

## FROM THE EDITOR

For a landmark two decades and counting, the German Studies Department at the University of Cincinnati has been *focusing* its attention on the publication of graduate student scholarship within the broadly defined field of German Studies. What once began as a biannual edition of *Focus on Literatur* later transitioned into the annual publication entitled *Focus on German Studies* and became coupled with an annual fall conference—now going on its eighteenth consecutive year—designed to incite presenters to publish their revised work in our edited volumes. Without a doubt, the initiators of this journal already had interdisciplinarity in mind when choosing a title for the journal, even before its name was altered with the turn from language and literature to cultural studies in German programs in the United States.

*Focus* is a word that is utilized in numerous fields of study beyond that of literature, including: film studies; pathology; physics; mathematics; and even geology, to mention but a few. Thus, a more suitable title for a journal (and conference) of such interdisciplinary nature, as that of *Focus on German Studies*, could not have been found. Likewise, a *focus* can be defined as a central point of convergence or a place of activity. Our journal is and has been at the very heart of our graduate program since its inception in 1993, integrating all of our graduate students from day one into the editing and publication process and providing them with an experience unmatched by most other academic institutions. Finally, *to focus*, can, among other connotations, imply concentrating one's energy, efforts, and attention on something. This is precisely what Alexandra Parks and I have been doing for the past year—focusing our interest on the scholarship of our peers and investing our time and energy into a project known for its tradition of excellence. There could be nothing more worthy of our attention. One of the major rewards of our hard work is witnessed in the final product you are currently reading: *Focus on German Studies*, Volume 20, 2013; however, a perhaps even more significant reward has been the invaluable experience and knowledge that we have gained as a result of the publication process, in addition to the academic network that *Focus on German Studies* has allowed us to establish as emerging scholars. *FoGS* is most certainly an essential tool of the trade and a rare gem among German Studies programs in the U.S. As a result, it is one that we are proud to have maintained for twenty strong years, and one that I am incredibly grateful to have taken part in developing further.

This year's special issue and twentieth anniversary volume, *Interdisciplinary Foci*, is exemplary of the extreme diversity and the wide range of submissions we receive. It serves both as a testament to the vast disciplines united under the umbrella of German Studies and demonstrates the necessity for conducting research through multiple, and oftentimes, overlapping, disciplinary focal points to understand and capture the big picture. Moreover, the contributions bear witness to the superior quality and innovativeness of the work that we welcome annually from graduate students around the globe. The papers range in scope from broader theoretical undertakings to linguistic subtleties. It is my hope that our readers will find these contributions equally as compelling as I have.

Chiara Maria Buglioni takes her literary investigation to the archives, focusing her article on the variation of language in different stages of the production of Marieluise Fleißer's *Fegefeuer in Ingolstadt*. Buglioni argues for a more nuanced understanding of and approach to the dramatist's pieces through a close reading of the linguistic shifts that Fleißer articulates in the archival sources examined.

Critically questioning and deconstructing the historiographic narrative that often functions as a form of willed self-representation, Christiane Bürger unmasks the supposedly anti-racist tradition in the German Democratic Republic through her analysis of the "postcolonial" discourse of the country that continued to perpetuate racial divisions.

Jenny Engler's contribution takes us to the contemporary streets of Berlin, where she assesses the postcolonial act of renaming streets in the city from a standpoint of cultural memory and citizenship. Engler views these measures as necessary steps to be taken in regards to postcolonial memory politics and in regards to the endorsement of an anti-racist movement that furthers a right to the city for all of its inhabitants.

Dissecting the work of E.T.A. Hoffmann from a medical and psychological standpoint, Giulia Ferro Milone investigates the integration of mesmerism and insanity into Hoffmann's short story "Das Gelübde." Ferrone highlights scholarly work completed on Hoffmann's medical career and the influence this aspect of his life had on his literary production, but then proceeds to expose the gaps of such scholarly research to-date, as it has not considered "Das Gelübde" as central to this particular repertoire.

Digging deep into her pockets, Nina Peter examines the symbolism of money—in particular coinage—in Schiller's Wallenstein-trilogy, reading the works within the social-historical context from which their content is derived. Peter reveals how Schiller's trilogy incites a discussion of the communicative and circulatory aspects of money, which are designed to reinforce political power, but also simultaneously expose the precariousness of this power.

Addressing the role of the title in the task of translation, Benjamin Schaper's article integrates translation theory and the literary text, utilizing examples across various foreign languages, in order to demonstrate the implications of textual titles in determining the reception of literary works. Schaper opens up the question of how a certain linguistic community potentially perceives itself based on newly produced title translations, and encourages future scholars to investigate this model and its applicability to the area of film studies and title translation methods employed therein.

Lastly, Alexander Scholz' work approaches Borges' short story *Das unerbittliche Gedächtnis* through a theoretical application of Friedrich Kittler's scholarship. Scholz introduces Kittler's media theory in relation to hermeneutics, time, and shiftability, ultimately arguing for the critical evaluation of language and the written word as it is tied to temporality.

This year we have an exciting collection of book reviews edited by Alexandra Parks. The reviews represent a wide selection of both new primary works that cross the oftentimes too-tightly-bound genre definitions, and innovative secondary literature with a particular focus on interdisciplinary compilations. Authors included in the primary section range from the well known to the up-and-coming. From Christoph Ransmayr's reflective travelogue, *Atlas eines ängstlichen Mannes*; to Birgit Vanderbeke's dystopian novel, *Die Frau mit dem Hund*; and Karen Duve's timely retelling of fairy tales

in *Grrrimm*; there is truly a staggering range of styles and tropes. Images focus our eyes in both *Aus der Ferne und Auf der Kippe* by Wilhelm Genazino and a new version of Adelbert von Chamisso's *Reise um die Welt*. Of particular note are the two pieces of non-prose work, Herta Müller's newest book of collages, *Vater telephonierte mit den Fliegen*; and Durs Grünbein's latest poetry collection, *Kolof im Nebel*.

A wide range of topics and academic approaches are covered in the secondary literature reviewed. Film, drama, opera, literature, history, women's and gender studies, and literary criticism are some of the areas examined. Edited volumes such as Katharina Gerstenberger and Jana Braziel's *After the Berlin Wall* and Lars Rensmann and Samir Gandesha's *Arendt and Adorno* give broad insight into complicated concepts and subjects, producing a wealth of varied perspectives within their, nevertheless, cohesive works, while preconceived notions of classics of the German canon are re-evaluated in Edward Potter's *Marriage, Gender, and Desire in Early Enlightenment German Drama* and Hugh Ridley's *Wagner and the Novel*. We would like to thank all the reviewers heartily for their thoughtful writing, careful revisions, and patient cooperation in the process of preparing these reviews.

This volume concludes with Vanessa Plumly's interview of Dr. Tina M. Campt, full professor of Women's Studies and Director of Africana Studies at Barnard College. Professor Campt was the keynote speaker at the 2012 Focus on German Studies Conference, entitled "Wanna Race?: Constructing and Contesting Race in German Cultural History," where she held an enthralling talk on "Racing the Family Narrative: Black German Family Photography and the Stories Pictures (Won't) Tell." Plumly questions Campt on diasporic identification and the layers of interpretation necessitated by photography and images.

As with all major undertakings, such as the Focus Conference and the *FoGS* Journal, they cannot be tackled alone. I came to UC knowing that our German Studies Department works together as a team, one that requires all of its players in order to compete, or in this case, in order to *complete* any given project of this scope. Dr. Todd Herzog, our newly installed Department Head, has been available at the drop of a hat to provide me with his expert opinion on questions that have cropped up over the duration of this year. His insight has guided me from day one as a graduate student at UC, and his newly assumed leadership role demonstrates his ability to keep the academic apparatus running smoothly and transparently. I know *Focus* will not be the only strength moving our graduate program forward, as he continues to be innovative in his development of our—in my opinion—already first rate program. One would hardly believe that this past year was also Dr. Tanja Nusser's first year in her role as Director of Graduate Studies. She somehow manages to make the motions of the job appear seamless, all the while maintaining a constant smile. Dr. Nusser is truly a fountain of knowledge and equally an asset to our department. I have never witnessed a professor who invests as much energy and time into her students and their goals, as does she. We are incredibly lucky to have her as an advisor and mentor. In addition to Dr. Tanja Nusser, Dr. Valerie Weinstein and Dr. Richard Schade—who is sadly bidding us *adieu*, albeit staying on as an emeritus professor—both also donated their time as peer-reviewers to our journal. They, too, have proven to be valuable resources and support structures for me over the past year(s).

Accordingly, a graduate student journal is simply not possible without the assistance of other experts in the field who are willing to volunteer their time and energy and lend a critical eye to potential publications. I would like to express my sincere gratitude to all of the evaluators from Africa, Europe, and North America who have demonstrated that they value the work of *FoGS* and its graduate student contributors.

The Graduate Student Governance Association of the University of Cincinnati should also be recognized for their unwavering financial support, as well as their impeccable leadership. They, like the Graduate School here at the University of Cincinnati, have supported our journal from day one. A special thank you goes to Dr. Robert Zierolf, Dean of the Graduate School for his support this year (and in years past) of our conference and journal. His acknowledgement and support of our hard work demonstrates his investment in the graduate students at UC. Our new Dean of the McMicken College of Arts and Sciences, Dr. Ron Jackson has also been a proponent of our academic efforts this year. He, too, recognizes the importance of graduate student research. Furthermore, The Charles Phelps Taft Research Center and the German Academic Exchange Service (DAAD) provide us with the financial means to maintain our conference, which ultimately contributes to our journal publication. For their prolonged support, we are truly thankful.

Julie Hollyday's enthusiasm and patience made compiling this volume the easiest part of the process. She turned a bunch of documents and files into a digital work of art that, despite Benjamin's opinion on the matter, radiates an 'aura' of sophistication. For her efforts, I am also extremely grateful.

The *FoGS* copy-editor team equally warrants a heartfelt thank you, as I have relied heavily on their expertise and acuity. My fellow peers in the German Studies graduate program at UC (even those who have moved on to other places/institutions) have been unfaltering in their willingness to contribute to this enterprise and to my efforts therein. I would certainly not be where I am today, if not for my ability to lean on each of them. Specifically, Wes Jackson, my co-editor from last year's volume, showed me the ropes and allowed me to grow professionally and academically alongside him. My current co-editor, Alexandra Parks, has been a sturdy pillar, holding me up in numerous times of need this year. Not only have we co-taught a summer course together, proving our talent to collaboratively and cooperatively work together, but now we have also completed a joint scholarly feat, including last year's Focus conference, "Wanna Race?". I like to think that Alexandra and I do not just walk across the finish line, but rather, that our teamwork provides each of us with the stamina to run. It is my hope that we will always be able to finish with our heads held high and that this volume evinces that aspiration. It is with great pride that I pass the torch on to her, knowing that she will light the way in bringing our *Focus* to new heights.

Thank you once again to all who have helped make this year's volume, as well as each of the past volumes, a successful endeavor. Here's to celebrating twenty years of the publication of *Focus on German Studies* and its offspring yet to be born!

*Vanessa D. Plumly*



