British novelist and historian of ideas Lesley Chamberlain will talk about the European events and ideas that have shaped her writing. Her books have thematized Nietzsche (Nietzsche in Turin 1996), Freud (The Secret Artist 2000), and Russian Utopianism and spirituality (Motherland 2004), while the lives of her fictional characters (In a Place Like That (1998), Girl in Garden (2003), Anyone’s Game (2012) are embedded in the traumatic history of their day. She was briefly a news reporter at the height of the Cold War, and Moscow at that time is the subject of her latest work in progress.

Lesley Chamberlain was highly influenced by the German novelist Thomas Mann (1875-1955) and at age 19 Chamberlain spent six months in Munich in honour of Thomas Mann, who introduced her to literature and philosophy and compelled her to compare not only life in different countries, but the feeling of lives with different histories and languages.

The German literature she read at the time was tightly structured and formally self-conscious, like a musical score. Then Russia came along. Suddenly she was carrying Russian literature to term without knowing who the father was. A virgin intellectual birth, of sorts.

Her latest non-fiction title, A Shoe Story (Harbour Books, forthcoming) reflects, by way of German art theory from the 1930s and postmodern art today, how the intellectual world she came into 40 years ago has changed so vastly.

Of her second novel Anyone’s Game, published by Harbour Books in 2012, writer Jennie Erdal said in a review that ‘this laudably unsentimental novel …allows the weight of history to be leavened with a sense of an extraordinary life being lived. Read more www.lesleychamberlain.co.uk

Presented by
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This lecture is free and all are welcome

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