

literature, a critic whom one would want to read irrespective of his authorial status. In the reality of a busy world, however, this book may only really appeal to Sebald specialists, since its fragmentary and eclectic nature prevents much coherence. In some ways, indeed, it is a cynical cash-in on Sebald's reputation, since it only includes the one unpublished fragment (which Michael Kruger had already published last year in his journal *Akzente*). That said, this book can certainly be recommended; indeed the expert will find that *Campo Santo* provides fascinating insights into a developing mind. The non-specialist, however, may be better advised discovering Sebald's real achievement, his unforgettable earlier books.

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On and Beyond Academic Journals, Globalization and Literary Canonization:

A Conversation with Hans Adler

Dr. Hans Adler is Professor of German at the University of Wisconsin, Madison. He was the editor of the *Herder Jahrbuch* from 1994-2000 and since 2001, has been the editor of the journal *Monatshefte für deutschsprachige Literatur*. He has published and lectured widely on topics such as Herder, the Enlightenment, the function of art and literature, Vormärz and the novel. Professor Adler is also the editor of numerous anthologies and has taught a wide range of courses over the span of his career.

FOCUS: You have been the editor of the *Herder Jahrbuch* and are currently the editor of the *Monatshefte*. What are the challenges of being an editor and what do you enjoy?

Adler: The *Herder Jahrbuch* and the *Monatshefte* are two different genres. The *Herder Yearbook* is run by the International Herder Society, a small society of about 100 members, so the funding comes from the subscriptions. It is difficult to run a periodical publication with less than 500 copies, and so that was challenging from the point of view of fundraising and we switched publishers three times. So far it has worked. It was fun to be the editor of the *Herder Yearbook*. It focuses on Herder and the Enlightenment, so it is very specialized. Colleagues from all over the world who are interested in the field submit their work, and you get highly sophisticated research in a field that contributed a lot to revising the concept of Enlightenment.

The *Monatshefte* are a different story. It is the oldest German periodical in the U.S. It started in 1899; and I have that volume in my office, which always reminds me of my obligations. One of its traditions is not to adhere too much to the tradition, i.e. to really respond with the periodical to new trends, interesting things, and changes in the discipline. It used to be a real 'Monatsheft,' appearing every month for teachers in the early 20th century, and now we are

a quarterly. Between 1918 and 1927, *Monatshefte* was a yearbook because the situation during and after WWI was very difficult. I admire the editor at the time, because he was stubborn and insisted on changing *Monatshefte* from a monthly publication to a yearbook. That is how it survived and that is why we are still in business today. That is a different story as opposed to the *Herder Yearbook* because *Monatshefte* is owned by the German Department of the University of Wisconsin Madison, there is no membership and we are doing quite well with subscribers all over the world. Money comes in from those subscriptions and we can run it based on those, so we are basically independent. If you look at the editorial board, it consists mainly of people from Madison. It is a referee journal, so most of the time when I receive an article, I send it out to my colleagues from Madison; usually there is a quick response and we can get back to the authors quickly, which is important for young authors.

FOCUS: How have the submissions changed over the years that you have been involved with these journals?

Adler: There is one trend clearly and not only for *Monatshefte*, but for almost all periodicals in our discipline: the number of submissions from established professors has gone down considerably, while submissions by graduate students and young colleagues have increased. We are not interested in who is behind the paper; the only criterion is the quality of the paper. The ratio now, I would say, is one-quarter professors, three-quarters younger colleagues.

FOCUS: Would you say that this change has to do with a change in attitude in the editors?

Adler: The situation for young people who go on the job market today has changed dramatically. If you go on the market today with a Ph.D. thesis only and without any other experience, i.e. publications, you will most likely have difficulties. Given the situation that the ratio of positions to applicants in our field is one position to an average of eighty to one hundred applicants, the challenges are obvious. So you have to present more than a thesis and that is one of the reasons why graduate students should try to publish before finishing their thesis.

On the other hand, editors' attitudes have probably changed also. I think that twenty to thirty years ago, they would have been reluctant to accept students' papers. Nowadays we get the submissions, erase the names, read the articles and discuss them independently from the position of the authors.

FOCUS: In the discussion after your lecture ["Is Enlightenment Divisible? On Pragmatics of Enlightenment in Germany," Taft Lecture on 30 April 2004], you mentioned that being amazed is the beginning of each science and an essential part of being a scientist. What do you find amazing in your fields of study, and in life in general?

Adler: What I was referring to was the Platonic idea of amazement. Plato said that with amazement the discourse of philosophy starts. I was more referring to an attitude than to particular objects, although there are a lot of things I am fascinated with. I think one of the very important features that a dedicated graduate student of German, or of any other discipline, should have is a curiosity in the field as well as a certain kind of openness toward things unexpected. Don't focus on just one thing, but keep your eyes open.

What I am amazed by is how much graduate students of German are dedicated to the field, given the fact that the job market situation is not very promising. They not only love literature, they also think that literature and culture are important; even as the political environment toward the humanities is not very favorable. I admire this attitude. It is a tough situation: they have to face statements like, "being a nurse is much more important than reading Goethe." I think in a complex society, the study of literature and culture is indeed very important. When one looks back at history and evolution, there has never been a society without some kind of literature, or an attempt to find expression in painting or music. It is anthropologically a part of us as human beings and we have to study and cultivate that.

FOCUS: We also touched on the vast topic of globalization. A while ago, you gave a paper entitled "Studying German in times of Globalization." Could you briefly summarize the arguments

you made? In your opinion, what effect does globalization have on German Studies in Germany and America respectively? Could you comment on what developments you think will take place in the field of German Studies in the future?

Adler: I gave that paper on the occasion of a recruitment event two years ago. I think the point I tried to raise was the question: We are living in the age of globalization – why then study national literatures or national cultures exclusively? I think there are several arguments in favor of that approach without losing the global perspective, which is important. Studying German for me is automatically linked to contextualizing Germany as a country in Europe. Migration as something that generates new cultures for example; and there is a vibrant research in German-Turkish-German or Minor literature. I think it still makes sense to study German and have the humanities in the universities organized along the line of languages, which is a nationally orientated organization of the disciplines. There are departments of French, Italian and Slavic languages. We are on our way to merging that somewhat. What we should not forget, however, is that the core of a French department is still French, just as the core of a department of German is still German, and I think it is always good when you enter a field such as literature or culture to have some knowledge in one particular field and then branch out. That means for a non-native speaker of German: first become proficient at the language, then become familiar with the history in that area where that language is spoken. Keep in mind that German is not geographically limited to that area, that German has a history, a history of contacts with French, Italian, Scandinavian, Polish, and Czech culture. I lived in the Ruhrgebiet for 20 years. You do not understand the Ruhrgebiet unless you know a bit of Polish culture and language. What I wanted with this presentation about globalization was to warn that the study of globalization should not abolish the studies of German literature, history and culture, but to open the cultures to a global perspective.

The second thing I wanted at that time was to problematize the concept of globalization. It sounds very attractive. It is basically the dream of “we are all brothers and sisters,” but in fact if you look

in the newspapers and news, it seems there is a difference between the dream of globalization and political facts. So, I think it is worth examining who basically is promoting globalization; and from what I see, who definitely profits from globalization are above all the big companies. That has nothing to do with understanding other cultures, meeting people from other cultures or trying to test the waters as far as tolerance is concerned. How far along are we with being able to really communicate and live together? That, from my perspective, would be the interesting point. And we have another field, namely that of communication, travel, and electronic media. This is challenging because all of a sudden people are in contact that have never been in contact with each other before and there are new chances and opportunities. This is not a quantitative but a qualitative element, a change; what has already changed is our vision of the world in which we live. The world in which we lived in 20 years ago for Germans was Germany and Europe. Nowadays, it is no problem to work with somebody in India or Africa. That is fascinating. The problem is, however, that an individual cannot process that in all its complexity. How many languages can I learn during my life? It is limited. So we have to find a way to specify what globalization in the very concrete case of every individual means. How much can I really process? It is not only the languages, but also news from all over the world. We now feel responsible for something that happens in Sudan or we feel affected by what is going on in the Congo. Of course, the problem, particularly in the States right now, is the events in Iraq. What is our position on the economic, political and cultural level? I am not sure whether we would be very happy if we just followed John Hutchinson's thesis that it is all about a clash of cultures. The assumption that there is a clash of cultures is that these cultures are givens. And then there is a clash and in the end one or the other will dominate. Instead of thinking that there is a clash of cultures, we would be better served by the idea of an encounter of cultures. Then we would still have the opportunity to communicate. If communication stops, then there would only remain the option of power, using force, and then we would be blocked.

FOCUS: You published a book on Karin Struck, a writer in the 1970s. Why do you think she is not so well known today? On a

related note, how do you think particular works of literature become canonical (or not)? Do you think the tradition of the canon will continue in our field, or do you think a new model will emerge?

Adler: I co-edited the book with Hans Joachim Schrimpf, who was one of my teachers at Ruhr University, and at that time Karin Struck was very well known in Germany for her books. She was seen as a representative lower-class writer, that is, as woman who had grown up in lower-class conditions, without higher education, who was writing about her situation. We had a look at her success, and were not convinced of the literary quality of those books. What was interesting to us was to look at her texts as “symptomatic literature,” a literature generated by social conflicts. I think Karin Struck is not read that much any more because those times are over. She also challenged the feminist movement. She was a horror for the media and the feminist movement, because she made statements such as “I want to be a mother.” The feminist movement at the time had completely different problems than motherhood; it was more about fighting against being placed in a traditional role. In that respect, Struck was challenging the movement and she triggered a change. In the novels she wrote after she left Suhrkamp, she left those questions behind and wrote more about her personal life, and I think that is why she is not well known today. In the States, she is definitely not among the well-known German authors.

As far as canonizing is concerned and questions of how texts make it into the canon or what are the criteria for a text to be accepted in a canon, I think the discipline has changed. We have departments of German Studies, like the one in Cincinnati, and we have departments that concentrate more on literature in the traditional way. That affects of course what you do in class. So the old model of having a canon that must contain a limited number of texts and authors does not really work any longer. I think the reason for canons was at least two-fold. One reason was that people who set up the canons followed certain information they got from various experts in the field as well as the traditional idea of a role model: this author or character is important as a figure of identification. For instance when the ‘Bildungsbürgertum’ developed at the end of the 19th

century in Germany, they discovered that there was what was termed ‘classicism.’ Before that they had not talked about classicism. So the bourgeoisie at that time looked to the past for identification figures, such as Goethe and Schiller. Because of such identification, Goethe, Schiller, Lessing and Novalis went into the canon. The second reason was that parts of the texts in canons are evaluated or considered the best texts in the literary field. I think that is a good criterion. Talking about the literary quality means that the literary discourse itself in these texts is challenged. I think that literary discourse is something that we anthropologically developed as a cultural tool to understand the world. If texts challenge these capacities of a literary discourse, by opening new windows, showing people new things — that is the most important function of a text. What you study in these texts is the process of breaking discursive standards. I think it is very important, and I try to focus on that in my teaching, and to show students that breaking standards is a visionary act. The only way to make or promote history is not to continue on with what you have, but to open new windows and possibilities for action and for solving problems. In my opinion, in culture and literature you can demonstrate very clearly how human beings made an effort to look at things in a new way when they were deadlocked in a situation, and to look for a way to get out: that is innovation. I think the hallmark of good literary texts is just such a new perspective. These kind of texts should be read, not because they transport values — that was a misunderstanding of the canon at times that texts should teach certain values — but rather because this kind of exemplary text challenges the literary discourse. I would not want to limit that to a certain type of text, namely literary ones, but instead would include texts that present ideas which could help to solve problems in politics, economy, and culture in a hitherto unknown way. These days, I think the canon is open, and I don’t know if Goethe has to be included, although I admire his achievements. It is incredible how much this man achieved, how many impulses he provided to do innovative things, and his ability to draw connections between discourses that people of his time had not conceived. However, there is only limited space for learning: we cannot teach and research everything. Graduate students, who will later be professors, must rearrange the idea of what to study and teach in the future. We

have to respond to developments in the world and give impulses by choosing texts that represent and challenge the world today.

FOCUS: Thank you very much for the interview.

Adler: Thank you for the opportunity to talk to you.

Julia Baker and Aine Zimmerman contributed to this interview.

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Leni Riefenstahl and Propaganda Film:

A Conversation with David Culbert

Dr. David Culbert is a Professor of History at Louisiana State University and editor of the *Historical Journal of Film, Radio and Television*. The title of his latest book is *Propaganda and Mass Persuasion: A Historical Encyclopedia, 1500 to the Present*. He has written on film, radio and television as history and propaganda in the U.S. and Germany during World War II.

FOCUS: You have written extensively on propaganda and film. What sparked your interest in these topics?

David Culbert: Until I began work on my doctoral thesis, I never had a single teacher that placed any faith in any of these topics, and so it probably seemed interesting to me for that reason. It has been my good fortune to have had a number of teachers along the way who let me study what interested me, although I think on the whole they were somewhat surprised that something so interesting came of it. I wrote a doctoral thesis on radio commentators discussing foreign policies in the 1930s, and I have an undergraduate degree in organ performance from Oberlin, so I had some interest in aural images based on that. I became interested in German film propaganda when I first saw *Triumph des Willens* in graduate school, and thought it was extraordinary.

FOCUS: Extraordinary in what way? In terms of the cinematography?

Culbert: Yes. Perhaps not those few opening intertitles, nor the endless parade of people marching by, although eventually I learned that there is some significance to those early scenes as well. For in spite of Leni Riefenstahl's often proclaimed statement that she was too young to know anything about politics (although she was thirty-