CAROLINE RUPPRECHT
Professor of Comparative Literature,
City University of New York

UNINHABITABLE PLACES:
Auschwitz and Angkor Wat in the Prose of Peter Weiss

This talk compares the German-Jewish author Peter Weiss’s descriptions of the Nazi extermination camp Auschwitz-Birkenau in Poland — which he visited and wrote about in 1964 (My Place) — and the Hindu temple Angkor Wat in Cambodia, which he visited in 1968 and wrote about in 1981 (The Aesthetics of Resistance vol. 3). What connects these haunted, uninhabitable places in Weiss’s œuvre, given their extreme geographical and temporal distance from one another? — As an exile who escaped the Shoah, Weiss identified profoundly with victims of twentieth century global atrocities — in particular, those of the Vietnam War and Pol Pot’s “Killing Fields.” Weiss created imaginary links between Europe and Southeast Asia through depictions of architectural sites, ruminations that paved the way for contemporary debates about displacement and migration.

Monday, March 30, 2020
4:15 pm - Old Library 224
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