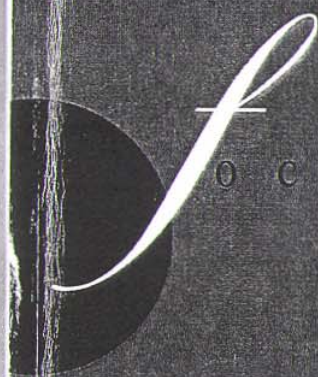


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2001

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From the Editor

In Winter Quarter of this past academic year, I participated in Martin Wechselblatt's literary theory course, "Testimony, Narrative, Memory." The course title and the variety of texts and genres that we encountered (including Morrison's *Playing in the Dark*, Spiegelmann's *Maus* and *Maus II*, Sebald's *Die Emigranten*, and Friedler's *Naked New York*), seemed to reflect current research trends in the field of German Studies. Increasingly, scholars are investigating the interrelationship between literary and documentary texts and how both play a crucial role in the construction of narrative: fictional text as narrative, (auto)biography as narrative, case study as narrative. For better or for worse, the traditional boundaries that once separated the disciplines continue to dissolve. The literary critic now trusts him-/herself to analyze texts that were once reserved for the historian, the lawyer, the psychologist, and the physician, all the while keeping one foot firmly planted in the literary canon. The transformation of *Focus on Literatur* to *Focus on German Studies*, aptly subtitled "A Journal On and Beyond German Language Literature," exemplifies this new license of the literary critic.

The diversity of the papers which comprised the Fifth Annual Graduate Conference also testifies to the ever-increasing role of German Studies within German departments at universities throughout the world. Held on October 13 and 14, 2000 in the Max Kade German Cultural Center at the University of Cincinnati, the twelve papers covered topics ranging from German literature to German film; from letters and autobiography to German cultural topics. Stephen Brockmann of Carnegie Mellon delivered the keynote address "Locating the Nation, Locating Literature": a discussion of the changing role of literature in establishing national identity, especially in post-*Wende* Germany. An interview with Dr. Brockmann held prior to the conference appears in this volume. Conference participants as well as members of the community gathered on the first evening of the conference in the Kade Center for a cabaret evening with Thomas C. Breuer, cabaret artist and author. *Focus* Book Review Editor Monika Hohbein-Deegen conducted the interview with Mr. Breuer that appears in this volume.

This year's call for submissions was met with a very enthusiastic response: we received 25 papers from graduate students from Canada, Germany, Ireland, the United Kingdom, and the United States. All submissions were refereed by members of our board of reviewers, whom we sincerely thank. Although the papers' themes were not necessarily a consideration for selection, all nine papers do indeed deal with questions of testimony, narrative, and/or memory. In the article that follows, Diana Alberghini discusses the "identity vacuum" of East German writer Helga Königsdorf, and how writing helped construct her "German" identity following German unification. Julie Kalani Smith Allen investigates autobiography as "vehicle for self-fashioning" vis-à-vis Franziska zu Reventlow's *Amoresken*. Allen argues that the auto-biographical nature of Reventlow's epistolary novel, *Amoresken: Von Paul zu Pedro*, simultaneously celebrates Reventlow's unconventional love life and subverts prescribed gender roles in Wilhelminian Germany.

In their co-authored paper, Martin Bäümel and Stephan Manns discuss the relationship between history and life in the works of Georg Büchner. Bäümel and Manns place Büchner both as an historicist and as an anti-historicist and cite this ambiguity as one of the reasons for his rediscovery at the end of the nineteenth century. History—and the problems surrounding "true" representation of the past—are key issues in Dagmar Jaeger's article. Jaeger proposes that questions surrounding personal and national identity in Elfride Jelinek's *Wolken Heim* and Heiner Müller's *Germania Tod in Berlin* reanimate a "suppressed and repressed collective memory" surrounding Germany and Austria's fascist past. Anca-Elena Luca considers the link between past and present in Bachmann's "Ein Schritt nach Gomorrha." In her article, Luca suggests that the story points "at the uncomfortable traces of colonialism, politics, and power from the former Austro-Hungarian Habsburg Empire, [which are] still present in the culture and politics of everyday Austrian life in the early 50s." Links between the anti-Semitism in Wilhelmine Germany and the Holocaust are the target of Teague Mims's study of Heinrich Mann's *Der Untertan*. In addition to discussing the theories of Daniel Jonah Goldhagen and Shulamit Volkov, Mims brings the "cultural polarization" between anti-Semitic and Jewish emancipatory movements in Wilhelmine Germany to the foreground. According to Mims, *Der Untertan* illustrates that not one single mode of thought, but rather that many "interconnected attitudes and practices" are "relevant to continuing efforts of historical interpretation" of the period.

In her article, Birte Schulz examines the question of the racial Other in Fontane's *Effi Briest*. In contrast to many previous studies, Schulz does not limit her investigation to negative images of the Other; rather, she also outlines the positive portrayals of "things foreign." Schulz maintains that both must be looked at in order to best understand not only Effi Briest's—but also Prussia's—psychology. Tom Stewart also concerns himself with psychological issues in his article, which investigates the causes of Anton Reiser's melancholia. Through a Foucauldian lens, Stewart analyzes the systems of discipline (namely the school) at work that control and thereby norm Anton Reiser's abnormal *Lesesucht*, which Stewart "reads" as a form of masturbation.

In the final article of this volume, Markus Wust offers the reader his analysis of Jeannette Lander's novel, *E in Sommer in der Woche der Itke K*. Wust proposes that the novel not only serves as Lander's quasi-autobiographical recreation of a world of Jewish and Black cooperation, but also portrays a world that now only exists in her memory. According to Wust, the novel, with its richness of language, stands as a textual representation of the interaction of the White, Jewish, and Black societal "circles" in 1940s Georgia.

This year has been a very busy one for Monika Hohbein-Deegen, *Foias* Book Review Editor. Largely through her efforts, the book review section in this volume is not only substantial in size, but also provides the reader reviews of the latest German-language literature, including autobiography (Helmut Kohl), poetry (Christoph Bauer, Volker Braun, Durs Grünbein, Dorothea Grünzweig), drama (Felix Mitterer), essays and stories (Manfred Hausmann, Alexander Häusser, Monika Maron), novels (Michael Braun, Gion Matthias Cavelt, Helene Flöss, Franzobel, Katharina Hacker, Wolfgang Hilbig, Barbara Honigmann, Alfred Komarek, Tobias Meißner, Adolf Muschg, Alexander Osang, Andreas Steinhöfel, and Marlene Streeruwitz), and even secondary literature (Anke Gleber). It has been a pleasure working with Monika, and the *Foias* staff thanks her for her commitment to the journal.

As mentioned earlier, the interview section includes interviews with Stephen Brockmann and Thomas C. Breuer. The third of the three interviews is with Hans Stempel and Martin Ripkens, whose combined autobiography *Die Liebe ist kein Haustier: Eine Lebensreise* was published this year by dtv. Their work is a testimony of their lives; their lives a testimony of their work. It was the highlight of my academic year in 1999 in Munich when I had the opportunity to meet them. The interview centers around their anthology of poetry, *Ach Kerl, ich krieg Dich nicht aus meinem Kopf* (dtv, 1998), and how gay German-language poetry and literature fits (or does not fit) within the literary canon.

The introduction to this volume serves both as my introduction and as my farewell as editor of *Focus on German Studies*. Next year, Susanne Lenné will be editor-in-chief, and Monika Hohbein-Deegen's position will be filled by Susanne Buckesfeld. I wish them both much success not only with Volume 9, but also with *On and Beyond German Literature*, Focus on German Studies' Sixth Annual Graduate Conference. The Conference will be held in the University of Cincinnati Max Kade German Cultural Center on October 12 and 13, 2001. For more information, please see our website.

In closing, I would like to express my appreciation to the Department of Germanic Languages and Literatures at the University of Cincinnati for trusting me with the position of Editor, and my thanks to my fellow graduate students of the University of Cincinnati German Graduate Student Governance Association for their enthusiastic support of last year's conference and of the journal itself.

David Prickett