

WORKSHOP

Transnational German Film

Thursday, November 8, 2012

UNC Chapel Hill

Institute for the Arts and Humanities, Hyde Hall

Friday, November 9, 2012

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Co-conveners:

**Carolina Seminars; UNC-Chapel Hill: Arts and Sciences
Interdisciplinary Initiative; German Embassy; Center for European
Studies, Center for Jewish Studies; Department of German and
Slavic Languages and Literatures and
Institute for the Arts and Humanities**

Aims and Agenda

Transnationalism, translingualism, and mobility are some of the leading tropes of research in German film studies today. This array of topics reflects the important role German cinema plays on the international film market and on festival circuits, as well as the fact that production and distribution modes increasingly move toward transnational cooperation and markets. Finally, these topics also correspond to film narratives and styles that deal with a transnational Germany and issues such as identity, immigration, borders, and assimilation.

Our workshop seeks to not only discuss current trends in transnational German film, but also place more recent films in a longer historical trajectory. We will address questions such as, how have changing politics over the years had an influence on German filmmaking? How does exploring foreign places enable German filmmakers to address local issues? And how does filmmaking re-imagine Germany's and Europe's borders? We hope this occasion will enable us to tap into the current debates in the field, but also promote interest in German Studies across North Carolina by discussing films that will appeal to multiple disciplines and a diverse public.

The workshop features keynote addresses by two respected scholars who have done important work on transnational German cinema. The conference will commence with a lecture by Erica Carter, the chair of German at King's College London. Erica Carter will discuss exile and female transnational spectatorship in relation to Caroline Link's film *Nirgendwo in Afrika* (*Nowhere in Africa*, 2001). The second day of the workshop will feature a keynote by Randall Halle, author of *German Film After Germany: Towards a Transnational Aesthetic*, on renewed interest in the German media regarding the territories of Central Europe, especially in connection with the issues of forced migration, deportation, flight and the expulsion of the Germans. The second day will also feature two panels with scholars from local universities. The first panel will focus on constructions of race and European identity in films spanning from the Weimar to the Berlin Republic. The second panel concentrates on not only migration across physical borders, but also conflicts across generational borders. Taken together, these panels will allow for a fresh look at the legacy and future of transnational German film.

Program

Thursday, November 8, 2012

Institute for the Arts and Humanities, Hyde Hall

7:00 pm: Keynote: Erica Carter (King's College London)

Becoming European in the Empire: Refugee Audiences in British Exile

Based on a longer project on mid-twentieth century exile audiences, Carter's lecture asks what becomes of the spectator group whom the cultural critic Siegfried Kracauer dubbed Weimar Germany's 'little shop girls' after 1933 and the Nazi seizure of power. Carter will look in particular at those sections of the female audience - largely, but not at all exclusively, Jewish women - who were driven into exile in Britain and the colonial territories. Historical studies of immigrant audiences (Ewen, Abel etc.) have regularly noted how film functions as a vehicle for the renegotiation of ideas

of identity, belonging and home. In her lecture, Carter will use case studies from refugee audiences in the British Empire to explore the relation between ideas of belonging (or non-belonging), and the racialized conceptions of European identity that structured colonial social life. In the colonial context, where 'European' was the accepted designation for 'white', Jewish women had only limited access to the 'European-only' screenings of English-language newsreels and features that were a high point of colonial social life. The refugees were similarly marginal within the cinematic intertexts (magazines, fashionable dress etc.) that played a part in delineating racial boundaries between 'native' and white audiences. In her keynote, Carter will use biographical and autobiographical accounts to explore both how refugee women negotiated this uncomfortable transitional space between the 'native' and the 'European', and the part played by cinema in offering to this displaced audience sites of symbolic attachment, and an affective home.

Erica Carter is Professor of German and Film, and Head of the Department of German at King's College, London. Her recent publications include *Béla Balázs: Early Film Theory* (Berghahn 2010) and *Dietrich's Ghosts. The Sublime and the Beautiful in Third Reich Film* (BFI 2004).

Moderator: Inga Pollmann (UNC-Chapel Hill)

Friday, November 9, 2012

UNC Chapel Hill, Institute for the Arts and Humanities, Hyde Hall

1:30 pm: Keynote: Randall Halle (University of Pittsburgh)

From Empire to Union: The German East in Film

In recent years, a new memory culture has emerged around the expulsion of Germans from Central European territories. The novel from 2007, *Die Flucht* (Tatjana Gräfin Dönhoff und Gabriela Sperl), which was quickly made into a made for TV movie and media event, marks one of the highlights of this memory culture. Documentary and feature films have proliferated and focused largely on the flight from Eastern Prussia, now Poland. Yet the awarding of the Nobel Prize for Literature in 2009 to the Romanian German author Herta Müller brought new attention to the expanse of the German East, in its reach through the territories of the former German and Austro-Hungarian empires stretching through the Danube valley all the way to the Black Sea. This presentation will consider the filmic space of the German East in broad strokes from the origins of cinema to the contemporary memory culture of the Berlin Republic. As a contribution to discussions of transnational cinema, this territory allows us to consider historical specificities of the periods of empire, nation-state, and European Union, specificities too often neglected in the work on transnationalism. This presentation will start with the work of the Brothers Skladanowsky from the early days of film; it will take up the question of multi-language version filmmaking from the early days of sound; and it will end with a discussion of the bridges of memory offered by current filmmaking. In each of these moments it will explore different modes in the apparatus of film in Europe: tracing out the connections of technological development, representational strategy, and political economy.

Randall Halle is the Klaus W. Jonas Professor of German Film and Cultural Studies at the University of Pittsburgh. His essays have appeared in journals such as *New German Critique*, *Screen*, *Camera Obscura*, *German Quarterly*, and *Film-Philosophy*. In addition, he is the co-editor of *After the Avant-Garde*

and *Light Motives: German Popular Film in Perspective*. He is the author of *Queer Social Philosophy: Critical Readings from Kant to Adorno* and *German Film after Germany: Toward a Transnational Aesthetic*. He has just completed *Interzone Europe: The Cinematic Apparatus and the Transnational Imagination* and is now concentrating on the book project *Visual Alterity: Seeing Difference*.

Moderator: Priscilla Layne (UNC-Chapel Hill)

3:00 pm: Coffee Break

3:30 pm: Panel 1: Race and European Identity

Moderator: Kata Gellen (Duke University)

- **Jonathan Wipplinger** (North Carolina State University):
Against War, Against Nation, Against Race? Victor Trivas's Niemandsland and the Construction of European Identity

This paper considers the 1931 pacifist film *Niemandsland* ("No Man's Land," Victor Trivas) as paradigmatic of the overlapping of discourses of black internationalism, internationalism, and German racial politics in Weimar cultural production. *Niemandsland* (released in English as *Hell on Earth*) narrates the story of five soldiers during the First World War who find themselves stranded between their respective front lines. Consisting of a French, German, English, Jewish, and French colonial African soldier, over the course of the film the group's members come to realize that their true enemy is not each other, but war itself. Lending credence to the plot's internationalist bent was the cosmopolitan cast and director. Trivas, a Russian-born director, who had arrived in Berlin in the late 1920s with little knowledge of German, skillfully stages the film's democracy of identities by employing four spoken languages in the film. Furthermore, the film uses the cast's two racial outsiders as mediators of the film's harmonization of (white European) identities.

Jonathan Wipplinger is Assistant Professor of German at North Carolina State University and earned his Ph.D. at the University of Michigan (2006). His research focuses on the culture of the Weimar Republic, with particular emphasis on the German reception of jazz music. He is currently completing his monograph "The Jazz Republic: Music, Race, and American Culture in Weimar Germany." His work has appeared in *Germanic Review*, *German Quarterly*, as well as the edited volumes *From Black to Schwarz* (LitVerlag 2011), *Blackness in Opera* (University of Illinois Press 2012), and *Thomas Mann. Neue kulturwissenschaftliche Lektüren* (Fink Verlag 2012).

- **Susanne Rinner** (UNC-Greensboro):
Racializing Radicals in Volker Schlöndorff's The Legend of Rita

In *The Legend of Rita* (2000), Volker Schlöndorff tells the fictionalized story of the West-German terrorist Rita who hides under a false identity in the GDR until the fall of the Berlin Wall threatens her cover. This paper asks the probing question why a film made in Germany in 2000 by a team whose stated intention it was to make a film about the German-German experience actually uses race in order to represent West-German terrorists as racialized radicals. Rinner questions the radicals' attempts to

assume a racialized identity in order to highlight the deficiencies of Western society and to claim victim status because it suggests a utilitarian function of the discourse on race and it seems to be an attempt to exculpate them from their own guilt. Analyzing these intersections will emphasize the importance of moving images in an increasingly globalized world and sheds light on the significance of race as an integral part of any critical inquiry.

Susanne Rinner is Assistant Professor of German Studies and regular program faculty in the Women's and Gender Studies Program at the University of North Carolina at Greensboro. Most recently, she edited a special issue of *International Poetry Review* with a focus on poetry written in German by bilingual and multicultural poets. She has published several articles on contemporary German literature and her book *The German Student Movement and the Literary Imagination* is forthcoming with Berghahn Books. She is currently working on a book-length study of intermediality and intertextuality in contemporary German culture.

5:00 pm: Second Coffee Break

5:30 pm: Panel 2: Border Crossing

Moderator: Andrea Mensch (North Carolina State University)

- **Claudia Becker** (North Carolina Central University):
Das andere Deutschland/Die andere Heimat - German Filmmaker Edgar Reitz's Latest Project

This presentation will analyze the filmic work of German filmmaker, Edgar Reitz, *Heimat*, *Die zweite Heimat*, *Heimat III*, and also, the latest project of the filmmaker, tentatively titled: *Die andere Heimat* in terms of the complicated process of constructing complex German identity. Becker will pay close attention to the scenes in which characters struggle to come to terms with their identity as well as maintain their German identity by all terms. In *Heimat*, she will trace how the characters Apollonia and Paul become French and American respectively. In *Die zweite Heimat*, Becker will discuss the Latin-American character Juan Ramon Fernandez Subercaseaux's long, painful, and difficult process of becoming 'German.' Finally, in *Heimat III*, she will focus on the journey of German Russians and individuals from the former Yugoslavia. Ultimately, Reitz' most recent work, *Die andere Heimat* will be looked at in terms of his German immigrant characters' struggle in becoming Brazilian-German.

Claudia Becker is Professor of German serving as the Chair and Coordinator for Modern Foreign Languages, World Languages and Cultures at North Carolina Central University (NCCU). She received her Ph.D. in German Applied Linguistics from the University of Southern California and her Master's Degree in German from Bowling Green State University. She has published in and reviewed for *Die Unterrichtspraxis*, *Forum Deutsch*, *The German Quarterly*, *Monatshefte*, *TRANS-LIT 2*, and *Dimension2* among others.

- **Maggie McCarthy** (Davidson College):
Mother/Daughter Configurations and Multicultural Divides in Fatih Akin's The Edge of Heaven

Fatih Akin's *The Edge of Heaven* (2007) obliquely positions the student movement in a longer, less flattering historical frame of failed revolutionary impulses, as well as in relation to contemporary German/Turkish tensions and their impact on the evolving values of the European Union. Political concerns, however, articulate themselves within a familial rubric, including two sets of mother/daughter pairings, one German, the other Turkish. Ayten, the Turkish daughter, serves as the film's most overt revolutionary, while the German daughter Lotte recalls the unattainable love object of Goethe's famous, failed revolutionary, Werther. Lotte's mother, Susanna Staub, represents the dusty spirit of '68, embodied in youthful travels outside of German but long eclipsed by a socially sanctioned passivity and complacent superiority. Ayten's mother Yeter, as prostitute, embodies the use value that ultimately underscores all human relations in the film. The manner in which the film ultimately expands familial structures across cultural divides after two female characters die implicitly critiques narrower purviews that would contain German feminism within a domestic, individualistic sphere. Akin's final multicultural familial configuration gives a new global reality utopian contours.

Maggie McCarthy is Professor of German and coordinator of the Film and Media Studies concentration at Davidson College. Her publications, which reflect a range of interests in contemporary literature and film, have appeared in *German Quarterly*, *Camera Obscura*, *New German Critique*, as well as numerous anthologies. She co-edited *Light Motives. German Popular Cinema in Perspective* and is presently working on a book about German second wave and pop feminism and their influence on pop literature by women and filmic depictions of the student movement. She is also editing an anthology for de Gruyter called *German Pop Literature: A Companion*.

7:00 pm: Dinner Banquet

Organization: Priscilla Layne and Inga Pollmann (UNC Dept. of German and Slavic Languages and Literatures)

We encourage participants to register by 25 October 2012 with **Priscilla Layne** (playne@email.unc.edu).

For more information see: <http://www.unc.edu/ncgs>

The NCGS Series is sponsored by

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