

European English Studies: Contributions towards the History of the Discipline

ed. Balz Engler and Renate Haas ([Leicester]: The English Association, 2000). Pp. ii + 388pp.

ISBN 0900232234.

Reviewed by Richard Utz

Published 08.04.2003

A time span of only eighteen years separates Thomas Finkenstaedt and Gertrud Scholtes's volume entitled *Toward a History of English Studies in Europe* from Balz Engler and Renate Haas's *European English Studies: Contributions towards the History of a Discipline*. However, during this relatively short period crucial political, cultural, and institutional changes have taken place, changes which are duly reflected in the selection of contributors, terminologies, and methodologies prevalent in both publications. Perhaps the most obvious difference between both essay collections can be found in the area of methodology/terminology. To name but one example: *Toward the History of English Studies* contains an extensive essay by one of Poland's internationally known Anglicists, Jacek Fisiak. Based on his *Bibliography of Writings on English Language and Literature in Poland* (1977), his essay "English Studies in Poland: A Historical Survey" presents an impressively detailed fifty-one-page account of the events, persons, and texts that shaped the genesis and development of English studies in his country. Fisiak clearly aims at presenting the facts and avoiding any irruptions of the investigating subject into the subject of investigation. In contrast, Krystyna Kujawska-Courtney's essay in *European English Studies*, "Masters and Teachers: English Studies in Poland," (pp. 161-81), demonstrates an awareness and conscious inclusion of the investigating self which characterizes so much of the historicizing of the academic field in the wake of Michel Foucault and Pierre Bourdieu. Where Fisiak's account is clearly influenced by the universalizing tradition of writing the history of one's discipline in the philologico-historical sense, that is, (supposedly) *sine ira et studio*, Kujawska-Courtney maps out emerging areas of dissent (e.g., "the dominant Polish value-set of English studies based on male norms", p. 175) and articulates specific methodological desiderata (e.g., cultural studies, p. 174).

A second significant and new pattern visible in the 2000 volume is a deliberate decision to complete the large number of more or less self-conscious national chronological surveys (Martin A. Kayman, "A Very Old Alliance? An Introduction to English in Portugal," pp. 13-32; Tomás Monterrey, "Notes for a History of English Studies in Spain," pp. 33-52; Franco Marengo, "English in Italy: a Problematic fortuna," pp. 53-68; Imelda Bonel-Elliott, "English Studies in France," pp. 69-88; Pieter Loonen, "English Studies: the Dutch Experience," pp. 89-101; Arthur O. Sandved, "Some Aspects of the History of English Studies in Norway," pp. 103-21; Jørgen Erik Nielsen, "The History of English Studies in Denmark," pp. 123-41; Manfred Markus, "English University Studies in Austria: an In(n)sider's Report," pp. 143-60; Josef Hladky, "The History and

the Present State of English Studies in the Czech Republic," pp. 183-89; Jozef Olexa, "The History and the Present State of English Studies in Slovakia," pp. 191-213; Radmila B. Sevic, "Seventy Years of English Studies in Serbia (1929-1999), a Brief Survey," pp. 215-30; Eugenia Gavrilu, Horia Hulban, and Ecaterian Popa, "The History of English Studies in Romania," pp. 231-66; Alexander Shurbanov and Christo Stamenov, "English Studies in Bulgaria," pp. 267-92) with several microhistories, a personal memoir, and some metacritical texts. The two microhistories (or "case studies" as the editors call them), Renate Haas's "1848 and German English Studies / German Philology" (pp. 293-311) and Helmut Schrey's "Vilém Fried - English Studies in Migration," (pp. 313-22), are both linked with Germany, a country whose history of English studies has already been surveyed by a solid number of narratives (e.g., Thomas Finkenstaedt's *Kleine Geschichte der Anglistik*, 1983), descriptive accounts (e.g., Gunta Haenicke, *Zur Geschichte der Anglistik an deutschsprachigen Universitäten: 1850-1925*, 1979), and bio-bibliographical sourcebooks (e.g., Haenicke/Finkenstaedt, *Anglistenlexikon: 1825-1990*, 1992). Haas sheds light on the foundational phase of English studies in Germany before, during, and after the ill-fated Bourgeois revolution of 1848 by focusing on the life and career of Victor Aimé Huber (1800-1869). She also connects Huber's politically savvy self-fashioning with the increasing philologization of German academic life in the nineteenth century and with how this philological formalism, meant to compete with the Natural Sciences and Technologies, brought about a temporal hegemony of German scholarship in international English studies, a hegemony amply illustrated by several of the other national histories in this volume. Helmut Schrey's microhistory of Vilém Fried (1915-1987), a Jewish Czech Anglicist of Prague University who had to emigrate to Britain twice during his lifetime and played a decisive role in shaping English linguistics at the University of Duisburg, illustrates many of the external forces (nationalism, racism, communism, processes of institutionalization and professionalization) which influenced academic careers in the twentieth century. In his memoir on "The Birth and Growth of ESSE: Some Personal Reflections" (pp. 323-34), Hans-Jürgen Diller reminisces on the birth and development of the European Society for the Study of English (ESSE) and adds a detailed "Chronicle" of the society's relatively short but successful history. This contribution, Balz Engler's introductory "Writing the European History of English Studies" (pp. 1-12), his "Englishness and English Studies" (pp. 335-48) and Renate Haas's "European Survey: Parameters and Patterns of Development" (pp. 349-71) provide heretofore inaccessible information about the organization sponsoring the volume, its *raison d'être*, and future goals. Furthermore, these four essays are concerned with overarching or metacritical observations such as the tensions between teacher education (a public service) and a more or less autonomous and often isolated "Wissenschaft," between national and international scholarly practices, and between English as the (mother) language and literature of Anglophone countries and as the (foreign/second) language or *lingua franca* for most of Europe.

European English Studies is a collection of essays with a clearly defined focus. It pays an unusual and greatly welcome amount of attention to nuances of terminology, fluctuating political and linguistic geographies, and the *longue durée* of national and institutional mentalities. However, by choosing to concentrate on matters "European," it is creating a scholarly universal as notoriously fluctuating as the

imagined cultural, political, economic, and geographical boundaries of Europe ever since the term *Europe* entered the Indo-European languages as a concept. Balz Engler indicates (p. 2) that the editors' choice of "Europe" as the scope of study for the volume had three reasons: 1) English as a university discipline is the result of developments in several European countries, and these developments also influenced the way English was institutionalized in England; 2) the gradual emergence of Europe as a cultural and political entity and the foundation of the European Society for the Study of English (ESSE); 3) writing history means not only recording events, but shaping a narrative of the past from them, from a specific perspective, determined by the articulation of a European identity. All three points indicate that the editors and authors made a conscious decision to contribute, on the academic level, to the construction of a nascent Pan-European perspective on the history of English. While they rightly feel that such a transnational perspective abandons the dangerous tendencies of earlier national(istic) ones, it immediately excludes a large number of similarly worthy and related practices and traditions. I am not so sure why the history of English studies should not be written more profitably as a global one, with regional and national developments featuring as significant microhistories. The genesis of English as a university discipline is, after all, inextricably interlaced with the European nations' colonial ventures all over the world; the largest number of scholars in English studies persecuted for racial or political reasons in the twentieth century emigrated not to England but to North and South America; and one of the most significant developments for European English studies since the 1940s is the belated but momentous advent of American studies and North American (and world) Englishes at European universities. Thus, I suspect that the choice of conceptualizing a history of English studies around the utterly palimpsestic concept of "Europe" might engender at least as many limitations as windows of opportunity. Despite these general conceptual caveats, however, this collection of essays is an important step toward a critical understanding of a multitude of institutional histories in English studies. It aptly showcases foundational periods as well as current developments and depicts the fascinatingly diverse canvas of a discipline constantly adapting to external conditions while -- at the same time -- actively transforming those external conditions through the study of language and literature at institutions of higher learning as well as through various forms of academic and extra-academic communication. I would hope that the ESSE would encourage its members to take the essential step from the survey-like histories to monograph-length, in-depth investigations of case studies in the history of English studies. Such case studies would be invaluable to our conscious understanding of the motley foundations for today's intellectual practices. An obstacle in the way of such essential work on the archaeology of the English studies is that too many scholars still look down on historians of the discipline as not busying themselves with the "real" objects of literature and language study (the ominous "primary texts" or the often-invoked "nitty-gritty"). That such critics are themselves victims of the scientific tempers that have molded academic mentalities since the nineteenth century is only one of the important results of writing the history of English studies.

One additional word of praise: The copyright page of the volume indicates that the copyright for all essays remains with their authors. At a time when many academic and commercial publishers have raised the cost

of academic books by more than 100% within the last decade and have -- because of the increased cost -- limited distribution and thus restricted easy access to scholarship for libraries and individuals, the editors' decision to guarantee authors' and readers' rights is a sign of their awareness of the current state of publishing in the academy.

KEYWORDS: History of the Discipline, English Studies in Europe, Archaeology of the Discipline, European Society for the Study of English

REVIEWED BY: Richard Utz

AFFILIATION: Department of English Language & Literature, University of Northern Iowa, Cedar Falls, IA 50614-0502

E-MAIL: utz@uni.edu