

CfA: “Practices, Procedures, Recursions: The Reality of Media?”

Fourth Annual Princeton-Weimar Summer School for Media Studies Princeton, June 15 – 21, 2014

The 2014 session of the Princeton-Weimar Summer School for Media Studies is devoted to approaches in media analysis whose focus are the operations, procedures, and practices that constitute cultures. In distinction to approaches whose goal is a comprehensive media *theory*, the fourth Princeton-Weimar Summer School for Media Studies will map out what can be called the “practical turn” in media analysis.

This “practical turn” is documented first and foremost by the rapid expansion of the new field of Cultural Techniques, the study of symbolic or symbol-generating practices and operations that are the very basis of cultures. These include techniques and media of reading, writing, and calculating, but also entail practices and methods of representation (e.g. linear perspective, but also masks, personae, effigies, votives), navigation, and technical or technological operations such as constructing, designing, collecting, modelling, drawing, note-taking, map-making, bookkeeping, filing, and the like. With the operational logic of cultural technologies as its goal, this strand of analysis focuses on the relation of technology, media, and culture and the operational production of networks between these.

It can be argued that the study of cultural techniques intersects with a version of philology, one that returns to (but also reinvents) the operations and practices that make it possible to analyse texts as media, and which therefore can be called “media philology.” Philology and media studies have been entangled from the beginning, of course: a number of media scholars, including Marshall McLuhan, Eric A. Havelock, Walter J. Ong, or Friedrich Kittler were trained as philologists and literary critics. But more importantly (and perhaps unsurprisingly), media studies owe a considerable part of their methodological approaches to the field of literary studies. The most prominent examples here are the study of the transition from oral poetry to written and printed literature by the Toronto School of Communication and Kittler’s analysis of *Aufschreibesysteme* (discourse networks).

Media philology is on the one hand dedicated to practices such as (re-)reading, collective reading, note-taking, compiling, collecting, or searching and finding, and on the other hand to operations and operators like spatialization, titles, paragraphs, page numbers, blanks, quotation marks, ellipses and so forth. Media philology thus de-centers the transcendental signified of hermeneutics and its cultural semantics, and situates at the core of the discipline operations, practices, and materialities which are, far from being mere auxiliary means, crucial conditions for the constitution of entities like the author, the reader, the work, and the process of meaning production.

Beyond the study of cultural techniques and (media) philology, recent developments in sociology and anthropology demonstrate an increasing emphasis on practices, operations, and procedures. Examples here are Bruno Latour’s studies of laboratory practice and of chains of operations especially in the production of scientific facts; Tim Ingold’s theory of making and especially the “textility” of making; Niklas Luhmann’s sociological systems theory as well as Michel de Certeau’s inquiries into the *Practices of Everyday Life*.

In all of these approaches, the knowledge produced is not a theoretical one but one that depends on the very operations and procedures of its own production. Media philology, for instance,

emphasizes both the technical character of philological knowledge and its dependence on specific technologies of writing. The fourth Princeton-Weimar summer school will therefore place special emphasis on the relevance of philological practices and operations for a “computerized society.” If, as media scholar Lev Manovich claims, the database has become the symbolic form of our culture, what role do philological practices play? How does the database differ from traditional collections of documents, e.g. archives and libraries, and which operations of access does the database instantiate?

The summer school will explore how these approaches can advance the methodological framework for an analysis of cultures that is based on media operations, procedures, practices.

The 2014 summer school will be directed by Bernhard Siegert (Weimar) and Nikolaus Wegmann (Princeton). The faculty will include renowned film maker Harun Farocki as well as scholars of media and literature such as Petra McGillen (Dartmouth), Grant Wythoff (Columbia), and Harun Maye (Weimar).

The Princeton-Weimar Summer School for Media Studies invites applications from outstanding doctoral candidates throughout the world in media studies and related fields such as film studies, literary studies, philosophy, art history, architecture, sociology, politics, the history of science and visual culture. All application materials should be sent by email to ssms@Princeton.EDU and must be **received** by **November 25, 2013**. Please consult the Application Information page <http://german.princeton.edu/ssms/> for required documents.