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From the "Introduction" to *Bridging Cultures: International Women Faculty Transforming the US Academy*. Lanham: University Press of America, 2011.

Introduction

Federica Santini, Sabine H. Smith, and Sarah R. Robbins

OTHERNESS AND SUSPENDED IDENTITIES

C'est faux de dire: Je pense: on devrait
dire on me pense. Pardon du jeu de mots.
Je est un autre.
(Arthur Rimbaud)

In his *Lettre du voyant*, Arthur Rimbaud concentrates on the otherness that emerges in the very act of writing, through which truths often materialize that had not been evident to the writer before s/he began the process of narrating. In this sense, only those who learn how to remain still while in movement will be able to be *voyant*, to discover the secret relation between things otherwise impossible to discern and express: language, then, will speak for itself.[1] In attempting to follow Rimbaud's advice, the authors of this volume's essays embarked on an intellectual journey that, ironically, required a patient stillness—giving themselves over to a sustained period of individual and shared reflection, supported by writing, then refined by collaborative re-writing, additional reflection, and extended communal revision. In gradually building and rebuilding our texts together, we have also revised ourselves and our view of the roles we can play in the US academy. Hence, this book aims both to disseminate our findings and to make as transparent as possible the process of "voyant" that eventually enabled our language to take us to a new place, where we could re-envision ourselves. So, this book tells a story of individual "others" becoming a community of empowered agents. Adopting a hopeful stance borne of this process, the authors of this collection also imagine how the university, as a site of public culture-making, can benefit from such personal and communal exchanges among international women faculty and, by extension, additional under-represented social groups.

Individuals who, by reason of choice or circumstances, find themselves starting a new life in a country different from that of their origin, need to come to terms with the question of becoming "other," of being, at least for a time, caught between two spaces, "at home" in neither one. Ex-pats and migrants tend to be suspended between worlds, seeking to bridge different cultures by continually interacting between the two. Eventually, they may move to

negotiating a hybrid identity and to making a new home in a space between cultures, a space of more generative otherness that is uniquely their own and is borne of the productive confluence of competing cultural experiences. For women like the authors of this book's six core essays, who have come to the US academy from overseas, pressure to assimilate into the dominant culture of American higher education is intense, so forging an identity that affirms the positive benefits of cultural hybridity can be especially difficult.

Even at the outset of our work, we realized that such ongoing individual efforts toward identity re-definition participate in larger societal trends. Specifically, "globalization" is claiming increasing attention in a range of public settings, including the university.[2] Touted as a positive value, the internationalization of higher education is, we would argue, inadequately critiqued, particularly around its impact on those members of the academic community who are most personally involved in effecting the "globalization" of US classrooms—the "others" who come from abroad to seek careers in the American academy. Meanwhile, despite many signs of progress over the years, the place of women in the US academy is still tenuous on many fronts. Thus, as co-editor Sarah Robbins asked in our preface, what happens when faculty members embody the combined "double jeopardy" challenge of being women and coming from international backgrounds? What strategies are some of these women developing to turn their complex identities, their inherent "otherness," into classroom assets and knowledge-making resources, rather than causes for concern or remediation? These are two core questions addressed in *Bridging Cultures*. We examine these issues through the stories of international women faculty using tools from diverse disciplines along with interdisciplinary approaches to claim personal agency and envision social change within higher education. As an alternative to the assimilation model often associated with immigration, this volume represents another approach—one which actively values knowledge brought from a home culture, and which assumes that reflective critique can integrate that knowledge into a professional praxis recognizing US-oriented expectations while developing a self-consciously intercultural vision.

These narratives examine the complex acculturation-related experiences faced by international women faculty members. This book's authors have taken on teacher-scholar careers within the United States early in the twenty-first century, an era celebrating traits of a so-called "flat" world yet often reluctant to facilitate intercultural passages promoting social justice.[3] Setting analyses within the context of scholarship on the burgeoning diversity in academe and US society overall, but also on gendered social roles and gendered ways of knowing, this collection demonstrates ways that feminist and womanist self-reflection can create new knowledge with important cultural impact.

Individually and as a group, this volume's essays affirm the importance of standpoint epistemology—that is, of identifying and critiquing the particular perspective from which one speaks. Each of the authors revisits her own individual experiences adapting to the shifting climate of higher education in the United States. As part of that standpoint-shaped effort, they describe their shared context of working at universities in the American southeast, which is itself being shaped by dramatic demographic changes, including internationalization. But they also outline and interrogate the unique personal histories each has brought to her current situation, based on experiences in "foreign" communities whose differences from US society continue to shape their lives today. By

grounding their interpretation of a broader social issue—the acculturation of international women faculty members—within reflections on their own individual experiences, the authors of our opening set of essays acknowledge both the contingent nature of their findings (which, standpoint theory would say, carry inherent biases and remain tenuous, awaiting future experiences) and the epistemological value their stories have for this particular topic.

To take on this collective enterprise, we have followed the framework recommended by Sandra Harding for carrying out standpoint projects.[4] Harding suggests that "Standpoint projects have the potential to help move positions of resistance into social transformation ones" which can provide "resources for serving . . . pro-democratic, identity-based new social movements" (246). In a "strong" standpoint project, individuals become subjects through collective study; they become capable of transforming society (255). For Harding, such projects exhibit three central features, all of which we have tried to incorporate into our work:

- "starting research from the lives (interpreted as experiences, structural social positions and/or discourses) of structurally exploited groups" (in this case, international women faculty) rather than through traditional disciplinary methods;
- seeking "to identify the conceptual practices of power in some particular context," in this case, US academic culture, by moving beyond "ethnographies or phenomenologies of 'others' and their life worlds" to critiques of power relations and social interaction; and
- developing "group consciousness" based in generating "the information and insight oppressed groups need and seek" (252-53), in this case, by promoting solidarity in a group of women writers whose own stories could then serve readers in similar situations, by presenting "information and insight" grounded in personal experiences, yet linked to relevant scholarship.

By using their own autobiographical writing as a meaning-making vehicle, this anthology's primary authors also affiliate with the feminist-oriented practice of life-narrating, a discursive enterprise that recognizes the centrality of everyday life viewed through a reflective lens. In line with Virginia González's affirmation of feminist, subjective modes advancing moral reasoning, their stories offer what González calls "first-hand and personalized knowledge based on observations."[5] As Sidonie Smith and Julia Watson have observed, life narrators use "personal memories" as "the primary archival source" for autobiographical work.[6] This endeavor is both psychologically productive, Paul John Eakin has argued, and highly complex, even at its simplest level, when people think or talk to themselves about themselves. For Eakin, making a narrative "about ourselves involves a lot more than self-indulgence; when we do it, we perform a work of self-construction."[7] To extend Eakin's point, therefore, this book's authors have used self-reflection, rendered into narrative writing, as a means of self-construction but also of comparative cultural analysis, in line with inter-culturalist scholarship outlined in more detail below.

Although the content of the essays affirms the importance of diverse, individualized experiences as a source of knowledge, our approach for creating this volume has been highly collaborative, consistent with feminist scholarship and recognized practices for women's collective action around political issues. We drew on research that has described and theorized feminist collaborations, such as the groundbreaking Forum published by *Tulsa Studies in Women's Literature* in 1994, which focused on co-authorship's pitfalls and possibilities,

both historically and for women seeking to build successful academic careers.[8] In our case, while several of the texts in this book are co-authored pieces, we also made a commitment to collaborative writing among all project participants, so that even the essays listing only single authors benefited from extensive small-group discussions of their content and/or online responses from readers involved in the project, as well as input from multiple editors. Following this approach, we could often refine our own thinking for one text by setting it in dialogue with the rich disciplinary resources our team members were bringing to different essays. Several times during the collective writing process, we assembled as many authors as possible for "status check" whole-group sessions, where we discussed our progress on individual pieces but also positioned the findings that were emerging from our writing within larger, cross-disciplinary frameworks. At the same time, we would re-visit overarching questions about internationalization and its relationship to teaching, scholarship, and community partnerships; and gender's place as an analytical tool in our work, based on both shared personal experiences and the traditions of feminist scholarship. Re-examining these questions together on a recurring basis reminded us that we were aiming for a trans-disciplinary audience, both within the academy and beyond, and that we had a responsibility to support each others' work on the project within the context of ongoing professional goals and constraints.

Eventually, setting our individual stories in conversation with each other, we achieved a new perspective on the "in-between" status of international faculty women, acknowledging both limits and enhanced capacities. In *Novecento*, Italian writer Alessandro Baricco recounts the fantastically woven story of a boy who, born and raised on one of the great ocean liners taking passengers of all sorts to America at the turn of the last century, spends his entire life playing piano on the ship, without ever setting foot on either shore. Like the pianist, migrants and ex-pats are often represented as permanently suspended between worlds, getting entangled in a net of regrets. What if, instead, the uncertain space of suspension could be used as a privileged setting from which to actively participate in the global world, to create interactive networks across space, by making connections or engaging with generative oppositions (core/periphery, inside/outside, high/low, East/West and/or North/South, patriarchal/feminist, white/non-white)? The ocean then becomes the multifaceted and fast-moving universe of intercultural exchange, in which the fertile surf touches at the same time on all aspects of reality on every shore. Suspension, with its possibilities for ongoing reflection, can therefore be a source of strength.

Kyoko Mori's collection of essays entitled *Polite Lies: On Being A Woman Caught Between Cultures*, thematizes a related idea of cultural suspension.[9] Specifically, Mori pays tribute to the challenges experienced by a Japanese-American woman college professor who, in her hyphenated identity, navigates the exigencies of two very different cultures while attempting to come to terms with her unhappy childhood in Japan and her adult identity in the United States. Mori's very personal and rather melancholic reflections parallel Baricco's inasmuch as she, too, views herself as suspended in space: unable to go home or to make a home somewhere else, she visualizes herself alone in a spacecraft, endlessly orbiting earth (3). At the end of the volume, however, she returns to the idea of her suspended existence in another image: in conjuring up the geographical distance between Kobe, Japan, and San Francisco Bay, in the United States, she focuses on her separate cultural identities as connected by the

ocean's waters. She takes solace in the fact that "in a roundabout way, the same water moved back and forth across the world—it didn't matter where I was" (258).

And yet, as the stories by this volume's authors show, migrating to a new place does matter. The vision that Mori herself achieves comes not only from the "water mov[ing] back and forth across the world" (258), but from her own movement between spaces, to the productive suspension that maintains intense awareness of and empathy for both the point of origin and the new place(s) to which she has journeyed. By the very act of becoming international faculty members, educators of foreign descent undergo life-changing experiences in which their views of their own cultures are substantially altered. They also encounter shifting visions of themselves through the reactions of others. When engaging with students, they meet with attitudes ranging from stereotyping to unfiltered enthusiasm, with the full range of classroom responses to their presence creating intense pressures on professional identity formation. Along the way, these "foreign" faculty find that they need to respond to such challenges within the context of American social norms, many of which they had not encountered before, and which they may still find difficult to understand, even after extended stays in the United States. Meanwhile, as would-be stewards and promoters of a "global" perspective, international women faculty also face gender-associated constraints when seeking to construct an authoritative persona in the classroom, among colleagues at their academic institutions, with other scholars in their fields, and in the larger society. Therefore, erasing or excluding the gendered dimensions of our identity from our self-examinations would be as serious an error as attempting to escape our "foreign" status.[10]

Taking this double jeopardy position into account, the present volume explores connections between the tests women faculty of foreign descent face in the academy and crucial, rigorous questions they ask themselves about their own evolving identities. After all, if educators and life-long learners are committed to making a change in the way students see the world, and therefore in the world itself, they ought to be ready to involve themselves—including their gender, ethnicity and cultural backgrounds—actively in the learning process and to encourage others to do the same. Such a strategy banks on diversity as powerful cultural capital rather than viewing "difference" as a problem to be overcome. Buttressed by recent scholarship on cultural competency, the contributors now capitalize on their role as facilitators of open-ended inquiry, encouraging students to explore cultural differences and similarities without trying to over-weigh positives and negatives, or passing definitive value judgments on one culture versus another.[11] The classroom, then, becomes a space where learners may study the "foreign" while interrogating the familiar and living increasingly more comfortably with the pluralism associated with cultural diversity.

Such a stance assumes that immigrants like our core essays' authors have a kind of epistemic privilege—a special capacity, by virtue of their personal histories, for developing their own bicultural identities as resources for knowledge-making. This positive vision of hybrid identity allows them to maintain their own original cultural selves, at least in some form, even as they participate actively in the new host culture—in this case, the US academy.[12] This approach, in turn, opens up the possibility of forming what Joel Spring has termed *multicultural minds*—identities that can switch social frames of reference fluidly but with self- and cross-cultural awareness, recognizing the value of cultivating and readily drawing upon multiple social perspectives.[13]

In interrogating their own personal backgrounds and day-to-day professional challenges interactively, our collection's primary authors follow advice from Zvi Bekerman and Ezra Kopelowitz, whose *Cultural Education—Cultural Sustainability* has argued that "Contemporary theories of multicultural society and education offer a poor start for understanding the dynamic, flowing, and complex experiences of cultural sustainability as it is actually lived." Thus, Bekerman and Kopelowitz recommend scholarship "that incorporates the complexity of lived experience." In particular, they call for "comparative study" that will take "social membership, and the place of particular cultural groups" into account. They note that "people who are members of culturally distinct groups [such as, we would say, international women faculty] live in a dynamic relationship with other groups and have social memberships in many groups, all of which are fluently juggled in the course of everyday life."[14] In the case of our six core essays, therefore, we have sought to surface the ways in which gender interacts with diverse national origins and other social identification factors to shape the daily lives of our authors, whose stories can now be read both comparatively and as a body of texts with recurring themes and arguments.

NOTES

1. See Rimbaud, "Rimbaud à Georges Izambard, 13 mai 1871," 111–14. Rimbaud will then develop the idea of the *voyant* in another letter, the famous one written, two days later, to Paul Demeny. (See Rimbaud, *Lettres du voyant*, 133–144).

2. For a productive discussion of differences between "internationalization" and "globalization," see the response essay by Steve O. Michael later in this volume.

3. Friedman, *The World is Flat: A Brief History of the Twenty-First Century.* For a more critical look at the global economy, transnational migrations, and associated shifts in our conceptions of knowledge, social relations, and more, see George Lipsitz, *American Studies in a Moment of Danger*.

4. See Harding, "Transformation vs. Resistance in Identity Projects: Epistemological Resources for Social Justice Movements," 246–68.

5. See González, "Daring to Be: Identity, Healing, and Mentoring in Minority Scholars," 153.

6. Smith and Watson, *Reading Autobiography: A Guide for Interpretation of Life Narratives*, 6.

7. Eakin, *Living Autobiographically: How We Create Identity in Narrative*, 2.

8. See, in particular, Leonardi and Pope, "Screaming Divas: Collaboration as Feminist Practice," 259–70. Leonardi and Pope affirm a feminist agenda "to formulate an alternative to the mode of scholarly production that the dissertation epitomizes—the solitary and competitive laborer, the single authorizing signature that produces, in the end and after many years of joyless labor, 'authority'" (259). Revisiting their own experiences of writing collaboratively, and admitting the problems evaluators such as tenure committees sometimes have had with co-authorship, they assert: "collaboration, whatever the subject, whatever the agenda, becomes a political act with political consequences" (259). In our case, within the authorial team, those consequences have been highly positive, forming a kind of mentoring by doing. We are aware, as our epilogue discussion acknowledges, that collaborative writing is sometimes devalued within the academy. But we also affirm that our collective voice has enabled us to say some difficult, political things, together.

9. See Mori, *Polite Lies: On Being a Woman Caught Between Cultures.* One of Mori's most relevant metaphors, for us, involved her efforts to use two languages. She refers to her linguistic and cultural identity as two stations on a radio: as she switches to one, the other fades, becomes unintelligible with static (17). Mori's difficulty with what some sociolinguists and multiculturalists would envision as a potential benefit—the

capacity for code-switching back and forth between two different language systems—led us to interrogate both ways in which our challenges with using a second language professionally had constrained our careers, and avenues to knowledge and intercultural competencies that the ongoing use of more than one language can provide for academics.

10. See, in this regard, Martin, *Coming of Age in Academe: Rekindling Women's Hopes and Reforming the Academy*. Martin argues that feminists in academe must maintain strong gender-based ties that also affirm other intersectional dimensions of identity, such as class and race. "How can feminist scholars find acceptance in the academy without losing sight of their mothers, daughters, sisters, half-sisters, female cousins and aunts—which means females of all classes, races, sexualities, and states of being?" (4).

11. For examples, see Michael Byram and Claire Kramsch, linguists who arguably initiated in the field of foreign language education the scholarly discussion on intercultural competence. These interculturalists have promoted the development of meta-skills to foster dispositions and attitudes that allow language learners to function effectively in any situational context, regardless of a speaker's familiarity with the target language and culture. Byram speaks of the different ways of knowing in his *Teaching and Assessing Intercultural Communicative Competence*. Claire Kramsch has recently coined the term of "symbolic competence" in her theorizing of intercultural competence. See "Language Ecology in Multilingual Settings: Toward a Theory of Symbolic Competence," 645–671.

12. We are well aware that merely experiencing more than one culture does not ensure achievement of an intercultural identity. As Geof Alred, Michael Byram and Mike Fleming have noted: "In crossing frontiers externally, the learner has crossed and possibly dissolved frontiers within," but internal change must truly "take hold" and be "incorporated into the person's sense of themselves" if one is to become "an intercultural person," with "a deeper, more complex, sense of belonging to groups, communities, societies and nationalities" in the plural (5). Indeed, they warn, "being intercultural" is "not synonymous with being 'international,' being a constant traveler, being constantly in search of somewhere else. Nor is it synonymous with abandoning one's own groups and rejecting one's social identities. On the contrary, it leads to a heightened awareness of these, and of the interactions between 'own' and 'other,' an interaction which, whilst maintaining distinctions, creates a sense of communality, of community" (4). See especially the editors' introduction to *Intercultural Experience and Education.*

13. See Spring, *The Intersection of Cultures*. Spring defines "biculturalism" as "the ability to switch cultural frames for seeing, knowing, and interrelating with the world." Biculturalism therefore "involves psychological movement between two cultural contexts" and requires a capacity for keeping more than one culture alive and accessible within oneself. To sustain a sense of integration, then, biculturalism requires "the maintenance of one's ethnic culture while participating in the host culture" (119). For Spring, a category of potentially greater social importance is the multicultural mind: "people with multicultural minds . . . understand that there are multiple perspectives and interpretations of any event and that cultural differences play a major role in shaping these differing perspectives" (143). While biculturalism is dependent at least in part upon having the personal experience of having lived in two cultures, "multicultural minds," with their productive capacity for what Spring dubs "frame-switching," can be self-consciously cultivated through such strategies as empathy. As an extension of Spring's argument, we would assert that the bicultural experiences of our book's primary authors, particularly through the critical stance their narrative reflections have produced, are now resources that can promote multicultural minds among their students.

14. See Bekerman and Kopelowitz, "Introduction," 2. See also, in the same volume, M. Gail Hickey, "New Worlds, Old Values: Cultural Maintenance in Asian Indian Women Immigrants' Narratives," 363–82. Hickey notes: "Knowledge about the everyday lives and cultural traditions of specific immigrant groups can be as valuable to researchers as knowledge about immigration trends and demographics" (363).

15. Santini and Smith recognize, as native speakers of the languages they teach, that they both enjoy a type of authority in the classroom not available to instructors of foreign

descent who work in other disciplines. In summer and fall 2007, Smith surveyed over one hundred students in classes taught by international women faculty members. The attitudes reported here are congruent with students' commentaries. Significantly, the survey revealed that undergraduates are favorably biased toward professors of foreign descent when the course content includes foreign language and cultures. According to the survey data, a significant number of students perceive international faculty members as "experts" on language and culture regardless of their specific knowledge, experience and expertise. Students in the survey readily assumed that, by virtue of having successfully transitioned from another culture to the US academy, international faculty are competent to teach on any culture and cultural topic.

16. "Diversity and Equity Assessment Initiative," available online at http://www.kennesaw.edu/deai/index.html. See especially the website's sections on "Project History" and "Conceptual Framework."

17. See Mohanty, "The Epistemic Status of Cultural Identity: On *Beloved* and the Postcolonial Condition," 29–66. Another version of this essay appeared in *Cultural Critique* 24 (Spring 1993): 41–80. Mohanty's stance is further supported by Moya's *Learning from Experience: Minority Identities, Multicultural Struggles*. Moya affirms "a postpositivist realist theory of identity that takes seriously the epistemic consequences of identity" (3).

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Chapter 3
Perfectly Ambivalent: How German Am I?

Sabine H. Smith

BEAN SPROUTS AND THE TEACHING OF FOREIGN LANGUAGE

"You have to talk with them if you want them to grow." Lowering his milky-blue, seventy-five-years-old eyes sheepishly, as if he suspects that his opinion may be discounted, my uncle Edgar still speaks with emphasis and measure, and his statement carries weight for me simply because of who he is. Granted, the subject is his sister's fledgling bean crop, stalks in her garden that won't grow this year, and I find Edgar's reminder surprising and somewhat bizarre. Edgar knows full well that this kernel of folkloric belief does not fall on fertile ground in this company of mixed generations seated at the dinner table. "Did you talk with them as you put them in?" he probes further, as his younger sister silently acknowledges his remark as the possible cause for under-achieving sprouts.

The exchange makes me pause as I consider my reluctance to engage in this culturally laden conversation about the family garden. I admit that my hesitation has several roots. Growing up in the city and in the urbanized part of the family branch, I lack much of German gardening folklore and rural training. My folks never grew beans, or anything else for that matter. However, had I stayed in Germany, I would have probably learned at one or another family occasion about the bean-growing practice that is still apparently familiar to my younger cousin and nephew (who don't show a reaction of surprise at Edgar's assessment). The puzzled look on my face marks me as the outsider, reminding my relatives of the cultural distance that encompasses more than the physical space between the States and Germany and the almost twenty years that I've been away from "home."

As the conversation continues without me, I realize that I position myself by declining to enter or take a stand. When Germans talk, you're expected to have an opinion, especially if you are educated. It's a cultural value to "speak your mind" and perceived almost as a civic obligation; Germans tend to take their conversations seriously, as if they responded to a lingering call from the twentieth-century past, feeling that they have to make up for all the Germans who didn't speak out when the Nazis took over. "Why even talk if you agree?" is another abbreviated, folksy explanation for why arguing for the argument's sake is expected and accepted behavior in German social circles. However, even to my initiated ears, conversations among my German relatives have begun to sound a bit confrontational and somewhat contentious. I recognize that I've become "Americanized" in my conversational style, preferring "pleasant" socializing in exchanges that verify common ground rather than divides in conversation. While I resist cultural stereotyping, the scholarship of feminist linguists has explored the role of culture and gender in communicative encounters.[1] My reluctance to speak up and question Edgar's claim may have to do with my socialization in the United States in addition to my gendered and generational experience of growing up in post-war Germany. I would "challenge" the family patriarch, and that is not what I'm expected to do.

As the first academic in my family, I have negotiated my role as a formally educated speaker in a male-dominated conversational environment. My family has been proud that I earned a PhD, but the men around the dinner table regularly joke about my being somewhat *weltfremd*, i.e. lacking in common sense or street knowledge. The teasing remarks suggest that my academic training and profession do not have "real-world" application, or are outside the testing grounds of a market economy. In a typical conversation, my own and other women's contributions are more likely dismissed, and the men advance the topical discussion by affirming each other's statements via verbal and non-verbal cues, barely validating the women's comments. Dominating the discursive field, they seem to assert the traditional gender hierarchy in the communicative situation, and it appears to me as if the publicly speaking woman is still perceived as a threat.

While growing up in Germany in the 1970s, I experienced the response to hiring women in public media quite similarly. Initially the German public media were staffed exclusively with men. I remember well the controversial induction of anchor woman Wibke Bruhns in the late-night edition of the news show *Heute* in 1971, followed by the introduction of female anchor Carmen Thomas in 1973 as the host of the sports news *Sportstudio* in Germany's public television channel *ZDF* on Saturday nights. The oldest public TV channel *ARD* followed suit with adding an anchor woman in the nightly news program in 1976. A vocal minority of men was outraged that women would announce soccer results and inform them on the latest events in the world. Since then, the media landscape has become more integrated, and female anchors, show hosts, and lead journalists are no longer the exception. In the summer of 2009, a cursory analysis of the German TV offerings shows that roughly half of the TV talk

shows are hosted by women. Thus, the discursive empowerment of women in the public realm has become a media staple, within limits, during my lifetime. As women take and assert their space, they also weigh the treacherous cultural exigencies of, on the one hand, replicating traditional expectations for gendered behavior and, on the other, individuating from prescriptive traditions. Sadly, their educational background has not always guaranteed that their words are valued.

In returning to Edgar's statement about bean sprouts, now I see its metaphoric meaning in relation to my profession, too. As educators and scholars, don't we seek to foster growth, planting seeds with students and readers in hopes of facilitating the development of knowledge, skills, and attitudes? Much of our eventual success hinges also on our ability to find the right words and to speak in a language our audiences will not only hear but find compelling: to make them want to venture out of their comfort zone and proverbial shells to stretch and strain not only their speech organs (to produce German), but also their minds to explore new ideas. We succeed if our audiences expand their own and navigate new horizons in both a cognitive and affective experience, and even in the term's physical connotations.

While this interpretation may seem trite, it is in direct relation to the significant disciplinary changes that my field, foreign language pedagogy, has undergone in the past twenty-some years. I'm both a product and practitioner of these student-centered, communicative methodologies. They focus on the learner's attainment of knowledge, skills, and dispositions through task-based, interactive, and proficiency-driven assignments. Richards and Rodgers summarize these trends: "In the 1990s, Content-Based Instruction and Task-Based Language Teaching emerged as new approaches to language teaching as did movements such as Competency-Based Instruction that focus on the outcomes of learning rather than methods of teaching" (15).

The focus on the student and his/her learning permeated popular teaching approaches that I was exposed to in graduate-level pedagogy classes during the 1990s while studying in the United States. They were developed at least partially in response to changing demographics and socialization processes in US youth culture via technology, and to low-enrollment numbers in German Studies. Not surprisingly, academics explored effective teaching practices in much scholarship, seeking to identify "best practices" approaches for recruiting and retaining learners and for attaining identifiable student learning outcomes. Richards and Rodgers summarize the history of foreign language pedagogy in the twentieth century in their volume *Approaches and Methods in Language Teaching*. In the United States professional language associations such as the Modern Language Association (MLA) and the American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages (ACTFL) have gathered data on disciplinary trends since the 1950s, and the 2007 MLA report delineated specific goals for transforming academic foreign language programs (see Geisler).

Significantly, the focus has changed over the decades although foreign language studies are said to remain in the interest of national security in a post-9/11

social environment. In the late 1970s, the President's Commission on Foreign Languages and International Studies under the leadership of Paul Simon had advocated for foreign language education in the United States as being of vital interest in a cold-war culture. The 2007 MLA report posits that new structures are needed in a changed world since learners' global citizenship requires translingual and transcultural competencies. In a recent, nation-wide study conducted by ACTFL, educators in the United States have identified the most pressing professional challenges. The study concludes that teaching with technology and learner motivation are the major professional challenges for the profession (see ACTFL, "Announcing the results").

As a student and professional, I have been interested in the literature on teaching practices. Possibly as in other disciplines, even fundamental questions in language teaching continue to be hotly debated, such as the inclusion of culture studies in the foreign language classroom. While there has been a general agreement that linguistic proficiency training is to be integrated with culture studies, researchers still disagree on how "Culture/culture" is to be defined and how the teaching is to be done. Recently, numerous investigations have addressed the ways in which the teaching of culture content is to be combined with the development of students' intercultural competence in a skill-building process that transcends language-specific competencies. Among others, Lange and Paige summarize the discussion:

> It should be clear that developing intercultural competence is different from "teaching culture in the classroom," as that subject has sometimes been treated in the language education literature. The goal of intercultural competence is not simply the knowledge of another culture, nor is it just the ability to behave appropriately in that culture. Developing intercultural competence demands a mix of culture-specific approaches that stress the apprehension of a particular subjective culture combined with culture-general approaches that address the larger issues of ethnocentrism, cultural self-awareness, and general adaptation strategies. (245)

Trying to reach the pedagogical goals that interculturalists promote has been a challenge for me as an individual and educator. In teaching German language and culture courses, my native and intuitive familiarity with the course content (the language itself, but also the culture's products, practices, and perspectives) has made teaching the subject no less challenging. For obvious reasons, I wish to avoid reiterating prevalent stereotypes, such as the German *Hofbräuhaus-Gemütlichkeit*, as popular as they often seem among novice learners.[2] I seek to convey to my students, as much as possible, an accurate and authentic representation of Germany—one that doesn't reflect (or at least addresses and resists) my own perceptual lenses and biases. Beyond communicating content knowledge, I seek to model and develop in students skills and dispositions which, as per the findings of interculturalists, the majority of students may not attain within the undergraduate curriculum. Lange and Paige and others identify the superior stage of integration at the late-advanced levels of

linguistic and cultural competency; such an individual is described as at least bi-lingual and bi-cultural and as accustomed to navigating effectively diverse cultures and discussing intercultural identities (264). While I have taught in diverse linguistic and cultural contexts and have acquired advanced proficiency and skill, I may not ever become perfectly bi-lingual, bi-cultural, or interculturally competent. In a life-long journey, I continue to foster my own tolerance for the ambivalences in my life and keep grappling with "larger issues of ethnocentrism, cultural self-awareness, and general adaptation strategies" (Lange and Paige, 245). Thus my own personal and professional journey mirrors the developmental continuum identified by interculturalists. In effect, I find that the professional task has been exacerbated by my specific and personal linguistic and cultural struggles as I explore my own learning curve.

In telling my story of personal and professional growth and by connecting specific experiences to general trends, I hope to show the interconnectedness between my German roots and my acculturation experience as a woman academician living and working in and between two cultures. I am motivated by a growing body of literature that articulates such experiences, including research by Mori, Li and Becket, and Hoffman. In these texts, academicians reflect upon the major influences in their lives and acknowledge their role in forming their personal and professional identity. In adapting their strategy, I outline in this chapter how my experience of growing up in post-WWII Germany in the private realm of my family and in the public realm of the German and US educational systems has influenced the academic I am today. I address the confluence of linguistic and cultural socialization, pedagogical theory and practice, and disciplinary epistemologies as they have shaped my own acculturation experience in the United States. I seek to take also a political stance: as the feminist adage goes, "the personal *is* political," and in my life, indeed, the private and the professional, and the particular and the systemic, have been connected and interdependent. This book aims to give voice to a growing minority of female academicians of foreign descent. I hope my contribution demonstrates the value of hearing more from these emergent voices as their concerns are relevant to a wider audience.

LINGUISTIC AND CULTURE PERSPECTIVES: THE "THIRD REICH" PRISM

Texts by German women authors who interrogate their families' and country's personal and collective Nazi past have formed a significant literature since the late 1960s. In their focus on the fathers' involvement, this literature has been variously termed, for example, *Väterliteratur* and *Töchterliteratur* to designate either the subjects of interest (the father figures) or the identity of the authors (the daughters). More recently, Cohen-Pfister and Wienröder-Skinner have summarized the history of post-WWII *Väterliteratur* in *Victims and Perpetrators 1933-1945* and juxtapose the older form of *Väterliteratur* of the 1970s with

the *Familienliteratur* (i.e. of the family) of the 1990s (32-34). While the process of coming to terms with our fathers' role is inherently a very personal journey, the journey of daughters in post-WWII Germany has been documented as enriching the literature on the Third Reich. Gravenhorst and Tatschmurat's 1990 edited volume *Töchter Fragen (Daughters Ask)* and Westernhagen's 1991 study *Die Kinder der Täter (The Children of Perpetrators)* are among the seminal studies. They address the question of what damage the post-war generation suffered at the hands of parents whose psyche was impacted by Nazi ideology. These and similar texts also bridge the traditional divide between literary writing and social science scholarship, connecting, from a daughter's perspective, the genre of memoir with scholarly research on National Socialism to synthesize diverse narratives of knowledge and experience.

The specific positionality of the daughters has been examined in this body of literature to provide corroborating evidence that the Nazi past influenced the relationship between fathers and daughters beyond the immediate post-war era into the subsequent generations. Because of familial and cultural traditions on the one hand, and counter-culture movements in the wake of the 1960s, on the other, it is hardly surprising that gender relations in general, but father-daughter relations in particular, became the battleground on which defeated *Wehrmacht* soldiers fought for domestic victories.

Born in the early sixties as the child of a disillusioned war veteran and a young refugee from the former *Sudetenland*, I identify as one such daughter who has struggled with her German parentage and her nation's past. Thus, it is not coincidental that instead of my father, my preferred father-figure Edgar claimed my attention at the outset of this chapter. In my extended family of rural, salt-of-the-earth, and somewhat gruff Germans, Edgar has always been the gentle father figure my biological father rarely was. Since my father's death, Edgar moved into the rank of family sage and patriarch—despite having character traits that my father denigrated as almost emasculating shortcomings. Humble to the core, Edgar was never an aggressive "alpha male" and owned this vulnerability as he transgressed prescribed gender role behaviors. When I was an infant, he gave me the bottle and changed my diapers "because," he'd say later almost in self-defense, "you needed it, your mother couldn't, and your father surely wouldn't have." Acting intuitively and unaffected by calculation, he'd get the job done when a hand was needed. In my father's view, he was always the "slighter" brother. To me, he was a source of comfort. Younger in age, smaller in size, and self-effacing in comportment, less accomplished financially, and more willing to prioritize his wife's and family's demands, he was perhaps less ambitious and more easily satisfied with the tangible here-and-now, taking pleasure in a simple life. I loved being with him as I trusted his steadiness and predictability.

Hence I was surprised to receive a formal invitation on the occasion of his seventieth birthday. The pre-printed, lined envelope seemed out of character. It contained an ornately decorated card with a photograph of himself at the age of twelve in his *Hitlerjugend* (Hitler Youth) uniform. It shocked me to see him as a beaming young boy visibly bursting with pride as if he had "arrived," being ac-

cepted and integrated, looking like a *man* in uniform. In contrast to my father, Edgar had never initiated talk about the past, or spoken favorably about the Nazis. I remember my disappointment. I remember calling him and regretting that I couldn't fly home to attend. I realize that I've never brought myself to ask him about the invitation—I suspect I've been actually fearful of what he might say.

To be sure, growing up in post-war Germany after the Holocaust, I had cause to fear, question, and doubt the language and actions of my elders. My generation, educated in public school during the late sixties and seventies, heard about the horrors of the concentration camps in every subject and in gruesome detail. Mortified by the accounts, I would return home to the family lunch, where my father, who had fought in France at the end of the war, quizzed me daily about what I had learned in school. Under the guise of supporting my education, he issued "corrections" to the official discourse as someone who really knew since he had lived in Hitler's Germany. The lunch-time history lessons would quickly deteriorate into abusive tirades, supposedly brought on by my meek attempts to defend my learning with the evidence I had seen and memorized. As his voice and anger climaxed, he would get up from his seat at the head of the table, agitatedly stabbing the air with his index finger thrust in my direction. Towering over me, his facial features strained as he combed thin black hair back in place, he reminded me of the specter I had seen in newsreels. Traumatized, I regularly reverted to tears in order to end the scene. As he stomped off and out of the kitchen, my mother would cradle me in her arms, telling me that I should have known better than to provoke him and that he didn't really mean it.

If the scene had been an occasional event, I could have possibly dismissed it. But the proverbial German persistence was not lost on him. Day after day, the lunch-time lessons would pour down, enhanced at times by his mandate that I go back to my teacher and tell him what my father had said. I made that mistake only once. Speaking up in class, relating "the facts" that my father had told me, I became a ready and welcome target not only for my peers but also my teacher. Ostracized for my attempt to do right by my family, I finished the school year as a loner and never brought up my paternal views in school again.

My relationship with my father remained strained and painful. Even years later and despite the physical and emotional distance that I put between my father and me (by moving to California, by marrying an American academic, and by raising children in a primarily English-speaking household), he would inevitably come back to the subject of German history during a visit or phone conversation. In generalizations as broad as brushstrokes, he would paint the ills of present-day society and ground what he perceived as the social wrongs of the day in the political mistakes of the past. As his emotions intensified, I felt the ideological noose tightening around my neck again. I knew cognitively and emotionally that I needed to speak my mind and that my academic studies in both history and gender relations equipped me to respond appropriately in these debates. However, my socialization into traditional gender role behaviors and the hierarchical power structure of the father-daughter relationship still weighed

me down in this verbal battlefield. When I re-entered the vertical structure of the parent-child dialogue and argued with him, I left it feeling belittled, patronized, abused, and violated, in fact assaulted by his world view.

In reviewing the literature and speaking to generational peers, I compare notes on childhood memories of father-daughter relations and find that my experience with the two formative male influences is shared. On an overly simplified typological continuum, many fathers appear to "fit" character profiles that resemble at their polar opposites those of Edgar's or my father's.

While the relationship with my father has left indelible marks, the wounds have healed, especially after I began addressing the pain. My studies and my profession have allowed me to find a forum and voice that my father did not tolerate. In learning, teaching, and writing about the Third Reich, I have funneled constructively my need to understand Nazi ideology. It was only in graduate school, however, and at a safe distance from Germany at the University of California, that I revisited of my own volition the subject. I wrote my "Third Reich" papers in English at least partially so that my father wouldn't be able to read them. Until recently, I crafted all professional writing in English and preferred it that way. English, as my second language, serves me to facilitate communication and impart meaning, but it is not connected to my core as is my "mother tongue." Thus I can speak more easily in English about difficult and emotional topics. Arguably, English and my "American" voice have afforded me emotional distance and freedom to express myself.

Ironically, it was my linguistic expertise in German that advanced my academic work on the Third Reich most recently. Two colleagues needed assistance from a native speaker in their efforts to design a study abroad program. As a product of study abroad myself, I had been itching to facilitate a tour, and the team approach and Maymester schedule were appealing. When I learned, however, that the purpose of the trip was Holocaust education, I felt the burden of history on my shoulders and weighed my options: I would be the only German in a group of faculty and students, some of whom had never left the country and some of whom had personal connections with victim fates of the Holocaust! After years of struggles with my German identity, I had finally gotten ready to excite a group about my people and culture. But surely not with a concentration camp tour! If they didn't return from Europe hating Germans or determined to never go back to the continent of horrors, I probably had done a decent job, hadn't I?

Since that first trip in 2006, my colleagues and I have led student groups overseas each year. I teach a class on how Germany has commemorated the Holocaust in diverse forms of public discourse. We examine government publications and educational materials, view public monuments and memorials, and analyze recent narratives in fiction and films. I have grown more comfortable with my role of facilitating this program, and I look forward to teaching the class. Although I understand that students do not perceive me as a *representative* German, I am aware of the *exemplary* status I have. I feel as if they wonder about my "Germanness," and am thus grateful when the group engages other

German (and non-German) scholars who share their viewpoints and provide additional perspectives. As per their own accounts, the students appreciate having multiple instructors from different disciplines (History, Philosophy, Nursing, German Studies); they like seeing us collaborate to deliver the content and facilitate learning and comment favorably on the team approach in post-trip evaluations.

In significant ways, both students and faculty suspend some of the traditional hierarchies between learner and teacher as we all gain new content knowledge on the historical facts from the diverse perspectives described above. During the trip, we collectively struggle to make sense cognitively and affectively of the experiences we have, and we discuss the challenge of how to commemorate the Holocaust in diverse "texts" intended to engage audiences that don't have biographical memory or emotional connection with the Shoah. In linking the events of the past to philosophical principles, the pragmatics of preservation history, or current events, we engage ourselves with the past to transfer the student learning outcomes of knowledge, skills, and attitudes to a range of academic and situational contexts. Recent pedagogical scholarship advocates for students' skill transfer: Cree and Macauley state: "Transfer of learning has been described as the 'ultimate aim of teaching'" (1). And Kemshall comments on the importance of fostering transfer skills in today's student as an integral component in the academy's changing mission (70). She views this mission as preparing students for survival and success in a professional world which requires "constant adaptation and an increased tolerance of both uncertainty in practice and the contingency of knowledge. . . . Transfer of learning will therefore be crucial; it will also be severely tested" (69).

During the program, we seek to engage students in age- and level-appropriate activities in hopes of fostering both cognitive and emotional growth. In addition to participating in pre-trip seminars (for which students review diverse texts, respond in writing to discussion questions, and complete a group project), students assume initiative and leadership during the trip: they lead a city walking tour, interview event facilitators, participate in focus-group discussions, prepare a photo essay for a post-trip presentation, and reflect on their trip experience in journal-writing assignments. In their journals, students respond to topical prompts, and in four entries, they hypothesize about an individual's experience during the Third Reich and his/her role as victim, perpetrator, bystander, or rescuer.[3]

Within the framework of our course, the students are expected to imagine an individual in a specific situation (e.g., in a concentration camp, experiencing an out-of-control feeling and a moment of joy). They are to discuss the hypothetical scenario before the backdrop of research assignments completed in preparation of the trip, thus bridging their own disciplinary content studies and creative writing. Moreover, students are asked to relate the situation to their personal contexts and to identify comparable experiences they have had. In our reasoning to assign this task, we follow the argument made by Morris "that curricularists must find a way to bridge the two cultures of social science and the

humanities, especially when attempting to interpret the complexities around the Holocaust" (5).

At the time of this writing, our faculty team has been analyzing the students' responses in a pilot study that supports our research agenda. In a qualitative and quantitative approach, we seek to glean data to verify the extent to which students are capable of empathy as corroborating evidence of the students' (hopefully progressive development of) intercultural competence. The preliminary results from the pilot study show that students are diversely prepared and motivated to engage in reflective writing of this kind. Some students share detailed responses that suggest affective dispositions conducive to experiencing and articulating empathy in conjunction with substantive content knowledge. These students exhibit attainment of specific academic learning outcomes, including attitudinal change. The data indicate that they have grown emotionally and cognitively in the course of the program. However, attitudinal changes are difficult to gauge, and the preliminary findings from the pilot study have prompted us to refine our approach and to include data from additional assessment instruments (e.g., photo-essay assignments, oral presentations, post-trip surveys, and in-focus group interviews) for triangulation. Our research question, still focused on assessing the extent to which students progress developmentally in the course of a short-term study abroad experience, is part of an emergent literature on the merits of short-term sojourns and students' intercultural competence, and on curriculum design and the Holocaust. In this context, Morris summarizes the discussion on the merits and limitations of seeking understanding of the Holocaust via empathy. She concludes: "If empathy suggests that your suffering is the same as mine, that the Holocaust survivor's suffering is like my own, then empathy is false. Still, a cautious empathy, a limited empathy, must remain or else we cannot do work on this horrific memory. A limited sense of empathy must keep the alterity of Auschwitz intact. I can empathize with the other, but I cannot feel what she feels. . . . The memory of the Holocaust lies at the limits of understanding, representation, and empathy" (12).

It seems self-evident that the unfathomable quality of the Holocaust lends itself to academic inquiries from numerous angles, with each approach complementing others to generate in their sum a more comprehensive analysis. Yet any attempt at comprehending the Holocaust also discloses again our limitations in understanding the unfathomable. I believe that as students and scholars of the Holocaust, we inevitably learn to foster a tolerance for such ambivalences. The Holocaust, as probably few historic events, pushes our cognitive and emotional limits. Morris observes: "It would be arrogant to suggest that an academic, who has never actually suffered Auschwitz, can really understand after all. In many ways, the Holocaust is beyond understanding and representation. And yet, cautiously and with humility—I proceed" (6).

In my personal experience, my academic studies of the Shoah have offered a prism through which I could begin to gauge my own personal and professional growth. Unable to resolve the painful ambivalences in my familial and collective pasts, I have begun to acknowledge, tolerate, and tentatively integrate them,

admitting to myself and others the limitations and imperfections entailed in the endeavor of coming to terms with one's own personal and national history.[4]

FROM AMERICAN TO GERMAN STUDIES: A JOURNEY THROUGH EPISTEMOLOGIES

Given my generation's cultural context described above, it is hardly surprising that I (and indeed many of my generational peers in my home country) became motivated to pursue their academic education and a career with a focus on foreign languages and cultures—and not in the least because it offered another voice, an additional identity and, in general terms, a way "out."[5] The German government provided copious opportunities for youth exchange, advocating that youngsters be ambassadors of goodwill who would represent the "new" Germany in a post-WWII world. Offering French, English, and several other languages beginning in fifth grade and in an articulated curriculum that allowed us to complete at best nine consecutive years in a foreign language before graduating from high school, the public schools emphasized the importance of second-language acquisition.

I viewed my language studies certainly as a convenient justification and means to travel, and my parents, both deprived of much formal education, thankfully encouraged the studying of foreign languages as a ticket to the world. Living somewhat vicariously through my *Wanderlust*, they seemed willing to offset the dysfunctional family experience with travel money if it furthered my education. During the post-WWII economic miracle years and beyond, they worked tirelessly to provide for a better "tomorrow"—and distracted themselves from the ghosts of the past by building second lives based on hard work and status symbols. I benefited from their dedication as they allowed me to focus exclusively on my studies.

And so I concentrated my studies on foreign languages—and appreciated the collateral benefit that I could reinvent myself in a foreign tongue and culture. As a shy and awkward teenager, I acted the part of the self-confident extrovert, flirting in French like I could have never done in German. In fact, away from home, I avoided speaking German, determined to integrate in the new culture. I indiscriminately emulated cultural gestures and perspectives, not necessarily grasping their complexities, nor realizing that my alternative self became a veritable nuisance to my German friends and family.

The inventory of intercultural competence developed by Bennett and Hammer identifies this behavior as typical for the earlier developmental phases that they classify as "ethnocentric." After an initial phase, in which an individual denies the equal or superior values of another culture, a person may shift to valuing the adopted culture more than their own and "goes native." Typically exhibited during long-term sojourns abroad, Peace Corps volunteers, in particular, tend to exhibit this exaggerated affiliation with the foreign culture (Brazinsky, *Nation Building*, 202). Elsewhere, this stage is described as a phase of

"defense/reversal."[6] Arguably, I moved into the phase because I was eager to leave my Germanness behind and find positive identifiers in another culture whose language I studied.

Since my first foreign language had been French, I initially traveled in Europe and came to the United States with a high school student exchange program as a seventeen-year-old, ready to explore the "new world" in a four-week stay in Nashville, Tennessee, in 1980. I had prepared for the trip by reading every tour guide I could lay my hands on. My knowledge of the South was mostly fed, however, by images from *Gone With the Wind*. And so I had donned (for the flight!) a flowery, feminine summer dress and a pink straw hat with fruit decoration. Jetlagged, ecstatic, and a bit rumpled, I emerged from the plane at Atlanta's Hartsfield airport to go through customs before finishing the trip. I'm sure I missed some curious looks as my fellow travelers marveled at my appearance. By contrast, the customs officer didn't even look up as he took my customs declaration and questioned in a commanding tone: "Alcohol? Cigarettes?" Somewhat surprised, I paused for a second, but then remembered and knew what this was about: I had read about the genteel Southern culture and Southern hospitality! And so I answered with a gracious smile: "No thank you, I'm fine."

The scene of this real-world encounter with the American South has remained vivid over the years. I have laughed at it since, used it in class, and marked it as the overture to many more intercultural misunderstandings. It taught me important and rather obvious lessons: that book knowledge of a language and culture has limitations and ought to be carefully checked within the context of the authentic environment; and that even if I understand and speak a language flawlessly, I might still miss the message, presenting myself as a "fluent fool." The term has been aptly used by interculturalists such as Bennett, who provides the following definition: "A fluent fool is someone who speaks a foreign language well but doesn't understand the social or philosophical content of that language" (Bennett, "Developmental Model," 1). While the snooty teenager (who I definitely was) thought she had it all figured out, the adult knows (mostly) better now. Instead of assuming that I understand, I try to ask for clarification and own comfortably (most of the time) that I'm a life-long learner.

My US customs encounter was a foreshadowing of my subsequent entry into the US culture. My socialization into American high school and youth culture was freighted with more misunderstandings, and I continually learned lessons that hadn't been included in textbooks. In particular, I struggled with gender expectations around dating and tried to reconcile them with my own experience and scripting. Not surprisingly, I sought refuge from these struggles in my academic work, first at school, then in college. My introduction into the US academic culture went smoothly by comparison and couldn't have been more gratifying to this enthusiastic learner. I experienced educators and staff as friendly and welcoming, and exceedingly "positive," helpful, and supportive professionals. My experience in the German educational system had been one of an uphill battle, or swimming against the stream. New ideas, project outlines and research topics met often with resistance, hesitation, and skepticism, and instruc-

tors' comments focused on weaknesses, shortcomings, and loopholes. In contrast, my experience with American academia resembled a ride in a water park: I felt like I was carried by forces moving with me in the same direction. American educators noted my strengths, celebrated my progress, showed enthusiasm for my ideas, and urged me to further explore my interests. Hence, the pedagogies of student-centered teaching and positive reinforcement provided a highly valued learning environment for me, and I sought every opportunity to experience more.

Upon graduating from high school in my home town of Wiesbaden, I enrolled in the American Studies MA degree program at the university of Mainz. While I loved all subject areas, I cherished particularly the classes whose instructors had been trained in the United States. Even as an undergraduate, I recognized the extent to which their interactive and discovery-based teaching approach benefited me. It motivated me to excel in my work, and with achievements came additional opportunities. I spent two more summers and a year abroad in pursuit of content knowledge and linguistic proficiency, hoping to develop with my American accent my American identity. But even after years of study and several immersion experiences, I still felt like an academic tourist, a visitor in the culture, or, at best, a "frequent flyer" on a transatlantic commute between my two worlds. In Germany, I no longer felt grounded either, and I counted the days to my next trip abroad.

The exigencies of completing my studies eventually with a Master's thesis, a book-length study on the experience of American women in Europe as narrated in nineteenth-century German popular fiction, provided the opportunity of exploring my interdisciplinary interests in American Studies and German Literature and Culture. Moreover, it virtually required me to spend a summer in the States, conducting research at Duke University, where the "Harold Jantz collection" held hundreds of German primary texts that had never been formally catalogued or analyzed. My academic pioneer instinct was piqued as I read scores of German dime novels with a cast of women characters that ranged from "the noble savage" to the shrewd businesswoman. I found inspiration in texts that diversely described the female experience in a German, popular-culture version of Henry James' "international theme." In analyzing the fictional stories of American women characters who lived and traveled between cultures, I began to embrace my own ambiguous identity as a German-American who did not feel "at home" in either country and who needed both cultures to feel "whole." In correlation with Bennett's intercultural diversity inventory, I began to move into a new stage, which he has described as "ethnorelativist."[7] In recognizing the competing allegiances I had formed, I still struggled with conflicting demands and exigencies—in a figurative "tug-of-war" around identity formation.

The internal struggles bore themselves out in the writing process. While I had enjoyed completing the primary thesis research, I discovered that my insecurities and "writer's block" drove me nearly to despair. Finding my academic voice in an English manuscript of publishable quality proved more than daunting. And there were very few resources to guide me. In the German university

system of the late eighties, student mentoring was hardly a concept, and my advisor professed, in fairly typical fashion at the time, a "sink-or-swim" philosophy. He handed out my thesis topic with a stern look and a firm handshake, and little more mentoring than the invitation to submit the final draft six months later. While I survived the gruesome process, I felt that I did not want to write another formal paper ever again. In hindsight, I realize that my German and American academic experience and the Master's thesis facilitated invaluable learning. Not only did they spur my interest in textual representations of women's experience from interdisciplinary perspectives; they afforded me immersion in two very different educational systems and allowed me to identify pedagogical approaches that resonated with my learning styles. To have known both systems became both an asset and a liability in my subsequent career choice as an educator, as I developed my pedagogical identity as a "learning facilitator."

When my thesis advisor urged me to add on the doctoral degree, he also suggested that I refine my English voice via a one-year lecturer appointment teaching Freshmen Composition at a major American university. With the lure of another year abroad and the prospect of buying time before I'd have to write the dissertation, I dutifully followed the recommendation of my prospective *Doktorvater* (dissertation advisor) and left for the University of California at Davis. Since I had already dabbled in teaching, I also felt that a year-long stint in undergraduate education would hone my skills and "Americanize" my style. Without a doubt, the teaching of writing helped my personal and professional development in countless ways. In mentoring students' writing and by addressing their fears, I articulated my own and overcame much of my writing phobia. In teaching them reading and writing skills, I gained confidence in my own abilities, finding my voice in a foreign tongue.

And yet, as eager as I was to emulate my American role models, my enthusiasm for teaching frequently brushed up against unanticipated ceilings imposed by inexperience, insecurities, or my original acculturation within the German educational system. While I cognitively acknowledged my preference for the "American" teaching style, I frequently lacked the skills to adopt it. Especially when "pushed" or stressed, I found myself reverting to "default" settings: I would regress to "teacher-centered" delivery formats by lecturing and seeking students' responses in structured dialogue; in grading student work, I'd note what was "wrong" with a student's work instead of focusing on its strengths. My students may have noticed these internal struggles, too. One day, a student disgruntled over a low grade and a mediocre paper "bleeding" red ink, declared in a reproachful tone: "How come you criticize my writing? You're not even a native speaker!" While I wish I could say that I dismissed the statement as easily with myself as I did in class, I admit that it echoed in my mind. Together with the dwindling prospects of landing a career job in English as a non-native speaker with only an MA degree, the student's comment helped cement my decision to switch careers, countries, and academic disciplines, and to pursue a PhD in German Studies in the United States instead.

And so I settled in the States, enrolled in graduate school, and enjoyed the privilege of being a native speaker in my field. As an international student, I didn't even have to take the dreaded GRE; my native-speaker skills and German transcripts were sufficient proof of my abilities: "Made in Germany," the cliché label, certified quality and expertise.

Due to my prior experience in English Composition, I placed competitively in bids for teaching assistantships, and absolutely loved teaching "Baby Deutsch." Since the language was not a challenge, I could dedicate myself to perfecting my pedagogical skills and to developing creative and interactive lesson plans. Inherently grateful for anyone who would care to study my language and culture, I courted the students, validated their efforts, and poured my heart into making German "fun." My students in turn loved my enthusiasm, my ability to switch between English and German with ease, my "American" teaching style, and my authenticity as a native speaker. The vast majority did, anyway. Little was I prepared for that inevitable comment, uttered accusingly by the student upset by a low grade: "How come you think you can teach us? You're a native speaker!" This time, I took the hit in stride. I appreciated the irony of having an echo of that earlier student's complaint and owned the kernel of truth entailed in both disgruntled comments. Yet instead of ditching this career, too, I resolved to accept the challenge and explored alternative pedagogies that honored multiple intelligences, different learning styles, and the perspectives of minorities.

To be sure, I benefitted from discipline-specific approaches to teaching academic skills (initially, in the English program, with its focus on reading and writing skills, and subsequently, in the German Studies curriculum, with its emphasis on oral proficiency). Epistemologies undergirding gender and cultural studies and theories on second language acquisition broadened my intellectual horizon. I was influenced in particular by Foucauldian discourse analysis and feminist standpoint theory and the ways in which they articulate strategies for resisting and subverting dominant power structures.[8] My passion for teaching combined with budding feminist activism, leading me to the aim of accommodating all students in an egalitarian classroom.

In my doctoral program, I alternated between German and Women's Studies classes as I completed coursework and reading lists on the "canonical" literature. I was inspired by feminist theories of "reading against the grain," which evolved from post-structuralist thought and Derrida's deconstructivist literary criticism, as I reviewed the scholarship on classic narratives in German culture. Many of the texts had been described as romantic love stories, but seemed abusive and violent when read from a woman's perspective. Within the Anglo-American academic context, scholarship that resisted the dominant discourse had just begun to emerge in the late eighties and early nineties. In the field of German Studies, such views were still deemed controversial at the time. In fact, more than once did senior professors at the University of California at Davis reject my thematic focus, dismissing it as ideologically skewed and irrelevant. However, a growing minority of feminist scholars had formed within the disci-

pline as I developed my own thoughts and a dissertation prospectus. I felt as if I was moving with their current, carried and uplifted to complete both the research and the writing process as a very enjoyable and gratifying experience.

From the onset, my *Doktormutter* (a female dissertation advisor) encouraged me to discover, select, and focus my thesis topic on my own. As I submitted outlines and chapter drafts, she reviewed them and provided constructive feedback continually. In addition, our cohort of doctoral students would meet to critique each other's writing in regular peer-review sessions. What a difference this made! I lost my fear of sharing my work, even if it was a less-than-perfect product. Cheered on by thoughtful and informed critique, I cherished the team spirit in this community of learners and completed my dissertation in a timely manner.

My dissertation was favorably reviewed and published despite the fact that it transgressed traditional disciplinary boundaries. Held together by a thematic focus and an interdisciplinary approach, the study entitled *Sexual Violence in German Culture: Rereading and Rewriting the Tradition* analyzes German primary texts from different eras and genres before the backdrop of non-literary discourses in the United States and Germany. It reflects my protracted efforts at bridging disciplines, languages, and epistemologies. And, it allowed me to formally examine the power differentials in gendered relationships. In a way, my preoccupation with discourse analysis and the Foucauldian concept of power structures that can be resisted and subverted marked an important step in my journey towards self-assertion and agency. Ultimately, it was Foucault's dynamic view of power hierarchies that encouraged me to examine my own positionality and recognize it as ambivalent and fluid, replete with opportunities for self-actualization and situated within a spectrum that encompassed the experiences of domination and victimhood. In reflecting now on my US-based academic studies in the mid-nineties, I see the developmental gains I made, but I also recognize the conceptual gap between my intellectual musings and my personal disposition. While I began to accept and integrate the competing ambivalences related to gender and power issues theoretically and cognitively, I struggled with them in my private life. Affective filters made me resist ambiguity and ambivalence as normal expressions of imperfection since I had been taught to strive for harmony, consonance, and perfection for the better part of my life.

THE PERILS OF PERFECTIONISM AND LIVING BETWEEN CULTURES

To be sure, I had not been socialized into a culture that valued an ambivalent self-concept. In my original family in Germany an ambivalent and fluid identity was not supported. Everyone knew everyone else's position and rank in the family hierarchy, and no one was to rock the boat. You were welcome to find your niche in life and carve out a space to claim your own, but you'd be expected to

"man" it to the best of your abilities. If you started something, you stuck with it, whether it was a career, or a marriage, or a 1,000-piece puzzle. It seems my family and I lived and had internalized a dictum that adorned our living room wall in a framed display: "What deserves to be done, deserves to be done well" (*Was sich zu tun lohnt, lohnt sich gut zu tun*). This motto is one of the "tapes" that used to replay in my mind. It is probably at the core of many of my accomplishments as well as my perfectionist and maladaptive tendencies. To do a good or rather perfect job became the standard to which my actions were held—first by my parents, then by myself as I bought fully into the adage, too. It took me years to understand the perils of perfectionism—and even longer to change my behavior.

I learned first about maladaptive perfectionism in connection with Callard-Szulgit's *Perfectionism and Gifted Children*. In reviewing the literature, I became painfully cognizant of the conclusions the data pointed to: maladaptive perfectionism in children may be the result of parental teachings that groom a world view of unrealistic expectations for self and others. In its most benign expression, perfectionism engenders high achievers who simply accomplish more because they are ambitious. In its neurotic or maladaptive form, individuals suffer under the pressure to do a perfect job, to maintain a perfect household, and to exceed in everything they do; over time, they may experience mental or physical stress that impedes their ability to complete the assignment.[9] Since their self-worth is connected to the perfect outcome, the vicious cycle becomes a downward spiral, often leading to psychological and physiological crises, as Rice and Preusser have noted. While the detrimental effects may be solely internalized, maladaptive perfectionists frequently have an adverse impact on the people around them. Consistently unrealistic expectations can harm relationships in both the professional and private realm. Recent studies on maladaptive perfectionism suggest that women more so than men are likely to suffer from the neurosis, and professionals in certain jobs, among them caregivers and educators, tend to be particularly susceptible (Domar and Kelly, *Be Happy*).

Not surprisingly, work in academia appears to accommodate perfectionist tendencies. In reflecting on my behaviors as a student and faculty member, I can identify the maladaptive perfectionism in my life: I immersed myself in my studies to the exclusion of many outside interests; I strove to be the best in every class by writing and re-writing drafts of papers, cramming for exams, and rehearsing presentations until I knew them by heart. Unfazed by input-output considerations, my perfectionist drive to excel didn't take into account the proportions of my efforts. In the best-case scenario, I simply worked until I was satisfied with the results. More often than not, however, I faced a deadline or my own limitations and the stressful prospect of submitting less than "perfect" work. In fact, teaching initially appealed to me mostly because I could re-work and perfect a lesson or even a course every time I taught it.

Once I realized, however, the dangers entailed in my own perfectionist tendencies with respect to my social contacts and the parenting of my children, my love for teaching and research became significant and instrumental in addressing

and managing the neurosis. In collaboration with my institution's Adult-Learners program, I taught students, staff, and faculty on how to identify and manage perfectionist tendencies. In teaching and publishing my research findings, I have been grateful that my academic work allows for the blending of personal and professional interests. To be sure, a merely cognitive and theoretical approach does not suffice in changing anyone's behavior. However, the act of exploring a research question can form a starting point, marking agency in yet another phase of the life-long learning process. In reaching the advanced levels of intercultural competence, an individual allegedly lives comfortably with the ambivalences and ambiguities in the world while acknowledging his/her own positionality from a non-judgmental viewpoint. Wouldn't such a stance presuppose a tolerance of imperfections, too?

CONCLUSIONS ON TOLERATING THE GERMAN

Arguably, learning a language and developing cultural knowledge and intercultural competence are comparable and interrelated skill-building processes. They share that it takes time and practice to move from the "novice" to the "expert" level. In Bennett's intercultural inventory, the highest level on the assessment scale is not even measured because very few individuals attain it—even if they appear to lay people as perfectly bi-lingual and bi-cultural. In my personal journey to reach the advanced levels of linguistic and cultural proficiencies, I have taken comfort in the fact that I will be a life-long learner in the process of tolerating my own and others' ambivalences while managing—however imperfectly—my personal and professional life. In fact, I have accepted the truism that the journey may be more important than reaching the destination.

In comparing the youth I was with the adult I have become, I suspect that my experience of growing up in post-war Germany actually prepared me for a life in and between different cultures. My initial and latent distrust in the language and actions of my elders has evolved into vigilance. I've been fortunate to develop skills and perspectives that allow me now to reflect on the patriarchal teachings from my own point of view and with less emotional energy. No longer am I the child in fear of the father-figure, refuting his lessons with tears when my words are not considered. By contrast, I don't feel compelled to speak out at all cost, either, and have reached the comfort level of just "sitting" with an elder's proclamation, pondering his statement and how it applies to me. While I still wrestle with the patriarchal power structures in my life, I have developed a voice and claim agency by telling my story as a gendered and generational experience. By exploring teaching, research, and study abroad opportunities, I have begun to integrate my own learning and shared it with others. I continue to heal the wounds that were inflicted at a younger age, and I continue to grow in the self-reflective process. In the course of writing this chapter, I have become more fully aware of the connections between my cultural roots and my cross-cultural and intercultural experiences. Thus, I return once more to this chapter's

opening and Uncle Edgar's remark. Maybe his comment bears wisdom, after all, with respect to my growth as a self-reflective scholar?

NOTES

1. See Tannen, *That's not what I meant!* and Wood, *Gendered Lives*.

2. In seemingly ubiquitous representations, Germans are still stereotyped in the extremes of the Nazi, on the one hand, and the jovial, beer-drinking German in traditional costume, on the other. Perhaps not surprisingly, my students, who have generally very little knowledge of German culture, foreground their appreciation of the latter.

3. The terms reflect the usage first introduced in the early 1990s and further discussed within the context of a scalable model and an empirical case study for a detailed description of distinct groups of individuals. See Hilberg, *Perpetrator, Victim, Bystander*, and Ehrenreich and Cole, "The Perpetrator-Bystander-Victim Constellation."

4. The topic of coming to terms with the German past (*Vergangenheitsbewältigung)* has been discussed in a multitude of historical and fictional texts, predominantly with the conclusion that the topos is a myth and that any attempt of coming to terms with it is tentative at best. See, for example, Frei, *Adenauer's Germany and the Nazi Past [*in German, *Vergangenheitspolitik]*, and Maier, *The Unmasterable Past*.

5. See Landler, *Germany Agonizes*, and Paterson, "German Brain Drain."

6. See Brazinsky, *Nation Building*, 202. For "defense/reversal," see Bennett, "Towards a Developmental Model," 3.

7. Bennett, "Toward ethnorelativism."

8. See Foucault, *History of Sexuality*, and Hartsock, *Feminist Standpoint*.

9. See Winter, *Perfecting Ourselves*, and Greenspon, *Freeing Our Families*.

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