0151-1

ADFL Bulletin
29, no. 2 (Winter 1998): 10-17

W(h)ither Literature? Reaping the Fruit of Language Study Before It's Too Late

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Stating the Problem

The following remarks are intended to be provocative. They open me to the criticism of "promoting a backlash" against the communicative approach to foreign language teaching, to ignorance of the value of literary translations, and to other kinds of misunderstandings. But if debate is furthered, then I do not mind the distortion. On one level, my remarks are premised on the view that there is no need to apologize for insisting on the elitist value of studying foreign languages and literatures in a liberal arts curriculum. On another level, my views are essentially informed by the suspicion that we as a profession seem intent on reinventing the wheel every so often.

Let me begin by stating the problem in terms of its historical and popularistic perspectives. Eighty years ago, two talks were given that anticipate my topic today. Frederick J. W. Heuser, professor of German at Columbia College, spoke at the December 1917 MLA convention on the topic "Nineteenth Century German Literature for Undergraduates." He provides insight into more than just the teaching of literature at the college level; he tells us something about the normal foreign language preparation of students on entering college (3-4 years), the college curriculum as it then existed, and the areas in need of reform. Heuser's remarks are based on surveys he sent to about 40 of the then 160-odd colleges in the United States. Although he provides detailed suggestions for K-16 articulation, Heuser intended his talk as a catalyst for "unifying our courses" in the American college (251). He cautioned against an overemphasis on transforming the language learner into a native speaker; his goal was to promote learning to read for pleasure and not simply for profit. That, after all, was the mission of a liberal arts college. It still is.

Earlier that same year in Portland, Oregon, at the Modern Language Conference held in conjunction with the

National Education Association meeting in July, William A. Cooper, professor of French at Stanford University, spoke on the topic "The Ideals of the Profession." His essay, with its early self-conception of language and literature teachers, provides useful insights into the ethos of the emergent profession. Cooper frames his remarks within the context of the liberal arts college just one generation after the founding of the MLA. Key is the link that Cooper sees between the liberal arts mission of America's college system and the role of foreign languages and literatures in combating the commercialism of early capitalistic America. The specific role played by the modern languages is to contribute to the individual's education as "a process of self-culture" (1). By that, Cooper meant the student's ability to continue educating himself or herself after graduating from college. Education was, for Cooper, tantamount to correcting errors, counteracting prejudice, broadening perspectives, and instilling a sense of kinship with all humankind as we flow along the widening river of life. Interesting in his context—and also in the context of this article—is Cooper's statement that reading a foreign language in translation is wholly unsatisfactory, for it "is like studying etchings of great paintings. They give only partial satisfaction. The original language is to the poem what the plumage is to the bird of paradise" (7). Only through familiarity with the foreign medium can one access the foreign mind. Cooper's remarks are directly related to our current curricular concerns. That is my historical perspective.

Language refinement, whether in oral-aural practice or in written form, is in any event a top-down development, not down-top. Yes: it is an elitist function that has an impact on one's social status and chances of getting the best jobs. That is the conviction of Professor Henry Higgins of *My Fair Lady* fame as he transforms Liza Doolittle from flower girl to lady-in-waiting. The fact that language transforms the speaker in significant ways is not a new topic in film, book, or scholarly article. We do well to recall this fact often and to use it to our advantage. If we do not involve ourselves in this way, then our students will continue to take Arnold Schwarzenegger of *Terminator* fame as their linguistic model, with his famous uninflected, unrefined yet catchy phrase: "I'll be back." Or Dirty Harry's (Clint Eastwood's) "Make my day." Rosie O'Donnell and Timothy Hutton in the movie *Beautiful Girls* and Rex Harrison in *My Fair Lady* with their refined and articulate speech, will remain without disciples. The idioms of the latter works are literary. That is my popularistic perspective. Now for my specific task.

Over the years we have seen enrollment shifts that caused us concern. We had good years and we had bad ones. What is different about the current shift is that—in some quarters—fewer students are enrolling in the advanced courses than before. Part of the explanation is that students come to us less prepared. Far fewer freshmen place into advanced courses than twenty years ago, let alone eighty years ago (Heuser's day). Add to that the fact that fewer students than before are beginning the study of a foreign language or continuing beyond the requirement, and we have a crisis situation. In 1965, 16.5% of college students took a foreign language; in 1995, that figure dropped by more than half, to 7.6%, despite the increase in student population from 5.9 million to 14.4 million (Brod and Huber 57). The decrease in percentage is more important than the relatively insignificant increase in raw numbers from 975,777 (out of 5.9 million) to 1.1 million (out of 14.4 million). Expressed differently, while roughly 1 in 6 students took a college foreign language course in 1965, only 1 in 14 enrolled in a foreign language class thirty years later. Moreover, the raw increase occurred in Spanish, Japanese, and Chinese. For its part, German is becoming a language taught in college only (Byrnes, "Future"), having gone from just over 200,000 students in 1970 to under 100,000 in 1995. [1] There have also been profound shifts on a wider scale, not just in foreign language and literature courses, as has historically been the case (see the table of 23 languages claimed as native tongue in Fishman 1:252-53). I discuss these issues a bit later.

Whether we know it or not, we are the Henry Higginses of the language "laboratory." Without our efforts, "good" literature will wither and die on the vine of the language system, language will never Teach its ultimate expression, and universities will become mere mirrors of society, forsaking their higher "oppositional" mission (Bloom). Appreciating the nuance, aesthetic verve, and gamelike quality of a literary masterpiece is one of the

fruits borne of language study. But the fruit must be cultivated in order to ripen. And it should be cultivated early on. You can, of course, pick the grapes at earlier stages and enjoy them in sensible, practical ways, but the fermentation necessary for producing a fine wine to delight the discriminating palate requires patience and continued effort.

Literature, Language, and the College Mission

Although I was asked to address curricular issues as affected by shifting enrollment patterns, I found myself distracted by the more fundamental relationship between our perception of the goals of language teaching, on the one hand, and the role of foreign language departments within the framework of the college mission, on the other. Obviously, that mission changes somewhat from institution to institution, but I think there is enough commonality in overall educational goals, especially at four-year institutions, that my comments are not beside the point. As a "literary" person rather than a "language" expert, I also have a personal stake in the question, Can we still teach literature? In acknowledgment of that concern, I have formulated my own question in my title, introducing into it a double entendre: "W(h)ither Literature?" On the one hand, I ask, What do we do with the teaching of literature in our language and literature departments? Where do we place it in the curriculum? What role does it or could it play in helping students achieve mastery of the target language in the early semesters? On the other hand, I suggest that the teaching of literature in our undergraduate programs is possibly headed for oblivion. That is my fear for German, an apprehension shared across national literature lines (Gillespie; Henning, "Integration"). Literature in our undergraduate foreign language departments will fade out and die off if we continue to direct our major attention to achieving "just" practical, that is, marketable, skills or aspire to produce near-native speakers. The first goal is shortsighted; the second, specious.

Unless we require our students to spend an extended period abroad, the goal of turning out near-native speakers is hardly realizable in the foreign language classroom. This insight was gained at least 150 years ago (Herrig and Viehoff 231). Striving to make students marketable—and thus ourselves viable entities on campus in the eyes of administrators and students (see Heuser)—is a seductively simple notion that threatens to lead us away from our identity as German or French or Spanish departments and away from the very competence that sets colleges and universities apart from private and public language schools, such as Berlitz or the Tennessee Foreign Language Institute. Their goal is to teach paying customers a foreign language for travel, business, or pleasure. Making ourselves marketable in consumeristic fashion plays directly into the hands of the new corporate-minded administrators in higher education who are increasingly drawn to the idea of establishing language-teaching-only divisions that can employ part-timers quite effectively and help students take care of that pesky requirement. To go down that road would separate the teaching of the language system from the highest realization of that system; it would favor teaching competence without literacy. It would cause us to be "merely auxiliary service personnel" with little hope of "ever again [being] full partners…in the American educational endeavor" (Henning, "Integration" 23).

By failing to integrate within our departments, consistently and emphatically, the teaching of language and culture with the teaching of literature—usually the highest expression of language—in at least the eight most commonly taught language systems (Spanish, French, German, Italian, Japanese, Russian, Latin, Chinese), we contribute to the ominous dissolution of our departmental programs and identities. While the emphasis in lower-division courses is on language acquisition and rudimentary cultural knowledge, upper-division courses remain under pressure to reconfigure themselves as part of a broader cultural studies program. We teach less literature and we rely more on the use of English in our instruction, and we give literature-in-translation courses even at the graduate level. When literature courses are still taught in the target language, students frequently are turned off because the language training they have grown accustomed to is neglected, and they are expected to perform at a level higher than they are capable of (Troyanovich vii; Kramsch, "Texts").

The key to success, so it seems to me, lies in our ability to bridge the divide between intermediate and advanced courses, especially in the transitional fourth, fifth, and sixth semesters of language study. They are critical to developing the student's recognition of semantic nuance rendered through syntax, diction, and allusion. What is called for at this level is the hybrid goal of advancing language competence, on the one hand, (e.g., idiomatic use of prepositions, vocabulary development, flavoring particles, the passive voice and its substitutes) and increasing literary competence, on the other (appreciation of irony; sensitivity to the shifting nuance of modal verbs; the significance of altered word order; themes, motifs, images, and metaphors as centers of meaning). One might refer to the task of teaching literature as teaching "effective stylistics," in contrast to Stanley Fish's "affective stylistics" (Friedman). Effective style is the mark of the best writing in any cultural tradition. Our efforts to teach reading for information clearly contribute to literacy, but Our efforts to teach discernment of aesthetic nuance go beyond mere literacy and transform the cultural outsider into an insider. We can and ought to combine the two goals almost from the start by moving from an additive model of language learning (grammar --> content --> culture --> literature) to a "holistic" (integration of the four elements from the start; see Byrnes, "Future") or to an "interactional" one (Kramsch, "Texts"). Even though textbooks and readers exist that advance these goals, we tend not to use them because of our preoccupation with communicative skills and transmission of cultural data (see Byrnes, "Foreign Language") or because the approach works at some institutions (Hommell-Ingram) but not at others (Gruenther and Roller).

The question of whether we can still teach literature is for me, then, a moot point. We must teach it. If we do not, who will? Moreover, it is at the center of an ongoing debate within my own field of Germanics (and I suspect it will arise in French before too long), and it is not limited to the American scene alone (Schwenk). At signs of a renewed crisis in German in the late 1970s, some departments began to expand interdisciplinarily in an effort to remain "relevant" on campus and in recognition of shifting thematic foci in research (here one thinks of Stanford). Curricula changed noticeably (Gillespie). The standard of comparison for the credibility and recognizability of literature departments, however, is and will remain the English department, which is always much larger and thus capable of greater flexibility than the language and literature departments. While acknowledging the advantages of flexibility, we should not be flexible for flexibility's sake, nor should we abandon the teaching of literature and literary history, the "scarce anchor points of program content" (Gillespie 93), out of a "false" need to be flexible. Gillespie cautions against a headlong rush into cultural studies, urging that (German) departments provide "a friendly home for some experts who cultivate awareness of great authors or periods." If we do not do that, departments will lose program identity, Obscure "an awareness of the scholarly depth in the field," and eventually wither and die (93). Jane K. Brown echoes many of these sentiments, stressing above all that our profession (of Germanics) is "an interpretive one"; our primary goal, she says, is to be literary critics, and we aim graduate teaching at training students to read and write thoughtfully and interpretatively. This we have in common with English departments. Ultimately our presence on an undergraduate campus is intellectually justified by this kind of objective (101).

Arguments on the other side of the coin stress the need for us to expand dramatically into interdisciplinary, gender, and queer studies—to strike while the iron is hot before we lose out to English (and now history) departments once again (Kuzniar; Natter). Short of that, German departments in particular will continue to be viewed widely as mere service departments for language acquisition (Kuzniar 123). In fact, it might prove quite useful to view the "crisis" in Germanics, or the crisis posed by the general shifting of language enrollments, as part of a much larger phenomenon in the humanities and social sciences associated with overcoming the binary, oppositional logic that has dominated Western thought and traditions for so long. We should see our own concerns with the problems of shifting enrollments, student retention, and the role of literature as contained in the general framework of rethinking the entire economy of intellectual life (Natter 118-19).

Ours is also a "crisis of image" in undergraduate departments, aggravated by a gap between faculty interests and student interests (McVeigh 61, 64). Faculty intractability and flexibility in the light of the change in student

body and preparation over the past twenty years have contributed to our current situation. To be successful, we must know where our students are, where they come from, where they are headed, and tie into their interests in order to win them over to our interests. That is exactly what Dieter Jedan has done at Southeast Missouri State, where he has turned the modern language program around. He did demographic research on the regions served by his institution and devised a broad range of activities to attract his consitutents' interests. Curricular changes were made, a major introduced, internships with local international companies established, film series begun, an international lecture series with simultaneous translation offered, a foreign language fair initiated, evening classes for non-traditional students introduced, affordable study trips to Germany created, exchange programs begun, and high school teachers with their students invited to campus. His reshaping of the undergraduate experience can serve as a model for all of us regardless of the kind of institution we find ourselves in. Unfortunately, literature plays only a minor role in his plan.

What is obvious from all this is not every department needs to reconfigure itself in the same way (Bullivant). Every department cannot be everything to everybody. While unofficially, in conversation over a beer, one is prepared to suggest that some kind of program coordination among our graduate institutions at the regional and national level might be beneficial, territorial instincts prevent much movement.

Herbert Lindenberger asked the question "Must We Always Be in Crisis?" (printed in this issue) at ADFL Seminar East early this June. For my part, I think that crisis is endemic to our profession and that the question of whether we can still teach literature is ultimately related to the "crisis of culture at the very top," which informs Alan Bloom's often-challenged treatise *The Closing of the American Mind.*

The connection I see between Bloom's chastisement of higher education and the teaching of literary competence is the need to assist students in penetrating the superficial language system in order to get at the meaning expressed in, through, and around that system. The subservience to fashion and the neglect of "real hard work" is what Bloom laments. We are not teaching our students to be interpreters. The mantra of deconstruction—"there is no text, only interpretation"—evolves from a "cheapened interpretation of Nietzsche" and leads to a cheapened understanding of the interpretive act: anything goes. That idea has liberated us from "the objective imperatives of the texts" but by the same token has deprived us of the liberating experience those texts might have provided in overcoming "our increasingly low and narrow horizon." We might then rightfully conclude with Bloom: "Everything has tended to soften the demands made on us by the tradition; this simply dissolves it" (379).

Seen as the bond to achievements of the past, literature has a liberating value. But it cannot liberate if it is not read or if it is not read in an appropriate manner—that entails accepting the text on its own terms. We do not want students simply to identify with Werther, mope around for a year, and then blow their brains out. Rather, we want them to observe Werther critically and to reflect on how his values and his mistakes can illuminate their own lives. In the process they should learn to enjoy the novel as an aesthetic construct and historical artifact with relevance to the contemporary world. Obviously, we must still teach literature in its fullest sense if our goal is the liberation of the spirit. We must not be seduced into thinking literature is unimportant simply because the forces of consumerism, materialism, and the Hollywood entertainment enterprise all work against the refinement of critical thinking, linguistic expertise, and literary sensitivity. If we do not teach literature, we will not reap the best fruit. Is it not possible to transfer the gains made in second language teaching to develop better strategies for teaching literary competence in our upper-division courses? We surely stand a better chance of retaining more students in our literature courses if we alter those courses to reflect and consciously build on the five Cs of contemporary second language acquisition theory and practice (see below). But then we must introduce literature as more than window dressing in the elementary courses (i.e., semesters 1-3) and use it to expand the student's horizons and critical acumen (as Cooper argued in 1917).

Bridging the Gap

As noted, ours is an aural and visual culture. Our approach to language teaching favors oral competence, as is clear from the *Standards for Foreign Language Learning: Preparing for the Twenty-First Century.* While reading is part and parcel of those standards, the volume places no real emphasis on learning to read and appreciate the literary qualities of a written text. (That oversight is made up for by the recent report of the President's Committee on the Arts and the Humanities; see Brademas.) Rather, the *Standards* commission focused on the diverse purposes and uses of foreign languages: some learners think a second language will help them achieve their career goals in government service or the international marketplace; others delight in the intellectual challenge and cognitive gain; still others want to better understand cultures foreign to their own; and, finally, there are those who take a foreign language because it is a course requirement. These diverse goals of language study are summed up under the five Cs of foreign language instruction: Communication, cultures, connections, comparisons, and communities. These goals are, in turn, achieved through rich curricular experiences that should enable students "to explore, develop, and use communication strategies, learning strategies, critical thinking skills, and skills in technology, as well as the appropriate elements of the language system and culture" (*Standards* 28). Strategies for developing these individual competencies should be woven into the fabric of the five Cs.

The focus is on communication, data assimilation, and participation in a global community. These are worthy goals. They are also aimed at secondary education systems (although they are definitely not without their usefulness in postsecondry institutions). "Effective" competence connotes the ability to derive meaning in the broadest sense from the text. However, I am concerned here much more with literary competence, because that level of expertise is, once achieved, like bicycle riding: you never forget it. Special note should be taken of the commission's statement on preparing students for the twenty-first century:

> The language system is a means for attaining the various outcomes described in this document: communicating, gaining cultural understanding, connecting with other disciplines. The language system is also much more than words and rules; it includes the sociolinguistic elements of gestures and other forms of nonverbal communication, of status and discourse style, and learning what to say to whom and when. These elements form the bridge between language and culture and must be present if students are ever to learn to interact appropriately in the target language. (29)

At the heart of literary competence is the whole unspoken, implied, or indirectly expressed realm of meaning. This literary space is occupied by nuance, irony, metaphor, the effectiveness of alliteration and assonance, intertextuality, and embeddedness in actual fact. They are the "gestures" of written language and should be the focus of those upper-division courses that endeavor to impart an enhanced understanding of another culture through the "gaps," or *Leerstellen* , to use Wolfgang Iser's terminology. That is precisely what some of our colleagues are already doing. I cite but two examples: Gerhard Clausing and Katharina von Hammerstein's *Interaktion: Text-Based Intermediate German Course* and Hans Weber's collection of literary texts, *Vorschläge 1* . While Clausing and von Hammerstein aim their text at the third and fourth semesters, Weber aims his at the fifth and sixth semesters.

Clausing and von Hammerstein use an integrated, holistic approach that draws heavily on short texts as well as popular songs and poems grouped around nine major themes chosen for their appeal. The authors' goal is to promote communicative activities, but these always proceed outward from the texts themselves. The accompanying activities are designed to offer "beginning literary analysis" and are intended to "arouse the students' interest in further reading" (5). Weber specifically envisions his approach as a complement to a language course, as a respite from the normal routine. In addition to the student version of the text, Weber

includes a detailed teacher's edition, with suggestions for dealing with the various literary texts provided. The suggestions range from issues of grammar, syntax, vocabulary, and content to the broader cultural and literary significance of those elements. To assist the instructor in making the transition from language competence to cultural literacy, Weber provides transparencies and audiotapes for classroom use. The package is so rich and varied that one could actually use *Vorschläge* as the basic text, augmenting it with a grammar review and dictionary. If Weber's work is used effectively, students should be well prepared to enjoy literature in German on their own and to deal sophisticatedly with even traditional courses on the literary canon.

What that means is spelled out by Silvie Debevec Henning in her scale of literary interpretations skills. Equally useful are the questions on literature devised by Irmgard Taylor and appended to Henning's study ("Assessing"). The authors also provide student responses for each level by way of illustration of competencies (Novice, Intermediate, Advanced, Superior).

In 1991 the Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction in the state of Washington published a volume of lesson plans entitled *German for the Learner-Centered Classroom: Reports from Teachers for Teachers* . Section 3, "Learner-Centered Approaches to Literature" (Legutke 90-180), is the largest of the four parts and the one most pertinent to my topic. Striking is the statement with which almost all the teachers begin the reports of their experiences—namely, that students complain that they do not read enough (Whiteman 90). The full range of reading activities is reflected in the ensuing reports, which deal with short prose, novels (Hans Peter Richter's *Damals war es Friedrich* and Dürrenmatt's *Der Richter und sein Henker*), and poems. Each of the installments includes a lesson plan and supporting materials for various group activities and homework assignments. And each project described seems indebted to the three-phase approach proposed by Bernd Kast, which stresses (1) preparation and motivation (*Vorkenntnisse*), (2) reading phase (*Lesen*), and (3) summary, evaluation, and synthesis (*Anwendung*) (Burke 138). The project orientation is an apparent response to Claire Kramsch's "plea for a change in orientation in classroom discourse" in the teaching of literary texts ("Texts" 364). The ultimate purpose is to motivate students in third- and fourth-year language courses to read for enjoyment, independently. What becomes clear is that "the gap between the language instruction and the literature course … can be bridged by coupling the literature read with the student's view of the world and with communicative events in the so-called 'real world'" (Hommel-Ingram 151; see Kramsch, "Texts" 356).

In any case, many teachers of literature do intuitively what Kramsch outlines in her useful analysis "Literary Texts in the Classroom: A Discourse." [2] To evaluate the effectiveness of these strategies, we could utilize Henning's guidelines for assessing literary interpretation skills, which are attuned to, yet go beyond, ACTFL's guidelines for testing linguistic skills.

The strategies tested and proved useful in the Washington State schools could be applied to such canonical works as Goethe's *Faust* . In fact, not too long ago, in response to student requests for more language training, I altered my usual teacher-centered approach to a senior seminar. The result was a stimulating combination of student-centered advanced language work and a heightened appreciation of the literary qualities of Goethe's *Faust* 1 and 2. An interactive CD-ROM program on Goethe's Weimar, *Goethe in Weimar: Eine virtuelle Reise in die Welt des grossen Dichters* , facilitated the conjoining of language and literature considerably. The students were enthusiastic about the program, its flexibility and authenticity. They could visit the cultural sites of Weimar, go through Goethe's house on the Frauenplan, wander through the gardens with him, call up key passages from his poems and prose works, hear them performed by professional actors, and click on icons to gain further insight into the cultural and historical parameters of Goethe's creative career. More and more applications of sophisticated, interactive technology are becoming available for classroom use. (The Germans are pioneering in this regard.) These interactive programs could prove most attractive in encouraging students

to continue their language study beyond the lower division, into upper-division courses. They might, in fact, contribute substantially to the overcoming of our crisis …if we can bring ourselves to integrate them into our more traditional literature courses.

From experience, I also know that Enlightenment and the Storm and Stress periods of the eighteenth century can prove attractive to today's students; we need not assume that only a twentieth-century focus will work in the classroom. But an effort must be made to relate the older texts to contemporary situations. Aids are available, such as the documentary short-video series from Inter Nationes: Barth and Bauer, *Erziehung des Menschengeschlechts: Lessing und die deutsche Aufklärung; Bauer, Kalkül und Leidenschaft: Die epoche des Sturm und Drang;* and Burkhardt, *Porträt: Friedrich Schiller* . These videos, with their accompanying workbooks, are designed for use in advanced undergraduate courses as an introduction not just to the major writers of the eighteenth century but also to the epoch of the Enlightenment, Storm and Stress, and even Weimar classicism. While ideally suited for advanced period courses, they could also, with proper preparation, be integrated into more general cultural and historical survey courses. The study of Schiller—and another is available on Günter Grass (Arnold)—is intended to augment traditional literature courses at the advanced level. While the Schiller and Grass videos can be best integrated into undergraduate offerings, they remain useful for the MA candidate as well. A by-product of their use in graduate programs would be to train future teachers in the use of videos and interactive media in the language classroom. These videos from Inter Nationes could even be considered for use in AP courses in high school.

Texts and anthologies designed to bridge the gap between language acquisition and literary competence are readily available from such publishers as Inter Nationes (Bonn), Hueber (Munich), and Klett (Stuttgart); there are also useful works available from American publishers (Wells, *Mitlesen—Mitteilen;* Senner and Schuback, *Geschichten zur Unterhaltung;* Turneaure, *Der treffende Ausdruck;* Konrad and Vivian, *Mosaik;* Clausing and von Hammerstein, *Interaktion*). Innovative works like these are aimed at the whole spectrum of second- through fourth-year courses in the college setting but could be used effectively earlier in some programs (Wells). I examine here a few in particular that appealed to me. Their distinctive feature is to take a holistic approach, drawing on the aural and visual culture that dominates Western life today. Similar products are surely available in the other commonly and less commonly taught languages.

- Larry D. Wells. *Mitlesen—Mitteilen: Literary Texts for Reading, Speaking, Writing, and Listening* . This attractive text is quite versatile. While designed for second-year college courses, it can be effectively introduced at the end of the second semester in some institutions. In other programs, the reader is perhaps better suited for the sixth and seventh semesters. Its versatility is such that the work can be sensibly implemented in advanced high school classes or college conversation and composition courses. The reader consists of short narratives, fairy tales, and poems primarily by modem authors and includes a good cross-section of minority and women writers from the German-speaking countries. The accompanying tape provides texts to augment those in the student book. The choice of topics and authors is up-to-date.
- Heinz Griesbach. *Moderner deutscher Sprachgebrauch* . This is a rather demanding textbook, but it should produce a refined sensibility to literary nuance at the advanced level. Best employed in the seventh and eighth semesters, it is also suitable for MA candidates.
- For teaching poetry, several works come to mind. Dietrich Kruses's *Mit der Zeit* , an anthology with transparencies and tape, has been introduced to an advanced course at Vanderbilt. It partially replaces traditional lyric anthologies. Strategies for teaching poetry are available in Daniel Soneson's "The Poetic Experience," an essay based on his experience in a third-year course at Montana State University. Robert Browning's *Umgang mit Gedichten* (1969) and Lore Foltin and Hubert Heinen's *Paths to German Poetry* (1972) are old standbys, still viable in the language and literature classroom.

What I would like to propose is the following: we should endeavor to appreciate the challenges and opportunities posed by shifting enrollment patterns not ahistorically and not in isolation from the general phenomenon of postmodernism. In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, the modern foreign languages (German, French, Italian, Spanish) were by far the less-taught languages; Latin and Greek dominated the classroom. The history of German-language teaching in the United States is highly instructive in this regard, since the instruction was not always focused on communicative competence à la the native-speaker ideal. Here I think of the efforts of early advocates of German in the schools and of Germanics in the colleges. H.M. Ferren (a teacher at Allegheny High School in Pennsylvania) and M.D. Learned (a professor at Penn) began publishing calls to arms in 1898—that is, a generation earlier than the calls by Heuser and Cooper cited at the beginning of this article. Ferren's "German in the Schools" (1898) and Learned's "German in Public Schools" (1913) bear an uncanny resemblance to Heidi Byrnes's sober estimation in "The Future of German in American Education." Both Ferren and Learned had an uphill battle in establishing German in the schools and colleges and in creating a niche for German alongside the classical languages. They had to be innovative in attracting students and in retaining them through the lower divisions up into the upper-division courses.

Of course, we could achieve the goal of teaching the refined language of literature by taking recourse in translations of the great writers of German tradition. But then we would face a double bind, as Gillespie and others (Van Cleve and Willson) have pointed out: "On the one hand, [Germanics] will fade out of the American picture of the humanities if Germanists do not actively make and use translations and teach the significant German works also in English at all curricular levels. On the other hand, it will disappear by cooptation if it fails to maintain a distinct profile from generalist and comparative studies and fails to prepare specialists with deep expertise" (Gillespie 97). We would, however, have to make better translations available than those being used now.

I close with two statements that shed light on the role of literature in the language classroom. One is by a "literary" person, Jane K. Brown, in connection with the debate on the crisis within Germanics, but it is not without relevance for other languages. The citation should also be seen as a response to the question of where we go from here:

> Personally, I think we should be cultivating a more intimate relation between language teaching and literature teaching by changing the focus of the language program away from communication and toward literacy. Good critical skills depend on sensitivity to language and the ways it is used. Good language teaching should cultivate this sensitivity at every turn. It should itself contribute to training our students to be critical in their use of language, whether or not they will ever use the target language. To my mind this is the most legitimate justification of foreign-language requirements. (103)

The other comment is by a "language" person, Claire Kramsch, in connection with the growing debate on the need to recognize the richness of "linguistic foreignness" and the value "foreignness" has for our future efforts. Kramsch avers:

> [I]t is time to exploit the linguistic diversity that students bring to language learning. Without losing the benefits of communicative approaches to language pedagogy, teachers may want to validate once again the poetic function of language, the physical pleasure of memorizing and performing prose and verse, of playing with language and writing multilingual poetry at the beginning of language instruction. In advanced study, teachers may want to legitimize once again exercises in translation and in comparative stylistics. Such attempts would enable learners not only to express others' linguistic and cultural meanings but to find new ways of expressing their own as well.

("Privilege" 368) [3]

In a very real sense, this obligation to teach literary sensitivity is an ethical one, for the "great books" are those that combine stylistic refinement with deep insight into the *condition humaine* . The classics of the past— *The Iliad, Divina Commedia, Cid, Faust* —were used to teach enduring human values. That could, of course, be done in English, but the full fruit of hermeneutics—that is, conscious reflection on the act of reading—is reaped within the language system that first framed those questions. We will gather those fruits of the vine when those whose competence in hermeneutics is brought to bear in our intermediate and advanced language-acquisition courses—and when those whose competence in language teaching is brought to bear in our literature courses.

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[1] Enrollment in German shifted from 146,116 students in 1960 to 202,569 in 1970, 126, 910 in 1980, 133, 348 in 1990, and 96,263 in 1995. Enrollment figures for French and Russian reflect these developments more or less drastically.

[2] The key features of her interactional approach are to (1) build a common discourse between reader and text, (2) define topic and genre, (3) determine essential vocabulary for Understanding the text, (4) make educated guesses based on context, (5) brainstorm to collect diverse information and input, (6) discover parallels and contrasts, (7) find illustrations of themes and motifs, (8) ascertain leitmotifs and recurrent resonances of meaning, (9) establish a ranking of information from most important to least important, (10) extrapolate alternate consequences from the information gathered, (11) reconstruct the text by changing the point of view and the time scale, and (12) establish archetypal figures and motifs (cf. "Texts" 359-63).

[3] Kramsch's guest column in the May 1997 issne of *PMLA* , entitled "The Privilege of the Nonnative Speaker," speaks directly to the issues raised here, albeit rendered from a different angle. Like Heuser and Cooper eighty years ago, Kramsch questions whether the goal of communicative efficiency should be so closely linked to the utopian concept of remaking the nonnative in the likeness of the native speaker, especially as the native speaker is "an imaginary construct" (363-64). Have we come full circle in our increasingly skeptical attitude toward the single-minded focus on communicative competence as the be-all and end-all of foreign language study?

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ADFL Bulletin 29, no. 2 (Winter 1998): 10-17

Table of Contents Previous Article Next Article Works Cited
