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Preface

The main objective of the present volume, which is a translation of an updated and slightly revised version of our book *Grundkurs anglistisch-amerikanistische Literaturwissenschaft* (Stuttgart: Klett 2001, 42004), is to provide a concise introduction to the subject-matter, major issues and research fields in English and American literary studies, and to detail the most important foundations, methods and models relating to the analysis and interpretation of literary texts. It is aimed primarily, but not exclusively, at students of English and American literary studies. As a familiarity with the analytical categories and methods used to approach narrative, dramatic and lyric texts is essential, especially at the beginning of the course of study, particular attention is paid to the use of clear conceptual language. We have also focused on fundamental and general aspects (such as central technical terms, generic categories and transferable methods of textual analysis from various genres and media), as such elements enable the student to situate the material covered within broader contexts and therefore provide helpful guidance for those new to the discipline.

When the German version of this book was published, some reviewers and any number of colleagues and students indicated that an English version of this introduction would be much appreciated. However, rendering a text of this type in English has naturally not been without its difficulties. Despite the common subject-matter, the discipline of literary studies takes different forms in English- and German-speaking countries, and methods, models and terminology do not always overlap. Where a standard equivalent to a German term was available, this has been employed; where an equivalent term was not available, efforts have been made to define or paraphrase the German term. When German authorities are cited, the standard or approved translation has been employed where one exists; otherwise the translator has supplied her own translation. Throughout the volume, every effort has been made to bridge the differences between the disciplinary traditions and create a text that is accessible to students of English and American literature from all backgrounds.

As general and comparative literary studies, like English and American literary studies, encompass a wide variety of objects, areas of enquiry and methods, which cannot be covered comprehensively within an introductory volume, we have taken a mixture of pluralism and pragmatism as our guide in writing this book. We have consciously adopted an approach which uses illustrative examples to afford insights into the practice and 'nature of real, existing English and American studies' (SCHWANITZ 1985: 9), and thus serves the needs of students beginning their course of study, but