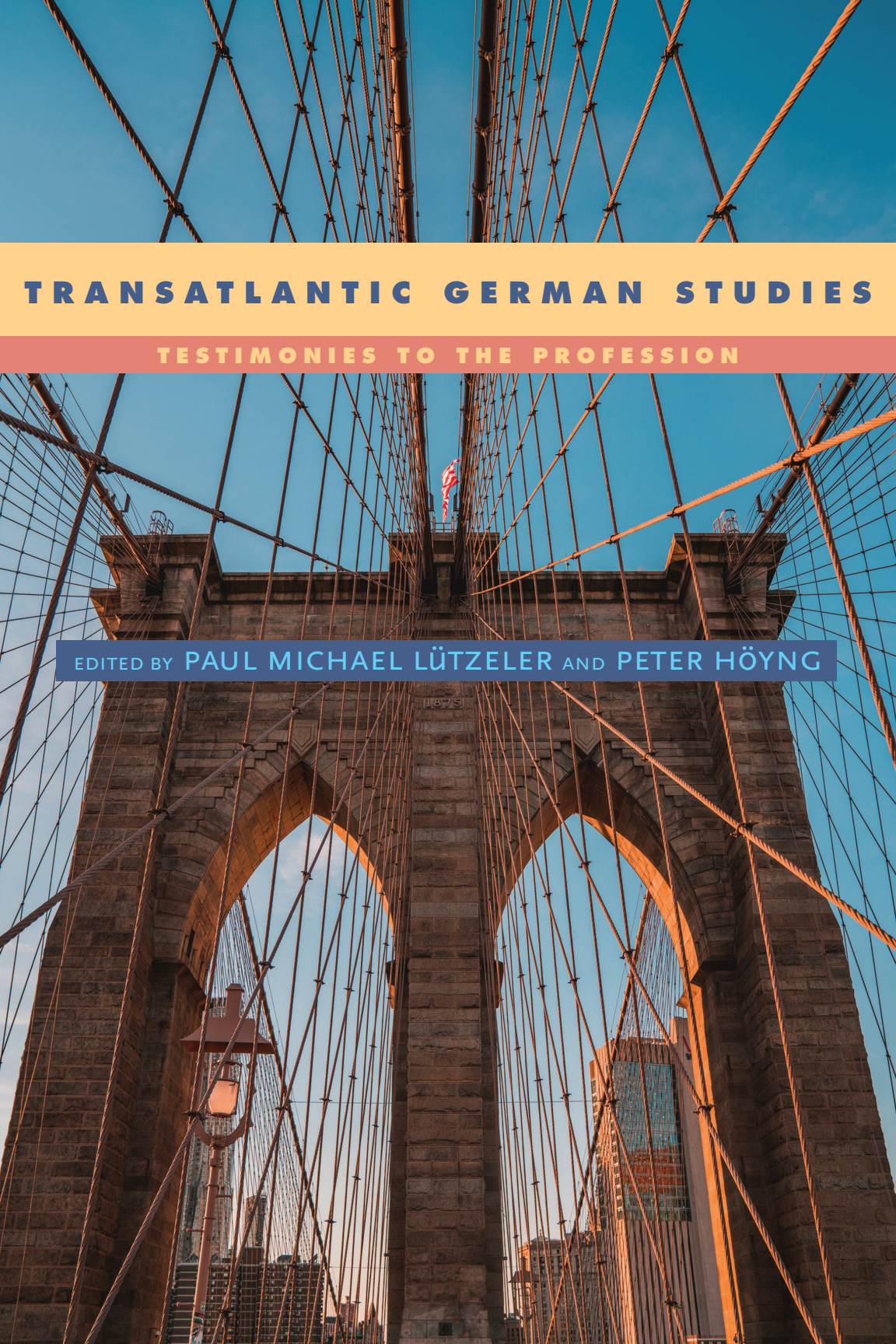
TRANSATLANTIC GERMAN STUDIES

TESTIMONIES TO THE PROFESSION



EDITED BY PAUL MICHAEL LÜTZELER AND PETER HÖYNG

Transatlantic German Studies

Studies in German Literature, Linguistics, and Culture

Transatlantic German Studies

Testimonies to the Profession

Edited by
Paul Michael Lützeler and Peter Höyng

CAMDEN HOUSE
Rochester, New York

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In Memory of

Egon Schwarz

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Acknowledgments

Inspired by the positive feedback on his book *Transatlantische Germanistik* (2013), Paul Michael Lützeler organized a symposium that was named, with a slight but important shift in topic, "Transatlantic *German Studies*," which gives this book its title: *Transatlantic German Studies*. The convivial conference—dedicated to and in memory of Egon Schwarz—took place at Washington University in St. Louis on September 15 and 16, 2017, and the collected essays encompass its proceedings. We also included at the end of this volume the banquet speech by Wilhelm Krull—Head of VolkswagenStiftung in Hannover, Germany, and a *Germanist* himself—since his contribution entails an eloquent and passionate plea for "The Usefulness of Useless Studies."

The symposium was supported by the German Department and the John M. Olin Library at Washington University in St. Louis, by the American Friends of Marbach, by the Max Kade Foundation in New York, as well as by the German Academic Exchange Service (DAAD) office in New York. Herbert Quelle, German Consul General from Chicago, enriched the program by sharing his expertise on "The German Harmonica and African-American Blues Culture." Furthermore, Brian Vetruba from the John M. Olin Library presented to all participants two exhibits: one on the Contemporary German Literature Special Collection initiated by Paul Michael Lützeler in 1985; and the other on the remarkable treasures within the German Collection at the library in general. It was there that Magdalena Schanz from the Deutsches Literaturarchiv (German Literary Archives) in Marbach, Germany shared in a lecture the plans for the Thomas Mann Exhibition in Marbach in 2018.

The Editors

Spring 2018

Introduction

Paul Michael Lützeler (Washington University) and
Peter Höyng (Emory University)

The fifteen essays in this volume present and document the emancipation of German studies from *Germanistik* over the past half a century. They do so, however, in an unusual way: the individual scholars were part of a vanguard group that transformed our discipline. They now bear witness to this dynamic process. The colleagues reflect back on their own academic careers as far as the profession as a whole is concerned, and thereby bring to mind a pluralistic history from the inside. In short, the scholars give testimony to the profession and to the capacious discipline of German studies that it has become.

Thus this volume complements the recent *Taking Stock of German Studies in the United States*, edited by Rachel J. Halverson and Carole Anne Costabile-Heming in 2015, with its primary focus on aspects of teaching German as a foreign language.[1] Likewise, this collection of essays should be seen in light of its predecessors, among them *German Studies in the United States*, edited by Peter Uwe Hohendahl in 2003, or its corresponding *Teaching German in America*, edited by George F. Peters in 2002.[2] Both of these latter-named works provide comprehensive handbooks, and both are published by professional organizations, the former on behalf of the Modern Language Association (MLA), and the latter by the American Association of Teachers of German (AATG). If these two handbooks together are all-inclusive in nature, special accounts such as that of the Brandeis Symposium of 1997, published by Stephen D. Dowden and Meike G. Werner in 2002, focused on Jewish critics and their relationship to German Literature, or thematized the discipline in crisis mode, as John van Cleve and A. Leslie Willson did in their *Remarks on the Needed Reform of German Studies in the United States* in 1993.[3] With less alarming overtones but equally concerned and committed were John McCarthy and Karin Schneider in *The Future of Germanistik in the United States: Changing Our Prospects*, their edited volume based on a symposium at Vanderbilt University in 1995.[4]

It is the latter two books that also underline what distinguishes this anthology of essays. While there are certainly plenty of reasons to lament

the perils and challenges of our profession and those of the humanities at large, this volume provides reasons to celebrate the achievements of what has become and remains a diverse field and a vibrant discipline, in great part thanks to the roles the volume's contributors have played as decisive actors in paradigm shifts. If nothing else, this anthology then documents how far along the discipline has come since the spring of 1989 when Paul Michael Lützeler and Jeffrey Peck edited the special issue of the *German Quarterly* "*Germanistik* as German Studies," in which the methodological and disciplinary borders were openly argued and queried.[5] The effects of this debate became obvious, for example when Scott Denham, Irene Kacandes, and Jonathan Petropoulos edited *A User's Guide to German Cultural Studies* in 1997.[6] Likewise, was one able to witness the achievements in our field in "The GSA Fortieth Anniversary Issue" of the *German Studies Review*, edited by Andreas W. Daum, Sabine Hake, and Brad Prager in the fall of 2016.[7]

Today, it is impossible to imagine the discipline without including women's literature, or the critique of the Frankfurt School, or new debates about modernism, or exiled writers and philosophers from Germany or Austria, or minorities and transnational literature, or German film, or new approaches to thinking about and teaching German as a foreign language; in short: the field has become inclusive, diverse, pluralistic, and interdisciplinary. As subjective as the points of views of the colleague-contributors to this volume necessarily are, their impact on the transformation of our field in the United States is an objective one. Whereas we are used to separating these two spheres to the extent possible—the subjective from the objective—it is the interconnection of the two provinces, the involvement of one with the other that provides in this volume a unique approach to and a new retrospective on our profession.

While each of the essays necessarily narrates a different personal and professional story, all of them nevertheless share central commonalities. None of the individual scholars felt destined to or experienced a linear *Bildungsweg* towards their eventual professional identity. Instead each of them encountered a great many vicissitudes, which they often encapsulated in a telling anecdote, before s/he ended up teaching and researching German as a foreign language, German literature and culture in the United States. Despite the variations of each personal *Bildungsgang*, their outlooks on the profession all entail a narrative on how they got involved in what used to be a rather narrowly defined *Germanistik*; how they reacted to the given status of this field of study at the time; how they pushed *Germanistik* towards new directions of a more diverse and inclusive German studies; and how they were able to contribute over the decades to new approaches and goals in the profession.

As the title of the book already indicates, there is yet another crucial denominator that ties all the essays together thematically: each scholar

deliberately reflects on their transatlantic experiences and dialogues. After all, how could the contributing scholars miss the geopolitical impact when half of them were born as US citizens and half of them immigrated from other countries or continents and started their careers in American *Germanistik* as young scholars. The colleagues who immigrated to the United States remember the first experiences in the American scholarly world, the attractions it held, the impressions it left, the chances it offered, and what it meant for their careers. Those born and raised in the United States recollect their first contacts—as students or as young scholars, and often inflected by their ethnic background—with German-speaking cultures, German or continental *Germanistik*, things that surprised them, how their interest in German literature or culture was stoked (or diminished) by getting acquainted with forms and trends of *Germanistik* in the German-speaking countries or in other parts of the world. What emerges from these stories are the scholarly inspirations that the foreigners got in the United States and the Americans got abroad.

As a result of these reflections on the individuals' positions vis-à-vis different professional and national cultures and ethnic backgrounds, each essay is by definition comparative when reflecting on the various meanings that the prefix "trans-" implies. Most of the contributors go even further in that they deliberately triangulate their own professional identity since this move allows them to be inclusive of other approaches towards literature, disciplines, or cultures. These triangulations deliberately resist the concept of an assimilatory *Aufhebung* of differences and instead they stress and make us aware of dissimilarities without canceling the positions of others. The contributors therefore account for the different academic traditions on both sides of the Atlantic, at a time when the long-held but often contentious relationship between the US and Germany is transformed by way of globalization; the current and surely in the end futile backlash against historical trends notwithstanding.

Due to their transatlantic and international perspectives, these essays are interconnected in that they deliberately reflect on the profession as a whole. They do so in a comparative fashion such as when German studies is seen within the larger context of the humanities in the US and the challenges and changes within its higher education system. Hence comparative literature has become for many contributors the natural extension and ally of German studies in such a way that both fields inform each other's outlook. Furthermore, most of the contributing scholars explicitly make the case for the intrinsic value of studying literature, the liberal arts, and by extension, the humanities in general; they see such study as a necessity for a vibrant and thriving democracy. And because each essay is both personal and retrospective in nature, all show a critical awareness of the profession's history. For many scholars this means that when they started studying or teaching German language, literature, and culture in

the United States, their professors or senior colleagues often were Jewish scholars who were able to escape Nazi Germany in the 1930s and 1940s. And it was in particular these exiled scholars who were keenly aware of the value of teaching and research in the humanities. In other words, these emigrant scholars of German embodied the very essence of both *humanity* and *the humanities*. To signal this crucial connection to that earlier generation we are dedicating the volume to the memory of Egon Schwarz (1922–2017).

Notes

[1] Rachel J. Halverson and Carole Anne Costabile-Heming, eds., *Taking Stock of German Studies in the United States: The New Millennium* (Rochester, NY: Camden House, 2015).

[2] Peter Uwe Hohendahl, *German Studies in the United States: A Historical Handbook* (New York: MLA, 2003); George F. Peters, *Teaching German in America: Past Progress and Future Promise; A Handbook for Teaching and Research* (Cherry Hill, NJ: AATG, 2002).

[3] Stephen D. Dowden and Meike G. Werner, eds., *German Literature, Jewish Critics: The Brandeis Symposium* (Rochester, NY: Camden House, 2002); John van Cleve and Leslie A. Willson, *Remarks on the Needed Reform of German Studies in the United States* (Columbia, SC: Camden House, 1993).

[4] John McCarthy and Karin Schneider, eds., *The Future of Germanistik in the United States: Changing Our Prospects* (Nashville, TN: Department of Germanic and Slavic Languages, Vanderbilt University/Vanderbilt University Press), 1996.

[5] Paul Michael Lützeler and Jeffrey M. Peck, eds., "*Germanistik as German Studies*," special issue, *German Quarterly* 62, no. 2 (Spring 1989).

[6] Scott D. Denham, Irene Kacandes, and Jonathan Petropoulos, eds., *A User's Guide to German Cultural Studies* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1997).

[7] "*The GSA Fortieth Anniversary Issue*," special issue of *German Studies Review* 39, no. 3 (October 2016), edited by Andreas W. Daum, Sabine Hake, and Brad Prager.

From *Erfahrungshunger to Realitätshunger*: Futurity, Migration, and Difference

Leslie A. Adelson (Cornell University)

Anfang und Fortschritt was the grammar book with which my German-language learning began in the New England fall of 1971, when I was nineteen and a sophomore in college. Yet there is nothing predictable about "beginning" or "progress" in my story of becoming a professor of German literary studies, and writing this in the summer of 2017, I cannot help but feel that any storytelling path I choose will be misguided, strewn with unfortunate omissions and isolated emphases, feigning more cohesion and surety than my personal trajectory warrants. This is an essay I never sought or knew how to write, so it has become an essay in the literal sense of the word. Theodor W. Adorno, who wrote so brilliantly in "The Essay as Form" in 1958, is a comfort to me when he insists (though comfort is hardly his concern) that the essay as form sets into motion a "force field" of utopian longing (13), "continuity as discontinuity" (16), and "individual human experience held together in hope and disillusionment" (8).[1] Karl Marx once wrote in a related vein, in his sixth thesis on Feuerbach, that the "essence" of being human is not the property of individual human beings but "the ensemble of the social relations" (Engels, 97). This need not be confined to empirically existent relations, but where and how would I begin to draw meaningful lines of connection or distinction between my personal experiences and an "ensemble" story of transatlantic German Studies? This is a daunting and impossible task, and any attempt to undertake it will surely leave too many things unsaid. Yet the study of German language, literature, and culture that began for me in 1971 has taught me that the impossible can be worth pursuing, and that language can transform us all. German is a trickster, as I learned early on, when I discovered that a single word such as "bitte" could signal both need and grace, and that the magic of "Mensch" lies in this word's ability to mediate between the empirically imperfect and a humanist practice of becoming more than we took ourselves to be.

I doubt I had ever heard of consequential historical phenomena such as the Enlightenment or the Treaty of Versailles until my junior year abroad in Hamburg, when a gifted tutor and literary scholar named Ulrich Bubrowski made *Emilia Galotti* come alive at the crossroads of society and sentiment, or when another favorite teacher and modern historian, Peter Borowsky, drove home the point that the rhetorical figure of Germany having been driven "to its knees" in one textbook did not warrant repetition in every sentence about the colossal effects of World War I. Indelibly etched in my memory, these moments and lessons all came later. What came first? A paradox of being simultaneously clueless and directed? Raised in family circumstances where financial struggles were pressing, I recall wondering on my way to school one day, around the age of ten, how on earth I would ever manage to make a living. This was a future I could not imagine. When I was a teenager, I had no idea what I wanted to become in life, but there were two things in which, I knew for sure, I had no interest whatsoever. One was becoming a teacher, and the other was learning German. My passion for both came later. Even as an older teen in the early 1970s, I knew about things "German" mainly through an unlikely pairing of *Hogan's Heroes*, a new situation-comedy series for US television set in a prisoner-of-war camp run by bumbling Nazis, and *Night and Fog*, Alain Resnais's radically sobering French documentary film from 1955 about industrialized death camps run by all-too-horrifying real Nazis at Auschwitz and Majdanek. What did any of this have to do with me? To this Jewish American teenager, World War II and the Holocaust were ancient history. For my generation, the Vietnam War and sociopolitical conflicts associated with 1968 were raging in their stead.

My thoughts meander in this vein because writing about my personal experiences "in" Germany invariably confounds the meaning of the locative preposition. All my experiences in Germany begin elsewhere, and yet my relationship to the very texture of experience was changed by the postwar Germany, critical theory, and literary tastes I would come to know and cultivate through the sounds, signs, and silences of German, a language I never intended to learn. Much of this "beginning" transpired under the influence of migration and exile, though I claim neither as my own. In family terms alone, my Eastern European grandparents emigrated to the United States from Vilna in the early twentieth century to escape czarist conscription or worse. To one of them I would owe my college education, as my mother did hers amidst the Great Depression. A junk peddler by trade, her father happened to settle in Northampton, Massachusetts, where Sophia Smith happened to have founded a liberal arts college for women in 1871, to address rampant gender inequality in higher education. Because the funding bequest also allowed local girls who met admissions requirements to attend more or less free of fees, my mother would be able to receive her BA with a Spanish major

in 1939 after having spent her junior year abroad in Mexico City, when fascist-supported Nationalists and communist-aided Republicans were still embattled in civil war in Spain. My encounter with German legacies of fascism and communism, the two most influential mass movements of twentieth-century Europe, would come unbidden when I first went to live in Germany in 1972. Even now, when I read Walter Benjamin's poetic characterization of Siegfried Kracauer in 1930 as a "ragpicker, at daybreak" (Benjamin, 310), I see shadows of a maternal grandfather I never knew, one whose experience of migration surely made it possible for me to attain a college education and later to envision migration studies and German literary studies as entangled critical fields.

Transnational migration was a constant though mostly unspoken factor in my academic training in the United States too. As a graduate student in Washington University's Department of Germanic Languages and Literatures from 1977 to 1982, I first read Adorno's *Ästhetische Theorie* and probed its significance for the Frankfurt School of critical theory with Peter Uwe Hohendahl, parsed Hugo von Hofmannsthal's approach to the Viennese *Sprachkrise* with Egon Schwarz, studied Middle High German and medieval literary culture with Gerhild Scholz Williams and James Poag, and discovered Botho Strauß and many other contemporary German writers in an experimental seminar with Paul Michael Lützeler. These distinguished scholars and teachers all have their own stories of twentieth-century migration and critical difference to tell, as does Hans Vaget from Smith College, who is best known internationally for his scholarly studies of Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, Thomas Mann, and Richard Wagner, and with whom I was privileged to write my much less memorable senior honors thesis on Goethe's *Theatralische Sendung* in 1974. In that New England fall of 1971 though, he was assigned to teach Smith's introductory German-language course, and clueless but attentive as I was, there I sat. The trajectory of my life and career owes much above all to that location, which is unmarked on any map.

If I had any sense of direction at the time, my orientation was not toward Germany but ancient Greece. My working fantasies until then had included being Mighty Mouse in my back yard, a cowboy, a hairdresser, a nurse at Halloween, and once I discovered art history in college, an archaeologist. Only the latter aspiration persuaded me to learn German after all. As my unseasoned nineteen-year-old brain reasoned, hadn't Heinrich Schliemann discovered Troy? Critical awareness would come significantly later, but whether he discovered or destroyed remnants of ancient Troy, Schliemann had a distinct hand in me stumbling upon German as a vehicle for experiential and intellectual discovery. Hans Vaget was the first of several demanding mentors from whom I learned that the devil and god alike are in the details, and only keen attention to the important ones can teach us how to tell the difference. When he singlehandedly alerted me to the

possibility of spending a year in Hamburg through Smith College's study abroad program, I knew only that I was hungry for experience, and a door began to open wide. I walked through it with more blindness than insight.

When a companion door opened for me at the Hamburg airport one year later, I was greeted by Margaret Zelljadt, a gifted historical linguist who had not only introduced me to the alchemy of the subjunctive mood in my second semester of German but also directed Smith's Hamburg program during my year of transformation, and by Luise Lutz, in whose home I was by chance slated to live, the only student on the program that year who had opted to reside with a German family rather than in a student dormitory. A post-professional student who was working toward an advanced degree in linguistics, Luise Lutz would later be both acclaimed and beloved for her pathbreaking innovations in therapeutic approaches to extreme stroke-related aphasia (see *Das Schweigen verstehen*). To me she was an inspiration, mentor, and friend long before either one of us had any academic degrees. Of the countless persons and experiences that shaped that first year of discovery in Germany, however labyrinthine the path, two stand out as especially influential, though neither had any direct bearing on my study of literature. The quietly persevering and deeply incisive Luise Lutz, whose conjoined skills in survival and compassion had been honed in a German childhood when war was palpably real, taught me by example that dominant views can be both deadly wrong and effectively challenged, even by the least powerful among us. The other beacon on that early horizon of Hamburg memories is Fritz Jacobs, a brilliantly effervescent teacher of art history, from whom I first learned that Baroque architecture is more than an academic category of disinterested identification. He taught me to see movement in static things such as Bernini's *Ecstasy of Saint Teresa*, but most of all he taught me literally to see that paying attention to small details matters in dramatic ways. My love of literature came largely from a young lifetime of reading and my dedicated high-school teachers of English and French, but from Luise Lutz, Fritz Jacobs, and many others I learned in that first year in Hamburg that perception, language, imagination, and the arts matter radically for survival, critique, and the social accountability we share for history and each other. Once I began turning my attention to modern German literature earnestly in this vein, as an adult vocation, all the people I had known in the US and Germany came with me. The "I" with which I write is well populated, and not only by persons I have known. As soon as I graduated from Smith College with a BA in German literature in 1974, I returned to Hamburg to live once more, this time under the auspices of the Fulbright-Hays Act, which the US Congress had passed in 1961, in the postwar hope that educational exchange makes international understanding possible. German involvement in this program exceeds any story that would belong to me alone.

Erich Auerbach once remarked in passing in 1952 that good students "already have a command of the spirit of their own times," without the need of special instruction, merely by virtue of living in "their own times" (259). According to Auerbach, they require such instruction only to gain insight into earlier times. Yet as the founder of the discipline of comparative literature crucially contends: "There is no question that we must learn to understand the whole of history from within the mentality and circumstances of our own times if that history is to become relevant for us" (259). By this reckoning, some command of our own times becomes paramount for understanding anything literary scholars might wish to know, while such command is mysteriously cast by Auerbach as something we possess naturally. My experiences in both West Germany and the United States of the 1970s go against the grain of any presumption of natural possession of time, history, or literature. I did not experience 1968 for example until I arrived in West Germany in 1972, where leftist student protest movements were challenging colonialist legacies of Western imperialism (including US-American hegemony in places such as Vietnam and Chile), fascist undercurrents in postwar German society and economics (as lambasted for example in Klaus Staeck's ubiquitous satirical poster art), and even the basic legitimacy of bourgeois subjectivity. If Emilia Galotti's loving and naïve sentiments seemed radically progressive in the 1770s, those of her twentieth-century sisters would be dismissed as naïvely "self"-indulgent instead. This yielded another experiential paradox for me, inasmuch as literature and history were coming alive in each other in the contemporary Germany I was coming to know, while the academic establishment on both sides of the Atlantic at the time tended to dismiss contemporary literature as trivial and passing—unworthy of sustained scholarly attention—and the political subculture of student activists pooh-poohed literary interests as bourgeois. Hans Magnus Enzensberger had famously spoken of the "death of literature" in a standard-setting issue of *Kursbuch* in 1968, a thoughtful critique of certain literary failures that many vocal activists misread as a damning dismissal of literature altogether. Focused attention to contemporary German literature was doubly doomed. At odds in so many other respects, academic convention and student protest were oddly united in a shared conviction that contemporary literature about contemporary life mattered not. It never occurred to me then that I would have a scholarly career or that it would begin by focusing on this conundrum.

The difference that contemporary life makes in literary analysis, especially with regard to textual form, has driven whatever contributions I have been able to make to the transformation of *Germanistik* in the United States and the broader international field of German studies. This has hardly been my doing alone. Already in the 1970s, former student activists such as Peter Schneider, Karin Struck, Uwe Timm, Jochen

Schimmang, and Nicolas Born had begun searching for literary language and especially narrative forms that could operatively intervene in what my first book would in the early 1980s analyze as a deep-seated "crisis of subjectivity" peculiar to contemporary experience. In his 1975 article "Rückkehr zur schönen Literatur," the literary critic Marcel Reich-Ranicki had conspicuously dubbed this publishing phenomenon the "New Subjectivity," but he had mistakenly consigned it to a renunciation of politics rather than its reconfiguration in the literary language of selfhood. This is now well known, but in West Germany of the 1970s, polemics and more were fiercely contested as left-wing terrorism in the Federal Republic grew, state oppression escalated (in the form of the so-called *Berufsverbote* or "professional proscriptions" designed to keep leftists out of civil service jobs in West Germany, for example, or Wolf Biermann's expatriation from East Germany in 1976), and the value of contemporary literature about contemporary life was too easily relegated to themes alone.[2] The academic field of *Germanistik* at the time, on both sides of the Atlantic, generally looked askance at contemporary emphases as unserious pursuits. When I declared my desire at the end of the decade to write a dissertation on the aesthetics of subjectivity in contemporary German literature (instead of writing one with my original eighteenth-century focus), one well-meaning interlocutor tried to dissuade me. One need not feel personally invested in one's topic, this scholar contended, since dissertations are after all mere "finger exercises" in academic accreditation. Even then, I knew this was misguided advice.

Several factors came together that gave me courage to make contemporary German literature and my "own times" my scholarly focus after all. As in so many other aspects of this roundabout tale of *Anfang* and *Fortschritt*, these factors comprise a network of books, institutions, persons, events, and times. And some elements of this network spanned the Atlantic rather than being located discretely in a single country. When I left Hamburg at the end of 1976 to take up graduate studies at Washington University in St. Louis, I was attracted to a top-notch and versatile program that was both historically grounded and critically attuned to the present. Peter Uwe Hohendahl had been teaching there since 1968 and chairing the Department of Germanic Languages and Literatures since 1972. His expertise in the public life of literature and the critical theory of the Frankfurt School, and the department's overall profile of sociohistorical accountability and analytical experimentation (in the field of German-Jewish exile literature, for example) were especially appealing to me. Even though I delayed the start of graduate school for so long that Hohendahl and I overlapped in St. Louis for just one semester before he moved to Cornell University, where we would encounter each other as colleagues some twenty years later, the courses I took with him in the spring of 1977 on Adorno's approach to aesthetics and

on nineteenth-century political lyric in Germany inspire me still. Oddly enough, Adorno has proved a surprisingly resilient bridge in two of my own books, separated by over thirty years, to contemporary writers as diverse in style and objective as Botho Strauß (*Crisis of Subjectivity*) and Alexander Kluge (*Cosmic Miniatures and the Future Sense*). Aside from a departmental culture in which faculty and students alike volunteered time to send protest letters against contemporary *Berufsverbote* or to research articles for the *GDR Bulletin*, which began in 1975 as a newsletter edited by Patricia Herminghouse and helped establish the field of GDR studies in the United States, two academic experiments in a more formal sense encouraged me to explore contemporary German literature as a legitimate object of study without a preconceived road map. The 1970s were a heyday of ferment in women's movements internationally and in the academic articulation of feminist literary theory. A future president of the professional German Studies Association in the twenty-first century, Patricia Herminghouse offered the first graduate seminar in Washington University's German department, in the late 1970s, on contemporary women's literature in East and West Germany in comparative perspective. This exploratory course thrilled me with permission to be genuinely curious about present-day literary cultures that academia was otherwise all too happy to ignore. Paul Michael Lützeler's first graduate seminar on contemporary German literature around the same time, which presumably also played a role in the story of the uniquely distinguished Max Kade Center for Contemporary German Literature that he would found in 1984, had a similar liberatory effect on me and also introduced me to *Die Widmung* by Botho Strauß, which in turn sparked my critical work on a contemporary crisis of subjectivity in literary form.[3]

If the academic institution of a forward-thinking German department in the United States enabled certain paths of intellectual discovery and professional orientation for me, it also introduced me to Jörg Drews at an international conference on "West German Literature after 1965," convened at Washington University in the spring of 1980. This introduction in St. Louis in turn facilitated additional exchange in (West) Berlin, where I spent 1980–81 conducting dissertation research on Botho Strauß. This contemporary author, who was living in Berlin, was notoriously averse to pesky interviews with scholars of *Germanistik* seeking explanations of his work, and as a doctoral candidate focusing on his aesthetics of subjectivity in prose, I opted to respect his aversion, even though I had read somewhere that he favored the shrimp salad at KaDeWe (Berlin's luxurious department and grocery store known as the *Kaufhaus des Westens* or "Department Store of the West") and deduced that I might find him there. (Some years after *Crisis of Subjectivity* appeared, I did seek contact and was kindly invited to tea, on the condition that we not discuss his work. A wonderful discussion of theater ensued.) While I was researching

Strauß's writing in Berlin however, Drews—who was both a professor of literature at the still relatively new and reform-oriented University of Bielefeld, on the one hand, and a literary critic and *Feuilleton* editor for the *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, on the other, and who frequently met with a wide range of contemporary German and Austrian authors in Berlin—would now and then introduce me to some of them. Whether I was actually meeting or merely hearing about experimental writers such as Oskar Pastior, Oswald Wiener, Walter Kempowski, Arno Schmidt, Herbert Achternbusch, and Paul Wühr (none of whom appeared on any syllabus I had ever seen on either side of the Atlantic), what was most important in my passing encounters with these literati was the crucial realization that much contemporary literature of profound merit passes under the radar of literary scholarship and literary history. Even though Drews and I would ultimately disagree about Alexander Kluge, another maverick about whom he also wrote, I learned above all from Drews the literary critic that German literature is not always where academic curricula tell us to look for it. This lesson would also prove invaluable when I turned my attention to literary practices and critical theories of difference in relation to gender, race, ethnicity, genocide, and migration.

Part of my brain wants to tell this story chronologically, but this "ensemble" story of personal experiences, intellectual trajectories, and transatlantic relations keeps pushing me back in time to the 1970s and my discomfort now with Auerbach's suggestion that we come to know our "own times" by natural possession. Nothing about my 1970s felt natural to me (except perhaps going to school, which is something I have more or less done since I was kicked out of kindergarten in 1956 and allowed back in a year later), and learning German played a large part in acquainting me with the critical principle of what Adorno would call "non-identity." If *Germanistik* in the 1970s was an academic field dominated by men in both Germany and the United States, the founding of the feminist organization Women in German in the US in 1974 gave women across the academic ranks a vibrant, supportive, and critical forum for articulating feminist analyses of German literature and literary history, pedagogical paradigms, and professional transformations. This was a personal and intellectual lifeline for fledgling US-American *Germanistinnen* like me. Biddy Martin, who would later author *Woman and Modernity* (in a book series on "Reading Women Writing"), and I, who would later write a book on feminist theories of positionality and contemporary women's literature, agency, and embodiment (*Making Bodies, Making History*), first met for example as graduate students from two different schools at an annual Women in German workshop in the late 1970s, a collective non-identical venue in which formal and political relationships between feminism and aesthetics were rigorously discussed. Those and many other conversations with various Women in German members have over the

years been formative, especially in the organization's unstinting commitment to non-discriminatory and self-reflexive practices in the teaching and study of German languages, literatures, and cultures. As with other fields and politics of academic contestation, there is nothing harmonious in the history or articulation of feminist scholarship, but lifelines are made of sturdier stuff than harmony.

The 1970s also introduced me to innovative scholarly journals of critical theory, social philosophy, and intellectual history such as *New German Critique*, which boldly called itself "an interdisciplinary journal of German Studies" already with its first issue in 1973 (which by the way included an early English translation of an article by Marxist social theorist Oskar Negt, with whom Alexander Kluge has closely collaborated over decades), and *Telos*, which was then subtitled "a quarterly journal of radical thought" and oriented to the New Left under the editorship of sociologist Paul Piccone. Because I was pursuing advanced studies of German literature and theory at Washington University, I was privileged to take a seminar on social theories of knowledge production with Piccone (before his appeal of his negative tenure review ran its unlucky course) and to work with the interdisciplinary graduate student collective known as the St. Louis *Telos* group. Because of my geographical location in the American Midwest, and because of some critical affinities between my home department in St. Louis and the German department at the University of Wisconsin in Madison, I would join fellow students to form caravans and drive north to attend the invigorating and sometimes explosive annual workshops on German literature and culture held at Madison. These workshops brought German and American practitioners of *Germanistik* together, and opinions as to what that practice should mean often varied widely on political, methodological, and generational grounds. The attendant debates and dance parties were equally heated. Because key members of *New German Critique*'s editorial board at the time (such as David Bathrick, Andreas Huyssen, Jack Zipes, and Helen Fehervary) were also located in the Midwest (Bathrick in Madison, Huyssen and Zipes in Milwaukee, and Fehervary in Columbus), the Wisconsin Workshop was for me also a venue where German theories of literature, culture, and critique—especially in the spirit of *New German Critique*—literally came alive. There were stakes that mattered both in and outside academe in the ongoing wake of fascist and communist legacies, and whether I fully understood a given analysis or not, I grasped then in a visceral way that the practice of German studies is never neutral or inert. The interdisciplinary and transnational mediations of German theory and experience that *New German Critique* affords for English-speaking readers have continued to inform and inspire much of my work ever since.

Two German books belonging to the 1970s in many senses imprinted themselves on my critical sensibilities like no others. Published in 1980,

the first of these is Michael Rutschky's *Erfahrungshunger: Ein Essay über die siebziger Jahre*, which paints with words a phenomenal portrait of what it felt like to live in the protest culture of the decade, at a time when the conceptual language of the Left promised liberation from experiences of oppression and in the same breath often foreclosed a phenomenology of experience by making Marxist concepts king. Whether the student movement associated with "1968" and the decade that followed is deemed to have succeeded or failed, the gap between concept and experience that it bookmarked signals for Rutschky a discontinuous relationship to utopian desire that is full of stops and starts, but despite the real "terror and pain" (101–93) of the decade, not resigned. Hanns-Josef Ortheil's contemporary review for *Merkur* captures not only the structure of Rutschky's book well but also its style:

> Die kunstvolle und doch versteckte Hermetik einer Gedankenführung, die den Leser nicht bei der Hand nimmt, sondern ihm nahelegt, lang und länger auf die Phänomene zu blicken, bis er sie als die erfahrenen und gelebten erkennt, setzt wie bei kaum einem anderen 'theoretischen' Werk Teilnahme, nicht stummes Lernen voraus. (934)

If Auerbach suggests that an understanding of our own times comes to us naturally, Rutschky's phenomenological portrait of a broken time subtly and paradoxically indexes a generation's intimate utopian quest for experience and language alike. Reading Rutschky while I was living in Berlin felt like being struck by the subtlest form of lightning. This was the first piece of critical writing I encountered that validated my own phenomenological sense of contemporary German life—a life that I shared at least in part—as a legitimate object of analysis and not merely a "space of experience" (Koselleck, 259).

Before I discovered Rutschky, there was Kluge, whose experimental literary writings above all have been a welcome provocation and generative irritant ever since. First published in 1977 and dedicated to the "Unheimlichkeit der Zeit," his *Neue Geschichten* collection is perhaps best known for its montage aesthetic of historical storytelling, especially in the entry "Der Luftangriff auf Halberstadt am 8. April 1945" (33–106), which W. G. Sebald famously counted in *Luftkrieg und Literatur* as one of the few German literary texts to deal with the Allied bombing of German civilians in World War II. The "air raid" entry also exemplifies Kluge's signature attention to devilishly entangled strategies of destruction "from above" and survival strategies "from below." I was immediately taken by the storytelling experiments in *Neue Geschichten*, including those that deal with topics ranging from National Socialism to astrophysics to child rearing and more, but the one that seized my attention most

is "Zustöpseln eines Kinderhirns" (14–15). This is a disquieting portrait of a large "ensemble" problem, the inculcation of thought that disdains difference and warps rather than sharpens perception. Here we encounter six-year-old Gerhard, who may be trapped between the Scylla of Nazi eugenics and the Charybdis of "set theory" in school. Unlike other boys his size, this German child is "nicht willig, die Mengenlehre zu begreifen, das Vergleichbare der Abbildungen herauszuarbeiten, weil er sicher weiß, wie ungleich in der Praxis alles Gleiche (oder nur um ein Jahr im Altersunterschied Versetzte) gehandelt wird" (15). Yet in a surprising narrative turn involving a cow's anus and a mode of looking (though not at the cow), we see all is not lost for Gerhard after all. Regardless of scale and theme, anti-realist hope and real catastrophe are always linked in the formal experimentation of Kluge's literary narratives, and this aesthetic constellation is akin in some ways to what Hannah Arendt once described, in 1943 in reference to Jewish refugees, as a kind of "insane optimism" living "next door to despair" (113). If Ortheil appreciated Rutschky's encouragement to let our eyes linger "long[er] and longer on the phenomena" of a turbulent time, Kluge's *Neue Geschichten* and "Zustöpseln eines Kinderhirns" made me want to keep lingering on the phenomenological and narrative operations of counterfactual hope in his persistently extraordinary writing about historical catastrophes.

Forty years later, my tarrying in the labyrinth resulted in *Cosmic Miniatures and the Future Sense*, a book that coincides with renewed interest across the disciplines in future studies for a conflict-ridden twenty-first century, when the future itself seems at risk on even larger scales. Back in the 1970s though, when I was personally experiencing West Germany as a contemporary living culture for the first time, that culture was devoting considerable affective and critical attention to the crimes of the Nazi past and a German social order that had been bent on the eradication of difference. If 1940s Europe had felt like ancient history to me when I was watching *Hogan's Heroes* back home, living and studying amidst the West German protest culture of the 1970s brought a profound German sense of postwar accountability for the Third Reich and the Holocaust home to me. Reading Kluge made the perceptual entanglement of past, present, and future time come alive to me as well, though it would take years of lingering on this nexus before I would come to understand how it operates on the level of experimentation with temporal perspective and narrative form (see *Cosmic Miniatures and the Future Sense* for detailed analysis of such experimentation in Kluge's storytelling hands, including in a collection of miniatures dedicated to Fritz Bauer, the German-Jewish jurist who played a key role in launching the Frankfurt Auschwitz trials of the mid 1960s).

Anti-Semitism was not entirely absent from the postwar Germany I knew, but instances in which I encountered it directly were rare. One

German student my age and a fellow dormitory resident was visibly shocked to learn I was Jewish because I did not have "the nose," as he put it. I was more shaken by an exchange that took place in 1987 in a bookstore specializing in Judaica, when, thanks to the especially generous support of the Humboldt Foundation and the welcoming professional sponsorship of Jörg Schönert from the German literature department at the University of Hamburg, I was spending another year in Germany, this time to conduct research on contemporary literatures of embodiment for *Making Bodies, Making History*. Because I had just opted to join the only extant Jewish congregation in town for the duration of my stay, I was hoping to learn more about the contemporary Jewish community in Hamburg, which I knew to have significant membership, including many Iranian Jews who had migrated to Germany after the Iranian Revolution of 1979. When I told the sales clerk what I was seeking, she disappeared for several minutes and returned with many wonderful books, all of which ended unwonderfully with the Third Reich. Baffled, I explained again to the bookstore expert on Judaica that I was interested in the contemporary lives of Jews in Germany. No less baffled, she proclaimed conclusively, no doubt thinking I had come from the moon: "Die gibt es nicht." The startling realization that such a blind spot could exist for someone working in this specialty bookstore, for someone who was convinced she was looking at all the right "phenomena" to be accountable to difference, made me especially curious about constellations of difference that binary paradigms (dead or alive, German or Jewish, male or female, west or east, literary or social) were inadequate to explain or even to portray. What happens to our critical perspectives on contemporary aesthetics of difference if third, fourth, or entirely uncountable elements are made to come into view?

My year in Berlin at the onset of the 1980s had already alerted me to many things about contemporary literature and contemporary life that can fly under the radar of scholarly recognition. With the benefit of hindsight I would say that this applies not only to the circle of writers I encountered through Jörg Drews but also to expanding perceptions of my own generation, notably through my enduring personal, intellectual, and creatively alchemical friendship with Christine Rinderknecht, a multitalented Swiss novelist, playwright, director, and dramaturge in Zurich. We owe the beginning of our shared explorations of literature in life to yet another organization dedicated to international educational exchange, the German Academic Exchange Service (DAAD), which had sent her on fellowship to the Freie Universität Berlin at the same time that I arrived on my fellowship from Washington University. When this future literary author and this future literary scholar first met at a FUB dinner for international fellows in the fall of 1980, neither one of us knew what our futures would hold, but our eyes began to open wide at the expanded perspectives this exchange would make possible. A DAAD "internationales

Germanistentreffen" on contemporary literature held in West Berlin in 1983 marked another important turning point for me by signaling growing legitimation of this academic concentration. A DAAD symposium in Philadelphia in 1988 had a similar effect in relation to "interdisciplinarity in German studies" and resulted in a corresponding theme issue of *German Quarterly* in 1989. To the DAAD I also owe the opportunities to direct intensive summer seminars at Cornell, for younger generations of German studies faculty from North American institutions, on the discipline's relationship to "the global" in 2005 and to futurity in 2012.

As the field of "contemporary literature" and my critical perceptions of it continued to expand over the 1980s and 1990s and beyond, my professional interests have pivoted on a differential aesthetic of difference, one that sets literary forms of narrative and social forms of life in relation to each other without reducing or equating one to another. This has also involved setting contemporary German literatures by different so-called minorities (such as women, Jews, Iranians, Turks, and Black Germans, for example) in transnational relation to each other, often with unpredictable results and triangulations (see for example my chapters on Anne Duden and Jeannette Lander in *Making Bodies, Making History* or the chapter "Genocide and Taboo" in *The Turkish Turn*). Much of this work was nourished, challenged, or sparked by key conferences in Germany, other professional encounters with German intellectuals and writers, or in some cases current events. One landmark conference in my experience was organized by the University of Hamburg's Arbeitsstelle für feministische Literaturwissenschaft (founded and directed by Inge Stephan and Sigrid Weigel) together with the affiliated journal *Frauen in der Literaturwissenschaft* in May 1986 ("Frauen—Literatur—Politik"), and another by Sigrid Weigel, Inge Stephan, and Sabine Schilling for Essen's Kulturwissenschaftliches Institut in December 1990 ("Jüdische Kultur und Weiblichkeit in der Moderne").[4] These conferences brought feminist literary scholars together from Germany, the United States, Great Britain, the Netherlands, Israel, Japan, and elsewhere for rigorous intellectual exchange and often probing disagreement about feminist aesthetics and what we today call intersectional analysis. I recall three atmospheric qualities most keenly about these signal gatherings. One was a shared conviction that minorities and migration matter for intellectual work in the literary field. Another was a remarkable sensibility for the texture of silence when historical trauma wanted to but could not speak its name, especially when experiences of racism and genocide were at stake. And finally, these were venues in which I first met many of the critical interlocutors and literary authors whose work has vitally enabled, even at some distance and not always in obvious ways, my own. They include writers such as May Opitz (later Ayim), Aysel Özakin, and Jeannette Lander, as well as scholars such as Sigrid Weigel, Birgit Erdle, and Gisela Ecker.

Important conversations with foundational figures of gender studies in the German context, such as Sabine Hark and Christina von Braun, were by contrast made possible by later conferences held in the United States. Several key voices of intersectional feminist scholarship in *Germanistik* and comparative literature gained voice first and sometimes only as independent scholars. Turkish-German voices of literary scholarship appear similarly marginalized in German institutions of higher education today, with the notable exception of Kader Konuk, who wrote her dissertation in comparative literature with Gisela Ecker in 1999 and received a distinguished professorship in the University of Duisburg-Essen's Institute for Turkish Studies in 2014.

If I have the Humboldt Foundation to thank for introducing me to British and African Germanists such as Steve Giles, Moray McGowan, and Adjaï Oloukpona-Yinnon as early as the 1980s, and German Studies Association conventions in the US for introducing me in the 1990s to Turkish-German and Black German public intellectuals, creative writers, and scholar-activists such as Zafer Şenocak, Fatima El-Tayeb, and Peggy Piesche, the right-wing firebombing murders of Turkish women and children in the western German cities of Mölln and Solingen in 1992 and 1993 shook me into focusing my existing transnational interests in literature, migration, and minorities on the growing cultural phenomenon of a Turkish-German literature of migration, which was already doing so much more than merely replicating a tired stereotype of migrants suspended "between two worlds" or pronouncements of a "clash of civilizations." My article "Opposing Oppositions: Turkish-German Questions in Contemporary German Studies" was the first of many I would write on this seemingly intractable topic. Written for a public event on *Heimat* at Berlin's Haus der Kulturen der Welt in 2000, my manifesto "Against Between" followed, as did eventually *The Turkish Turn in Contemporary German Literature*, with which I aimed above all to rethink the presumed relationship between literary and social phenomena in this regard. Some jarring moments attended my transition into this subfield in the early stages of its formation. The Minneapolis restaurant hosting featured speakers (May Ayim among them) from a 1994 university conference on "Xenophobia in Germany," for example, greeted us warmly with a specially printed menu labeled "Welcome to Xenophobia!" Blind spots of a more targeted nature manifested in vocal disdain and physical shunning by a handful of German scholars and intellectuals (in this case, all men) when I gave the long version of "Opposing Oppositions" a public airing for the first time, also in 1994. I do not mean to suggest that criticism would have been unwelcome or unwarranted. However, the affective vehemence and absolute dismissal I encountered from some German colleagues on that occasion serve as an extreme reminder of a more prosaic phenomenon: mainstream scholarship in Germany was for many years

not particularly interested in or receptive to my work on the nexus of literary form and social life in contemporary Germany. My personal experiences and transatlantic relations with German academe have changed dramatically for the better in the twenty-first century, partly thanks to the international growth of related fields such as migration studies and globalization studies, and notably thanks to both formal and informal intellectual exchanges with a wide range of discerning colleagues and critical interlocutors at the Humboldt-University of Berlin, the Justus-Liebig-University of Giessen, and the University of Konstanz.

My current interests in future studies and narrative form emerged in some senses from *The Turkish Turn in Contemporary German Literature*, where I wrote in 2005: "The future of Germany lies ahead no less than its past, and the literature of Turkish migration labors to articulate newly intelligible relationships between them" (169). More focused interest in evolving constellations and concepts of futurity leads me back to Kluge, whose literary experiments I first encountered in 1970s Germany at the "ensemble" crossroads of hope, despair, and catastrophe. The field and I had no critical language for such future-oriented crossroads then—Kluge's contemporary writing is helping us divine one now (see for example his story collection *Tür an Tür mit einem anderen Leben*). And it is striking that futurity becomes a bridge between so-called minority literatures in Germany, on the one hand, and Adorno's inventive heir, on the other, as our "own times" make us question the experiential status of futurity itself (see Adelson "Experiment Mars"). Kathrin Röggla, a critical Austrian wordsmith of contemporary capital whom I was privileged to meet during her stint as artist-in-residence at Cornell University in fall of 2016, speaks of a "Krise des Erzählens von Begebenheiten und Erfahrungen" (328), when conversation is already catastrophe in small form (315). She speaks, not of "Erfahrungshunger," but of a contemporary "Realitätshunger" (33). This includes in my view hunger for the reality of a future in which difference is not eradicated. The best of contemporary literature bespeaks such a non-identical hunger for our own times, and that too is an aesthetic form of embodiment, one that, as I argue in my recent work on Kluge's "future sense," can be experiential without ever being empirical alone.

Notes

[1] Here I deviate from Shierry Weber Nicholsen's translation of Adorno's phrasing, "die in Hoffnung und Desillusion zusammengehaltene einzelmenschliche Erfahrung" (Adorno, "Der Essay als Form," 15). Nicholsen renders this as "individual human experience, maintained through hope and disillusionment" ("The Essay as Form," 8), whereas, for Adorno, hope and disillusionment form the composite glue that holds individual human experience "together."

[2] The value of contemporary films, especially those such as *Deutschland im Herbst* (1978), made by directors associated with New German Cinema, were by contrast more frequently discussed in conjoined terms of political themes and cinematic form.

[3] *Crisis of Subjectivity* focuses on Strauß's early prose writings, from the 1970s through *Paare, Passanten* (1981), which are different in aesthetic and tone from his later works beginning with *Der junge Mann* (1984). Strauß is also well known for his extensive work in contemporary German theater and for his highly controversial essays "Anschwellender Bocksgesang" (1993) and "Der letzte Deutsche" (2015). One might say that *Crisis of Subjectivity* deals with an "other" Strauß, one that the reading public, literary critics, and many scholars have largely forgotten.

[4] For an overview of the history and significance of Hamburg's Arbeitsstelle für feministische Literaturwissenschaft, see Ulrike Vedder, "Innovation, Institution." Scholarly anthologies based on the two conferences appeared in 1988 and 1994 respectively, though published content and conference content are not identical. For an overview of institutionalized gender studies in twentieth-century Germany, see Claudia Breger, Dorothea Dornhof, and Dagmar von Hoff ("Gender Studies/Gender Trouble") and Ulla Bock, *Pionierarbeit.* Inge Stephan recalls that student interest and the SPD politics of gender equality played a much larger role in the success of Hamburg's feministische Arbeitsstelle than institutional commitments by the university as such (94–95). On the social and epistemological stakes of feminism for German theories of knowledge production, see Sabine Hark, *Dissidente Partizipation.*

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