

Greta Olson, Ansgar Nünning (Eds.)

New Theories, Models and Methods  
in Literary and Cultural Studies

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**New Theories, Models  
and Methods in Literary  
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## PREFACE

News about theory's premature demise appears to be exaggerated. While some of the most renowned thinkers associated with the rise of critical theory have indeed passed away since the last two decades of the twentieth century, literary and critical theory have continued to be widely expanding fields. If indirectly intervening in debates about the alleged death of theory, the present volume mainly pursues a much more modest and pragmatic objective. *New Theories, Models and Methods in Literary and Cultural Studies* aims to offer students as well as other readers compact information about some of the most important and fruitful approaches and methods that have recently emerged in the field of literary and cultural theory. Simultaneously, *New Theories, Models and Methods* intends to give its readers the means to carry out their own independent study, research, and analyses of literary texts as well as other cultural artifacts and phenomena.

By documenting some of the critical moves that have taken place since Deconstruction fell out of favor, this book intends, on the one hand, to contradict the narrative of theory's death. Not incidentally, the first methods it introduces are those of New Historicism and Cultural Materialism, arguably the paradigms of criticism that were dominant after Deconstruction. *New Theories, Models and Methods*, on the other hand, aims to demonstrate how vital theoretical impulses now profitably co-exist next to each other, arguably with no one of them in the ascendance. The volume thus attests to the vibrant state of diverse, sometimes mutually conflictive methods of analyzing literature and culture at the beginning of the second decade of the twenty-first century and works to show students how to put these theories into practice. While by no means inclusive of all recent developments, *New Theories, Models and Methods in Literary and Cultural Studies* does offer eight examples of how to perform cultural and literary criticism that are pertinent and up to date and it describes their relations to one another.

Yet this handbook also has a more local, specific, and situated history. It documents a fortuitous moment in the development of the English Department at the University of Giessen, when due to the presence of the Giessen International Graduate Centre for the Study of Culture (GCSC)<sup>1</sup> and a new mixture of faculty, students had the opportunity to choose between a great variety of methods and theories with which to go about doing research on literature and culture. The volume results out of a series of lectures held in 2009 and 2010 that was intended, in the first case, to introduce new

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1 The International Graduate Centre for the Study of Culture is an interdisciplinary institution at Justus Liebig University Giessen that aims to establish optimal conditions for doctoral candidates focusing on the study of culture. It has been funded twice by the German Research Council's excellence initiative, once in 2006 and again in 2012 (for further information see <[http://gcsc.uni-giessen.de/wps/pgn/home/gcsc\\_eng/](http://gcsc.uni-giessen.de/wps/pgn/home/gcsc_eng/)>).

students to researchers in the university faculty and members of the GCSC.<sup>2</sup> Lectures by the linguistic professors Joybrato Mukherjee and Magnus Huber and by the didactics professor Wolfgang Hallet added to the compass of those by university faculty members, GCSC PhD candidates, and permanent researchers, whose disciplinary roots are in literary and cultural studies. Ranging from Linguistic and Cultural Approaches to World Englishes to Ecocriticism, the variety of approaches that were introduced demonstrated that one may engage in the study of literature and culture on the basis of any number of disciplinary grounds and from a variety of perspectives. This multi-disciplinary approach is reflected in this volume's acceptance of the differences between its contributors' working methods even in terms of detail. The reader may note that some contributors use British English, whereas others do not. Moreover, the use of personal pronouns to denote "one," which was once universally and now only problematically expressed in English as "he," is also not uniform in the essays that follow here. This, too, reflects the current state of non-consensus in academic usage.

Post-doctoral researchers and PhD candidates from the GCSC numbered amongst the lecturers and included Anneka Esch-van Kan, Sonja Frenzel, and Nadyne Stritzke whose work is reproduced in this volume. Their presence demonstrates that the gap between audience members in an academic lecture series and speakers is permeable and in a constant state of flux. The production and dissemination of knowledge need not proceed in a top-down direction from established professor to student. Rather, younger researchers, like those whose work is represented here, personify the cutting edge of the humanities today.

Each of the essays printed here departs from the question "If theory is dead what comes next?" and provides an answer by introducing a new cultural or literary object of research and/or an innovative theoretical framework and method for approaching literature and/or culture. Major theoretical debates in this methodology are described as well as the central historical developments in the respective approach. Most importantly, each essay offers an application of the theoretical approach and method in order to demonstrate how it may be applied. In this manner, the editors and contributors hope to render a theoretical trajectory that might seem dauntingly abstract when one first hears about it into something approachable and useful to student and non-student readers.

It is in this spirit that the editors have worked to see this book into publication. Our debts are many, and it is our great pleasure to acknowledge them here. First and foremost, we would like to thank our colleagues for their collaboration and for all of the energy, work, and time they invested in their contributions to this project – to the lecture series as well as the present volume – and for their conscientious revisions of their essays. We are extremely grateful for their willingness to present their research in the

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2 For more information and to access podcasts of most of the original lectures, see "Podcasts WS 09/10 Lecture Series: New Theories, Models and Methods in Literary and Cultural Studies" (<[http://www.uni-giessen.de/cms/faculties/f05/engl/lit/lectures?language\\_sync=1](http://www.uni-giessen.de/cms/faculties/f05/engl/lit/lectures?language_sync=1)>).



admittedly concise format of a handbook and for their great patience during the production process. We also wish to thank Isabell Dinies, Madelyn Rittner, and Sebastian Gerla, who checked bibliographical references and quotations and assisted with the preparation of the manuscript for publication. Our greatest gratitude, however, goes to Jutta Weingarten and Birte Christ, who invested greatly in the time-consuming editorial process. Finally, we would like to thank Dr. Erwin Otto and his colleagues at WVT for their encouragement of and assistance with this project.

Giessen, May 2013  
Greta Olson & Ansgar Nünning

