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FROM THE EDITOR

For eighteen years, the German Department at the University of Cincinnati has been fortunate enough to publish a successful graduate student journal. What began with a biannual edition of *Focus on Literatur* changed into an annual publication entitled *Focus on German Studies* with the new millennium. When I began my graduate work here at the University of Cincinnati, I knew I wanted to be a part of the journal, but I never imagined I would be editing it. I also had little notion of how challenging and rewarding an undertaking editing a journal could be. After many months of hard work and set-backs it is my pleasure to present this year's journal: *Focus on German Studies*, Volume 18, 2011.

Thanks to the hard work of Marie Buesch our goal of making all of our previous volumes from 1994 to 2009 available electronically has been realized. Soon, the seventeenth volume as well as all forthcoming volumes, will be digitally available one year from the original publication date. It is our hope that by making *Focus* widely available, we will both further the publication's excellent reputation as a research journal and introduce it to more German Studies professionals.

There is no doubt that *Focus on German Studies* has been and will continue to be an important professional outlet for graduate students from a wide variety of different backgrounds. This year we received over thirty submissions to our article coming. Articles, book reviews, and interviews came from places as far flung as Japan and as close to home as Columbus, OH. The three articles published in this volume reflect the diversity of the world of German Studies, including articles on the history of the SPD to reflections on Musil and Lukacs, to Ingo Schulze's post-*Wende* debut novel.

I trust that you will find the articles interesting, thought-provoking and informative. Additionally, the book review section will hopefully stir your curiosity about several new publications in both the primary as well as the secondary literature field.

This year we have an exciting complement of seventeen book reviews, edited by Wes Jackson. In keeping with the theme from this past year's conference regarding generational differences in German culture

(with an emphasis on the discourses surrounding the activists of the '68 generation), the selection of primary texts among the book reviews feature such novels as Thomas Hettche's *Die Liebe der Väter* and Alina Bronsky's *Die schärfsten Gerichte der tatarischen Küche*. Both of these novels problematize the relationships of children with their parents—the intense need that children have of connecting to their fathers, as in Hettche's novel, but also of the dangers of getting too close to fathers who are limited socially by the laws of divorce

Bronsky's *Die schärfsten Gerichte* likewise tackles the generational problems within families, particularly from the female perspective. Her novel is the much anticipated follow-up to her remarkable debut *Scherbenpark*. In this nuanced story, Bronsky reflects on a grandmother's experience immigrating from Soviet Russia to Germany. Bronsky is concerned both with examining the roles of immigrant women in their families and in their surrounding societies, as well as with offering critiques of both Soviet Russia's and of Germany's methods of integrating immigrants into the larger cultures.

In addition to these two generationally-themed texts, we are proud to present reviews of primary works by several other established authors such as Arno Surminski's *Winter Fünfundvierzig oder die Frauen von Palmnicken*, Claire Bergmann's novel, banned in Germany during the Nazi era, in a newly-translated edition, *What Will Become of the Children?*, Wilfried Meichtry's *Hexenplatz und Mörderstein: Die Geschichten aus dem magischen Pfywald*, and Eva Menasse's *Lässliche Todsünden*.

In the secondary literature, we chose to cover a variety of texts treating various new trends within German Studies. Jaime Fischer's and Barbara Mennel's collected volume of essays, *Spatial Turns: Space, Place and Mobility in German Literary and Visual Culture* attracted our attention, especially since it comes right on the heels of the rather ground-breaking text by Doris Bachmann-Medick: *Cultural Turns*. Fischer and Mennel include articles tackling the influence of major theorists such as Benjamin, Kracauer, Henri Lefebvre, and Edward W. Soja. The book attempts to provide a larger historical context to the German concerns of space, as well as integrating perspectives as to how newer technological developments influence our understanding of places.

Gisa Weszkalnys' book, *Berlin Alexanderplatz* is another text dedicated to the spatial understanding of Berlin in light of post-Wende

developments, as well as globalization themes. Wieszkalnys' arguments take in to account how the respective worldviews and ideals of East and West Germany influenced their architectural styles. The book, according to Wieszkalny, is an "ethnography of urban planning." In this study, she explores how the new unified Germany is seeking to build and shape the new Berlin into a *Heimat* that reflects the vision of a culturally and historically integrated city.

In keeping with our interests in spatial theory, we also wanted to give attention to themes of performance: how do people act and live in these (sometimes) very new and changing places? The review of *Religion and Identity in Germany Today: Doubters, Believers, Seekers in Literature and Film*, edited by Julian Preece, Frank Finlay, and Sinéad Crowe, provides an interesting overview to a topic that is steadily gaining more interest in theoretical circles. What does it mean to be Jewish, Muslim, or Christian in a Post-Modern, increasingly self-aware and globalized German context? The plurality of answers that accompany such questions is not only necessary to understand in the midst of twenty-first century developments but, as *Religion and Identity* emphasizes, it is important to understand those identities apart from a purely political sphere.

Likewise, the review for Michelle Mattson's book, *Mapping Morality in Postwar German Women's Fiction: Christa Wolf, Ingeborg Drewitz, and Grete Weil*, presents a similar text that examines the roles of women in pre- and post-Wende Germany through a performative, theoretical lens. Connecting back to the theme of generational differences, Mattson's book is unique for highlighting how women in literature uniquely dealt with the German *Vergangenheitsbewältigung* process through the framework of familial relationships. Mattson chooses to focus on the ethical roles of women as caregivers within the works of Wolf, Drewitz, and Weil.

The book-review section for this year's journal was particularly theory-heavy, but this is in part because of the new developments within the field of German Studies. Far from being monolithic or myopic in our outlook, the graduate students who contribute to Focus continue to show an eagerness to integrate diverse areas of study to an extraordinarily productive degree. We believe that the selection of reviews here is simply a further confirmation of that desire.

Editing a journal, no matter how small, is a big job. It is also an extremely rewarding experience that teaches you a great many things about our chosen profession. Aside from realizing truths, like editing a really tight, penultimate can sometimes be much more difficult than a second draft, I learned quite a bit about the quality of my colleagues. Beginning at just about the time I was to take over duties as editor of this volume, I was faced with some rather daunting personal issues that made my work all the more difficult. It is only through the hard work of last year's editor, Marie Buesch, and next year's co-editors, Wes Jackson and Vanessa Plumly, that there is a 2011 issue of *Focus*. I and *Focus on German Studies* as an organization are deeply in their debt. If you find mistakes in this journal, they are solely mine, however you will recognize the work of some really great human beings wherever this edition truly shines.

Further, the faculty here in the Department of German Studies has always been our biggest supporter. I would be completely remiss if I did not thank our esteemed Department Head, Katharina Gerstenberger for both her guidance and her leniency whenever the situation called for it. Without Professor Gertsenerger, there would be no *Focus on German Studies*.

This enterprise of a graduate student journal would not be possible without the help of experts in the field. I would like to express my sincere gratitude to the evaluators from all over the world for their volunteered time and detailed comments on all articles, which appreciated both by every author, published and unpublished alike. The *Focus on German Studies* copy-editor team deserves special mention, as I have relied on their time, energy and expertise quite a lot. I would especially like to thank Alexandra Parks and Matthew Bauman for their never-failing willingness to make *Focus* a priority in their lives with a day's notice.

I would like to thank Marie Buesch, Wes Jackson, and Vanessa Plumly a final time. Without them, this journal would have faltered. Thank you again for your support.

Joshua Arnold
