

Lament emerges in moments of deep mourning and sorrow, moments in which pain overwhelms us to such a degree that we fail to find words for it. It is as if our language goes amiss in the face of such sorrow, disintegrating into mere exclamations and disconsolate cries. But what does it mean for language to lose its grip and fail in such a way? And how is such a failure related to the constitution of lament? Ferber argues with Gershom Scholem that this unique form of expression is not only a passionate intimation of the sorrow incited by loss, but more importantly, an expression of the very failure of language. Lament, therefore, ought to be understood as a language constituted by its fundamental failure to establish propositional statements regarding loss, to communicate it as referential content, and, ultimately, to elicit a response to its plea. These failures, however, do not weaken or undermine lament's expressive capabilities; on the contrary, they establish the very basis for its unmatched force of expression. In addition to her discussion of Scholem, Ferber will touch on the performative aspects of language and their failures, as well as on Benjamin's idea of 'pure language' and its relation to failure. Her argument thus not only concerns the nature of lament but the very essence of language and expression at large.

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The English verb 'to err' has largely lost its positive connotations. It no longer invokes wandering, rambling, or roaming, and is now understood negatively in relation to a prescribed path or goal. To be sure, errors are acknowledged to play an important role in the pursuit of knowledge and happiness, but usually only to the extent that their recognition allows for their elimination, correction, and avoidance. Recognizing that a critique of ideals of productivity, success, goal-orientation, and determination is necessarily paradoxical, the **ICI Lecture Series ERRANS** will take the shifting meanings of 'erring' – connoting the violation of norms as well as the activity of wandering – as a prompt to explore the critical potentials and risks of embracing error, randomness, failure, and non-teleological temporalities, and to do so across different disciplines and discourses.

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**Language Failing:
The Reach of Lament**

