From BA-Bashing to Building Bridges Between Literary Scholarship and Teaching Literature: An Introduction*

> We need to be prepared to take the lead in transforming
> institutions from being simply the provider of courses and certificates
> to become the developers of human potential, producing active
> learners, new forms of knowledge, a valuing and sharing of
> culture and active and engaged citizens. (MacLabhrainn 51)

When I had my first academic position twenty years ago, a well-established and well-meaning professor gave me good advice not to spend my time on teaching but to concentrate on research in order to have a career in academia (see also Showalter 11). Needless to say, I did not take his advice because my strong interest in teaching and learning made me experiment with student-centered tasks and micro-teaching. Fifteen years ago, funding for an interdisciplinary volume on teaching at university was refused on the grounds that the topic was not scholarly (Meyer, Vom Hörsaal zum Tatort). Thus, it should not have come as a surprise, when ten years ago, another well-established and well-meaning professor told me that my application for a professor position had not been considered because the recruitment commission was only interested in literary scholarship - not in TEFL. About five years ago, I obtained one of the very few positions in both literary scholarship and TEFL. Last year, I gladly took on the task to prepare the present edition on teaching literature at university with the hope to achieve more than preaching to the confessed. The multiple functions of the university and of "polyvalent" BA programs require systematic reflection on teaching and learning in post-secondary education, which is not exactly a favorite pastime among scholars primarily interested in the pursuit of "truth" (Dainat 199). However, there is very promising research on how and why to teach literature, culture, and theory at school, which we can draw on, and the present volume aims at contributing to the budding debate on the "uses of literature" (Felski) at university. I would argue that literature in English is particularly "useful" in achieving the multiple goals of the new BA if its potential is unfolded in up-to-date research, teaching, and learning.

In order to understand both the resistance to, and the need for, innovative concepts in teaching literature, it is useful to briefly consider the general framework of the university as an institution, the agents, the disciplines, and the process of education before we turn to specific aspects of studying literature. The present reform has created or aggravated problems, yet it has also provided opportunities to reshape teaching literature, which are addressed from various perspectives in the contributions to this volume. The German university as an institution has, like its British and American counterparts, been under considerable pressure to square the circle: to boost (esp. applied) research, raise more funds, improve the vocational use of education, and cope with more students (MacLabhrainn 42-44, 50). The political agents create a lot of publicity for the relevance of research and tertiary education but do not put enough tax money where their mouths are.

* This article and my second contribution to this volume have profited from comments by Fred Thompson.

German competition for academic excellence among universities has met with mixed responses as it certainly highlights quality in research but gives more to those who have. A significant number of productive scholars and the opportunity to devote a substantial amount of time to research rather than administration and teaching cannot alone improve the structural deficits of many universities and thus create better working conditions for the majority of scholars. In addition, it has been criticized that, for utilitarian reasons, society has decided to endorse science and technology in the academic culture war rather than the humanities. Recently, the Pisa-shock, among other factors, has led to initiatives that support more research on teaching and learning, and the wholesale reform towards the new BA and MA programs asks for a makeover of university education.

Do politics and the university only pay lip service to the relevance of education? The Hochschulpakt designed to enable universities to offer more places for students does not alleviate the old problem of a lack of staff because it allocates new positions only on the basis of the intake of new students, perpetuating the poor ratio of staff to students. Prizes for teaching certainly create the impression that teaching is a priority in recurrent media events but do not create sustain- able effects. Research on teaching in tertiary education is less institutionalized than teacher training for academic staff, which many German universities offer (Wildt 271). However, systematic education in teaching at university is not always deemed essential, student feedback on teaching is often considered a hot potato, excellence in teaching is no reason for promotion, and even many of our young colleagues remain skeptical as to whether engagement in teaching really "pays off." It is easier to raise extra funds for research than teaching, but in very basic terms, in the humanities "we earn our bread by teaching rather than scholarship" (Nicolson in Showalter 11; Dainat 200). In addition, teaching is one of the major avenues to promote the value of our discipline (Kaulen 337).

Developments in pedagogy, the public debate and the institutionalization of objectives of tertiary education set up a framework for the why and how of teaching but do not provide pat solutions because of conflicting educational models. Public and political strife between the advocates of liberal education and those of vocational training seems to have been decided in favor of the latter. However, considering the rapid development of the economy and the changing skills required in the labor market, it is arguable that a general liberal education is quite appropriate for finding one's position in the liberal market economy (Dainat 205). Accreditation agencies are required to check educational standards in the new BA and MA programs, which should combine the two models of education in four fields: academic competencies, vocational skills ("Employability," HRK 308), competence for "Democratic citizenship" (HRK 308), and personality develop- ment (Meyer, "Lernen und Lehre" 11). However, this list can also be read as a sequence of goal conflicts, the search for scientific truth versus the need to apply knowledge, the pragmatic training of vocational skills versus political awareness and participation, and all of these objectives against the individual desire for development. Though Silke Wehr and Helmut Eitel, experts on teaching at university, see the need to cut down on content in order to focus on learners and learning, competencies, and practical contexts, they maintain that the academic staff serves as model and guide in research while promoting students' personal

development at the same time (19-23). This expansion of potentially conflicting objectives has alerted many colleagues to mount resistance to what they consider as an infringement on their primary duty and interest, scholarship, as well as a questioning of their "time-honored" and teacher-centered methods of their lecture plan and Socratic dialogue.

The majority of our colleagues feel that the conception, implementation, and administration of the new BA and MA programs for even larger numbers of students have aggravated the problem of their roles as administrators, managers, and teachers, and therefore do not leave them sufficient time to be scholars - ultimately violating Humboldt's ideal of teaching and learning through research with a comparative freedom from examinations (cf. Dainat 201). Considerations of quantity rival those of quality in measuring success. The academic staff is wary about calculating the efficiency of the new BA in terms of how many students graduate and how much time is needed. (Current data is contradictory but does not indicate any decisive change in drop-out rates from the old programs and the new BA.) However, numbers can also help: the Hochschulrektorenkonferenz (HRK) has stipulated core requirements concerning the improvement of teaching and consultation in the new BA and MA, which staff should use as a leverage in order to negotiate appropriate student numbers in courses within their universities. For example, a lecture that prepares for an exam should not have more than 100 students, and a typical course in the style of a seminar should not have more than 30 students (HRK 29). Therefore, a serious accreditation commission would demand amendment if made aware of crucial problems due to understaffed departments.

The staff is tempted to blame the growing intake of students in the new BA and to succumb to the vicious circle of attributing less academic potential to students, lowering academic standards and pedagogic engagement. It is understandable that, in a contemporary culture that values acceleration and output, students, burdened by a heavy workload - calculated for twelve months but often crammed into eight - and a frightening barrage of final exams and papers at the end of each term, often feel compelled to take recourse to the topical economic principle of minimal investment, delivered just on time, for maximum return. The structure of the new examination system, while giving a fairly balanced view of student performance over the semesters, figures students as subjects of examinations rather than individual personalities and fosters external motivation rather than individual interest. If students who are more interested in reproducing than in understanding have delivered good performances in courses with traditional forms of teaching and assessment (MacLabhrainn 45-46), they are unlikely to alter their attitudes and habits quickly. The necessary turn from teaching to learning requires both staff and students, mostly seasoned in the transmission model of education, to adopt new roles and to become aware of the difficult alignment of educational objectives, teaching methods, and forms of assessment.

"Polyvalent" curricular standards, the result of compromises between representatives of the ministry of education, academic staff, and teachers, reveal how hard it is to find a balance between subject-oriented knowledge, student-centered teaching methods, and outcome-oriented, pragmatic competencies. For example, the curricular standards for English (BA and MA Ed.) at universities in Rhineland-Palatinate are fairly comprehensive but set a great store on vocational skills: the

Standards fall into two categories, two in academic skills and seven in vocational skills (Wolf et al.). These standards require excellent knowledge and skills in core subjects - with a view to applying their knowledge at schools, a near-native command of the English language, intercultural communication, and sophisticated skills in teaching, especially in learner-centered methods. Aspects of individual education are implied in cognitive strategies that enable one to acquire information and critically reflect on one's own knowledge, the ability to make sense of other cultures, open-mindedness, the capacity and the desire for life-long learning. Political emancipation and participation have been neglected.

How do educational and curricular standards translate into modules? The stress on vocational standards mentioned above certainly documents a serious will to drive a pragmatic turn in teaching at university by objectives in terms of skills; and this is partly at odds with the attempts of staff concerned about slackening academic standards who want to save as much as possible from their disciplines in the content of the modules. As a result, we are faced with differences between the goals and the content of modules, e.g. the suggestion to study the academic subject with a view to teaching at school. Considering the specialization of academic disciplines and the complexity of quite a few approaches and material, the requirement of applying scholarly knowledge to schools can be a tall order and begs the question as to how to design teaching in order to make both ends meet (cf. Kaulen 337). For example, it is not easy to integrate teaching an overview of British literature in cultural contexts, theoretically informed interpretations, and considering the knowledge transfer to schools in one course with 3-5 credit points, as required in Module 4 of the B.Ed. English in RLP (for a suggestion, see Meyer in this volume). The problem is not only to select which literature, but also which contexts, which literary or cultural theory, which approach, and which model and method of teaching and learning.

The problem of choice is compounded by the fact that literary studies have been under continual revision for almost half a century, with new approaches hunting down the previous ones and haunting scholars to change and dramatically expand both the range of material under study and the methods of approaching them, following or driving new "turns" - the cultural, the cognitive, the ethical, the historical, etc. We have weathered the debates of theory against theory, literary versus cultural studies, and literature versus theory (Felski, Showalter).

The choice of texts has become more difficult than ever because the contemporary publication of a plethora of new books in English each year surpasses anything that even a professional reader can cope with. In addition, the canon debate has largely expanded the range of eligible material from high-brow literature to popular, from British and American literature to the New English Literatures, from verbal and printed texts of all genres to radio-plays, visual "texts," and other cultural dis- courses and media. The question is no longer literature or culture but how to com- bine both subjects in interdisciplinary work that is grounded in expert knowledge. If interdisciplinary work proves challenging for experienced scholars, how much more difficult must it be for students? The choice of approaches has become quite a daunting task. It is remarkable how "disciplines have reached out to one another in recent years - not only by means of formal 'interdisciplinary' undertakings, but by responding to provocations and incorporating techniques from other fields" (Spacks 13). Teaching and learning have to consider students' capacity, attention and time.

How much time can we give students to master core concepts of literary analysis and interpretation, many of which, such as voice, perspective, rhetoric, or emplotment, can arguably be transferred to quite a few other genres and cultural discourses? How much visual literacy or electronic literacy, for example, do we have to acquire and implement in courses that used to be devoted to literary studies (in cultural contexts)? The command of several approaches (as perspectives) - and the awareness of their limitations - in a pluralist (and global) culture are de rigueur. We have to move beyond the traditional (now impossible) survey and the topical (perhaps random?) sample, and direct our attention towards core cultural concepts, such as memory and identity, as Roy Sommer argues for the teaching of cultural studies (193), which can be transferred to cultural approaches in literary studies.

The value and functions of literature have been negotiated by implicit or explicit theories, which in turn suggest approaches and didactic proceedings. However, theoretically informed approaches to literature should not throw the baby out with the bath water by marginalizing literature and neglecting its "use" by and for individual readers. The academic conflict between aesthetic and analytic attitudes to literature dates from the mid-nineteenth century, compounded by the claim of emancipatory readings in the twentieth century (Kaulen 340-341). Recently, Rita Felski has taken up that debate in the *Uses of Literature*. She polemically takes issue with the problem that the academic diagnosis of literature as negative know- ledge has replaced the dialogue with the text (1):

> We are called on to adopt poses of analytical detachment, critical vigilance, guarded suspicion; humanities scholars suffer from a terminal case of irony, driven by the uncontrollable urge to put everything in scare quotes. Problematizing, interrogating, and subverting are the default options, the deeply grooved patterns of contemporary thought. "Critical reading" is the holy grail of literary studies [...]. (2)

She ironically expresses weariness with critical routines that seem dated:

> There is a dawning sense among literary and cultural critics that a shape of thought has grown old. We know only too well the well-oiled machine of ideological critique, the x-ray gaze of symptomatic reading, the smoothly rehearsed moves that add up to a hermeneutics of suspicion. Ideas that seemed revelatory thirty years ago - the decentered subject! the social construction of reality! - have dwindled into shopworn slogans; defamiliarizing has lapsed into doxa, no less dogged and often as dogmatic as the certainties it sought to disrupt. (Felski 1)

Felski convincingly criticizes the stereotypical use of concepts that lead to sweeping judgments on literature (9), a simplifying strategy that reveals poor discrimination but might be tempting for teaching purposes. However, it is important to teach diverse approaches as cognitive, heuristic, and communicative tools with caution rather than abandoning them wholesale (cf. Nünning, "Es geht immer auch anders"). Approaches used in the way criticized by Felski would ignore or repress readers' subjective responses. For Felski, the primary meaning of literature lies in its manifold uses by subjective readers and their "vast terrain of practices, expectations, emotions, hopes, dreams, and interpretations" (8). She calls for "micro-aesthetics" in literary scholarship that reflects actual reading practices open-mindedly rather than a micro-politics of literature (Felski 133).

At school and at university, however, the predominant transmission model of teaching and the detached analysis of literature hardly takes into account a

student's individual appreciation of literature in a foreign language (Burwitz-Melzer 127-36; MacLabhrainn 48; Schädlich). There are several arguments and models of teaching that address the aesthetic, cultural, academic, and vocational uses of L2 literature and meet the tasks of higher education, the critical reflection of topical social and cultural issues, the development of individual human potential, "engaged citizens and critical, reflective professionals" (MacLabhrainn, with reference to Habermas and Zemsky, 50). Despite the fact that teaching literature at schools has more limitations than at university, e.g. the selection of material or approaches appropriate to the students' level and interest (Kaulen 338), the opening up of schools to student-centered methods is of great interest for university education. Unfortunately, the present introduction cannot discuss the whole range of current didactic approaches to teaching English literature (and culture), which is mostly aimed at secondary education, and the potential transfer to and necessary transformation in tertiary education. An indication of three (partly related) concepts of literature and its functions, which endorse student-centered, aesthetic, and cultural approaches, may suffice here:

(1) Literature and recognition. The individual aesthetic experience and appreciation of literature triggers processes of empathy and recognition – or resistance -, making sense of oneself and others in complex social situations (Bredella; Felski 33; Delanoy 9-10).

(2) Literature and literacy. Literary genres use similar modes of world making just as cognitive processes and cultural discourses do: the narrative construction of experience, meaning, and identity, the performative quality of social life and media, as well as the poetic structure of conceptual metaphors. Readers can develop individually and culturally relevant competencies by understanding generic forms of construction, producing or enacting processes, critical reflection of what we do, and meta-cognitive reflection of how we "generate" reality (Hallet "Literatur, Kognition und Kompetenz"; Nünning & Nünning).

(3) Literature and knowledge. Literature "represents," forms part of, and negotiates cultural issues (Ricoeur in Bredella, "Kraft literarischer Texte" 78; Felski), but also suggests alternatives to prevalent cultural values and practices. - Literature as an inter-discourse or an inter-textual and inter-medial phenomenon asks for subjective interpretations establishing complex webs of significance and a tolerance for the plurality of heterogeneous voices (Hallet 2002, 31-39, 70, Hu 25). Literature in the foreign language offers the opportunity to understand other cultures through the imaginative participation in and the reflection of others' perspectives (Nünning, "Fremdverstehen"; Freitag).

The present volume addresses a gap in the discussion on teaching at university: "There have been many debates about the literary canon, and about the teaching of literary theory, but almost none about the day-to-day life of the literature class- room. Although we talk a lot about what we teach, we are embarrassed or afraid to ask why and how we teach" (Showalter vii). The articles in this volume pro- vide good reasons, models, and practical suggestions to help make teaching and learning of literature at university more rewarding. These articles relate disciplines,

new approaches to learning and teaching, taking heed of changing requirements of education at university, the changing roles of the staff and the students, and new technologies:

- Goals: competencies rather than content
- Content: literary scholarship, cultural studies, and EFL
- Methods: process-oriented and student-centered
- Media: neglected genres, eLearning technology

Wolfgang Hallet presents a model of teaching literature at the university as a discipline, which needs to reflect the cultural and social conditions of designing the curriculum and the canon, to obtain basic information of and to reflect on processes of learning and teaching young adults, to construct a theory of methods for teaching literature, to consider the cultural relevance of the competencies acquired through literary knowledge, and to delineate a number of core skills of academic teachers in order to implement professional teacher training. As a preliminary step, he specifies three dimensions of literary knowledge that should feed into teaching literature as a subject in its own right: (1) the subjective experience and significance of reading, (2) the inter-subjective negotiation of the cultural, reflexive function of literature, and (3) the systematic literary scholarship in terms of theory, history, and analysis.

Susanne Reichl takes issue with the fact that university courses in literature concentrate on analysis and interpretation but neglect the preceding process of reading texts in EFL. She suggests that research on reading skills needs to provide concepts to promote reading strategies, while at the same time misunderstandings and confusions should be taken as an opportunity to raise an awareness of the reading process and to practice problem-solving. Here, the L2 reader is not necessarily inferior to the native speaker because the advanced learner can take recourse to specialized competencies, such as an explicit knowledge of grammatical rules and means of disambiguation.

Maria Eisenmann proposes to start with creative tasks that pave the way to analyzing a drama in order to involve students in a holistic way. The aesthetic experience of watching, scripting, and performing dramatic discourse, she argues, offers rich learning opportunities since it activates EFL learners, appeals to their creative imagination, and allows them to practice the target language. Working with plays that are part of the curriculum at school would help prepare students for their future career as teachers in terms of both content and motivating teaching methods.

In a comprehensive, praxis- and learner-centered approach, Laurenz Volkmann presents a whole array of drama techniques, which turn the classroom into a stage that is marked by acting out plays alternating with reflection and critical discussions. In order to introduce this approach carefully, Volkmann proposes making students work with silent tableaux, select key words or lines from dialogues, and explore their potential meanings in a micro-drama rather than a full-fledged performance. It is possible to connect the focus on the text with that on performance and literary theory, such as considering the casting or enactment of roles on the basis of the script, or debating how Hamlet would feel and act if he had an Oedipal complex, were a misogynist, etc.

Carola Surkamp draws attention to a neglected genre: radio plays. She reveals how the production of radio plays by teams of students develops their understanding of this specific genre, of narrative, of communication, and of media. This task

appeals to their emotional and creative faculties and demands cooperative performance. In this project, students also present their own versions of the radio play to their peers and discuss their merits and shortcomings, as well as the transfer of their experience to a school setting. Thus, students develop their aesthetic appreciation and cognitive understanding of art, and also enhance relevant practical competencies, such as auditory and oral skills, strategies of planning and problem- solving in teams, and the creative use of media in teaching.

Harry Rusche, an autodidactic pioneer of blended learning, explores the options of computer-assisted teaching from working with word-processors on individual computers to blogs and wikis on the web. He traces the changing roles of the teacher from lecturer to coach and of the learner from receptive individual to active participant and collaborator. His most recent model of sequential writing assignments on Shakespeare considers writing as an open-ended process, which gives individual students the opportunity to revise their own writing with the help of comments by peers. Students create spatial and inter-medial rather than linear and verbal texts, utilizing both their creative potential and practicing multi-literacy skills relevant to their vocational careers.

Michael Meyer has developed a process- and learner-oriented model of peer-teaching in literary studies, which aims at integrating the learners' individual interests in literature, its cultural significance, literary scholarship, and teaching EFL. Peer-teaching gives teams of students the opportunity to practice personally relevant and academically appropriate strategies of interpretation and teaching. Groups of students specify the content and the method of particular lessons they plan, implement, and reflect with the help of the teacher and their peers.

Barbara Buchenau and Carola Hecke discuss an interdisciplinary project, which coordinated a course in American Studies with one in teaching EFL on the topic of "race," and which culminated in a symposium. The choice of African-American and Mexican-American topics in theory, literature, and film served to discuss questions of ethnic difference, (multi-)cultural identity, and social justice in cultural studies and the teaching of intercultural competence in TEFL through planning, implementing, and reflecting lessons. The project aimed at involving students as much as possible in intercultural readings in order to make the experience of the other relevant to them as individuals and to their own reflective cultural and social practice. The tasks required students to specify and solve problems in teams, to develop theoretically informed readings, and to practice skills of presentation and academic discussion in the symposium.

Koblenz
Michael Meyer

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