

CFP: Reading Exhaust- | Erschöpfende Lektüren

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Type:

Call for Papers

Date:

June 30, 2017

Location:

Rhode Island, United States

Subject Fields:

Art, Art History & Visual Studies, Humanities, Languages, Literature, German History / Studies

Reading exhaust- | Erschöpfende Lektüren

Graduate Student Conference

German Studies, Brown University

October 20-21, 2017

“Das menschliche Wissen ist den Graden nach unendlich, aber der Art nach ist es durch seine Gesetze vollständig bestimmt, und lässt sich gänzlich erschöpfen.”

Johann Gottlieb Fichte, *Über den Begriff der Wissenschaftslehre*

“Wenn die Ausführung den Gedanken erschöpfte, der sehr gut ist, so wäre nichts zu erinnern...”

Johann W. Goethe, *Wahlverwandtschaften*

“... das durchaus originelle jeder echttragischen Sprache, das immerwährendschöpfrische ...”

Friedrich Hölderlin, *Das untergehende Vaterland*

Keynote speaker: Daniel Heller-Roazen (Princeton University)

Date: Fr, Oct 20 - Sat, Oct 21 2017

The interdisciplinary conference **reading exhaust-** aims to trace the oscillation of exhaustion between completion and depletion, plenitude and hollowness, productivity and bankruptcy, as well as its connotations of a possibly infinite depth or even collapse of bodies, both animate and inanimate. In this regard, reading appears as a form (not far from *affirm-*), affirming tensions between attention *and* boredom, mindfulness *and* mindlessness, and casting interpreter and art/work as effects of such tensions. This leads to questions such as: Who is the subject or object of exhaustion? In reading, does exhaustion (un-)bind both subject and object of reading? How do *Schöpfung* and *Erschöpfung* relate to one another? Is one the precondition for the other? Do they complement or subvert each other? Is any word – and how – exhaustible? Take the word *exhaust*, for example. Instead of reaching a finite form, the word appears to remain open-ended in its various conjugation and translations, running the risk of disintegration before our eyes – exhaust(ive)(ing)(ible)(ed)(!) –

We seem to exhaust ourselves in attempt to exhaust a text. We adopt the posture of readerly attention, bent over, for an uncomfortably long period of time, at an awkward angle; and when our concentration fades and inspiration – the spirit – leaves us, a body is left behind, meaning withdraws from the letter, leaving us with its sheer, graphic materiality, a textual landscape. If we look at it this way, exhaustion could designate not an end, but a beginning for the exploration of uncharted territory. In reading, we find ourselves tracing and mining for meaning when meaning retracts, pulls back, withdraws itself and pulls us into the depth. There is a certain degree of compulsion, if not obsession, to this motion: perhaps it is we who seek to reach a limit, to go beyond our forces when we engage with texts and other webs, chasing what might be called a “reader’s high”. Perhaps the moment of exhaustion confronts us as readers with the limits of human capacity and reveals thereby to us our ‘human-ness.’ Might there be inhuman, inexhaustible modes of reading? Can machines be exhausted or are they digital dwarves, inexhaustibly mining through gigantic corpora?

Exhaust: from Latin *exaurire*, ‘to draw off or out,’ ‘to use up completely,’ ‘to empty,’ ‘to treat or study (a subject) so as to leave nothing further to be explained or discovered,’ ‘to drain of strength or resources, or (a soil) of nutritive ingredients.’ Does exhaustion presume an essence that can be drawn out of an object of investigation, or does the question, drawing out a text’s exhaustibility and breaking through the reader’s reserve, challenge its very readability? Is the semantic spectrum of the word *exhaust* exhausted by bringing to light, digging up, its etymology – in one language? Within *exhaust* particles from different languages resonate. Ex=aus. The Old Norse *haust* corresponds to English *harvest*, German *Herbst*, referring back to Latin *carpere*, ‘to cut, divide, pluck’. *Haut* resurfaces in the Franconian German dialect as noun, heap, ‘im Felde zusammengestellter Haufen (Heu).’ Here, *exhaust* and *reading* – German *Lesen* (to read) and *Lese* (harvest) – do touch one another. What are the fruits of labor reaped by the one who reads?

reading exhaust- aims to intertwine or confront close readings with reflections on the relation of reading and working, the institutionalized and professionalized status of reading today. This call is neither limited to the field of literary studies nor to notions of text in the written sense, but welcomes contributions from a variety of fields, such as Visual and Performance Studies, History, Political Theory, or Digital Humanities.

The conference format will consist of a seminar setting (open to the public) in which participants will

each present a short paper of no more than 6 pages. Primary materials chosen by the participants will be compiled and distributed in a reader.

Abstracts no longer than 250 words should be submitted to reading.exhaust@gmail.com. The deadline for submission is **June 30, 2017**. Participants will be notified of their acceptance by July 15, 2017.

Topics may include, but are not limited to:

Reading readings - the relation between so-called primary and secondary literatures / hierarchies among readings / strategies of legitimacy, authenticity/ inexhaustibility of reading vs. seemingly exhaustively read texts (canon).

Filibusters / Politics - exhausting and reading as political acts, strategies of delay

Arbeiten / Durcharbeiten - the (intellectual) worker, reading and work, reading as work

Exhaustion Matters - questions of materials, bodies / human and inhuman / mechanical and digital reading

Reading Gestures - languages (ach, oh) and scenes of exhausted or exhaustible reading / close and distant forms of reading / breach of linguistic, socio-political categories

Metaphorical limits - metaphors of exhaustions, catachresis

Exhausting figures - hermeneutic circles, infinite regress, translation, mise en abyme

Withdrawal - dimensions in language that cannot be exhausted / what withdraws from language?

The Unreadable Space of Publications - who reads, can or should read what is written?

Contact Info:

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