

## **Jörg Roche and Thomas Salumets, eds. *Germanics Under Construction: Intercultural and Interdisciplinary Prospects*. Munich: iudicium, 1996.**

To review an anthology is always problematic. Of course, the quality of contributions will differ widely and some of them will actually expand the field and others will only marginally contribute to it. In the case of *Germanics under Construction: Intercultural and Interdisciplinary Prospects*, edited by Jörg Roche and Thomas Salumets (both from the University of British Columbia), this does not seem to be the case. Although there are differences in the quality and length of the contributions, all in all this anthology does fulfil its goal, namely to "explore the potential" of German Studies without being restricted to 'things German' but rather including "the study of a national culture in a 'foreign' country" (7). Continuing the discussion begun by the special issues of *German Quarterly* (1989), *German Studies Review* (1990), and the *Monatshefte* issue on New Historicism and German Studies (1992), this anthology traces the recent developments in German Studies and gives an overview of various approaches to the field. What makes this anthology particularly interesting is that it does not focus on one aspect of German Studies, i.e. literary/cultural theories or didactics, but rather allows the reader to form an informed opinion of the state of German Studies in the mid-1990s.

The focus of this volume, although it is applicable to 'Auslandsgermanistik' on a global scale, is on North America, and apart from one, all contributors work in the US or in Canada. In this respect it is a summary of recent developments and at the same time an outlook at things to come. It is particularly gratifying to read the contributions which specifically deal with German Studies in Canada, because for some time "the discussion in Canada about the future role of 'Germanistik' remained muted" (239).

Separated into an introduction and four main sections, theoretical discussions are expanded by detailed descriptions of German Studies in the classroom. To establish a theoretical framework, in Part I, "Models of Interdisciplinarity and Intercultural Studies," Michel and Keller discuss the linguistic, historical, and textual turns that influence any discussion of the topic. Which literary and cultural theories can and should be applied to German Studies? How have approaches changed since the establishment of German Studies Programs and where is the discussion at right now? Of central importance is a constant re-orientation, away from clear delineations of theory and of the discipline, "towards the critical study of the medium in which these values are articulated" (33).

Examples of German Studies in the classroom can be found in Part II, "Didactics." Questions of what should be taught and how it should be taught are exemplified by articles on Christa Wolf's *Selbstversuch. Traktat zu einem Protokoll* (Nolden/Kramersch) and "Exile Studies" (Sabalius), seeing students' work "not only as instances of grammatical or lexical paradigms, not only as expressing the thoughts of their authors, but as situated utterances, directed by a

particular writer to a particular reader about a particular topic" (73). Supplying examples of Applied Linguistics (at the University of Alberta), Hufeisen offers a detailed description of the goals and comments on the courses offered in that program.

Further literary examples can be found in Part III, "Textual Criticism and Cultural Contingency," where topics appropriately blur the formerly strict boundaries of 'high' and 'low' culture. The essays in this section thus deal with topics ranging from literary revisions of Parzival (McClintick) to Nietzsche reception in contemporary Hollywood films (Pollard), a discussion of (re)unification and the ideological implications in using those terms (Macki), to German and North American perceptions of the controversy surrounding Clayoquot Sound (Taubeneck). They show that the framework of what is considered worth teaching has clearly expanded in the last years, and that an application of literary/cultural theories that have taken the textual turn are part of these projects.

Although most of the projects discussed in the previous sections could and probably would take place in a 'traditional' classroom, Part IV, "Institutional Frameworks," explores innovative programs with a strong interdisciplinary component, such as the Baden-Württemberg-Ontario exchange (Webber), German and Engineering (Kecht and Strack), and German and Science (Anderson). The final contribution in this section, Prokop's "Survey of the State of German Studies in Canada" offers a historical overview of German Studies and shows how various departments have integrated this field into their curricula.

The question that remains is, of course, what is it that we want to teach and how do we want to reach this goal? What is the theory behind these goals and how has it changed over the last years? What mark have theories like New Historicism, structuralism, post-structuralism, post-colonialism, and feminism left on German Studies? How should different methodologies be incorporated in the classroom? How international is, and will be, the classroom of the future?

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These questions are changing rapidly and constantly. Particularly in terms of the expanding notions of 'classrooms' and 'interaction', a printed volume that attempts to deal with the latest developments in any discipline falls short of electronic publications. The speed of discussion and the instant communication cannot be matched. In the introduction to this volume, the editors state that "the digital technology of hypermedia converges with the necessary continued informalization of German Studies" (14). True, German Studies has seen re-evaluations of topics and means of dispersion, but, unfortunately, no article explicitly deals with these new possibilities and challenges. However, the topics and ideas covered in this volume do present a very interesting and stimulating point of departure for the field and are proof that the discussion has transcended static notions of content and form.

As part of the ongoing German Studies discussion, this volume offers a clear focus, contributions of quality, and a wide range of topics covered. It is essential reading for anybody interested in the state of German Studies.

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Jörg Roche and Thomas Salumets, eds. *Germanics Under Construction: Intercultural and Interdisciplinary Prospects*. Reviewed by Peter Gözl. (1997).  
*Zeitschrift für Interkulturellen Fremdsprachenunterricht* [Online], 2(1), 3 pp.  
Available: [http://www.spz.tu-darmstadt.de/projekt\\_ejournal/jg\\_02\\_1/beitrag/goelz.htm](http://www.spz.tu-darmstadt.de/projekt_ejournal/jg_02_1/beitrag/goelz.htm)

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