

Centre for Anglo-German
Cultural Relations (CAGCR)
Annual Report for the Academic
Year 2009-2010



www.qmul.ac.uk/cagcr

Introduction

The on-going fascination with what happens between cultures, the social trends and fashions, but also the individuals that regard themselves as “go-between”, continue to inform the work of our Centre. We have become used to calling these processes cultural transfers, but we should not believe that we are the first to do so. Students of our unique MA in Anglo-German Cultural Relations, for instance, investigate the meaning of cultural transfers and their agents, whom we have termed the *transferrants* or mediators between cultures. The historical dimension of this phenomenon is considerable. In German, it was the literary scholar Wilhelm Scherer who was arguably the first to have coined the concept of cultural transfer or *Culturübertragung* (1888). Furthermore, he suggested that we could only progress in our appreciation of other people(s) if we engaged in meaningful *Vergleichung*, that is:

comparing prominent, and less prominent, features of individual cultures and their literatures that would lend themselves to constructive interaction.

In Scherer’s time, others corrupted this approach by applying it to a rather obscure *Völkerpsychologie* that generated a great deal of unnecessary, if not damaging, production of prejudices. We, in the Centre for Anglo-German Cultural Relations, are inheritors of the tradition of Scherer and his helpful definition of cultural transfer, as well as its application to the analysis of cultural exchange. Our Writers in Residence, our refereed yearbook *ANGERMION*, our annual *ANGERMION* lecture, and literally each seminar or conference that the Centre organizes, contribute to this end: a meaningful study and authentic experience of the Anglo-German heritage and its present day character. The sheer richness of this legacy remains the Centre’s main asset and investment into the future.

Professor Rüdiger Görner
Director of the CAGCR



The Centre for Anglo-German Cultural Relations at Queen Mary, University of London was founded in December 2005

1. Aims and Structure of the CAGCR

The Centre for Anglo-German Cultural Relations at Queen Mary, University of London was founded in December 2005. The Centre is housed in the Department of German, within the School of Languages, Linguistics and Film. The Centre's website can be found at: www.qmul.ac.uk/cagcr



The CAGCR aims to: facilitate research on Anglo-German cultural relations with special reference to the fields of literature, language, intellectual history and comparative cultural practice; disseminate said research through colloquia, international conferences, and the CAGCR Yearbook *ANGERMION*; provide high quality postgraduate teaching through the Centre's MA Programme on Anglo-German Cultural Relations.

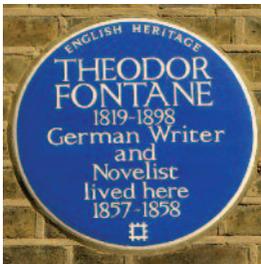
The CAGCR's Director is Professor Rüdiger Görner; Dr Angus Nicholls is Acting Director and Dr Susanne Frane runs the CAGCR's Writer in Residence Programme. The Centre's research activities are divided into the following four sections of research interest, each of which is convened by a staff member in the Department of German at Queen Mary:

- Literature (Dr Astrid Köhler)
- Language and Linguistics (Dr Falco Pfalzgraf)
- Intellectual History (Dr Angus Nicholls)
- Cultural Transfers and Drama (Dr Robert Gillett)

Within any given academic year, one of these sections functions as the principal area of research interest for the CAGCR. The principal area of research interest for 2008-9 was Cultural Transfers and Drama; in 2009-10 the principal area of research is Literature.

2. Principal Area of Research for 2009-10: Cultural Transfers and Drama

The Literature section of the CAGCR – convened by the Head of the German Department, Dr. Astrid Köhler – took the lead during 2009-10 as the Centre’s principal area of research focus. The key academic event for 2009-10 was a one-day conference on the theme of *London in German Literature*, held in honour of Dr. Patricia Howe, a distinguished and long-serving member of the German Department at Queen Mary. One of Dr. Howe’s main areas of research focus is the writings of Theodor Fontane and nineteenth-century German literary realism, and she accordingly gave a masterful lecture on “Mapping London in the Realist Novel.” Dr. Howe’s lecture dealt with Fontane’s novel *Unwiederbringlich*, along with Johanna Kinkel’s *Hans Ibeles in London: Roman aus dem Flüchtlingsleben* (1861) and with Julius Rodenberg’s *Die Straßensängerin von London* (1863). Other contributions to the conference spanned across German literature from the beginning of the nineteenth- to the beginning of the twenty-first centuries, including such figures as Heinrich Heine, Anna Jokl, German pop-writers of the 1960s and 1970s, and the



The ‘blue plaque’ marking Theodor Fontane’s London residence during the years 1857-1858

contemporary novelist Katharina Hacker. Selected papers from the conference will be published in a special section of *ANGERMION* volume 3 (2010).

3. The *Gesellschaft für deutsche Sprache* comes to Queen Mary

Germany’s most important government-sponsored society for the German language – the *Gesellschaft für deutsche Sprache* (GfdS) – took the important decision to open a London branch to be chaired by the convenor of the Language and Linguistics section of the CAGCR, Dr. Falco Pfalzgraf. The London Branch of the GfdS was officially launched by the President of the GfdS, Professor Rudolf Hoberg, and the Principal of Queen Mary, Professor Simon Gaskell, on 12 March 2010. In his opening address, Professor Hoberg spoke about a very recent large-scale representative survey conducted with the participation of the GfdS, about Germans’ attitudes toward their own language and to foreign languages. This event was also attended by the German Ambassador to the United Kingdom, his Excellency Georg Boomgaarden (who made some lively interventions on the subject of the German language) along with other representatives from the German Embassy in London. The London branch will continue to host public lectures on the German language under the leadership of Dr Pfalzgraf.



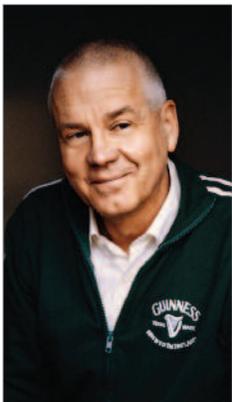
Dr Falco Pfalzgraf with the President of the GfdS, Professor Rudolf Hoberg, and the Principal of Queen Mary, University of London, Professor Simon Gaskell

4. Writer in Residence Programme

Established in 2005, the CAGCR Writer in Residence programme showcases recent developments in contemporary German literature. This initiative is financed by the Deutscher Literaturfonds and on regular basis by the German Academic Exchange Service (DAAD). It is administered by the German Department's DAAD Lektorin, Dr Susanne Frane.



Jan Böttcher, author of *Nachglühen*



Matthias Politycki, author of *Jenseitsnovelle*

The CAGCR hosts writers whose work is representative of contemporary literature in German and enables visiting authors to reside at Queen Mary for periods of approximately ten weeks. The CAGCR writers in residence for 2009-10 were Jan Böttcher and Matthias Politycki. Jan Böttcher read from his novel *Nachglühen* (*Afterglow*, 2008) set in Stolpau, a fictional German town on the river Elbe, which had been a border town before the fall of the wall dividing East and West Germany. His novel deals with both the personal and political difficulties experienced by

Stolpau's residents during the pre- and post-unification periods. Matthias Politycki's most recent novel, *Jenseitsnovelle* (*Next World Novella*, 2009), offers a profound meditation on mortality and miscommunication within marriage, presented in the classical form of the German *Novelle*. This novel is to be translated by the renowned translator from German to English, Anthea Bell, and will appear with Peirene Press in 2011.

5. Third Year of Teaching in the MA in Anglo-German Cultural Relations

The CAGCR's MA in Anglo-German Cultural Relations focuses on both the theory and practice of cultural relations between the Anglophone and German-speaking worlds, covering a period spanning roughly from 1800 until the present, and focusing on issues such as literary relations, journalism, translation studies, and foreign cultural policy in both nations. A particular highlight of this year's core course on The Theory and Practice of Anglo-German Cultural Relations was the session involving Anthea Bell, who is without doubt the most renowned translator of German literature into English working in Britain today. Anthea Bell provided students with a keen insight into the work of literary translation, focusing in particular on her English language rendering of W.G. Sebald's *Austerlitz*, and



Renowned Translator Anthea Bell OBE

reflecting upon her professional relationship with this most singular of German authors.

Some of the dissertations written by students in the CAGCR's MA programme during 2009-10 included:

- Toyah Buse, "Thomas Mann and England," supervised by Professor Rüdiger Görner
- Emilie Oleron, "Heiner Müller's Reception of Shakespeare" supervised by Professor Leonard Olschner
- Thomas Fletcher, "The Depiction of Ethnic Minority Experience and Identity by Turkish German and British-South Asian Writers and Filmmakers," supervised by Dr Angus Nicholls.

The performance of Thomas Fletcher – whose studies were sponsored by a studentship for Anglo-German Cultural Relations that was kindly made available to the CAGCR by Robert Bosch UK – was particularly outstanding. For his consistently excellent results across all aspects and modules of the MA programme, Thomas Fletcher was awarded a Queen Mary College Prize for Academic Excellence, and the Jethro Bithell Prize for the best MA dissertation in German Studies written at any University of London

College. After finishing his Postgraduate Certificate of Education at Goldsmiths, Thomas will be teaching German language and culture at all levels at Wilson's School, Sutton.



Thomas Fletcher, graduate of the MA Anglo-German Cultural Relations in 2009-10

6. Launch of the second issue of *ANGERMION*, Yearbook for Anglo-German Cultural Relations (2009) by the German Poet, Durs Grünbein

Durs Grünbein is one of Germany's most lauded contemporary poets. His work has been awarded a number of major German literary prizes including the Georg Büchner Preis and the Peter Huchel Prize for Poetry. An English collection of his poems, *Ashes for Breakfast*, was published in 2005, translated by Michael Hoffmann. Grünbein was invited to launch the second (2009) volume of the CAGCR's Yearbook for Anglo-German Literary Criticism, Intellectual History and Cultural Transfers, *ANGERMION*, published by Walter de Gruyter (Berlin and New York). This event, held in the beautifully austere setting of East London's St. George's German Lutheran Church, saw Grünbein read some of his most recent prose and (unpublished) poetry, along with some poems in English translation. The CAGCR wishes to thank Lufthansa AG for sponsoring this event, St. George's German Lutheran Church for providing such a wonderful venue, and De Gruyter for continuing to support *ANGERMION*.



Durs Grünbein

7. Workshop on Postgraduate Academic Publishing in Collaboration with the Justus-Liebig-Universität Gießen

In 2009, the German Department's German Academic Exchange Service (DAAD) Lektorin, Dr Susanne Frane, was awarded a grant by Queen Mary's Westfield Trust in order to set up a new online refereed journal for postgraduate students in the field of literary studies. Dr Frane and the CAGCR's Acting Director, Dr Angus Nicholls, then decided to make this a collaborative Anglo-German project by approaching the Graduate Centre for the Study of Culture (GCSC) at the Justus-Liebig-Universität Gießen, a graduate school which was established as a result of the Justus-Liebig-Universität Gießen's successful bid in the German government's "Excellence Initiative" for higher education funding. To begin this collaboration, a Postgraduate Journal Workshop involving staff and postgraduates from the CAGCR and the GCSC was held at Dean Rees House on 8-9 October 2009. This workshop involved planning for the new online postgraduate journal, as well as presentations by Johanna Green and Marc Alexander from the UK's *Association of Postgraduate Journals*. The CAGCR's new online journal for postgraduates, to be named *eTransfers*, will be published for this first time in early 2011.

8. Joint Event with the Goethe Institute, London: *Critic Meets Critic*

This event, held on 6 May 2010, had as its aim a discussion of the different literary cultures of the Anglophone and German-speaking worlds, as seen through the eyes of two very prominent literary critics from both cultures: Erica Wagner, the Literary Editor of *The Times*; and Christoph Bartmann, Head of the Culture and Information Department at the Goethe Institute's headquarters in Munich, and a regular literary reviewer for German newspapers such as the *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* and the *Süddeutsche Zeitung*. The central themes of this event, chaired by the CAGCR's Director Professor Rüdiger Görner, were the overlaps, continuities and discontinuities between the Anglophone and German-speaking literary worlds, with a particular emphasis on the role and fate of literature in the age of digital culture and globalisation.



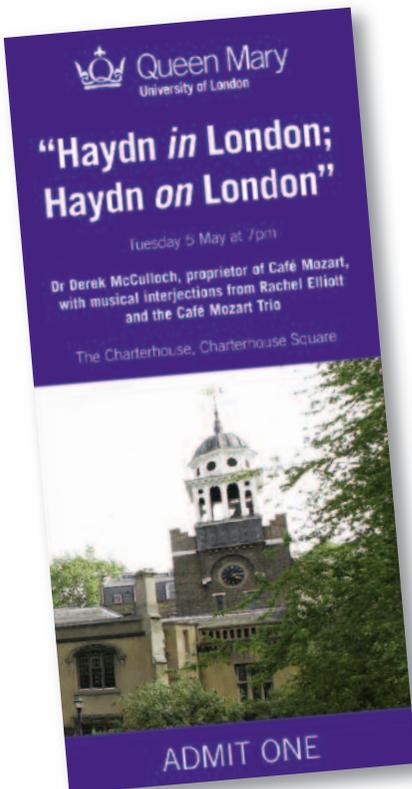
Literary Editor of *The Times*, Erica Wagner, with Professor Rüdiger Görner

9. The Year Ahead: 2010-11

The 2010-11 academic year will be a challenging one both for the CAGCR and for Queen Mary's Department of German. The German Department will be hosting the seventy-fourth meeting of the Association of German Studies (AGS) of Great Britain and Ireland in April 2011. This will be the first such meeting in London since 1982, and will present an opportunity to showcase the work of the CAGCR, the

Department of German, and the College, to the German studies academic community of the UK and Ireland. A key focus of the conference will be the theme of Anglo-German Cultural Relations in London, including a lead panel convened by Dr Robert Gillett and Dr Astrid Köhler on *London in German Literature / German Language and Culture in London*, involving practitioners of Anglo-German Cultural Relations from the fields of literature, theatre and cultural heritage. Representatives of the London embassies of the German-speaking nations – Austria, Germany, and Switzerland – will also attend the conference.

Further events planned for the 2010-11 academic year will include: a major collaboration with the Goethe Institute, the German Embassy, the Institute of Germanic and Romance Studies, and Shakespeare's Globe under the provocative title of *Shakespeare is German*; an international Leverhulme-funded conference on *English and German Nationalist and Anti-Semitic Discourse*; conferences on *Wolfgang Hildesheimer in England* and *Ilse Aichinger in England* in collaboration with the Swiss Embassy and the Austrian Cultural Forum respectively; a postgraduate workshop in collaboration with the University of Munich on theme of *Alltagsrealismus in der deutschen Literatur*; and a Summer School on Cultural Relations under the auspices of the MOVENS international academic network for postgraduate mobility.



Notes

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