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 FROM THE EDITOR

This year has seen a good deal of scholarly activity among the graduate student ranks, and *Focus on Literatur* has done its best to be in the thick of it. We have made contact with graduate student conferences at the universities of Pennsylvania and North Carolina, Chapel Hill through our contact persons Norman Roessler and Chris Prang, and our Book Review Editor Tonya Hampton attended the Yale Graduate Student Conference, which took place on March 29-31, 1996. Tonya acquainted the audience with *Focus* and informed them of our own upcoming *Focus* conference. Since then, a number of our colleagues have notified us and expressed their intentions to participate in *Focus* in some way, whether by submitting essays and book reviews for publication, or by submitting abstracts for the *Focus* conference. By the way, Tonya was very impressed with the Yale conference: not merely by its interesting topics, but by how well-organized it was, and how smoothly it came off. We owe a special thanks to Yale's Mary Ballard Paddock for giving Tonya the program spot in which to introduce *Focus*.

We hope that our own conference comes off as smoothly. This conference, co-sponsored by *Focus* and the University of Cincinnati's German Department, will be devoted to 20th century German, Austrian, and Swiss Literature, and will take place on October 11-12, 1996. It is our first annual conference. We have received a good response, will have a full menu for those in attendance, and hope to see you there.

I recommend the web surfers among you take the opportunity to visit our Web site at the following internet address: (<http://www.uc.edu/~fourmag/focus.htm>). Our Technical Assistant and all-around computer guy, Mike Shaughnessy, has put together a very nice and useful Web site full of links to other German Studies sites.

And now to the contents of the present issue. As in previous issues of *Focus*, you'll see that we continue to affirm our commitment to inquiry into the German-American literary relationship, to present original scholarship on classic German authors, and to offer reviews of well-known and less well-known contemporary German-language

authors. But for all this continuity, we have a number of new things on our slate this issue. Nicole Zoellner's article recommends to us a novel by Hans Sahl, *Die Wenigen und die Vielen*, which a number of respected literary authorities have praised as the quintessential exile novel, but to which the goddess of literary fortune has not been kind. Steve Angermeier argues for an economic reading of Kleist's "Verlobung in St. Domingo," suggesting economic self-interest is the principal factor motivating character action in the novella. Chris Prang's Kafka essay is indicative of a new turn in Kafka studies, which explores the social dimension of a suffering traditionally interpreted as individual and existential. Finally, Laura Jackson interviews the German-American authoress Ursula Hegi about her latest book project, a collection of interviews with other people in her position, people born in Germany but now living in the United States.

The book review section brings you well-established authors, such as Kunert and Enzensberger, as well as interesting lesser-known writers: a nice mix of the familiar and the less familiar. Here's a sampling of some of the themes: terrorism in Vienna (Haslinger); the attraction of life in the margins of society for people who have lived in the center of the page for most of their lives (Fischer, Kleeberg); linguistic experimentation (Jirgl, Kling); East-West German relations (Jirgl); food, its semiotics and social significance (Lander); and finally, translation (Gahse). Did you know that the eighteenth-century French Encyclopedist Denis Diderot was a *Hörspiel* author? Read Norman Roessler's review of Enzensberger to find out why.

Jeffrey Dean Todd