

Wat's In-Sight

News from

and the



Germanic and Slavic Studies
UNIVERSITY OF WATERLOO

WATERLOO CENTRE FOR
Germanstudies



Dear readers,

A winter term filled with inspiring talks, lectures, readings and discussions is coming to an end. We were honoured to welcome many distinguished guests who shared with us their thoughts about today's important issues, ideas, and insights: the German Ambassador to Canada and the German Consul General, noted Croatian writer Slavenka Drakulić, and several prominent scholars in German Studies. We ended the term with a daylong symposium on Romantic Ecology and our annual GSS Book Awards Reception, a perfect conclusion of an exciting time.

We hope you enjoy reading the fourth issue of our joint newsletter!

Myriam Léger, editor

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GSS In-Sight



Portrait: Alice Kuzniar

Prof. Alice Kuzniar joined the Department as a Full Professor of German and English in 2008. She has since taught courses on Romantic Ecology, Queer Cinema, and Psychoanalytic Approaches to Literary and Visual Studies, and recently organized a well attended daylong Romantic Ecology Symposium at the University of Waterloo. Her research interests are varied and include German Romanticism, women and gender studies, literary and cultural theory, and German cinema. While the subjects of her research have shifted many times throughout her academic career, she regards her work on German Romanticism as one of her most important

contributions. It was the last time during the Romantic period, she says, that we had unity between the humanities and the natural sciences. This division has even led today to issues of compassion, love, and empathy being excluded from scholarly discussion, whether in our research or teaching. Alice Kuzniar's most recent monograph, *Melancholia's Dog. Reflections On Our Animal Kinship* (2006), attempts to reinscribe these issues into the academic discourse. Because she regards this unity as being of greatest importance in our global environment, her graduate teaching this semester focused on Romantic Ecology and its symbiosis of man and nature; her current research examines in particular the ties between the philosophy of homeopathy and the tenets of Romanticism.

In 2010, Alice Kuzniar also became the Chair of Croatian Studies. Although she is new to her role as a Chair in this field, she has had a long-standing interest in reading Croatian novels in translation, especially works by Irena Vrkljan, a Croatian-German writer who lives in Berlin. She recently organized a series of events surrounding Slavenka Drakulic's 1999 novel *As If I Am Not There* and Juanita Wilson's critically acclaimed 2010 film based on Drakulic's novel.

Have you heard about our new MA in Intercultural German Studies?

This Waterloo-Mannheim joint graduate program is a truly integrated program that offers students a rare opportunity of immersion in two academic-cultural environments while earning a Master's degree from each university.

Please visit <http://germanicandslavic.uwaterloo.ca/graduate/IGS/index.html> or contact Prof. Michael Boehringer at mboehringer@uwaterloo.ca for more information.

At the **GSS Annual Book Awards Reception** on March 22, we celebrated our students' achievements and honoured our best students. The four Ambassador Awards, sponsored by the Russian, German, Swiss, and Austrian Embassies, were received for outstanding achievements in the Major or Minor Field of Study and for overall performance. Congratulations to this year's recipients: Cecilia Drozd, Rebecca Kaster, Stephanie Cooper, and Lisa Feil! In addition, all instructors of courses taught in the winter term nominated their best students.

The Book Awards Reception is one of the highlights of our academic year. New this year was a slide show introducing each recipient by name and Major, which showed an impressive diversity in subjects studied by our students, ranging from Arts to Biology, Engineering, and Computer Science. Prof. James M. Skidmore, Chair of the Department, as well as Prof. Liebscher, Associate Chair and Advisor for Undergraduate Studies, thanked students and instructors for their hard work and commitment to achieve the educational and professional goals in our department. We are very proud of our graduating students who either continue with graduate school or enter the professional world as teachers, consultants, managers, lawyers, project officers, administrators – to name but a few of our graduates' jobs.

Prof. Liebscher pointed out that some exciting new courses would start next year as well as four different language certificates. After the official ceremony with appreciative, funny, and emotional words from our instructors to their students, all guests were invited to stay for snacks and drinks.

Keep up the good work everyone! Thanks to the Embassies for sponsoring the books, to the GSS department for providing the food and drinks, and to everyone else for making such great contributions to our department.

Grit Liebscher

Joint In-Sight

Where is the nature in nature?

This question came up in the audience of the **Romantic Ecology Symposium** on March 19. Prof. Alice Kuzniar was proud to welcome an impressive variety of speakers from different scholarly fields, such as German and English Studies as well as Science and Technology, who also drew attention to the connections between literature, nature, and eco-criticism. The first session focused on natural philosophy and the evolutionary theories in the Romantic period and the current debates about that topic.

After a short lunch break, the two guest speakers David Clark of McMaster University and Ian Balfour of York University gave a fascinating insight into the impact of Immanuel Kant's philosophy on the Romantic period. The talk by guest speaker Joan Steigerwald of York University discussed Ritter's Experimental Self and illuminated the topic of Romantic Ecology from the perspective of Science and Technology Studies.

The daylong event was concluded by a session about the importance of the notion of Romantic ecology for German literature, during the period of Romanticism and well beyond into post-war Germany. The audience also had the opportunity to watch remarkable computer-based visual essays that were drawn from the two graduate classes "Criticism and the Environment" taught by Prof. Andy McMurray and "Romantic Ecology" taught by Prof. Alice Kuzniar. The Symposium was attended by a wide variety of faculty members, students, and community members that took part in the discussions following the talks.

The symposium was co-sponsored by the Waterloo Centre for German Studies, the Canadian Centre for German and European Studies, York University, and the Department of Germanic and Slavic Studies.

Daniela Roth

Slavenka Drakulić reads from her new book *A Guided Tour Through the Museum of Communism: Fables from a Mouse, a Parrot, a Bear, a Cat, a Mole, a Pig, a Dog, and a Raven*

Have you ever met a mole who understands the problem of East and West Berlin? In the evening of March 21st, Chair of Croatia Studies Prof. Alice Kuzniar brought to the University renowned Croatian writer Slavenka Drakulić whose novel about communism features the voices of animal narrators.

Before Drakulić began reading from one of the chapters entitled "The Cat-Keeper in Warsaw (Letter to the State Prosecutor)", she shared with the audience some insights into her motivations for letting animals narrate. Said Drakulić, "With this book, I want to communicate with the younger generation born after 1990 and make the recent history of Eastern Europe more accessible to them."

Her book illustrates that "communism" looked and felt very different in different countries; thus each chapter of the book is written from the perspective of a different animal who addresses the communist past of a particular nation. These narrators' very personal accounts – in the form of letters, reports, lectures, recipes, and tours – both reveal the incongruence of memory and history and serve as a springboard for further inquiry and discussion regarding the communist past of eastern European countries.

Allison Cattell

German Research Today Lecture Series

Between February 16 and March 24, the Department and the Centre welcomed four excellent researchers from Canada and the United States who shared their inspiring research with students, professors, and friends of the Department and the Centre alike. The talks were organized as part of the winter term's graduate courses on Romantic Ecology; Concepts of Masculinity; and Language, Migration & Identity and showcased the broad spectrum of today's research in German Studies.

The lecture series was opened by Prof. Christine Lehleiter of the University of Toronto who spoke about the ways in which scientific as well as philosophical perspectives on heredity during the Romantic period were processed in Romantic German literature such as Novalis. Prof. Heidi Schlipphacke of Old Dominion University was invited to join a graduate seminar on Concepts of Masculinity. In a short presentation, she shared her insights into the interconnectedness of masculinity, nationhood, and the self-victimization of Austrians during the World War II in Robert Menasse's 2008 novel *Don Juan de la Mancha*. Her second talk, this time for a large audience of about 50 attendees, discussed the ways nostalgia is examined in German cinema not as a longing for an idealized past but for a future free of the past's confinement. Last but not least, Prof. Magda Stroinska of McMaster University discussed the role of attrition in elderly immigrants and how language use can help offset dementia and Alzheimer's disease.

The lecture series was very well attended and sparked many thought-provoking discussions about current issues in the academic community. We look forward to welcoming more outstanding researchers in German Studies in the future!

The lecture series was co-sponsored by the Department of Germanic and Slavic Studies and the Waterloo Centre for German Studies.

Myriam Léger and Kyle Scholz

In-Sight Centre



Visit of the German Ambassador and the German Consul General

On March 2, the German Ambassador to Canada, Dr. Georg Witschel, and the German Consul General in Toronto, Ms. Sabine Sparwasser, visited the Waterloo Centre for German Studies. They met with then UW's Interim President

Feridun Hamdullahpur, the Associate Vice-President International Leo Rothenburg, the Dean of Arts, Ken Coates as well as members of the WCGS executive committee and later with graduate students to talk about present and future collaboration, initiatives, and student exchanges.

In their presence, the double exhibition on *Every Day Life of the GDR* was

officially opened. The first part of this exhibit was the poster display "The Ideal World of Dictatorship? Power Structures and Daily Life in the GDR", which showed photographs by Harald Schmitt, who worked for 6 years in the former GDR as photojournalist.

Historian and journalist Stefan Wolle wrote the poster texts. The second part of this exhibition was the Beier collection, a photo display resulting from a lifetime of devoted photography

by Manfred Beier, a teacher and GDR citizen who took some 60,000 photos of everyday life in the GDR. We are grateful to the German Consulate in Toronto for lending the exhibit to the Waterloo Centre for German Studies.

Dr. Georg Witschel, who has been the Ambassador of the Federal Republic of Germany in Ottawa since 2009 and is a lawyer by degree, gave a public talk and round-table entitled "International Law and the War on Terrorism".

He engaged the audience by asking for personal opinions on case study terrorism scenarios such as: What would you do if you knew of the planning of terrorist attacks south of the Canadian border? The audience, consisting of GSS students and professor, students of history, and guests from the community, made some suggestion but had no easy answer. Based on his expertise in international law and professional experience, Dr. Witschel provided insightful information on how to judge a situation like that. The lively discussion afterwards centred on similar cases, and the difficult question of which perspective to take in judging a humanitarian situation – a local or a global one. Other questions addressed the just then evolving hotspot Libya, which Ms. Sparwasser joined in answering because of her personal experience in Libya. We would like to thank Dr. Witschel and Ms. Sparwasser for their visit to the University of Waterloo.

Grit Liebscher



Debating East Germany: A Dictatorship – But What Kind?

Associate Professors of German History Andrew Port of Wayne State University and Gary Bruce of the University of Waterloo did agree on at least one thing: the GDR was definitely not a participatory dictatorship as suggested by German History Professor Mary Fulbrook. Apart from this, Gary Bruce and Andrew Port differed in their opinions on the nature of the East German dictatorship, causing an active and dynamic debate. Port argued for a remarkable stability of the GDR mainly caused by division among the people and the concessions the regime was willing to make. Bruce, by contrast, pointed out that one in six citizens left the country and that the GDR experienced two revolutions in 40 years. Moreover Bruce thinks more research should be done on those few people who were in power instead of continuing to focus on the life of 'ordinary' Germans. This raises interesting issues for the study of history: Should historians focus on the question of guilt and responsibility or should they rather investigate what they think happened? Does openly acknowledging the "evil" elements in history mean that we are not to talk about the good things that happened? The debate was well attended by students and professors from various departments as well as friends of the Centre.

The event was sponsored by the Waterloo Centre for German Studies.

Ines Erdmann

Wat's Upcoming

Come and celebrate the 50th anniversary of the Department of Germanic and Slavic Studies!

Please join us on April 28 for many events throughout the day and evening:

- Attend our Ninth Annual Germanic and Slavic Studies conference.
- Join departmental tours and see historical displays.
- Be part of an evening celebration full of fun and memories.
- See your old professors, meet past classmates, share stories and good times.
- Enjoy delicious refreshments and be part of a fascinating slideshow spanning fifty years.

Come for the whole day or just the evening.

View the conference program and the schedule for all activities during the day and evening at <http://germanicandslavic.uwaterloo.ca/50anniversary.htm>

We hope to see you on April 28!

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