THE HUMANITIES CENTER
in the Krieger School of Arts and Sciences at Johns Hopkins University
50th Anniversary Conference
March 24–25, 2016 // Levering Hall Glass Pavilion, Homewood Campus
On March 24 and 25, 2016, the Humanities Center at Johns Hopkins University will hold a celebratory conference marking its 50th anniversary. Our aim is not to indulge in nostalgia, much less in a vain attempt to replicate the famous 1966 conference on “The Language of Criticism and the Sciences of Man” with which the earliest beginnings of the Humanities Center are now identified. Rather, while we wish to measure the distances that our intellectual fields have travelled since that inaugural moment, together with an eminent group of distinguished invited plenary speakers, we hope to explore new avenues of thought under current conditions (as the speakers at the 1966 conference undeniably did for their times).

We would like to thank Beverly Wendland, James B. Knapp Dean of the Krieger School of Arts and Sciences (KSAS), and Professor Jacques Neefs, James M. Beall Professor of French Literature and Director of the Centre Louis Marin in the Department of Romance Languages and Literatures, for the generous co-sponsorship of this event. Our gratitude also goes to Marva Philip, our Senior Administrator, and to Dr. Nicole Jerr, Dr. Larry S. McGrath, and Dr. Nils F. Schott, current and former postdoctoral fellows in the Humanities Center, for their efforts in preparing this program and making the 50th anniversary conference a worthy successor in a long line of events that the Humanities Center has organized to the benefit of the KSAS and Johns Hopkins as a whole.
Introduction to the 50th Anniversary Conference

From its very beginning, the Humanities Center has been a unique department in the Johns Hopkins community. Faculty, graduate students, postdocs, and visitors share a commitment to philosophical and, more broadly, theoretical and practical questions, as these arise in relation to art, literature, film, history, psychoanalysis, as well as philosophy proper. In addition, over the years the Humanities Center has maintained connections with centers of learning across Europe and North America.

Our 50th Anniversary Conference has been organized in the same interdisciplinary spirit.

The department saw its first full academic year in 1966–67, when it turned out that the directorship of the Center was an appealing position to offer to the renowned Dante scholar, Charles Singleton, whom the university was eager to bring back to Baltimore. Singleton had served as a professor in the university’s Italian department for some years before a brief stint at Harvard. With his return, an illustrious history of scholarship, curricular innovation, and international exchange began that in the best tradition of Johns Hopkins University was deeply committed to the principle of selective excellence, while exploring the potentials and limits of ever changing fields in ancient, early modern and contemporary thought; art history and aesthetics; the history and theory of literature and theater; cultural and political theory; the history of psychology and psychoanalysis; and, more recently, the philosophy of film, television, and new media, as well as the legacies of Judeo-Christian and Islamic thought. All along, new approaches in Intellectual History and Comparative Literature have been consistently fostered.

The Humanities Center became known to the world in the fall of its inaugural year with the conference, “The Languages of Criticism and the Sciences of Man,” which brought champions of French thought together in the US. “What is now called “theory” in this country,” as Jacques Derrida, a participant at the conference, suggested, “may even have an essential link with what is said to have happened there in 1966.”¹ Made possible by a $30,000 grant from the Ford Foundation, the conference established an enduring legacy. It set in motion a two-year seminar series that convened under the title, Section on

Language, Culture, and Literature, which became an intellectual hotbed preoccupied with two questions central to the late 1960’s: first, the momentous transition from structuralism to post-structuralism, lead by Jacques Derrida and Paul de Man, both regular visitors to Hopkins; and second, the fate of hermeneutics in sociological and historical scholarship, which Hans-Georg Gadamer and Northrop Frye discussed in their concluding seminars for the Section.

The Center’s founders were very much in touch with structuralist and phenomenological currents of European thought, and sought to establish a forum to explore these trends in the US on the model of the “sixième section” of the École Pratique des Hautes Études in Paris (which, in 1975, became independent to form the École des Hautes Études en Sciences Sociales) or the Institut für Soziologie at the University of Frankfurt under the direction of Theodor W. Adorno. The Center continues to provide an institutional site for frequent visits between American and European professors and students and has invited writers and scholars from South-Africa and Palestine in the recent past as well. The Center’s historical connections with centers of thought in Paris, Hamburg, Berlin, Strasbourg, and, more recently Amsterdam and Jerusalem, not only facilitates intellectual exchange and affords an opportunity to bring international scholars to the Hopkins campus, but also provides faculty and students with crucial opportunities for research abroad.

Even so, the department has come a long way since the “Structuralist Controversy.” The interest in concepts and problems is as strong today in the Center as it was when Jacques Lacan stared out his hotel window following the 1966 conference and quipped, “The best image to sum up the unconscious is Baltimore in the early morning.” The Center’s lively transatlantic conversations and commitment to interdisciplinary inquiry – two hallmarks of its early years – continue to benefit the Hopkins community.

As a department with its own faculty positions, graduate student stipends, and operating budget, the Humanities Center currently has six full-time faculty members: Michael Fried, Leonardo Lisi, Paola Marrati, Yi-Ping Ong, Anne Eakin Moss, and Hent de Vries, who serves as Director. Ruth Leys,

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3 Quoted in Richard Macksey and Eugenio Donato, eds., The Structuralist Controversy: The Languages of Criticism and the Sciences of Man (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2007), x.
recently retired, held a seventh position. Two postdoctoral fellows and one visiting scholar, together with one senior lecturer and an adjunct professor further contribute to a resolutely interdisciplinary curriculum in humanistic studies.

The department has historically functioned as a nerve center of sorts and continues to do so. There are thirteen joint appointments from departments as diverse as Philosophy, History, History of Art, Classics, Anthropology, and German and Romance Languages and Literatures, and graduate students are encouraged to work intensively with colleagues in these departments. The Center also has a regular slate of Associates, distinguished visiting professors, who are appointed to three-year terms. Currently, Anita LaFrance Allen (Penn), Barbara Cassin (CNRS, Paris), Susan James (Birkbeck, London), and David Wellbery (Chicago) are Associates of the department.

Fourteen graduate students are currently funded to complete a doctoral program in Comparative Literature or Intellectual History. In addition, the department recently launched a one-year, terminal MA in Humanistic Studies. Last year, the department further announced a plan to expand its undergraduate division, which comprises a Minor and Major divided into three concentrations: Comparative Literature, Intellectual History, and Comparative American Cultures. A significant number of undergraduates already participate in the Great Books and Great Minds survey courses and in the Honors programs as well as in numerous interdisciplinary courses offered by department faculty.

We believe that the 50th Anniversary Conference reflects the exploratory and interdisciplinary thrust of the Humanities Center. The speakers and participants have come together to contribute another moment in the department’s ongoing engagements with intellectual history, philosophy, aesthetic theory, languages and literatures, film studies, and the history of science.
Thursday, March 24, 2016

Morning Session 9:00 am–12:00 pm

Hent de Vries (JHU, Director, Humanities Center)  
“A Word of Welcome”  

Sharon Marcus (Columbia University, Dean of Humanities, English)  
“Erich Auerbach’s Mimesis and the Value of Scale”  

Lorraine Daston (Max Planck Institute for the History of Science, Berlin)  
“Modernity and the History of Science”  
Introduced by Michael Williams (JHU, Philosophy and Humanities Center)  

Lunch Break

Afternoon Session 2:00–4:30 pm

Ruth Leys (JHU, Humanities Center and History)  
“The Chameleon Effect”  
Introduced by Gabrielle Spiegel (JHU, History and Humanities Center)  

Antonio Somaini (Université Sorbonne Nouvelle—Paris 3, Cinema and Media Studies)  
“The Medium as Milieu”  
Introduced by Anne Eakin Moss (JHU, Humanities Center)  

Coffee Break

Evening Session 5:00 pm

Jeff Wall (Photographer)  
“Depiction, Object, Event”  
Introduced by Michael Fried (JHU, Humanities Center and History of Art)
Friday, March 25, 2016

Morning Session 9:30 am–12:00 pm

Samuel Moyn (Harvard University, Law and History)
“The Political Origins of Global Justice”
Introduced by Sharon Achinstein (JHU, English and Humanities Center)

Toril Moi (Duke University, Program in Literature, Romance Studies)
“Reading as a Practice of Acknowledgment: On the Text as Action and Expression”
Introduced by Yi-Ping Ong (JHU, Humanities Center)

Lunch Break

Afternoon Session 2:00–4:30 pm

Robert Pippin (University of Chicago, Committee on Social Thought, Philosophy)
“Moral Suspension in Hitchcock’s Vertigo”
Introduced by Leonardo Lisi (JHU, Humanities Center)

Michael Puett (Harvard University)
“Creating Worlds: Imagination and Interpretation in the Chinese Tradition”
Introduced by Paola Marrati (JHU, Humanities Center and Philosophy)

Coffee Break

Evening Session 5:00 pm

Michael Fried (JHU, Humanities and History of Art)
“Guercino’s Anni Mirabiles, 1619–20”
Introduced by Robert Pippin (University of Chicago, Committee on Social Thought, Philosophy)

Reception
Speakers

Lorraine Daston is the Executive Director of the Max Planck Institute for the History of Science in Berlin, a regular Visiting Professor in the Committee on Social Thought at the University of Chicago, and Permanent Fellow of the Wissenschaftskolleg zu Berlin. Her books include Classical Probability and the Enlightenment (1988); Wonders and the Order of Nature, 1150-1750 (with Katharine Park, 1998); Things that Talk: Object Lessons from Art and Science (2004); Objectivity (with Peter Galison, 2007); Histories of Scientific Observation (co-edited with Elizabeth Lunbeck, 2011); and How Reason Almost Lost Its Mind: The Strange Career of Cold War Rationality (with Paul Erikson, et al., 2014). She is the recipient of the Pfizer Prize and Sarton Medal of the History of Science Society, the Schelling Prize of the Bavarian Academy of Sciences, the Lichtenberg Medal of the Göttingen Academy of Sciences, and the Luhmann Prize of the University of Bielefeld.

Hent de Vries is Director of the Humanities Center and Russ Family Professor of Humanities and Philosophy at Johns Hopkins University. His books include Philosophy and the Turn to Religion (1999); Religion and Violence: Philosophical Perspectives from Kant to Derrida (2001); Minimal Theologies: Critiques of Secular Reason in Adorno and Levinas (2005); and Kleine filosofie van het wonder (Philosophy of the Miracle: A Short Introduction) (2015).

Michael Fried is the J. R. Herbert Boone Chair in the Humanities at Johns Hopkins University, with a joint-appointment as Professor of History of Art. His books include Absorption and Theatricality: Painting and Beholder in the Age of Diderot (1980), Courbet’s Realism (1990), Manet’s Modernism, or, The Face of Painting in the 1860s (1996); Art and Objecthood: Essays and Reviews (1998); Menzel’s Realism: Art and Embodiment in Nineteenth-Century Berlin (2002); Why Photography Matters as Art as Never Before (2008); The Moment of Caravaggio (2010); Four Honest Outlaws: Sala, Ray, Marioni, Gordon (2011); Flaubert’s “Gueuloir”: On Madame Bovary and Salambô (2012); and Another Light: “Gericault’s Romanticism” and Other Essays (2014). He is the recipient of the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation Distinguished Achievement Award, and the American Academy Award in Literature. The French Ministry of Culture and Communication has named him Chevalier de l’Ordre des Arts et des Lettres.
Ruth Leys is Professor Emerita of the Humanities and Academy at Johns Hopkins University, where she was the Henry Wiesenfeld Professor of Humanities until 2014. Her books include Trauma: A Genealogy (2000) and From Guilt to Shame: Auschwitz and After (2007).

Sharon Marcus is an alumna of the Humanities Center at Johns Hopkins and currently Dean of the Humanities, Arts and Sciences as well as Orlando Harriman Professor of English and Comparative Literature at Columbia University. Her books include Apartment Stories: City and Home in Nineteenth-Century Paris and London (1999) and Between Women: Friendship, Desire, and Marriage in Victorian England (2007).

Toril Moi is James B. Duke Professor of Literature and Romance Studies, and Professor of English and Theater Studies at Duke University, where she is also the Director of the Center for Philosophy, Arts, and Literature. Her books include Sexual/Textual Politics: Feminist Literary Theory (1985); Simone de Beauvoir: The Making of an Intellectual Woman (1994); Sex, Gender, and the Body: The Student Edition of What Is a Woman (2005); and Henrik Ibsen and the Birth of Modernism (2007).

Samuel Moyn is Professor of Law and History at Harvard University. His books include Origins of the Other: Emmanuel Levinas Between Revelation and Ethics (2005); The Last Utopia: Human Rights and History (2010); and Christian Human Rights (2015).

Robert Pippin is the Evelyn Stefansson Nef Distinguished Service Professor of Social Thought, Philosophy, and in the College at the University of Chicago. His books include Hegel’s Idealism: The Satisfactions of Self-Consciousness (1989); Modernism as a Philosophical Problem: On the Dissatisfactions of European High Culture (1991); Idealism as Modernism: Hegelian Variations (1997); Henry James and Modern Moral Life (2000); The Persistence of Subjectivity: On the Kantian Aftermath (2005); Hegel’s Practical Philosophy: Rational Agency as Ethical Life (2008); Hollywood Westerns and American Myth: The Importance of Howard Hawks and John Ford for Political Philosophy (2010); Hegel on Self-Consciousness: Desire and Death in the Phenomenology of Spirit (2011); Fatalism in American Film Noir: Some Cinematic Philosophy (2012); After the Beautiful: Hegel and the Philosophy of Pictorial Modernism (2013); and Interanimations: Receiving Modern German Philosophy (2015).
Michael Puett is the Walter C. Klein Professor of Chinese History in the Department of East Asian Languages and Civilizations and Chair of the Committee on the Study of Religion at Harvard University. His books include The Ambivalence of Creation: Debates Concerning Innovation and Artifice in Early China (2001) and To Become a God: Cosmology, Sacrifice, and Self-Divinization in Early China (2002). He is the co-author, with Adam Seligman, Robert Weller, and Bennett Simon, of Ritual and its Consequences: An Essay on the Limits of Sincerity (2008).

Antonio Somaini is Professor of Film, Media, and Visual Culture at Université Sorbonne Nouvelle–Paris 3. His books include Eisenstein: Cinema, Art History, Montage (2011, English edition forthcoming 2017), the English edition of Eisenstein’s Notes for a General History of Cinema (together with Naum Kleiman, 2016), as well as other critical editions—in English, French, and Italian—of writings by Walter Benjamin, Sergei M. Eisenstein, László Moholy-Nagy, and Dziga Vertov. His current research deals with the history of the concept of “medium.”

Moderators


Leonardo Lisi (JHU) is Associate Professor of Humanities. His books include *Marginal Modernity: The Aesthetics of Dependency from Kierkegaard to Joyce* (2012) and *The Fate of Suffering: Form, Philosophy, History in Modern Tragedy* (forthcoming).

Paola Marrati (JHU) is Professor of Humanities and Philosophy. Her books include *Genesis and Trace: Derrida Reading Husserl and Heidegger* (2005) and *Gilles Deleuze: Cinema and Philosophy* (2008).

Anne Eakin Moss (JHU) is Assistant Professor of Humanities. Her book manuscript is *Women’s Community in the Russian Imagination: Realism, Utopianism, Modernity*.

Yi-Ping Ong (JHU) is Assistant Professor of Humanities. Her book manuscripts are *Art of Being: The Poetics of the Novel and Existentialist Philosophy* and *Philosophy in the Golden Age of the Novel: Novelistic Form, Existentialist Thought*.


Michael Williams (JHU) is a Krieger-Eisenhower Professor of Philosophy and Humanities. His books include *Groundless Belief* (1977), *Unnatural Doubts* (1992) and *Problems of Knowledge* (2001).