

## II. Situating Gender Studies in a Changing German Studies / Germanistik

### Overview

Andrea Bandhauer and Maria Veber (Sydney)

The following contributions demonstrate emphatically that engagement with perspectives and methods inspired by a feminist-inflected gender analysis runs in tandem with an intellectual-activist interest in the shaping of German Studies/Germanistik. The contributors establish connections between feminist/gender scholarship and German Studies, and also suggest how this area of endeavour might contribute to the continuing development and relevance of the discipline. While acknowledging the agenda-setting impact of US feminism, the contributions provide insights into differences arising from the particular socio-political and historical development in each country and thus into the cultural specificity of each form of German Studies/Germanistik.

Various aspects of the development of feminism and feminist thought in view of the shift from Women's Studies to Gender Studies are discussed. Gutjahr and Lennox provide detailed accounts of the development of feminist thought in Germany and America. In contrast, Lewis focuses on early stages in the institutionalisation of feminist scholarship in the Australian academy. In recalling some of the political concerns accompanying the shift from Women's to Gender Studies in the early 90s in Australia,<sup>1</sup> her discussion specifically contextualizes the difficulties that feminist research has encountered in establishing and maintaining visibility within the discipline of Australian German Studies.<sup>2</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup> For an extensive survey of institutional and intellectual features of Australian Women's and Gender Studies see Terry Threadgold: "Gender Studies and Women's Studies," *Australian Feminist Studies* 15. 31 (2000): 39-48. Threadgold notes other controversial shifts such as the "theoretical displacement in some quarters of Gay and Lesbian Studies by Queer Theory" and problematises the uncomfortable fit that results when such studies and the study of masculinities are grouped together under the umbrella term of Gender Studies (39).

<sup>2</sup> Australian work by feminist Germanists has made some isolated contributions to Australian feminist discourse. See for example Rita Felski: *Beyond Feminist Aesthetics. Feminist Literature and Social Change*. London: Hutchinson Radius 1989. More recently

Lewis links the name change with the shift to poststructuralist modes of inquiry. She refers to concerns that Gender Studies might result in the elision of women and a potential loss of political bite. This contrasts strikingly with Gutjahr's and Lennox's positive emphasis on both the intellectual significance and institutional impact of the shift. Such differences highlight the specific conditions of German Studies in Australia in the 90s - a discipline that has seen the shrinking and abolition of departments already few in number to begin with. Under such conditions neither feminist nor gender emphases can be made as readily as elsewhere, as Lewis makes clear.

Lennox discusses the significance of the role of the U.S. organisation Women in German (WIG). She characterizes the continuing feminist activism practised by WIG as an open infiltration of German Studies and the academy in order to effect profound societal as well as institutional change. While in Germany, the field of Gender Studies has achieved the institutional success denied to Feminist Studies,<sup>3</sup> scholars in that country have remained emphatic about the need to retain feminist modes of inquiry. Von Braun and Stephan, in their introduction to Gender Studies in Germany, counter the fear that Gender Studies would render feminist perspectives and thus the gains of feminist/women's studies obsolete by insisting, in agreement with Lewis, that feminist perspectives "can and must" remain focal points within Gender Studies. Von Braun and Stephan note that the interdisciplinarity that forms the basis of Gender Studies readily allows insights into the interconnections between discourses concerning women and gender in the various disciplines. At the same time, they emphasise that both gender and feminist perspectives must continue to co-exist in order that the groundbreaking research and critique

---

Kate Rigby and Silke Bejnssen-Hesse sought to raise the profile of German feminist thought in the English-speaking world with *Out of the Shadows. Contemporary German Feminism* Melbourne: Melbourne University Press 1996. Lewis herself has published in the interdisciplinary journal *Australian Feminist Studies (AFS)*: "The Art of Ventriloquism: Feminism and the Divided Self in the Works of Irmtraud Morgner." *AFS* 22 (1995): 31-58.

<sup>3</sup> See Sigrid Weigel: "Geschlechterdifferenz und Literaturwissenschaft." In: Helmut Brackert and Jörn Stückrath (eds.), *Literaturwissenschaft. Ein Grundkurs*. Reinbek bei Hamburg: Rowohlt 1999, 686-699.

provided by feminist thought from its beginnings can continue to inform Gender Studies.<sup>4</sup>

The positive implications of Gender Studies for feminist inquiry as well as suggestions about possible future directions of gender-focused research are discussed by all three contributors. The contributors draw on insights from many different disciplines, and firmly embrace interdisciplinary practices as they are being developed further within theoretical frameworks of difference. While Lewis elaborates the usefulness of (feminist) sociological research, Lennox suggests that British forms of feminist materialism might provide fruitful analytical models. Lennox's call for a post-Eurocentric paradigm is complemented by Gutjahr's discussion of models derived from German intercultural literary studies. According to these models, both the feminine and the masculine are posited as shifting terms and the area of difference between them - the "third space" or the "in-between" - becomes the new focus of analysis. The three papers thus elaborate models of gender that are informed by the shift from the sex/gender distinction to the cultural constructionist position, in line with positions argued by Judith Butler.

The contributions also show that the discipline of German Studies/Germanistik has developed different degrees of openness to interdisciplinarity and cultural studies approaches. This ranges from Lewis' embracing of such approaches to Lennox's and Gutjahr's more thorough recasting of the discipline. Lennox thus presents a German Studies that has undergone a paradigmatic shift from "the philological focus of German Germanistik to a broader concentration on culture studies," and Gutjahr presents the specifically German form of literary studies as "Kulturwissenschaft" that has developed in line with the German "cultural turn." In contrast to Australia, where developments in the discipline have not been directly advocated by a central body, in Germany and the United States these shifts have been promoted by the DFG (Deutsche For-

---

<sup>4</sup> Christina von Braun and Inge Stephan: "Einleitung." In: *Gender-Studien. Eine Einführung*. Stuttgart, Weimar: Metzler 2000, 11.

schungsgemeinschaft) and the GSA (German Studies Association of America) respectively.<sup>5</sup>

The establishment of Intercultural Literary Studies (Interkulturelle Literaturwissenschaft) on an intellectual as well as on an institutional level in Germany was mainly a product of what has since become known as “The Cultural Turn” (kulturelle Wende).<sup>6</sup> In the volume *Germanistik als Kulturwissenschaft* Gutjahr, among others, identifies this “Cultural Turn” in Germany as the point of departure for the establishment of new directions in research, with gender as well as interculturality becoming paradigms for scholarship in all established disciplines within the Humanities.<sup>7</sup> The popularity of the section “Literaturwissenschaft als Kulturwissenschaft” at the International Germanists Congress (Internationaler Germanistenkongress/IVG) in Vienna (2000) attests to the successful incorporation of Culture Studies into mainstream literary studies.<sup>8</sup> The published papers demonstrate that the new approach has resulted in a shift in perspective within traditional areas of German Literary Studies,<sup>9</sup> as well as in the introduction of the concepts of alterity and interculturality as key categories of analysis.<sup>10</sup>

---

<sup>5</sup> It is important here to note that within the DaF (German as a Foreign Language)-strand of Germanistik, discussions concerning a re-conceptualisation of Germanistik as a philology concerned not only with its own language base but also other languages and cultures had already begun in the 1970s. As early as 1980, Wierlacher referred to this paradigm shift within the Humanities as a “cultural turn”. (Alois Wierlacher: “Interkulturelle Germanistik. Herausbildung eines Konzepts - Konturen eines Faches.” In: *Handbuch interkulturelle Germanistik*. Alois Wierlacher and Andrea Bogner (eds.), Stuttgart: Metzler 2003, 1-13.

<sup>6</sup> The “Denkschrift” (memorandum) in which prominent scholars called for a rethinking of the humanities provided the impetus for these changes. (Frühwald, Wolfgang; Jauss, Hans R.; Koselleck, Reinhart; Mittelstrass, Jürgen; Steinwachs, Burkhard: *Geisteswissenschaften heute. Eine Denkschrift*. Frankfurt a.M.: Suhrkamp 1991).

<sup>7</sup> Ortrud Gutjahr: “Interkulturalität: Zur Konjunktur und Bedeutungsvielfalt eines Begriffs.” In: *Germanistik als Kulturwissenschaft. Eine Einführung in neue Theoriekonzepte*, Claudia Benthien and Hans Rudolf Velten (eds.), Reinbek bei Hamburg: Rowohlt 2002, 349.

<sup>8</sup> See Manfred Engel: “Einleitung zur Teilsektion ‘Interdisziplinarität und Medialität.’” In: *Akten des X. Internationalen Germanistenkongresses Wien 2000. “Zeitenwende - Die Germanistik auf dem Weg vom 20. ins 21. Jahrhundert.”* Bern: Lang 2003, 143.

<sup>9</sup> Engel, 144.

<sup>10</sup> Gutjahr: “Vorwort zur Sektion ‘Literaturwissenschaft als Kulturwissenschaft.’” In: *Akten des X. Internationalen Germanistenkongresses Wien 2000*, 15.

The call for a reconceptualisation of the Humanities in Germany was an acknowledgement of the increasing trend towards inter- and trans-disciplinary research in response to changes within Europe resulting from debates about national identity within a united Europe, pluralisation, and growing transnational networks.<sup>11</sup> It thus required that the traditional practice of “Germanistik” take cognisance of historical and cultural phenomena and also take into account the increasing culture of inter-disciplinarity within the academy.

Lennox links the emergence of gender studies as well as cultural studies in America to the “linguistic turn” instigated by the reception of Foucault in the early 90s. Like Gutjahr, she identifies the beginnings of cultural studies in feminist American Studies with the insistence on the discursive construction of all human experience. However, in contrast to Gutjahr, Lennox accepts a model of cultural studies which dismantles the distinction between literary texts and other cultural products altogether. This reflects the rootedness of German Cultural Studies in America in the British model of cultural studies. While Lennox discusses the implications of this new approach to German Studies in America, such as the need to abandon pure literary studies in order to open up the discipline to anthropological, historical and political inquiry, Gutjahr’s contribution mirrors the fact mentioned above that literature is still the focus of “kulturwissenschaftliche Germanistik” in Germany.<sup>12</sup> Interestingly, Lewis’ approach displays a greater similarity to the new German model of “Interkulturelle Literaturwissenschaft.” While acknowledging the contribution of insights from (feminist) sociology, history, political science and ethnography to her research project on German unification, her focus remains the literary text. Within the framework of this “conversation” between German, American and Australian Germanists it would thus appear that the focus of Australian German Studies is closely aligned with its German counterpart, whereas American Germanists have moved further away from the discipline as conceptualised in the target country.

---

<sup>11</sup> See Claudia Benthien and Hans Rudolf Velten: “Einleitung.” In: *Germanistik als Kulturwissenschaft. Eine Einführung in neue Theoriekonzepte*, 17.

<sup>12</sup> See also Benthien and Velten, 14.

As Gutjahr outlines, "Inlandsgermanistik" needed to question its essentialisms and allow for and incorporate the gaze of the other on German society and its cultural products. It thus had to unsettle its assumption of leadership and direction-setting in order to counter its increasing global marginalisation. The rise of migrant literatures and the acknowledgement of their voice by the literary establishment<sup>13</sup> caused additional pressure from within Germany and provided further grounds for "Germanistik" to acknowledge these changes and develop an "intercultural hermeneutics" in order to analyse texts which negotiate the margin, the "in-between" and the "third space." Significantly, in this context Gutjahr stresses the impact of German unification on the rethinking of German cultural identity and its "other," which resulted in the development of a form of intracultural German literary studies concerned with the evaluation of difference within the newly unified Germany.

Lewis' analysis of post-unification literature can be viewed as an example of intracultural analysis within an Intercultural Literary Studies in this sense, with a particular focus on gender. Her discussion of the upheaval in definitions of gender and gender relations following German unification, and her analysis of the inscription of the resultant sense of crisis in literary texts takes sociology and feminist sociology as the primary frame of reference. However, in her emphatic focus on post-unification literary texts, Lewis remains within the framework of German Literary Culture Studies. In the present paper she also insists on retaining a critical stance that is informed by feminist analyses of power in gendered relationships. Her work of intracultural analysis thus demonstrates how the analysis of post-unification literature can enrich the understanding of intercultural as well as gender studies.

What we find particularly fascinating and potentially productive for future research is the development of intracultural Germanistik in Germany - the turning of the disciplinary gaze upon itself that requires the discipline to examine its own premises in its engagement with objects of

---

<sup>13</sup> For example the Turkish German writer Emine Sevgi Özdamar was awarded the prestigious Bachmann prize in 1991.

study. This has not been possible for Australian *Auslandsgermanistik* in quite the same way as in Germany, partly because of the traditional philological focus of German departments. However, Australian German departments are again looking at the German contribution to Australian culture<sup>14</sup> and, as has been occurring in the United States, might examine more closely the premises underlying their engagement with German culture as they develop their own notions of German Studies.

---

<sup>14</sup> Earlier studies include Leslie Bodi, Stephen Jeffries, Susan Radvansky: *Image of a Continent: a Bibliography of German Australiana from the Beginnings to 1975. Bild eines Kontinents: eine Bibliographie deutscher Australiana von den Anfängen bis 1975*. Wiesbaden: O. Harrasowitz 1990; Alan Corkhill and Manfred Jurgensen (eds.), *The German Presence in Queensland over the last 150 Years: Proceedings of an International Symposium Aug. 24, 25 and 26, 1987, University of Queensland, Brisbane, Australia*. St. Lucia, [Qld]: Department of German, University of Queensland 1988.