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Todd Heidt  
Alexandra Hagen

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**FROM THE EDITOR**

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With the volume you hold in your hands, *Focus on German Studies* has reached yet another milestone. After fifteen years we have not only established ourselves as a name associated with quality research and publication, but our name continues to spread further and wider through academia. As you read on in this introduction, you'll see that *Focus* broke a number of its own records this year. I am extremely proud to have guided *Focus* in this remarkable year; however, I cannot accept full responsibility for this success. *Focus* is, without a doubt, a tremendous amount of work for its editor-in-chief and book review editor. At times, editing *Focus* feels like a veritable academic decathlon: accounting, grant writing, editing, e-mailing, snail-mailing, selecting, requesting, following up, keeping to deadlines — and attempting to keep others to their deadlines — and losing sleep all belong to the many skills one develops, and the potential snares to which one falls prey. However, it would simply be impossible without the extensive network of support in this department, at this university and within the German Studies community at large. Simply looking at the table of contents would give the reader only a cursory overview of the many names who made this volume possible.

First and foremost, the previous editors of *Focus* must be recognized. *Focus* is possible this year only because of the foresight of a group of graduate students and supportive faculty from this department fifteen years ago when our journal was founded. In creating this journal, they exhibited great foresight (if not bravery) in addressing the ever-growing significance of original research, publication and editorial experience for graduate students in an increasingly challenging professional environment. The success that the journal and conference have enjoyed since then rests upon those founders as well as all the intervening editors who have published this journal year after year with aplomb. The continued (and growing) excellence as well as the reputation *Focus* enjoys are a result of our unrelenting commitment within the Department of German Studies at the University of Cincinnati to make this journal possible. The intellectual rigor and near frenetic energy of graduate students in German Studies from around the world astounds me. Amidst coursework and prelims, teaching and research, they find time to provide us with their best work. We at *Focus*

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are honored to be able to serve the wider academic community as well as promote the research of these rising academics.

The Department of German Studies at the University of Cincinnati has supplied this journal with an immense store of resources. From office space to mailings to computers, this journal is highly dependent upon the resources generously put to our disposal by our department. Furthermore, department head Dr. Katharina Gerstenberger has provided me with guidance and advice throughout my editorial tenure. Her time, energy and insight are greatly appreciated. Additionally, graduate director Dr. Sara Friedrichsmeyer has played a key role in facilitating our interactions with the Graduate College. In the labyrinth paperwork, grant applications and university bureaucracy, her guidance has been constant. My fellow graduate students have worked tirelessly, despite their own demanding schedules, to aid me in every way imaginable. From aiding me in planning and hosting our annual conference to copy editing, the many hours they donated to *Focus* have not gone unnoticed. Last year's editor-in-chief, Wolfgang Lückel has been a wealth of knowledge. My book review editor, Alexandra Hagen, has been a positively indispensable partner in bringing this publication to fruition, being of aid to all aspects of this journal, even those far beyond her responsibilities as book review editor. *Focus* will certainly flourish in her capable hands next year, and I look forward to her success.

While we suffer no dearth of intellectual capital in our department, the journal enjoys the support and services of various groups at the University of Cincinnati. The Graduate School at the University of Cincinnati has provided assistance for this journal from its inception. Graduate School Dean Neville Pinto is due a great amount of credit for his enthusiastic support of and dedication to this project. The Graduate Student Governance Association (GSGA) at the University of Cincinnati has been a constant partner to and friend of *Focus*. Supporting *Focus* is just one of a multitude of ways in which GSGA President Ezgi Akpinar and her team work hard to create a seamless relationship between the Graduate School resources and individual students, making UC an outstanding environment for graduate studies and projects such as *Focus*. The dedication of these various individuals and groups at the university has ensured an environment in which our intellectual pursuits can flourish, and we hope that our journal contributes to the reputation for excellent research our UC enjoys in so many fields of study.

Lastly, and certainly not least, our panel of reviewers is truly an outstanding group of academics. Their donations of time and energy and

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dedication to German Studies are to be commended. Their insightful comments and detailed critiques of articles (both accepted and not) will surely prove to be of tremendous aid to these graduate students as they develop and refine their academic voices.

On October 26-27, 2007 we hosted our Twelfth Annual Focus on German Studies Conference. The topic was “Images of Culture... A Culture of Images” and focused on the continually growing field of visual culture. We received a number of paper proposals from as far away as Australia (a first for *Focus* to my knowledge) and the conference featured presenters from all corners of the US, one presenter from Canada and three presenters from Germany. This international mélange has become the status quo over the years at the Focus Conference. Over the course of two days, our 13 presenters featured papers on topics ranging from Goethe’s use of ekphrasis in Wilhelm Meisters Wanderjahre to contemporary installation art in Berlin. These papers were as diverse in methodological approach as they were in content, and exhibited the truly fascinating range of intellectual engagement by graduate students. We were fortunate to have a leading figure in this field, Dr. Gerd Gemünden of Dartmouth College, as our keynote speaker. We were delighted by his keynote address on Wilhelm Dieterle’s Hollywood biopics, a new area of research which Dr. Gemünden presented for the first time at our conference. He was as engaged in the conference as his paper was engaging, and his questions and insights into various papers were greatly appreciated by our presenters.

Our call for submissions for the journal received nearly 50 submissions this year from five continents and eleven countries. The six chosen for submission are arranged in chronological order, ranging from late eighteenth and early nineteenth century Austria-Hungary to contemporary literature in the Berlin Republic.

The first article, Matthias Mansky’s “Österreichische Kollisionen mit dem etablierten Literaturkanon. Zu Cornelius von Ayrenhoff” is a multi-faceted study and research project. The dominant literary history of this period, the end of the eighteenth and beginning of the nineteenth centuries, generally subsumes the Austrian dramatic tradition to its northern cousin in Germany. Mansky’s extensive archival research charts the contemporaneous literary landscape, before our historical hindsight sought to subsume authors and genres into a literary history with a clear trajectory. Using the example of Cornelius von Ayrenhoff, whose popularity rivaled Goethe in his own day but is now largely forgotten, Mansky argues for a reevaluation of the Austrian dramatic

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tradition free of the fetters of the dominant Germano-centric histories now in place.

Qinna Shen re-charts the development of the trope of the witch in the 19th century. While the Grimm's *Kinder- und Hausmärchen* helped fossilize these images in the German imagination, some decades later Jacob Grimm's *Deutsche Mythologie* recasts the witch as a positive image of German womanhood only demonized as a result of the Christianization of Germanic people. Moreover, Jules Michelet — a friend of Wilhelm Grimm's for decades — similarly appropriates the witch some 30 years later in France. This time, the witch is the victim of the religious institutions of the Christian faith and the socio-political system of feudalism. While Michelet's work is an oft-cited source for twentieth century feminists, Shen convincingly argues that the influence of Jacob Grimm on Michelet and, by proxy on 20<sup>th</sup> century feminist reappropriations of the witch, deserves more attention.

Our next article proceeds into the early twentieth century, focusing on another author who deserves more attention. Antonius Weixler's investigation of Carl Einstein focuses on the so-called "transvisuell" in his works. Analyzing the cryptic and often challenging narrative of *Bebuquin*, Weixler grapples with the aesthetic viscosity of this novel, and the role of vision as a trope which runs throughout Carl Einstein's works. In it, he addresses the transvisual as a means by which Einstein attempts to enrich vision with literature.

Ari Linden's essay on Kafka's "In der Strafkolonie" contributes to a much larger discussion of the role(s) of the law and the divine in Kafka's work. Taking a cue from Slavoj Žižek, he begins with the assumption that, instead of being absent, God is immanently present for Kafka. In his analysis, law, theology and writing all collapse back upon each other. He is ultimately able to dialectically marry deconstruction and theology as approaches to Kafka in his attempt to draw together the various readings of this text by Walter Benjamin, Jacques Derrida and others.

Martin Kley's "Industrieliteratur Reconsidered" investigates the largely anonymous contributions of "worker correspondents" to the literary landscape of Weimar Germany. *Die rote Fahne's* use of these factory workers-cum-authors is the overlooked nexus of Marxism and theoretical analyses of labor in literature. The material and the cultural coalesce in this article, in which Weimar communist movements attempt to apply industrial concepts of production to literary production. He uncovers an aesthetic heredity which extends to the Soviet literary and artistic scene, charting its influence on German communists during this

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period. Ultimately, in subordinating literature to industrial models of production, Kley finds that literature loses its ability to critique these industrial models of production.

Our final article, Karina Berger's "Children of the Lebensborn" fast forwards to post-Unification literature. Amidst a growing trend to reevaluate the Nazi past in the Berlin Republic, Berger's article homes in on a very specific set of texts. Fictional and non-fictional accounts of the Lebensborn legacy have boomed in recent years as later generations address their identity, family and (literally) inborn connections to this strange Nazi institution. Berger argues that these literary confrontations with the past compliment historical texts – particularly as these records will soon be our only access to the period since the World War II generation is dying out – and address larger questions about the Nazi past and contemporary German identity in the Berlin Republic.

Twenty-two multifaceted reviews appear in this year's book review section – edited by Alexandra Hagen. All the reviews have a pronounced international flavor as our reviewers contributed their texts from six different countries. The books reviewed provide colorful insight into German life, language and culture. Each book, as well its reviewer, was carefully selected – as we tried again to strike a balance between primary and secondary works, well-known authors and authors off the beaten track. We selected primary works by former East-German writer Christoph Hein, Austrian author Peter Handke, this year's *Deutscher Buchpreis* winner Julia Franck, German-Jewish writer Maxim Biller, a promising newcomer Kevin Vennemann and renowned author Martin Walser. All six primary works concern themselves with questions of the German past as well as the constant renewal of its identity. Furthermore, this year's selection of secondary works reviewed prides itself with having a strong focus on German contemporary literature. We selected Daniel Kehlmann's *Poetikvorlesung* as it looks behind the scenes of the production of last year's bestseller *Die Vermessung der Welt*. To commemorate the 40-year anniversary of 1968, we selected the detailed history of the RAF by Willi Winkler. Rüdiger Safranski's newest book gives an encyclopedic account of German Romanticism and its legacy in contemporary German literature. We selected scholarship on W.G. Sebald, an anthology on German writing in the Berlin Republic as well as an analysis about former GDR writers before and after the fall of the Iron Curtain. The section is rounded off with monographs on the poetics of pain in the 19th century, the youth movement in the Third Reich, the interplay between multiculturalism and the Jewish people and a comprehensive collection of Theodor Storm's letters to his son Ernst. These writings not only tell about Storm's stoic character, but also about a frail individual in a period of historic upheaval.

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This year's interview section includes four fascinating and varied discussions. The first is an interview Wes Jackson conducted with Gabriele Dürbeck about her two very different research projects: German-language South Sea Literature as well as post-dramatic theater and Elfriede Jelinek. Alexandra Hagen had the opportunity to speak with author Hans Pleschinski about his fascinating views on American, East Germany, and the cultural life of Germany before and after the fall of the Berlin Wall. The multi-faceted life and professional experiences of Birgit Dahlke were the topics of the next interview. Continuing the theme started by Pleschinski, she spoke to Todd Heidt about her academic life before and after the Wende as well as her past and upcoming research projects. Our final interview is with Gerhild Scholz Williams, a specialist in Medieval and Early Modern German culture. In this interview, she discusses not only her current and past research, but also her experiences as a university administrator and the perspective this provides her on the future of German Studies.

This volume of Focus marks the close of one year, but we will immediately start work on the next. The bright and thoroughly capable Alexandra Hagen will take over as editor-in-chief, assisted by Marie-Luise Büsch as book review editor. I am positive both will provide Focus with outstanding leadership and I am already looking forward to next year's conference. The Thirteenth Annual Focus on German Studies Conference is entitled "Mediating the Message: The Poetics of Communication in German Literature, Language, Film and Culture" and will take place on October 31 and November 1, 2008 in the Max Kade German Cultural Center at the University of Cincinnati.

As I conclude my tenure as Focus editor, I look back on the year and acknowledge how little I realized what I was getting myself into. It has been a privilege and a challenge, an opportunity and a great responsibility. Above all, I have suddenly found myself woven into the thick tapestry of German Studies in a manner which is only possible with such projects. Perhaps nowhere else in the academic community does one exert such a wonderfully collaborative influence than in hosting conferences and editing publications, all the while meeting exciting new people and gaining perspective on our field as a whole. Over the past year, I have had the tremendous opportunity to bring sometimes lonely and isolating research out into the large and rich community of individuals who call themselves Germanists, and I invite you now to enjoy the fruits of that research.

*Todd Heidt*

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