

Introduction to the GAFOH Essays

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THE FOLLOWING ESSAYS by Gabriele Haug-Moritz and Terri J. Gordon are revisions of the working papers they presented at the inaugural German-American Frontiers of Humanities (GAFOH) symposium, held at the American Philosophical Society on 7–10 October 2004. It is fitting that we publish these essays in the *Proceedings*, because GAFOH is sponsored by the APS in close collaboration with the Alexander von Humboldt Foundation in Germany. The APS and Humboldt have now staged five GAFOH meetings, three in Philadelphia, one in Hamburg, and one in Potsdam. All of these meetings share two features. First, we assemble a group of young humanists, half German and half American, who spend three days in intellectual, cultural, and social exchange. Second, each symposium explores new scholarly methods in four distinctly different humanistic fields, in an effort to stimulate fruitful interdisciplinary connections. So far we have brought together more than 250 specialists in anthropology (twice), archaeology, art history (twice), Chinese studies, Classics, economics, Egyptian studies, history (four times), literature (twice), media studies, music (twice), philosophy of science, and South Asian studies. A sixth GAFOH symposium will take place at Potsdam in October 2009, mixing young German and American practitioners of art history, cultural anthropology, political philosophy, and social history.

GAFOH has much the same interdisciplinary character as a Spring or Autumn General Meeting, and the same nation-to-nation character as a National Academy of Sciences “Frontiers of Science” symposium in which young American scientists mix with British, or Chinese, or German, or Indian, or Japanese scientists. The combination of these two factors makes GAFOH highly unusual, especially for a symposium series in the humanities. Most participants have greatly enjoyed the opportunity to meet a group of scholars from another country, and to learn about scholarly approaches in fields far removed from their own.

At the opening GAFOH symposium in 2004 the sixteen speakers were all asked to present short papers on the general topic of "Identity." Gabriele Haug-Moritz, a German who specializes in sixteenth-century history, was a panelist at the Social History session, and Terri Gordon, an American who specializes in twentieth-century film studies, was a panelist at the Cultural Studies/Media Studies session. They responded to the identity theme in strikingly different ways. Haug-Moritz challenged the traditional argument that the Protestant Schmalkald League was motivated by national rather than religious identity when mobilizing against the Catholic emperor Charles V. Gordon examined the performative strategies of sexual and social transgression in *Cabaret* to explore the complexities of gender identity in this 1972 film. Read separately, these essays pursue interesting and significant interpretations. Read together, they suggest the wide variety of offerings at a GAFOH symposium.