Born in Benin in 1967 to a family of cattle herders and traders, Idrissou Mora-Kpai received both an academic and a traditional education. After completing his Baccalaureate, he left Benin to work as an itinerant laborer, tracing a course from Algiers to Rome, then on to Berlin where his desire to become a filmmaker led him to attempt the entrance exam to the Babelsberg Film and Television School. There, Mora-Kpai trained in documentary and fiction filmmaking. In 1999, he moved to Paris, where he set up MKJ FILMS, a production company principally devoted to documentary films. Africa, with its innumerable postcolonial conflicts, has been a major source of inspiration for his socially engaged films. Mora-Kpai’s films have been seen throughout the world and have garnered international accolades and prizes. Released in movie theaters in France, *Si-Gueriki* received the Best Documentary award in 2003 at Namur. Inflected by the personal, the film reflects on the condition of women in his country, evoking Africa’s difficulty in reconciling tradition and modernity. Even more notably, he in Benin in 1967 to a family of cattle herders and traders, Idrissou Mora-Kpai received both an academic and a traditional education. After completing his Baccalaureate, he left Benin to work as an itinerant laborer, tracing a course from Algiers to Rome, then on to Berlin where his desire to become a filmmaker led him to attempt the entrance exam to the Babelsberg Film and Television School. There, Mora-Kpai trained in documentary and fiction filmmaking. In 1999, he moved to Paris, where he set up MKJ FILMS, a production company principally devoted to documentary films. Africa, with its innumerable postcolonial conflicts, has been a major source of inspiration for his socially engaged films. Mora-Kpai’s films have been seen throughout the world and have garnered international accolades and prizes. Released in movie theaters in France, *Si-Gueriki* received the Best Documentary award in 2003 at Namur. Inflected by the personal, the film reflects on the condition of women in his country, evoking Africa’s difficulty in reconciling tradition and modernity. Even more notably,
EVENTS 2011-2012
SCHEDULE

ICM FALL 2011
LECTURE SERIES

BRETT DE BARY
Professor, Asian Studies and Comparative Literature, Cornell University

Mining the “Remains of the Remains”: Materiality and Spectrality in Morisaki’s Writings from Chikuhô
Wednesday October 5, 2011, 4:45 – 6:15 pm
Kaufmann Auditorium, Goldwin Smith Hall

PETRUS LIU
Assistant Professor, Comparative Literature, Cornell University

The Peripheral Realism of Two Chinas
Wednesday November 16, 2011, 4:45 – 6:15 pm
Toboggan Lodge
38 Forest Home Drive

OLÚFÉMI TÁIWÒ
Professor, Philosophy and Global African Studies; Director of the Global African Studies Program, Seattle University

Freedom and Democracy: Rethinking Political Philosophy in Modern Africa
Tuesday October 18, 2011, 4:45 – 6:15 pm
Kaufmann Auditorium, Goldwin Smith Hall

Seminar
Wednesday October 19, 2011, 10:00 – 12:00 pm
Toboggan Lodge
38 Forest Home Drive

ICM SPRING 2012
LECTURE SERIES

DAPHNE BROOKS
Professor, English and African American Studies, Princeton University

Black Swan(s) Rising: Blues Women, Female Minstrels & the Gendered Politics of Sonic Afromodernity
Wednesday April 11, 2012, 4:45 – 6:15 pm
Kaufmann Auditorium, Goldwin Smith Hall

Seminar
Sonic Bluesface Culture: Race, Gender & Minstrelsy in High Fidelity
Thursday April 12, 2012, 10:00 am – 12:00 pm
Toboggan Lodge
38 Forest Home Drive

ICM SPRING 2012
NEW CONVERSATIONS SERIES

SHELLEY FELDMAN
Professor, Development Sociology; Director, Feminist, Gender, and Sexuality Studies, Cornell University

&

CHUCK GEISLER
Professor, Development Sociology, Cornell University

Accumulating Insecurity: Violence and Dispossession as Lived Experience
Tuesday February 7, 2012, 4:45 – 6:15 pm
Toboggan Lodge
38 Forest Home Drive

DAGMAWI HOUBSHEET
Assistant Professor, English, Cornell University

The Feelings of Motherless Children: AIDS Orphans and Their Epistles to the Dead
Wednesday March 28, 2012, 4:45 – 6:15 pm
Toboggan Lodge
38 Forest Home Drive

GERARD ACHING
Professor, Romance Studies, Cornell University

Just War Theory and the Invention of the American Man
Tuesday April 10, 2012, 4:45 – 6:15 pm
Toboggan Lodge
38 Forest Home Drive

ICM 2012 ANNUAL
CONFERENCES

After Bandung: Non-Western Modernities and the International Order
A Two-Day Workshop Organized as a Collaboration between the Makerere Institute of Social Research (MISR) at Makerere University, Kampala, Uganda, and the Institute for Comparative Modernities (ICM) Thursday May 10 – Friday May 11, 2012

Global Anarchisms: No Gods, No Masters, No Peripheries
Organized by Barry Maxwell (Comparative Literature and American Studies, Cornell University) and Raymond Craib (History, Cornell University)
Thursday September 21 – Saturday September 22, 2012

OTHER EVENTS OF INTEREST
The Department of Government, the American Studies Program, the Department of History, the Department of Near Eastern Studies, the Department of Development Sociology, the Department of Sociology, the Department of Anthropology and the Institute for Comparative Modernities at Cornell University jointly present:

From Meydan Tahrir to Wisconsin: Rethinking Revolution, Democracy and Citizenship
Friday April 27 to Saturday April 28, 2012
Toboggan Lodge
38 Forest Home Drive

ORIYEN E DAVIS
Professor, Development Sociology, Cornell University

Can the New Man Speak?
Wednesday September 14, 2011, 4:45 – 6:15 pm
Kaufmann Auditorium, Goldwin Smith Hall

ZIAD FAHMY
Assistant Professor, Near Eastern Studies, Cornell University

Ordinary Egyptians: Creating the Modern Nation through Popular Culture
Wednesday November 2, 2011, 4:45 – 6:15 pm
Toboggan Lodge
38 Forest Home Drive

ADRIENNE DAVIS
Vice Provost and William M. Van Cleve Professor of Law, Washington University, St. Louis

Irregular Intimacies: Polygamy, Race, and the Sexual Politics of Democracy
Wednesday April 25, 2012, 4:45 – 6:15 pm
Kaufmann Auditorium, Goldwin Smith Hall

ICM FALL 2011
NEW CONVERSATIONS SERIES

BRUNO BOSTEELS
Professor, Romance Studies, Cornell University

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FALL 2011 LECTURE SERIES

MINING THE “REMAINS OF THE REMAINS”: MORISAKI’S WRITINGS FROM CHIKUHÔ

Wednesday October 5, 2011
4:45 – 6:15 pm
Kaufmann Auditorium, Goldwin Smith Hall

The paper considered selected essays from Morisaki Kazue’s Principles of Japanese Literature (Tokyo: Shobō, 1971) in relation to stud-
ies of comparative modernity, translation theory, and gender and spa-
tial practice. Morisaki’s writing from the Circle Village collective, located at the site of the protracted Chikuhô coal-mining strikes of the
20th century cultural criticism by women, especially Simone Weil, Morisaki
Kazue, and Hannah Arendt. She is currently writing a book on
century cultural criticism by women, especially Simone Weil, Morisaki
Kazue, and Hannah Arendt. She is currently writing a book on

What would happen if, instead of taking an instrumentalist view of
the ideas of modern African political thinkers, we were to consider
those ideas as attempts by these thinkers to proffer answers to the cen-
tral questions of political philosophy as they are apprehended in the
African context? If we did, we would end up with a robust, sophisti-
cated discourse properly denominated "Modern African Political
Philosophy" in which we recognize, possibly celebrate and, ultimately,
assess the quality of answers that African thinkers have provided. The
importance of recognizing a body of work as belonging to this genre
cannot be overemphasized given the many debates, controversies, and
misrepresentations abound in accounts of the relationship between
African and modernity. For us to come to this recognition, we need to
question the dominant idea that limits the possible ways in which
African thinkers have related, and can or should relate, to modernity:
as victims or resisters. There is a third alternative that continues to be
ignored or, when acknowledged, denigrated in the literature: those
who embraced modernity and sought to remake African societies in
its image. Táíwò argues that one can give an account in political phi-
losophy that shows that the received wisdom is profoundly mistaken.
To do so requires that we rethink political philosophy in the modern
African context. When we do, we shall be surprised by the treasures of
political philosophical thinking waiting to be explored. Táíwò’s lec-
ture was a contribution in this direction. His specific focus was on
the idea of freedom and its role in modern African political philosophy.

SEMINAR

Wednesday October 19, 2011
10:00 am – 12:00 pm
Toboggan Lodge
38 Forest Home Drive

Olufemi Táíwò was born and raised in Ibadan, Nigeria. He earned under-
graduate and graduate degrees from the University of Ife (now
Obafemi Awolowo University), Ilé-Ife, Nigeria, and graduate degrees
from the University of Toronto, Canada. He taught at the Obafemi
Awolowo University until 1990. He served as a Staff Development
Fellow, under the Canada-Nigeria Linkage Programme in Women’s
Studies, at the Institute for the Study of Women, Mount Saint Vincent
University, and the Centre for International Studies, Dalhousie
University, both in Halifax, Nova Scotia, Canada, from 1988 to 1989. He
was a Rockefeller Postdoctoral Fellow at the Institute for Afro-
American and African Studies; director of Cornell's Society for the
Humanities and of its Visual Harrington Auditorium, Goldwin Smith Hall

The paper argues that Morisaki’s work participates in the
creating of comparative modernity, translation theory, and gender and
orthodox Marxist historiography, Morisaki chose to voice this critique
from the marginal site of rural Kyushu. Her works from Chikuhô might
therefore be seen as attempting to trace the outlines of what Spivak
has described as “epistemes or mindsets foreclosed by capitalist so-
cialist teleology, defective for capitalism” that “survive in more or less
habitual ruins…as more or less recognizable remains.” De Bary ex-
plains the figuration of the Chikuhô mines as “more or less recogniz-
able remains” in Morisaki’s writings, suggesting that her represen-
tation of this underground space and its floating specters can be
seen as resonating with the “planetariness” Spivak finds in Marx’s
depictions of the rural Cuban “earth” and the “uncanny” caves of
Mahaoswa Devi’s Pirtha. Rather than insisting that one or another
representational practice finally resolves the aposiis faced by writers
seeking to pluralize modernity and its impacts, however, de Bary ar-
gued that it is this very effort that constitutes the stuff, texture, and
even “materiality” of the writing practice of authors like Morisaki at
Chikuhô.

Brett de Bary is Professor of Asian Studies and Comparative
Literature at Cornell University, and Senior Editor of Traces: A
Multilingual Series of Cultural Theory and Translation. She has served
as Director of Cornell’s Society for the Humanities and of its Visual
Studies Program, and as Associate Director of the East Asia Program.
She is a member of the international research collaboration “Gender
and Migration,” funded by the Japanese Ministry of Education at
Osaka University. She is a Fellow at Harvard University’s Reischau
Institute for Japanese Studies, a member of the Humanities Initiative
Steering Committee for the Canadian Institute for Advanced
Research, and served for eight years on the Japan Foundation’s
American Advisory Committee. Her research interests include mod-
eran Japanese fiction and film, the Japanese post-modern, compara-
tive literary theory, translation theory, and the comparison of 20th
century cultural criticism by women, especially Simone Weil, Morisaki
Kazue, and Hannah Arendt. She is currently writing a book on
Morisaki Kazue, who was a member of the artist/collective activist
“Circle Village” (7 4 7 ) established during the political and cul-
tural upheavals over the 1968 revolution of the U.S.-Japan Security
Treaty, and around the historic strike at the Mitsui Miike Coal Mine.
Recent publications include “Practicing and Theorizing Translation:
Implications for the Humanities” (MLA, 2010); her edited volume,
Universities in Translation: The Mental Labor of Globalization
(Hong Kong University Press, 2010); “Dexis, Dislocation, and
Suspense in Translation: Tawada Yoko’s ‘Bath’ in Translation and the
Sensori(s) of the World” (Tamkang Studies of Foreign Languages and
Literature, 2007) and Deconstructing Nationality, co-edited with
Iyotani Toshio and Naoki Sakai (Cornell East Asia Series, 2005).

The paper considered selected essays from Morisaki Kazue’s Principles of Japanese Literature (Tokyo: Shobō, 1971) in relation to stud-
ies of comparative modernity, translation theory, and gender and spa-
tial practice. Morisaki’s writing from the Circle Village collective, located at the site of the protracted Chikuhô coal-mining strikes of the
1960s, has been seen as a forerunner to the emergence of second-wave
feminism in Japan, and, because of her status as daughter of Japanese
colonizers returned from Korea, as a contribution to post-colonial

Olufemi Táíwò is Professor, Philosophy and Global African Studies; Director of the Global African Studies Program, Seattle University. He is the author of
This talk aims to illuminate the imbricated histories of female black-face entertainers, black and white women’s blues cultures, and the emergence of the modern recording industry in the early twentieth century. Through an examination of the politics of cultural cross-pol-lination and appropriation, as well as racial and ethnic mimicry, the lecture will consider the central role that female vocalists have played in crafting sonic forms and aesthetics that have, in turn, served as the foundations of popular music modernity.


Co-sponsored by the Society for the Humanities, the Department of Music, and Feminist, Gender, and Sexuality Studies

ADRIENNE DAVIS
Vice Provost and William M. Van Cleve Professor of Law, Washington University, St. Louis
IRREGULAR INTIMACIES: POLYGAMY, RACE, AND THE SEXUAL POLITICS OF DEMOCRACY
Wednesday, April 25, 2012
4:45 pm – 6:15 pm
Kaufmann Auditorium, Goldwin Smith Hall

At face value, polygamy, prostitution, and pet inheritance have noth-ing in common beyond being socially marginal practices. This lecture connects these three as examples of intimate connections and practices that are typically viewed as deviant and dismissed as threats to equal-ity, family, and even democracy. This lecture argues that, taken to-gether, these three practices embody irregular intimacy and all of the challenges it poses for law and culture. The lecture will explore how each of these practices is situated at the intersection of social power and legal regulation and uses them to trace various modes and tra-jectories of law in post-modernity. In particular, the lecture will ex-plore the crisis that irregular intimacy poses for liberalism and the democratic state.

Professor Adrienne D. Davis, Vice Provost and William M. Van Cleve Professor of Law at Washington University, is renowned for her scholarship and teaching on gender and race relations; theories of jus-tice and reparations; feminist and critical race theory; and law and popular culture. She has written extensively on the gendered and pri-\n
can the new man speak?

BRUNO BOSTEELS
Professor, Romance Studies, Cornell University

Wednesday September 14, 2011
4:45 – 6:15 pm
Kaufmann Auditorium, Goldwin Smith Hall

In this presentation, Bosteels took a fresh look at Tomás Gutiérrez Alea’s 1968 movie Memories of Underdevelopment from the combined points of view of film theory and the politics of subjectivity.

Bruno Bosteels is Professor of Romance Studies at Cornell University. He is the author of several books, including Alain Badiou: une trajectoire polémique (2007), The Actuality of Communism (2011), Badiou and Politics (2011) and Marx and Freud in Latin America: Politics, Religion, and Psychoanalysis in Times of Terror (2012). He is the translator of Theory of the Subject (2009) and Wittgenstein’s Antithesis (2011), both by Alain Badiou. From 2005 until 2011 he served as general editor of diacritics.

ZIAH FAHMY
Assistant Professor, Near Eastern Studies, Cornell University

ORDINARY EGYPTIANS: CREATING THE MODERN NATION THROUGH POPULAR CULTURE
Wednesday November 2, 2011
4:45 – 6:15 pm
Toboggan Lodge
38 Forest Home Drive

The popular culture of pre-revolution Egypt did more than entertain—it created a nation. Songs, jokes, and satire, comedic sketches, plays, and poetry all provided an opportunity for discussion and debate about national identity and an outlet for resistance to British and elite authority. This presentation examined how, from the 1870s until the eve of the 1919 revolution, popular media and culture provided ordinary Egyptians with a framework to construct and negotiate a modern national identity. Fahmy’s work engages with some theories of nationalism and tests their applicability to Egypt and the Arab world. It introduces the concept of ‘media-capitalism,’ which expands the historical analysis of Egyptian nationalism beyond just print and elite media.
where his dissertation, “Popularizing Egyptian Nationalism,” was awarded the Malcolm H. Kerr Dissertation Award (2008) from the Middle East Studies Association. His first book, Ordinary Egyptians: Creating the Modern Nation through Popular Culture (Stanford University Press, 2011), examines how, from the 1870s until the eve of the 1919 revolution, popular media and culture provided ordinary Egyptians with a framework to construct and to negotiate a modern national identity. His articles have appeared in the International Journal of Middle East Studies and in Comparative Studies of South Asia, Africa and the Middle East. Professor Fahmy is currently beginning another book project tentatively titled, Listening to the Nation: Mass Culture and Identities in Interwar Egypt.

PETRUS LIU
Assistant Professor, Comparative Literature, Cornell University

THE PERIPHERAL REALISM OF TWO CHINAS

Wednesday, November 16, 2011
4:45 – 6:15 pm
Toboggan Lodge
38 Forest Home Drive

What exactly constitutes peripheral literature? This talk explores realism from 1970s Taiwan/China as a peripheralist reflection on capitalism's de-synchronization effects. The historical creation of two China provided a formative stage for vibrant literary writings on the dissonant relations between novelistic subjectivities and historical circumstances. Time and again, characters from this body of literature ask what it means to be part of a spatially and temporally fragmented world as they embody and engage capitalism's social contradiction. The libidinalization of capitalism's structural principles serves as the primary driver of this realist, which is not an unmediated reflection of global commodification, but a locally grounded effort at achieving an historical understanding of human sociality under intense economic modernization, inter-Asian intercolonization, and political upheaval.

Petrus Liu is Assistant Professor of Comparative Literature at Cornell University. His book, Stateless Subjects: Chinese Martial Arts Literature and Postcolonial History, is forthcoming from Cornell East Asia Series in October this year. He has published on queer Chinese studies, film, the aesthetics of Cold War cultures, Marxism and humanism, and gaming in China.

SHELLEY FELDMAN
Professor, Development Sociology, Director, Feminist, Gender, and Sexuality Studies, Cornell University

ACCUMULATING INSECURITY: VIOLENCE AND DISPOSSESSION AS LIVED EXPERIENCE

Tuesday, February 7, 2012, 4:45 – 6:15 pm
Toboggan Lodge
38 Forest Home Drive

The project leading to the book Accumulating Insecurity: Violence and Dispossession in the Making of Everyday Life, involved experts on the securitization of society and resulting insecurities in the U.S. and elsewhere. The book grew out of two Cornell workshops, a conference, and, with others, A Metsy: Contemplations of a Crisis in Agricultural Science. Charles C. Geisler is Professor of Development Sociology and a Cornell International Professor. His current research focus is the relationship between property and security in the current war on terror. Other interests include the militarization of land use planning; theories of police power; displacement-induced displacement; new narratives of terra nullius and post-property. These interests are reflected in his edited books: Inhabiting SIA: The Social Impact Assessment of Bankable Resource Development; Native Peoples, Land Reform, American Styles; The Social Consequences and Challenges of Changing Agricultural Technologies: A Community Land Trust Handbook; Property and Value; and Accumulating Insecurity. Other recent publications include work on social displacement, homelessness, indigenous property rights, and

DAGMAWI WOBSHET
Assistant Professor, English, Cornell University

THE FEELINGS OF MOTHERLESS CHILDREN: AIDS ORPHANS AND THEIR EPISTLES TO THE DEAD

Wednesday, March 28, 2012
4:45 – 6:15 pm
Toboggan Lodge
38 Forest Home Drive

In an untitled painting, Trevor Makhoba, the late South African painter, captures the havoc wrought by AIDS in South Africa and indeed in many other parts of the global south. The painting depicts a funeral procession, which is not an uncommon subject of painting, however, what’s uncommon about Makhoba’s funeral scene is that the people carrying the casket and lining the burial procession are all children. Not only does the painting conjure up the predicament of millions of orphans who have lost their parents to AIDS, it also urges us to ask what the possibilities of mourning are for this class of AIDS mourners. Can children carry caskets? How do children bear loss? How do children mourn without recourse to adult funerary rites and mourning conventions? These are the kinds of questions that Makhoba’s painting raises—questions we can begin to answer by turning our attention directly to the writing and art of AIDS orphans themselves. In this presentation, I will consider the writings of AIDS orphan writers who have addressed these very questions.
This project explores the relationship between Western European thinking on just war and the dawn of this region’s empires in the Americas and the juridico/ideological creation of the indigenous American man. Drawing principally from St. Augustine, Vitoria, Sepúlveda, Las Casas, and Munt, this presentation describes and interrogates the rationalizations for and against declaring war against the Indians in order to examine the creation of the Indian as a specific and unprecedented category of the human and a fundamental paradigm for subsequent, imperial regimes in the extra-European world.

Gerard Aching specializes in 19th- and 20th-century Caribbean literatures and intellectual histories, theories of modernism and modernity in Latin America, and colonial literatures in the Caribbean, with a specific focus on the relations between slavery, sovereignty, sentiment, and philosophy. He is the author of The Politics of Spanish American Modernisms: By Exquisite Design (Cambridge, 1997) and a book manuscript titled, Freedom From Slavery: Liberty, Sentiment, and Literature in Cuba. In the contemporary period, he has worked on the play between recognition and misrecognition in Caribbean masking practices and popular cultures and published Masking and Power, Carnival and Popular Culture in the Caribbean (Minnesota, 2002). He has recently begun a book-length study on the relationship between just war theory and the sixteenth-century invention of the indigenous American subject.

Western hegemony in political, social and intellectual life? What has been achieved and what remains to be done?

Global Anarchisms: No Gods, No Masters, No Peripheries

Organized by Barry Maxwell

Comparative Literature and American Studies, Cornell University

and Raymond Craig (History, Cornell University)

African Studies and Research Center, 310 TripThrimer Road

Friday September 21 – Saturday September 22, 2012

Anarchism: no gods, no masters. Enough with religion and the state. This workshop makes an additional demand: no peripheries.

The diffusionism line—anarchism was in areas outside of Europe an import and a script to be mimicked—has faced the challenge in recent years of research that reveals anarchism in its plural origins and sheer multiplicity of local variants. In this sense one might go so far as to argue that early twentieth century anarchists were—in their emphasis on the world as their home, in their peripatetic radicalism, (in the fact that anarchist perspectives could be seen from (rather than prior to) migration, in their critique of the constant efforts to divide and hierarchize people—the first postcolonial theorists. To reflect on the histories and cultures of the anti-statist mutual aid movements of the last century, then, will be one aim of this conference. It has a second aim, that devotes itself with the first: the re-examination of the historical relationships between anarchism and communism, without starting from the position of sectarian difference (Marxism versus anarchism). Rather, we will look at how anarchism and communism intersected; how the insurgent Left could appear—and in fact was—much more ecumenical, capacious, and eclectic than frequently portrayed; and that such capaciousness is a hallmark of anarchist practice, which is prefigurative in its politics and anti-hierarchical and anti-dogmatic in its ethos.

Participants will include Benedict Anderson (Professor Emeritus, International Studies, Cornell University); Mohammed Baniyeh (Sociology, University of Pittsburgh); Avery Barna Barqu (Political Science, The New School for Liberal Arts); Iain Boal (Birkbeck Institute for the Humanities); Bruce Bostrell (Romance Studies, Cornell University); Barry Carr (University of California, Berkeley); Glen Coulthard (Yellowknives Dene) (First Nations Studies and Political Science, University of British Columbia); Andrej Grubacic (Social and Cultural Anthropology, California Institute of Integral Studies); Steven Hirsch (International and Area Studies, Washington University); Adrienne Hurley (East Asian Studies, McGill University); Ilham Khuri-Makdisi (Middle East and Area Studies, Northeastern University); Tom McDonough (Art History, Binghamton University); Haim Revadisky (Middle East and World History, Northeastern University); Tom McDonough (Art History, Binghamton University); Maia Ramnath (Humanities and Social Thought, New York University); Joelene Richard (Asian Studies) (American Indian Program, History of Art and Visual Studies, Cornell University).
by Muslim states. The year 1492 was marked by the immediate expulsion (or forced conversion) of Iberian Jews following the fall of Granada. This fateful year of 1492 that sealed the end of Islamic rule in Iberia and marked the beginning of a new era in European history. Ali underscored the virulent bigotry and violence that played the midwife in the “birth of modern Europe,” a process, he pointed out, whereby Europe was rendered a “Christian monoculture” before it became the seat of the Enlightenment and the Industrial Revolution. While medicine and astronomy were some of the better-known parts of this story, Ali emphasized that Arabic remained as the language of rule and learning in Toledo and Sicily for another 100 years after the reconquest. Ali punctuated his rejoinder to an insular “European history” and Western popular culture’s ignorance of the Judeo-Muslim heritage by pointing out that the tradition of “holy war” was not a legacy of Islam (as the hysteria over “jihad” would lead one to believe) but, rather, of Catholic Christianity.

Placing the reconquest and the Crusades within the same topographic and religious real, Ali underscored the evident bigotry and violence that played the midwife in the “birth of modern Europe,” whereby Europe was rendered a “Christian monoculture” before it became the seat of the Enlightenment and the Industrial Revolution. Moreover, this monoculture was utterly intolerant of Islam and Judaism, as Ali reminded the audience that until the middle of the 20th century, the “Jewish Hell” was nowhere other than in Europe. The fateful year of 1492 that sealed the end of Islamic rule in Iberia and saw the immediate expulsion (or forced conversion) of Iberian Jews would be the most conspicuous milestone in the creation of the European monoculture, as would the year 1514, when Philip II criminalized everything associated with the Muslim-Arab culture, including clothing, surnames, and even bathing—a process, Ali stingingly articulated everything associated with the Muslim-Arab culture, including clothing, surnames, and even bathing—a process, Ali stingingly art}

Eurasian history. Ali argued that during the period that stretched between the Islamic conquest and Christian reconquest, the Iberian Peninsula hosted a unique synthesis of the three monotheistic life worlds and the richest civilization in the Mediterranean basin. Departing from this historical background, Ali opened to question the notion of a “Judeo-Christian” legacy that supposedly contains the heart of European culture. Even a brief chronicle of the persecutions and expulsions under Christian rulers and the relative peace they enjoyed in Muslim kingdoms, Ali maintained, suffices to demonstrate that “Judeo-Muslim civilization” is a more accurate notion for characterizing European history.

An exemplary case was an Islamic Spain that (thanks to the efforts of Iberian Arab scholars in recovering, translating, and further developing the fragments of ancient texts) can be seen as bridging antiquity and the European Renaissance. While medicine and astronomy are some of the better-known parts of this story, Ali emphasized the study of music and traced the theoretical fundamentals of classical Western music back to the books of Spanish Arab scholars such as Al-Kindi, Al-Farabi, and SaFi Al-Din. The deep-seated scholarly knowledge in Islamic culture was further evidenced by the fact that Arabic remained as the language of rule and learning in Toledo and Sicily for another 100 years after the reconquest. Ali punctuated his rejoinder to an insular “European history” and Western popular culture’s ignorance of the Judeo-Muslim heritage by pointing out that the tradition of “holy war” was not a legacy of Islam (as the hysteria over “jihad” would lead one to believe) but, rather, of Catholic Christianity.

Ali concluded by cautioning the audience about the rise of Islamophobia in Europe that has been occasioned by the “return of the Muslims,” this time as immigrants, and drew attention to the familiar discourse of alarmism with its accompanying suspicion that contemporary Islamophobia shared with the anti-Semitism of the 18th-20th centuries. U.S. political culture was not spared. Ali argued that the language of the spokespeople of the American far right and especially the unconditional supporters of Israel embraced a discourse on Muslims that was reminiscent of the anti-Semitism preceding the Holocaust, a discourse that is fraught even now with a “crisis of Israel.” Denouncing such parochialisms that extinguis

TARIq ALi

“Final Solution: Islam in Spain”

Thursday September 23, 2010

For Tariq Ali, the aim of his film “Final Solution: Islam in Spain” was “to challenge the memory of 1492 that the entire media all over the globe was portraying.” The film was made and aired on British television (Channel 4) in 1992. The year 1992 was conceived and celebrated in popular consciousness as the 500th anniversary of the “discovery” of America, at the expense of what Ali called “the other 1492,” namely, the fall of Granada and the expulsion of the Jews. The film was made and aired on British television (Channel 4) in 1992. The year 1992 was conceived and celebrated in popular consciousness as the 500th anniversary of the “discovery” of America, at the expense of what Ali called “the other 1492,” namely, the fall of Granada and the expulsion of the Jews. The film wove a variety of representational techniques into a striking narrative: visual representations of the traces of the Islamic presence in Spain (both quixotic and monotonous, in interviews with Spanish authors and historians who agreed upon the calamitous impact of the reconquest, a short play based on archival material that depicted the ambiguities of forced conversion, and brief conversational exchanges with (predominantly North African) Muslims living in Spain at the time the film was made that revealed the difficulties they experienced under the immigration laws of the country. The message of the film was coextensive with that of Ali’s lecture of the previous day—1492, a year when a “new world” was opened to Europe was, simultaneously, a year when a whole world was forcibly closed.

The panel discussion that ensued brought together such illustrious trans-disciplinary intellectuals as Benedict Anderson (author of Imaginative Communities) and Martin Bernal (author of Black Athena) to participate in a disciplinary criticism of the film, noting that the field of Spanish studies has been significantly transformed since 1992 by the proliferation of Arabists and Hebrewists. Robinson voiced a general concern about the way in which the film picks up “with a vengeance” for political and cultural agendas. Emphasizing the need for more careful attention to historical context and accuracy, Robinson called for shifting the focus of inquiry away from the expulsion to the “permutation” and mutual inflection of cultures in Spain. Martin Bernal highlighted the murky histories of expulsion and persecution in the early modern period, with some of the Jewish expatriates being burnt at the stake while others moved to Holland and England where they became slave traders and plantation owners. Bernal also maintained that Spain presented quite a hybrid geography even prior to Islamic rule (Phoenicians who settled in Spain had already converted to Judaism), and that the role of Islam as the hinge of diversity has been overemphasized. Benedict Anderson made a cautionary intervention, reminding the audience that the idea of “Spain” as a state or a people was not in place during the reconquest, and the expulsion could therefore not be imputed to “Spain” without anachronistically reading the “nation” back into a period where it did not exist. Drawing attention to the broader geographical and political complexity of the issue, Anderson pointed to the Muslim rule in Southeastern Europe under the Ottomans. Most insightfully, he observed that the Ottoman Empire was considered to be the “sick man of Europe” (and not of Asia or Africa), problematiz

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Katzenstein the following day. Participants included Cornell profes-
sors and students from such diverse subject areas as history, develop-
ment sociology, art history, political science and architecture as well
as citizens from the Ithaca community. The discussion centered on
several contentious issues, such as the exploration of the linkages be-
tween Katzenstein’s and Huntington’s work, the difficulty of defining
the concept of “(multiple) modernity” and, importantly, the intellec-
tual hazards and advantages of working with the concept of “civiliza-
tions” as such. Results from the discussion included a preliminary
understanding of modernity as consisting of forms or principles of
shared knowledges rather than concrete contents. “Multiple moder-
nities”, then, were tentatively taken to denote the diverse implemen-
tations and substantiations that differ amongst civilizations.
Regarding the value of retaining the concept of civilization, the de-
bate ultimately cohered around a middle ground of understanding
Katzenstein’s approach as a capacious critique of Huntington which,
nevertheless, remains in communication with mainstream vocabu-
lar and is thus able to converse critically with deeply entrenched,
popular conceptions of world politics.

Sinja Graf
Department of Government, Graduate Student

AAMIR MUFTI
The Missing Homeland of Edward Said
Tuesday March 8, 2011

In his lecture, “The Missing Homeland of Edward Said,” Aamir Mufti
(UCLA) proposed an understanding of secular criticism for which
the only appropriate homeland would be a missing homeland. Against
the current tendency of post-colonial critique to confine itself to na-
tional frameworks, Mufti proposed a rereading of Said to develop the
exilic potential of post-colonial critique. Thus the absence of home-
land becomes a desideratum to the extent that it challenges the very
concept of the nation-state.

Mufti’s talk was based upon a chapter of his current book project,
titled “Palestine: from nowhere.” While Said found his missing homeland only in death—his
death certificate listed his birthplace as “Jerusalem, Palestine”—it still
figures largely as a non-place elsewhere in popular and official dis-
course.

Mufti then turned to Hannah Arendt’s postwar writings on
refugees in works like The Origins of Totalitarianism (1951). In her
analysis of these stateless populations, denied even the right to have
rights, the rise of anti-Semitism is inseparable from the trajectory of
imperialism. By contextualizing the destruction of Palestinian soci-
ety by Zionist colonial expansion within a global colonial framework,
and more specifically within the global postwar crisis of the emerging
nation-state system, Arendt suggests that the refugee problem of
Europe in the 1930s and 40s is transferred to the colonial world in the
1950s and 60s. The experience of the stateless would thus be sympto-
matic of modern politics.

Mufti deepened this analysis with a reading of Men in the Sun, the
1963 novella by diaspora Palestinian writer and activist Ghassan
Kanafani. The novella narrates the attempt of three Palestinian
refugees to travel to Kuwait for work; forced to hide in an
empty water tank at a border checkpoint under the desert
sun, they die a short distance from their goal. Arguing
that a lyricism of the land represented by the figure of
the peasant is an exhausted historical possibility, Mufti
delineated the geographic tensions between the inter-
nationalism of the Fedayeen and the place-bound na-
ture of their movement to show how the novella delinks homeland
from territory: Kanafani’s text, Mufti contended, is a parable of home-
land as such, and poses the problem of mobility for those who come
from nowhere.

Turning to Edward Said’s collaboration with Swiss photographer
Jean Mohr in After the Last Sky (1986), Mufti discussed the book’s hy-
brid nature between narrative and critique, text and image to argue that
the programmatically fragmented, reflexive, and dialogic narra-
tive performs a series of spatial inversions between inside and outside
to interrogate the spatiality of homeland. From here, Mufti moved to
Said’s political turn in the 1990s to binationalism. As a homeland
claimed by two exile peoples, Palestine/Israel requires a dismantling
of exclusionary territorial narratives and calls for binationalism as a
social, secular process rather than a simple structural coexistence
without equality. Said’s binationalism, Mufti suggested, draws on and
modifies earlier binational tendencies within German-Jewish
Zionism, while insisting that historical possibility not be frozen into
a static national framework. Palestine/Israel would thus be one state
and one society composed of two interdependent exile groups, trans-
forming the Palestinian desire for a state from a national project into
a permanent rebuke to the global system of nation states.

Seminar
The starting point for discussion in Aamir Mufti’s seminar was his ar-
ticle “Orientalism and the Institution of World Literatures.” As Mufti
explained, the article arose from a double motive, the first being a dis-
satisfied response to current discourses of “world literature.” In recent
discussions of literature as a planetary formation, represented by
Pascale Casanova’s The World Republic of Letters (2007), for example,
Edward Said’s notion of Orientalism is critically absent. In failing to
take account of the embedded power relationships and hierarchical
structures within the history of “world literature,” the resulting dis-
tussion tends towards a glib Eurocentrism. Secondly, Mufti was con-
cerned with exploring the situation in Northern India between Hindi
and Urdu, and their relationship to orientalist philology, world liter-
ature, and English as a global cultural system.

In contrast to what he characterized as Casanova’s fundamental
misconception—that non-Western literary cultures don’t really emerge until the era of decolonization in the mid-twentieth century—
Mufti’s article sought to suggest ways of thinking critically about the
consequences of the new European structures of knowledge for
language, literature, and culture in the Indian subcontinent in the 19th
century. Casanova’s presentist account, in missing the significance
of the philological knowledge revolution at the heart of 18th- and 19-
century orientalist praxis, cannot account for the deep encounter
that took place at the dawn of the modern era, fundamentally transform-
ing the cultural formations of both the colony and the metropole.

Philological Orientalism played a large role, still yet to be com-
pletely grasped, in creating a system for evaluating diverse forms of
textuality that were then uniformly processed as “literature” — a
move that enabled the fabrication in non-Western societies
of forms of cultural authenticity tied to the authentic-
ity of “tradition.” In tracing the role that oriental-
ist praxis had within India, Mufti is able to
demonstrate the significance of the parallel
emergence of “world literature” and
what he calls “nation-thinking.” To

quote: “The idea that India is a unique national civilization is first pos-
sulated on the terrain of literature, that is, in the very invention of the
idea of Indian literature in the course of the philological revolution” (472-3).

The ramifications of this nationalist approach to literature and culture
for the subcontinent include the division of the vernacular of
the north into Hindi and Urdu, whereby a dynamic, layered linguis-
tic situation is fixed into a binary opposition. Orientalism then may
be understood as a way of reorganizing “language, literature, and cul-
ture on a planetary scale, which effected the assimilation of heteroge-
nous and dispersed bodies of writing onto the plane of equivalence and
evaluability that is literature” (488). Because this is an open-ended
process, the critique of Orientalism must also be an ongoing project,
to teach “world literature” must also mean to teach the history of the
forces, hierarchies, and assimilations that constituted this arena in the
first place.

Discussion focused on the relationship in 19th-century India be-
tween Orientalism, cosmopolitanism, and modernity; the Calcutta
orientalists and the centrality of translation within Orientalism and
world literature; the role of the colonial intelligentsia in the emerging
global nation-state framework and the nation as a portable social form;
secularism, post-secularism, and ethnocentrism; and the rela-
tionship within art history between the non-Western realms of “the
Orient” and “the Primitive,” among other topics.

Carl Gelderloos
Department of German Studies, Graduate Student

1963 novella by diaspora Palestinian writer and activist Ghassan
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2010-2011 NEW CONVERSATIONS SERIES 
IN REVIEW

BERNIE SEARLE
IN CONVERSATION WITH SALAH M. HASSAN
Wednesday November 10, 2010
Bernie Searle
South African Artist

Salah M. Hassan
Director, Institute for Comparative Modernities
Goldwin Smith Professor, Africana Studies and Research Center and Department of History of Art and Visual Studies

Bernie Searle is a world-renowned South African artist who works with photography, video, and film to produce lens-based narratives that stage narratives connected to history, memory, and place. Her work was included in the 1997 Johannesburg Biennale, the 1998 Cairo Biennale, and the 2001 and 2005 Venice Biennale. Searle received a UNESCO award in 1998 and the Minister of Culture prize at the DakArt 2000 Biennale. In 2001, she was awarded a Civitella Ranieri Fellowship, was the Standard Bank Young Artist in 2003, and was short-listed for the first Artes Mundi award in 2004. Most recently, her work has been featured in Pictures by Women: A History of Modern Photography at the Museum of Modern Art in New York, and in NTF: Santa Fe Eighth International Biennial, Santa Fe, New Mexico (June 2010). Searle is preparing a solo exhibition with new commissioned work that will be shown at De Hallen, the Belfry Tower, Bruges, Belgium (April-June 2011), and then travelling to MMKA, Arnhem, the Netherlands.

Co-sponsored by the Carl Becker House, the Department of Art, and the Department of History of Art and Visual Studies

HAIPING YAN
My Dream: “New China” in Performance
Tuesday November 30, 2010

Dr. Haiping Yan, Professor in the Department of Theatre, Film and Dance, shared her work-in-progress on the idea of a “new China,” which is a key trope in her larger book project about contemporary Chinese artistic culture and its revolutionary transformation.

In the first part of her presentation, Yan discussed various uses of the concept of a “new China” during the twentieth century. “New China” is often associated with Mao Zedong, who used it in 1949 to designate the new consolidation and codification of the Chinese state and society under Communist Party rule. But Yan traces the term back further to the 1890s, when “new China” was used in social, political, legal, and artistic spheres to signify a cross-cultural, trans-temporal, and trans-spatial imaginary of China as “part and parcel of a modern world in the making.”

Using the example of Storm, an historical drama written by the young woman director Tian Qinxin in the 1990s, Yan reflected on how this imaginary has continued to influence Chinese artistic culture in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. Storm features the life of the revolutionary artist Tian Han (1898-1986) and other members of his generation who lived through the enormous and often shattering changes that constitute modern Chinese history, and who were among the founding figures of modern China’s artistic vision of “New China” as a transformational space. Yan noted that Tian’s 2001-2002 production of Storm resonated especially well with young audiences who are themselves facing a new moment of worldwide change, driven by the market forces of globalization and concomitant pressures of hegemonic normality that tend to foreclose various social possibilities and human potentialities.

In the second part of her presentation, Yan analyzed a production of My Dream, the signature piece of the China Disabled People’s Performing Art Troupe, as a particularly suggestive example of how the transformative spirit of a “New China” continues to appear in the work of artists today. Yan emphasized three features of the performance of My Dream that capture this spirit. First, the performers employ an intricate double vision in their engagement with and re-functioning of mainstream vocabularies. Their interpretations often rework traditional or familiar motifs and imageries, but produce new meanings that shift and transform the parameters of what is legible and intelligible. Second, the performers utilize what Yan tentatively calls “excess labor” on stage to redefine “deficiencies” or “disabilities” of their bodies. In doing so, they physically and aesthetically re-signify the excess labor that is both required and hidden in their everyday life to destabilize binary distinctions such as able and disabled, normal and abnormal, universally human and particularly Chinese. Third, they focus on how to act, amidst the material and symbolic conditions that tend to condition them into the “excludable” or “passive,” as “mobilizing” agents who produce immanent realities beyond ready-made codifications. Yan argues that the spirit of a “New China” that is embodied in such performances invites, challenges, and enables the audience to participate in an aesthetic and cognitive re-imagination, reflective and revolutionary in its impetus, about the meanings of social change and the potentialities of humanity in transformation.

Christopher Alun
Department of Asian Studies, Graduate Student

PETER LINEBAUGH
The Commons in Historical Perspective
Thursday February 17, 2011

Acclaimed social historian Professor Peter Linebaugh presented a lecture entitled “The Commons in Historical Perspective.” A student of E. P. Thompson and an expert on the history of criminality and the death penalty in the 18th century, Linebaugh has authored several books, including The London Hanged (1991), Albion’s Fatal Tree (1975), co-edited with Doug Hay and E. P. Thompson, The Many-Headed Hydra (2000, co-authored with Marcus Rediker), and most recently, The Magna Carta Manifesto (2008). True to the title of the lecture, Linebaugh’s lecture centered on rewriting history from the perspective of “the commons,” “commoning,” and “communing.” Linebaugh pitted this enterprise, on the one hand, against narratives spun from the perspective of private property

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and commodity (a perspective that inflects even those histories writ-ten by the critics of commodity and property) and, on the other hand, against the widespread misconception of the commons as a common pool of resources subject to "sustainable" exploitation (à la Elinor Ostrom). Linebaugh strove to present the commons for what it really and more capaciously is: a form of social practice and way of life.

Linebaugh illustrated this point through a description of the open field system in early 17th century Nottinghamshire, England, where the use of rotating fields and subsistence strips was decided upon, down to the crops to be planted and fields to be left fallow, by the commoners. Organization of common practice on common land by common consent was compounded by the adjudication of disputes amongst the commoners by none other than the commoners them-selves, prompting a contemporary observer to conclude that "the eco-nomic organization of the place was controlled entirely by the community." Equally noteworthy was the bluntness of any kind of ex-cussivist edge to commoning, as attested to by such customary norms as "not too carefully," so that one left "the orphan, the widow, and the stranger" something to glean.

The 18th century witnessed the most sustained legal and political assault on commoning, namely, the "Parliamentary Enclosures." "Progress" and "improvement" were the signs under which the enclo-sure of common lands and extinction of common practices were pushed through, amounting to "the largest project of expropriation in human history" (the genealogy of the contemporary notion of "de-velopment" and its sacred belief in "productivity." Linebaugh argued, could be traced to this original enclosure of the commons). Linebaugh illustrated the ideological spirit of the period of enclosures by pre-senting Madison's attempts to reconcile the "Parliamentary Enclosures." In a sense, then, Madison's dictum, "We are opposed to the enslaved, and women (the fruit of these attempts was the US Constitution). In a sense, then, Madison's attempts to reconcile the fractionist edge to commoning, as attested to by such customary norms as "not too carefully," so that one left "the orphan, the widow, and the stranger" something to glean.

A scholar engaged in collaborative research and institution building in West African cities, Jennifer Bajorek plumbed the interstices be-tween several of her current projects to draw out the theoretical im-plications of her scholarly work. A key part of this effort is the work toward a defini-tion of the "open photograph," and she emphasized the unique qual-ities of the photograph as an object, a visual experience, and a memory. Suggesting that photography is a particularly salient medium with which to aspire to create a "decolonial archive," she in-sists on the decolonial because such an approach requires work that actively dismantles the colonial, whereas "postcoloniality" may allow for complacency—as if the colonial period has, in fact, ended.

Photography and photographic technology are characterized by un autoreleaseability—the ease of reproduction and portability defy conven-tions of meaning for making many other aesthetic and visual prac-tices. She noted that this ability of photographs and photographic equipping cartographer and cartography's origins to the later or invasive. Erin Haney's work to demonstrate Africans' early understanding and use of photographs for self-representation. That said, she noted that the "open photograph" also draws out asymmetries in power, and that what she terms a "culturalist frame" does not suf-fice to analyze the distribution of power or the photographic history that "always exceeds its meaning as an image and vice versa. Citing Elinor Ostrom's writings as postcolonial attempts to archive the be-longings of citizens and suggested that individuals' access to archives be a fundamental component of archive building.

It is here that Bajorek propelled collaborators to admit collusion in colonial power patterns, development discourses, and economic in-justices, as we desire the kinds of modern nation-states with infrastruc-ture and economy that are nearly anachronistic to that of a well-defined cultural patrimony. Is our dismay at decaying objects, whether photo-graphs or documents, not rooted in a colonial salvage paradigm? For Bajorek, the central question is the following, decidedly non-com-partmentalized: How might we start to archive the decolonial archive? A new kind of institution is needed. She concludes by suggesting that one version of a decolonial archive would be a locally-managed one that gives local citizens access to the materials, but also uses the images to profit from the international art market in such a way that benefits the institution and its community.

Jennifer Bajorek
The Open Photograph and the Decolonial Archive
March 1, 2011

The White Highlanders and the National Bourgeoisie: Ngũgĩ Wa Thiong’o and the Vernacular Socialist
Tuesday April 5, 2011

James Holstun

Department of the History of Art, Graduate Student

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forms that have been constitutive of capitalist modernity. The sepa-
ration of peasants from land has culminated in the emergence of a free-
hold property and free labor, at the same time it has instituted the divi-
sion of the peasantry into agricultural capitalists and rural wage-
laborers. Compounded in the colonial context by the imperialist strat-
gies of mobilizing local divisions to the benefit of the metropole
(such as pitting the Masai against the Gikuyu), the fragmenting thrust of primitive accumulation represents the twin problematic,
Holstun argued, with which Ngugi has been grappling.
Ngugi has not restricted his critical scope to the immediate violence
of British colonialism. Holstun contended that Ngugi’s analysis of post-
independence Kenya should be viewed through the lens of the land
question and the persistent failure to solve it. When land is con-
sidered to be the irreducible basis of social reproduction and the
medium of unfolding capitalist relations, rather than metaphor or
a substrate of literary tropes of nostalgia and nationalism, Ngugi’s
work appears as a commentary on neocolonialism rather than post-
colonialism. Such commentary targets first and foremost the Kenyan
national bourgeoisie that has perpetuated, through land consolida-
tion schemes, the primitive accumulation undertaken by their met-
ropolitan predecessors, creating acute land shortages for the majority
of Kenyans (alongside thriving land markets) and displacing the en-
suing strife onto allegations of “tribalism.”
Holstun constructed his interpretive scaffolding around Ngugi’s
work with reference to four major historico-theoretical contexts or
moments that are Marxist and anti-colonialist in nature. The first
of these was Karl Marx, himself a vernacular socialist at the end of his
life, who perceived in the Russian Narodniks, but “returning to the people” to which he already be-
longed. What he crafted by drawing on the histories and traditions
that were “not over and done with,” Holstun concluded, represented a “collective art project,” a sort of our in Kenya.

Omar Ulax Iince
Department of Government, Graduate Student

SUSAN BUCK-MORSS
Seeing Global: History in a Communist Mode
Thursday April 21, 2011

In this insightful and provocative talk, Professor Susan Buck-Morss
challenged deeply entrenched binaries of European modernity, and
explored new ways of responding to a global transformation in col-
llective imagination. Analyzing ancient and medieval cartographies,
she demonstrated that a set of binaries erected by modernity—reason
and faith, science and religion, progress and backwardness, the East
and the West—has long been a myth. The purportedly scientific
Europeans insisted on incorporating eschatological motifs and a
Christian worldview into their map-making practices, often in con-
tradiction to known geographical facts. Even the experience of space
travel, possibly the most celebrated scientific achievement, was satu-
rated with religious motifs; when, in 1968, humanity saw its entire body (planet Earth) for the first time in history, it was through a care-
fully timed Christmas Eve television broadcast in which the crew
of Apollo 8 read the first ten verses from the Book of Genesis. As long as
we accept the categories of European modernity as universally bind-
ing, Professor Buck-Morss suggested, we will be unable to grasp how
our new era of globalization necessitates and demands a radical re-
configuration of our conceptual apparatus. As globalization violates
and transends national and civilizational boundaries, a “modern”
emphasis on sovereignty, property, and fixed identities becomes in-
creasingly obsolete. Professor Buck-Morss illustrated our “global”
Suman Seth, Associate Professor in the Department of Science and Technology Studies at Cornell University, is the author of Crafting the Quantum: Arnold Sommerfeld and the Practice of Theory, 1890-1926 (MIT, 2010) and the editor of a special issue of Postcolonial Studies on “Science, Colonialism, Postcoloniality” (Vol. 12, No. 4, 2009). He is currently at work on a new project, entitled “Modeling Modernity: Science and Colonialism in German Qingdao, 1897-1914.”

Seth’s lecture focused on “the roles of the sciences in the manufacture and maintenance of modernity” and “the significance of colonial practices in the construction of seemingly universalist science.” Central to his lecture was an analysis of progressivism. Arguing that “progressivism was made natural in the nineteenth century,” Seth offered extremely intriguing ideas for the audience to discuss on that stormy afternoon in late-April Ithaca.

Seth’s lecture provided a stimulating answer to the question of what is central to the idea of modernity. “You can’t talk about modernity or colonialism without talking about science,” he stated. Scholars of postcoloniality have been tackling this question from many provocative viewpoints. For example, in Provincializing Europe, Dipesh Chakrabarty has examined the concepts of historicism and “the very idea of the political,” both of which are “integral to the idea of modernity.” As a historian of science, Seth responded by emphasizing “the West’s characterization of itself as progressive” in the making of nineteenth-century science—specifically in the making of physics and biology.

Seth started his lecture by introducing the question of modernity, which obsessed Charles Gillispie, Joseph Needham, George Basalla, and Walter Rostow in the 1960s: Why is it that only the West has experienced the benefits of the birth of modern science, enjoying autonomous and continuous scientific progress since the beginning of modernity; and why has the Rest been suffering from the stagnation of their scientific accomplishments? Seth pointed out that the four 1960s historians of science and economics were in agreement that the scientific revolution in the West was due to the West’s exceptionalism, and that the Rest occupied the place of the West’s past.

Seth proposed we consider a different question: “What is it about the discourses and practices of modernity such that they require the question of modernity’s specialness to so consistently be asked?” While modern disciplines such as history and sociology, as epistemological machines, have constantly raised the modernity question, scholars have not explored how the natural sciences, as modern disciplines, also have restlessly produced the modernity question.

In this context, Seth argued that the 1960s question of modernity should be considered in connection with twentieth-century physics and biology’s obsession with progressivism. He then elaborated that the second law of thermodynamics, which William Thomson had presented in 1852, contained the idea that energy dissipates but cannot be destroyed. Drawing on this idea of thermodynamics, Thomson had commented, “everything in the material world is progressive.” Seth pointed out that Thomson’s work on the second law of thermodynamics both exemplified the universal law of progress and emerged in the context of the industrial revolution, the political economy of his time, and colonialism.

Similar to thermodynamics, Darwinian theory on the differences between the civilized and the savage illustrates that the universal law of progress worked in tandem with the West’s exceptionalism. To Darwin, while savages represented the past of the civilized, savages had not followed the natural path of progress because they had engaged in promiscuous intercourse, practiced infanticide, and treated women as slaves. In this regard, in Darwinian theory, savage society was less natural than the civilized, and savages were farther from human beings’ animal ancestors than the civilized.

To conclude, Seth pointed out that the roles of the natural sciences and the social sciences in the manufacture of modernity during the nineteenth century differed significantly from the corresponding roles during the 1960s. He thus suggested scholars scrutinize both the natural sciences and the social sciences as constitutive of and constituted by modernity, when historicizing and anthropologizing the modernity question.
The history and criticism of Latin American art for the most part exclude or obscure works in which contemporary technologies played an integral part. This omission reinforces the assumption that experimentation and innovation in technological art are exclusive provinces of the developed world. The involvement of Latin American artists with various media technologies dates at least to the late nineteenth century and has especially flourished in the last three decades. Studies of alternative and comparative modernities have called attention to diverse constructions of modernity. Nonetheless, the relation of modernity to technology remains understudied in recent historiographies. As the history of art expands to include diverse areas of media arts and visual culture, the recognition of these practices is not only overdue but also urgent, for the advancement of both art history and nuanced understandings of modernity.

At the annual conference of the ICM, held on May 13-14, 2011, seven scholars of Latin American art and visual culture mapped various involvements of Latin American artists with technology from the beginnings of the 20th century to the present. The papers covered artistic developments in Mexico, Brazil, Argentina, and Andean countries. The renowned Mexican artist Rafael Lozano-Hemmer gave the Keynote Address. We plan to publish the papers as an edited volume.

María Fernández
Associate Professor and Director of Graduate Studies, History of Art and Visual Studies, Cornell University

KEYNOTE ADDRESS
RAFAEL LOZANO-HEMMER
Artist, Mexico
“Platforms for Alien Participation”

Rafael Lozano-Hemmer develops interactive installations that are at the intersection of architecture and performance art. His main interest is in creating platforms for public participation, by perverting technologies such as robotics, computerized surveillance or telematic networks.

His work has been commissioned for events such as the Millennium Celebrations in Mexico City (1999), the Cultural Capital of Europe in Rotterdam (2001), the UN World Summit of Cities in Lyon (2003), the opening of the YCAM Center in Japan (2003), the Expansion of the European Union in Dublin (2004), the memorial for the Tiananmen Student Massacre in Mexico City (2008), the 50th Anniversary of the Guggenheim Museum in New York (2009) and the Winter Olympics in Vancouver (2010).
His kinetic sculptures, responsive environments, video installations and photographs have been shown in museums in forty-four countries. In 2007 he was the first artist to officially represent Mexico at the Venice Biennale with a solo exhibition at Palazzo Soranzo Van Axel. He has also shown at Art Biennials in Sydney, Liverpool, Shanghai, Istanbul, Seoul, Venice, Seoul, Havana and New Orleans. His work is in private and public collections such as the Museum of Modern Art in New York, the Jumex collection in Mexico, the Museum of 21st Century Art in Kanazawa, the Daros Foundation in Zurich and the Tate in London.

He has received two BAFTA British Academy Awards for Interactive Art in London, a Golden Nica at the Prix Ars Electronica at the Sony Centre in London, a Silver Nica at the Prix Ars Electronica at the Tate in London.

He has received the Rockerfeller fellowship, the Trophée des Lumières in Lyon and an International Bauhaus Award in Dessau. His writings have been published in Kunstforum, Leonardo, Performance Research, Telepolis, Movimiento Actual, Aicho, Aztlan and other art and media publications.

**FEATURED SPEAKER**

**RUBÉN GALLO**

Director, Program in Latin American Studies; Professor, Department of Spanish and Portuguese Languages and Cultures, Princeton University

**Notes Towards an Acoustic Modernity: Radio and Avant-Garde Practices in Mexico City**

Modernity is usually imagined in visual terms, and explored through visual documents like photographs, film, paintings, and drawings. This talk will posit the existence of an alternative, acoustic, modernity, composed of sounds, noises, and other aural phenomena. Radio will occupy center stage: beginning with the first radio-poetic experiments by the Estridentistas poets in the 1920s, and continuing into artistic projects from the 1990s, this talk will analyze, through strategies of close-listening, such phenomena as trompe-l’oreille, phantasmatic sounds, and spectral noises.

Rubén Gallo is an award-winning writer and scholar. He is the author of Freud’s Mexico: Into the Wids of Psychoanalysis (2010), a volume on Freud’s fantasies about Mexico. He has also published Mexican Modernity: the Avant-Garde and the Technological Revolution (2005), on the Mexican avant-garde’s fascination with machines, and two books about Mexico City’s visual culture: New Tendencies in Mexican Art (2004) and The Mexico City Reader (2004). He is currently at work on a new book on Marcel Proust’s Latin Americans. He is a member of the board of the Sigmund Freud Museum in Vienna, and in 2009 he was the Freud-Fulbright Visiting Scholar in Psychoanalysis in Austria. He teaches at Princeton University and lives in New York City.

**LYNDA KLICH**

Visiting Assistant Professor, Hunter College, CUNY

**Estridentismo, Mexican Modernity, and the Popular**

The Mexican cultural movement Estridentismo (1921-1927) remains marginalized from nationalist concerns by art historians because of its engagement with technology. Typically, scholars focus on the exhibition Cybernetic Serendipity (1968) in London, and works in Buenos Aires and Barcelona. They have been discussed. In contemporary Mexican technological art, we find in both areas indispensable references that must be included in critical discourses of art and technology.

Lynda Klich teaches Latin American art history at Hunter College, CUNY and is curator of the Leonard A. Lauder Postcard Collection. She received her Ph.D. from the Institute of Fine Arts, NYU, and is currently preparing a book manuscript based on her dissertation “Revolution and Utopia: Estridentismo and the Visual Arts (1921-1927),” which won the Association for Latin American Art’s 2009 dissertation award. She was guest editor of the Mexico theme issue of the Journal of Decorative and Propaganda Arts (2010). She is also a juror for the Leonard A. Lauder Postcard Collection, opening at the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston in September 2012.

**CONFERENCE PARTICIPANTS**

**RODRIGO ALONSO**

Art historian, Universidad de Buenos Aires; Curator representing Argentina at 2011 Venice Biennale

Emanicipating Realities: Art and Technology in Argentina around the Sixties

Technology-based arts have quite a long tradition in Argentina. From the early forties, artists have imagined, planned and produced pieces using new materials, scientific resources, and different kinds of technologies. Their perspectives have not always been the same, however. Some of them had in mind utopian projects and ideas; others fostered research and experimentation; others developed analytical and critical approaches to their own means and work.

In the context of the sixties, these practices should be seen as political as well. They tried to be revolutionary, liberating, subversive; they wanted to impact everyday life, to challenge the autonomy of art, and to promote the viewer’s agency. In so doing, they reflected both on art and society in a time when these fields were particularly close together.

The art historian Rodrigo Alonso is a researcher and theoretician in the field of media arts, whose work has been central to the history and to the contemporary development of those practices in Latin America. His numerous publications include Muntadas, Con/Textos (Buenos Aires: Ediciones Sigma, 2002), Artic y Desviación (Buenos Aires, Fundación Prada, 2000), and Jame Davidovich: Video Works 1970-2000 (New York: The Phatory Gallery, 2004). He has taught at the graduate and post-graduate levels at the Universidad de Buenos Aires (UBA); Universidad del Salvador (USal); Instituto Universitario Nacional del Arte (IUNA), Buenos Aires, Argentina; and at the Media Centre d’Art i Disseny (MECAD), Barcelona, Spain; and has been a guest lecturer in various institutions in Latin America and Europe. As an independent curator, he has organized numerous exhibitions nationally and internationally and recently was designated curator of the Argentine Pavilion at Venice Biennale for 2011. He is also a judge and consultant for contests, awards and international foundations. He lives and works in Buenos Aires and Barcelona.

**KARLA JASSO**

Art Historian, Chief Curator at Laboratorio Arte Alameda, México

Cybernetics and Electronic Sculptures in Mexico: Two References for Contemporary Techno-Artistic Practices.

In 1968 the exhibition Cinetismo: Esculturas electrónicas en situaciones ambientales (Kinetic electronic sculptures in environmental situations) opened at the Museo Universitario de Ciencias y Artes of the Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México (UNAM). Two months later, Cybernetic Serendipity, one of the keystones of media art, opened in London. Organized by Mathias Goeritz, the exhibition in Mexico was notable for presenting a series of aesthetic premises essential to the charting of the relation between art and technology, a set of premises that unquestionably made the exhibition a fundamental point of reference for the field. Yet despite the exhibition’s international character and its emphasis on artists from Latin America, it is seldom mentioned in the histories of technological art. Similarly important to the field of media arts were the relationship of Negritor Werne and Arturo Rosenbluh in 1940s Mexico and the links they developed with artists that explored the relationship of art and science at that time. In a visionary spirit, Rosenbluh wrote: “a scientific work, like a work of art, is a message.”

While both cybernetics and Kinesthetics—the latter defined by Goeritz as a practice related to electronics in an essential way—defined specific histories in Mexico, the possibilities that they, when taken together, might open up for aesthetic discourses have seldom been discussed. In an effort to chart a Mexican technological art, we find in both areas indispensable references that must be included in critical discourses of art and technology.

Karla Jasso is an art historian, media theorist and curator. She is author of the book Arte, Tecnología y Feminismo: Nuevas Figuraciones Simbólicas (Mexico: Universidad Iberoamericana, 2008). Since 2007, she has worked as Chief Curator at the Laboratorio Arte Alameda, one of two institutions in Mexico City specifically dedicated to media arts practices. With Tania Aedo she directs (Ready) Media: Towards an Archaeology of Media and Invention in Mexico, an ongoing project commissioned by the Laboratorio Arte Alameda involving multiple researchers, artists and curators to document the development of electronic arts in Mexico. Jasso’s current scholarly research focuses on the relationship between art and science in the neo-Hispanic imaginary.
JOSÉ-CARLOS MARIÁTEGUI
Scientist and media theorist/researcher/curator, UK and Peru

How Media Art Becomes Social: A New Technological Culture in Latin America

The map of Latin American culture is increasingly drawn by technology. The 1990s brought a shift in the dissemination of new media art, opening a dialogue for democratic and unprecedented open exchange. During the last decade, mostly due to the expansion of the Internet, artistic projects are evolving towards structures where technologies are not only replicated but also remixed to become new cultural forms. Recent empirical observations in several countries of Latin America have shown us that many of these projects are stimulating a varied set of initiatives that build upon a strong social relationship with their local contexts through the use of information technologies and new media. As most initiatives in Latin America have scarce support from the established artistic and cultural institutions, they turn to technology to find practical solutions to their social and cultural needs. Our findings show the different ways in which information technologies and new media are being articulated in Latin America, and the wide range of possibilities and applications centered on culture and social development, which challenges deeply our current understanding of media art.

José Carlos Mariátegui is scientist and media theorist, researcher and curator. He studied biology and applied mathematics and has an M.Sc. in Information Systems from the London School of Economics, where he is a Ph.D. candidate researching the socio-economic and technological consequences of information growth (www.tigiar.info). Mariátegui is the founder of Alta Tecnología Andina (www.atana.org), dedicated to the development of projects in art, science and technology, and EscuelaLab (www.escuelalab.org), a research and education space for creativity, technology and innovation in Latin America. Recent curatorial projects include: VideoXII - Lemaitre Collection (Barcelona in 2007), member of the Advisory Council of Third Text (UK), Co-Managing Editor of sister publications Tercer Mundo (www.tercermundo.org), and is currently an advisor to the Minister of Culture of Peru (2010). He lives in London and Lima.

SIMONE OSTHOFF
Associate Professor, Critical Studies, School of Visual Arts, Pennsylvania State University.

Beyond Syntax: Intersections of Poetry, Art, Design and Media in Brazil in the Late 1950s

This paper brings to light an almost lost experimental legacy that was part and parcel of the Neoconcrete movement. Among the venues discussing the larger project of building a radically modern Brazilian culture by leaping “fifty years in five years,” was a Rio de Janeiro newspaper’s cultural supplement—Suplemento Dominical do Jornal do Brasil—published every Wednesday between June of 1956 and December of 1961. Created by the poet Reynaldo Jardim, a media innovator avant la lettre, it included other Neoconcrete members among critics, designers, and journalists, such as the poet Ferreira Gullar, the sculptor Amilcar de Castro and the poet Theon Spanídis. The remarkable intellectual adventure on the pages of this publication was accompanied by radical graphic design innovations with emphasis on the blank space of the page, as well as changes in the language of criticism—an ad-hoc media revolution that remains under-examined and evaluated.

While contextualizing these accomplishments against strands of international constructivism in Europe and Latin America, this paper not only brings to light a number of forgotten artworks that fuse poetry, art, design and media, it also points out how this radical experimental legacy led to the participatory works of Lygia Clark and Hélio Oiticica. It continued, forty years later, to dialogue with seminal media works such as Eduardo Kac’s Genesis from 1999, which explores writing in terms of translation, encoding, and inscription, and Giselle Beiguelman’s Book After the Book, also from 1999, which probes unwriting, code, and the loss of inscription.

Simone Osthoff is Assistant Professor of Critical Studies in the School of Visual Arts at Pennsylvania State University. She is a Brazilian artist and writer based in the U.S. since 1988. Osthoff holds graduate degrees from the University of Maryland and from The School of the Art Institute of Chicago where she taught Art History, Theory, and Criticism between 1997 and 2001. Her research focuses on Brazilian media arts and has appeared in many journals and books since 1996, such as the New Art Examiner, World Art; Leonardo; Ecoscópico: Image, Rhetoric, and Nature, ed. Sid Dobrin and Sean Morey (State University of New York Press, forthcoming); At a Distance: Precursors to Art and Activism on the Internet, ed. A. Chandler and N. Neumark (MIT Press, 2005); (J) Brasil, ed. Americ Bureaud (Paris: Anomos/Hy, 2005). Women, Art, and Technology, ed. J. Maloy (MIT Press, 2003). Osthoff received a Fullbright Fellowship in 2003 and is currently working on a Ph.D. candidate researching the socio-economic and technological consequences of information growth.

DANIEL R. QUILES
Assistant Professor, Department of Art History, Theory, and Criticism, School of the Art Institute of Chicago

From Communication to Containment: Space and Technology in Argentine Art, 1966–1974

Intersections of space and technology in Argentine art from the 1960s into the early 1970s reveal a shift from environments designed to generate intellectually and politically conscious viewers to figurative and literal containment devices. From 1966 to 1970, the Instituto Torcuato Di Tella financed artistic explorations of television, radio, and audiorecording, with an emphasis on the “environment” — the delimited space in which participatory event- and technology-based works were staged. The Tucumán Aede collaboration of 1968 was an inheritor of these experiments in its informational space for a politicized viewer. In the early 1970s, faith in the liberatory potential of technological-space faded in favor of a darker metaphysics. Using a cybernetics-inspired conceptualism, Centro de Arte y Comunicación artists such as Luis Benedet and Horacio Zabala designed habitats for plants, animals, and people. In imprisoning life as much as they protect or nourish it, these art-machines dramatized an increasingly fraught relationship between the state and its citizens.

Daniel Quiles is Assistant Professor of Art History, Theory, and Criticism at the School of the Art Institute of Chicago, where he teaches courses on the theory and History of postwar art of the Americas. He was a 2003–2004 Critical Studies Fellow in the Whitney Independent Study Program, and has since written criticism of contemporary art in Arte al día, ArteNexus, Art in America, and ArtForum, as well as catalogue essays for exhibitions at Americas Society, Art in General, and the David Rockefeller Center for Latin American Studies at Harvard University. He received his Ph.D. from the CUNY Graduate Center in May 2010, and is currently expanding his dissertation on Argentine conceptual art into a book manuscript.

MARTHA SESÍN
Independent Scholar, US

Technology and Toys: Optical and Kinetic Art’s Rise and Fall in Mid-Twentieth Century Paris

With an emphasis on participation, kinetic and optical art broke new ground in late-1950s Paris by introducing a public, increasingly numb to the individualistic palette of art informed, to a whimsical, interactive art form. In fact, by the time kinetic and optical art was first launched by the Denise René Gallery, the situation in France, marked by a stalled economy, a lack of clear political leadership, and a confined cultural scene, was receptive to some sort of paradigmatic shift.

Using the works of artists such as Martha Boto, Julio Le Parc, and Jesús Rafael Soto, this paper considers the technological optimism inherent in their art production, and their subsequent success in French society. Combining their own geometric abstract tradition with the latest in technological progress, the Latin American optical and kinetic artists succeeded in promoting an art for the masses that was socialist in spirit, something which resonated in both postwar France and their countries of origin.

Martha Sesín completed her dissertation in the fall of 2008 at the University of British Columbia. Her thesis examined the cultural exchange between Latin America and France in the late 1950s and early 1960s, when several countries in Latin America were experiencing new types of democratization and when France was emerging from the trauma of the post-WWI reconstruction period. In addition, she helped organize the exhibition Be-Bomba: Transatlantic Wars of Images and All That Jazz, curated by Serge Guilbaut, which took place at the Museum of Contemporary Art in Barcelona in 2007. She is presently an independent scholar working in Miami.
CONFERENCE REPORTS

RAFAEL LOZANO-HEMMER

“Platforms for Alien Participation”
Friday May 13, 2011

A chemist by training, Rafael Lozano-Hemmer is a Mexican/Canadian artist working in a variety of media, including public performance, video, photography, large-scale installations, and electronics. Hemmer’s many distinctions include representing Mexico at the Venice Biennale in 2007 and receiving a Golden Nica at the Prix Ars Electronica in Austria. His work is included in private and public collections such as the Museum of Modern Art in New York, the Jumex collection in Mexico, the Museum of 21st Century Art in Kanazawa, the Daros Foundation in Zurich, and Tate in London.

Hemmer’s presentation, entitled “Platforms for Alien Participation,” showcased two decades of his work in public spaces and galleries. He began by contrasting Mexico’s external image of modernity, in relation to utopia, and to contemporary visions of apocalypse. He cited the contributions of Mexican and Latin American figures, such as physiologist Arturo Rosenblueth Stearns, who collaborated with cybernetician Norbert Wiener and participated in the Macy Conferences; Antoine Hercule Romuald Florence, a painter and inventor known as the isolated inventor of photography in Brazil; Luis E. Miramontes, a chemist known as the co-inventor of the birth control pill in 1951; Miguel de Icaza, open-source software icon and founder of the GNOME and Mono projects; and Carlos Fuentes Macias, a well-known novelist, diplomat, and fierce critic of the United States’ policies in Latin America.

Hemmer spoke of his artistic practice in response to the question of Mexican identity and in relation to his engagement with digital technologies as amplifiers of open-ended interactions. He framed his work in terms of a relational architecture designed for intimacy, citing in contrast Albert Speer’s use of architecture as a tool of intimidation. In contrast, Hemmer framed his work as a metropolis of chaotic spaces. The piece consists of a prepared tape of representation vis-à-vis modern urban spaces such as Mexico City, played over the bus’s sound system on the route of Avenida Revolución, traversing the city from north to south. The format of the broadcast is similar to the live commercial stations that comprise the city’s soundscape, but includes a headless woman calling into the station to alert the audiences about organ trafficking, detailed instructions on how to strip a body of internal organs, and the grand finale: Antonin Artaud reading the last part of his radio play “To Have Done With The Judgment of God” (1947), in which he urges listeners to strip man of organs. Passengers reacted with amusement but did not question the “legitimacy” of the broadcast, which was in fact a radio play.

RUBÉN GALLO

“Notes Towards an Acoustic Modernity: Radio and Avant-Garde Practices in Mexico City”
Saturday May 14, 2011

Rubén Gallo is a writer and scholar at Princeton University, where he teaches in the department of Portuguese and Spanish Culture and serves as the director of the Program in Latin American Studies. His publications include Mexican Modernity: the Avant-Garde and the Technological Revolution (2003), about the Mexican avant-garde’s fascination with modern technology.

Gallo spoke of the modernist avant-gardes in terms of their commonalities, relating their shared penchant for modern technology to their context in developing countries. He argued that their development responded to aural modernity, as sound technologies emerged in various forms, including radio, the telegraph, and the phonograph. He gave a series of examples of avant-gardist radiophonic literature from the late 1910s and throughout the 1920s, centered on exploring the relationship between language and radio. Examples included Filippo Marinetti’s 1913 technical manifesto of Futurist literature relating the wireless imagination with “words in freedom,” an analogy of wireless radio and syntax-less poetry; the fascination of the French avant-gardes with the Eiffel Tower, which served as a radio antenna, as salient in Apollinaire’s concrete poetry, Calligrammes (1918); the Ultraist poets in Spain, whose “Nocturno” (1919) speaks of telegraphia sin hilos, and includes a line in Morse code; and the Russian Futurists, whose utopian approach to radio (Velimir Khlebnikov envisioned radio emitting melliferous smells, alleviating the harsh Siberian winter) spoke of the new Soviet world.

In Mexico, radio emerged on the interstices of commercial and artistic worlds. The first radio broadcast in Mexico City in 1923 featured an Estridentista reading a poem about radio on the broadcasting station of Buena Vida, the cigarette manufacturing company of Ernesto Pugnet. Pugnet, an entrepreneur and French immigrant to Mexico, founded the radio station as a way to link his business to the modernist symbology of radio, launching a new brand of cigarettes called “Radio,” and conducting marketing campaigns in which women adorned with radio antennas urged consumers to “smoke radio.” The technical poetry of the Estridentista movement appeared also alongside such advertisements in the pages of the literary magazine El Universal Ilustrado, and could be heard on the magazine’s radio station, financed by businessman Raúl Azcárraga.

Early radio provided a link between disparate spheres during a period in which the specificity of the medium was ambiguous, bringing together poetic experimentation, newscasts, linkages between body and automation, utopian politics, marketing, propaganda, and, shortly, resistance (e.g., Franz Fanon’s “This is the voice of Radio Algeria,” 1959). Out of this emerged radio in its present form: a spectral medium that intensifies aura, serving to augment the illusion of immediacy. Contemporary Mexican artists, like Taniel Morales, continue to explore radio as an artistic medium in the context of pirate broadcasts (Morales runs pirate station “Radio Pirata XCH-Sin Permiso”). Morales’ Sin-Cabeza, Necropsia (1999) responds to a crisis of representation vis-à-vis modern urban spaces such as Mexico City, a metropolis of chaotic spaces. The piece consists of a prepared tape played over the bus’s sound system on the route of Avenida Revolución, traversing the city from north to south. The format of the broadcast is similar to the live commercial stations that comprise the city’s soundscape, but includes a headless woman calling into the station to alert the audiences about organ trafficking, detailed instructions on how to strip a body of internal organs, and the grand finale: Antonin Artaud reading the last part of his radio play “To Have Done With The Judgment of God” (1947), in which he urges listeners to strip man of organs. Passengers reacted with amusement but did not question the “legitimacy” of the broadcast, which was in fact a radio play.

Claudia Pederson
Department of the History of Art and Visual Studies, Graduate Student
One of the challenges implicit in our proposal was that of think- ing through the theoretical specificity of late capitalism in Latin America both from and beyond today’s given material conditions. Principal among these conditions is the way in which Latin America’s rapid and fragmented process of capitalist modernization since the 1970s has given rise to both varying degrees of institutionalized, parliamentary democracy and to new kinds of grassroots social movements. Rather than seeking to affirm one extant kind of political practice over another, our readings work to highlight the artificial framings and transcending the artificial political alternatives already contemplated within neo-liberal discourse.

In attempting to confront this challenge, we turned to a variety of contemporary European and Latin American thinkers from different theoretical traditions, including David Harvey, Slavoj Žižek, Guillermo Buenabrin, Alfredo García Linera, José Aricó, Michel Foucault, Alain Badiou, Gilles Deleuze, and Paolo Virno, among oth- ers. Our readings and discussions thus aimed to give an account of the principal ways that the specificity of late capitalism has been thought with regard to its political, ideological, and subjective effects. These frameworks include neo-liberal economic and social policy and the correlative disaffection of democratic politics; changes within the capitalist regime of work, enjoyment, and authority; the creative po- tential to be found within this new regime of labor; the place of race within Marxist politics and theory; the changing relationship of state and market to each other and to the collective subject they produce and control; the relevance or caducity of contemporary theories of hegemony and radical politics; and the relationship of Christian, the- ologically defined and against modernity as a structural and cultural practice in contemporary post-colonial politics. Rather than pretending to respond to contemporary capitalism’s myriad political and psychic effects, we sought to think beyond the capital for the fu- ture—we offer these possibilities of critique for now.

States Need Tribes: Colonialism, State-Formation and Indigenousness

Group Members:
Michelle Baumfleds, Department of Natural Resources
Andrew Curley, Department of Development Sociology
Laura Martin, Department of Natural Resources
Morgan Ruefle, Department of Natural Resources
Ashley Smith, Department of Anthropology

Faculty Advisor: Paul Nadady, Department of Anthropology

Our reading group this year was meant to investigate the ways in which the construction of nation states (or modern “territorial states”) also creates ideas of tribes as bounded cultural/ethnic enti- ties that in many ways live and operate in counter-distinction to states or “civilizations.” We learned this insight from our previous inquiry into the idea of political authority in Latin America. Our readings and discussions thus aimed to give an account of the principal ways that the specificity of late capitalism has been thought with regard to its political, ideological, and subjective effects. These frameworks include neo-liberal economic and social policy and the correlative disaffection of democratic politics; changes within the capitalist regime of work, enjoyment, and authority; the creative po- tential to be found within this new regime of labor; the place of race within Marxist politics and theory; the changing relationship of state and market to each other and to the collective subject they produce and control; the relevance or caducity of contemporary theories of hegemony and radical politics; and the relationship of Christian, the- ologically defined and against modernity as a structural and cultural practice in contemporary post-colonial politics. Rather than pretending to respond to contemporary capitalism’s myriad political and psychic effects, we sought to think beyond the capital for the fu- ture—we offer these possibilities of critique for now.

One of the challenges implicit in our proposal was that of think-
Contours of Eastern Marxism

Group Members: Matteo Calla, Department of German Studies
Kevin Duong, Department of Government
Béguer Medak-Seguí, Department of Romance Studies
Maríana Saavedra, Department of Anthropology
Nathan Taylor, Department of German Studies
Facundo Vega, Department of Romance Studies

Recent attempts to reformulate communism for the twenty-first century, spearheaded by theories like Alain Badiou and Slavoj Žižek, have enjoyed a particularly Eastern Marxist inspiration that begs the question: What in the history of Eastern Marxism thought might allow us to better address our present conditions under late capitalism? Eastern Marxism, hinging on the Lenin-Trotsky-Mao triptych as well as Japanese Marxist thought, has had to address a series of problems, unthinkable in the West, that center on several main theoretical strands: uneven development (Trotsky), imperialism (Lenin), revolutionary violence, three worlds theory (Mao), hegemony, and the vanguard party. Our group proposes to read contemporary interventions in communist thought from Althusser, Badiou, Žižek, and others by departing from primary texts of Lenin, Trotsky, Mao and the writings of several of their contemporaries, such as C.L.R. James and Antonio Gramsci.

Eastern Marxism neither presents itself as a stage in the process of modernization nor as an indicator of modernity itself, but rather as an interrogatory logic that modernity must address. Fashioning Eastern Marxism in this way, there is a linear developmental model for Eastern Marxism! What place does it assign to the domains of art, culture, ideology, and intellectual work? In what ways does it articulate today center-periphery paradigms and Mao’s Three Worlds Theory? What temporalities (i.e. multilinear or nonlinear) are involved in Eastern Marxism? How does Eastern Marxism fashion itself vis-à-vis other Marxisms or Western Marxism in particular? What is Western Marxism lacking that Eastern Marxism may be able to compensate for? If Western Marxism relies heavily on the appropriation of a certain tradition of Hegelian-Marxist materialism and the specific privileging of concepts like commodity fetishism, reification, historical progress, totality, exchange value, etc., to what extent do Eastern proponents of Marxism lay claim to a different arsenal of Marxist concepts and how does this variance reflect the singular differences in historical situation, material conditions, etc. that determine the non-Western world?

Do Eastern Marxisms present alternative methodologies for studying global political economy, including such fundamental concerns as how to conceptualize the state and the reification of “the economy”? Through problematizing traditional approaches, the authors we will read (whose perspectives range from postcolonialist to poststructuralist) both provide alternative methodologies for studying global political economy, and argue against the totalizing logic of both neoclassical economics (and its contemporary form of neoliberalism) and Marxism.

One of the underlying themes of this reading group is that politics ultimately arise, in one way or another, out of the way in which social and economic reproduction is organized in a given society. In a more proximate sense, however, we will explore how politics originate from the capacities of the mind to form and receive ideas. To this end, we have included readings regarding the social formation of economic ideas. For example, grand political economic theories that so effortlessly influence the course of late modernity first arose out of competition between schools of thought founded by charismatic and otherwise gifted thinkers. The competition between these schools of thought, in turn, was disciplined by the extent to which they did or did not explain the perceived material conditions of the time.

Researching political economy as a discipline, with a special logic of its own, a deliberate intention of this group will be to examine how political economic texts that have largely been forgotten in contemporary discourse. Does a Marxist theory of political economy necessarily give rise to Eurocentric models? What questions did Marx ask of the Eurocentrism present in Hegelian historiography?

Critical Perspectives on Political Economy

Group Members: Nolan Bennett, Department of Government
Fedor Dokshin, Department of Sociology
Joseph Florence, Department of Government
Alyhia Ledlie Department of History
Mariana Saavedra, Department of Romance Studies
Derica Shields, Africana Studies
Kevin Duong, Department of Government
Noor Hashem, Department of English
Nicolette Lee, Department of English
Christine Yao, Department of English
Dislocating the Postcolonial: Re-Encountering Others

Group Members: Rose Casey, Department of English
Noel Hashem, Department of English
Carly Kaloustian, Department of English
Nicolette Lee, Department of English
Fedor Dokshin, Department of Sociology
Nolan Bennett, Department of Government
Nolan Bennett, Department of Government
Bécquer Medak-Seguí, Department of Romance Studies
Mariana Saavedra, Department of Anthropology
Nathan Taylor, Department of German Studies
Facundo Vega, Department of Romance Studies

Our aim is to re-examine the current state of postcolonial theory. The present political moment has seen both the disavowal of the “post-colonial” as well as a persistent reference to this paradigmatic construct. It has been cast aside as ineffectual for its universalizing and ahistorical gestures, as well as for its apparent reference to an obsolete historical and geopolitical circumstance, yet, paradoxically, the term still resonates throughout the world as defining the particular moment we inhabit. This being the case, is the concept of the postcolonial, and the framework of postcoloniality, still useful? What can we, within the academy, make of this term? Even as we recognize its limits, we begin with the preliminary position that there is much still to be done under the rubric of the postcolonial. Indeed, we suggest it is the transnational intellectual subject that emerges today as the crucial element in postcoloniality.

Our task is to unpack postcoloniality in its disparate geographical and historical locations through the varying interpretive lenses of critical theory, ethnography, literary analysis, gender and sexuality studies, and cultural materialism. In what ways do certain disciplines enable or occlude the study of knowledge and hegemony vis-à-vis the postcolonial? Has the utility and urgency of the “postcolonial” withered away in an epoch of proliferating “post” categories such as post-modern, post-Marxian, postfeminist? In many ways, the postcolonial is a term that largely re-inscribes the same global hegemonic system that it initially sought to disavow. In terms of global hierarchies, what distinguishes the colonial encounter from the postcolonial encounter? Indeed, to what extent does the encounter itself instigate a set of
power relations that postcolonial analysis attempts to deconstruct? In order to disrupt these hegemonic echoes, our readings and discussions will investigate the porousness of the spatial and temporal limitations of the “postcolonial.”

Our approach to this problematic involves pairing theoretical with primary texts, setting the limits of interpretation while also preparing the space for new investigation. We have organized our reading into four thematic stages that will build our discursive paradigm. We intend to begin with foundational authors such as Edward Said and Homi K. Bhabha, testing the grounds of the discipline against a diverse array of both new and established texts. This entails pairings between the expected — for example, how does reading Salman Rushdie’s classic Midnight’s Children with Chris Abani’s recent GraceLand, both with their liminal protagonists, reveal the limits and new horizons of foundational theory? In our next phase, we turn to Derek’s reading on hospitality as well as Stuart Hall’s and David Scott’s work on the time and place of the postcolonial, here one of our primary texts will be Turgon’s Dilemma by Edmundo Pui Sotan, which explores the alignment of right-wing dictators with multinational corporations, and the global hegemonic order in the global South (specifically, South America) and investigates how resistance might be imagined in such a context. Our third stage moves us to the body, to pain, and to the possibilities within the post-colonial envisioned by Elaine Scarry and Sara Ahmed. Our work at this stage pairs the satirical Bengalese film Xela with Leslie Marmon Silko’s Almanac of the Dead. In our final phase, we will consider the geographic with a particular focus on the work of geographer Yi-fu Tuan: for Tuan, the geographical region confronts such a student with numerous periods for inquiry. Equally complex, the historiography of this immense geographical region was and is marked by colonial and postcolonial domination, and the circulation of knowledge, materials, and people – which will serve as the sub-themes for our enquiries. These focal points will allow us to reform models of reading that, for instance, associate queerness with the ostensibly opposed discourses of political Islamism and Muslim community-formation and saints/ascetics, both of which present particularly rich avenues for examining the effects of modern materials, movements, persons, and texts on religious subjectivities.

As Arab insurrections bubble and calms across the Middle East/North Africa region, France bans the niqab, and Peter King holds hearings as the sub-themes for our enquiries. These focal points will allow us to reform models of reading that, for instance, associate queerness with the ostensibly opposed discourses of political Islamism and Muslim community-formation and saints/ascetics, both of which present particularly rich avenues for examining the effects of modern materials, movements, persons, and texts on religious subjectivities.

Cutting through our first two foci is a deep concern with the aesthetics of moral being. In the final section of our reading group, we will consider the production of artistic works and genres, and the circulation of aesthetic sensibilities. How do circulating styles, modes, and judgments effect artistic production and musical performance, and how do aesthetic sensibilities articulate with conceptualizations of what is (and what is not) modern? Of particular interest are ways in which visual art, music, and performance structures construct narratives of the past, which can then be deployed for specific political and cultural purposes.

Through these readings we aim to illuminate the connections and differences between multiple proposals regarding what it means to be modern or non-modern and how these ideas have affected various life-worlds in South Asia across time and space. The final mode of comparison to be emphasized is the marked interdisciplinarity of our project. Drawing on numerous academic fields, we seek to demonstrate how a critical analysis of modernities in South Asia, predicated on historical precision and ethical critique, necessarily complicates more totalizing narratives of modernity, colonialism, postcolonialism, and capitalism.

The Mind/Ear Binary and Transnational Modernities

Group Members: Arina Rotaru, Department of German Studies
Caroline Wight, Department of Music
Clare Hane, Department of Theater and Performance Studies
Minhwa Ahn, Department of Asian Studies
Samuel Dwinnell, Department of Musicology
Walter Jen-Hao Hsu, Department of Theater and Performance Studies

The reading group we propose to the Institute for Comparative Modernities is concerned with an interdisciplinary collection of texts that allow us to consider the intersection of the fields of sound studies, performance theory, art history and visual studies, and music. Our aim is twofold: first, to not read modernity as either ocularcentric or phonocentric but to understand it beyond the traditional Western opposition of mind and perception, sight and hearing, second, we want to reform models of reading that, for instance, associate queerness with the passage through Western modernity. Our first model of reading allows us to study expressions of contemporary cultural production from a variety of globalized sites and provide evidence for a reading fallacy as division of mind and ear and its impact on the history of Western modernity and beyond. Our second research focus is on some of the key narratives that have traditionally converged on the socio-historical transformations associated with the advent of capitalism in the subcontinent. Recent work, however, has begun to address divergent conceptualizations of what it means to be modern, to exist in a productive milieu marked by colonial modernization and postcolonial development. We will also investigate the subtleties of rural and agricultural modernity through comparative consideration of the processes of urbanization in recent centuries.

We will then turn to other forms of production and circulation: the production of religious identifications through innovative ritual practices, and the circulation of these affiliations through new networks of information, travel, and law. This section is organized into two groupings: Muslim community-formation and saints/ascetics, both of which present particularly rich avenues for examining the effects of modern materials, movements, persons, and texts on religious subjectivities.
prompts us to re-examine the epistemological divide between East/West and in the consequences of Euro- American colonialism for transnational queer studies or post-impe- rialist studies. Based on these exploratory questions, we have come up with a small list of readings that range from canonical authors to very recent productions. We will start with less known pieces by well-known au- thors who have been read in a traditional ocularcentric key such as Descartes and his Compendium Mechanicum from 1588, and will inquire into his understanding of subjectivity and “the listener.” We will fur- ther read other works that focus on the properties of sound and its ca- pacity to build an audience such as Diderot’s “Principes d’acoustique” (1742). From more recent analyses that have the potential to prob- lematize the mind/ear divide, we will address the power of noise to destabilize the text-audience division and its potential to reform tra- ditional gender divisions as well. To that purpose, we will read stud- ies by Jacques Attali such as Noise (1977) and Douglas Kahn’s Noise, Hier, Mixt (1999) and ask how the potential of noise can make room for a different understanding of audience beyond gender and national divisions. A number of our readings will focus on explorations of queerness in performance and the ways queer performances engage community. For this part of our inquiry, studies such as Martin Manatul’s Global Divas and Gayatri Gopinath’s Impossible Desire (2005), which both talk about the use of sound for queer community building, will prove useful. The theoretical readings we propose are meant to help us inquire into the meaning of the post-national and transnational in various European and non-European contexts, tak- ing as its point of departure the transnational model of a queer modernity in Taiwan and China. Our broad interests concern some other models of confrontation between the West and the non-West such as the notion of Americanization in Japan and Korea, the post- imperialistic context in Great Britain and its thematization of moder- nity as return to earlier modes of opera experiments or the post-Wall literary context in Germany in the 1970s. In order to address the advantages and disadvantages of the removal of the national paradigm and a peculiar en- gagement of the nexus of audience/readership/spectatorship. We use discussions of cultural production, such as cinema, the- ater, and other media, in order to access a range of questions ad- dressing the notion of spectatorship and audience in a transnational context, the reconsideration of voice in performative and philo- sophical analyses, and various theories of sound and performance that have emerged after the so-called performative turn. This project allows us to develop an intellectual exchange that does not seek to relegate “cul- tural practice” to “theory” and thus encourages participation from representatives of a wide range of disciplinary locations. We hope to show how the dissolve of the mind/ear divide has a far-reaching im- pact into what we now understand as transnational modernities be- yond a cultural and national space. 2012-2013 GRADUATE READING GROUP PROPOSAL GUIDELINES The Institute for Comparative Modernities invites proposals that in- clude a 500-word statement of intent, a bibliography, and a list of the names and departmental affiliations of the proposed group members, along with the curriculum vitae of each participant. Proposals from departments of members from a single department will not be ap- proved. We imagine most groups will consist of six to eight members (a minimum of six members is required to be eligible for the subven- tion), this program, which will be announced annually, will provide a sumvention of $1,000 for books and copying, and a comfortable and even congenial meeting space at the ICM (housed in the Toboggan Lodge). We expect the sustained collaboration to culminate with a public presentation (oral or written) at the end of the award year. The subvention would be for one year, but renewal may be possible under certain circumstances. It is likely that academic year 2012-13 will see 4-5 awards.

Proposal submission process:
- 500-word statement of intent
- Bibliography
- List of the names, departmental affiliations, email addresses of the proposed group members, along with the curriculum vitae of each participant

Deadline: Tuesday April 17
Notifications will be sent out the week of May 7, 2012.

Proposals can be emailed to Molly Kerker, ICM Program Coordinator (mek226@cornell.edu)

PROGRAM COORDINATOR

Molly Kerker is the new Program Coordinator for the Institute for Comparative Modernities. Molly comes to the position from Cornell’s Department of English, where she provided administrative support for Front Desk Representative. In previous positions, Molly has served as an AmeriCorps volunteer, spearheading food justice projects in rural New York, and supplied graphic design at a photography stu- dio. She graduated with a Bachelor of Arts in English from SUNY Geneseo, where she as a Presidential Scholar she developed a love for cross-cultural inquiry and desire to enact social change. In addition to her position with the Institute, Molly continues to be involved in sev- eral extra-curricular activities and volunteer work, including among others teaching middle schoolers at a Humantistic Jewish cultural school.

Recent Publications by ICM Members

Benedict Anderson
ICM Advisory Board Member

Anarchism and Syndicalism in the Colonial and Postcolonial World, 1870-1940 (Leiden & Boston: Brill, 2010).

This anthology, which begins with a substantive preface by Benedict Anderson, collects essays treating anar- chism as it was both theorized and practiced in Egypt, China, South Africa, Korea, the Ukraine, Ireland and, in the Americas, Peru, the Caribbean, Mexico, the United States, Argentina and Brazil.

The editors, Steven J. Hirsch and Lucien van der Walt, open and close the volume with reflections on anarchism and syndicalism as forces in the colonial and post-colonial experiences and on the vi- cissitudes of anarchist and syndicalist trajectories in recent decades. Above all else, this collection joins with Benedict Anderson’s Under Three Flags: Anarchism and the Anti-Colonial Imagination (2005) and recent work by Ithamar Kimhi-Malki, Maia Ramnath, Jason Adams and others in the project of showing as untenable claims that anarchism was at its inception and in its development a Western European matter, and that the wider manifestations of an- archism were either negligible in effect or deficient in theory.

Further, the editors assert contentiously that the essays in the vol- ume “demonstrate unequivocally that anarchism and syndicalism were important currents in anti-imperial, including anti-colonial, struggles in the late 19th and early-to-mid 20th centuries—and were, for most of this period, more important than their Marxist ri-
volutionaries.” In our moment of renewed engagement with communism, it would be a mistake to stay solely with Marxism, and neglect or for- get the crucial emancipatory contributions made by anarchists worldwide. This collection will prove useful in realizing that modest project of accuracy. To give the meaning of the spirit and flavor of this volume, it’s appropriate to close with a passage from Anderson’s preface.

The beauty of this book is that it shows what classical anarchism, and its progeny, syndicalism, bequeathed to our dyspeptic times. Exemplary courage, theoretical contestation (which lasts longer than theoretical certitude), concerns about how to live free, and interna- tionalism from experience, not from libraries, a skeptical view of the limits of nationalism, no matter how anti-imperialist, the building of transnational and trans-regional networks, a commit- ment to socio-cultural emancipation and grass-roots level organi- zation, emnity towards ‘don’t worry we will take care of you’ welfare bureaucracies, and, of course, utopias, over the rainbow.

Brett de Bary
ICM Advisory Board Member


George Lewis
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Lisa Lowe
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“Metaphors of Sovereignty,” in America and the Misshaping of a New World Order, Giles Gunn and Carl Gutiérrez-Jones, eds. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2010).


Fouad Makki
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"Translation as a filter" translated by Gavin Walker, in Transversées revues internationales de pensée critique (2010).

"La traduction comme filtre" translated by Didier Renault, in Transversées revues internationales de pensée critique (2010).

Salah M. Hassan
Director, ICM


Published as a companion to the traveling retrospective of the exemplary career of the Sudanese artist Ibrahim El-Salahi, this book chronicles the evolution of his artwork over more than fifty years of sustained artistic productivity and intellectual engagement. El-Salahi’s accomplishments offer profound possibilities for both interrogating and repositioning African modernism in the context of modernity as a universal idea, one in which African art history is part and parcel of a global art history. Hence, the essays included in this book represent an attempt to re-construct the remarkable journey of El-Salahi, and provide a critical look at his artistic contributions in an effort to expand the narrative of modernism in the visual arts from comparative and global perspectives. Edited by Salah M. Hassan, the book includes a range of contributions by well-known art historians and art critics: Chaka Okeke-Agulu, Sarah Adams, Hassan Musa, Ulis Beier, Itikhar Dadi, Salah M Hassan and Ibrahim El-Salahi.


Decolonization and liberation movements in the Third World were struggles in which Marxism played an important role as an ideology. In all these events, the specter of Karl Marx loomed large. Yet, most of the current scholarship on Marxism and the non-west has focused on re-reading Marx as less-European by recovering his lesser known writings on the non-western world. Such efforts might have affirmed Marx as a less of a class-based thinker and more of a theoretician who was sensitive to nationalism and issues of race, ethnicity, and diversity of human and social experiences across the globe.

However, such contributions tended to ignore the fact that Marx was a product of his time and of Europe as a rising colonial empire, and the larger framework of his analysis was bound by the evolutionary thinking of the time. Such efforts also ignored non-western (and more specifically African) contributions to Marxism as it has been appropriated and reshaped in the context of decolonization and postcolonial struggles. This Notebook (part of the 100 Notes-100 Thoughts Published by DOCUMENTA (13)) pays homage to Karl Marx as one of the most influential German thinkers in the 20th century by revisiting Marxism from an African/Black perspective as well as explore the global impact of his ideas, which have been appropriated, rethought, and localized in different settings (such as Sudan, the Caribbean among others) in ways that Marx himself could not have anticipated or imagined.

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INTELLECTUAL VISION AND OBJECTIVES

The Institute for Comparative Modernities (ICM) addresses a key problem in the study of modern culture and society: the transnational history of modernity and its global scope. A broad range of scholarship over the last few decades has contested and complicated the two primary dimensions of the received narrative of modernity: that it arose strictly within the confines of Europe, and that its extension outside Europe was a matter of simple diffusion and imitation. What is emerging instead is an account of modernity as a global process in which deep and multifarious interconnections have created complex cultural formations.

The Institute is dedicated to the study of modernity in such a transnational and comparative perspective. Its primary emphasis falls on neglected or under-studied articulations of modernity outside of the historically constituted hegemonic spaces of Europe and the United States, but it also gives serious attention to conflicts and complexities within the West. Inadequate understandings of the complex history of modernity have led to simplistic and untenable positions that unknowingly repeat colonialism’s ideological juxtapositions of “us” and “them,” with modernity (and all the positive connotations of historical progress that accrue to the term) all on one side and in-scrutable backwardness all on the other. This results in ghettoized scholarship that is damaging to all.

The standard equation of modernity with the West needs to be problematized and opened up to comparative examination. The Institute hopes to galvanize work in this direction by encouraging cross-disciplinary collaborative research that advances a genuinely global analysis of modernity that is also empirically faithful to geographical and historical specificity. By bringing attention to less frequently studied aesthetic and social practices from non-Western and immigrant communities, the Institute hopes to correct accounts of modernity as primarily Western in origin and dynamics.

The Institute hopes to foster collaborative research that advances a genuinely global analysis of modernity that is also empirically faithful to geographical and historical specificity. By bringing attention to less frequently studied aesthetic and social practices from non-Western and immigrant communities, the Institute hopes to correct accounts of modernity as primarily Western in origin and dynamics.