March 4, 2009
4:15 p.m. – 6:00 p.m.
Yael Simpson Fletcher, presenting
Labor and Desire in Interwar Marseilles: Thyde Monnier’s Modern Working Women

and

Scott Branson, presenting
Mrs. Dalloway: Death and the Moment

April 16, 2009
4:15 p.m. – 6:00 p.m.
Louis Ruprecht, presenting
Images Without Aura in an Era Without Authority: Walter Benjamin’s Modernity and

Elizabeth Chase, presenting
Big House Memories of the Anglo-Irish War in Elizabeth Bowen’s The Last September
Interdisciplinary Research Seminar, Bill and Fox Center for Humanistic Inquiry

2009 brings publication of the first of four volumes of The Letters of Samuel Beckett, 1929-1940. Research for this project, based in the Graduate School at Emory since 1990, has raised a gamut of issues of interest to scholars in the humanities and social sciences. It is a pleasure to announce a colloquia series for faculty and graduate students sponsored by a CHIIRS grant from the Fox Center for Humanistic Inquiry.

Colloquia Series:  *International Modernisms between the Wars*

While two world wars frame the period of Volume I, the time “between them” is marked by social, political and cultural upheaval: borders and power realign, nationalisms are penetrated by pan-national diasporas. In a climate of economic instability and social dislocation, cities such as Berlin, Paris, Marseille become magnets for art and artists; expatriots mingle with refugees creating polyglot communities that are relatively care-less of restrictive conventions of nationalism, race, and gender. Surrealism, dadaism, expressionism, futurism challenges both the primacy of object and the limits of perception; ferment is evident even in the titles of emerging journals (Verve, Der Sturm, and Transition). Taking a cue from one of the oldest forms of pan-national culture, European Caravan is an anthology of contemporary literatures in translation; the anthology Negro links literary and political in revisionist assessments of race. The tensions between language-as-nation and language as self-expression spawn inherent contradictions: post-colonial Ireland recuperates itself through an ancient tongue and heroic myth while reinventing nationhood as “that neutral island” and cloaking new freedom in parochialism. Art meets politics in other venues as well: Spain’s war rallies support from the young and the left of many nations, while the treasures of the Prado are safely removed to Geneva for the duration; in Germany, what is new and non-Aryan is declared degenerate and pernicious, yet Hitler minions scavenge art collections both to create a museum in Linz and to finance the coming war and persecution. Disillusionment is the other side of hope: for many intellectuals the attraction of communism and fascism turns a Janus face when Stalin, Hitler, Franco, and Mussolini assert absolute authority. Yet for masses of people disillusioned and displaced by change, a desire for stability causes them to turn to these central figureheads as heroes. Within such tensions and contradictions, we might ask of events and circumstances: “what does the modern mean?”

Seldom do faculty and graduate students have an opportunity to discuss research-in-process or to share the issues that compel their interests with colleagues across disciplines. This colloquia series will invite proposals of work-in-progress, not finished papers. Proposals should present the issues that provoked inquiry, the questions selected for investigation, the research materials and methods of the approach. Discussion will follow.

Discussion will bring to the table related issues and questions, research suggestions and enlivened inquiry. Two or three presentations will set the thematic parameters for each colloquium, which will be announced in advance of each meeting. If the colloquia generate sufficient interest, the series may culminate in a small conference at Emory.