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Aine Zimmerman
Julia Baker

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From the Editor

To the right of my computer sits a stack of fourteen journals. The volume now in the reader's hand was built upon this stack of journals representing a decade of *Focus* volumes. (Once published semiannually, *Focus on German Studies* has appeared annually since 2000.) One thing jumps off the page in each editor's introductions over the last ten years: the vision on part of each *Focus* editor to create a forum for scholarly work and exchange. Founded in 1993 by graduate students of the University of Cincinnati, *Focus* was conceived in part as a response to the increasing emphasis being placed on candidates' publication records in the field of German Studies. Little has changed since then in terms of the vision of this journal — or the field's expectations of candidates; if anything, both have kept pace with one another. We are pleased to enter our next decade continuing to serve as a forum for the exchange of ideas via graduate students' articles and book reviews, as well as interviews with scholars in the field.

Since 1995, *Focus on German Studies* has organized an annual graduate student conference. This year's conference began with Claudia Breger of Indiana University delivering the keynote address "Metaphors-Memories-Mockeries: Border Talk in Recent Turkish-German Prose." This literary talk segued into other literary and interdisciplinary treatments of the conference's topic: "Crossing Borders, Cultures and Disciplines." Graduate student speakers came from Europe, Canada and the United States to present their investigations of such 'crossings' in the areas of literature, film, pedagogy, linguistics and sociology. The two-day conference was an enjoyable way to meet students from diverse academic backgrounds and share in their research.

Although *Focus* does not publish conference proceedings, speakers are encouraged to submit their papers for consideration to each year's volume. *Focus* is one of two graduate student journals in German Studies, and is highly competitive in its selection of scholarly texts. We received twenty-six submissions this year from graduate students in Canada, Germany, Ireland, England, France,

Italy and the United States. All underwent a rigorous selection process by graduate students and faculty referees on our board of reviewers, and in the end twelve articles were accepted. Thank you to our board of reviewers for their thoughtful and detailed critiques of this year's submissions.

Articles in this year's volume begin in the 21st century and work backward to the 18th century. Within this reverse chronological order, the reader will also notice themes such as globalization, philosophy of history, the visual arts, and gender, among others. The journal begins with Christian Buss' examination of the recent films *Goodbye Lenin*, *Die leere Mitte* and the documentary *Chronik der Wende* as related to identity and 'otherness.' Notably, he does not relate the first film to 'Ostalgie,' but rather he argues that these visual texts' attempts to come to terms with how "the breakdown of entrenched borders leads to the instability of the traditional narrative of East vs. West." Sonja Klocke's article, reworked from her original conference paper, examines the tropes of migration, political systems and language in Emine Sevgi Özdamar's novel *Mutterzunge*, and asserts that the work challenges stereotypical roles for migrant women in a globalized society. Considering another group that has transgressed borders, Patrick Farges interviewed refugees from National Socialism who settled in Canada, and finds in their narratives (and narrative ruptures) the constant negotiation of acculturation and identity.

The next two articles draw on colonial and post-colonial theory. Martin Widmann's contribution investigates Heiner Müller's representation of history in his drama *Der Auftrag* through the lens of post-colonial theory. In a related vein but in a visual context, Richard John Ascárate examines the film *Metropolis*' colonialist fantasies. In his article, he focuses on contemporary visual influences on the film's images, as well as their significance for his interpretation of the robot-Maria scene as exemplary of Weimar discourse.

Images make their debut in *Focus* both as part of the Ascárate and Träser-Vas articles. The latter presents not images of Rodin's sculpture as one might expect, but rather paintings by Cézanne in her article, in order to illustrate Cézanne's epistemological and poetological influence on Rilke's *Die Aufzeichnungen des Malte Laurids Brigge*. Ulrich Eschborn's piece deals with not with the metropolises of Lang's film or Rilke's Paris, but Berlin. He offers a

close reading of textual city images in *Berlin Alexanderplatz*, revealing the protagonist's experience of the metropolis and the complex literary representation of the city. Ben Hutchinson reprises the Rilke theme, with his meticulous examination of the poet's use of the verb 'zittern,' stating that "through the microcosm of [this] one verb we can see the young poet asserting his own individual authority on the conventional vocabulary of the day."

The next article spans the 20th century, while the final three deal with works from the 19th and 18th centuries. In her discussion of works by Brecht, Dürrenmatt, Frisch and Handke, Birte Schulz approaches the plays from the theoretical framework of disability studies. She scrutinizes the plays' characters with disabilities, and relates their dramatic portrayal to theater aesthetics. Katherine Wilford compares different versions of Wedekind's 'Monstretrogödie,' and by situating them in their historical and cultural context, theorizes the reasons for the changes. The connection between aesthetics and ethics is the target of David Wachter's study of Musil's *Der Mann ohne Eigenschaften*. He considers how artistic production and the aesthetic experience of art open one to existential experiments with the self. Finally, Lanlan Xu's evaluation of Lessing's *Miß Sara Sampson* takes its cue from Foucaultian ideas about self-care and self development. She considers these theories in relation to the female characters' development in the drama, drawing conclusions about Lessing's emancipatory capabilities.

This year's book review section is the work of Julia Baker. It provides the reader reviews of the latest German-language literature, including novels (Bánk, Diggelmann, Peters), short stories (Junge) and tales (Sacher-Masoch), essays (Loetscher, Ransmayr, Sebald), biography (Claussen on Adorno) and autobiography (Rusch). Secondary literature on the topics of fanaticism (Berkéwicz), Schnitzler (Foster and Krobb), Austrian literature (Haas, Schlösser, Zeyringer), prostitution (Jost), literary responses to unification (Kane) and Schlingensief's "Ausländer Raus" project (Lilienthal and Philipp) round out the reviews.

Julia and I had the opportunity to interview Dr. Hans Adler and Dr. David Culbert, respectively, during their visits to the University of Cincinnati. As a fellow Germanist and editor, Dr. Adler shared his

insights into those positions, as well as his thoughts on globalization and the formation of literary canons. An expert on propaganda, Dr. Culbert spoke to *Focus* about Leni Riefenstahl's films and techniques, along with other players in the field of German cinema during National Socialism.

Taking over the editorship, Julia Baker will continue her work with *Focus* as journal editor-in-chief and conference organizer for 2004-5. She has already begun planning the ninth annual *Focus* graduate student conference entitled "Forgetting and Remembering: Memory Discourse in German Literature," which will be held October 29th and 30th, 2004 in the Max Kade German Cultural Center at the University of Cincinnati. Please contact us or see our website for more information. Laura Tráser-Vas joins her as incoming book review editor, and I am confident of Julia and Laura's future success in their positions.

I wish to thank a number of people for their support of *Focus on German Studies*. First, I would like express my gratitude to the Department of German Studies at the University of Cincinnati for entrusting me with the position of editor and its responsibilities. Department Head Sara Friedrichsmeyer and advisor Katharina Gerstenberger deserve heartfelt thanks for their continued support of the journal and annual conference. I would also like to recognize the Graduate Student Governance Association of the University of Cincinnati for their continued financial support. I wish to extend additional thanks to Volume 10's editor, Silke Schade, and Melinda Tracy for their helpful suggestions and support. Finally, it was a pleasure to share the responsibility of selecting, revising and proofreading this volume's articles with my fellow graduate students. Due to their assistance in the journal editing process and with the 2003 conference, we start a new decade of *Focus on German Studies*.

Aine Zimmerman

Toward an Event-based History:
Chronik der Wende, Die leere Mitte, and Good Bye Lenin

Christian Buss

Film can function as history: as a source or a document not only
of its own aesthetic history, but of history in general.

Vice versa, history can be presented as film.

Patrick Vonderau

If film is capable of functioning as a document of history while also acting as a text that self-consciously creates narratives of history, we must ask the question, what kind of histories can films present? Focusing on filmic attempts to represent the fall of the Berlin Wall, this paper demonstrates how recent films engaging in the memory work of unification directly suggest the impossibility of a sequential narrative of historical meaning as a way to make sense of German unification. Specifically, two recent films, *Die leere Mitte* (1998) and *Good Bye Lenin* (2002), problematize traditional documentary narratives, primarily through their exploration of 'otherness': ethnic, economic and temporal. Ultimately, the re-focusing of events along the lines of the status of 'others' in these films leads to the implicit invocation of a Deleuzian event-based history, in which every present is infinitely divided by its becoming a past event and a future. Beginning with the made-for-TV documentary, *Chronik der Wende* (1994), then moving to the film essay *Die leere Mitte*, and finally *Good Bye Lenin*, this paper argues that attempts to come to terms with the breakdown of entrenched borders leads to the instability of the traditional narrative of East vs. West. Reconfigurations of this narrative are initially affectively oriented around a myth of 'oneness' exhibited in *Chronik der Wende's* documentation of the first month of unrest. The inability to maintain this myth of instant unification is explored in *Die leere Mitte*, a film essay that attempts to re-view the events of 1989 and 1990 not within the hopeful matrix of "together" but alternately from the perspective of estranged 'others.' The frame of the outsider is revisited in the pop-cultural phenomenon of *Good Bye Lenin*, in which the melodrama