Faculty News - Spring 2012

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Hellmut Ammerlahn

Since my retirement in 2008 I have been teaching graduate and senior-level courses on a part-time basis. The exception is the current academic year which allowed more travel, also to my three children and grandson living in the eastern and southwestern US respectively. I read a paper entitled “Configurations of Creative Self-Transformation: Goethe’s Wilhelm Meister and His ‘Doubles’” at the international conference of the American Society for Eighteenth Century Studies in Vancouver, Canada, where I also chaired a special session arranged by the Goethe Society of North America. An article dealing with fundamental psychological and poetological considerations and their implications for Goethe research, will appear in the Festschrift for Jane Brown. Its title: “From Haunting Visions to Revealing (Self-) Reflections: The Goethean Hero between Subject and Object.”

Eric Ames

Greetings from Muenster! The town is of course totally overrun by bicyclists, but my seminar on Werner Herzog is off to a good start. After so many coffees and meetings, I am pleased to convey best wishes from Martina Wagner-Egelhaaf, Eric Achermann, and Hamid Tafazoli (Bielefeld) as well as from our graduate students Seth Berk and Japhet Johnstone. The same goes for Sabina Pasic, whom I visited in Berlin. There, I was working on a book of interviews with Herzog, whose Cave of Forgotten Dreams continues to top the lists of best-selling documentaries and DVDs.

My new book, Ferocious Reality: Documentary according to Werner Herzog, will be published in November by the University of Minnesota Press. In winter and spring of 2013, I will serve as acting chair of the department. I look forward to working with you!

Charles Barrack
Voiced stops (b, d, g) are among the most common consonants in the languages of the world. On the other hand, so-called voiced aspirated stops (bʰ, dʰ, gʰ) are extremely rare—their occurrence almost restricted to the Indian Subcontinent. Yet in Proto-Indo-European (the reconstructed ancestor to most of the languages of Europe—including the Germanic subfamily of languages) it has been estimated that a remarkable 29.3% of roots begin with this rare series whereas a mere 17.9% of roots begin with the far more common voiced stops. My present research is directed toward finding the cause of this discrepancy.

Klaus Brandl

This is my third year since I took over the language program in the department. In many ways, this has been a long and fascinating learning experience considering the multitude of areas, in which this position has engaged me. I am also happy to report that despite a steady decline in German language programs in the US and Europe over the last few years, we still have a flourishing language program in place. Currently, more than 325 students are enrolled in our undergraduate courses.

Here are a few highlights from the past academic year:

One of my projects was to revise and implement a new curriculum for our advanced 300-level courses. In search of appropriate texts, this endeavor took me on a journey to read copious literary texts reaching across three centuries, and ultimately resulted in the development of three different course readers for our 300-level courses. In hindsight, this project was challenging, enjoyable and also quite rewarding allowing me to explore a new academic field. Currently, I am also teaching and trying out one of my own readers, which is definitely the most enjoyable experience for me this quarter. One of my goals for the summer is to develop a shorter version of an advanced German reader entitled “Freiheit und Konsequenzen” and make it available to the public.

In early April I attended a language symposium at the University of Illinois at Chicago, where I was invited to give the opening keynote. Nearly 100 participants attended my talk on “Maximizing Task Effects in Communicative Language Learning Environment”. As far as my personal research is concerned, I just finished a project on the development of and changes of beginning teachers’ cognition. Having been involved in teacher training for more than 20 years, the question of how beginning teachers learn and grow has always been fascinating and of great interest to me.

Jane Brown

I spent my last full quarter of teaching in Germanics with two totally wonderful groups in 311 and 421. It is a joy to see how intelligent and enthusiastic our majors are. I gave a paper on Die Wahlverwandtschaften at the triennial Atkins Goethe Conference organized by the Goethe Society of North America; it was part of the next to the last chapter of my new book, Allegories of Interiority: Goethe and the Modern Self, that I submitted in January. In March I read a paper at ASECS on the sanctification of the Magic Flute in Goethe's "Novelle." It follows up on an essay appearing in Opera Quarterly this spring on Goethe's responses to the opera in the 1790s that explains some of the odder details in Goethe sequel to the opera in terms of French neoclassical painting. I've also enjoyed my last year as Hanauer Professor for Western Civilization. The year is finishing with a bang as I give two pre-performance talks on the Faust theme for the Fifth Avenue Theatre production of Damn Yankees. This has gotten to be my favorite genre. I look forward to a slower pace next year, to welcoming a new colleague who works on Goethe and the Romantics, and to a new project learning about dream narratives.

Richard Gray
has been working this past year in what for him is well-known terrain, writing and researching primarily on Sigmund Freud, Franz Kafka, W. G. Sebald, and economic theory. An essay titled “Accounting for Pleasure: Sigmund Freud, Carl Menger, and the Economically Minded Human Being” appeared in the January issue of *Publications of the Modern Language Association of America (PMLA)*, and another essay related to economic discourse in Freud, “Economics as a Laughing Matter: Freud’s Jokes and Their Relations to the Economic Unconscious,” is currently under review for publication. Economic questions are also at the center of an essay, bearing the title “Imaginary Value and the Value of the Imaginary: J. G. Schlosser, E. T. A. Hoffmann, and the Convergence of Economics and Aesthetics in German Romanticism,” published in a special issue of the journal *MLQ* devoted to the theme of “Literary Value.” In November Gray participated in a scholarly conference in Prague dealing with Kafka’s international reception, where he delivered a paper on Kafka’s reception among German-Jewish émigrés in the USA, “Un-Verschollen in Amerika: Der Einfluss deutsch-jüdischer Emigranten auf die (amerikanische) Kafka-Rezeption.” The lecture appeared in print in the on-line magazine LETNAPARK: Prager Kleine Seiten and is available at: [http://www.letnapark-prager-kleine-seiten.com/r-t-gray-kafka-usa.html](http://www.letnapark-prager-kleine-seiten.com/r-t-gray-kafka-usa.html). An expanded version of this essay will appear next year in the published proceedings of the conference. Gray also took on Kafka’s academic ape, Rotpeter, in the essay “The Fourth Wall: Illusion and the Theater of Narrative in Franz Kafka’s ‘Ein Bericht für eine Akademie,’” which appeared in a volume he co-edited with his former postdoc, Hamid Tafazoli, *Außenraum–Mitraum–Innenraum: Heterotopien in Kultur und Gesellschaft* (Bielefeld: Transcript, 2012). While in Europe for the Kafka conference, Gray returned to the *Literaturarchiv* in Marbach, to continue his on-going research on W. G. Sebald. The book he co-edited with colleagues from various disciplines at UW, *Inventions of the Imagination: Interdisciplinary Perspectives on the Imaginary since Romanticism*, appeared in print last summer with the University of Washington Press. Beyond his own scholarship and teaching, Gray has also begun a two-year term as a member of the *PMLA* editorial board, which has the remarkable perk that it takes him to New York City three times a year for meetings.

**Gunter Hertling**


**Brigitte Prutti**

...published *Festzüge: Thomas Bernhard und seine Preise* [Aisthesis 2012] and is currently finishing a monograph on the Austrian dramatist Franz Grillparzer. She gave a talk on contemporary female travel prose at last year's PAMLA meeting and has courses planned on travel writing for next year.

**Ellwood Wiggins**

My teaching and research have been committed to understanding the roles that performance and the reception
of antiquity play in the protean formation of identities in literature and culture. I am especially interested in the performative practices and acts of self-assertion involved in the reception of Greek drama and philosophy, Shakespeare, and Eastern Thought. The German intellectual and cultural worlds of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries provide a rich locus in which these strands of research converge.

I am currently revising my dissertation on dramatic recognition from Homer to Büchner (via Shakespeare, Goethe, and Kleist) into a book. Other ongoing projects include a study of the rhetoric of sympathy in the eighteenth-century discourses of moral philosophy and the theatre. I have published or presented work on such varied themes as *anagnōrisis* in Goethe and Aristotle, representation in Indian and German aesthetics, translation theory and Shakespeare, irony in Plato and Romanticism, and affinities between Confucian ethics and Goethean morphology. I am also interested in connections between evolutions in scientific understanding and artistic creation, and my translation of Rüdiger Campe's *The Game of Probability: Literature and Calculation between Pascal and Kleist*, will be published by Stanford UP in 2012. All of my sundry interests unfold from some aspect of performance studies: it is instructively revealing to view even the scientific experiment as a staged performative space. Before coming to UW, I taught at Centre College in Danville, Kentucky, the Johns Hopkins University in Baltimore, Maryland, and the Priamursky State University Shalom Aleichem in Birobidzhan, Russia.

**Sabine Wilke**

2011-12 was the last year for the DFG-funded research network on postcolonial German Studies in which I participated for the last three years. We met in Trier in December 2011 for a conference on the postcolonial canon (papers were just published by Aisthesis), then again in Erfurt in May 2012 for a conference on postcolonial desire, and in Bremen in September 2012 for our final meeting to discuss the planned publication with contributions by all network participants. My paper was on narrating and depicting the early contact scene, specifically Georg Forster's figuration of New Zealand and Alexander von Humboldts experiences in tropical South America.

As president of the Pacific Ancient and Modern Language Association I gave the presidential address at the annual convention at Scripps College in November 2011, and presented a first attempt at articulating a humanistic perspective on climate and climate change at a conference on contemporary German Studies at the University of Toronto in April 2012. This is a new direction for me and I am very excited to be able to start thinking about issues like climate change, pollution, and food networks in literature and culture. To advertise and advance the cause of the environmental humanities, I edited a special volume of *Pacific Coast Philology* with papers from American Colonial Studies, Spanish, Irish Studies, German, French, Classics, and Asian Languages and Literatures to show the world that you do not have to be a professor of English in order to be a vocal ecocritic. Moreover, I will hold the first meeting of a newly constituted transatlantic research network in the environmental humanities here in Seattle in September 2012 which will bring together many colleagues from North America, the UK, and Germany to discuss urgent environmental problems from a humanistic perspective. As you can see, I am having a lot of fun with this new topic. Stay tuned.

**Hwa Young Lee**

I am a Professor of the Department of German Language and Literature at Chungnam National University in South Korea (see image). I am working at UW this sabbatical year. My research Fields are literary theory, symbol theory, Grimm's fairytales and Bibliotherapy. Specifically, I am going to focus on Bibliotherapy in the Grimm's fairytales. While I was teaching students about literary problems, I
thought of practical aspects of literature. Since literature is part of society, it should contribute to human life positively and by means of that, I am interested in the therapy function of the literary. Books are not only providing amusement but they are also encouraging readers. Bibliotherapy is a meaningful attempt in using an individual's relationship to the content of books as therapy. The idea of bibliotherapy has grown from the human tendency to identify with others through their act of expression in literary works. Grimm's fairytales could be used as bibliotherapy materials. A fairy tale is a story, usually generated anonymously, handed down orally from one group to another across generations. Fairy tales can help readers to overcome difficulties of human problems. Grimm's household tales are famous and delightful narratives. These enchanting stories, gathered together by the brothers Grimm, have entertained and frightened children and adults alike. I think that people can often easily identify with folktale characters. During my sabbatical year, I would like to illustrate the function of bibliotherapy with Grimm's folktales.