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ON GERMAN STUDIES  
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Edited by

Wolfgang Lückel  
Todd Heidt

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**FOCUS**  
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## FROM THE EDITOR

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As an academically trained person, I normally do not take stock in magic and prophecy. And so it happens that I do not believe in numbers and the secret meanings such numbers might carry according to some people. However, in the course of my year as the editor-in-chief of *Focus on German Studies* I have grown sensitive towards one particular number: 14. This is the number that is emblazoned on the cover of *Focus on German Studies* in prominent and bold yellow. This is also the number that has become deeply entrenched in my thoughts during my work on this volume. If there is any prophetic power in numbers, I strongly believe that the number 14 spells a good future for *Focus on German Studies* although, at first glance, it seems to be rather inconspicuous. It neither betrays the mathematical purity and simplicity of numbers like 1 or 10, nor does it possess the jinxed qualities of numbers like 7 or 13. It has no obvious religious and cultic meaning like the numbers 3, 4, and 12, nor does it have the delicious appeal of voluptuous numbers in the three figures. The number 14, so it seems, is rather unblemished, fresh, and unconsumed. It shows that 13 – a number that is dreaded by so many – could be overcome, and its evenness points merrily into a future with a plethora of *Foci on German Studies* yet to come.

I have even more reason to be so sanguine about our journal as I know that *Focus* has a phalanx of strong supporters, each of whom is invaluable for the journal. Under the auspices of Dean Dr. Neville Pinto, the Graduate Student Governance Association of the University of Cincinnati, and the Department of German Studies of the University of Cincinnati, *Focus on German Studies* will continue to flourish and will present a fine and rare example of graduate student publishing in this country. The spirit of *Focus* is carried by our promising authors and contributors, our knowledgeable and critical faculty reviewers, and last but not least, our many fine graduate students here in Cincinnati who volunteer their time in order to make the journal possible. At this juncture I would like to express my gratitude to a couple of people who deserve a special mention. First and foremost I name Department Head Professor Katharina Gerstenberger and Graduate Program Director Professor Sara Friedrichsmeyer who each year dedicate a considerable amount of their energy and time to ensure the well-being of *Focus*. Even the best academic enterprises cannot come to fruition without monetary

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means. Therefore, my thanks go to Marjon Kamrani, Vice President of the Graduate Student Governance Association of the University of Cincinnati (GSGA), and her colleagues. Without the continued support of the GSGA, *Focus* could not be published. I would like to thank Professor Richard Schade for sharing his rich experience in academic publishing with me. I sincerely want to thank the former editor Laura Vas for answering the many questions that I had when I took the helm of *Focus* in the fall of 2006. Finally, Ferenc Traser is responsible for the marvelous design of all things *Focus*: the journal layout as well as the posters and the program for our annual conference.

I am extremely proud to say that *Focus* has not only maintained its reputation but is now actually known by many people in the profession, faculty members as well as graduate students. In the future, we want to further strengthen this good rapport with our community of readers, contributors, and evaluators. Many research libraries in the United States, Germany, Great Britain, and Canada are subscribers of *Focus*. Even in times when slashed budgets and financial crises often prevent the acquisition of new titles, *Focus* has managed to continually gain four to five new institutional subscribers every year while retaining the already existing ones.

*Focus* has continually received more submissions every year. This year we received a record number of 32 article submissions. With eight published articles, our acceptance rate for 2007 is 25%, lower than ever. More submissions always mean more work for the editor, but they also give the editor the opportunity to cherry-pick the most promising texts. As *Focus* strives to retain a broad spectrum, it also seeks to further those who will be the best scholars of tomorrow.

As many of our readers know, each *Focus* journal is preceded by an annual conference. The Eleventh Annual *Focus* German Graduate Student Conference at the University of Cincinnati was titled “Between Future and Fatality – Utopian and Dystopian Ideas and Concepts in German Literature, Film, and Culture.” It took place on October 27-28, 2006, in our beautiful Max Kade Center. Our 12 presenters this year came from all four corners of the United States and Germany. I was very delighted that we had – for the first time – three presenters traveling all the way from Germany to join us in Cincinnati. A fourth person also came from Germany: our keynote speaker Thomas Meinecke.

When we invited Thomas Meinecke for the conference, we did not think that we could secure such a prestigious keynote speaker. We did not even know how to contact him in the first place. First we

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thought of approaching him through his publisher. But one knows how that goes. One writes a letter to the publisher but mysteriously the letter never finds its way to the author. It is like talking to a wall. After Alexandra Hagen and I had written a cooing and courting letter of invitation to Meinecke, we decided to look him up on the German online phone directory. Sometimes it is foolhardy to do the most improbable thing just for the sake of doing it. Our search yielded 27 people by the name of Thomas Meinecke, and I was instantly glad that his name was not Thomas Müller or Thomas Meier for that matter. Knowing his approximate coordinates, I could finally narrow down my search to one entry that also supplied an address. Then I went ahead – a shot in the dark – and mailed the invitation to Germany. Little time elapsed and I received an email from one Thomas Meinecke – the header of this very email in capitalized letters: “OHIO – HERE I COME.” When we picked him up from the airport on October 26, 2007, I was glad it turned out to be the real Thomas Meinecke. We were fortunate to host him in Cincinnati where he read from his two latest books *Musik* and *Feldforschung* and vivaciously discussed his ideas with the audience. He also gave us an interview which can be found in the interview section at the end of this volume. At this point, I would like to thank the Taft Research Center for furnishing a Taft speaker grant. Without this grant we could not have invited Thomas Meinecke.

The eight articles in this volume explore a broad spectrum of topics and themes. They are arranged in a reverse chronological order, so that the reader can start in the late twentieth century and then dive into the layers of time, into 100 years of German literature.

In the first article, Andreas Martin Widmann focuses on the understanding of history and historiography in Michael Kleeberg's 1998 novel *Ein Garten im Norden*. According to Widmann, the novel develops a new concept of portraying history in fictional texts that he aptly juxtaposes with and finally distinguishes from various traditions of historical thinking. As Widmann maintains, Kleeberg's attempt at rewriting history is evolutionary, not revolutionary. The author's revived utopian ideals strive towards opening up the possibilities of history rather than curtailing them.

In the second article, Frauke Matthes explains how the children of former Turkish *Gastarbeiter* are searching for their identity by creating their own language. She in particular focuses on two books by Feridun Zaimoğlu, *Kanak Sprak: 24 Mißtöne vom Rande der Gesellschaft* (1995) and *Koppstoff: Kanaka Sprak vom Rande der Gesellschaft* (1998). As she argues, it is through language and performativity that this young generation of

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Turkish Germans finds its own space of belonging, often in opposition to German mainstream culture. Within this context of a new cultural identity, Matthes reveals the different concepts of masculinity and femininity and how they correlate with each other. She also critically questions Zaimoğlu's more recent work in which he turns away from challenging the Turkish-German identity formation.

In the third contribution, Katya Krylova penetrates Ingeborg Bachmann's storied and enigmatic novel *Malina* (1971) with the analytic devices of the French psychoanalyst Jacques Lacan. According to Krylova, Freudian and Jungian readings have neglected the central preoccupation of *Malina*: language and its relation to the formation of identity. She argues with Lacan that the analyst/analysand dynamic in the novel serves the narrative function of illustrating the constant struggle with language and the Symbolic.

Jürgen Schacherl questions in the fourth text the limited canon of German serial killer films by presenting us with a fresh array of fascinating and bizarre films ranging from 1973 to 2005, many yet to be discovered by a wider audience. He immerses the reader in the realms of a murky subculture rife with shed gore and spilled guts. Behind the hair-rising brutality of such films like *Antikörper*, *Tattoo*, *Der Sandmann*, *Funny Games*, *Schramm*, or *Der Totmacher*, Schacherl reveals deeper socio-cultural messages. He then aptly links his discoveries to existing research and defends their relevance for a redefinition of the serial killer genre.

In the fifth article, Anke Hertling fleshes out the interrelationship between Weimar culture, Expressionism and the technological advances of the twenties. She maintains that the presence of technology and its acceptance by many contemporaneous thinkers and writers like Bertolt Brecht, Erich Kästner, Alfred Döblin, Hannes Küpper, Erik Reger, and Otto Flake has been crucial for the self-definition of this period. The different forms of technology influenced and fertilized the techniques of the writers and left their indelible mark on them.

In the sixth contribution, Barry Murnane analyses the concept of spectrality in an early text by Franz Kafka, "Unglücklichsein" (1912/13). Murnane compares it to "Verkehr mit Gespenstern," a letter that Franz Kafka wrote to his lover Milena Jesenská at the end of 1922. Harnessing Jacques Derrida's concept of *hantology*, Murnane argues that it is not the ghost proper that becomes relevant in Kafka's depiction but rather the creation of the ghost through the language. The spectral figure comes into being when it is discussed. It is erected by words.

In the seventh contribution, Axel Bangert links Robert Musil's narrative "Tonka" to the philosophy of Friedrich Nietzsche. He shows

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that especially Nietzsche's concept of truth becomes crucial for the understanding of "Tonka." Truth, as Bangert posits, becomes important for the story's protagonist not as something absolute but as a psychological concept that satisfies the needs of the seeker of truth. When looking at Tonka, the story's female figure, the protagonist vacillates between these two poles that Bangert defines as *Märchen* and *Realität*.

Dayton Henderson's analysis of Hugo von Hofmannsthal's "Reitergeschichte" (1899) concludes the article section. He posits that interpreting the text only with Freud's concept of the uncanny is not sufficient. Only the interplay between trauma/war neurosis and the uncanny explains the dire straits in which the story's protagonist Anton Lerch finds himself. As the article's title suggests, Henderson reads trauma as an extension of the uncanny and finally conjoins both concepts with each other.

This year's magnificent book review section was edited by Todd Heidt. The eighteen books reviewed represent the wide and varied range of cultural production and intellectual engagement which comes under the broad and exciting umbrella of German Studies. Our reviewers were equally as varied, with participants from a myriad of institutions from coast to coast within the United States, as well as perspectives hailing from Germany, Ireland, Belgium, Finland and Slovakia.

The primary literature reviewed included tremendously important works such as Nobel laureate Günther Grass's controversial autobiography as well as Katharina Hacker's *Die Habenichtse*, which won the *Deutscher Buchpreis* in 2006. Robert Musil speaks from beyond the grave to an English-speaking audience with the first translation of his eerily and aptly titled *Posthumous Papers of a Living Author*. Other authors included well-established names such as Thomas Meinecke, Ralf Rothmann and Martin Walser, who contributed to and stretched the boundaries of our conception of German-speaking culture(s) with their latest publications. Robert Menasse weighs in on globalization in his publication of a series of lectures focused on the topic, as he continues to develop as a cultural critic at large alongside his established position as a leading Austrian prose author. One *Multi-Kulti* author who only recently enjoyed his debut on the literary scene in Germany also made his way into our pages: Saša Stanišić, a German-language author from the former Yugoslavia.

Secondary literature runs the gamut from the medieval conception of the soul to contemporary concerns about German culture after Auschwitz and (Re)Unification. The essays collected by Katharina

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Philipowski and Anne Prior investigate the influence science, theology and religion exerted upon literature in their *anima und sèle*. Similarly engaged with philosophical discourses, Josh Cohen's *Interrupting Auschwitz* is an attempt to re-stake a claim on thought after an event which is frequently interpreted as putting a clear limit on total knowledge. Stanley Corngold and Sander Gilman offer new perspectives on Franz Kafka's life and work in their respective volumes. Alexander Košenina revisits Karl Philip Moritz' influential role in the development of the psychological novel at the end of the eighteenth century. Insofar as questions of the mind are concerned, Laurence Simmons offers a new perspective on the thought-provoking power of images and art in the course of Freud's theoretical development. Lastly, John A. McCarthy engages himself in an attempt to combine chaos theory with aesthetic theory in order to address mimesis in a manner which proposes new interdisciplinary work between the humanities and natural sciences. If this brief overview has seemed to race from one topic and methodology to the next, this is only because this is precisely the diverse and challenging nature and imperative of German Studies today.

This year's interview section boasts five interviews. Thomas Meinecke provided us with a view into the writer's secret chamber. He told us about the poetics behind his texts and gave us a glimpse of his next novel. Andreas Martin Widmann interviewed the German author and translator Michael Kleeberg on the perception of history and the creation of history in his literary works. Dan McGee met Dr. Gerd Gemünden, Professor of German at Dartmouth College and notable scholar of German film, and talked with him about Billy Wilder, the influence of Germans on Hollywood and the future of German cinema. Michael Ennis conducted an interview with Dr. Gesa Dane, this year's Distinguished Max Kade Visiting Professor at the University of Cincinnati, on German and American cultural perspectives and her own work experience in the United States. Finally, Georg Büchner returned from the grave in order to field our critical questions about his role as a canonical author in the light of the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

Next year's editorship will be in the ambidextrous hands of Todd Heidt who is currently planning the upcoming conference. The Twelfth Annual *Focus* German Graduate Student Conference, entitled "Images of Culture... A Culture of Images: German Visual Culture in Literature, Film, Art, and Beyond," will be held October 26-27, 2007, in the Max Kade German Cultural Center at the University of Cincinnati. For further information please refer to the announcement section at the back of the journal. I also want to introduce next year's book review

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editor Alexandra Hagen who is already selecting books for the 2008 issue of *Focus*. I wish Todd and Alexandra much success for the upcoming conference and the next issue of *Focus*.

As my time with *Focus* is drawing to an end, I am looking back in gratitude to what the journal has afforded me. I have met a welter of new and interesting people during this year, be it in the flesh or through email or the phone. I have learned a lot about the virtues of academic publishing and editing texts. By reading through our numerous submissions, I have also learned a lot on topics and themes about which I had not heard before. This has shown to me what a versatile and multi-faceted domain our great field of German Studies is. And now, without further ado, I invite you to delve into the many mesmerizing pages that lie ahead of you.

*Wolfgang Lüchel*

