

# gods

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# Letter from the Chair

## Dear Friends,



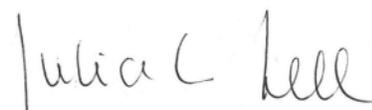
I am writing this letter on November 10, one day after the twentieth anniversary of the fall of the Berlin Wall. As Professor Kerstin Barndt reports on the facing page, students and faculty of the German Department organized a series of events celebrating East Germany's Bürgerrechtsbewegung, or citizens' movement. As part of these celebrations, a group of German Studies undergraduate students erected a replica of the Berlin Wall on the Diag on November 9, drawing a large and enthusiastic audience.

The Avant Garde Interest Group, comprised of many our graduate students, is also participating in the commemorations of 1989, drawing attention to the year's wider scope. On December 10, the group will meet with Andrei Codrescu to discuss his recent book, *The Posthuman Dada Guide*, and the revolutionary events of 1989 in Romania. As it turns out, 2009 is also the year in which Hertha Müller, the German-Romanian writer who left Timisoara for Berlin in the 1980s, received the Nobel Prize in Literature. Her short stories and novels continue to be taught in several undergraduate and graduate courses within our Department. Our colleague, Andrei Markovits, born in Timisoara as well, opened the lecture series "The Nines: Brinks, Cusps and Perceptions of Possibilities – 1789-2009" at the Center for European Studies.

Our department remains a vibrant place of learning and scholarship. The fall semester began with a successful international conference on German Idealism, organized by two of our experts in German literature and philosophy, Andreas Gailus and Silke-Maria Weineck (article on page 7). Our third specialist in eighteenth-century studies, Vanessa Agnew, received two national awards for her book, *Enlightenment Orpheus: The Power of Music in Other Worlds* (2008), highlighted on page 6. And we are happy to report that the German Department and the Department of Comparative Literature voted to recommend the promotion of Kader Konuk to the rank of Associate Professor. Konuk's book, *East West Mimesis: German-Jewish Exile and Secular Humanism in Turkey*, will be published by Stanford University Press.

Thanks to the efforts of our concentration advisers, we continue to see increasing numbers of German Studies majors. Kalli Federhofer expects to have the largest graduating class to date in May of 2010. Vicki Dischler, one of our lecturers, has been preparing undergraduate students for next semester's Max Kade House spring break trip to Hamburg with a series of lectures on the history of the city. Ton Broos, the director of our Dutch program, has been busy with the 14th Annual DeVries-VanderKooy Lecture (article on page 8). Scandinavian program director, Johanna Eriksson, writes about the extraordinary Signe Karlström Nordic Festival on page 9.

It is a pleasure to serve as chair of the department, and I invite you, as friends of the department, to contact me, send us letters from abroad, or drop in.

  
Julia Hell [hell@umich.edu]

# Undergrad Connection

1989/2009:

By Kerstin Barndt

## 20th Anniversary of the Fall of the Berlin Wall

On the evening of November 9th, 2009 former president of Poland and Solidarnosc leader Lech Walesa toppled the first of numerous large-scale domino pieces lining

the former border between East and West Berlin. Attended by national and international political luminaries, Walesa's act reminded Germans and the world that the opening of the German Democratic Republic (GDR) border was only one episode

in a chain of events and revolutionary movements that brought down state-socialism in Eastern Europe and ended the cold war.

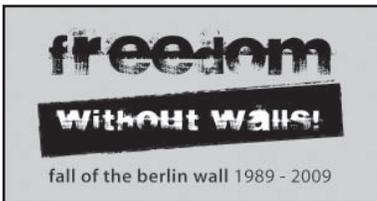
This semester, many classes in the German department focused on the peaceful revolution of 1989 as part of their curriculum, and a number of special events helped to celebrate the anniversary as well:

- a public film series Un/Building the GDR looked back at the history of East Germany and the Fall of the Wall through the related motifs of construction and destruction, rise and ruin;
- two panel discussions addressed life with the Wall from East and West German perspectives, respectively;
- art and education students from Michigan and Ohio conceptualized public art projects that investigate

historic and contemporary walls—physical borders as well as the equally real imagined walls in our heads;

- German students created video projects that were screened as part of a trans-Atlantic digital video-jam session Collapsing Borders/ Einstürzende Grenzen with Markus Güttner (Regensburg), and nospectacle (Detroit/Ann Arbor);
- the German Club and Max Kade House residents built a cardboard wall on the diag to invite reflection and comments from fellow students.

The anniversary celebrations in Ann Arbor were crowned by a concert of the Berlin Philharmonic, who filled Hill Auditorium with music by Johannes Brahms and Arnold Schoenberg. We hope that many of you were able to attend the concert and see some of the public Fall of the Wall art projects on display. At the time of this printing, a photo exhibition *Redux/The Berlin Wall. 1989/2009* by Piotr Michalowski, Professor of Near Eastern Studies, will still be on view at the Institute of the Humanities Osterman Commons Room (Thayer Building), through December 11. We thank the Weiser Center for Europe and Eurasia, and UMS for their on-campus collaboration, and Freedom Without Walls (German Embassy) for its sponsorship.



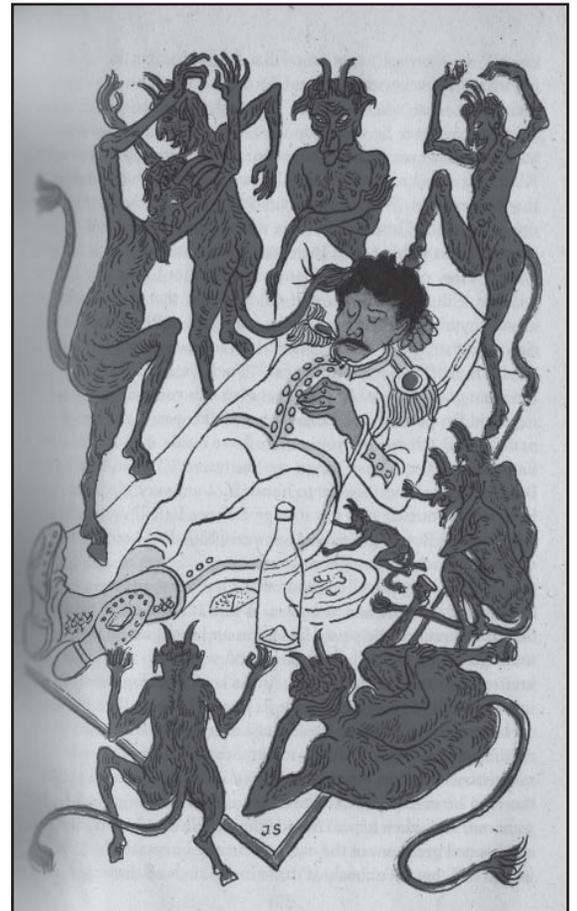
## Living Happily Ever After—Telling Fairy Tales

By Silke Weineck

Everybody—well, almost everybody—knows Cinderella, Snow White, or Hansel and Gretel. They are everywhere: in the movies, in advertisements, and in the stories we keep telling—sometimes using their names, sometimes not. But how many Americans know the story of Allerleirauh, or All Fur, the princess who wraps herself into a cloak made of a thousand animals' pelts and flees the castle after her father announces that he will marry her? Or how about that stepmother in "The Juniper Tree" who beheads her stepson, convinces her own daughter that she is to blame, and serves a stew made of the little boy's flesh to her clueless but appreciative husband? Or that decidedly grim account of "How Some Children Played at Slaughtering," a brief tale that leaves three children and both of their parents dead in the end?

German 386 introduces students to the dark side of the Grimms' fairy tales, a collection of old stories heavily edited by the two pious brothers Wilhelm and Jacob, prolific 19th century scholars who published what would become the most widely read anthology of folk tales in the West. In class, students analyze the best- and the least-known of the tales, trace the changes from edition to edition, peruse the most influential historical, psychoanalytic, anthropological, and literary scholarship devoted to them, look at contemporary literary adaptations, think about the politics of various film adaptations, and, of course, write their very own fairy tales. What emerges is a comprehensive introduction to a narrative tradition that has helped children and adults alike to negotiate questions of violence, gender, adventure, desire, and justice.

An illustration by Josef Scharl of "Brother Lustig" from *Grimm's Fairy Tales*



## Freie Universität Berlin/U-M Graduate Student Exchange

By Joshua Hawkins  
and Simon Walsh

Simon Walsh and Joshua Hawkins are both fourth year graduate students. Simon was the first student to participate in the *Freie Universität Berlin* exchange, and was by way of exception allowed to go there before completing his prelims. Joshua Hawkins has been in Berlin for a month and thus can only claim limited experience. A guiding principle for the exchange year is *freedom*. The exchange is carried out with the *FU*, and the exchange student is nominally a member of a larger group of international students on direct exchange. Although courses are not compulsory, both Simon and Joshua found classes that complemented their wider research plans. During his second semester, Simon took an advanced writing course and audited a musicology *Seminar*; and Joshua is currently enrolled in an advanced writing course, a *Vorlesung*, and is auditing two other classes. Exchange students are also granted full access to the *FU* libraries and are allowed to apply for

membership at all the other major Berlin libraries, including the outstanding *Staatsbibliothek*. In addition, *FU* student status allows one to participate in the university's *Hochschulsport* program—for Simon this meant badminton, and for Joshua this means Tai Chi and the esoteric Brazilian art form, Capoeira. After spending most of his first semester in the strikingly modern *Philologische Bibliothek* of the *FU* (nicknamed “the brain” after its unusual shape) preparing for his preliminary exams, Simon used the second semester to take classes and get started on his dissertation. Joshua arrived in Berlin still finishing up his prospectus, which he is set to defend in December, and will use the new year to begin the bulk of his dissertation work. Both Simon and Joshua are taking comfort in the thought that, should things go *schief* with their dissertation, they should be able to smoothly switch topics to a field on which all Berlin exchange students will become experts, German bureaucracy.



The University of Berlin's Library. Photo by Joshua Hawkins.

Former graduate director, Silke Weineck, was instrumental in organizing and implementing this exchange program. A big thanks goes out to her, and to current graduate director, Johannes von Moltke, for planning things from this end. Thanks also to Günther Schepker at the *FU* exchange office, for ensuring that the exchange year goes so smoothly.

## Congratulations to Our Recent Ph.D.s

### Adile Esen, Ph.D.

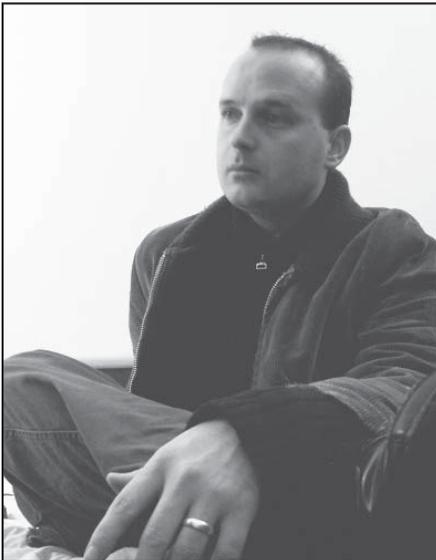
In September, Adile successfully defended her dissertation, *Beyond “In-Between,” Travels and Transformations in Contemporary Turkish- German Literature and Film*. Adile has accepted a position at Maharishi University in Iowa.



### Sun Young Kim, Ph.D.

In July, Sun Young successfully defended her dissertation, *Beyond Disintegration. Apocalyptic Discourse in Hermann Broch's ‘Die Schlafwandler.’* Sun Young obtained a postdoctoral teaching fellowship at Kalamazoo College.

## Greetings from Andrew Mills, Our New Undergraduate Advisor



Andrew Mills can be reached via email at [ajmills@umich.edu](mailto:ajmills@umich.edu)

I appreciate the opportunity to introduce myself in writing, and hope to have the pleasure of meeting you in person one day. I moved to Ann Arbor this fall from Georgetown, Texas, where I served as Adjunct Scholar of German at Southwestern University while completing my dissertation. I acquired my Bachelors at Purdue University and my Masters and Ph.D. at Indiana University in Bloomington.

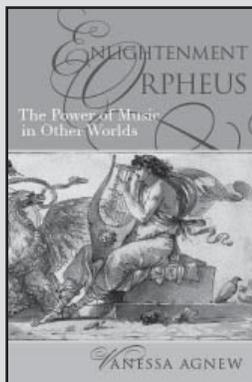
Despite my gentle nature, the research I pursue is characterized predominantly by an interest in human violence. I most often analyze my subjects and topics through the prism of specific concepts that have seized my attention, and through which I hope to establish an elucidative, meaningful perspective. I have published, for example, on 'opportunism' and the contemporary reception of Third-Reich

entertainment composer Peter Kreuder, the concept of 'total mobilization' and the pre-Second-World-War writings of Ernst Jünger and Ishiwara Kanji, and dissertated on the notion of *Satisfaktion* and dueling in 19th-century German literature. Most recently, I have been invited to lecture on the sometimes bloody Mensur fencing bout, practiced by today's ever-controversial German-university fraternity students.

The endeavor of teaching is what originally attracted me to this profession as a first-generation university student, and in this field my continuous aim is to foster critical thinking skills in an atmosphere of intercultural awareness and competence. My affinity for the classroom has only been greatly encouraged here at the University of Michigan, where I have been delighted with the quality, attitude, and intellectual curiosity of my students.

Finally, as the new concentration advisor, I look forward to building strong working relationships with incoming undergraduate students of German, as well as with our fellow instructors of German on the high school level in the state of Michigan, from which we receive so many promising students each year.

## Professor Agnew's Award-Winning Book



We are pleased to announce that Vanessa Agnew is the winner of the Kenshur Book Prize for 2008 for her book, *Enlightenment Orpheus: the Power of Music in Other Worlds*, Oxford University Press, 2008. The award was celebrated with a roundtable discussion on Monday, September 21st, 2009. April Alliston (Comparative Literature, Princeton University), Dror Wahrman (History, University of Indiana), Fritz Breithaupt (German, University of Indiana), Jesse Molesworth (English, University of Indiana), Vanessa Agnew (German, University of Michigan), and the audience participated in the discussion.

Vanessa Agnew's book is also the recipient of another national prize, the Lewis Lockwood Award for 2009, awarded by the American Musicological Society.

## GDS Conference on “Idealism Matters”

By Andreas Gailus

The era of German Idealism, broadly understood as spanning from Kant to early Marx, saw an intense commitment to the force and power of thinking. For thinkers and writers like Kant, Goethe, Hegel or Hölderlin, ideas mattered in that they were seen to shape what people held to be, and cared to make, real. Today, this trust in the power of ideas might seem naïve or outdated; does the news not show us daily that it is money and power, not ideas, that matter? Contemporary scholarship often echoes this skeptical attitude by studying the period of German Idealism through a predominantly historical lens, as an edifying but bygone era, a museum piece. An international conference on “Idealism Matters,” organized by Mika Lavaque-Manty (Political Science), Silke Weineck and Andreas Gailus (GDS), attempted to take Idealism out of the museum. For three days, eleven scholars from Germany and the US explored if, and how, ideas mattered and matter.

Eckart Förster (Johns Hopkins University), one of the world’s leading Kant scholars, set the stage in his keynote address at Rackham’s Amphitheater. According to Förster, Goethe’s writings on the metamorphosis of plants mark a radically new

model of scientific observation, one in which the scientist does not stand outside his/her object, measuring it on a pre-existing scale, but instead adapts to and changes with the observed reality. Such an attitude is prompted by a new interest in nature and life that emerges around 1800. If nature is living—and thus, constantly changing—how can we observe and describe it accurately? Idealist thought, Förster suggested, responds to the need to understand a reality that is in flux; it is thinking that seeks to be alive to the life around it. Förster’s ideas were taken up in a fascinating and beautiful talk by Marianne Schuller (University of Hamburg), who explored Goethe’s meteorological studies and in particular his interest in clouds. Ephemeral, untouchable, and constantly changing, clouds posed an intractable problem to Goethe’s attempt at circumscribing and cataloging natural phenomena. Neither form nor non-form, clouds suggested to the aging Goethe the limits of knowledge. Even ideas have boundaries.

Besides Goethe’s scientific thoughts, the talks explored a wide variety of thinkers and issues, spanning from modern utopian thinking, to problems of objectivity, Schiller’s dramas, questions of secularization and freedom, and Kant’s aesthetic theory. Judging from the excellent attendance and the lively and stimulating discussions, it seems clear that idealism does indeed matter.

Does idealism matter? What is the matter of idealism? How does it engage with and affect the material world? This conference pursues questions of German idealism and materiality by bringing together scholars from several disciplines and two continents.

## IDEALISM MATTERS

UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN  
SEPTEMBER 17-19, 2009



## 14th Annual DeVries–VanderKooy Memorial Lecture Presents Michiel van Kempen

On October 15, the Annual DeVries-VanderKooy lecture hosted its 14th speaker to promote the Dutch and Flemish Studies program. Professor Michiel van Kempen was the invited guest, and he gave a most intriguing presentation, weaving his own personal experiences in Surinam with the adoption of his Amerindian children from that country together with his expertise in the literature of the Dutch speaking West Indies and former Dutch colony Surinam. His lecture was entitled *Circular Journeys: On Going Native in Postcolonial Studies*; Professor Van Kempen holds the Chair of West Indies Literature at the University of Amsterdam.

Students from Ton Broos' freshmen seminar 'Colonialism and its Aftermath' were very enthusiastic about Michiel van Kempen's visit to the class and his engaging lecture. Here are some of their comments:



Michiel van Kempen and Professor Broos with the DeVries-VanderKooy Memorial plaque.

similar to the class discussions we have in Dutch. What we know is mostly Western ideas. As a result, a topic like racism in South Africa will quickly shift to the American Civil Rights Movement of the sixties. What we know best is comfortable. As a result, to open one's horizons, we must be uncomfortable sometimes." *Kyle Welch*

"Van Kempen mentioned literature as a way to look at a culture, and he certainly gave several names of important contributors to Surinamese literature over the years. His point that judging art is not so much a matter of a particular culture as a matter of humanity was very interesting. He said that many shy away from judging the art of a different culture, but that it is just as arrogant to assume that they can judge the art from their own culture. Art transcends differences—commonalities are present in all people, and these shine through especially in art." *Liza Wolterink*

"I was intrigued when he spoke of how Western concepts and the Western way of thinking get in the way when analyzing literary works from another country. I find this difficulty in my own life, when discussing works in classes like this one. He said that we can easily write texts pertaining to our own culture, but when it is about another culture, it feels strange to us. This is very

"I agree with his statement that for interpretation, 'Everything from skin color to background matters, even though it should not.' Most issues that would influence your view are encompassed in your background, such as race, social status, etc. Mr. van Kempen's lecture was highly informative and entertaining." *Chris Carender*

# Scandinavian Studies

## Signe Karlström Festival of Nordic Arts

By Johanna Eriksson



Pictured are Fred Amrine and Olaf Karlström, taken at the 2008 Signe Karlström event.

This year's Signe Karlström Festival was a spectacular three-day celebration of Nordic creativity in dance, theater, music and cuisine. In collaboration with Finnish-born cellist Katri Ervamaa, head of music at the Residential College, the Scandinavian Program reached a broad audience of all ages.

In a pre-performance lecture, Kirsten Herold (English), fellow Scandinavian, presented Ibsen, who is considered the father of modern drama. Ibsen is claimed to be the second most performed playwright after Shakespeare. The play, *Lady From the Sea*, was efficiently and passionately performed by a three-person troupe. The scenes were accompanied by improvisations on cello, violin and jouhikko, an ancient Finnish instrument.

The drama was followed by a powerful performance modern dance, *Kolme Kuuta*, loosely based on the Finnish national epic, the Kalevala. It is inspired by traditional folk dance and music, relating various myths, beginning with the birth of the sun and ending with a mesmerizing lullaby.

Joining Kerrytown Concert House in their Magic Carpet series, "Nordic Weave" featured a piano trio, a cello duet, and ended with songs in Swedish and

Finnish. Classical as well as traditional music were presented to the children, who were encouraged to wiggle and dance along. The children could also draw on large papers situated on the floor while enjoying the music.

Saturday evening's concert featured the Nordic National Romantic composers Grieg, Svendsen and Madetoja. This pleasant concert transported us to the warm summer nights of Scandinavia. The after-glow reception hosted a beautiful selection of shrimp, salmon and meatball smörgåsar, exotic to the American audience, and a taste of home to the Scandinavians.

The grand finale was a homage to young contemporary Scandinavian composers. The pieces were extraordinary and brought new and unexpected sounds to the audience, all of whom went home satisfied from the music, as well as the delicious Finnish fare.



### Giving to German, Dutch, and Scandinavian Studies



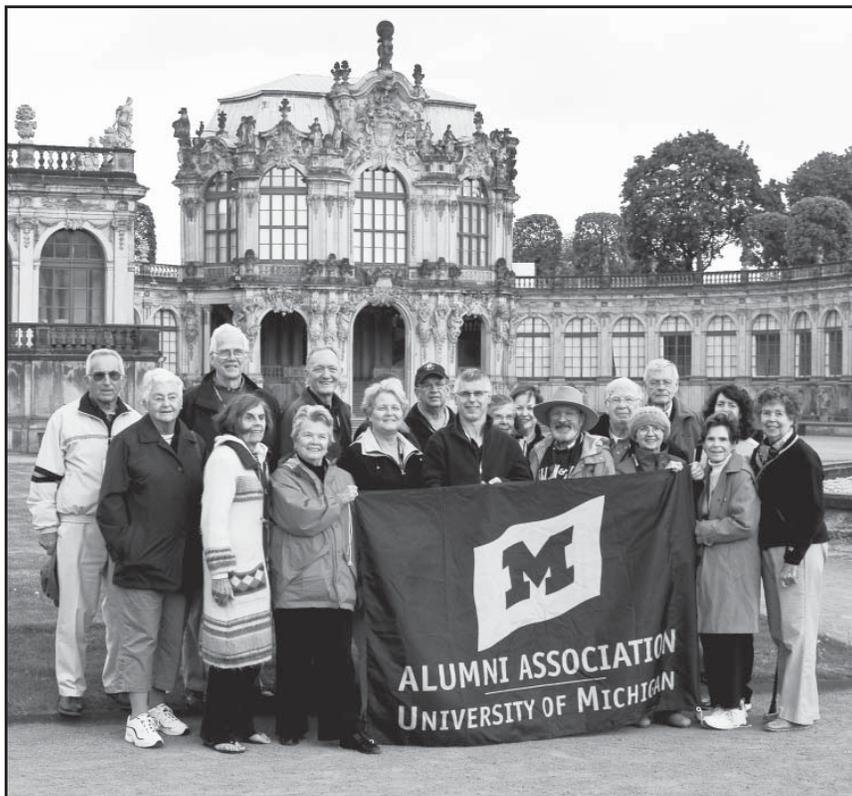
*Giving to the Department continues to grow. In these times of economic uncertainty and potential budget cuts, we are grateful to our many supporters and benefactors for their trust and gifts of support. The quality and diversity of the programs and opportunities we provide for graduate and undergraduate students would not be possible without this support. Please consider making your donation this year.*

- Katharina and Kurt Bettsteller, Sr. (German-American history)
- Frank X. Braun (grad teaching prize)
- Bronson-Thomas (ugrad prizes)
- Alan P. Cottrell (grad support)
- Dutch Studies Fund
- Hans Fabian Fund (Freiburg program support)
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- Mildred N. Nelson Scholarship Fund
- Arati Sharangpani (junior year abroad)
- Strategic Fund (unrestricted)
- Swedish Studies Fund
- George Valenta Endowment (Max Kade House scholarship)
- Hermann Weiss/Charles Parton (unrestricted)
- Martijn Zwart Scholarship Fund (Dutch study abroad)

## Dear Alumnus and Friends

Ever thought of taking a boat-trip on the Elbe River? Neither had I until last April, when I served as our university's Academic Travel Representative on the Saxony cruise from Potsdam to Prague. From April 24 to May 2, I accompanied 17 U-M alumni on a lovely trip upstream the Elbe, Germany's second largest river. My task was easy: all I had to do was give a couple of lectures—on Franz Kafka and Prague, and on the political and cultural significance of the Elbe region—eat exquisite meals aboard our elegant cruise ship, the *Katharina von Bora*, and accompany our group on sightseeing tours through cities such as Berlin, Magdeburg, Wittenberg, Dresden and Prague. While some of us had been to Berlin and Prague, and all were charmed by the beautifully restored medieval town of Wittenberg, from where Luther launched his reformation, it was Dresden that represented

for many the surprise highlight of the trip. Heavily bombed during the war, Dresden's architectural splendor has been magnificently restored over the last 20 years. While certainly not free from economic and social tensions, Dresden nonetheless affords a glance into a successful part of German unification. Here's how William Olsen, a member of our group, described his impressions of the trip in an email to me: "We had never been in Germany and had no idea how much has been done to renovate and rejuvenate East Germany. What an incredible effort and one for which the German people should be very proud—and receive more recognition for internationally. How impressed I am with the architectural integrity, zoning, transportation, health care and the contentment and warmth evident in the German people. It looks like a great lifestyle to me. Great country; so happy we went." The picture below shows all of us in the courtyard of the *Zwinger*, a baroque complex of galleries and pavilions that is one of Dresden's landmarks.



Back in Ann Arbor, university life is in full swing. The articles in this issue—on the festivities surrounding the 20-year anniversary of the Fall of the Wall, the conference on German Idealism, etc.—will give you an idea of the vitality of our department. Check out our website for upcoming events and perhaps on your next visit to Ann Arbor you will join us for one of our many public events. In the meantime, I wish you peaceful holidays and *einen guten Rutsch*—"a good slide"—into the New Year.

Andreas Jai'les

# Staying Connected

## From Thesis to International Policy

By Maggie Geiger

In July 2008, on my first day of work, my supervisor told me we were planning a meeting in Stockholm in three months and that I should plan on going. I, of course, agreed. I also realized that this was unlikely to happen on the first day of any future job that I may have. I helped plan and execute the Stockholm meeting in October and had the next trip to Europe on the horizon—which ended up being a three week tour to Stockholm, London, Belgrade and Paris. The opportunity to work with Europeans and to travel was one of many things that attracted me to the German Marshall Fund of the United States (it's a mouthful, I know) ([www.gmfus.org](http://www.gmfus.org)). I am based in our headquarters in Washington, D.C., but we have seven additional offices in Europe—Berlin, Bratislava, Paris, Brussels, Belgrade, Ankara, and Bucharest. While GMF focuses on a range of policy issues, I am part of the Economic Policy Program, focusing on international aid effectiveness. I identified with GMF's mission of strengthening transatlantic relations and had particular interest in international development policy. I work specifically on a project called the *Transatlantic Taskforce on Development* which consists of 24 senior development experts from Europe and North America, coming from different political perspectives and with experience across government, private sector, NGOs and foundations and corporations ([www.gmfus.org/taskforce](http://www.gmfus.org/taskforce)).

I did not know such a job even existed as I prepared to graduate from U-M with a degree in German and Political Science. Professor Kerstin Barndt encouraged me write a thesis my senior year, analyzing the anti-nuclear energy movement in the 1970s and the impact it had on energy policy in Germany today. I did not fully appreciate the skills writing a thesis helped me develop until I went out



Maggie Geiger (U-M '08) in Stockholm for the *Transatlantic Taskforce on Development* plenary meeting that she helped plan.

into the real world—everything from conceiving a topic to the research, analysis and writing (and rewriting) until it was complete. Andrei Markovits was one of my many advisors. I met with him as I started my job search and ended up with a laundry list of organizations and people in D.C. working in the international policy arena. After rounds of informational interviews with various organizations I finally found what seemed to be a perfect fit at GMF. I now realize that it was not only the process of writing a thesis that influenced my decision to pursue a career in policy and international relations, but more importantly the relationships I built with my professors and their guidance along the way.

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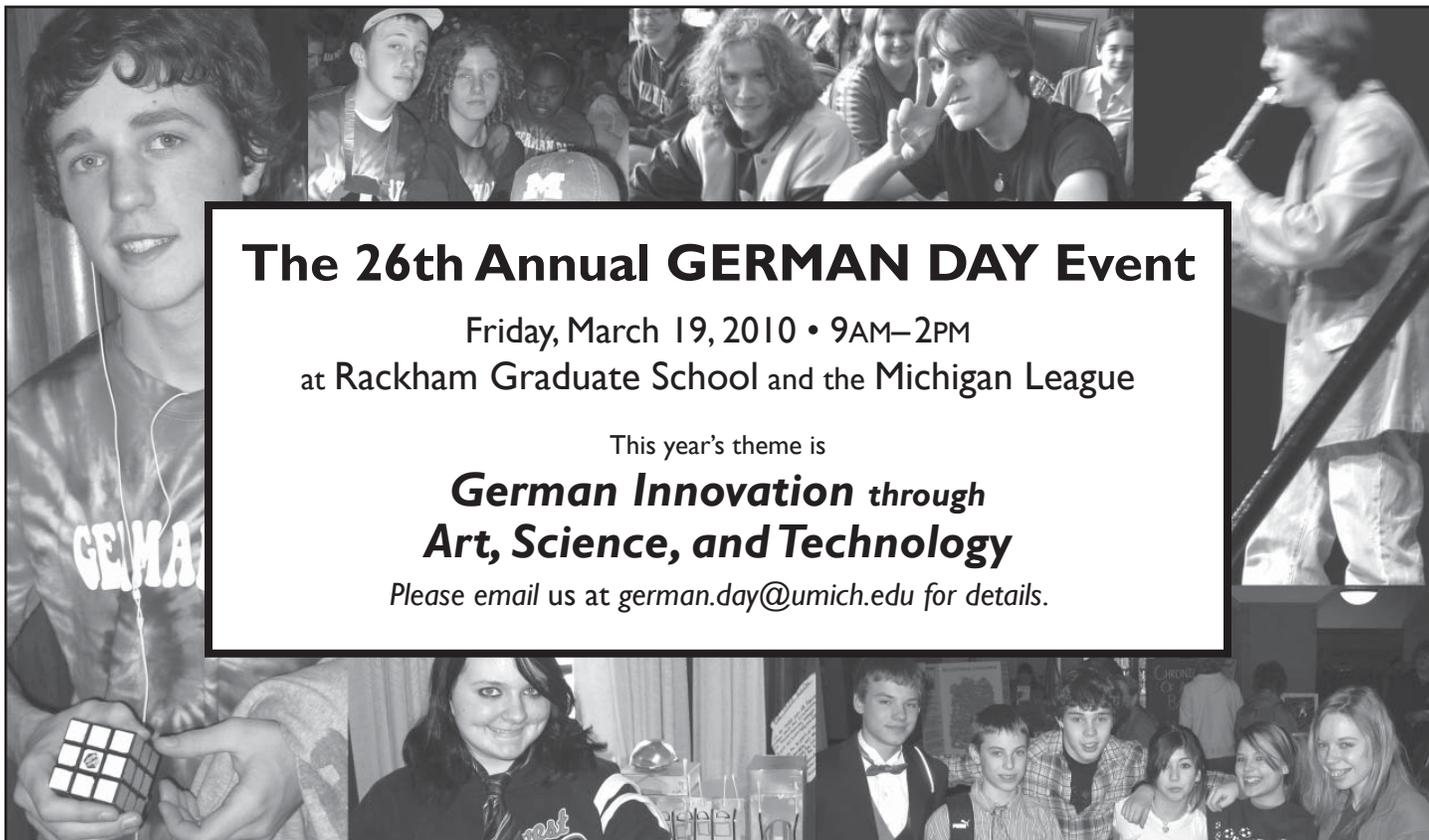
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Friday, March 19, 2010 • 9AM–2PM  
at Rackham Graduate School and the Michigan League

This year's theme is

***German Innovation through  
Art, Science, and Technology***

Please email us at [german.day@umich.edu](mailto:german.day@umich.edu) for details.