

Global Humanities Campus of the Thematic Network

Principles of Cultural Dynamics

Summer School

**Commonalities and Differences: The Bronze Age, the Ancient
High Civilizations, and Industrial Modernity**

(July 21-August 1, 2014)

NILS F. SCHOTT (JHU)

THE THEORY AND PRACTICE OF NATURAL RELIGION

To confront what they saw as excesses of organized religion, Enlightenment thinkers like Hume, Rousseau, and C. F. Bahrtd developed notions of natural religion. At a time when public opinion and the secular state—Enlightenment inventions, as well—struggle to address reassertions of faith, does the idea of natural religion still have anything to tell us?

DS MAYFIELD (FUB)

DETERMINISM AND CONTINGENCY IN ANTIQUITY AND THE EARLY MODERN AGE

A discourse's tendency may reflect a view of the world's workings, as well as assumptions as to mankind's place and task in a world so conceived. To approach a description of such views held at certain points in time, the seminar will consider Ancient texts (from Aristotle's "On Interpretation", and from Epictetus' *Discourses* and *Encheiridion*), as well as Early Modern texts (extracts from Machiavelli's *The Prince*, and from Gracián's *Pocket Oracle*). Theoretical support is provided by Blumenberg's philosophy.

MICHAEL FREIKMAN (HUJI)

**TRANSREGIONAL RELATIONS IN THE PROTOHISTORIC OLD WORLD THROUGH
THE PRISM OF THE MEGALITHIC ARCHITECTURE**

In the course of the seminar, I will present the phenomenon of the megalithic architecture in the Ancient Near East in its social and religious context, by giving its general outlines. Megalithic monuments as the most explicit expression of the ancestor cult are known in both the Near East and Western Europe; but is there a connection between these two phenomena, or did they develop apart from each other? I will present the data regarding the development of megalithism, and the new theory in light of this data; as well as the possibility and the nature of the social, economic and religious relations between these two cultures and their implications on further research.

ERAN LAISH (HUJI)

KNOWLEDGE AND METHOD IN THE ANCIENT SCHOOL OF TIBETAN BUDDHISM

The various strands of Tibetan Buddhism reflect several distinct approaches to the core questions of religion, including those that concern the relation between the human and the divine, or the nature of the ultimate reality. In the seminar, we will discuss some of these approaches in the context of the early stages of Tibetan Buddhism. Special emphasis will be given to the relations between the theoretical aspects and the respective contemplative methods. By addressing these relations, we will consider the various religious discourses that are revealed by the specific approaches and their connections to distinct dimensions of human consciousness.

WAN-JUI WANG (CUHK)

MODERNITY, COLD WAR, AND THE WORLD CINEMA

The seminar aims to introduce you to an exciting and expanding field of research on the post-Cold War period and decolonialization in East Asia. It will also explore the issues concerning a specific area of cultural intervention: race, ethnicity,

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cultural diversity, and the transformation of cities and landscapes. Many films from Taiwan use the Cold War as a backdrop, or directly take part in fictional conflicts between the U.S. and Taiwan. Wan Jen's short film *The Taste of Apples* (1983), for instance, opens a window into the political struggle in the Cold War era, and leads the critique of American cultural imperialism in Taiwan.

MARIE-CHRISTIN WILM (FUB)

RETHINKING THE TRAGIC: COMMONALITIES AND DIFFERENCES IN ANCIENT AND MODERN THOUGHT ON TRAGEDIES

In modern times, discussing tragedies always refers to the commonalities and differences between Classical Antiquity and modernity. Rethinking the tragic is not only a question of the evolution or revolution of a literary genre, but also mainly an issue of how to define man and the anthropological, psychological and sociological complexity of his intellectual, emotional and neurotic status. Based on a reading of Johann Wolfgang Goethe's essay "Shakespeare and no End" (part one and two were first published in 1813), next to some fragments by other authors, we will follow several points presented in modern tragic theory about why a contemporary tragedy has to be different from Antique plays. This may lead to the question of what is essential for ancient and for modern thought on tragedies.

IOANA VULTUR (EHES)

THINKING MODERNITY: BAUDELAIRE'S REFLECTIONS ON ART, BEAUTY AND SOCIETY

In his art criticism and particularly in *The Painter of Modern Life*, Baudelaire develops an original perspective on what he calls "modernity"—more specifically, a concept of aesthetic modernity. In this essay, Baudelaire reflects on the relationship between Art and Fashion, Art and Beauty, Art and Modern life and sketches an image of the modern artist. Baudelaire's theory is related to his own practice: in his *Flowers of Evil* (especially the Parisian Scenes) or his *Paris Spleen*,

he evokes modern life and the image of Paris as the modern city. Starting from these texts, we will study the relationship of modernity with time and history, distinguishing between Baudelaire's modernity and the modernity of the avant-gardes, as well as between artistic modernity and industrial modernity, in order to show that their cultural dynamics do not coincide—Baudelaire being at the same time modern and "antimodern" (A. Compagnon).

CARLA GAGO (FUB)

INTERDISCIPLINARITY, PASSE-PARTOUT OR EMERGENCE OF CULTURAL DYNAMICS

Despite academia's renewed interest in "crossing disciplinary boundaries", the label "interdisciplinarity" lacks on an unified body of discourse. A crucial momentum for the understanding of the concept is the nineteenth century and the first part of the twentieth century with the evolution of modern natural sciences, the industrial revolution and general "scientification" of knowledge. At this historical moment converge both movements of several disciplines becoming identified as such or winning its modern character and the emergence of interdisciplinary tendencies with its ideals of unity/synthesis. One central question that we shall explore is the viability into an academic practice in the humanities of an analysis of literary aesthetics that interface culture and science.

JEAN-MARIE SCHAEFFER (EHES)

MODERNIST ART, HISTORICISM AND DEMOCRACY: MODERNITY, THE HERO AND THE COMMON MAN

The development of industrial modernity went hand in hand with highly important demographical, social and political transformations that destabilized and finally disrupted most of the "traditional" social and cultural hierarchies which had defined pre-industrial Western society. These transformations were also huge challenges for traditional views of art, artists and artworks. Art, be it visual,

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literary or musical, had, for centuries, chanted heroes and their deeds. But these heroes had vanished with the traditional social order. Many artists of the beginning of the XXth century turned their back on the present and struck up the melancholic complaint of a post-auratic art. Others on the contrary embraced history, and looked for new heroes. Yet who would be the new hero? The artist? The socially dominated classes? The totalitarian ruler? Some, but they were few, took a bolder step: art does not need heroes. James Joyce was perhaps the writer who embraced the modern condition of mankind in the most radical way: *Ulysses* and *Finnegans Wake* celebrate the common man and satirize every form of heroism. We shall explore some of the consequences of this radical shift in the history of literary representations.

ELISABETH ENGEL (FUB)

RACE IN SPACE: A HISTORY OF MODERN SEGREGATION

This session explores the dissemination of race in space with the example of modern segregation. We will focus on the emergence of the system that became known as 'Jim Crowism' in the US South between 1860 and 1950. In this time, the idea developed that American people could be classified according to their race and live in the same country 'separate, but equal'. Various Jim-Crow laws and practices served to create two fully divided life worlds for black and white Americans, while informing ideas of new imperialism, modern colonialism and racism throughout the world. The session will be based on C. Vann Woodward's lecture series "The Strange Career of Jim Crow" of 1954. Given in the year in which the 'separate, but equal' clause was formally outlawed by the US Supreme Court, Woodward's lecture series was, and is, one of the most influential historical studies of modern segregation.

ELISABETH STROWICK (JHU)

SUSPICION: SIGNS OF MODERNITY

Modernity gives rise to various forms of suspicion, including modern forms of resentment and practices of self-discipline (a suspicion of oneself), as well as to an epistemology of suspicion as it is developed in the modern human sciences. The project examines literary representations of suspicion within a broader cultural-historical frame: Nietzsche's analysis of resentment in his *Genealogy of Morals* serves as one point of reference; another is what Carlo Ginzburg has called the "paradigm of clues". As readings of Kleist, Fontane, Kafka, Freud, Thomas Mann etc. demonstrate, the question of suspicion links cultural and literary theory, philosophy, semiotics, and epistemology in a unique way.

SONG HWEE LIM (CUHK)

SPEED AND SLOWNESS IN CONTEMPORARY FILM CULTURE

How can we qualify slowness in cinema, and what is the relationship between a cinema of slowness and a wider socio-cultural "slow movement"? With a body of films that share a propensity toward slowness emerging in many parts of the world over the past two decades, this seminar will explore notions of speed and slowness in cinema, and address this fascinating phenomenon in contemporary film culture. We will discuss questions of temporality, materiality, and aesthetics, and examine concepts of authorship, cinephilia, and nostalgia, alongside detailed analyses of aspects of stillness and silence in selected film sequences.

REMIGIUS BUNIA (FUB)

THE RISE OF THE MOTHER TONGUE

In the late 18th century, the first language became the mother tongue: it no longer simply was the language one's parents spoke, but it became the only language that allowed a subject to perfectly express his or her emotions. This more or less poetic concept concurred with the rising nationalism of the 19th

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century. Nations claimed to possess a national culture and identity, and with only few exceptions (such as Switzerland) the national language was chosen to be a core component of these newly constructed collective identities. In the seminar, we will trace the origins of the concept back to the Middle Ages, analyze its political impact in the 19th century, and discuss its slow dissolution in the past decades.

OFER ASHKENAZI (HUJI)

MODERN ATROCITIES AS POST-MODERN JOKES: REFLECTIONS ON NAZISM IN CONTEMPORARY ISRAEL AND GERMANY

Ever since its violent demise, Nazism has played a pivotal role in the identity discourses in Israel and Germany. Consequently, the Nazi regime and its unprecedented atrocities have become an essential component of these countries' mainstream culture. This seminar discussion will follow an intriguing current trend in the integration of Nazism to popular cultures, namely, the use of humoristic references to Nazi violence as a critique against accepted national narratives. We will examine examples from the Israeli and German television shows, comic books, satirical magazines and stand-up acts in a way that would emphasize the intricacies between the national and the transnational contexts in which violence turns into a joke.

WHEI-MING CHOU (CUHK)

CROSS-TAIWAN-STRAIT RELATION OF THE LAST 100 YEARS

Taiwan was ceded to Japan by the Qing court in 1895, following the Treaty of Shimonoseki which ended the Sino-Japanese War. Long before Japanese colonization, Taiwan had been a province of China. In the early 17th Century, the Dutch East India Company arrived at Taiwan and turned it into a maritime base for trade with Japan. The Chinese general Zheng Cheng-gong drove the Dutch out

of Taiwan and established an administration. Since then, Taiwan has been under Chinese rule, apart from a short period of Japanese Colonization. At the Cairo conference in 1943, the allied powers agreed that Taiwan should be returned to China after World War II. In 1945, China celebrated victory over Japan after eight years of warfare, and Taiwan was once again a part of China. After the Japanese capitulation, China saw no immediate peace; civil war broke out. The Chinese Communist party got the upper hand, and Jiang Jie-shi withdrew his army to Taiwan, where he sought a revival that turned out to be mere survival. The confrontation between these two parties lasted over four decades. The three major conflicts were called the "Taiwan Strait Crises", including the 823 Artillery Bombardment in 1958. Young, contemporary Chinese have not necessarily inherited the notion of confrontation. With the possibility of mutual visiting, Chinese from both sides of the Taiwan Strait are convinced of the *Zeitgeist* and are now willing to seek a peaceful resolution. Beijing proclaims the peaceful rise of China; however, her neighbors sense different degrees of pressure. The political sentiment in Taiwan is more and more in favor of independence, while the national consciousness on mainland China insists on the return of the island to China. The US attitude towards the cross-strait issue plays a pivotal role.

SUSANNE ZEPP (FUB)

CULTURE AND NEGOTIATED MEANINGS IN MICHEL DE MONTAIGNE'S *ESSAIS* (1580-1588)

The *Essais* of Michel de Montaigne, first published in 1580, relativize all cultural traditions and show that nothing can be known for sure: "There were never in the world two opinions alike, any more than two hairs or two grains. Their most universal quality is diversity." What lends unity to the purposely and sometimes provocatively hybrid material of Montaigne's *Essais* is a – fictitious – referential cipher: the "I" of the writer. The text repeatedly emphasizes that this "I" has no "substance" or "essence" beyond what it says about itself in the text. The seminar will discuss how Montaigne's *Essais* preserve the cultural alterity of the self and the other when they stage "meaning" as a non-objective category. These

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negotiated meaning give Montaigne's Essais a dimension reaching far into the modern and even the postmodern age.

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