and how political structures are challenged by fiction in order to assist the poor and voiceless. The practitioner of New Historicism acknowledges the impossibility of accounting for all possible connections between literary text and contemporary discourse, therefore he/she is free to choose and to integrate a playful style of writing into his/her work. New Historicism brings to the forefront a subjective choice of topics which may then in fact lead to eclectic and highly personalized statements; this is one of the major drawbacks of this approach.

Like the aforementioned anthropological and feminist theories, psychoanalytical theory also investigates cultural identity. Sander Gilman, using a psychoanalytical model, may discuss identity, but his methods are unlike those discussed thus far, for he insists that American identity is constituted by means of fixed cultural constructs he calls "stereotypes", unable to change under abstract notions developed by other theories. His approach to cultural

studies combines feminism, anthropology, and psychoanalysis in order to define his concept of cultural stereotypes. The stereotype, according to Gilman, is a foundational psychological concept necessary to draw distinctions between subject and object. Through the use of stereotypes, the individual divides the material world into two categories: good and bad. German studies must therefore, in order to understand cultural conflict, investigate the evolution of common stereotypes and how they justify certain modes of behavior. The creation of stereotypes is inevitable, according to Gilman. The investigation of stereotypes focuses thus on their representational values: the rational person acknowledges the use value of stereotypes and accepts their decay and reoccurrence in everyday life. The irrational person denies the fading of stereotypes and turns them into a tool for hatred.

While Gilman calls for a unified approach to German studies, based on the critical analysis of stereotypes, the focal point of his research turns to Holocaust studies, which examines those specific stereotypes which led to the atrocities of the Holocaust.[44] Because it is, according to Gilman, the most significant and representative event of modern German history, the Holocaust should also become a main topic for German studies. The investigation of German literature and culture, Gilman maintains, should be directed towards documents and theories that could explain how the horrors of mass murder emerged from German culture.

We now turn to a discussion of culture and language learning, for one cannot separate culture from second language acquisition. In his 1989 article, Hinrich Seeba asks the question: Isn't cultural criticism a topic that can be totally disconnected from any kind of language teaching?[45] and answers his question in the negative. Since an anthropological study consists not only in gathering facts, but also in the examination of the rhetoric in which these facts appear – always in the context of a particular language – the study of culture is inseparable from the study of language. He concludes with a call for the re-integration of cultural theory and language pedagogy.[46]

It seems as if recent language pedagogy has been responding precisely to Seeba's call; Claire Kramsch is among those scholars who have attempted to integrate the teaching of language and of culture.[47] She approaches the problem of German culture as a language teacher and challenges the notion that a critical view of culture is inappropriate for the purpose of presenting a culture to foreign language learners. Until recently, it has been presumed that critical reflection on culture is appropriate only for students of higher-level literature courses, not for first- and second-year foreign language learners. Kramsch counters that there is no level of engagement in a language that is purely verbal and does not explore the non-verbal dimension of world views. By "non-verbal," Kramsch means "background knowledge"– that network of mental schemata by which a person divides his or her world conceptually into parts. In terms of Saussurean linguistics, we might say that a cultural investigation is a focus upon "signifieds" rather than upon "signifiers."

Cultural differences among participants in the foreign language classroom poses a problem, for no "typical second language learner" can be assumed.[48] It is important to discuss multiculturality in the classroom,[49] for such a discussion not only makes students aware of the diversity within their own community, but also permits them to form by analogy the hypothesis that the target culture, the foreign culture, is diverse in the same way. This hypothesis will be supported as well by the teaching material chosen, provided that a critical attitude toward any literary "canon" permits a set of texts that reflect the diversity that there is to be found in the target language. Recognition of this diversity renders the concept of an "ideal native speaker" as problematic as the notion of a "typical foreign language learner." Neither person actually exists, except as a mental contruct.[50]

The critical language teacher should not, however, strive to aim, by means of discussion, toward a kind of vague compromise about what a culture is or should be. Kramsch says of critical language pedagogy:

> This approach involves dialogue. Through dialogue and the search for each other's understanding, each person tries to see the world through the other's eyes without losing sight of him- or herself. The goal is not a balance of opposites, or a moderate pluralism, but a paradoxical, irreducible confrontation that may change one[self] in the process.[51]

The goal is what Kramsch calls a "third place" located neither within one's own culture nor within the target culture, nor at some ideal midpoint between them, but rather "at the intersection of multiple social roles and individual choices,"[52] from which vantage point–a critical vantage point–the learner may assume an identity that belongs to him or her alone. "Nobody, least of all the teacher, can tell [the learner] where that place is; for each learner it will be differently located, and will make different sense at different times."[53] The teacher can only make the classroom a starting place where, prodded by confrontations with differences, the students' own efforts to think about different cultures and their place among them can transport them to that "third place."

VI

> Your concern might be trying to reduce your chosen quilt topic to more manageable dimensions. Some enjoy the freedom of form afforded by the Crazy Quilt, while others prefer the discipline and predictability of an established pattern.

We found it important to discuss the various theoretical trends which have arisen in German studies over the last thirty years, for in order to study German culture, it is necessary to view it from a variety of perspectives. A difficulty, however, has been in creating a new approach to this culture, without replacing a diversity of theories with one singular theory. We maintain that a unity *in*

diversity is needed within the field of German studies, in order that it may continue to develop and become acknowledged as an important discipline, without the risk of minimizing and/or reducing the individual approaches which make the field of German studies a rich, vibrant patterning of diversity and recognition and acceptance of the "Other." It is our hope that we may offer a possible solution to this problem.

The incorporation of images and metaphors from the acclaimed novel, *How to Make an American Quilt*, by Whitney Otto[54], into our paper is significant for two reasons: first, we are discussing German studies in the United States. It seems to have been an arduous road travelled by scholars before us to define North American German studies, often referred to as *Germanistik des Auslandes,*[55] as something other than a mimesis of practices found in German Departments in Germany. Questions still linger, as to whether German studies in the United States stands on its own foundation. In using a cultural art work, the patchwork quilt, distinct to the United States, we place emphasis on the importance of *this* field in *this* country.

Second, the novel by Whitney Otto does not merely tell us how to make an American quilt. Rather, this extended metaphor runs throughout the novel, interweaving moments of history with moments of the immediate present (the turning of a new century). It is actually a guide for organization, understanding, and acceptance of both old and new. Thus, the construction of a quilt is the construction of life-sustaining concepts which may be created and passed on to future generations. Otto advises, however, that it is not only the creation of the quilt that matters, but also the framework itself, which supports its construction. In our model, *Germanistik* becomes the framework upon which we should appliqué the various subdisciplines and theories onto our finished product: German studies.

Otto's guide to quilt-making calls for the use of "finely honed" needles – are these not our skills, since if these are developed, we can penetrate material from a wide variety of sources, whereas

without them, as dilletant(e)s we would only entangle ourselves in a snarl of thread and fabric? But if we can not all be the best at every skill, then does it not become necessary for us to co-operate, so that we can compensate for each other's weaknesses? Otto observes that quilters group and re-group themselves "as if in some sort of complicated, intricate dance of many partners, facing many different directions." It is not required that we all be the best at everything, rather that we complement one another's lacks, shifting our chairs when needed. In this manner, the wayward patches of subject matter lying about in German studies become a diversified yet harmonized unity.

And finally, what makes a quilt attractive? What makes German studies attractive to students? "Do not underestimate the importance of the carefully constructed border," advises Otto, for it is there "to keep blocks apart while binding the entire work together both literally and thematically." We need to make borders so as to give people their own space in which to work, where they can pursue their own interests and showcase their talents. This will allow the creation of enlivening courses which, due to their engaging qualities, will attract students.

Notes

1 Valters Nollendorfs, "Special Survey: German Studies," in *Monatshefte* vol. 87 no. 3 (1995), p. 366.

2 Steven Taubeneck, "Voices in the Debate: German Studies and Germanistik," in *The German Quarterly* vol. 62 no. 2 (1989), p. 220.

3 For example, see *Germanistik in den USA. Neue Entwicklungen und Methoden*, ed. Frank Trommler (Opladen, 1989); *Rethinking Germanistik. Canon and Culture*, ed. Robert Bledsoe, Bernd Estabrook, J. Courtney Federle, Kay Henschel, Wayne Miller, Arnim Polster (New York, 1991); *German Cultural Studies*, ed. Rob Burns (New York, 1995); *Remarks on the Needed Reform of German Studies in the United States*. John Van Cleve and A. Leslie Willson (Columbia, SC, 1993); *Teaching German in America. Prolegomena to a History*, ed. David P. Bensler, Walter F.W. Lohnes, Valters Nollendorfs (Madison, 1988); *The Future of Germanistik in the USA. Changing Our Prospects*,ed. John A. McCarthy and Katrin Schneider (Vanderbilt 1996); *Challenges of Germanistik. Traditions and Prospects of an Academic Discipline. Germanistik weltweit? Zur Theorie und Praxis des Disziplinrahmens*, ed. Eitel Timm (München, 1992).

4 See *Timetable of the University of Wisconsin-Madison: 1961-62 Second Semester Registration and Related Information* (Madison, 1961), p. 29 and *Timetable 1962-63 Second Semester*, p. 14. The form that we will use for references to this resource will be henceforth: *UW Timetable* academic year, semester, and page number. We believe that the change in this course in German culture in 1962 was not only in nomenclature, although earlier name changes had been just that. In 1931, the earliest year of its existence, the course was named "Kulturkunde." By 1937 the name had been changed to "German Civilization." (See *Bulletin of the University of Wisconsin: Announcement of Courses 1937-38 (Catalog, 1936-37)*, p. 173. A collection of *Bulletins* of the University of Wisconsin can be found in University archives on the basement level of the UW/Madison Memorial Library. We shall henceforth refer to it as *UW Catalog*, followed by an academic year and a page number.) By 1940, for reasons unclear to us, the name of this course had been changed to "Deutsches Volkstum: Dichtung und Kunst." (*UW Catalog,* 1938-39), p. 175.) The course description and its instructor, Robert O. Röseler, remained the same throughout these early name changes. This was not the case in 1962, when the instructor was Jost Hermand. Part of our investigation has focused upon course offerings, specifically those courses offered in the German Department of the University of Wisconsin at Madison. This we have done (here follows a disclaimer:) *not* because we are convinced that the UW German Department is necessarily always the most progressive or

innovative of all the German Departments in North America, but because we believe its development is typical of the developments that many other college-level departments of German underwent during the period that is the focus of our paper.

5 UW Timetable, 1964-65 sem. 2, p. 19. The course (numbered 315 and intended for undergraduates) was taught by Valters Nollendorfs. The first seminar to carry the name of "Brecht" at the University of Wisconsin was "Brechts Bearbeitungen," taught by Jost Hermand in the fall semester of 1966. (See *UW Timetable,* 1966-67 sem. 1, p. 19.) In the spring of 1968, a known Brecht scholar, Reinhold Grimm, was hired by the UW-Madison Department of German and taught a seminar on Brecht in the fall of that year. (See *UW Timetable,* 1968-69 sem. 1, p. 62.)

6 *UW Timetable*, 1970-71 sem. 2, p. 71.

7 *UW Timetable*, 1972-73 sem. 2, p. 70. In the seventies, Evelyn Torton Beck offered a course in "Yiddish Literature in Translation" every spring, including a special feminist course in 1978 entitled "The Jewish Woman." (See the booklet *University of Wisconsin/Madison Department of German: 1977-78 Courses and Programs*, p. 20. Booklets of course descriptions are stored in the files of the German Department at the University of Madison in Van Hise Hall Room 807. We will refer to these booklets henceforth as *UW Courses and Programs*, followed by the academic year and page number.) Torton Beck's interests in these areas continue. See the revised edition, *Nice Jewish Girls: A Lesbian Anthology*, ed. Evelyn Torton Beck (Boston 1989).

8 *UW Courses and Programs*, 1976-77, p. 19.

9 The first meeting of WIG recorded was in fall 1974 in St. Louis. (This is recorded in the first newsletter, then called the *News from Women in Germanistik*, no. 1 p. 1 (December 10, 1974).) The text of this newsletter was typed by Evelyn Torton Beck; Gisela E. Bahr was chairperson, and the main organizer of the meeting in St. Louis was Pat Herminghouse. The second number of the WIG newsletter appeared on Feb. 1, 1975. This newsletter reports that the name WIG has changed; "Germanistik" has now become "German." The people who put together this newsletter were: Angelika Bammer, Evelyn Torton Beck, Kay Goodman, Nancy Vedder Shults, and Christa Stutius. See *Women in German*, no. 2 p. 1. By the sixth number (February 18, 1976), the newsletter was circulating widely enough to demand a subscription charge: $2.00 per year, $1.00 "if unemployed". See *Women in German*, no. 6. p. 1.

10 Louis F. Helbig, "The Concept of a German Studies Program," in *Teaching Postwar Germany in America. Papers and Discussions. German Studies Conference at Indiana University, March 24-25, 1972*, ed. Helbig and Eberhard Reichmann (Bloomington, Indiana, 1972), p. 4.

11 The original editors of *New German Critique* were Bathrick, Rabinbach, and Zipes, with Andreas Huyssen as associate editor. See *New German Critique*, vol. 1 no. 1 (Winter 1974), p. 1.

12 See *New German Critique*, vol. 1 no. 1 (Winter 1974). The St. Louis conference is announced on the inside front cover as follows: "East German Culture in the Sixties and Seventies, April 5-7, 1974." Participants to appear are listed: David Bathrick, Jost Hermand, Peter Uwe Hohendahl, Paul Michael Lützeler, and Frank Trommler.

13 *New German Critique*, vol. 1. no. 2 (Spring 1974), p. 3.

14 See, for example, the description of undergraduate culture area studies in *UW Courses and Programs*, 1976-77, pp. 21-23, or of any course taught by David Bathrick or Jost Hermand during the seventies.

15 *UW Timetable*, 1971-72 sem. 2, p. 62.

16 *UW Courses and Programs*, 1977-78, p. 16. The Wisconsin Workshop "Literature and Work" was held in October 1978.

17 The terms *U-Kultur* and *E-Kultur* are borrowed from a book whose analysis exemplified the genre pluralism of the new cultural studies of the Seventies: Jost Hermand's and Frank Trommler's *Die Kultur der Weimarer Republik* (Munich, 1978).

18 *UW Courses and Programs*, 1975-76, p. 13.

19 *UW Courses and Programs,* 1980-81, p. 17.

20 Two "Seminars in German Culture Studies" offered by James Steakley in the 1980s – "The Wilhelminian Era" (*UW Courses and Programs*, 1983-84, p. 25), and "Nazi Culture" (*UW Courses and Programs*, 1987-88, p. 27) – are examples of courses that probed the history of homosexuals in Germany.

21 It would of course be too simplistic to suppose that a humanistic ethic and an ecological ethic necessarily had to antagonize each other; on the contrary, it is a concern for the survival of *all* living things that informs the best humanistic and ecological ideologies. However, the cultural topic of ecology poses a special challenge to literary theory that even such a socio-politically highly charged topic as "Queer Studies" does not, for several reasons.

Principal among these is the difficulty in explaining ecological concerns as a "discourse" at a time when nearly every other special thematic focus within literature departments can be treated by means of some kind of "discourse analysis." Animals and plants, which are of great interest to any ecologist whose concern is not merely anthropocentric, have no "discourse." They simply do not talk and therefore do not participate in any human conversation; they have produced no literature or art of their own. The aim of environmental ethics therefore is not – in contrast to, say, a deconstructionist feminist approach to literature – merely or even primarily to critique, or to undermine, a particular discourse – such as

patriarchy – so as to enable the hearing of previously neglected voices. A *non-anthropocentric* environmental ethic requires not only that we speak against the discourses of ecological destruction, but also that we speak for living things that – unlike oppressed human beings – are unable to speak for themselves. It requires furthermore that we ascribe to these creatures not only an existence separate from ours, but also an inherent worth that is not related to their instrumental or economic value to us. In order to accomplish this, the ecological critic must occasionally lend credence to philosophical or even scientific claims about reality. For these purposes, the pan-skeptical world view that often accompanies a strict deconstructionist approach is singularly ill-suited.

This is not to reject deconstructionist approaches to literature and culture as useful tools, which are applicable toward various praiseworthy goals, but only to point out that, as a world view, deconstructionism is unavoidably at odds with any ecological world view that is not merely anthropocentric. This explains, in part, why ecologically oriented criticism has been accepted only slowly into German studies and other cultural area studies in which a deconstructionist world view prevails.

22 For example, a course offered by Jost Hermand in the spring of 1980 – just as the West German Greens were preparing for the first time to participate in national elections in the Federal Republic of Germany – was entitled "Concepts of Nature"(*UW Courses and Programs*, 1979-80, p. 18). Hermand's spring 1982 course on "Literature of the 1970s" expressly included the environmental discussion in Germany as a topic (*UW Courses and Programs*, 1981-82, p. 19), and his spring 1991 course "Grüne Utopien in Deutschland von 1750 bis heute" made "nature" ideologies in German cultural history the focus of attention. (See *Courses and Programs*, 1990-91, pp. 23-24.)

23 Environmentally oriented scientists, it is interesting to note, are themselves often strong proponents of interdisciplinarity. At the University of Wisconsin since 1970, there has existed an interdisciplinary "Institute for Environmental Studies" which offers multidisciplinary courses and even multidepartmental "joint" degrees, drawing upon the skills of faculty in various fields, ranging from "hard" sciences to applied sciences (such as engineering, journalism, political science) and history. (See pamphlet: "25 Years Institute for Environmental Studies: Interdisciplinary Study of People and the Environment" (University of Wisconsin-Madison, 1995), pp. 4-7.)

24 The first number of the first volume of the *German Studies Review* includes articles and reviews of books concerning contemporary German-German (East-West) politics, history, music, and literature. (See *German Studies Review* vol. 1 no. 1 (February 1978), pp. 1-3.) Subsequent issues are similarly multidisciplinary.

25 Whereas the original "institutional members" of the Western Association for German Studies had included no German departments east of the Rocky Mountains, by the mid-eighties the German Studies Association had spread from coast to coast, and a Harvard professor had joined the editorial staff of the *German Studies Review*. (See *German Studies Review* vol. 8 no. 1 (February 1985), p. 1.)

26 Biddy Martin, "Teaching Literature, Changing Cultures" *PMLA* vol. 112 no. 1 (January 1997).

27 Martin, p. 12.

28 All data regarding dissertation titles have been taken from the Fall issues of *Monatshefte* (Madison 1970-1996), in which lists of each year's newly completed dissertations originating in the USA and Canada appear. It must be noted that this type of study is by no means *scientifically* researched. What we may classify as a "Women's studies" dissertation may not be considered so by another. Thus, in order to keep personal bias at a minimum, dissertation titles were placed in the categories based on the following words appearing in the title: "woman/women", "Frau", "girl", "Mädchen", "mother", "daughter", "wife" (Women's studies); "Jew", "Jewish" "Jude", "jüdisch", "Yiddish", "Holocaust", "Judaism" (Jewish studies); "film" (Film studies); "GDR", "DDR" (East German studies); "culture", "Kultur", "cultural" (Culture studies). Pedagogical (non-literary) dissertations were included in the count as well. Several dissertations, which did not warrant a separate category, but show an increasing interest in Ecology-Literature studies should also be noted: "The Development of an Ecologically Critical Sorbian Literature as a Consequence of the German Democratic Republic's Dependence on Soft coal as an Energy Source" by John (Drew) Reaves (UW-Madison 1996); "Poetry, nature and Science: Romantic Nature Philosophy in the Works of Novalis and E.T.A. Hoffman" by Ausma Weisend (Ohio State University 1994); "Future Perspectives: Contemporary German Science Fiction's Contribution to an Ecological Bewußtseinswandel" by Amy Stapleton (UW-Madison 1992); "Naturkonzepte in der Literatur der frühen Jugendbewegung" by Peter Morris-Keitel (UW-Madison 1991); and "Aesthetic Environmentalism: The Heimatschutz Movement in Germany, 1904-1918" by William Rollins (UW-Madison 1994).

29 Peter Uwe Hohendahl, *Geschichte. Opposition. Subversion* (Köln, 1993), p. 15.

30 Hohendahl, p. 16.

31 Sara Lennox, "Feminist Scholarship and Germanistik," in *The German Quarterly* vol. 62. No. 2. (1989), p. 161.

32 See *Outing Goethe and his Age*, ed. Alice A. Kuzniar (Stanford, 1996).

33 *UW Timetable*, 1970-71 sem. 1, p. 68. These courses were also a preparation for the Wisconsin Workshop of 1971, which announced "Klassiklegende" as its theme.

34 Cited by Hinrich C. Seeba, "Critique of Identity Formation: Toward an Intercultural Model of German Studies" in *The German Quarterly* vol. 62 no. 2 (1989), p. 151; "The Training of the Teacher of German" by John Eiselmeier in *Monatshefte für den deutschen Unterricht* vol. 1 (1908), p. 6.

35 Seeba, p. 145.

36 Seeba, p. 145.

37 Jost Hermand and Frank Trommler, *Die Kultur der Weimarer Republik* (Munich, 1978), p. 12.

38 Seeba, p. 147.

39 Seeba, pp. 150-151.

40 Seeba, p. 149.

41 Lennox, p. 163.

42 Lennox, p. 165.

43 Anton Kaes, "New Historicism and the Study of German Literature" in *The German Quarterly* vol. 62 no. 2 (1989), p. 212.

44 An approach that has also partly been used by Wilfried van der Will in his chapter on National Socialist Ideology in *German Cultural Studies*, ed. Rob Burns (New York 1995), pp. 101-144.

45 Seeba, p. 147.

46 Seeba, p. 152.

47 Let us offer once again a disclaimer: Of course there are other pedagogy scholars whose work follows similar lines, such as Michael Byram, *Teaching-and-Learning-Language-and-Culture* (Philadelphia, 1994)) and Janet K. Swaffar, "Reading and Cultural Literacy" in *Journal of General Education* vol. 38 no. 2 (1986), pp. 70-84).

48 Claire J. Kramsch, *Context and Culture in Language Teaching* (Oxford, 1993), pp. 91-93.

49 Kramsch, pp. 91-92.

50 Kramsch, "New Directions in the Teaching of Language and Culture," *National Foreign Language Center Occasional Papers* (Washington, D. C., 1989), p. 9.

51 Kramsch, *Context and Culture* (1993), p. 231.

52 Kramsch, *Context and Culture* (1993), p. 234.

53 Kramsch, *Context and Culture* (1993), p. 7.

54 Whitney Otto, *How to Make an American Quilt* (New York, 1991).

55 Claudia Brodsky Lacour, "Zur vermittelten Präsenz der deutschen Tradition" in *Weimarer Beiträge* vol. 39 no. 3 (1993), p. 353.

Sander L. Gilman

A Near Future at the Millennium

I

We are entering into a decade of systematic retrenchments in higher education that will permanently (in education "permanence" is anything that lasts longer than the limited tenure of a college president – today a bit less than seven years) impact on the profession of teaching in higher education. As a profession teaching German Studies in North America we must be aware of this reality, but it is also important how we "read" it. We as a profession can run about yelling that the "sky is falling" (and perhaps it is), but we must also be aware that at present there are still a large number of positions in German Studies that are open and that will need to be filed, especially those that bridge traditional ideas of the teaching of language, culture, and literature. The question should be now – how do we maintain the number and quality of these positions in times of retrenchment? What can we do as members of the profession to signal the importance of our field to our administrators? (Most of whom are from our ranks: We have to meet the enemy and s/he is us!)

The answer must lie in the value that our undertaking as professors teaching about Germany, its history, its culture, its literature, and its language has in our eyes, for if we do not respect or understand the meaning of our own work in the realm of North American higher education, we will communicate all the wrong signs to those making choices about us, our jobs, and our fields. The rationale of "why" we should teach "German" rather than say – Spanish, Japanese, or Java (the computer language not the language of the Javanese!) is one which each generation must decide for itself. Mine needed to understand the complex history of Germany, Austria, Switzerland and their inhabitants as well as the often contradictory role which "German" culture had in those

complex histories. The present generation may (must) have other motivations, other interests. But as of now there seems to be no compelling reason why German should vanish from the "most commonly taught" languages in the United States. Things "German" (however defined) still fascinate in difficult and challenging ways.

But should we decide to teach German, German language and culture, we are confronted with a set of presumptions about the insitutions in which we will teach. Let me give you a specific example that has and will cost jobs in the field of foreign languages. Every institution of high education is examining itself today considering greater "productivity" or "efficiency" of its faculty. Higher and higher costs at both state funded and private universities (and it is harder and harder to provide a good rule of thumb that divides them) have driven faculty and administration to asking hard pedagogical questions about size of faculty, coverage of programs, and the costs of such undertakings. This is acute now but has been the case in many areas of higher education over the past few decades, even in the "boom" years of the 1980s. There has been a sea-change in the arguments employed, however.

The contested decision at Bennington College can serve as a marker for the transition between the "older" model of cutting programs and a rather frightening "newer" model. Over the decades programs have been regularly cut at universities. My institution, the University of Chicago recently closed its historically important Department of Education, founded by John Dewey, when it was felt that the department could no longer meet the national standards of academic excellence. Washington University did the same with its sociology department. The State University of New York at Albany closed its German department. All such changes were local not global. Other institutions of high learning have regularly closed programs, including those in foreign languages, because of financial exigency.

In no case was the basis of the decision the argument that there was a global problem with the very idea of teaching a specific field

at universities and colleges. Each closing was the result of the local situation in a field, program, or department. Bennington's take on this is quite different. The Foreign Language Staff with and without presumptive tenure was dismissed because it was argued that the teaching of foreign languages was merely skill transfer (such as the teaching of typing) and that this was not the proper stuff for universities. This sadly echoes the unspoken view inculcated in graduate students in many Ph.D. granting departments at major research institutions – bear with language teaching at the beginning of your career, once you get tenure you won't have to bother with it. Look at us! Too few graduate students are exposed to the intellectual rationale of language teaching as the teaching of culture and see it as "merely skill transfer." There are major exceptions to this view – but the emphasis on the teaching of 'high' literature to the exclusion of language and culture by the research institutions has underwritten to this attitude.

Jobs vanish. The existing system seems to valorize the closing of such jobs or the turning over of such jobs outside the graduate institutions training German teachers to part-time faculty, to untrained "native informants," or most egregiously to undergraduates. Rather than stressing that the teaching of language in all of its complexities is a job for professionals, some colleges use undergraduates to teach language! They do the drill sessions, the supplemental teaching, as if the teaching of language was merely skill transfer. The pedagogical rationale is that undergraduates can teach language as well as graduate students. In a sense that is true, since few research institutions provide the rationale for language teaching; yet most have been forced at least to rigorously train their TAs because of the complaints of undergraduates and their parents. These undergraduates are rarely being professionalized as language teachers; they are rarely as well trained as even the beginning graduate TAs. But what is most important is that their payment is usually minimal; indeed in some institutions they are "paid" with credits toward a degree that they have paid real money to earn. They are cheaper than even part-timers or untrained "native

informants." Unlike many faculty members, they are also extremely enthusiastic about their participation in such programs!

Such attitudes toward the instruction of language reinforces the Bennington argument. If undergraduates can do it, it certainly does not need to be done by faculty members! And eventually we can scrap the whole thing, purge language instruction of faculty participation or turn it over to auto-tutorials and self-instruction. You can learn Japanese just as you learn typing!

Not only does this limit the number of new jobs that can and will be created in modern languages, but it will place the very notion of teaching languages in jeopardy. And many of us *de facto* participate in the rationale behind this reduction in faculty lines. Where some Spanish departments can fill all of their upper division courses, it seems superfluous to "waste" faculty time on introductory Spanish – and therefore it becomes difficult if not impossible for those entering university who wish to beginning Spanish and have it well taught to start a new language. Part-time faculty, adjunct faculty, and then no faculty are and will be employed in such systems. German departments do not have such luxury. "Can't you just hire a couple of undergraduates to monitor the auto-tutorial in German?" asks the dean. "That would save us the part-time line. We'll give them credit for an upper level language pedagogy seminar, if they do it." Academic administrators now look toward the day when language instruction will be done on interactive video without even the presence of undergraduate monitors. Shades of the 1960s when the language laboratory was going to free everyone from the rote teaching of language.

Language teaching is the teaching of culture in complex and direct ways. Sam, our twelve year old, just began German in seventh grade at the Lab School. The first day in class, his first lesson was to learn titles: *Herr, Frau, Fräulein* and the text book pointed out that *Ms.* in German was "*Frau.*" This was also an observation on both German culture's understanding of gender roles as well as that of the American speaker of English and Sam

understood that immediately. And this cultural lesson – unintended and unplanned – was part of the first lesson on his very first day. Teaching language is teaching culture and teaching culture is teaching history and teaching history is teaching literature – all of these come together in our sense of the new vistas open for the field of German Studies in North America. Yes, add gender, class, and race to the curriculum; expand courses to teach film and colonial/post-colonial studies – but don't forget the reading of texts and the teaching of language as part of our future.

To assure new jobs, to assure the continuation of old positions in the teaching of foreign languages is to give serious thought to a new emphasis on the role of language teaching in training our graduate students and rewarding our colleagues. At the same time that universities speak of internationalization (in the name of new revenue sources) it is important for them to recognize that the teaching of language and culture in those languages can not be turn over to the ubiquitous proprietary language schools or the hoped for importation of new technology. Language teaching and the teaching of languages and cultures is and has been an intrinsic part of American higher education. American higher education has traditionally used a combination of on-site and study abroad options to make the study of language and culture part of our understanding of our own language and culture as well as the "target" culture. Teaching language is not "merely" skills transfer. It is providing an academic introduction to culture, both that of the "target" culture as well as our own. It is the ground on which all further work must be undertaken. In demanding that jobs in foreign languages be maintained, let us look simultaneously to our own sense of the role that we as German Studies teachers play in higher education.

II. How to Preserve The Teaching of German in Twenty Minutes

UNDERGRADUATE:

• Make sure that your language teaching is the teaching of culture. Aim toward some real life experience with the language in a program abroad, whether it is for a sophomore quarter, a summer internship or a junior year abroad

• Teaching undergraduates demands diversity. Teach courses in German as well as in English; give lecture courses as well as small seminars; offer courses with senior faculty for freshman; encourage your faculty to get involved with weekend seminars for high school students.

• Offer courses with and for the broadest range of undergraduates and with colleagues from across the disciplines. Make sure your German courses are cross-listed in other disciplines; makes sure you co-teach with colleagues from other departments. Offer courses that reflect the strengths and interests of your faculty. Don't have any courses "because we have to offer them." Teach students to learn!

• Don't concentrate on the number of majors but on the range of students in your courses. The more diversity your courses offer, the greater the number of good students you will have. Stress joint majors and certificates in German as well as traditional and innovative major programs.

GRADUATE:

• ARTICULATION. Be aware of what your students will teach and research after they leave you. Don't make them reinvent themselves when they are out in the "real" world. Coverage is not

the only model – focused programs can be just as effective in articulating graduate studies with post-graduate work experience.

• DEPTH. Figure out what the people in your graduate program can teach; build your program around their academic and research strengths; not around some abstract notion of what "must" be taught. Teach students to learn!

• NUMBERS. Admit small numbers – no more than 2/3 a year. Be very selective while respecting diversity. Weed seriously after the first year. Offer adequate support so that 5 years is sufficient to complete a program. Limit your expectations to what can actually be accomplished in 5 years.

• INTERNSHIPS rather than TAs/RAs. Teach graduate students how to teach in all areas, not just in language teaching. Create further work experience in other arenas at the University – film series, music series, art museum, as well as (through alumni) in industry and government (for summers).

ADMINISTRATION:

• Don't count heads in single courses; look at the total numbers of students in a program over a year. Language courses must be small even on the advanced level to be effective. But lectures don't have to be.

• Support programs abroad. Make this a permanent part of why your institution is attractive. Provide leadership for the internationalization of the American academe. Provide exchanges for students and faculty with schools and universities abroad.

• Scholarship fuels teaching at ALL institutions. With no original scholarship people quickly revert to teaching their graduate school notes, which palls after a few years. Support original peer reviewed

research as part of the mission for teaching. Encourage this with promotions and leaves.

• Respect your faculty. Don't hire part-time faculty to replace full-time, committed faculty. In research universities, don't see teaching assistantships as relatively inexpensive labor but as internships. Make their assignments flexible.

Hans Adler

Amazement, Culture, and Historicity*

I. Preliminary Remarks

It is no coincidence that within the debates about concepts and the scope of culture studies, the focus does not seem to be on mapping out a new field. Rather, one could interpret the discussions on the academic as well as non-academic level as one phenomenon within a more general development driven by the intention to redistribute the space and place of intellectual activities as a whole. The point is no longer whether the study of German literature should be combined with German Studies or German Culture Studies or Culture Studies in general, or whether one of these should replace one or more or all of the others. The point seems to be instead whether the humanities as such should be redefined or refunctionalized, which at its extreme may turn out to be a euphemism for their abolition. This includes the attempt to assign the universities a new role within society. My following remarks on the relationship between culture, culture studies, and history start from a critical stance toward the complete annexation of the university as institution into a short-term-oriented cycle of training and output, or, seen from a different angle: a cycle of investment and profit. Since the breakdown of socialism, we have been experiencing an increasing pressure on the humanities both in terms of quantity and quality. Two basic and essential functions of the humanities, reflection and criticism, are being jeopardized by this development.

Relinquishing the obligation to safeguard the critical as well as the reflective function is tantamount to reducing the universities to mere service institutions adapted to what the "market" requires. This scenario is, as far as public universities are concerned, an affront to the tax payer. A student who is only trained to insert

him- or herself into the market, or, to be more precise: who is only trained in order *to be* inserted into the market should not be educated at a public university but by private companies instead. Universities, be they public or private ones, should have their strength in long-term-oriented programs, programs which allow in-depth reflection, programs which do not labor the pressure of having to apply their findings within a year from when the funding began. This dimension of the university requires *time*. A modern university has a right to slowness, as much as this sounds like an anachronism. And there is a second thing a modern university has a right to, which is another 'anachronism', and this is the right to *esoteric communication*. An adaptation of academic research to everyday language, i.e., commonsensical understanding, has been a common demand for a long time. Basically, the claim for this has been voiced ever since a rift developed between those in possession of knowledge and those without it. So this claim is nothing new. But in our situation it often camouflages as a call for the 'democratization of knowledge', where it is asserted that the 'mandarins' in academia exert unlegitimated power over an excluded majority of people who are the condition of the possibility of this very elite simply because they pay them. But terminology, formulae, and a particular way of expression – things we encounter everywhere in a university, and not only there – can only be deemed illegitimate if there is suspicion[1]. That universities as societal institutions must undergo certain procedures of control should be taken for granted. Suspicion, however, is a different thing, because it implies misunderstanding in a double way. Either it is a necessary element in this partnership between university and society, presenting itself in the form of prejudices. Or suspicion manifests itself in malevolent form as an allegation that the university exerts power on the base of secret knowledge.

I will not present a solution to this problem here. What I want to do, though, is to point out that a simplistic attempt to adapt academic discourse to everyday speech is not only doomed to fail from the outset, but starts from a misconception of

comprehensibility. The function of universities is not to confirm common-sense expectations; it is to challenge them. For that reason, the demand to make complex issues easily comprehensible and accessible to 'common sense' is misguided precisely to the extent that it would prevent the expression of such challenges to the common sense.

To ignore this is to curtail a vital function of a university in a highly detrimental, if not suicidal adaptation to claims that merely appear plausible on the surface. There is, to be sure, no right to jargon, but there is definitely a right to – and the necessity of – an elaborated linguistic and semiotic tool kit, i.e., terminology and particular types of argumentation.

These general reflections precede the following presentation because they not only affect them in a certain way, but also because they give shape to the context within which the discussion about culture studies has been taking place for the last several years. Moreover, the issue itself, culture studies, seems to be a prominent example of two highly problematic phenomena: On the one hand, it exemplifies the continuous churning out of streamlined aspiring professionals. On the other hand, it represents a field within which exoteric comprehensibility is being touted as a means of survival for the humanities, or, at least, for German Studies[2]. The simple, the easily understandable sentence or text, let us not forget that, guarantees neither truth nor insight nor any kind of moral quality. Adorno focused critically on comprehensibility as something taken for granted:

> [Man wird,] "sobald man lax und verantwortungslos formuliert, mit einem gewissen Verständnis belohnt [...]. Es hilft nichts, alle Elemente einer Fachsprache, alle Anspielungen auf die nicht mehr vorgegebene Bildungssphäre asketisch zu vermeiden. Vielmehr bewirken Strenge und Reinheit des sprachlichen Gefüges, selbst bei äußerster Einfachheit, ein Vakuum. Schlamperei, das mit dem vertrauten Strom der Rede schwimmen, gilt für ein Zeichen

> von Zugehörigkeit und Kontakt: man weiß, was man will, weil man weiß, was der andere will. Beim Ausdruck auf die Sache schauen, anstatt auf die Kommunikation, ist verdächtig: das Spezifische, nicht bereits dem Schematismus Abgeborgte erscheint rücksichtslos, ein Symptom der Eigenbrötelei, fast der Verworrenheit. Die zeitgemäße Logik, die auf ihre Klarheit so viel sich einbildet, hat naiv solche Perversion in der Kategorie der Alltagssprache rezipiert. Der vage Ausdruck erlaubt dem, der ihn vernimmt, das ungefähr sich vorzustellen, was ihm genehm ist und was er ohnehin meint. Der strenge erzwingt Eindeutigkeit der Auffassung, die Anstrengung des Begriffs, deren die Menschen bewußt entwöhnt werden, und mutet ihnen vor allem Inhalt Suspension der gängigen Urteile, damit ein sich Absondern zu, dem sie heftig widerstreben. Nur, was sie nicht zu verstehen brauchen, gilt ihnen für verständlich; nur das in Wahrheit Entfremdete, das vom Kommerz geprägte Wort berührt sie als vertraut. Weniges trägt so zur Demoralisierung der Intellektuellen bei. Wer ihr entgehen will, muß jeden Rat, man solle auf Mitteilung achten, als Verrat am Mitgeteilten durchschauen.[3]

In the following three parts I will concentrate on three aspects of culture and culture studies. Firstly, I will try to outline some ideas about culture/culture studies and non-empirical anthropology. Secondly, I will give a brief sketch of the relationship between social history and culture studies. Thirdly and finally, I will address one of *the* touchstones of culture studies, i.e., the relationship between culture/culture studies and prejudice.

II. From *Θαυμάζειν* (Thaumázein) to Cognition: Culture Studies and (Non-empirical) Anthropology

Humanity's first step toward culture was *θαυμάζειν*. This Greek word means "to be amazed" or "to marvel", but also "to hold in

high esteem." This act of marveling or the effect of being amazed requires a minimal stretch of time, interrupting the ordinary and suspending the continuous pressures of necessity. It is not the time Sisyphus enjoyed as leisure when he returned from the top of the slope, the short moments in the life of this man which Camus considers the sole moments of freedom. *Θαυμάζειν* is being in suspense and experiencing the extraordinary, it is the initiation to that which is opposed to the self. *Θαυμάζειν* is the psycho-physical act of constituting in a proto-cognitive way the self by experiencing alterity. There is fear, anxiety, even terror and fright in it, but they are not identical with it. It is more like a kind of curious uncertainty which is not simply 'caused' by the object of experience. It is within the space of the relationship between the two poles of experience that *θαυμάζειν* originates. It may be, as it was for Aristotle, the initial act or behavior which leads to philosophy[4]. "He who is asking questions and is amazed has the feeling of being ignorant" – and philosophy is called upon to reduce ignorance. But *θαυμάζειν* may also be regarded as the moment of inarticulate attention, lured, but not focussed, in a state of fixation, but not yet of reflection. *Θαυμάζειν* is the proto-reflective experience of the possible which in turn is the condition of both order and chaos. *Θαυμάζειν* is the proto-cosmic experience of the *hic et nunc*, spelled out later in the personal pronoun "I". This is far from a full-fledged awareness of identity or self-consciousness, but it is at its origin.

What seems interesting to me in this – admittedly superficial – look at amazement as the origin of the culture of humankind is that we may understand the origin and development of the formation of an individual human being from that same starting point. For that very reason, it would be justified to demand that everybody's power of *θαυμάζειν* be preserved or – allow me the term here – cultivated. It is a cornerstone of human behavior.

But there is more to it and this affects the constitution of the field of culture or cultural studies. It is quite remarkable that in publications about culture studies we often do not find an explicit

definition of the core concept of culture. To take an obvious example: Cultural studies "possesses neither a well-defined methodology nor clearly demarcated fields for investigation."[5] Let us recall that "definire" in Latin derives from "finis", "border", so that "definire" means to mark off a terrain. Given the fact that culture studies are on their way through the academic institutions without a distinctly delimited field of objects and methodology, one could explain this somewhat paradox situation in analogy to the origin of culture itself. Famous philosophers held that philosophy cannot be taught, but that philosophizing ought to be the goal of teaching. One may understand the state of the art of culture studies as that point in the development of a new academic activity of reaching out across a multitude of disciplines, thus questioning disciplinarity itself. Those laboring in the trenches of their discipline(s) find themselves all of a sudden confronted with new issues, attitudes, and procedures which express a desire to join the fray. And there is a twofold attitude of *θαυμάζειν* involved. On the one hand, there are those who see a whole new world to be discovered. Their 'travelling' is guided by curiosity. The decentering of the scholarly focus – generally in the direction of a critical attitude toward Eurocentrism – opens up a completely new field of interest and research. This is the quantitative and 'horizontal' aspect of the development, and it is a legitimate question to ask how this relates to German culture studies without virtually dissolving them in some institutionalized form of general culture studies.

On the other hand, besides the 'traveler', there is a kind of 'speleologist' in culture studies who focusses his or her activities on the paradigmatic aspect of culture studies, i.e., theoretical and methodological approaches. This 'speleological' attitude represents the 'vertical' aspect of the development. Just as the syntagmatic and the paradigmatic aspects of a language cannot be strictly separated without destroying it, neither can the 'traveler' and the 'speleologist'. In culture studies activities either of the two may dominate, but there is never an exclusively horizontal or vertical

approach. Both are confronted with the same type of problem. I do not know whether there is a handy name for it, but I would argue that it can be situated amongst three concepts, namely *θαυμάζειν*, curiosity, and cognition. Let me try to explain this constellation a little further.

The Greek adjectives *νέος* and *καινός*, both meaning "new", are not crucial in a world where a sphere of ideas represents reality and where what we call "reality" is a mere conglomerate of contingent phenomena. There is nothing really new in a world of contingency, as long as there is a world of coherence and order 'behind' it. This is the reason why the word "new" does not play a major role in Plato's and Aristotle's writings.[6] The development of eschatological prophecy as well as Jewish and Christian apocalyptic thinking brought forth the idea of something radically new, as, e.g., the "new creature", "new Zion", "new earth" "new creation" etc. This dimension of innovation, of course, transcends history. It is only with the development of the modern philosophy of history that innovation becomes a part of human history, be it in the form of the concept of "future", the unknown, or hope. But whereas Ernst Bloch's "hope" is a category which virtually leads the future back to its origins, since history consists in human being's discovering themselves, newness as the unknown implies a dimension of discomfort which is created by the experience of disorder. *Θαυμάζειν* as a primordial form of mental and physical reaction to the encounter of the unexpected is, as sketched above, an ambivalent mode of behavior, a blend of fear and interest, of shying away and being attracted. The experience of disorder not only tends to unsettle the time-space coordinates, it threatens the deictic foundation of the self. Hence, discovering the newness affects the discoverer.

Curiosity is a dynamized form of amazement. It is worth recalling that the term "curiosity" not only designates some sort of interest in something, but that its etymological roots go back to "cura" which is not easy to translate, encompassing among others such aspects as anxiety, uneasiness, concern, alarm, fear. Those

elements are still active in the Latin words "curiosus" and "curiositas". So we have an etymological indicator for the fact that curiosity is a risky disposition. At its extreme, this risk may affect the subject, the I, by threatening either its physical existence or its identity. Curiosity is, as Hans Blumenberg has pointed out in a different context, not only a primary characteristic of the human being itself but also of "der Welt, in der er [sc. der Mensch] sich vorfindet als eine Sphäre blockierter Unmittelbarkeit und nur partieller anthropozentrischer Teleologie, besetzt mit Zonen der Verborgenheit und Abgelegenheit, der Seltsamkeit und des entfremdeten Vorbehalts"[7] Thus, curiosity tends to pursue the unknown as well as that which used to be declared off limits. From this perspective, curiosity challenges the realms of ignorance, authority, and myth. It is no surprise that curiosity had been declared a vice in pre-modern times whereas modernity declared it one of the cardinal virtues.

Cognition, finally, consists in the self-conscious appropriation of experience. In culture studies, it appears to me that methodological questions are less problematic than those of awareness. The crucial point is not the scientific procedure but the commitment. How much is a scholar willing to invest in his or her research? The core of the answer to this question consists neither in naming a sum of money nor in, say, naming an amount of time and energy. The appropriate answer would consist in naming degrees of openness on a scale of identity. How far is a scholar in culture studies willing to go down the road to the other or otherness? But if there is a constant change of self-identity involved in the research process, how can there be cognition, self-conscious appropriation of experience? The only and, admittedly vague, answer I can think of right now points to the historicity of what culture studies is doing, a reference, by the way, which is closely related to the hermeneutical understanding of what "theory" means.

The three cornerstones *θαυμάζειν*, curiosity, and cognition are hierarchically related to each other, with cognition at the top and *θαυμάζειν* at the bottom. But let there be no misunderstanding:

this hierarchy does not imply that, once we have reached the top cognitive level, we could forget about its predecessors. On the contrary: cognition is the least independent level of the three. In other words: there may be amazement without cognition but not the other way round.

III. Social History and Culture Studies

What kind of socio-historical conditions are favorable to the emergence of reflections on culture? To phrase this question in a different way: Is there a point in the development of a culture where reflections on culture *necessarily* develop? Or, more generally speaking: What kind of culture is culture studies a part of? It seems as if both the quest for social change and the experience of a loss can be seen at the origin of culture studies. The prominent foundations of cultural history and philosophy of the eighteenth century as we find them in the works of Vico, Voltaire, and Herder may be understood as mediating the self-conception of the rising middle classes. Culture studies as they came to be outlined in the course of that century, acquiring sometimes truly monumental dimensions, obtained their power from being amalgamated with the principles of non-empirical anthropology on the one hand and principles of the philosophy of history on the other. Both anthropology and philosophy of history provided a quasi-scientifically valid background for a new dynamic concept of culture. Johann Gottfried Herder crystallized this complicated relationship in a concise formula: "[T]he nature of the human being is *art*." And he continued: "Everything to which he is disposed, can and must in time become art."[8] We need to point out here that the term "art" in this context is not limited to the fine arts but encompasses *techne*, technology, and craft as well as everything which is designated by the word "culture" in its etymological sense as derived from the Latin *colere*, meaning "to till", "to cultivate".[9] Culture in this perspective – and let me emphasize here that this was a groundbreaking innovation – is defined as a process and not

as an inventory. It is the dynamism of transforming human dispositions into skills and habits, the activities of which may result in building up a tradition. This is the anthropological and historical version of Herder's concept of culture.

Within the social constellation of the second half of the eighteenth century, the anthropological generalization of the concept of culture obviously transcended the particular status quo of a social formation characterized by mutually impenetrable classes. Herder's historicization of the concept of culture questions this status quo by introducing the idea of his present being a result of a process in the past, a process, however, which presents the contemporary as something which not only *can* but necessarily *will* change. The connection between the reflection on culture and the quest for social change is all the more evident in Herder's case as he was the one who initiated the upgrading of popular culture against the 'refined' culture of the nobility. At that time, focussing on the culture of the lower classes was indeed a subversive undertaking.

At the same time, Herder tried to compensate for the experience of a 'loss' by reorganizing human knowledge in a new way. He not only shifted the focus from aristocratic to popular culture, he also reminded his contemporaries of the fact that they were on their way to lose contact with 'nature', an admonition which he offered alongside Rousseau and others but which also differs from Rousseau's. 'Nature', of course was a complex concept at that time (and still is) and it may suffice here to point out one important dimension of it. Emphasizing 'nature' in those times meant emphasizing authenticity in two perspectives.

First, it designates a reintegration of the body and the senses into a new holistic concept of the human being as an integral part of nature. It thus attempts to mediate between two opposite poles that came under heavy criticism: on the one hand the decadent nobility with its extravagant and excessive physicality, and on the other hand, rationalism of the Wolffian kind which sought to minimize the physical basis of experience and insights by way of

devaluing it. It is, by the way, no coincidence that most recent advances in both ecological thinking and post-Adornian aesthetics, offered among others by Hartmut and Gernot Böhme, Wolfgang Welsch, and Martin Seel[10] insist on drawing our attention to pre-Kantian concepts of aesthetics and, at the same time, are looking for a new field in which ecology and aesthetics, sensate cognition and ethics come together. What these scholars are developing *is* culture studies and they are doing the right thing in asking why the (Kantian) tradition that came to dominate did prevail over competing paradigms of the time. Herder offered one of these. His criticism tried to overcome the mere 'word philosophy' of rationalism and to reintegrate the aisthetic (that which is exercized by sensate cognition, 'aesthetics' in the pre-Kantian sense) into Enlightenment thought. *Secondly, 'nature' in the eighteenth century designates authenticity in the relationship between the subject of cognition and action on the one hand and its object on the other. Thus, cultural history and philosophy – the culture studies of those times – were no longer collections of curious and remarkable things from all over the world and all times. Culture studies of the Herderian mold were developed in order to exercise an influence on their own time. To phrase it differently: The critical function of Herder's culture studies resided in its being conceived of as a medium to influence contemporary culture by trying to regain the power of curiosity and *θαυμάζειν*, now with the highly reflected level of cognition as the starting point. And it should not go unnoticed that those very components which appeared as the least political ones did in fact contribute significantly to the formation of the new rising class, namely *aisthetics* (aesthetics in the pre-Kantian sense), *humanity* (yet to be discovered as well as constituted by non-empirical anthropology), and *historicity* (introduced via the highly complex discipline of philosophy of history). There are of course more – and possibly more striking – examples for the emergence or re-emergence of culture studies motivated by social demands, but this one may suffice here.

IV. Culture Studies and Prejudice: A Touchstone

It may have become clear from what I have said so far that not only is culture a necessarily historical concept, but that culture studies, in a similar fashion, are historically determined. This is certainly not new. The question is only whether the implications are taken seriously enough. The historicity of culture studies is closely related to the fact that there is a mutual relationship between culture studies and the culture within which culture studies are practised.

Let me start with a more metaphorical approach to determining the position of the culture studies scholar or practitioner. One of these metaphors is the analogy of the culture studies scholar as anthropologist. Another is that of the culture studies scholar as traveler. In a recent publication, we can read:

> German Studies sees itself proceeding anthropologically, looking at things German, and as much as possible, at itself in the same way as any anthropologist looks at the culture of the Other.[11]

This is said within the context of reflections on the Americanization of culture studies which entails emphasizing the distance and difference from 'things German' as well as the tradition of German Studies. One may adhere to this position advocating the anthropologist's distanciation from his object ('things German'), though it is not exactly clear why a specifically ethnological or anthropological distance is required and not, say, the distance of the natural scientist. What makes the German Studies scholar's position somewhat difficult from a methodological point of view, however, is that he or she is supposed to treat him/herself at the same time both as the subject as well as the object of the research process. A seasoned hermeneutician may recognize parts of the famous hermeneutic circle and admit frankly that there is no

knowledge without prejudice, since there is not tabula rasa scholar. This problem is addressed in parentheses in the above quotation, which limits self-reflection to what is "possible." There is nevertheless a two-fold implication in the anthropologist metaphor. On the one side it seems to establish a high degree of objectivity through distanciation from both the object and the researcher him/herself. On the other hand the anthropologist is supposed to be an American anthropologist and he/she admittedly looks at 'things German' from an American point of view. (I leave it to the reader's imagination to figure out what this 'ethnological' approach may entail with regard to German colleagues in German Studies departments.) Hence, the objectivizing gaze of the anthropologist is tinged, if not saturated, with national or even nationalist elements.

Let there be no misunderstanding: this is not a plea for a chimeric pure objectivity in research and scholarship. Everybody knows that this 'purity' is itself an ideological assumption. What seems to be important, however, is that, even in highly reflected positions, unreflected national(ist) elements find their way into concepts of culture studies. And this – nation and nationalism – was and still is a crucial determinant of culture studies despite such reassuring catchwords as "global culture", or especially "global village" with its insinuation of cozyness. The only thing global I can see so far at the end of the twentieth century is a sweeping economy. Czaplicka, Huyssen, and Rabinbach were right when they stated in the 1995 special issue of *New German Critique* that it would be "difficult [...] to deny the national a central place in cultural history and cultural studies."[12] Developments in the former USSR as well as on the Balkans demonstrate clearly the crude vitality of nationalism. And this nationalism very often draws its primary legitimations from history and cultural heritage. The fact that even blatant lies and distortions of historical truth could serve in this function for the Serbs during the war shows the power of cultural legitimations of nationalism in our times. The concept of a 'cultural nation' (Kulturnation), incorrectly attributed to Herder, is not as innocuous as it may seem at the first glance. Culture studies

has to face nationalism as a fact – on both sides, to be sure: on the side of the object of investigation as well as on the side of the investigator. Declarations of innocence do not obviate this necessity.

This implicit nationalism in culture studies is intimately tied to prejudices as a constitutive part of the investigator and his or her object. Instead of declaring it as a goal of culture studies to reduce prejudices, culture studies would profit more from both acknowledging existing prejudices and recognizing them in their functions, the most crucial of which is to stabilize the status quo. The individual as well as collective development of human beings is inconceivable without prejudices. Everybody necessarily adopts unproven assumptions, judgments, habits etc. during his or her education. Social bodies like nations are drawing large portions of their power from the existence of stabilizing prejudices. Culture studies may help to understand prejudices as culturally constitutive elements and culture studies may contribute to an understanding of how prejudices function in social formations. But it would certainly be asking too much of culture studies if they were assigned the task of overcoming prejudices. In fact, there might be pragmatic reasons against assigning the quest for an allegedly undisputable truth the highest priority. Tolerance – meaning the actual toleration of what is unassimilable – often is a more important goal than 'truth': this means that culture studies may want to question the scholarly hierarchy of logic and ethics.

Another metaphor for the cultural studies theorist or practitioner is that of the traveler, whom I already introduced above as opposed to the 'speleologist'. There is a certain risk attached to this traveler metaphor, which is bound up with the ambiguity of the character of the traveler. As innocuous as the metaphor may seem, particularly in the context of our reflections on culture studies, one should not forget that conquistadores were travelers as well as tourists, and it is not clear at all whether mass tourism doesn't aquire characteristics of conquistadores. Kwame Anthony Appiah's and Henry Louis Gates Jr.'s *Dictionary of Global Culture* of 1996

declares itself "a sampler of cultural contributions from around the globe." By juxtaposing different cultures, the editors expect to "enrich our understanding and appreciation of the achievements of 'our' culture" (xi) as well. Of course the dictionary is a strict selection, which the editors offer with the understanding that one has to start somewhere:

> [J]ust as a dictionary of Swahili would be a good start in preparing for a visit to Mombasa, and a dictionary of Tamil might help in a trip to South India, a dictionary that introduces you, however haphazardly, to a few of the central ideas and objects in many of the world's civilizations is, we [the editors] believe, a good beginning for our lifelong travel through the range of human cultures. (xiii)

The editors pick up the traditional topos of life as a voyage, but their example includes traveling in order to visit other cultures physically, too. The question is whether this seemingly harmless metaphor is hiding something unspoken which may subvert the good intentions. The declared purpose of the dictionary is to prepare its readers "for the beginning of a global civilization". (xiii) In this point the editors bridge the more than 200 years that have passed since Herder's idea of a human culture which spans the globe and is characterized by its unfathomable variety, i.e., by differences. So far, so good.

But there is another dimension to this 'traveling' either through the dictionary or with its help, from "Abakwa, Sociedad" to "zydeco", meeting en passant with – to name a few entries from the realm of German studies – "Freud", "Gastarbeiter", "Goethe", "Hegel", "Heidegger", "Heine", "Hitler", "Holocaust", "Schiller," and "Schopenhauer". Is this travel guide helping us genuinely to understand both other cultures and our own, or is it providing us with a means to familiarize us with the other in a way that reduces otherness to what is known however vaguely and thus makes it disappear?

What does "understanding" in this context mean? A first step to 'things cultural' is certainly to collect factual knowledge about a culture, be it past or present, close or distant, foreign or one's own. But that only amounts to a collection which one can display, the parts of which can be enumerated. True understanding starts with contextualizing facts in time and space in order to uncover the conditions which constitute the fact as such, and in culture studies there is no fact which does not have its history. Understanding in culture studies starts with grasping facts as historical facts. No normative approach, be it an ethical/moral, logical, or legal one will provide appropriate means for an understanding of culture. In fact, ethics, logic, and the law are prominent objects of cultural studies themselves. Historicizing the object of cultural studies necessarily includes the historicization of the scholar. It is not enough to just assume the *role* of an anthropologist for a certain time and then discard the costume in order to return to something called "normal". Culture studies is neither performance on a stage nor fiction. It is an encounter with facts, persons, societies, discourses, rituals, habits, customs, techniques, etc., all of which have *become* what they are, as have the scholars themselves. Hence, a theory and methodology of culture studies would be well advised to start with an investigation of the historicity of both its object and subject. Understanding in culture studies is first of all historical understanding in that double sense.

But understanding a culture requires more, some sort of immersion in or immediate contact with that culture. Experiencing a culture changes the history of the one undergoing this experience. Learning a language and discussing things German in German is the kind of experience which starts to reach out to *θαυμάζειν* as soon as the lexicon fails to offer a simple one-to-one solution. Hinrich Seeba recently wrote a marvellous article in which he emphasizes the necessity to teach things German essentially in the German language because a new language is a new set of eyes.[13] In this respect there is a sort of Americanization of German Studies which tends towards parochialism and imperialism at the same

time. It is time not only to discuss Eurocentrism but also focus on Amerocentrism in close connection to an ongoing yet clearly fading critique of capitalism. "Understanding" in culture studies may – or ought to – include entering into close contact with a specific culture's life, linguistically and physically. Cultural tourism as a profitable enterprise or culture studies as tourism easily develop a tendency to be vague and superficial, i.e., culinary and providing no lasting insight. Cultural tourism has become a huge industry, exactly because of this superficiality and its inclination to either fade otherness out or accommodate it to that which is already known, i.e., to make otherness disappear. This, seen together with the breathtaking global progress of capitalism, may open one's eyes to the dimension of culture studies as travel around the world supported by handy multiculturally oriented travel guides. Research on Turkish culture in Germany will yield limited results unless informed by knowledge of the Turkish language and the Koran. As teachers of a foreign culture, we should try hard to maintain or, if necessary, raise our students' curiosity, but we should make clear at the same time that curiosity is only a disposition, albeit a very valuable one, toward being successful in culture studies. Attempting this would mean to develop – in oneself and in others – a constant awareness of the unforeseen, unexpected, and the unnoticed, the most important of which is normality. This disposition is a proto-intellectual one, and it can only be achieved if we allow our habitual ways of reflection to be ruffled and upset. And it would be even more of a success if we could reach the students' at the level of *θαυμάζειν*. This can only be accomplished if we question our mechanism of cognition and tradition. Thus history and the historical perspective is one of the prominent ways to this goal. But in order to pursue this way a human being needs time – time to marvel, to think, to learn news things. What this means is that the university, as an institution where research is done, ought to claim a particular role within its society in order to allow those who attend it to step aside for a certain time, to take the right to be amazed, to develop a less-than-

clearly focussed curiosity – all this as prerequisite to gaining new, innovative knowledge. Time, so to speak, has to be slowed down for a university; universities have a right to being out of time. This, of course, is an untimely reflection.

Notes

* I would like to thank my colleague Sabine Gross (Madison) for reading this article thoroughly and critically.

1 There are different degrees of suspicion, depending on which discipline is involved. While the natural sciences and medicine, for example, are allowed ample use of terminology, the humanities are not.

2 "Germanistik [hat] ein PR-Problem." E. Schütz, "Am Ende sich schneidende Parallelen? Germanistik und Kulturjournalismus in der Marketing-Kultur. Ein Pastiche." In: *Mitteilungen des Deutschen Germanistenverbandes*. 4/96 (43. Jg.), p. 8.

3 Theodor W. Adorno, *Minima Moralia. Reflexionen aus dem beschädigten Leben* (Frankfurt/Main, 1997), p. 114 ("Moral und Stil", formulated in 1944).

4 *Metaphysics* 982b.

5 Simon During, "Introduction" to *The Cultural Studies Reader.* Ed. Simon During (London and New York, 1994), p. 1.

6 See J. Moltmann, "Neu, das Neue". In: *Historisches Wörterbuch der Philosophie*. Eds. Joachim Ritter† and Karlfried Gründer. Vol. 6 (Darmstadt, 1984), cols. 725-727.

7 Hans Blumenberg, *Der Prozeß der theoretischen Neugierde* (Frankfurt/Main, 1973), p. 107.

8 Johann Gottfried Herder, "On the Character of Humankind". *On World History. An Anthology.* Eds. Hans Adler, Ernest A. Menze (Armonk, NY, 1997), p. 101. This is one of the letters from Herder's collection *Letters Concerning the Advancement of Humanity* (1793).

9 See. W. Perpeet, "Kultur, Kulturphilosophie". In: *Historisches Wörterbuch der Philosophie* [see note 6 above], vol. 4, col. 1309f. and id., "Zur Wortbedeutung von 'Kultur'." In *Naturplan und Verfallskritik. Zu Begriff und Geschichte der Kultur.* Eds. Helmut Brackert, Fritz Wefelmeyer (Frankfurt/Main, 1984), pp. 21-28.

10 See Hartmut Böhme, *Natur und Subjekt* (Frankfurt/Main, 1988). – Gernot Böhme: *Für eine ökologische Naturästhetik* (Frankfurt/Main, 1989). – Gernot Böhme, *Atmosphäre. Essays zur neuen Ästhetik* (Frankfurt/Main, 1995). – Wolfgang Welsch, *Ästhetisches Denken* (Stuttgart, 3rd ed. 1993). – Martin Seel, *Eine Ästhetik der Natur* (Frankfurt/Main, 1996). Enlightening in this context is also Rüdiger Bubner, *Ästhetische Erfahrung* (Frankfurt/Main, 1989).

11 William Rasch, "The Latest Contest of the Faculties: On the Necessary Antagonism Between Theory and Culture Studies". *The German Quarterly* 69 (1996), p. 376.

12 *New German Critique* 65 (1995), p. 9.

13 Hinrich C. Seeba, "Cultural Versus Linguistic Competence? Bilingualism, Language in Exile, and the Future of German Studies". *The German Quarterly* 69 (1996), pp. 401-413.

Gerhard Richter

Ethics and the Rhetoric of Culture

I

There can hardly be a concept, much less a concept of culture, that is not touched by a moment of uncertainty. It is difficult now, at the end of our millennium, to think about the many competing concepts of culture without also reflecting upon the cultural status of the concept itself. The claims to authority, presence, and totalizing cognition inscribed in the history of the word "concept" have become increasingly problematic in the discourses of what is sometimes called the postmodern condition. This is especially true when the concept of culture itself is at stake. When Jacques Derrida, for instance, speaks of a certain decentering within the concept of culture today, he refers to "the moment when European culture – and, in consequence, the history of metaphysics and of its concepts – had been *dislocated*, driven from its locus, and forced to stop considering itself as the culture of reference." This historical site is characterized not only by conceptual tensions within "philosophical or scientific discourse" but also by ones that are "political, economic, [and] technical" in nature.[1] While the field of cultural studies in the United States has begun to address issues ranging from postcolonialism and emerging cultures to ideological negotiations of gender, race, and class in the mass media, it has not yet confronted the rupture that traverses the concept of culture itself. To some critics, this shortcoming merely signals a failure to develop an identifiable set of terms, assumptions, and strategies that could constitute the foundation of a new discipline. Other critics, such as Stephen Greenblatt, have attempted to rescue the concept of culture from its now exceedingly vague and all-encompassing field of reference by questioning the usefulness of its traditional, ethnographically inflected accounts – indebted more

to the nineteenth century than to the promise of the twenty-first – in order to open up the more complex question of how to "get the concept of culture to do more work for us." But even Greenblatt contents himself with the modest proposal that we conceptualize culture in terms of the centrifugal movement of the two opposing forces of "constraint and mobility."[2] There may, however, be other, more fruitful, ways of approaching the concept of culture – if it is one – that have not been fully put to work in cultural studies.

As early as 1951, Theodor W. Adorno draws attention to the problem of the concept of culture. He writes that "the greatest fetish of cultural criticism is the concept of culture as such. For no authentic work of art and no true philosophy, according to their very meaning, has ever exhausted itself in itself alone, in its being-in-itself [*An-sich-Sein*]. They have always stood in relation to the actual life-process of society from which they separated themselves [*von dem sie sich schieden*]."[3] For Adorno, the concept of culture can be thought in terms of a double movement that traces the relays between cultural productions and their larger semiotic network as well as the ways in which they retreat from their contextual embeddedness. The concept of culture needs to be thematized in this double movement, lest cultural criticism fall prey to the threats of fetishization and reification, the vertigo of co-opted ideology critiques, and the iron collar of local positivism and essential presence. Although Adorno's essay is historically specific to the German cultural condition of the 1950s – with its unruly ghosts, its misguided attempts at coming to terms with the recent past, and the political ailments associated with a heady mixture of catastrophic loss and an emerging "economic miracle" – the implications for today's cultural criticism have yet to be realized. The survival of the humanities in the next century will depend, among other things, on the willingness of cultural studies to engage the double movement of the concept of culture that Adorno has begun to outline.

In these pages, I wish to think through the implications of the proposition that there can be no reading of culture that does not

threaten, in the moment of its articulation as a concept, to fail to remain itself. To read a cultural text, then, is to read the moment of transgression that the simultaneity of representational faithfulness and violation invites, a simultaneity that is encrypted in the persistent refusal of cultural texts to be reduced to a single stable concept. As Adorno poignantly puts it, "the utopia of cognition would be to use concepts to unseal the non-conceptual with concepts, without making it their equal [*die Utopie der Erkenntnis wäre, das Begriffslose mit Begriffen aufzutun, ohne es ihnen gleichzumachen*]."[4] Therefore, Adorno suggests, we "must strive, by way of the concept, to transcend the concept."[5] Here, one hears in Adorno's concerns also the echo of Martin Heidegger's admonition against pursuing a thinking of what is in a way that "fails to recognize that there is a thinking more rigorous than the conceptual."[6] But will we arrive at a new concept of culture? Our experiments should not cause us to succumb to the seductive teleology of arriving, of arriving at a concept of culture, much less of arriving at culture itself. Rather, these movements name something at which it is not possible to arrive. That is to say, they circle the domain of what thus far refuses to be reached. This circling constitutes not so much an effort to approach another concept of culture but rather, if such a thing were possible, an effort to approach a culture of that which is an other to the stable concept. To think culture in terms of the other of the concept means to respond to the call to be open and to relate ethically to what presents itself to us as wholly other, as what has no name yet and does not fit the mould of a concept, including culture itself. Here, I wish to pursue Adorno's opening up of the concept by focusing on the realm of ethics and responsibility, terms that are at the conceptual forefront of cultural analysis today. In so doing, the contested concept of ethics will be analyzed as a privileged metonymy of the larger and equally contested concept of culture itself.

In thinking through the possibility of developing a concept of culture that follows Adorno's lead by transgressing the concept, I

focus on the contested problem of ethics as a test case for cultural analysis. To the extent that theoretical questions concerning the readability of the cultural text are inevitably tied to ethical and political concerns, the responsibilities that arise in this enigmatic reading process need to be emphasized. In this sense, there is an essential rapport between questions of reading culture and those of reading ethics. Indeed, as Sigmund Freud unequivocally states in *Civilization and Its Discontents* (*Das Unbehagen in der Kultur*): "The cultural super-ego has developed its ideals and set up its demands. Among the latter, those which deal with the relations of human beings to one another are comprised under the heading of ethics. People have at all times set the greatest value on ethics, as though they expected that it in particular would produce especially important results. And it does in fact deal with a subject which can easily be recognized as the sorest spot in every culture [*Und wirklich wendet sich die Ethik jenem Punkte zu, der als die wundeste Stelle jeder Kultur leicht kenntlich ist*]."[7] Freud's identification of ethics as the sorest spot of a culture, as the problematic blind spot of the cultural text, suggests that the rhetoric of ethics is a privileged sphere in which to investigate the enigmas and undecidabilities that haunt culture more generally. Any concept of culture and cultural studies today is called upon to respond to the vital questions of its own ethical trajectories, the norms and claims of cultural responsibility itself.

The relays that connect the moment of this response with issues of responsibility also name the ethical impulse to approach the text of culture as a series of aporias, and not merely to follow a normative program or to implement a stable, singular ideology. The aporias present themselves as a constellation of impasses, impossibilites, and predicaments. Yet, far from negating the possibility of political responsibility, these aporias open up the experience of the impossible through which any serious ethics of decision – the decision that *is* ethics – must first travel. As Derrida puts it, ethics "will only ever have begun with the experience and experiment of the aporia. When the path is clear and given, when a

certain knowledge opens up the way in advance, the decision is already made, it might as well be said that there is none to make," because "one simply applies or implements a program."[8] This implies, among many other things, that the aporias of the cultural text are not the nihilistic other to *engagement* in an ultimately untenable binarism of activism and quietism. Rather, they usefully challenge our unspoken assumptions about cultural responsibility by making it more difficult to pretend to know exactly what is meant by words, evoked by students of culture high and low, such as authenticity, political responsibility, intervention, and ethics. To do justice to these words, to actualize them, means in some sense first to do violence to them. To follow their laws we may at times have to break them. For the aporias inscribed in them ultimately ask us to respond responsibly even when we have no secure ground on which to stand, no stable meta-narrative to follow, no program to implement, and no hegemonic set of values and norms to disseminate. To read the aporias of these concepts means to respond, in short, to the abiding injunction to act ethically even in the absence of a metaphysically grounded concept of ethics. Within a transgressive culture of the other of the concept, the aporias are thus the beginning rather than the end or closure of ethics.

While the full implications of Freud's privileging of ethics and, by extension, its usefulness in cultural analysis, remain to be fully investigated, the problem of ethics has not eluded cultural criticism. Indeed, ethics, along with its interrelated notions of responsibility, justice, and freedom, has become a political bone of contention in the postmodern condition. In a post-metaphysical age without stable foundations and universal norms, the possibility of thinking and acting ethically has moved to the forefront of critical concerns. A thinking of ethics is, in Heidegger's understanding, always already a sign of the fall or decay of philosophical inquiry itself. Accordingly, "such names as 'logic,' 'ethics,' and 'physics' begin to flourish only when original thinking comes to an end [*sobald das ursprüngliche Denken zu Ende geht*]," an original thinking that was nevertheless neither illogical nor unethical.[9] If

"thinking comes to an end when it slips out of its element,"[10] then ethics is one of the titles of this outside, its sore spot.

How, then, can one address the difficult problem of ethics while navigating an age of post-authenticity, a network of constructs and contingencies? Whether allied with philosophical hermeneutics, post-contemporary Marxism, feminism, Freudian and Lacanian psychoanalysis, or poststructuralist modes of inquiry – cultural studies has in the last decade or so begun vigorously to re-visit the problem of ethics. Each attempt to re-articulate what ethics might mean in a postmodern world of finitude has had to confront the ironic status that ethics had acquired in the wake of recent theoretical developments: on the one hand, ethics was seen by some as complicitous in the normative program of the Enlightenment and the ways in which hidden claims to personal power and institutional authority were presented in the guise of a self-identical rational subject allegedly carrying out the transcendental ethical rules and norms bestowed by a disinterested force; on the other hand, critics believed themselves to have detected in postmodern approaches to ethics the very locus of an arbitrary playground designed to overthrow universal values and the cherished certainties of humanistic inquiry.[11] Yet while this state of affairs has led in some quarters to the diagnosis of a bleak theoretical impasse, other theoretical approaches have recently begun to trace the initial contours of what might be involved in a new, rigorous thinking of ethics that takes its point of departure not in the alleged certainties granted by secure foundations and ideologies of totality but, rather, in the serious and productive re-reading of the ethical aporia itself.[12] Perhaps more than ever, ethics is the "sorest spot" of our cultural inquiries. In order to bring these tensions into sharper relief, I will, in what follows, examine the stakes of two recent influential attempts at formulating a normative ethics of culture in an age which has abandoned the language of foundations. The first is by Charles Taylor, the second by Jürgen Habermas.

II

In his influential text *The Ethics of Authenticity* (1991), Taylor argues that there can be no outside to the ideal of authenticity in contemporary Western culture. This modern culture of authenticity, according to Taylor, compels us to seek self-fulfillment in a kind of radical authenticity with regard to one's self. Evoking the writings of Rousseau and Herder, Taylor summarizes the modern cultural ideal of authenticity as follows:

> Being true to myself means being true to my own originality, and that is something only I can articulate and discover. In articulating it, I am also defining myself. I am realizing a potentiality that is properly my own. This is the background understanding to the modern ideal of authenticity, and to the goals of self-fulfillment or self-realization in which it is usually couched. This is the background that gives moral force to the culture of authenticity, including the most degraded, absurd, or trivialized forms. It is what gives sense to the idea of "doing your own thing" of "finding your own fulfillment."[13]

Yet in this culture of self-fulfillment, Taylor laments, we lose sight of concerns that transcend the self-gratificatory desires that we attempt to cultivate in the effort to be true to ourselves. Taylor constructs a narrative of moral decline in order to restore to the culture of authenticity what he sees as its properly ethical dimension. While Taylor cannot realistically imagine an alternative to the modern culture of authenticity, his project is nevertheless to revive a "moral force" within the "the ideal of authenticity," lest we fall prey to the dangers of "moral subjectivism."[14] Taylor therefore calls upon us to realize the moral dimension of what it means to "become full human agents, capable of understanding

ourselves, and hence of defining an identity, through our acquisition of rich human languages of expression."[15]

In order to reach such a moral realization within the culture of authenticity, we must, Taylor tells us, understand the problems inherent in the assumptions that would lead us to be true to ourselves without being inscribed in a larger framework of significance, even when we are not securely anchored in a larger framework of significance. Taylor therefore argues that when "we come to understand what it is to define ourselves, to determine in what our originality consists, we see that we have to take as background some sense of what is significant."[16] Thus, the problematic nature of "a rhetoric of 'difference,' of 'diversity' (even 'multiculturalism')," that is so "central to the contemporary culture of authenticity,"[17] lies not in the reign of authenticity itself but rather in the fact that this rhetoric flies "in the face of its requirements."[18] Once these ethical requirements are completely abandoned, Taylor claims, there can be no definition of the self that is not trivial, self-immuring, and self-stultifying.[19] Articulating our identity in terms of a fight against fragmentation and the dispersion of community, Taylor suggests, "we face a continuing struggle to realize higher and fuller modes of authenticity against the resistance of the flatter and shallower forms."[20] Ultimately, according to Taylor, we "ought to be trying to lift the culture back up, closer to its motivating ideal."[21]

Taylor's engaging model threatens to fold back upon itself and actually fails to achieve what it sets out to do, that is, to restore an ethical dimension to the discourse of a culture of authenticity. This is the case not only because Taylor's narrative fails to question the notion of cultural authenticity itself but also because the concept of ethics that he seeks to implement is presented as a self-identical set of assumptions and propositions that, owing to their systematicity and normativity, could serve as a program. Although the word "program" is not explicitly mobilized in Taylor's text, what he calls his "project of re-enframing"[22] can best be described as a program because it ultimately works to offer a series of

instructions dictating ethical behavior encoded in advance of the ethical decision (to "become full human agents," "define our identity," "realize higher and fuller modes of authenticity," "lift the culture back up" etc.). The old (ethically challenged or even unethical) program is to be replaced smoothly by a new and improved program. But in Taylor's tropes there is no outside to the program, no other to the program as such. The very concept of the program, its programmaticity, can itself never be opened up to questioning and differentiation. In the moment when an ethical decision must be made – and there can be no ethics without the difficult moment of having to decide – Taylor always already knows what to do: he follows his new program, the new ideology that needs to be installed. Yet this movement, it could be argued, is in fact the opposite of the moment of decision and of ethics. Since Taylor's concept of a new program would always already have stipulated what to do, there is no real decision to be made, only tasks to be performed, programmatic operations to be carried out. That no real decision is to be made also means that no ethical moment unfolds, no difficult and potentially undecidable situation or text is to be faced. But since there may not be any genuine ethics without the aporetic moment of having to decide, without the experience (literally: the moving through) of the highly differentiated aporia, Taylor's model of ethics would seem to turn into its opposite. He thus constructs a cultural model of ethics that runs counter to ethicality.

This internal reversal is unwittingly performed, for instance, in Taylor's desire for transparency and immediacy, for closure and stable meanings. Consider, for instance, Taylor's claim that "anthropocentrism [by which he seems to mean any number of postmodern and poststructuralist movements of thought], by abolishing all horizons of significance, threatens us with a loss of meaning and hence a trivialization of our predicament."[23] Taylor falls prey here to a series of misreadings. First of all, it is questionable, to say the least, to speak of certain postmodern impulses as "anthropocentrism." Taylor implies that the rupture of

the security of metaphysical concepts by necessity amounts to a shift toward a condition in which the human subject is of primary importance. But the rupturing of metaphysics can also be read as one of the names of a questioning of the subject itself, of its metaphysical claims and endowments. In this reading, the rupture signals not a turn toward the subject but rather a step away from it. Here, the subject is recognized as a construct of contingencies, and its privileges are called into question. The impulses that Taylor evokes are in many ways nothing but attempts to overcome anthropocentrism, focusing, as they do, on a radical critique of the concept of the self-identical, continuous human subject as a transcendental signified. Second, to my knowledge, no poststructuralist theory exists that could in all seriousness be read as "abolishing all horizons of significance," of undoing or erasing all meaning, as Taylor claims. On the contrary, such theories have set into sharp relief the excess of signification, the super-abundance of many competing meanings that can never be forced into the comfortable contours of a single monolithic moment of signification. The "horizons of significance" important to these theories emerge precisely in the moment when an ethical and rigorous engagement with this excess is set into motion – in the decisive event of the more-than-one. Third, this instability of meaning does not need to be demonized as "a trivialization of our predicament," but rather can be invited as an opening up of its full complexity, a calling for much-needed differentiation and an acknowledgment of the multiplicity of this predicament. This opening up of the predicament to its full complexity is also a moment of respecting it, of taking it seriously and of acknowledging, even being hospitable to, its otherness. Like the instability of the moment of the ethical decision, the exposure of "our predicament" to the fullness of its own complexity is not simply a threat to what is ethical, but rather its beginning, its condition of possibility. Fourth, it might be asked, just who is Taylor's comfortable "we" pronouncing "our predicament"? To whose community does it belong? Who is excluded

from it? Whom and what does it in turn represent, marginalize, or homogenize in the name of a foundational, normative ethics?

This last problem of the communal "we" in Taylor's rhetoric of culture is related to his fear of fragmentation. He writes that the "danger is not actual despotic control but fragmentation – that is, a people increasingly less capable of forming a common purpose and carrying it out. Fragmentation arises when people come to see themselves more and more atomistically, otherwise put, as less and less bound to their fellow citizens in common projects and allegiances."[24] But, one might ask, ought there not to be some suspicion of the telos of community, understood as the manufacturing of consent, of an agreed-upon heading, of a program of inclusion and exclusion? Is this community, open or otherwise, not also a dangerous fiction, a delusional rhetoric masking what is dispersed and can never have a community? Consider, for instance, Derrida's suggestion that what "*is proper to a culture is not to be identical to itself.* Not to not have an identity, but not to be able to say 'me' or 'we'; to be able to take the form of a subject only in the non-identity to itself or, if you prefer, only in this difference *with itself* [*avec soi*]."[25] Derrida would implicitly seem to counter Taylor's wish for community with the experience of what can never have a community, his desire for the undoing of fragmentation with the moment in which we ask ourselves – but who are "we"? – not how to undo fragmentation – indeed, how would this be possible? – but how one's knowledge and experience of fragmentation inflects the ways in which one reads the cultural text and self-reflexively confront one's own critical activities.

Yet Taylor's wish for the undoing of fragmentation raises further conceptual problems. First, Taylor's program is vexed by a constant slippage between positing fragmentation as a danger to be avoided and regarding it as a present phenomenon to be undone. On the one hand, as we have seen, he speaks of the "danger of fragmentation," and thus of something that is yet to occur. On the other hand, he evokes a "democratic system that is fragmented,"[26] a fait accompli. This slippage perfectly stages itself when Taylor

speaks of "resisting and reversing fragmentation."[27] If fragmentation is to be resisted, it cannot have taken place yet; if it is to be reversed, it must already have installed itself. Second, if the culture is indeed already fragmented, and if it consists of dispersed, fragmented subjects, then a) who or what could undo this fragmentation (a stable, non-fragmented agency beyond the cultural dominants would seem to be required for this) and b) who or what could construct an authenticity, much less an ethics of authenticity, if this agency is not already non-fragmented, ethical and fully authentic? Where would such an agency be located? Whence would it speak? To whom? On whose behalf? By whose authority? And who could verify or counter-sign its special qualities and qualifications?

Because Taylor's model of ethics exhaust itself in providing prescriptions and guidelines for ethical decisions, it does not permit the concept of the program itself to be criticized, that is, questioned on the basis of its meta-theoretical assumptions about both ethics and programs. Taylor's stance projects a rhetorical situation in which it would seem as though a critique of his program of ethics – a critique that calls for an opening up to questioning of its meta-theoretical beliefs – does not actually concern his model, designed, as it is, as a supposedly practical, more immediately relevant ethical guide. After all, should not the level of abstraction of a critique share a common measure with the level found in the object of critique itself? To be sure, a transgression of Taylor's model of ethics in the name of an aporetic other cannot itself be a reliably stable source of ethical prescriptions. It therefore cannot be a matching (though bland) substitution on the level of Taylor's own pragmatics. Refusing to be inscribed fully into this economy of exchange, it unfolds on a conceptual level somewhat different from that prescribed by Taylor's text. However, even Taylor's pragmatist program – like any "system" or "model," no matter how seemingly natural and pragmatically commonsensical – relies on certain meta-theoretical assumptions and unspoken presuppositions. Thus, Taylor's

program can indeed be opened up to questioning from the perspective of an aporetic otherness, with an eye toward an engagement with the more general stakes of ethics. Indeed, the kind of ethics that is still to come, an ethics of aporia and of decision, could not be reduced to the pragmatist level of Taylor's argumentation without being emptied out of its political potential, which resides precisely in its alterity and namelessness. This aporetic ethics calls for a thinking that places the questionable binary of theoretical speculation and quotidian practice productively under erasure. The qualities of one version of such a thinking are described in Heidegger's discussion of ethics in relation to what is when he asks, "does thinking remain only a theoretical representation of Being and of man; or can we obtain from such knowledge directives that can be readily applied to our active lives? The answer is that such thinking is neither theoretical nor practical. It comes to pass before this distinction."[28] This coming to pass *before*, and, indeed, *as other than*, this distinction names the hope that an aporetic ethics to come may still hold. Here, reflecting upon the condition of possibility of the ethical decision is the ethical act par excellence because it retains an openness and hospitality toward who or what arrives as wholly other, as someone or something that may be foreign to the precepts of our programs and norms, as something or someone whose assimilation or reduction to the concepts and categories of our programs would be an act of violence. In this sense, the aporetic thinking of ethics is real beyond and *before* any realism and realist pragmatism.

Similar issues arise in the recent work of Habermas, an avid reader of Taylor. In a programmatic text entitled "What Does 'Working through the Past' Mean Today? Comments on the Double Past" [*"Was bedeutet: 'Aufarbeitung der Vergangenheit' heute? Bemerkungen zur doppelten Vergangenheit"*] (1992), Habermas wishes to confront the problems surrounding various German attempts at constructing or appropriating certain narratives about Germany's fascist and Stalinist pasts. Claiming to stand on

the shoulders of Adorno's famous 1959 essay, "What Does 'Working Through the Past' Mean?" [*"Was bedeutet: Aufarbeitung der Vergangenheit"*], which suggests that the ill-fated Germans attempts at working through the Nazi past often resulted in its further repression, Habermas calls for an approach to the reading of Germany's double history in the wake of reunification in terms of an "ethico-political *Selbstverständigung* (self-clarification or self-communication)."[29] According to Habermas, in contemporary culture there can be no other to the paradigm of authenticity – a view he shares with Taylor. Today, Habermas writes, "the success or failure of one's own life can no longer be measured against the standard of exemplary contents, but only on the basis of the formal aspect of authenticity. Everyone must be himself in a different way [*Jeder muß auf andere Weise er selbst sein*]. He has to find out how this is possible by ascertaining and checking who he is and who he would like to be [*indem er prüft, wer er ist und sein möchte*]. This is why moral assessments interlock, in this specific experience of the self, with a changed ethical understanding of the self."[30] Again, according to this story, while authenticity was determined in the past by the normativity of a cultural system's master narratives, it is now postulated and measurable by the desire for self-fulfillment and self-actualization, in short, by being true, i.e. "authentic," to oneself.

For Habermas, as for Taylor, today's culture is one in which the concept of authenticity reigns supreme. Under the conditions of post-metaphysical thinking, Habermas asserts, there can be no metaphysical or religious grounding of any concept of authenticity. This means, for him, that authenticity is now a subjective construct, a way of being authentic with regard to certain images of the self. Everyone must examine, verify, scrutinize, and ascertain (*prüfen*) who he is (*er prüft, wer er ist*). Yet, upon reading and re-reading Habermas' text, the reader is vexed as to who or what validates and counter-signs this self prior to the act of self-construction? Is there a judging self in the absence of a subject that constructs itself in the moment of judging? And if so, is this

moment in which the self ascertains its own authenticity not already a form of inauthenticity, a moment in which the semblance of an act of constitutive judging of authenticity is mistaken for the initial or prior act which posits a self that could be in a position to judge in the first place? And even if such a self existed prior to the act of self-construction through an assessment of its own authenticity, would this self, whoever or wherever it may be, not be unreliable, given that it has not yet been submitted to an assessment of its own authenticity? Can one trust a self that has not been authenticated to ascertain its own authenticity? Who authenticates the authenticator? Who witnesses his witnessing, guarantees his guarantee, and counter-signs his signature? It is difficult to remain immune to the suspicion that, despite its bow to the post-metaphysical condition, Habermas's model continues to be limited by the rhetoric of autonomy, subjectivity, and the supposed self-identity of the subject which the very condition of which Habermas speaks – post-metaphysicism – has problematized. While both Taylor and Habermas endorse a model of cultural authenticity, Habermas attempts to ground and explicate this authenticity philosophically, an effort which becomes problematic when he enlists the service of a humanist conceptual repertoire of the self-positing, self-knowing subject in order to delimit a realm of tropes that may no longer be governable by the logic of its own system.

This politically driven reliance on ultimately idealist and narrowly rationalistic principles also accounts for Habermas's rhetoric of *Selbstverständigung*, a term that, although never clearly explicated, traverses his entire text. Habermas's term *Selbstverständigung* echoes self-comprehension, self-communication (the communication of the self to itself and of the self by the self to others), self-explanation (again, to oneself and to others). It is in this problematic realm of *Selbstverständigung* that Habermas wishes to locate a culture's properly ethical and political domain.[31] Indeed, for Habermas, the "publicly executed ethico-political *Selbstverständigung*" is the central dimension of a true working

through of a culture's past.[32] But Habermas's *Selbstverständigung* ultimately seems to rely on a rather logocentrically metaphysical belief in the possibility of straight-forward communication, of the stability and self-identity of meaning, of immediacy within or beyond a complexly mediated network of cultural discourses, and, not least of all, the notion of a coherent, autonomous subject capable of unproblematically implementing its own programs. This metaphysics of the self-identical, autonomous subject propels Habermas to assert that "in the absence of a link between a change in mentality and those political decisions that one can attribute to oneself [*die man* sich selbst *zuschreiben kann*], important means of verifying the achievement of a successful collective *Selbstverständigung* are missing."[33] For Habermas, transformation, in his sense of *Selbstverständigung*, which, by this time in his essay, has become even a collective enterprise, is tied to the idea of the human subject as controlling agency, as a sovereign master of its identity and political domain. One could even say that under these conditions the outcome of a *Selbstverständigung* threatens to become something merely *selbstverständlich*, that is, self-evident and not normally questioned. But these are views that are at odds with what Habermas himself calls the post-metaphysical condition and, indeed, have been the object of persistent theoretical critique by a variety of poststructuralist reflections. Even theorists affiliated with the Frankfurt School of Critical Theory, especially Adorno and Walter Benjamin, as whose new generation Habermas is often cast, largely reject this belief in the subject and its metaphysical programs; this rejection occurs not in an effort simply to dismantle and destroy the subject but rather, since their critique is always mounted in the name of something else, to liberate it in order for it to experience an openness to its own internal differences and contradictions.

The claim, implicit in both Habermas and Taylor, that there can be no politics without a securely grounded subject strategically erases all alternative modes of inquiry into the political construction of certain subject-positions and their ethical

investments. By equating the destabilization of the self-identical subject with the negation of political activism as such, one (contingent) view of the subject is violently valorized to the exclusion of all other analyses of the political subject, ones that would take as their point of departure not a Habermasian communicative transparency and liberal rationalism but rather the serious reading of certain moments when a system's allegedly secure foundations are shaking and when the power network that perpetuates the system threatens to withdraw from immediate comprehension. From the perspective of a feminist politics, for example, Judith Butler has shown how such a maneuver of claiming for one's own politics the only viable version of the subject, a tactic which "unilaterally establishes the domain of the political," operates "as an authoritarian ruse by which political contest over the status of the subject is summarily silenced."[34] Far from silencing the call for ethical and political responsibility, the critical refusal to take the metaphysical heritage of the stable political subject at face value emerges as the starting point for a critical analysis of the ways in which "the subject" is constructed through a variety of discourses and political disseminations. Indeed, the *contested* notion of the subject names the very struggle that traverses the ethico-political domain.

Yet such contestations are not Habermas's concern. Instead, he shares the hermeneutic and political optimism embedded in Taylor's model of being able to implement a new program, of substituting an old cultural paradigm with a new one. Where Taylor speaks of mobilizing an ethical program in today's culture of authenticity, Habermas has his own set of substitutions in mind, with, specifically, "three goals: the substitution [*Auswechslung*] of the politically incriminated elites; the manufacturing of political justice [*Herstellung politischer Gerechtigkeit*]; and the population's democratic change of consciousness" (254). Just as Taylor always already knows what "ethics" means, Habermas seems comfortable with an economy of political exchanges and theoretical substitutions, a program of *Auswechslung*. But one

wonders if one should not at some point allow for the radical alterity of a new ethics and a politics to come by being open to the otherness of ethics and a future politics that cannot be delimited and evaluated in advance from a position of secure knowledge and a stable ideological program. For instance, who would be substituted for Habermas's politically burdened elites? Who are the new elites? Are they politically uncontaminated? And who would authorize the substitution according to what political power plays? Likewise, is Habermas's desire for a specific shift in the consciousness of a culture's population somehow beyond ideological and political critique? And, finally, what might it actually mean to "manufacture" political justice (*Herstellen politischer Gerechtigkeit*)? Who is manufacturing according to what concept of justice on whose authority? Can one pretend to be in possession of a stable program of justice that could easily be reeled off at will? Should one not stop pretending that one knows once and for all what justice means and to acknowledge that a concept of justice can never be arrived at but only harvested anew along with the cherished fruits of a rigorous reading and a careful confrontation of the aporias of decision?

Far from being mere theoretical abstractions with no actual bearing on the space of their utterance, such questions regularly arise in concrete political contexts. The German Green party, for instance, with its necessary and progressive attempts at intervening in a tenacious constellation of injustices, among them, prominently, ecological irresponsibility, could be read in light of the limitations and conceptual restrictions that its self-imposed normativity perpetuates. A sympathetic reader of the Green movement, Peter Schneider has eloquently pointed to the internally crippling politics of this party whose programmatic norms at times favor contrived consensus over healthy conflict, conformity over difference, a phantasmatic notion of wholeness over the reality of fragmentation, and authoritarian norms to the constant and necessary negotiation and revision of the undecidable.[35] Schneider calls for an attempt to rescue the political promise of the Greens by

questioning its normative ontologizations and its valorizations of the law – understood as a meta-law of natural necessity – over the indeterminate moment of the difficult decision. Here, the mere positing of peace is not sufficient when it lacks the articulation of an ethical concept of freedom, a freedom structured by the problems of not being able to decide in advance, rather than by the power-driven calls to "freedom" from the right. In order to continue to be promising as a viable political alternative, the Green discursive network must therefore not rely on an ethics in the normative or programmatic sense of a Habermas or a Taylor, even when the security of such normative programs become especially seductive antidotes to a difficult world of difference. Otherwise, Green thought would run the risk of tacitly perpetuating the internal "logic" of certain Western discourses and ideologies that produced the current global ecological crisis in the first place.

Ethics, conceived as the moment of traveling through the aporia, is also thinkable as a trope that touches the difference between law and justice. Habermas tacitly minimizes the vital difference between the two when he insists that the "goal of *political justice* must [*muß* – but to whose authority does this "must" belong?] be achieved primarily through the channels of criminal law and civil law-based restitution."[36] But in his declaration of faith in the program of state law, Habermas does not do justice to the full complexity and the vital interest of the difference between law and justice, that is to say, between a historically, culturally, politically, and rhetorically contingent construct or code, that is, the law, that presents itself in the name of justice, and justice itself, which always threatens to elude full hermeneutic closure while nevertheless remaining undeconstructable. While the existence of a state governed by the rule of law, a system that guarantees its citizens certain enforceable rights, is certainly one of the cherished achievements of the project of the Enlightenment and should be protected as such, one should not too hastily rush to identify it with justice itself.[37] After all, how often does the execution of the law seem to be at odds with justice, and

how often is justice violated in the name and signature of the law? (One need only think of the police beatings of Rodney King and the subsequent scandalous trial, or the case of the award-winning black radio reporter Mumia Abu-Jamal who awaits execution in Pennsylvania, following an ignominious trial that many activists and legal scholars have characterized as profoundly biased and racially motivated.) Like ethics, justice seems to be one of the names of the aporia, of the abyss that one faces in the moment of having to respond ethically and justly to the predicament of an undecidable situation. Like ethics, justice cannot be programmed in advance. Instead, it emerges in the active struggling embedded within the moment when a decision has to be made without a stable ideology or party line to provide answers or guidance. Far from being a paralyzing stasis, the radical otherness and undecidability of the moment of justice is what enables ethical struggles for justice to take place. It is a critical engagement with what Benjamin once called "something rotten in the law" [*etwas Morsches im Recht*].[38] To arrive at this advanced state of the aporia, one may have to break the law; that is to say, in order to approach something like justice, one may have to cease to conform to the prescriptions of the law in order to re-invent its code. This is not to say that one should abandon the law or to dismiss it lightly; it is not a call for lawlessness but rather an invitation to remain faithful to the idea of justice within the law by uncovering its internal violence and improving it by transgressing it. By the same token, justice cannot be reduced to any instrumentality, not even a negative or inverse instrumentality of the kind that Michel Foucault has in mind when he conceives of the very concept of justice along Nietzschean lines solely as an instrument of socio-economic and political power dynamics.[39] An aporetic thinking of justice cannot make do entirely without the promise that the notion may still hold. The ethics of justice, then, cannot be pre-programmed into a network of binary codes and fully predictable ideologies. Its arrival – if such a thing is possible – is always the wondrous result of an aporetic struggle through a careful reading of

the text of decision. Yet justice is not deconstructable; it is no fairy tale. To speak of the astounding moment that propel us toward justice is not to speak of texts (or cultures) taken for wonders, "not stories about wonders [*keine Wundergeschichten*]," as Adorno's friend Siegfried Kracauer once wrote, "but the wondrous arrival of justice [*wunderbare Ankunft der Gerechtigkeit*]."[40]

III

This wondrous arrival of which Kracauer speaks is linked to the movement of transgression that exceeds the limits of seemingly stable concepts, that is, remains receptive to the liberating potential of the internal differences and discontinuities that are at work within them. This is not to say that such a transgressive reading would simply undo or invalidate the traditional or canonical reading – after all, no transgression without something that can be transgressed, no interdisciplinarity in cultural studies without disciplines. On the contrary, the respectful perpetuation of the tension between these internal breaks and the traditional, canonical reading of a concept, text, or culture are precisely what allows the transgression to take place. The border or limit that circumscribes a concept or text is simultaneously respected and violated. In the context of cultural studies, which is so often concerned, for instance, with nationalities and nationalisms, with the politics of identity and the alternative languages of postcoloniality, the many implications of this transgressive maneuver include, among other things, the movement away from unproblematically stable concepts of cultural essence, national community, and ethnic identity.

Productively careful readings that consider ethically and politically charged transgressions in the affirmative sense suggested here – performed in the name of something else, something that is yet to come – are still to be achieved in cultural studies. But what might such a moment look like? Can it have an example, or does the example already signal a problematic return

to the concept of the program and the program of the concept, the unifying master of all singularities? Giving an example always also signifies a risk, the risk of the problematic logic of "exemplarity," a risk that will we now nevertheless venture to take. Respecting the singularity of each text to be examined and without intending to construct a false veil of homogeneity, I wish to discuss two possible examples of the ethical transgression of the program, a transgressive thinking that links two moments in Adorno and Ernst Bloch.

To return once again, then, to the orbit of Adorno, we encounter in his 1965 "On the Question: 'What is German?'"a careful transgression of the essentializing questing after "Germanness" and the ideology of a stable German identity. Having transgressed the ideology of a German essence, Adorno writes, "It is in the fidelity to the idea that the way things are should not be the way they remain – rather than in the hopeless attempts to establish once and for all what is really German – that the sense which this concept may still claim is to be surmised: in the transition to humanity [*In der Treue zur Idee, daß, wie es ist, nicht das letzte sein solle – nicht in hoffnungslosen Versuchen, festzustellen, was das Deutsche nun einmal sei, ist der Sinn zu vermuten, den dieser Begriff noch behaupten mag: im Übergang zur Menschheit*]".[41] Adorno wishes to remain faithful to the idea (*Treue zur Idee*) that the last word has not yet been spoken, that the definitive reading has not been given, that there will be an other that is yet to arrive – and this other is primarily an other to any ontologizing notion of what is German. By extension, the infinitely mediated complexity of the concept of Germanness should not be exhausted and closed off, through a delusive chase after its elusive essence, in a single violently dominant interpretation. Such a violent positing would erase the faithfulness to what is to come. Adorno's transgression here consists in a productive double movement which opens up the concept of Germanness to difference and otherness without, however, abandoning the thinkability of that concept altogether. That is to say, he violates it even

as he remains faithful to it. This double movement of the transgression enables him to suggest that what is German should not be posited in terms of an essential presence or positive set of verifiable features, but rather in its movement, its transition toward humanity (*im Übergang zur Menschheit*). Notice that he does not advocate a simple model of substitution, the flat exchange of pre-determined programs that we encounter in Taylor and Habermas, say from a blemished Nazi past to a new and higher humanity. For Adorno, it would only be a delusion to assume that one could arrive once and for all at a stable concept or state of "humanity," a program that one could easily follow. Here, humanity, like its vital dimensions of ethics, justice, and democracy, is always still to come. In order to remain effective as the promise of a future – indeed, as the promise that there will be a future at all – these concepts can never be assumed to be simply present. Instead, Adorno locates the prospect of a future, a future Germanness, in the moment of transition itself. This new concept – if it is one – would suggest that what is proper to what is German is its movement toward something else, and not its programmed arrival at a delimited new destination. It is most properly itself when it is on its way toward something else. This perpetual transition (*Übergang*) names the political stakes of Adorno's double reading.

Adorno's transgressive gesture is shared by his friend Bloch, whose writing would be unthinkable if it did not occur in the sign of transgression. Indeed, there is hardly another modern thinker to whom the moment of transgression, both as a specific technical term and as a general movement of thought, is of greater importance. This becomes perhaps most evident in his monumental *The Principle of Hope*, a complex network of highly mediated transgressions and their political and philosophical potential – be it in his discussions of medical, social, technological, architectonic, and geographical utopias, or in his analysis of Faust, music, and Marx. For Bloch, "Thinking means transgressing [*Denken heißt Überschreiten*]," a motto that his text periodically reproduces. He writes:

> Thinking means transgressing. But in such a way that what already exists is neither shattered nor skipped [*nicht zerschlagen, nicht überschlagen wird*]. Not in its deprivation, let alone in moving out of it. Not in the causes of deprivation, let alone in the first signs of the change which is ripening within it. That is why real transgressing never goes into the mere vacuum of an In-Front-of-Us, merely rapturously, merely picturing abstractly. Instead, it grasps the New as something that is mediated in what exists in motion [*das im bewegt Vorhandenen vermittelt ist*], although to be revealed the New demands the most extreme effort of will. Real transgressing knows and activates the tendency which is planted in history and which proceeds dialectically [*kennt und aktiviert die in der Geschichte angelegte, dialektisch verlaufende Tendenz*].
>
> [...] Thinking means transgressing. Admittedly, transgressing has not been all that adept at finding its thinking until now [*fand bisher nicht allzu scharf sein Denken*]. Or even if it was found, there were too many bad eyes around [*zu viele schlechte Augen*] which did not see the matter clearly.[42]

In order to name the possibility of the transgression, Bloch is careful not to mistake transgression for the dismantling or smashing of what is to be transgressed. There can be no transgression without the simultaneous violation and preservation of what is transgressed. In the moment of crisis, the moment in which a transgression becomes necessary, even the movement beyond the limits of the critical situation preserves a self-reflexive awareness of how the excess toward which it strives perpetuates both the object of its transgression itself and the heterogeneous impulses within that object that prompted the need for the critical act in the first place. Thus, Bloch's transgression cannot be tied to

any simple notion of progression or progress toward a new stable telos. Instead, it attempts to face what is to come in terms of its own tensions and with an eye toward the hidden figures of what is to come that are already faintly visible not in the present object itself but in the lines of the many mediations that intersect within it. By extension, even though both Bloch's transgression and Adorno's *Übergang* share certain movements of thought with the conventional dialectic, they cannot ultimately be contained by it. While there is an element of transgression in the movement of the dialectic to ever higher states of synthesis, both Bloch's and Adorno's transgression move not toward a mere dialectical sublation but an otherness that remains semiotically not fully accessible. This other's promise and challenge resides precisely in its refusal to be assimilated, even dialectically, to a readable, stable presence.

If, for Bloch, true thinking – or at least one that avoids "bad eyes" – is unthinkable without transgressing, then the movement of the transgression will never yield to the program of immediate substitution of programs (say, the ethical programmaticity that Taylor advocates and what Bloch would call "[l]azy substitution, current copying deputizing [*[f]auler Ersatz, gängig-kopierende Stellvertretung*]").[43] The economy of Bloch's transgression is always interrupted, interrupting itself even as it seems to unfold toward what is to come. Because of the refusal of this critical performance to yield to the demands of immediate instrumentality, it remains to be thought. This remaining to be thought is not a stable telos. Rather, it signals the possibility that a true transgression may occur at all, in the future, in what or who is always yet to come. It is in this sense, too, that Bloch's transgression is not so much an instrumental program or set of maneuvers externally applied, with a closed concept in mind, that could be substituted for the present scenario. Instead, it is hospitable and radically open to the internal tensions that are already at work in what presents itself to us as a stable concept. Bloch's work is thus less one of teleological *intervention* than one

of critical *activation* ("Real transgressing activates," as he puts it, what is already *angelegt*.). This reading of the transgression also makes it more difficult to perpetuate the static binarisms of a self-identical inside and outside, an a priori center and margin, homeland and foreign land, law and outlaw, guest and host, and the essentializing cultural rhetoric that has parasitically fed on them.

To conclude, let us not pretend – but who are we? – that we know in advance what transgressing means. It, too, is not a program. For in order to remain open to the ethical opening up through the transgression, we are also propelled to open up the concepts of transgressing itself, that is, to allow for the possibility, if necessary, of transgressing the transgression. A transgression in the sense in which it has emerged here – a transgression that, in order to be true to itself, must remain at odds with itself – can never be formalized into a fixed program, a stock set of concepts and unwavering prescriptions. This would only lead to the undoing of transgression's liberating hospitality to the otherness that is found not only in the objects it transgresses but also since it is not, like the Hegelian subject, capable of containing and comfortably delimiting within itself its own contradictions – the multiple transgression already at work within every single transgression. Instead, the transgression remains open to the threat, the possibility of its own impossibility. For a transgression to confront its own transgressability, its resistance to programmability, means that it can be hospitable to the singularity and the specific requirements of each moment or object to be transgressed, that is, to a transgression that calls for a strenuous re-formulation with every new situation, every new aporia, every new text or culture that it encounters. If it is true, as Benjamin writes, that cultural history is always about to explode, "since the continuum of history, exploded by the dialectic, suffers in no realm so wide a dispersion as in that which is called culture," then we may no longer wish to follow certain conventional programs and concepts of cultural inquiry.[44] Today, with close to six billion people confronted with a late capitalist culture of remainderless commodification that claims to

have transcended all ideological systems in the name of the culture or religion of capital itself, a special transgressive vigilance is required. The suffering and injustice inflicted now, when the inequality between wealthy nations and poor nations, the disparity between classes and groups within a given nation, and the blindness of ecological violence are without common measure with what has often passed in the name of ethics and interrelated concepts such as justice, requires a special vigilance, a new cultural ethics. Under these conditions, the call to resist the temptation to follow what has often been perpetrated in the name of responsibility and to respect the ethical transgression by refusing to turn it into a program, acquires a special urgency. Therefore, in our work as literary and cultural critics, in our research, our teaching, and our institutions, to do justice to this urgency in a non-programmatic way means, among so many other things, to resist the temptation to turn transgression in the name of ethics into yet another cultural program, to reduce it to one possible program generically related, in a traditional relativistic sense, to a whole array of possible normative programs and concepts. Confronting the serious task of reading the series of difficulties that come under the names of literature and culture places us in a unique position to shed new light on our thinking of ethics in a late postmodern age. This is so because it is precisely in the Sisyphean work of reading, in the emphatic sense, that we encounter the fissures and blind spots that we are called upon to negotiate in any attempt to confront the task of responsibility and political commitment. Like our reading of literary and cultural texts, our reading of ethics as a key cultural concept can never be fully finished. What is needed is a radical openness to the otherness that approaches and inhabits us in our reading, thinking, and teaching of the cultural text, even if this otherness asks of us an uncommon measure of hospitality to the unpredictability of ethics and its perpetual revisions. Today, the magnitude of this hospitality is the measure of our ethics.

Notes

1 Jacques Derrida, *Writing and Difference*, trans. Alan Bass (Chicago, 1978), p. 282. Throughout this essay, I use standard English translations of German and French texts wherever available. On occasion, I have modified these translations slightly in order to increase their faithfulness to the original. In such cases, I have indicated the changes in the footnotes. Where no English version of a text is cited, the translation is my own.

2 Stephen Greenblatt, "Culture," in *Critical Terms for Literary Study*, ed. Frank Lentricchia and Thomas McLaughlin (Chicago, 1995), p. 225.

3 Theodor W. Adorno, "Cultural Criticism and Society," in *Prisms*, trans. Samuel and Shierry Weber (Cambridge, MA, 1981), p. 23. Transl. modified: To capture Adorno's *Begriff*, I have substituted "concept" for "notion." I have also substituted "separated" [*schieden*] for "distinguished."

4 Theodor W. Adorno, *Negative Dialectics*, trans. E. B. Ashton (New York, 1983), p. 10. Trans. modified: I have substituted "utopia of cognition" [*Utopie der Erkenntnis*] for "cognitive utopia."

5 Ibid., p. 15.

6 Martin Heidegger, "Letter on Humanism," in *Basic Writings*, trans. Frank Capuzzi, ed. David Krell, (San Francisco, 1992), p. 258..

7 Sigmund Freud, *Civilization and its Discontents*, in *The Standard Edition of the Complete Works*, trans. James Strachey (London, 1968), vol. 21, p. 142. Transl. modified: I have substituted "culture" (*Kultur*) for "civilization."

8 Jacques Derrida, *The Other Heading: Reflections on Today's Europe*, trans. Pascale-Anne Brault and Michael B. Naas (Bloomington, 1992), p. 41. My discussion and understanding of the ethics of aporia is indebted to this seminal text and the possibilites that it opens up for us.

9 Heidegger, "Letter on Humanism," p. 219.

10 Ibid., p. 220.

11 For extended discussions of this and related issues in the genealogy of ethics and the current critical situation, see Geoffrey Harpham, *Getting It Right: Language, Literature, Ethics* (Chicago, 1992) and his "Ethics," in *Critical Terms for Literary Study*, ed. Frank Lentricchia and Thomas McLaughlin (Chicago, 1995).

12 I am thinking, for instance, of the groundbreaking work on ethics by Derrida and Michel Foucault, both of whom attempt to articulate ways in which issues of ethical and political possibility can best be cast in terms

of a deconstruction of the subject and its metaphysical certainties. See, for example, Jacques Derrida, "Afterword: Toward an Ethic of Discussion," in *Limited Inc.*, trans. Samuel Weber (Evanston, 1988) and Michel Foucault, "On the Genealogy of Ethics: An Overview of Work in Progress," in *The Foucault Reader*, ed. Paul Rabinow (New York, 1984). For a far-reaching network of efforts to delimit a new space of literary and cultural responsibility, cf. *Deconstruction is/in America: A New Sense of the Political*, ed. Anselm Haverkamp (New York, 1995).

13 Charles Taylor, *The Ethics of Authenticity* (Cambridge, MA, 1991), p. 29.
14 Ibid., pp. 17f.
15 Ibid., p. 33.
16 Ibid., p. 35.
17 Ibid., p. 37.
18 Ibid., p. 40.
19 Ibid., p. 40.
20 Ibid., p. 94.
21 Ibid., p. 73.
22 Ibid., p. 120.
23 Ibid., p. 68.
24 Ibid., p. 112f.
25 Jacques Derrida, *The Other Heading: Reflections on Today's Europe*, trans. Pascale-Anne Brault and Michael B. Naas (Bloomington, 1992), p. 9.
26 Taylor, p. 117.
27 Ibid., p. 118.
28 Heidegger, "Letter on Humanism," p. 259.
29 Jürgen Habermas, "Was bedeutet 'Aufarbeitung der Vergangenheit' heute? Bemerkungen zur doppelten Vergangenheit," in *Die Moderne – ein unvollendetes Projekt* (Leipzig, 1992), p. 243.
30 Ibid., p. 244f.
31 Here, Habermas implicitly takes up his project of communicative rationality and normative mutual understanding that traverses so many of his writings. Cf., for instance, his *The Philosophical Discourse of Modernity: Twelve Lectures*, trans. Frederick Lawrence (Cambridge, MA, 1987), p. 149ff.
32 Habermas, "Bemerkungen," p. 245.
33 Ibid., p. 266.
34 Judith Butler, "Contingent Foundations: Feminism and the Question of 'Postmodernism,'" in *Critical Encounters: Reference and Responsibility in Deconstructive Writing*, eds. Cathy Caruth and Deborah Esch (New

Brunswick, 1995), p. 214.

35 Peter Schneider, "Keine Lust aufs grüne Paradies," in *Deutsche Ängste: Sieben Essays* (Darmstadt, 1988), pp. 41ff..

36 Habermas, "Bemerkungen," p. 255.

37 On the difficult relationship between justice and the various manifestations of the law, see for instance the volume that grew out of a symposium on these issues held at the Benjamin N. Cardozo School of Law, *Deconstruction and the Possibility of Justice*, eds. Drucilla Cornell, Michel Rosenfeld, and David Carlson (New York, 1992), especially Derrida's critique of Walter Benjamin's 1921 "Critique of Violence" with a view toward an ethics of the aporia in his "Force of Law: The 'Mystical Foundation of Authority," pp. 3-67.

38 Walter Benjamin, "Critique of Violence," in *Selected Writings*, vol.1, eds. Marcus Bullock and Michael Jennings (Cambridge, MA, 1996), p. 242

39 This view is held by Foucault in a dialogue with Noam Chomsky. "Noam Chomsky and Michel Foucault: Justice versus Power," in *Reflexive Water: The Basic Concerns of Mankind*, ed. Fons Elders (London, 1974), p. 184f.

40 Siegfried Kracauer, "The Mass Ornament," in *The Mass Ornament: Weimar Essays*, trans. Thomas Y. Levin (Cambridge, MA, 1995), p. 80. Transl. modified: I have substituted "wonders" [*Wunder*] for "miracles" and "wondrous arrival" [*wunderbare Ankunft*] for "miraculous advent."

41 Theodor W. Adorno, "On the Question: 'What is German?'," trans. Thomas Y. Levin in *New German Critique* 36, Fall 1985, p. 131.

42 Ernst Bloch, *The Principle of Hope*, trans. Neville Plaice, Stephen Plaice, and Paul Knight (Cambridge, MA, 1986), vol. 1, p. 4f. Transl. modified: I have substituted "transgressing" [*überschreiten*] for "venturing beyond"; "neither shattered nor skipped" [*nicht zerschlagen, nicht überschlagen*] for "kept under and skated over"; "rapturously" [*schwärmend*] for "fanatically"; "picturing abstractly" [*abstrakt ausmalend*] for "visualizing abstractions"; "what exists in motion" [*bewegt Vorhandenes*] for "what exists and is in motion"; and "planted" [*angelegt*] for "inherent."

43 Ibid, p. 5. Transl. modified: I have substituted "deputizing" [*Stellvertretung*] for "representation."

44 Walter Benjamin, "Eduard Fuchs: Collector and Historian," trans. Knut Tarnowski in *New German Critique* 5 (Spring 1975), p. 36. Transl. modified: I have substituted "exploded by the dialectic" [*von der Dialektik gesprengt*] for "severed from the dialectic."

Jost Hermand

Towards a Truly Democratic Culture

I

Though often endowed with the aura of the timeless, the term "Culture" is, when considered more exactly, actually an invention of the bourgeois age. During the feudal and absolutist epochs, aesthetic practice in Europe was still a natural component of the need for conspicuous representation by throne and altar. Since Renaissance Humanism and the Enlightenment of the eighteenth century, the creation of art has been increasingly stripped of aristocratic and religious notions. The bourgeoisie, as the class gradually rising to power, used art primarily to give itself and its concept of virtue a greater degree of legitimacy. Because the middle class cloaked its striving for power – at least since the French Revolution of 1789 – in the supposedly universally applicable slogan "liberty, equality, and fraternity" (or better, "solidarity"), a grave contradiction arose. On the one hand, the bourgeoisie advanced a concept of democracy that rested on universal human values, but on the other hand, it felt a desire for superiority and therefore repeatedly sought to legitimate itself by defining "Culture" as something that could only be obtained through higher education. In other words, Western societies have been marked since the eighteenth century by an ideologically informed contradiction between superior and inferior concepts of culture – the former for the educated bourgeoisie, the latter for the broad masses.

While such progressive-minded educational utopians as Thomas Jefferson, Friedrich Schiller, and Wilhelm von Humboldt believed that this discrepancy could be at least partially overcome, it nonetheless became ever more entrenched over the course of the nineteenth century, if not even completely immutable. Many bourgeois cultural critics have correctly pointed out that this split

widened as the middle class came to power not only in America, but also in several European countries, and as these countries witnessed the breakthrough of industrialization, urbanization, the emergence of the working class, and finally the spread of the trivial mass media concerned only with maximizing profits. Within the German bourgeoisie, this develop led – simplifying it somewhat – to a dual reaction: both to an ever-growing intellectual arrogance à la Friedrich Nietzsche, by which the educated middle class tried to separate itself from the lower class, and simultaneously to a mood of universal cultural crisis that finally culminated in the writings of Oswald Spengler, who was convinced that the unstoppable spread of mediocrity and culture-destroying egalitarianism, which passed itself off as democracy, would inevitably lead to the "Decline and Fall of the Western World."

Since the 1890s, uninterrupted debates have been conducted in the public sphere of many highly developed industrial democracies about how modern mass society can coexist with "Culture," or at least with that concept of culture which seemed to the educated middle classes of the nineteenth century to be the highest legitimation of human existence. Many representatives of the older educated bourgeoisie trembled at the prospect of cultureless "barbarism," and in order to avert this "crisis," they repeatedly postulated new concepts of culture, starting in the late nineteenth century and then intensifying in the first decades of this century. These proposals were rife with speculations on how this downward spiral into the dismal depths might be stopped. The conservatives among the older bourgeoisie simply recommended an increased allegiance to national and religious values within the cultural heritage. The liberals, however, pushed for increased state or municipal subsidies to support "High Culture" (in German, "E-Kultur," for "Elitäre Kultur" or "Ernste Kultur"), as this form of culture was usually known among these classes – in contrast to the "entertainment industry" (in German "U-Kultur" or "Unterhaltungskultur"), which was dismissed as low art. While the conservatives' plan to save the cultural heritage won over relatively

few adherents, the liberals has achieved considerable success by removing high culture from the realm of partisan politics and focusing the debate on questions of financing. That has meant encouraging both government bodies and private sponsors to deal more effectively with cultural concerns, without posing any sort of socio-political demands that would call the status quo into question.

Such debates, which have been conducted in Germany for decades with an astonishing fervor, are now becoming increasingly undermined by a discourse that no longer takes the demise of high culture as a tragedy, even though this viewpoint is still being upheld by the remnants of the older bourgeoisie. Under the terms of this new discourse, this entire process is seen as a structural shift and even welcomed as a positive turn toward a truly "democratic" culture. What older bourgeois critics characterized as cultural decline is, in fact, the very same phenomenon that the proponents of many of the newest discourses term cultural progress. They bring two main arguments to bear: either the theory of a positively characterized "juxtaposition" (in German, a *Nebeneinander*) of low and still existent high cultural forms, or the theory of an ever-advancing "mixture" (in German, *Vermischung*) of the two areas in favor of a culture industry producing commodities consumable by everyone. Let us examine each of these theories in turn.

The proponents of the juxtaposition theory often take as their sociopolitical starting point the classic liberal concept of an open society as formulated by the postwar sociologist Karl R. Popper. In their view, the oligarchic rule that characterized past societies has been successfully replaced in today's industrialized democracies by political pluralism. In these nations, they maintain, the older forms of culture exclusively dominated by the haute bourgeoisie have been superseded by an ever more intricate system of quite dissimilar subcultures. A cultural system has thereby come into being which gives members of any social grouping the chance to choose the subculture that speaks to them most directly, in keeping with the latest notions of social diversity and multiculturalism. As

one reads repeatedly in the publications of this school of thought, this vast array of subcultures still makes space for cultural conservatives as well as liberal adherents of modernist-elite "high culture." However, these two concepts of culture are no longer privileged above the other subcultures within the realm of the entertaining and the distracting, but rather exist alongside or next to them.[1] In this way, they contend, the demand for a "Democraticization of the Arts" has finally been met.

Turning next to the proponents of the mixture theory, we find the same project for democratizing the arts, but with a different slant. While the postulates of cultural juxtaposition can be most readily compared to the tenets of "politically correct" multiculturalism, the arguments in favor of an increasing mixture of all art forms are more reminiscent of the "melting-pot" ideology, which a few decades ago was upheld as an especially progressive concept of democratic egalitarianism. The mixture theory therefore does not speak of increasing differentiation (in the sense of Niklas Luhmann's contemporary sociological work on systems theory), but rather – à la Wolfgang Welsch – of an increasing "intermixing" leading to a "transculturation" of all art forms within Europe or even globally.[2] Accordingly, advocates of this theory almost without exception champion an increasing mixture of high and low cultural forms, arguing that it will result in greater accessibility to art – however defined – for the entire population. What these cultural theorists portray as a growing democratization in cultural practice, thanks to demystification, dehistoricization, and dehierarchization, actually amounts to a noticeable devaluation of the high into the low. It can also result in a randomness depicted as "postmodern," through which all of the ideological, political, and aesthetic value judgments that up to now have been associated with the concept "culture" fade into the background.

Wherever one turns, one encounters evidence that what we have been discussing here, simplified typologically as a tendency toward splintering into subcultures as well as toward a mixing of these subcultures, is not merely a theoretical construct, but rather

has long since been put into practice by the modern culture industry. The older bourgeois cultural formations, be they conservative-value-setting or liberal-elite, have gradually been set aside in many areas of the culture industry, along with leftist high-culture concepts of the rebellious movements of the late 1960s and early '70s, including works by Brecht, Eisler, Peter Weiss, and so on. They have largely been replaced by an affirmative position that quite approves of the absence of social commitment within the various art forms and describes this stance as "democratic." In analyzing this situation, let us first take up the cultural theories which welcome these developmental tendencies as anti-hierarchical and then turn to the culture industry as it actually exists to see how it has developed within a societal system based on free enterprise that is governed ever more strictly by the principles of supply and demand.

The epistemologies behind the juxtaposition and mixture theories generally situate culture in a field devoid of any binding societal values, after the definitive collapse of political ideologies and the resulting "End of History," as they call it,[3] which they duly register but no longer regret nor even criticize. In such a field, they argue, only Lyotardian simulations or surprise effects are staged that are to a large degree lacking in content, because they are no longer based on any ideologically relevant impulses. Without a critical bite, these theories provide a direct or indirect apology for the prevailing status quo by characterizing the present free market system as the prerequisite for a "positive alienation." In this state, everything that was formerly considered "alienating" is reinterpreted as something ostensibly subjective and pluralistic and thereby freed of all goals, purposes, or even utopias anchored in supraindividual structures. For today's free-enterprise suppliers, everything is just a product, and so too for the spokespersons of postideological or postmodern theory, everything is just a "polyvalent" text. It follows that their definition of text may range from high to low, from classical to trivial, from Goethe's *Faust* to Warhol's Brillo boxes, from Shakespeare quotes to Spiegelman's

Maus, from political posters to essay exams. In doing so, they contribute to the general trend toward cultural "crossover."

While it used to be common in university circles to exhibit an exaggerated pride in one's own culture, which was considered superior to that of other social classes, today many representatives of these two cultural directions may differentiate their interest in computers, TV series, Hollywood B-movies, sporting events, etc., from the interests of other social classes only by their fake ironic distance to these objects. Even academics are no longer proud of what used to be considered high culture, which they often see as old-fashioned and, because its appreciation requires higher education, as an "undemocratic" privilege that should be eliminated. Therefore they can usually look on with no qualms as the cultural heritage is sold off cheaply by the modern advertising industry, reduced to ahistorical entertainment gags in the name of supposed democratizing tendencies. Beethoven's "Moonlight Sonata" as the background for a seductive perfume ad, a pristine landscape by Caspar David Friedrich used in a commercial for a natural gas company in the hopes of communicating its supposedly environmentally friendly policies, an opera quiz based on dumb recognition capabilities as radio entertainment, a Venus by Botticelli in the display window of a porn shop: all this hardly bothers anyone anymore. Instead, it is tolerated, if not even endorsed, by many supposedly cultivated people as the transfer of bourgeois cultural property into everyday life and thereby into the possession of everyone. But what is actually being "transferred" when all of these works merely serve as stimuli for increasing consumption, or in other words, solely benefit the companies that are using them?

As the new master discourses behind such tendencies proclaim, a "demystifying" democraticization of art and culture is supposed to come about through these developments. But isn't something entirely different going on? Isn't the older culture simply being processed for the marketplace, turned into a gimmick rather than being appropriated in any higher sense? And as Wolfgang Fritz

Haug articulated it in his critical *Warenästhetik* of the early 1970s,[4] doesn't this process mean that every cultural product becomes a purchasable consumer product that one can eat right off the shelf, like a banana? In other words, doesn't it transform culture into a commodity of cheap pleasure or even a drug with which one tries to fill what Ernst Bloch called the "emotional void,"[5] that vacuum created by the loss of values and meaning? Is it not the case that aristocratic or bourgeois high culture thereby sinks to the same level as the designer culture, cuisine culture, tourism culture, resort culture, or cosmetic culture that so many people are talking about these days? Admittedly, this does bring about a general commercialization of culture. But does that also mean a genuine democratization?

II

So much for the theories of culture that are current nowadays. Let us now turn to some concrete manifestations of the actual situation. To take a sober view for a minute, what this new cultural scenery is all about is a gigantic "aesthetic supermarket," in which the principle of supply and demand largely holds sway.[6] In many so-called democracies there are still a few state-subsidized enclaves of high culture, especially in the areas of theater, opera, symphony concerts, and museums, which could hardly exist without state or municipal monies. Yet in the remaining ninety percent of what passes itself off as culture – namely in pop, rock, techno, and movie music, in the film industry, television series, best-selling literature, romance novels, comic strips, posters, and greeting cards, or, in other words, in all those areas where big money is to be made – the principle of profitable market appeal dominates almost exclusively, even and especially in those countries that are so proud of their wealth of cultural opportunities. Marketing strategists like to laud this principle as democratic and invoke the euphemistic formulation of an "expanded concept of culture," even though it is ultimately governed only by the economic laws that

determine profit margins.

This commercialization of wide areas of the artistic necessarily leads to an increasing emphasis on political noncommittalism, the average, whatever has mass appeal, and thereby the profitable, both in the culture industry and in all other areas of consumer-goods production. If a few individual exceptions do still stand out among the stereotypically mass-produced protagonists, they are almost never representatives of specific political, ideological, or cultural concepts, but rather are simply people with greater perseverence, that is, social climbers who are determined to get to the top and are willing to be ruthless to get there. These are today's heroes! The artists as well as their corporate flacks in these areas thereby become ever more integrated into the reigning ranking system as it has taken hold in all market-oriented countries in the form of best-seller lists, pop music hit charts, concerts featuring the most requested works, and popularity rankings of television shows. Wherever one looks, the stars, the divas, the Three Tenors, the TV moderators, the actors and actresses of the most popular films, the best-selling authors, or top-40 rock groups are thrust into the foreground. In fact, these stars and divas put themselves on the market through interviews and photo sessions in exactly the same way that they are marketed and sold by the firms that stand behind them. The principle of advertising prevails everywhere in this world, along with that of self-promotion, which the so-called darlings of the public pursue for themeselves. What the Davis Cup, the Wimbledon championship, the European Soccer Championship, or the world record are for sports greats, the Oscar, Emmy, and Grammy Awards are to the "cultural greats." With them, they try to improve their market value in the framework of the artistic hit lists.

As a result, more artistic or creative energy is almost automatically employed for advertising and publicity than for art itself. For example, TV commercials are usually more intellectually stimulating than the crime or comedy series in which they are embedded. Actually, it could even be said that with commercials,

as with music videos, the current free-market system has finally come into its own. By means of ads and videos, almost everything lends itself to marketing, be it a new consumer product or the newest star on the cultural scene. What counts is success, based on mass appeal that exceeds all other products or stars. Here the only remaining values are cheap pleasure, consumption, and marketability at any price, all three of which are incentives that contribute to a further acceleration of the economic growth rate – the central driving force and highest fetish of the current social order. For this reason, in these products and their attendant advertising, everything is reduced to the level of the lowest common denominator, following H.L. Mencken's maxim from the 1920s, which still holds true today: "No one ever went bankrupt underestimating the taste of the general public." The result is ads, which under a gloss of refinement, vociferously and ruthlesssly call for the employment of ever more brutal technologies as well as for the merciless pillaging of all natural resources, apparently supported by an attitude of "Me first!" or "Who cares what happens once I'm gone?"

III

In the end, we are left with an aesthetic supermarket in which a few connoisseurs, aging *Bildungsbürger*, and intellectual outsiders serve themselves in the gourmet corner of the aesthetic delicatessen, while the majority, manipulated by the social-engineering tactics of the culture industry, buys the cheap cultural products in the bargain basement. To portray this situation as "democratic" seems to me to bespeak an almost insurpassable cynicism. Many of today's cultural commentators act as if there had never been media critics such as Theodor W. Adorno or Hans Magnus Enzensberger, never books such as *One-Dimensional Man* by Herbert Marcuse, never the arguments by Jürgen Habermas for expanding the critical public sphere. Fascinated by post-ideological theorems, they portray the dearth of criticism and loss of utopian

notions reflected in the growing commercialization and flood of advertising as a welcome dismantling of older educational barriers, thanks to which, they argue, the majority of the population has lost its earlier phobias about culture. But to portray this process as "democratization" seems to me to be just as myopic, or consciously deceptive, as if one were to depict the Federal Republic of Germany as socially or economically democratic, even though 5 percent of the population possesses over 47 percent of the wealth, a further 45 percent controls 51 percent of the wealth, and the remaining 50 percent has a mere 2 percent at their disposal.[7] The situation is similar in the United States, as indeed it is in almost all other so-called advanced democracies. These are countries in which the top managers, who twenty years ago earned fifteen to twenty times as much as the white- and blue-collar workers in the same companies, now make 150 to 200 times as much as those working below them.

Because of these crass discrepancies in the distribution of wealth, the culture industry in such countries can also be nothing other than undemocratic. Ultimately, the big cultural producers – such as Disney, Time-Warner, Sony, or Bertelsmann – support a politics that clearly represents the social and economic interests of the owners who stand behind them. They do this so expertly, however, that the majority of the population is not even aware of this manipulation and the resulting cultural pacification. While those who ruled in an earlier age still had a clear need to maintain their image culturally, by constructing castles, churches, and parks, as well as commissioning painters, sculptors, poets, composers, and even entire orchestras, the powerful of today, with a few exceptions, largely forgo such cultural markers of prestige in order to conform, at least in their image and lifestyle, to the so-called democratic *Zeitgeist*. Many are in fact wealthier than some of the kings, dukes, or bishops of the past, and could, if they wanted, build even "more beautiful" castles and churches, and commission even more beautiful poetry, compositions, and paintings. They do not, however, and instead make an appearance of being

consciously uncultured, even modestly lower-middle-class. And for many, this seems to be quite easy, because they are often determined social climbers, whose lives – devoid of all other values – have stood solely in the service of their own desire to succeed. For this reason they let themselves be portrayed in the mass media, which they control, or which are at least dependent on them, not as powerful rulers, but as successful stars in the framework of a free-market, globalizing society of upward mobility in which everything is possible. They assiduously avoid giving the appearance of elegance, tradition, or higher culture, as was commonly the practice in older forms of the ruling class.

What these parvenus among the managerial elite are directly or indirectly striving for regarding culture, therefore, is simply a backdrop, against which the stars under their supervision can try to outshine all other stars. Instead of considering any sort of cultural concepts which involve a greater whole, they support a chaos flooded with advertising and self-promotion, in which those who are better off financially regularly prevail as the stronger and more powerful. In these areas there can be no serious talk of pluralism or diversity. In the present culture industry, it is not the representatives of multiculturalism, but instead the murky multinationals that set the tone. Although they may not appear as easily identifiable dictators in the press outlets, film and TV studios, record labels, film distributors, or book and magazine publishers they own or influence, they are in fact pulling most of the strings, in that they hire only those people sworn to strictly adhering to the trend toward producing highly marketable best-selling products. Instead of critically presenting the problems that affect the general well-being of the entire society, or making suggestions that could effect systematic, institutional change, such people are largely committed to thrusting issues into the foreground which exclude any political, ideological, or cultural concepts of identity and instead adhere to the principle of stardom and concentrate on the fate of individuals or families. These cases can indeed involve issues perceived as "problematic," but ultimately they must

somehow correspond to the officially sanctioned mentality of upward social mobility. Through this, even the large culture corporations give themselves the appearance of being "democratic," even though they actually want to establish a general sense of conformity in order to create the most homogeneous audience possible, all equipped with the same interests in buying and consuming. It poses no contradiction, however, that in this process they should continually place their main emphasis on the individual, the clever social climber, and the victor. In this way they lead their audience to believe that in a pluralistic society all people enjoy the same opportunities for social and economic advance, as would befit any "true democracy."

Given the current economic and social conditions, what different model could be used to counter this hypocrisy in order to expose not only the political discourse of the "truly democratic" but also its cultural counterpart as a conscious deception? After all, we are no longer living in the age of the East-West confrontation, in which the "democratic" – regardless of which form it took – was automatically regarded as better and superior. Now that this confrontation has fallen by the wayside, our system should finally be prepared to face criticism that measures it against its own founding principles, to which surely still belong the democratic human rights first summarized in the eighteenth-century formulation of "liberty, equality, and solidarity." Upon closer examination, the situation in our society is not nearly as promising for this postulate as it might seem at first glance.[8] Our social order is, in fact, distinguished by a great deal of positive freedom, but likewise by negative freedom, as manifested in the political, social, and cultural superiority of those who are stronger economically. We enjoy positive equality, but there is also much poverty along with a great deal of easily mobilized conformity, which hinders any deeper intellectual engagement with the questionable aspects of our society. And, finally, there are also a few beginnings toward a positive brother- and sisterhood, yet, in current everyday life, this is usually only expressed in the context of various religious sects.

Let me pose the question even more pointedly: Where are the ideals of freedom, equality, and solidarity to be found in the art and culture of the so-called Western democracies? Granted, all artists in these countries are free to choose their subjects and means of expression. But do they really do so? Don't most of them simply follow whatever the current fashion trends might be? Don't they consciously or subconsciously conform to those master discourses praised by the leading pundits in order to place their works among influential cultural managers as marketable products? Is this a truly democratic, self-regulating process, as is often claimed, or is it not the case that the winners in this selection process are again those conformist social climbers who adhere most closely to the dominant paradigms, and for whom in turn the large firms and corporations advertise the most? In this realm, as in the political arena, everything takes shape in the form of what I would like to term an apparently paradoxical "conformist egotism," which in its success-directed mentality has a clear alibi function in regard to freedom and equality. Indeed, within this system, it would be highly dubious to claim that our culture is the product of a democracy based on freedom, equality, and solidarity, and not on the social-engineering strategies of the group that controls public opinion, a group dependent on those who are economically stronger.

IV

But, to move this line of argumentation toward a more productive and positive conclusion, what would a truly democratic culture actually look like? And how could we find the means to somehow contribute to its establishment? Instead of immediately drifting off into a never-never land of unrealizable dreams, critics of today's culture should proceed as soberly but also as decisively as they possibly can, since the magnitude of this task is truly overwhelming, as indeed it is in all areas of "democratization" which take material conditions into account. What ultimately

stands in the way of such a process of change is not only the economic power of large corporations and their political and social-psychological strategems, but also the almost narcotic desire for relaxation and distraction that they create among the broadest social classes. Allegedly, these viewers want nothing more than to amuse themselves as passive spectators with relentlessly promoted sporting events, B-movies, TV-sitcoms, detective novels, commercials, and rock and techno music. The notion that one ought also to enjoy "higher" forms of culture they consider a quirk of "elite-culture" fans who, they assume, are also not really interested in such obsolete forms of culture, but "have" to be for professional reasons.

In light of these circumstances, many of the university egg-heads in the arts and humanities who found themselves ridiculed for being old-fashioned have resigned themselves to abandoning their earlier concepts of high culture. For that reason, we find even among our own colleagues ever fewer who are truly interested in high culture or who even take the questions raised here seriously. They may talk about cultivating cultural sensitivity, authenticity, and multiculturalism in order to separate themselves from the low-brow, but they have largely ceased to consider the material factors that could actually allow us to advance such concepts. Many of them simply assume that by insisting on their own individuality, they are contributing to a pluralistic democratization of society, without considering to what degree they are condemning themselves to social isolation. They are blithely unaware of the extent to which they are being pushed into the realm of the powerless and unimportant by the social-engineering tactics of the mass media corporations. This attitude has led them to see concepts such as solidarity, communitarianism, or avant-garde as the very opposite of an allegedly democratic desire for individuality. After all, the journalistic henchmen of the reigning culture industry have told them over and over again that these values are undemocratic, labeled "collectivist" at the time of the Cold War and now deemed "antiquated" by supporters of popular market theories of

obsolescence. In the face of this, the "democratic" notion of individuality stressed by many postmodernists does not lead to a mature self-determination (what Adorno termed *Mündigkeit*[9]), but rather amounts in many cases to pure egoism.

Nevertheless, I think that without such notions that support solidarity, we gradually lose any justification for calling ourselves cultural critics. For what should our function be other than to further such ideas and concepts that would be worthy of a true democracy, that is, one based on strivings for cultural and social justice? Or should we be satisfied with ever more sophisticated analyses of the status quo that remain in the realm of complicated and cryptic theories that are virtually unintelligible to over ninety percent of the population? And, keeping in mind the ever more relevant eleventh Feuerbach thesis, should we do this without pushing for reform, or without seeking ways to change current conditions so that it would become possible to speak of an actual democracy in the cultural sphere, that is, a form of popular rule in the best sense of the word? For this reason, the widely expanded questions of identity should no longer just involve the individual, and not even just the gender- or ethnically specific, but rather they should also include questions of political, social, ideological, cultural, and ecological identity, which treat one's own person as a "self in the context" of the force field of overall social relations.[10]

Admittedly, not even I know how we can put up a fight or even make ourselves heard when confronted with the hegemonic power of the large media corporations, which aim to put an end to all higher and all politically critical culture. We can, however, say one thing with certainty: By retreating into overly academic theorizing, we are only playing right into their hands. For that reason, we should not simply throw in the towel at the very outset, but instead develop a capacity for resistance. In the cultural sphere, this means seeking a middle ground between total conformity and total isolation, finding a position that would unite us in search of communitarian ideals. And in these attempts, those repeatedly proposed, yet ever-betrayed ideals of "liberty, justice, and

solidarity" should remain important guiding principles of a truly democratic culture. This is a culture which would not be satisfied with the three dominant trends in today's aesthetic supermarket, namely the pluralistic differentiation into countless separate subcultures, the increasing mixture of these subcultures resulting in an ideological neutralization of all artistic means of expression, and a brutal polarization into a now anemic High Culture and an aesthetically depraved popular culture. Instead, this truly democratic culture would seek a middle road among the three extremes in the form of an "universal culture" or "A-Kultur" (in German, *Allgemeinkultur*), which would be directed toward all citizens of any social order that claims to be democratic.[11]

Most importantly, we must finally start thinking about ways to overcome the current split between High and Low Cultures. After all, there is nothing more undemocratic than the polarization of culture into one branch for the refined elite and another for the supposedly stupid masses. But beyond that, we also face the problem that any mere blending of the various subcultures will likewise remain unsatisfactory as long as these attempts are not based on truly democratic values but instead serve only the profit interests of opinion-shaping media corporations. But the cynics among today's cultural critics, who like to pass themselves off as "realists," will ask at this point: What are truly democratic values in regard to culture? In keeping with the old, but by no means obsolete fundamental principles of 1789 they would be, above all, the following: 1) A more active freedom, that is, neither a totally manipulated freedom, nor one reduced completely to the private sphere, but instead an interventionist freedom dedicated to the democratization of society. 2) An expanded equality, that is a greater share in and a more meaningful right to contribute to the production and distribution apparatus of the current culture industry, in order to reform these institutions from the oligarchic into the democratic. And 3) a sense of humanity that inspires solidarity by seeking to overcome the current fracturing and atomization of society with all its depoliticized notions of

individuality and instead encourages the growth of a social consciousness that shifts our focus from the egotistical desire for wealth and self-realization toward the advancement of the general welfare within a culture and art that offers positive images of a better social order.

This sort of restructuring would require an entirely new attitude toward the current distribution of property and all its underlying ideologies. The prospect of such a restructuring should be frightening only to those egotists who are striving purely for power and profit and who must therefore constantly invent new legitimizing strategies in order to avoid being exposed as distorters of originally democratic notions such as individual freedom and commercial opportunity. These social groups, therefore, can hardly have a particularly positive attitude toward a position that publicly supports an "A-Kultur" which attempts to establish a new concept of culture based not on a striving for success and profit but rather on the three main postulates of truly democratic cooperation that were just outlined. They will therefore try everything to discredit such concepts as overly ambitous, if not completely unrealistic. For that reason the proponents of a truly democratic culture should therefore not be content simply to warm up the time-honored concepts of high culture and the corresponding notions of appropriating the cultural heritage that used to be advanced by *Bildungsbürger*. An "A-Kultur" or "universal culture" should above all consist of works that are free of any forms of elitist snobbery, any contempt for social relevance, any excursions into the bizarre, the far-fetched, and therefore irrelevant, any trivializing reduction to slapstick, sentimentalism, schmalz, or kitsch, or any glorification of violence, war, racism, and macho attitudes. Instead, such a culture should work, in serious or in comical form, toward the establishment of fundamentally democratic values, including, among other things, a strengthened adherence to the principles of peace, a dismantling of patriarchical structures, protection of the natural environment, greater solidarity among people, a progressive educational system, a sense of pride in communal property, and a

heightened sense of beauty.

Some of these concepts, especially that of increased protection for our natural environment as well as that of a deepened desire to ameliorate the areas we inhabit, could have an almost revolutionary character, if they were carried out in a spirit of solidarity. They could also open many people's eyes to the fact that, ultimately, "culture" can also imply constructing, making inhabitable, and also cultivating. This insight might also make them recognize the ugliness of our current surroundings, defaced as they are by the results of industrial overproduction, land speculation, an obsession with advertising, and the plundering of the natural world – in short, by our lack of consideration, fueled by profit interests, which expresses itself in the countless signs, freeways, wires, piles of filth, garbage dumps, and polluted areas that are destroying the necessary natural elements that enable us all to live.

I know these are all just utopian proposals, which at first sight must seem just as unrealizable as my call for an "A-Kultur" or socially relevant culture – at least given the current system of property ownership, based as it is not on communitarian, meaning truly democratic, principles, but rather on private egotism. Seen in this light, today's advanced industrial societies hardly deserve to be termed smoothly functioning democracies, even though that's what they like to call themselves. They are still oligarchically structured, and so are their cultures. Anyone who does not resist such self-glorifying presumptions, or at least develop theories counter to them, should not claim to be a good democrat. Ultimately, the level of democracy in our society has not come close to meeting the promise of its founders, and until it does it will necessarily remain a pathetic, instrumentalized framework, based only on economic principles. In order to withstand the tendency in today's society toward the one-dimensional, I will side with Jürgen Habermas, who once said: If "the utopian oases dry out" in a democratic society, what necessarily expands in their place is "a desert of banality and bewilderment."[12]

Translated by Eric Jarosinski

Notes

1 See Jost Hermand, *Geschichte der Germanistik* (Reinbek 1994), p. 188.
2 See Wolfgang Welsch, "Transkulturalität," *Universitas* 52.1 (1997), pp. 16-24.
3 According to Norbert Bolz, as quoted in *Süddeutsche Zeitung* (May 24, 1996), no. 119, p. 14.
4 Wolfgang Fritz Haug, *Kritik der Warenästhetik* (Frankfurt a.M., 1971).
5 Ernst Bloch, "Vom Hasard zur Katastrophe," *Politische Aufsätze aus den Jahren 1934-1939* (Frankfurt a.M., 1972), pp. 297f.
6 See Jost Hermand, "Ist die Bunsdesrepublik ein Kulturstaat?" in idem, *Angewandte Literatur. Politische Strategien in den Massenmedien* (Berlin, 1996), pp. 249-265.
7 Cf. "Die gespaltene Gesellschaft," *Spiegel* (1997), no. 40, pp. 86-91.
8 See Jost Hermand, "Liberté – Egalité – Fraternité. Die Postulate einer unvollendeten Revolution," *Freiheit, Gleichheit, Brüderlichkeit. 200 Jahre Französische Revolution in Deutschland*, ed. Rainer Schoch (Nürnberg, 1989), pp. 31-40.
9 Theodor W. Adorno, *Erziehung zur Mündigkeit* (Frankfurt a.M., 1970).
10 See Seyla Benhabib, *Selbst im Kontext. Kommunikative Ethik im Spannungsfeld von Feminismus, Kommunitarismus und Postmoderne* (Frankfurt a.M., 1995), pp. 76-95.
11 See Hilmar Hoffmann and Dieter Kramer, "Zum Kulturbegriff demokratischer Kulturpolitik," *Kultur. Bestimmungen im 20. Jahrhundert*, ed. Helmut Brackert and Fritz Wefelmeyer (Frankfurt a.M., 1990), pp. 421-440.
12 Jürgen Habermas, *Die neue Unübersichtlichkeit* (Frankfurt a.M., 1985), p. 161.

German Life and Civilization

German Life and Civilization provides contributions to a critical understanding of Central European cultural history from medieval times to the present. Culture is here defined in the broadest sense, comprising expressions of high culture in such areas as literature, music, pictorial arts, and intellectual trends as well as political and socio-historical developments and the texture of everyday life. Both the cultural mainstream and oppositional or minority viewpoints lie within the purview of the series. While it is based on specialized investigations of particular topics, the series aims to foster progressive scholarship that aspires to a synthetic view of culture by crossing traditional disciplinary boundaries.

Interested colleagues are encouraged to send a brief summary of their work to the general editor of the series:

Jost Hermand
Department of German
University of Wisconsin
Madison, Wisconsin 53706

This volume contains the contributions to the Twenty-Ninth Wisconsin Workshop on "Concepts of Culture." Culture studies in the United States have arrived at a turning point. There is a clear orientation toward solidification on the one hand and to self-clarification on the other. The pragmatically oriented attempts to institutionalize culture studies refrain from further theoretical and methodological discussions, while attempts of an ongoing self-clarification of culture studies are still substantially involved in giving a profile to the aim and scope of the concept(s) of culture studies. Throughout the exciting debates at the Workshop it became clear that culture studies cannot be reduced to a quest for identity or an inconceivable "Other." It has also become clear, however, that declarations of the end of the "revolution," in order to do (new) business as usual, do not hit the mark either. In nine essays, German studies scholars help to show the state of the discipline and its problematic ambitions.

Hans Adler is Professor of German at the University of Wisconsin–Madison, where he teaches German literature and culture from 1700 to the present, continental philosophy, and aesthetics. His publications include several books and numerous articles on the industrial novel, eighteenth-century literature and philosophy, J. G. Herder, K. Ph. Moritz, J. W. Goethe, G. Büchner, L. Otto, K. Struck, and the relationship between literature, philosophy, and social history. He is president of the International Herder Society.

Jost Hermand is the William F. Vilas Research Professor of German at the University of Wisconsin–Madison, where he teaches German literature and culture from 1750 to the present, German-Jewish history, and the methodology of cultural studies. His most recent books include *Geschichte der Germanistik* (1994), *Judentum und deutsche Kultur. Beispiele einer schmerzhaften Symbiose* (1996), and *Die deutschen Dichterbünde von den Meistersingern bis zum PEN-Club* (1998).