

*F*OCUS
ON GERMAN STUDIES

BOOK REVIEWS



GÖTZ ALY. *Unser Kampf. 1968 – ein irritierter Blick zurück*. Frankfurt am Main: S. Fischer Verlag, 2008. 253 S. € 19.90

Die „68er-Bewegung“ ist seit einigen Jahren zunehmend als Feld zeitgeschichtlicher Forschung erschlossen worden. Neuere Studien von Norbert Frei, Ingrid Gilcher-Holtey, Wolfgang Kraushaar und Detlef Siegfried zeigen in eine Verortung dieser Bewegung in einem sozialen, politischen und kulturellen Rahmen. Neben geschichts-wissenschaftlichen Arbeiten entsteht eine Ansammlung von Erinnerungsberichten der damaligen Protagonisten, der anlässlich des 40-jährigen Jubiläums stetig angewachsen ist. Unter den Neuzugängen finden sich etwa Peter Schneiders *Rebellion und Wahn* und Reinhard Mohrs *Der diskrete Charme der Rebellion*.

Eine unausgewogene Mittelstellung zwischen Wissenschaft und Erinnerungsarbeit nimmt hierbei das neue Buch des NS-Historikers Götz Aly ein: *Unser Kampf. 1968 – ein irritierter Blick zurück*. Der anspielungsreiche Titel erklärt Alys Hauptthese geradeaus, dass die Achtundsechziger „ihren Eltern, den Dreiunddreißigern, auf elende Weise“ ähnelten (7), denn „68“ sei ebenfalls eine Pathologie des 20. Jahrhunderts und ein typisch deutscher „Spätausläufer des Totalitarismus“ (8).

Aus autobiographischer Perspektive spricht Aly von seiner Zeit als linker Student am Otto-Suhr-Institut der Freien Universität Berlin – dem Zentrum der Studentenbewegung –, von seiner Herausgeberschaft der Zeitung *Hochschulkampf*, seiner Verurteilung zu einer Geldstrafe von 1200 Mark wegen Hausfriedensbruch, Nötigung, Sachbeschädigung und Freiheitsberaubung und von seiner Zeit bei der „Roten Hilfe“, einem mit der KPD verbundenen linksextremen Verein. Daraufhin folgt eine Abrechnung, ohne sich und einstige Mitstreiter zu schonen. Aus der Perspektive des Insiders, der die Fronten gewechselt hat, schreibt Aly eine prägnante und oft amüsante Satire der Achtundsechziger und ihrer Lebenswege. Auch für den nicht eingeweihten Leser ergeben sich daraus eine Reihe interessanter Informationen zu Figuren des öffentlichen Lebens. So erfährt man etwa von der geschönten Biographie der Grünen-Politikerin und ehemaligen Vizepräsidentin des Deutschen Bundestags Antje Vollmer und ihrem Engagement in einer „maoistisch-stalinistischen Frontorganisation“ (15).

Gleichzeitig beansprucht Aly für sich den Blick des Geschichtswissenschaftlers. Er besteht auf „Geschichtsschreibung statt

Veteranengeschichten“ (23). Der Historiker Aly wertet drei Arten von Quellen aus: zunächst Akten des Bundesinnenministeriums und des Bundeskanzleramts, die unter dem Stichwort „Unruhe in der Jugend“ geführt wurden, sowie die geheimen monatlichen *Informationen* des Bundesamts für Verfassungsschutz; ferner die Schriftzeugnisse remigrierter Professoren, insbesondere die Nachlässe von Ernst Fraenkel und Richard Löwenthal; und schließlich Flugschriften, Zeitungen und Broschüren aus dem APO-Archiv der Freien Universität. Mittels dieser Quellen möchte Aly die Reaktionen des Staates und der Remigranten auf die „68er-Bewegung“ rekonstruieren, aber auch die Bewegung anhand der Materialien aus dem APO-Archiv charakterisieren. Sowohl die Perspektive staatlicher Akteure als auch die der Remigranten sind bislang in der Forschung wenig beachtet worden, welche Alys Studie einen gewissen Neuheitswert verschafft.

Der Balanceakt zwischen autobiographischer Abrechnung und historischer Studie ist Aly jedoch nicht geglückt. Die beiden Perspektiven überschneiden sich unvorteilhaft, was sich auch in den Thesen niederschlägt. Alys provozierende Feststellung einer „formalen Ähnlichkeit“ (178) zwischen der rechtsradikalen Studentenbewegung in der Weimarer Republik unter Baldur von Schirach und der linken Bewegung von „68“, zwischen Vätern und Söhnen, resultiert aus einer undifferenzierten Betrachtung eines Phänomens mit vielfältigen, teils widersprüchlichen Erscheinungsformen. Aly stellt die Achtundsechziger als einheitlichen, ideologisch geschlossenen links-radikalen Kreis dar. Er generalisiert hier seine Erfahrungen in den K-Gruppen, einem Sammelsurium von Splittergruppen, die sich am Maoismus orientierten und bereit waren, die bürgerliche Gesellschaft Deutschlands und anderer Länder zur Not mit Waffengewalt zu stürzen. Diese Gruppen können in ihren Strukturen sicherlich mit anderen totalitären Gruppierungen verglichen werden; „68“ lässt sich allerdings nicht darauf reduzieren. Um seine These zu halten, konzentriert sich Alys Darstellung auf Frankfurt und Westberlin und blendet auch dort Unterschiede zwischen einzelnen Strömungen aus. Der Leser erfährt nahezu nichts über die Achtundsechziger in der SPD, der FDP, den Gewerkschaften oder den Kirchen, also über die Kräfte, die den Staat grundsätzlich reformieren und nicht gewaltsam stürzen wollten.

Der Vergleich 33/68 hat einen weiteren Haken: In dem Kapitel „Dreiunddreißiger und Achtundsechziger“ reiht Aly impressionistisch Aussagen aus dem Umfeld der nationalsozialistischen Studentenbewegung aneinander, um sie mit denen der Achtundsechziger zu konfrontieren. Dabei stößt er auf eine Reihe von Parallelen, darunter

der geteilte Hass auf den Spieß, die Ablehnung der Erfahrungen der älteren Generationen und das Aufgehen im Kollektiv. Aly arbeitet seinen Vergleich zwar nicht historisch aus, die Beispiele sind aber doch treffend. Es ist jedoch zweifelhaft, ob sie Alys These stützen, dass die deutschen Achtundsechziger an den Aktionismus ihrer Väter anknüpften. Zu fragen wäre, inwieweit einige dieser Merkmale jeder enthusiastischen Bewegung zukommen und sich nicht auf den Nationalsozialismus und „68“ beschränken.

Eng verbunden mit der Feststellung einer strukturellen Ähnlichkeit zwischen Dreiunddreißigern und Achtundsechzigern sind Alys Mutmaßungen darüber, was „68“ letztendlich ausgelöst hat. In dem Kapitel „Befreiung vom Elend der Gegenwart“ (61-79) beschreibt Aly eine Reihe von gesellschaftlichen Missständen, gegen welche die Achtundsechziger rebellierten. Dazu gehören prügelnde Lehrer, latent rechtsradikales Gedankengut in der Bevölkerung und mangelnde sexuelle Aufklärung. Auf politischer Ebene wendeten sie sich laut Aly gegen den Beschluss der Notstandsgesetze (1968) sowie gegen die Beziehungen der BRD zu den Militär-Diktaturen in Griechenland (1967-1974), Spanien und Portugal. Dieser Versuch einer eher sachlichen Erklärung weicht allerdings im letzten Kapitel heiklen Schlüssen über die familiär bedingte psychosoziale Situation der Achtundsechziger. Hier reduziert Aly das Phänomen „68“ auf die Generationenperspektive und bringt es auf die handliche Formel: „Man kann sie [die Achtundsechziger] als Generation emotional frierender Kinder bezeichnen“ (196). In den Studenten von 1968 potenzierten sich „die familiengeschichtlichen Folgeschäden aus zwei fürchterlichen Kriegen“ (196), daher ihre „wild ausgreifenden Aktivitäten, ihre Selbsterfahrungs-, Gruppen- und Kindererziehungsexperimente“ (196).

Sowohl der Vergleich zwischen Vätern und Söhnen als auch die Generationenfixierung in der Ursachenerklärung weisen auf eine spezifisch deutsche „68er-Bewegung“ und schließen eine internationale Einbettung aus. Aly erwähnt zwar die Bedeutung der Black-Power-Bewegung und des Civil-Rights-Movements, und er verweist auf vergleichbare Studentenproteste in Frankreich und Italien, dennoch beharrt er im Kern auf der Fortführung des „deutschen Sonderwegs“. Dies ist wiederum nur möglich, indem die Strömungen ausgeblendet werden, die sich am Westen orientierten, demokratische Protestformen wählten und nicht totalitär waren.

Diese Kritikpunkte rücken Alys Buch deutlich näher an das Konzept Erinnerungsarbeit als an die Geschichtswissenschaft. Es kann als durchaus lesenswerter polemischer Essay begriffen werden; für eine

historische Studie kommen die Thesen hingegen zu großspurig daher und sind zu schlecht fundiert. Obgleich Ansätze zu einem differenzierteren Verständnis von „68“ vorhanden sind, werden diese in den beiden letzten Kapiteln komplett ausgeblendet. Hier fällt Aly zurück in unkritische Schwarzweißmalerei. Dennoch lassen sich aus seinem Buch Impulse für die historische Forschung gewinnen. So steht ein abschließendes Urteil noch aus, inwieweit die Achtundsechziger gesellschaftliche Veränderung angestoßen und gefördert oder ignoriert und verstellt haben. Eine detaillierte Untersuchung könnte beispielsweise Alys These genauer prüfen, dass den Achtundsechzigern weniger an der Aufarbeitung des deutschen Nationalsozialismus gelegen war als gemeinhin vermutet, dass sie sogar vor der Aufarbeitung in Ideologien geflohen seien. Auch die Rekonstruktion der Perspektive der Remigranten – die in Alys Studie überwiegend zitiert werden, um seine eigene Meinung zu stützen – kann aufgenommen und ausgebaut werden. Insgesamt ist Alys *irritierter Blick zurück* irritierend für den Leser. Dies liegt weniger an Alys Ergebnissen als an der dem Buch eigenen Doppelperspektive.

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MATTHIAS BEILEIN. *86 und die Folgen. Robert Schindel, Robert Menasse und Doron Rabinovici im literarischen Feld Österreichs*. Berlin: Erich Schmidt Verlag, 2008. 386 S. € 49.80

Matthias Beilein contributes an interesting perspective to the existing secondary literature on three controversial, contemporary Austrian-Jewish writers and intellectuals: Robert Schindel, Robert Menasse and Doron Rabinovici. Given the media- and critical attention paid these writers in recent years, Beilein's book serves as both a reassessment of their entire oeuvres as integral to their critical engagement in the socio-political arena as well as a deconstruction of notions of Austrian-Jewish literature and identity. Using Pierre Bourdieu's concepts of "field" and "habitus," Beilein deconstructs the concept of an "engaged" literature in Austria by arguing how Menasse, Rabinovici and Schindel differ significantly from the "engaged" literature of the 1970s. By incorporating Bourdieu's definition of the intellectual into his argument and analyzing their works in a more overarching notion of what constitutes an intervention into

the sphere of culture, Beilein analyzes the political engagement of these “intellectual-writers,” drawing the conclusion that they represent a new type of Austrian writer, one whose emergence coincides with the “caesura” (*Wende*) brought about by the Waldheim Affair.

Using the 1986 historical *Wende* of the Waldheim Affair as his point of departure, Beilein explores the very different social criticism developed by these “intellectual-writers,” including not only Schindel, Menasse and Rabinovici, but also others such as Josef Haslinger, through which a more discussion-oriented, less polemical and historically aware form of critical engagement with Austria’s Nazi legacy could take place. Beilein distinguishes between the *Österreich-Kritik* (“*Österreich-Beschimpfung*”) of the generation of pre-*Wende* writers (“*Nestbeschmutzer*”) - represented by Elfriede Jelinek, Gerhard Roth and Thomas Bernhard, whose criticism was characterized by the incessant claim, that Austria is a country of Nazis - and a newer criticism of the older generation of critics (*Kritik der Österreich-Kritik* or *Neue Österreich-Kritik*). Beilein asserts that the Waldheim Affair was more than the end of a forty-year silence surrounding the Nazi past, the exposing of the perseverance of Nazi ideology or the exploding of Austria’s “victim myth” - e.g. that Austria was Nazi Germany’s first victim.

In a thoughtful analysis, Beilein discusses the non-fictional and fictional writings of all three authors, while carefully situating them in terms of their respective backgrounds, yet demonstrating how each - in their own manner - have utilized their “social-“ and “cultural capital” (Bourdieu) to position themselves as not just writers, but also as critically engaged intellectuals in Austria. He sets the three discussed authors apart from the activities of the so-called “*Nestbeschmutzer*,” among others, arguing that Schindel, Menasse and Rabinovici constitute a new literary movement in which authors integrate their non-fictional - *Essayistik*, speeches, interviews, etc. - and fictional writings in a strategic move to politicize their entire oeuvre. In fact, it is the cohesive political stance of their work, their *geisteswissenschaftlichen* studies and their rather prolific non-fictional writing which sets them apart from the earlier critical authors of the 1970s and early 1980s. Further, by blending fictional and non-fictional elements with “factual” writing strategies, Menasse, Rabinovici and Schindel blur distinctions such as the autobiographical, referentiality and fiction in their works, which has often been misinterpreted in the reception of their works (226). Beilein cites this blending and its misreading as further evidence of the typical misunderstanding of the writers’ works and their significance as part of

their political engagement on different terms than the first post-war generation.

Taking a stance apart from many early critics of these contemporary authors, Beilein also argues that the literature of Menasse, Schindel and Rabinovici is primarily a return to *Großstadtliteratur*, and not - as some claim - a more specifically Jewish literature about Vienna or Viennese-Jewish literature (134). It is the lack of “urbanity” of Vienna which, according to Beilein, is the impetus for their literary engagement to portray a “counter-example” of Vienna (140). By focusing on the inner districts of the Austrian capital, they are able to maintain the specificity of metropolitan life, emphasize those places “wo auch Interessantes geschieht” (Rabinovici cited in Beilein 139), and break away from “die Lähmung” of the city by the past (ibid.). This allows them, according to Beilein, to incorporate “transitorische Orte”¹ - such as Viennese coffee-houses - as centers of social capital distribution (142), continuing the tradition of the *Kaffeehausliteraten* and charging them with social and cultural capital (144-45). Although the preceding discussion gives weight to his argument concerning the accumulation of social and cultural capital and factual writing strategies, Beilein does not convincingly ground his reasons in arguing for a new *Großstadtliteratur*.

Beilein, using Bourdieu’s theoretical framework of power and practice, convincingly demonstrates the rise of opposition to these writers who transgress their field - literature - in practice, thereby encroaching on the symbolic capital of journalists, politicians and historians as part of the dynamics of power in the “social partnership” structure of Austria. Further, he shows how the supposedly defunct social partnership structure of Austrian society is still rallying to defend and reproduce itself, while Schindel, Menasse and Rabinovici are simultaneously pushing the boundaries of the field of literature. In effect, they are resisting domination by the social order which seeks to neatly contain them within the literary field.

Indeed, in the case of Menasse and his reception - both as writer and intellectual -, Beilein traces critics’ attempts to characterize him in a position directly at odds with his public stance(s). For example, he analyzes articles and editorials which quote from Menasse’s criticism leveled against the rise of anti-Semitism, often attributed in the press to the rise in power of Haider within the FPÖ, because he simultaneously claims that Haider is an integral component to the emergence of the debate over anti-Semitism. Because of his attempt to *situate* Haider on the Bourdieuan field of Austrian culture rather than to simply condemn him, Menasse is thus characterized as an anti-Semite, hypocrite and

supporter of Haider; he is largely taken out of context and misrepresented by the popular press, which only seeks to discredit him. Beilein expounds upon such attacks, using the example of Menasse's reception in Germany and the Austrian public's interpretation of his talks given and publishing record in Germany, in which he is perceived to be furthering his own career at the expense of Austria and its reputation. However, as Beilein indicates, it is a false accusation, owing largely to suspicions aroused by previous actions of the *Nestbeschmutzer*.

Beilein repeats this strategy of analysis with each of the three authors, which he pursues as an attempt to restore the balance of power upset by increasing influence and social capital of these "intellectual-writers." Significantly, Beilein's discussion of the system of government-funded literary prizes - and the public's perception of writers denigrating Austria as a means to win these stipends/awards - discredits the supposed linkages between criticizing the country/system as a self-interested, monetary move and the personal symbolic capital of the authors. However, he also reveals a trend in the accumulation of prizes by these authors, which he posits as a consequence of acquiring symbolic capital - successful authors win prizes, rather than authors who criticize Austria winning prizes out of a sense of guilt.

Overall, Beilein's contribution to the secondary literature on Menasse, Rabinovici and Schindel is of critical importance, if one is to situate their writing in its complexity. His argument that their writing constitutes a more concrete and comprehensive program of literary and political engagement, and that they need to be distinguished from the avant-garde (Jelinek, Bernhard, etc.) is convincingly defended, especially through the use of Bourdieu's theoretical framework. Further, utilizing Gérard Genette's concepts - "epitext" and "peritext" - Beilein shows how the authors refer to their non-fictional works through their fiction in order to position their work within their "oeuvre" and reality. His thesis that the "intellectual-writers" can be explained - in terms of their success and engagement - by their accumulation of symbolic and cultural capital takes into account the unique Austrian context - especially its cultural production and social structures - and challenges the more narrow readings of their literature as old-fashioned *Tendenzliteratur*, designed to further a particular political agenda. Moreover, Beilein's theoretical framework leaves open future research on Austrian literature in which genre (especially "Jewish" literature), generation, and autobiographical details are questioned, but considered as only part of the Austrian social, political and literary landscapes.

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Note

¹ Volker Klotz' term, denoting public, accessible and community-forming spaces "*des Vorübergehens*" (140-41).

GERRIT-JAN BERENDSE & INGO CORNILS, eds. *Baader-Meinhof Returns. History and Cultural Memory of German Left-Wing Terrorism*. Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2008. 345 pp. \$ 98.00

2008 marked the 40th anniversary of 1968, a year that came to define a generation of Germans. The ideologies and protest movement that surround that year gave birth to a wave of terrorism that reached its high-point in 1977. The German audience's fascination with these turbulent years of abductions, shootings, and bombings never entirely waned and has instead recently undergone a resurgence. This renewed interest led to a conference on the cultural memory of German left-wing terrorism at Cardiff University in September 2005 which resulted in the 2008 publication of *Baader-Meinhof Returns*. In this review, I will evaluate *Baader-Meinhof Returns* as a whole, but I will also attempt to give a sense of the quality of the individual contributions by discussing one representative essay from each of the three sections.

Dedicated to "the study of artistic and historical documents that recall German left-wing terrorism in the 1970s" (9), *Baader-Meinhof Returns* presents 16 essays as diverse in their examinations of cultural memory as the texts that they interpret. In their introduction, the editors, Gerrit-Jan Berendse and Ingo Cornils, lay out the theoretical groundwork behind much of the scholarship presented in their volume. Drawing primarily on the concept of memory as delineated by Aleida Assmann, the editors assess the status of the cultural memory of 1970s German terrorism. They find the sustained interest in the 'terrorist genre' and its coincidence with an extant 'direct memory' remarkable and, therefore, all the more worthy of interpretive focus. Berendse and Cornils then map out the history of these cultural memories, which is longer than that of the phenomenon itself. Decade by decade, the editors present a brief sketch of selected texts from each time period.

After a prologue by historian Gerd Koenen, which examines present perceptions of public interest in and opinion on violent resistance in light of the history of left-wing terrorism, the main portion of the volume is divided into three sections: Depicting Dead Terrorists, Literary Representations, and Cinematic Imageries. "Depicting Dead Terrorists" comprises three essays, all of which examine the implications of the post-mortem representation of terrorists. The cultural impact of the images of the funeral photo of Holger Meins and Gerhard Richter's series *October 18, 1977* are both treated in this section and the interpretations of these visual representations are valuable. Sarah Colvin's "Ulrike Marie Meinhof as Woman and Terrorist: Cultural Discourses of Violence and Virtue," however, stands out as an especially interesting examination of the gendered memory of one of the more mysterious members of the RAF.

Colvin begins by partially tracing the ludicrous history of the study of criminality among women. More often than not, these 'studies' were largely bound up with laughable stereotypes and found explanations in perceptions of aberrant sexual behavior. Incredibly, this way of thinking was even uncovered in a 1972 report by the West German government that identified oral contraception as one of the possible reasons for violent behavior in women. In fact, authorities were so desperate for an explanation of Meinhof's actions, that her brain was secretly stolen for examination before her body was turned over to her family. Colvin also traces the various theoretical attempts to deny women autonomy by linking any 'non-feminine' behavior to sexual anomalies. Great achievements as well as crimes have been rationalized as having been committed not by the woman but by the 'man inside.' In accordance with this line of reason, both Meinhof and Ensslin were often described as exhibiting homosexual tendencies.

After focusing on the demonization of women, Colvin turns to the opposite end of the spectrum at which women are redeemed through displays of feminine virtue. Indeed, it seems that later descriptions of Meinhof, which were conceived to redeem her image, were centered on portraying her as a caring mother or an ideal child. Colvin concludes her essay by linking the changing perception of Meinhof to biblical representations of femininity: the transformation of the sex criminal Eve to the self-sacrificial Mary. These changing perceptions, into which Meinhof's biographers were discursively forced, are, as Colvin is careful to point out, merely myths. Aside from the sometimes amusing, sometimes simply saddening gender stereotyping, the entire essay adds both a well-structured and well-written dimension

to the understanding of memorializing dead terrorists. The entire section, including Colvin's reading of Meinhof, could have benefitted from a contextualization of the depiction of dead terrorists within the larger problematic of memorialization.

The next section contains six essays that examine a sometimes overlapping, yet diverse body of literature. Birgit Haas's contribution is unique in this volume, however, in that the author focuses entirely on theater. In her essay, Haas examines five plays that deal with RAF terrorism. Especially informed by the opposing concepts of dramatic vs. post-dramatic theater, "Terrorism and Theatre in Germany" engages *Ulrike Meinhof*, *Leviathan*, *Born in the R.A.F.*, *Rote Armee Fraktion*, and *Ulrike Maria Stuart*.

Through her analyses she argues that the dance theater of *Ulrike Meinhof* reduces history to an interchangeable and universal conflict. Words are replaced by depictions of bodily violence that interweave the history of the RAF and of German reunification, effectively asserting that all history is mere conflict. *Ulrike Marie Stuart*, on the other hand, overwhelms the audience with words, with an endless series of monologues out of which no plot or meaning is discernable. The play rejects all explanations of the RAF and the notion of causality in general. Haas identifies *Leviathan* as a Brechtian exercise in which the politics is presented, not objectively, but through purposefully biased personal views. *Rote Armee Fraktion* presents the political debates of the 1970s in a realistic atmosphere, whereas *Born in the R.A.F.* uses its historical distance from the violence of the RAF to poke fun at the terrorist witch hunt and general attitudes of paranoia. Finally, Haas concludes that each of the plays examined in her essay rely less on the content and more on the form to express a political message, carefully avoiding the trappings of documentary theater. Haas's survey is representative of the kind of overview that this section of the book gives on the RAF's representation in literature. While it is by no means complete, it is diverse and offers important interpretive insights.

The third section comprises five essays, among which Julian Preece's stands out. Preece presents an excellent overview of filmic representations of left-wing terrorism in his, "Reinscribing the German Autumn: Heinrich Breloer's *Todesspiel* and the Two Clusters of German 'Terrorist' Films." Preece begins by tracing some of the links between the RAF and cinema, particularly Andreas Baader's taking of inspiration from films such as *The Battle of Algiers* or from actors like Brando or Bogart. Preece then groups the RAF filmography into two distinct clusters. The first cluster, which includes 10 films from the period

between 1975 and 1992, is identified as being largely interventionist, in that all of the films challenge mainstream beliefs or seem to be attempts to change viewer perceptions. The second cluster, which includes 8 films released between 1997 and 2004, seems to be largely a historicization and re-presentation of events presented in the first cluster of films. After discussing these clusters, Preece devotes the rest of his essay to an examination of Breloer's *Todesspiel*. *Todesspiel* is an uncommon mixture of documentary evidence, contemporary interviews, and dramatic re-enactments of events, which was shown several times on German television in the summer and autumn of 1997. Breloer blurs the distinction between documentary footage and re-enactment to effectively debunk the myths surrounding the RAF. Preece compares this film to *Deutschland im Herbst*, concluding that *Todesspiel* presents a more balanced view that is not as sympathetic to the terrorists, which, nevertheless, does not attempt to resolve all of the complications, such as Hanns Martin Schleyer's Nazi past. This third section presents the most innovative contributions and reflects much of the exciting work being done in film studies today.

The volume ends with a epilogue by Jeremy Varon: "Stammheim Forever and the Ghosts of Guantánamo: Cultural Memory and the Politics of Incarceration." In this closing contribution, Varon outlines many remarkable similarities between the debates about Stammheim prison and the US facilities at Guantánamo Bay. While Varon is careful not to equate the two situations, he keenly analyzes the discourses surrounding both and concludes that part of the RAF's legacy may be to draw attention to current injustices in incarceration. Further, this chapter underlines the continued relevance of the subject of terrorism in literary and cultural studies and provides a neat capstone to the entire volume.

In *Baader-Meinhof Returns*, Berendse and Cornils have assembled an extremely relevant collection of work by an equally impressive collection of scholars. The contributions in this book offer new perspectives on 'classics' of the so-called terrorist genre, but also examine recent works, such as Elfriede Jelinek's 2006 *Ulrike Maria Stuart* and interpretations that are informed by the new realities of the Berlin Republic and protracted American wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. Understanding the cultural impact of terrorism is as important as ever and *Baader-Meinhof Returns* provides an excellent contribution to that understanding. I highly recommend this book to all of those interested in the cultural memory of terrorism, but especially to those in the fields of film and German studies.

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ALINA BRONSKY. *Scherbenpark*. Köln: Kiepenheuer & Witsch, 2008. 287 S. € 16.95

If television's Dr. Gregory House (Hugh Laurie) were ever reincarnated as a 17-year old girl growing up in modern Germany, it would be as Sascha Naimann, the hero of Alina Bronsky's debut novel, *Scherbenpark*. We are introduced to Sascha as a self-assured, stubborn, cynical teenage girl who also happens to be something of a mathematical genius. She confronts life's difficulties with the same pragmatism and cynical humor and pleasure as she would a quadratic equation. Once a single group of problematic issues or people has been resolved, Sascha moves on to the next set. With an abrasive, almost confrontational style and a rather coldly logical tone, Sascha beats out a narrative path through tangles of memories and bitter new experiences in her Russian ghetto, just outside of Frankfurt am Main.

Sascha begins telling her story by saying that she believes herself to be the only one with reasonable dreams. Unlike other girls in her apartment complex who want to marry rich husbands, and unlike the teenage boys infatuated with blonde actresses and dreams of expensive sports cars, Sascha wants to kill her step-father. After all, he is the man who murdered Sascha's mother and her mother's lover.

As readers, we are intrigued from the beginning to see if Sascha will pull a trigger, draw a knife, serve up poisoned food, or configure some other unique and satisfying form of revenge for Vadim, her step-father. Our curiosity and the briskly-paced narrative keep us eagerly reading, but we soon discover that the hard-boiled, pulp-fiction plot which snagged our attention has been replaced by an interest in Sascha's first experiences of love, her concern for her traumatized younger brother and sister, and her bitter attempts to chisel out an identity for herself as a young woman.

The structure of the novel lacks an overarching trajectory. While Bronsky provides resolution to the initial conflicts, the reader has already begun to question mid-story if these original problems even matter. The plot takes us somewhere else. Instead of a traditional story arc, it might be helpful to see the plot like a series of equations which Sascha must work through in order to solve a problem—the problem of growing up. Medical metaphors also bleed through the narrative, making the narrative's form something akin to the trial-and-error processes which emergency room physicians perform in order to stabilize a patient

on the brink of death. Alina Bronsky's own medical training betrays itself in an appropriate and engaging manner here.

Sascha vacillates between the stagnant void of the Russian ghetto, which nurtures a sense of hopeless apathy in its inhabitants, and the new, quasi-romantic relationship with Volker, a local newspaper editor, and his teenage son, Felix. Just as Felix has a lung disorder which entails frequent asthma-like attacks and subsequent visits to the emergency room, Sascha is confronted with the question of how she can keep breathing in a culture of poverty and of the incompetency which comes with a struggling immigrant community. She has her own strategies for breathing, for staying alive.

She listens to Eminem. She plots her revenge on Vadim. She fantasizes about Volker as her lover. She seduces a stuttering Neo Nazi and hands him over to her Russian gang acquaintances for a beating. Sascha uses these people and situations like various kinds of scaffolding, never allowing the reader to forget that this is her story, her process of development, her way to climb out of the void.

Alina Bronsky's direct narrative, sterile embellishment of style, and emotionally detached voice allow us as readers to stomach the otherwise rotting poverty and stagnant evil of ignorance described within Sascha's world. There is little room to wonder that Sascha's mother found her "schon immer unheimlich, weil ich [Sascha] logischer dachte als sie. Sie war zwar nicht dumm, aber viel zu gefühlsvoll" (10). Sometimes brutal pragmatism looks a little strange and "unheimlich." If Sascha's character is disturbing at moments, it is not without reason and also not without its own unique charm. The novel is anything but sentimental, and yet there is a kind of inspiring, if also "unheimlich," practicality which leads to her own personal growth and development.

Sascha Naimann is simultaneously repulsive and irresistibly fascinating. She is, above all, believable. Her story has the same kind of spell-binding magic that one feels upon seeing the demonstrated solution to a complex mathematical equation. If solutions to math problems can be elegant and magical, how much more so the resolution which one brings to her own emotional and situational crises? *Scherbenpark* is an engaging read and fully justified in the popular acclaim it has already won. Alina Bronsky has, it seems, successfully solved the beginning figures of her career-long equation as an author.

Wes Jackson, University of Cincinnati

TOM CHEESMAN. *Novels of Turkish German Settlement: Cosmopolite Fictions*. Rochester, NY: Camden House, 2007. 232 pp. \$ 75.00

“Turkish German writing,” comments Tom Cheesman, “is a fast-moving target” (183). Since the early 1980s the body of Turkish German literature has consistently increased in size and scope. Despite this expansion, Turkish German authors have been met with resistance by the traditional authorities of the German literary world and have been therefore relegated to a marginalized space outside the German literary canon. It comes then as no surprise that a body of secondary literature pertaining to Turkish German writing, especially in the field of Anglo-American German Studies, has concomitantly developed with the augmentation of Turkish German writing. In the past few years the appearance of several monographs on this subject has provided this area of German literature with vigorous critical scholarly attention and has done its part to help locate Turkish German writing within the mainstream fold of the German literary canon. One monograph on this subject worthy of mention here is Leslie Adelson’s *The Turkish Turn in Contemporary German Literature: Toward a New Critical Grammar of Migration*, which appeared in 2005. Another one is Venkat Mani’s *Cosmopolitical Claims: Turkish-German Literatures from Nadolny to Pamuk* which was published in 2007, and in the same year Tom Cheesman’s *Novels of Turkish German Settlement: Cosmopolite Fictions*, the subject of this review, appeared.

Cheesman begins *Novels of Turkish German Settlement: Cosmopolite Fictions* with the transcript of a “live arts magazine talk-show” broadcast on public television in Bremen, Germany in 1998. Among other things, the content of this particular show featured a heated exchange between the high-profile albeit controversial Turkish German author Feridun Zaimoğlu and a prominent Social Democrat (SPD) politician, Heide Simonis. Cheesman includes the broadcast and harks back to it throughout the book as an example of the resistance with which Turkish German writers are met, not by right-wing extremists, but by self-proclaimed liberals who present themselves as tolerant and open-minded but are in fact prejudiced against those who do not meet the standards of their cultural traditions and ideology such as those from purportedly “less civilized nations and cultural traditions” (24). Cheesman states that these attitudes are founded upon their “association of many non-German groups with political and religious fanaticism”

(*ibid.*). This nuanced argument certainly sheds some light onto why Turkish German writers who do not conform to these liberal standards find it disproportionately difficult to achieve success in Germany as writers.

The three objectives of the book are clearly defined in the first chapter. The first – and strongest of the three – is to demonstrate that Turkish German literature both exemplifies and foments the “cosmopolitanization” of Germany or the expansion of the idea of Germanness. The second is to show that the diversity of Turkish German literature in form and content fuels intellectual debate which “is productive for cultural transformation,” and the third objective of the book is to show that Turkish German literature is “developing its own specific intertextual traditions” (13).

Whereas Leslie Adelson expressly rejects the term *cosmopolitan* to describe Turkish German writing, one notices by the chosen titles of their books that both Tom Cheesman and Venkat Mani have embraced variations of the term. *Cosmopolitan*, Cheesman maintains, is an appropriate term to describe the literature at hand because it suggests the notion of settlement. Other labels used for this body of literature, such as “‘literature of migration,’ ‘diaspora literature,’ or ‘intercultural literature’ perpetuate the notion that the work in question emerges from an interstitial space, distinct from the space occupied by German culture proper” (13). In the second chapter of *Novels of Turkish German Settlement* Cheesman presents a convincing argument for his usage of the term *cosmopolitan* by drawing on the work of various theoretical texts that analyze the notion of cosmopolitanism, such as those from Kwame Anthony Appiah and Timothy Brennan. The result is a brief but informative theoretical introduction to the idea of cosmopolitanism which explores different usages and connotations of the term, thereby demonstrating its versatility in comparison to similar terms such as *multiculturalism*. Cheesman is far more sparing in his engagement with theoretical texts than are other studies on this subject whose primary arguments become obfuscated through excessive name-dropping and therefore tend to be less accessible to the average student of Turkish German literature.

Cheesman dedicates chapters three through seven to the examination of Turkish German writing, but in doing so he does not lose sight of his goal to locate cosmopolitanism in the textual subjects. This is evinced within the chapter in which he lays out different variations of cosmopolitanism in the work of seven Turkish German writers in order to demonstrate, as he writes, that “the concept

[cosmopolitanism] is more versatile and useful than some critics have suggested” (81). Chapter four provides a thorough history of the Turkish German novel which he begins with Akif Piriñci’s 1980 novel, *Tränen sind immer das Ende*. Impressively, Cheesman discusses the work of eighteen different novelists in a way that not only highlights the cosmopolitanism in their work but also establishes their relationship to seminal works in the German literary canon. Chapter five is devoted to the writer Zafer Şenocak, whose work is presented as quintessentially cosmopolitan. Moreover, the works of Şenocak, Cheesman argues, more so than others, “home in on the most awkward and sensitive issues in German-Turkish relations,” and this “is why his work is less welcome to German publishers and readers than work that either affirms individualistic resolutions of the conflicts, or avoids them altogether” (112). The sixth chapter focuses on the issue of the female voice in Turkish German literature. In this chapter Cheesman defines and dismisses what has been called the “maltreated Suleika” or “the iconic female victim of primitive, Oriental, patriarchal violence” as “a gendered ethnic stereotype” (113). Furthermore, this chapter identifies certain commonalities between female voices in Turkish German literature the foremost being that they are often based on authentic biography. The seventh and final chapter “tracks vicissitudes of the iconic figure of the male labor migrant through three decades of writing” (145). This helpless, voiceless, pitiful figure is commonly known as “Ali.”

Instead of bringing closure to the arguments presented in the book, Cheesman opts to examine several more novels. Certainly the postscript offers no substitute for a satisfactory conclusion, and one is left to wonder why he did not choose to include one. As expected of a study with such a wide scope, there are other shortcomings. Perhaps the most significant of these is Cheesman’s argument that the maltreated Turkish German female is only a myth that perpetuates other stereotypes of Oriental patriarchal violence. Of course he is right in pointing out that insensitive or careless use of such typecasts can wrongly fuel “anti-Islamic and anti-Turkish” sentiment. But at the same time Cheesman fails to adequately take into consideration other perspectives on the matter. Domestic violence is as great a social ill as any, and testimonials of such should not be subordinated due to fears that they would not be conducive to cultural understanding.

Considering the impressive ground Cheesman covers with this study, the few shortcomings listed do not detract from its overall quality. The accessibility of *Novels of Turkish German Settlement* makes it a suitable read for varying levels of students of Turkish German literature. The

number of authors and texts analyzed in this study also make it a suitable point of reference for a particular author or literary text of interest. Furthermore, considering Cheesman's critical engagement with the term *cosmopolitanism*, this study would be helpful to anyone with interest in the concept of cosmopolitanism. Tom Cheesman has proven that he remains one of the foremost scholars of Turkish German literature, and this book stands as a major contribution to the growing body of secondary literature on this topic.

Jason Doerre, University of Massachusetts, Amherst

ALBRECHT CLASSEN. *Sexuality in the Middle Ages and Early Modern Times: New Approaches to a Fundamental Cultural-Historical and Literary-Anthropological Theme*. Berlin/New York: Walter de Gruyter, 2008. 903 pp. \$149.95

Those familiar with Medieval and Early Modern Studies will not be surprised to see that a new book from Albrecht Classen has reached the shelves of their libraries. His new volume *Sexuality in the Middle Ages and Early Modern Times* is filled with exciting approaches to the study of the history of sexuality from a regiment of both young and veteran scholars. This hefty de Gruyter volume contains twenty-nine separate essays on sexuality in medieval Europe, the longest of which is Classen's own 142 page manifesto-introduction in defense of the study of medieval sexuality – “a ‘sordid’ topic” (1). Classen's defense of the study of sexuality in early modern Europe seems almost unnecessary to anyone willing to crack open such a monstrous volume. But the introduction is more than just a defense of this project. It not only clarifies and streamlines the task of such a compendium, it also cuts a brilliant and much needed path in this field of research by smoothing out a broad swath of cultural artifacts. In doing so, Classen frames the contextual position of medieval sexual history. While he focuses heavily in the introduction on the Catholic Church's control of sexuality *à la* Foucault, he also points to the places where the Church failed to fortify this control, even among its own clergy. Furthermore, Classen's reflections on the terminology of sexuality in the Middle Ages helps the curious scholar parse the “myriad of meanings” carried by the term and recognize that it was no less complex eight hundred years ago than it is today (16).

Because of the vast length of this volume and the number of outstanding essays it contains I must limit my review to those most germane to German Studies. Classen's three essays ("The Cultural Significance of Sexuality in the Middle Ages", "Naked Men in Medieval German Literature and Art", and "Sexual Desire and Pornography") have a clear *roten Faden*. Each of them reads against both Norbert Elias' famous conceptualization of culture *Über den Prozeß der Zivilisation* (1939) and Hans Peter Duerr's subsequent critique *Nacktheit und Scham* (1988). Classen acknowledges their long-known shortcomings, but questions surrounding the linear progression of civilization are not really at stake in Classen's arguments. In his essay on nude men in medieval German cultural products from *Parzival* to *Iwein* to the works of *dem Stricker*, Classen levels both Duerr and Elias and states that shame (surrounding nudity) is neither a historically isolated development nor a "timeless experience" (159). Rather, *Nacktheit* fits into particular situations in various examples from medieval German literary works as a problem dealt with in ways appropriate to the situation in which the nakedness occurs. While nakedness may symbolize a 'transitional' or liminal phase of humanity such as in *Iwein*, it is also a natural state with socially constructed arenas of acceptability (or at least, unabashed intrigue) such as in *Der nackte Bote* or *Parzival*.

Classen's third essay, "Sexual Desire and Pornography," treats concepts of desire in combination with very graphic descriptions of male genitalia found in the *mare* "Der turnei von dem zers" [The Tournament for the Penis] otherwise known as "Das Nonnenturnier." The bawdy sexual exploits of this particular tale lend themselves well to deconstructing Duerr's argument, for sure. It gives some ammunition to Elias, although Classen claims that it neither proves nor disproves Elias' hypothesis. Throughout the three essays, Classen highlights his deconstruction of the sociological [Elias] and the anthropological [Duerr] arguments for the process of civilization, but his attempted *coup de grace* of these two (partially) defunct arguments is the least intriguing of his accomplishments in this volume. Instead, Classen should be praised for his close and careful analyses of relatively underrepresented – but intriguing – medieval literary works that have human sexuality at their core, not to mention his extensive introduction, which is a must-read for anyone interested in questions of sex and gender in medieval literature.

Classen, though the predominant contributor to the volume, has a chorus of twenty-seven other contributors from whom he draws his complex yet tight guide to reading sex in medieval sources. The

contributors, selected from a symposium on the topic in May of 2007 at the University of Arizona, Tucson, may indeed prove that sexuality is as 'irrepressible' now as it was in the Middle Ages, as Classen claims. The scholarly work is impressive to say the least, even if it lacks the oh-so-desired bibliography that would make this massive volume epically valuable. Its essays, many and varied, hold together rather well in spite of their differences. An intriguing and appropriate point of departure for the contemplation of the volume as a whole is Siegfried Christoph's article on the hermeneutical problems of reading sexual innuendo in medieval texts. True, his study is limited to sexual innuendo and not explicitly broader notions of sex and gender, but his analysis proscribes important boundaries in medieval studies. How far is too far for the medievalist when it comes to reading sex and gender in pre-modern texts? How much can we read into a work and where must we check our 'modern' selves when diving into a text?

A number of articles take up the task of probing literary works for their sexual undertones. *Tristan*, through the 'crooning' of Jazz musician Helen Adu, a.k.a. Sade, becomes a window into notions of 'good' and 'bad' sex in medieval Germany thanks to Christopher Clason's essay, "Good Lovin'." Clason's analysis pits the selfish and dominating sex of Mark against the sweeter sex of Tristan, and the erotic, naughty sex of Tristan's parents Rivalin and Blanscheflûr at his conception. Rasma Lazda-Cazers takes on sexual innuendo directly, asking whether oral sex really happens in the songs of Oswald von Wolkenstein, in a close, semantic reading of one of the last *Minnesänger*. Eva Membrives, on the other hand, takes on Roswitha (Hrovita) von Gandersheim's didactic works to explore punishments for sexual transgressions, and in doing so offers insight into the canoness's perceptions of desire and sex as definitively gendered acts deserving different gendered punishments. Finally, Gertrud Blaschitz's essay on "Das Freudenhaus im Mittelalter" explores the culture and historicity of the brothel in the Middle Ages through Heinrich von Neustadt's novel *Apollonius of Tyrus* (ca. 1300).

Aside from the eight essays on Teutonic topics, Classen's volume is also filled with a handful of French literature essays -7-, a pair of Spanish, a poker-hand of English, some art history -2-, a musicologist (more sexual innuendo), and a comparative cultural history of the clitoris and breasts. This final contribution by Allison Coudert reminded me of a recent panel chaired by Susan Stiritz on "Cultural Cliteracy" hosted by the Women, Gender, and Sexuality Studies Program at Washington University in St. Louis in November 2007, and so I will punctuate my review with Coudert's looking glass on the increasingly *cliterate* climate of

gender and sexuality studies. Stiritz, arguing for pedagogical approaches to gender studies that recognize and reveal the suppression and oppression of clitoral based sexual stimulation over the heterosexual and hegemonic history of focusing on vaginal penetration as the primary source of female sexual pleasure, suggested during the panel that *cliterate* classrooms promote sexual health and positive self-images for “little girls and big girls too.” Coudert’s concluding essay in this volume gives early modern researchers a reason to make their classrooms *cliterate* as well. Disappointingly, Stiritz’ essay, attempting to prop up some of Coudert’s more questionable conclusions, makes an unfortunate foray into Laquer’s ‘one-sex/two-sex’ theory. On the whole, however, Coudert’s argument does much to unveil the concerted marginalization of the clitoris as a socially reprehensible thing in comparison to the socially acceptable “utility” of the breasts. The defamation of the clitoris and the idolization of the breasts points unabashedly to the gender-biased anatomical discrimination of the clitoris as well as the symbolic oppression of female sexual pleasure that this discrimination represents. The proliferation of cultural *cliteracy* is an expansion of perspectives on the history of sexuality in the Middle Ages and beyond.

Sexuality in the Middle Ages and Early Modern Times delivers a number of perspectives on medieval sexuality in a lot of space. Its heavy focus on literature makes it invaluable to the medieval literary theorist, in particular those who are concerned with interdisciplinary and multi-lingual projects. Additionally, as many of the essays contain illustrations and visual examples, *Sexuality in the Middle Ages and Early Modern Times* will benefit scholars of art history and visual culture. Sex and sexuality, the core of this volume, remains heavily theorized and not very problematized, partially due to the very careful use of language and examples employed. Most of the essays view sex and sexuality on a very loose spectrum, which is a safe bet when dealing with hermeneutical problems in texts that are chronologically and linguistically quite removed from us. But, as Classen argues, these literary texts, for all their linguistic differences, touch us at a very human level and provide insight into attitudes and ideas of the pre-modern age, even if they are not necessarily the hegemonic or ‘objectively’ accepted ones, a phenomenon Gerhild Williams has often referred to as “experiential realism.” While the price tag may make this volume out of reach for graduate students to purchase, they and their professors should put pressure on their institutions to acquire it for them. It could very likely, for its breadth and insight, become a centerpiece for a number of dissertations.

Patrick Brugh, Washington University in St. Louis

KAREN DUVE. *Taxi*. Frankfurt am Main: Eichborn, 2008. 313 S. € 19.95

Es gibt keine Zufälle – zumindest nicht, wenn es um Karen Duves neusten Roman *Taxi* geht. Das ‚taxifarbende‘ Buch in schwarzem Mantel deutet auf die verdrehte Welt hin, die sich in *Taxi* entfaltet, denn das Design spiegelt die Realität wider: Unter einer beigen Klebefolie eines Taxis verbirgt sich allzu oft der schwarze Lack, der den Wiederverkaufswert steigert. Als ob Duve schon mit Umschlag und Einband auf die verkehrte Welt im Inhalt vorbereiten wollte, ironisiert sie wie schon in *Regenroman* in gekonnter Manier das Verhalten der Geschlechter untereinander und oszilliert zwischen Klischee und Realität bei ihren Charakteren.

Die Hamburgerin Alexandra Herwig treibt ziellos durch ihr Leben. Auf der Suche nach etwas Besserem fährt sie in der zweiten Hälfte der 80er Jahre *Taxi* und versinkt immer wieder im Tal der Depressionen. Aus dem Elternhaus wurde sie kurz nach dem Abitur ins Gartenhaus verbannt und aus dem Gartenhaus zieht sie in eine Einzimmerwohnung – nicht ohne vorher eine Panikattacke in Anbetracht der bevorstehenden Freiheit zu bekommen. Der dominante Vater wird von einem taxifahrenden Kollegen abgelöst, der Alex als Projektionsfläche für seine Fantasien nutzt und sie wie eine Puppe kleidet und durchs Leben dirigiert. Doch auch diese männliche Bezugsperson wird von anderen Männern abgelöst. Ihre sozialen Kontakte sind andere Taxifahrer; ausschließlich Männer und ausschließlich Klischees, die Karen Duve überspitzt darstellt. Es ist eine Welt, in der Frauen sich unterzuordnen haben, und Alex hat weder die Kraft noch das Selbstbewusstsein, um sich aus dieser Situation zu emanzipieren. Der einzige Lichtblick ist Marco, ein kleinwüchsiger Intellektueller aus Alex' Schule. Die Affäre der Beiden schwankt zwischen gegenseitigem Verständnis, physischer Gewalt, Alex' Überlegenheitsgefühlen und ihrer Scham und Marcos Minderwertigkeitsgefühlen und seinem Intellekt und dennoch ist es die einzige reale Beziehung, die Alex aufbauen kann und die in Alex das Erstarren ihres Selbstwertgefühls ermöglicht.

Wie die anderen Protagonistinnen in Duves Werken ist sich auch Alex ihres Umfeldes nur peripher bewusst. Die Mauer fällt; und Alex ist als Assistentin ihres derzeitigen Freundes – ein Fotograf – dabei, aber nur wenig interessiert. Die Wiedervereinigung erweitert ihre Welt um eine – natürlich von einem Mann initiierte – gefährliche

Wildwasserfahrt im Osten, aber ansonsten bleibt Alex gleichgültig in ihrer Hamburger Heimat und fährt Taxi. Euphorie empfindet sie nur für Affen. Versuche, als Journalistin Fuß zu fassen, scheitern ebenfalls an Alex' Antriebslosigkeit, aber Recherchen bescheren ihr eine Mitgliedschaft bei Mensa, dem internationalen Hochbegabten-Verband. Die Welt, die Duve für Alex Herwig entwirft, ähnelt denen aus *Regenroman*, *Dies ist kein Liebeslied* und aus den Kurzgeschichten in *Keine Ahnung*. Innere Lähmung und Apathie machen sich in *Taxi* nicht nur bei der Protagonistin bemerkbar sondern beeinflussen zunehmend den Leser / die Leserin. Die Begegnungen mit den Taxipassagieren heitern zumeist nicht auf, sondern erwecken misanthropische Gefühle. Alex wird beleidigt, angespuckt und geschlagen, fährt dubiose Gäste zu dubiosen Orten und Prostituierte durch die Nacht. Ihr werden sowohl unmoralische Angebote als auch Vorwürfe für ihre gefährliche Nacharbeit gemacht. Immer wieder muss sie sich von ihren männlichen Kollegen und den Fahrgästen Frauenfeindlichkeiten gefallen lassen und sich ihnen zur Wehr setzen. Umso erstaunlicher ist Alex' Ansicht zum eigenen Geschlecht. Sie kommentiert das Fahrverhalten einer anderen Autofahrerin exemplarisch für das ganze Geschlecht abschätzig (60f.) und doch parodiert Duve diese Situation mit einer ‚autofahrerlichen‘ Glanzleistung Alex' – „An jeder Seite meines Taxis war höchstens noch zwei Finger breit Luft“ (T 61). Dieses Spiel zwischen der klischeehaften Kritik, die Alex an der Autofahrerin übt, und der sofortigen Untergrabung dieser Kritik durch das Verhalten der Kritikerin als exzellenter Autofahrerin illustriert Duves Humor im Hinblick auf ihre Darstellung der Geschlechter und durchzieht *Taxi* ebenso wie Duves andere Romane und Kurzgeschichten. Dass der Leser / die Leserin sich oft in dem Verhalten der Charakter wiedererkennt – nicht nur in den Geschlechterklischees, sondern auch im Benehmen der Taxigäste –, verdeutlicht die metatextuelle Relevanz von Duves Texten.

Taxi amüsiert, deprimiert, regt zum Nachdenken über festgefahrene Verhaltensmuster an und nimmt einen mit durch die Hamburger Nacht. Karen Duve bleibt sich selbst treu und fasziniert nicht durch elaborierte Sprache oder Handlung, sondern durch die Ironie und den Humor in ihren Werken. *Taxi* ist dabei hoffnungsvoller als seine Vorgänger. Fans von *Regenroman* werden *Taxi* dementsprechend genießen, aber die Komplexität des Erstlings wird in *Taxi* dennoch nicht erreicht.

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MICHAEL ESKIN. *Poetic Affairs: Celan, Grünbein, Brodsky*. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2008. 252 pp. \$ 60.00

In August 1953 Claire Goll, the wife of the French Surrealist poet Yvan Goll, wrote a defamatory letter to different German publishers, broadcasting stations and newspapers accusing Paul Celan of plagiarizing – especially in his second collection of poems, *Mohn und Gedächtnis* – the late work of her husband, of whom the young poet was an admiring friend. These allegations – which have been proved to be completely false and yet which overshadowed Celan's existence until his suicide in 1970 – were perceived by the Bukowina-born German-Jewish poet and Holocaust survivor as part of a dangerous revival of National Socialism in Konrad Adenauer's Germany.

In 41 A.D., after Caligula was assassinated and Claudius proclaimed Roman Emperor, the Stoic philosopher and statesman Lucius Aennaeus Seneca was banned – at the behest of Valeria Messalina, Claudius' first wife – to the Mediterranean island of Corsica. The sentence was clear: Seneca was said to have committed adultery with the emperor's niece, Julia Livilla. During the exile the Stoic's belief in the practice of *πάθεια*, the impassable absence of passion and emotional disturbance, was put to an extreme test. Only eight years later, with the intervention of Claudius' second wife, Agrippina, was Seneca able to return to the imperial court in Rome, where he asserted his innocence.

In December 1963 Leningrad native poet Joseph Brodsky was unjustly accused by the Soviet Writers' Union as well as by state authorities of social parasitism. A few months later he was arrested, tried and sentenced to five years forced labor in the remote North-Russian village of Norenskoe. Thanks to the pressure of important public figures he was allowed to return to Leningrad in September 1965, to be expelled from the USSR for good in June 1972. Not only was the poet betrayed and abandoned by his own country, but also by his beloved: after he was incarcerated, Marianna Basmanova, a Leningrad artist whom he had met and desperately fallen in love with in early summer of 1962, began an affair with Brodsky's fellow poet and rival Dmitrij Bobyšev.

What is it that synergically binds and holds together these three different as well as engaging stories? To what extent can these literary, historical and biographical events generate or testify authentic poetic

love affairs? In his extraordinarily entertaining and original study *Poetic affairs*, Michael Eskin strategically uses the Goll affair, the Livilla affair and the Brodsky affair as the concrete basis for a well-grounded analysis of the poetics of three outstanding voices of modern poetry: Paul Celan, Durs Grünbein and Joseph Brodsky. The specific way the writers deal with these poetologically significant, real-life events allows the scholar not only to point out some peculiar elements of their lives and works, but also to observe how each of their separate poetic projects can be embedded within a wider framework of mutual imbrication and complementarity, so that at the end of an adventurous philological and hermeneutical travel through texts, pre-texts and contexts, after the accurate survey of orgiastic poetic colloquies and ethical-anthropological *élans* – it seems – *tout se tient*. Eskin explains the juxtaposition and orchestration of Celan's, Grünbein's and Brodsky's lives and *œuvres* in the light of a genealogical common denominator: the three poets can be considered the poetic heirs of the Russian Acmeist writer Ossip Mandelstam, who embodies the cultural-historical chiffre of the modern "persecuted, abused, and exiled poet [...] whose art and existence present a threat to tyranny and who does not shy away from putting his life on the line for the sake of poetry" (137). The appropriation, poetical metabolization, displacement and re-writing of the three cited affairs which Celan, Grünbein and Brodsky offer Eskin the opportunity to reflect on the complex relationship between literature and life, notably on life as a "literary fact" (4). Events – considered as the "coming into being of something [...] that exceeds and transgresses the ordinary, [...] pierces through the accepted matrices of making sense and going about things, and creates an indelible point of historical, political and semantic reference henceforth to be reckoned with" (19) – can effectively help us shed light on the inner motions of poetry, which Eskin cleverly interrogates through the prism of three fundamental questions: the constitution of poetic signification, poetic subjectivity and ethical agency.

The author has the merit of offering remarkably inventive and unconventional readings of the three poets' *opera*. In particular, Celan's production is not read – as would normally be the case – as thematically revolving around the tragic sufferings of the Holocaust, but rather is reassessed as poetry of (erotic) love, as a powerful lyrical counter-project to the Shoah as well as to coeval anti-Semitic resurgences. In addition, Eskin engages in the interpretation of poems Grünbein has written in the new millennium – that is to say, poems more classical in tone, which the critics have only partially dealt with up to now. And, finally, by placing aspects of Brodsky's life and production within the particularly

broad exegetical horizon of intertextuality, he chooses to work on a relatively little known Nobel prize winner, about whose poems, prose and essays there is still much to say.

But the core of this book undoubtedly lies in the unprecedented conception of poetry as a sensual constellation of love affairs, “predicated on the ethical-existential and erotic categories of love, fidelity and betrayal” (6) and substantiated by affairistic dialogues – which Eskin metaphorically stages as sexual intercourses – with (the texts of) other interlocutors, who chronologically reside mostly in the past of literary tradition, but also in the present of contemporaneity and in the future of yet unknown readers and recipients. Celan finds solace and shelter from the calumnies of Claire Goll in his interlocution with William Shakespeare, whose *Sonnets* he begins to translate – with important semantic redirections to his own personal situation, as Eskin skilfully suggests – in September 1959; Grünbein recognizes – in his marvellous poem *Julia Livilla*, the product of a sleepless, adulterous night of readings – Seneca’s status as an exile, a cosmopolitan and an anthropological realist as the mirroring image of an ideal *alter ego*; Brodsky creates in his *New Stanzas for Augusta* an intricate onomastic texture – Marianna, Mary Anne, Mary, Marianne – by entwining his personal biography with the one of Lord George Gordon Byron. But these poetic love affairs are not the ones recounted in the book: the three poets’ readings and re-readings of Georg Büchner, René Descartes, Dante Alighieri and – of course – Ossip Mandelstam, among others, are constantly called to mind.

With *Poetic Affairs* Michael Eskin proves to be – once again – an astonishing researcher in matters of poetic dialogues, a genuine expert of literary interlocutions. Just as in his previous study, *Ethics and Dialogue in the Works of Levinas, Bakhtin, Mandel’shtam, and Celan*, as well as in many of his articles – memorable, above all, the one on Grünbein’s reading of Dante, Baudelaire and Mandelstam –, the scholar successfully traces and scrutinizes the story of the most passionate poetic love affairs in the history of contemporary literature. By examining the practices of reading, interpreting and translating works of literature, Eskin elaborates a novel, compelling concept of love as a particular “way of engaging with and interpreting the world and reality [...], as a force that creates meaning(s) and establishes new semantic structures and connections” (22).

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ECKARD FAUL. Hrsg. *Hugo Ball. Dramen*. Göttingen: Wallstein, 2008. 339 S. € 28.00

„1910-1914 war alles für mich Theater, das Leben, die Menschen, die Liebe, die Moral. Das Theater bedeutete mir: die unfassbare Freiheit.“ Der dies schrieb, ist keinesfalls als Dramatiker oder Regisseur in die Literaturgeschichte eingegangen, sondern lebt im Bewusstsein der Gegenwart als einer der Mitbegründer des DADA und des Lautgedichts „Karawane“ fort. Prominent wurde er zudem als erster Hermann-Hesse-Biograph im Jahre 1927. Die Rede ist von Hugo Ball (1886-1927).

Die seit 2003 von der *Deutschen Akademie für Sprache und Dichtung* in Darmstadt und der 1998 gegründeten *Hugo-Ball-Gesellschaft* herausgegebenen *Sämtlichen Werke und Briefe*, die auf zehn Bände angelegt sind, werden das verkürzte Bild des experimentellen Dichters sicherlich nachhaltig korrigieren. Die bereits herausgegebenen Bände zu den Gedichten, Briefen und Essays zeigen einen bei Ausbruch des Ersten Weltkriegs enthusiastischen Autor, der sich schon bald dem revolutionären Anarchismus zuwendet, um sich nach dem Kriegsende und dem Ruin seines Arbeitgebers, dem politisch engagierten Verlag *Freie Zeitung*, zusehends einem schon früh latenten mystischen Katholizismus zu ergeben. So schrieb Ball in den 1920er Jahren Heiligenviten, befasste sich mit dem Exorzismus und veröffentlichte im konservativen, katholischen *Hochland*. Verbreitern die zum Teil bisher unpublizierten Briefe und Essays vor allem die Grundlage, auf der in Zukunft eine intellektuelle Biografie Hugo Balls geschrieben werden kann, so erschließt der vorliegende Band mit Hugo Balls Dramen für breite Leserkreise Neuland.

Von den in diesem Band versammelten fünf Stücken – weitere gelten als verschollen – erschien lediglich das erste, die Tragödie *Nero* (1911), zeitgenössisch beim Rowohlt-Verlag, und nur sein letztes, das *Krippenspiel. Bruitistisch* (1916), wurde zu seinen Lebzeiten aufgeführt. Sowohl für den Leser als auch die Forschung sind die Stücke erst seit den 1980er Jahren in der Form von limitierten Liebhaber-Editionen zugänglich. Blickt man auf Fauls gründlichen bibliografischen Anhang, so scheinen Balls Dramen bisher kein übermäßiges Interesse in der Literaturwissenschaft geweckt zu haben. Ob dies nur an der unbefriedigenden Editionsgrundlage gelegen hat, wird die Zukunft

zeigen. Doch – dies sei schon vorweggenommen – wirkliche Entdeckungen gibt es in diesem Band kaum zu machen.

Die dramatische Produktion Balls muss im Zusammenhang mit einer geradezu eruptiven Theater-Begeisterung gesehen werden, die den 24-jährigen Studenten dazu veranlasste, seine Nietzsche-Dissertation abzubrechen und sich an der berühmten, von Max Reinhardt geleiteten Schauspielschule des *Deutschen Theaters* in Berlin einzuschreiben. Zwar war er als Schauspieler keineswegs überragend, sein Talent als Regisseur und Dramaturg aber wurde erkannt. Es folgte ein erstes Engagement am *Stadttheater Plauen* (1911), kurze Zeit später eine Verpflichtung als Dramaturg des *Münchener Lustspielhauses*, das auf seinen Vorschlag hin in *Münchener Kammerspiele* umbenannt wurde. Es waren weniger die Inszenierungen und Projekte, die diese Münchener Zeit auszeichneten, sondern die Kontakte zur Münchner Bohème wie Wedekind oder Kandinsky, die Ball in seiner Suche nach einem neuen antipsychologischen Theater bestärkten, das er – zeittypisch – als 'Gesamtkunstwerk' und 'Festspiel' imaginierte. Um diese Theaterpläne in eine verbindliche programmatische Form zu gießen, plante er, zusammen mit Kandinsky, Marc, Thomas von Hartmann u. a. ein Theater-Pendant zum *Blauen Reiter* zu verfassen. Der Erste Weltkrieg bereitete jedoch solchen Plänen ein jähes Ende. Die Theaterschriften dieser Periode sind nicht originell zu nennen. Anti-Realismus, das Gesamtkunstwerk-Konzept und die Hoffnung auf ein gesellschaftstransformierendes Festspiel sind schon im Jugendstil-Theater der Jahrhundertwende und in den Schriften des Münchner Kollegen Georg Fuchs zu finden. Faul, der es sich in seinem Nachwort zur Aufgabe macht, Balls manische Theaterjahre nachzuzeichnen, hält sich mit einer breiteren Kontextualisierung seiner Theaterideen auffällig zurück. Es bleibt zu wünschen, dass der Band mit Balls Theaterschriften die Querverbindungen zu den Theaterprojekten des Sturm-Kreises von Herwarth Walden, zu Georg Fuchs und Max Reinhardt genauer herausarbeitet.

Wie nehmen sich Hugo Balls eigene Dramen vor dem Hintergrund seiner Forderung nach einem neuen plurimedialen Festspieltheater aus? Der Kontrast könnte größer nicht sein. Sieht man von dem brutistischen Krippenspiel ab, so spielen Musik, Tanz und Gebärde keine erwähnenswerte Rolle in diesen Dramen. Hier liegen keine Vorlagen für ein etwaig zu verwirklichendes utopisches Gesamtkunstwerk vor, wie sie etwa das große Vorbild Kandinsky mit *Der gelbe Klang* (1909/10) lieferte, sondern weitgehend konventionelle Dramen, deren Sprache nichts mit der abstrakten Wortkunst des

Frühexpressionismus gemein hat. Der Erstling *Nero* (wahrscheinlich um 1905/06) ist ein epigonaler Nachzügler der im 19. Jahrhundert so populären, zumeist in der Tradition des Historismus stehenden Nero-Dramen. Allenfalls die nicht von einem plumpen Moralismus getriebene Darstellung des Nero als Inkarnation der Unnatur, die die Schöpfung rückgängig machen möchte, deutet schon auf die existentielle Dimension hin, die das letzte große Stück, *Der Henker von Brescia* (1914), haben wird. Mit *Des Teufels Erdfahrt* (1906) liegt ein harmloses Puppenspiel vor, das Ball für ein Kinderpublikum wohl etwas zu teuflisch geriet. Die Tragikomödie *Die Nase des Michelangelo* (1911), die in der Grundanlage auf das Drama *Michel Angelo* (1855) des von Ball innig verehrten Friedrich Hebbel verweist, kann als eine Auseinandersetzung mit der Figur des Künstlers gewertet werden. Michelangelo vergibt dem verfeimten Künstler Torrigiano, der ihm vor dreißig Jahren die Nase schief gehauen hat, doch die Idolatrie des Künstlers, betrieben durch den das Volk aufhetzenden Cellini und die politischen Ränke des Papstes, verhindern eine gütliche Schlichtung. Der in einer Gerichtsszene kulminierende „Nasenstreit“ birgt eventuell für das neue Feld 'Recht und Literatur' noch ein gewisses Betätigungsfeld, erscheint aber doch eher als Kuriosum. Im Freitod des Torrigiano, der begleitet ist von neronischer Weltverachtung, kündigt sich schon das ekstatische Pathos von *Der Henker von Brescia* an, dem zweifellos sprachlich und gedanklich reifsten Stück des 28-jährigen Hugo Ball. Wenn es auch sprachlich schwer fällt, dieses Stück dem Frühexpressionismus zuzuordnen, so werden doch wesentliche expressionistische Themen in dieser Komödie verhandelt. Insbesondere die Spannung von amoralischem, hochgradig sexualisiertem Vitalismus und der Sehnsucht nach einer den Leib transzendierenden Erlösung gemahnen etwa an die Dramen August Stramms (*Sancta Susanna*, 1912; *Geschehen*, 1915) oder Reinhard Sorges (*Der Bettler*, 1912), ohne deren sprachliche Radikalität zu besitzen. Das Stück sprengt seine Gattungsbezeichnung 'Komödie' und kann als eine mustergültige Grotteske bezeichnet werden, deren Hauptfigur, der Henker, an den Zwergriesen Karl Hetmann in Wedekinds *Hidalla* (1904) erinnert. Schon die Anlage des Stücks, dessen Stoff Ball einer populären Romanvorlage Karl Hans Strobls entnommen hat, ist grotesk: Der Henker beaufsichtigt zugunsten des skrupellosen Geschäftemachers Barbiano ein römisches Freudenhaus, in dem die Prostituierten zur Vesper gehen und vor der Jungfrau Maria beten. Der Henker erblickt in dem anfänglich für eine wahre Königin gehaltenen 'Neuzugang' Roswitha eine „Seelenkönigin“ (180). Die von ihm Vergewaltigte wird zur gewöhnlichen Hure, die Erlöserin zur

personifizierten Schuld, die dem Henker unerträglich wird. Der Henker sieht keinen Ausweg. Die Hure Barbara empfiehlt ihm die naheliegende Lösung: „Henk, Henker!“ Diesem Rat verschließt der Henker sich anfänglich: „Immer nur henken und Henker bleiben! Der Sohn wird Henker. Der Vater war Henker. Die ganze Welt ein blutiges Haus!“ (190). Der Henker wird zur großartigen, sich nicht in bloßer Allegorese auflösenden Figur einer erlösungsbedürftigen Gesellschaft am Rande des Ersten Weltkriegs, die immer wieder in überkommene, affektiv bestimmte Handlungsschemata zurückfällt und das, was sie und ihr Gewissen belasten könnte, abschafft. Schließlich tötet der Henker seine Seelenkönigin „im Handumdrehen“ unter dem Ausruf: „Weg mit dem Juden! Weg mit der Dirne! Weg mit der frässigen Kindsbetterin!“ (194). Das 'Andere' der Gesellschaft, erzeugt durch den eigenen Sexualtrieb und Materialismus, wird externalisiert und getötet. Es erscheint nicht abwegig, dieses Stück in der Ausstellung einer grotesk-brutalen Handlungslogik mit Heiner Müllers *Hamletmaschine* (1977) zu vergleichen.

Das bruitistische Krippenspiel ist das einzige Stück, das der Erwartung des Lesers an ein Drama Hugo Balls entsprechen dürfte. Auffällig an dieser musikalischen Vorlage in Textform, die 1916 im *Cabaret Voltaire* der Zürcher Dadaisten aufgeführt wurde, ist die starke lautmalerische Orientierung. Faul erläutert in seinem Kommentar überzeugend, wie wenig radikal diese Lautmalerei gegenüber dem ursprünglichen bruitistischen Konzept der Futuristen war.

Mit diesem Band liegt eine sorgsame Edition der Dramen Balls vor, die Textgenese und Lesarten einbezieht. Der Stellenkommentar gerät an einigen nebensächlichen Stellen etwas zu ausführlich; die Deutungen des Herausgebers verharren auf einer zurückhaltenden biografischen Ebene, drängen dem Leser also keine Sichtweise auf. Zusammen mit der wohl vollständigen Bibliographie zu den einzelnen Dramen bietet sich hier dem Germanisten ein für diesen Teil des Ballschen Schaffens unabdingbares Handwerkszeug. Ob sich aber dem Leser oder Dramaturgen hier neue Entdeckungen erschließen werden, darf – sieht man von der herausragenden Groteske *Der Henker von Brescia* ab – bezweifelt werden.

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JENNIFER FAY. *Theaters of Occupation: Hollywood and the Reeducation of Postwar Germany*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2008. 228 pp. \$ 22.50

Jennifer Fay's *Theaters of Occupation: Hollywood and the Reeducation of Postwar Germany* addresses the intersection of allied political aims and the possibilities provided by a burgeoning Hollywood film industry. Fay traces a shift, from the use of film to de-Nazify and democratize western Germany, to its role in integrating the western zones into a larger Cold War alliance against the Soviet-led East. Her emphasis is on the former part of this mission, and she concludes that American efforts to tutor occupied Germans in the culture of democracy through film were less than successful. Germans, rather than absorbing genuine democratic lessons from Hollywood films and later sanctioned native cinematic efforts, learned instead to mimic democratic comportment and behavior – to pretend at democracy and to appear as ersatz Americans, regardless of their inner political convictions. In this sense she departs from Heide Fehrenbach, who argues in her *Cinema in Democratizing Germany* that postwar West Germans used film to consciously construct a new, post-Nazi national identity. Fay focuses more on American plans for using film as a [re]-educational tool than on German efforts to self-promote democracy through cinema; where Fehrenbach cites successful West German efforts at carving out a democratic identity for the Federal Republic, Fay finds failure, in that the filmic messages the American occupiers intended to send were interpreted rather differently by German viewers.

Germans' susceptibility to – and suspicion of – the medium of film has inspired an array of scholarly inquiries. During the Weimar era, the output of German filmmakers rivaled Hollywood in its ambitiousness and craftsmanship, and the Nazis perfected the use of film for its propagandistic value. Heide Fehrenbach and Anton Kaes have both mined West Germany's rich postwar cinematic tradition, assessing the FRG's emerging sense of democracy and the way that German directors dealt with the country's troubling past. Fay starts with American plans for the use of American films, but also interrogates a number of German-made films, treating them as responses to and reinterpretations of the American message.

Historians and film scholars will find much of interest in Fay's use of a variety of theoretical frameworks to approach her subject. Her chapters proceed roughly chronologically, following shifting occupation

policy aims from the immediate postwar moment through the eventual licensing of German-run film companies. Throughout, German suspicion thwarts American intention. Rather than reading Hollywood movies like *Ninotchka* (Lubitsch, 1939) as a subtle lesson in democratic consumerism, Germans were more likely to approach the films allowed into the western zones as evidence of American policy goals. Canny viewers, Germans saw Hollywood films as escapist entertainment – but also as a variation on the propaganda to which they have been subjected in the Nazi era. The newsreel *World in Film* (*Welt im Film*, a U.S.-U.K.-produced newsreel for western Germany) and the widely shown concentration camp documentary *Death Mills* (Wilder/Burger, 1945) exemplify the most obvious American efforts to propagandize. Fay also cites public opinion surveys that point to German distrust in American intentions as well as the skeptical content of newspaper movie reviews as evidence that German viewers came to the movie house as practiced spectators rather than fully receptive blank slates.

Fay's most ambitious chapter is the one she titles "A Gothic Occupation." In it, she looks to the tropes of the "female gothic" film as a model for understanding the occupation of Germany. She summons Freud to make sense of the interwar period and the sexual repression and paranoia that gave way to the "national mental illness" of Nazism. Though initially skeptical of her use of the American thriller *Gaslight* (Cukor, 1944) as a lens through which to view the western German response to the occupation, I was ultimately persuaded by the illuminating effects of the exercise: Fay points to the popularity of *Gaslight* among German audiences as evidence that the tale of a terrorized woman unable to trust her own intuitions resonated with the heavily female audiences, themselves reeling from the rapid shift from Nazi to American domination.

One of the book's few weakness is Fay's treatment of Germany as a unified whole, rather than one divided into eastern and western zones that experienced vastly different conditions of occupation. While she acknowledges shifting American aims and German responses as de-Nazification gives way to the Cold War, she does not extensively treat Soviet cultural policy or the response of East Germans. In part, this is an understandable consequence of less accessible sources about the eastern zones, many of which are in Russian. Fay might be advised to more explicitly categorize her study as one of the western zones and point to the eastern ones as a regional case worthy of further study.

KATHARINA GERSTENBERGER. *Writing the new Berlin. The German Capital in Post-Wall Literature*. Rochester, New York: Camden House, 2008. 219 pp. \$ 75.00

After the commotion and excitement surrounding the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989 calmed down, literary critics started asking for the novel that would explain it all immediately. Not just ask, they demanded it. Critics were thinking of an all-encompassing work that spanned from the history of a divided Germany after World War II up to the summer of 1989, when thousands of GDR citizens fled the country and started their lives all over again in the West. Such a novel has never been published. Instead, as Gerstenberger (2008) acknowledges, German writers from the East, from the West, and those who have a Turkish background, composed works about the new capital Berlin. These works dealt with problems that arose after unification as their protagonists searched for an identity in the newly reunified country. Gerstenberger modifies an idea that the literary critic Volker Hage used for an assessment of contemporary German literature in „Deutsche Literatur: Liebe im Gästehaus der DDR“ (Spiegel 42/2000). He suggested a compilation of publications by East and West German authors to create a comprehensive picture of understanding, as „Bruchstücke“ eines Wenderomans (166). Gerstenberger takes this thought one step further and calls the literature “a patchwork body of about three hundred texts” (18). In addition, Gerstenberger puts this post-Wende literary production in the context of a long history of the Berlin novel.

Working within the field of Contemporary German literature, especially literature after the fall of the Wall, is no easy task since literary production is ongoing, the body of work to be analyzed has not been completed and literary scholars such as Brockmann (*Literature and German Unification*, 1999), Taberner (*1949/1989 Cultural Perspectives on Division and Unity in East and West* 2000), Cooke (*Representing East Germany since Unification*, 2005), Cooke/Grix (*East Germany: Continuity and Change*, 2000) and Wehdeking (*Die deutsche Einheit und die Schriftsteller* 1995) often come to different conclusions. Until Gerstenberger’s *Writing the New Berlin*, there was no comprehensive study of post-unification-literature. Instead, there were compilations of short stories or secondary literature around one topic within the current literary production, such as the concentration on the involvement of writers with the Stasi (*German*

Writers and the Politics of Culture: Dealing with the Stasi. Plowman, Cooke, 2003). Literary scholars such as Wehdeking demonstrated the diversity of literature after unification rather than providing insightful literary analyses the way Gerstenberger does.

Surveying the literary landscape after the *Wende*, Gerstenberger sees the post-*Wende* novels as often aspiring to be the quintessential Berlin novel, the one that would redefine German identity for the new country, setting itself up in the site of the newly established capital. Berlin is after all a microcosm of post-*Wende* identity for Germans. Within its outlines a reunification has taken place, just as it has for the country as a whole. However, she states that now this search for the iconic Berlin has ceased. Authors, critics and readers are no longer looking for *the* novel that is the Berlin novel summarizing a new German identity and post-*Wende* events.

The lens of Gerstenberger's approach portrays novels, short-stories and essays published after unification from the perspective of what Berlin novels are. In this approach Berlin appeared to be an on-going development, rather than a finished product as a discussion of the building spree that was filling up Potsdamer Platz and changing the city's identity and look at the same time indicated (chapter 5). And as this new identity was constructed in Potsdamer Platz and East Berlin, the city that East Germans knew and the identity it gave them also disappeared and became part of memory (chapter 4). Interpreted as an organizing principle, Berlin provides a site for identity definition, whether successful or not. It is also a place where many different kinds of borders meet, interpenetrate, and clash. The new buildings and spaces brought with unification changed life for the West Berliners as well. Consequently, this change is reflected in what she describes as Berlin novels. It is the means by which memory is fixed, old identities are remembered and new selves are created. Globalization and internationalization exposes the East to the new metrics of freedom and free markets. For the West it provides another route to the reworking of memory and remembering as the Nazi legacy continues to play out in the history of property ownership, now that the holdings in the East are open to claims by the original, pre-GDR and pre-Nazi (in the case of Jewish claimants) owners.

Gerstenberger's book is a work in the true spirit of German and Cultural Studies. She looks at the novels from different perspectives. We see them interpreted within Butler's theory of sexual identity. Another angle is provided by how Germans in general, and Berliners in particular, have become multicultural because the world passes through

Berlin now. With Gerstenberger's exhaustive study, the reader truly understands the intention of the author and how the novel/short story fits within the body of work that provides a new definition of German identity and highlights the importance of Berlin as this identity's locus. *Writing the new Berlin* is an extremely valuable contribution to scholarship about most recent German literature and Germans after unification with their ongoing discussion about German identity, especially in the light of debates about collaboration with the Stasi, the Nazi-past, and the value of GDR-literature after its demise (Literaturstreit).

Anne Hector, University of Massachusetts Amherst

CHRISTINE HAASE. *When Heimat Meets Hollywood: German Filmmakers and America, 1985-2005*. Rochester, NY: Camden House, 2007. 225 pp. \$ 80.00

With *When Heimat Meets Hollywood: German Filmmakers and America, 1985-2005*, Christine Haase adds a new chapter to a rich and complex history of German-American film relations. Focusing on four German-born directors who make films either in the U.S. (Petersen, Emmerich, and Adlon), or in relation to America as a national-cultural imaginary (Tykwer), the author situates her study as part of a current scholarly trend of examining German cinema for its transnational elements. Despite any apparent dissimilarities in filmmaking practices and aesthetics, Haase asserts that all four directors share an overt "bi-cultural relationship to the United States and Germany, their interaction with American and European cinematic traditions, and their transnational directorial aspirations" (10). Therefore, she concludes, each director's work offers a unique model for conceptualizing the transnational "beyond the conventional boundaries of nation-states" (ibid).

Before engaging in either of the four case studies, Haase undertakes a film-historical review of the German film industry's relations to the United States throughout the twentieth century (including, for example, such canonical markers as the quota policies to combat American competition during the 1920s, the wave of emigration to Hollywood during the 1930s, and the German partaking in popular European-American co-productions during the 1960s).¹ The somewhat lengthy review would not contain any new insights if it were not for the highly original reading of a body of 1970s films, known as "dreckige, kleine Filme" (41) that, overshadowed by the phenomenon of the New

German Cinema, have largely been forgotten by audiences and film critics. Haase points out the influence of Hollywood genre cinema on these small-scale budget films and, in doing so, historically contextualizes similar generic markers that have usually been identified as unique signatures of film authors like Fassbinder or Wenders. In moments like these, Haase convincingly employs a critical methodology she identifies as part of a “cultural turn in German film studies” (3), where beginning in the mid-1980s, the focus shifted from studying the aesthetics of individual *auteurs* to the nationally- and historically-specific investigation of particularly popular forms of cinema.

It is, therefore, all the more surprising that Haase structures her following quest for a transnational model of German-American cinema in the form of an auteur-oriented study that discusses each director’s work primarily in terms of his stylistic traits or narrative motifs. This allows Haase to position the currently most prolific German-born directors in Hollywood, Wolfgang Petersen and Roland Emmerich, at two opposite poles. On the basis of Petersen’s early career in the New German Cinema, Haase claims that his films have remained “informed by aesthetic, philosophical, and ideological concerns traceable to his German roots and leftist political influences” (64). This remark leaves the impression that a critically-engaged, leftist cinema inevitably originates from the soil of 1970s new German filmmaking, an assumption that is based on cultural bias rather than on actual film-historical grounds.² Haase labels Petersen a “blockbuster auteur,” while emphatically denying Emmerich a similar treatment. Born fifteen years after Petersen, Emmerich apparently lacks the critical merits that Haase associates with West Germany’s 1960s and 70s new cinema forms. Thus, according to Haase, while Petersen’s *Air Force One* (1996) undercuts its patriotic and nationalistic overtones through “satirical impulses” (129), Emmerich’s *Independence Day* (1996) propagates “a form of metanational globalism [that] is primarily a magnified and expanded American nationalism” (ibid). In order to theoretically support her textual analyses, Haase allows Homi Bhabha’s concept of hybridity to rescue Petersen’s work, whereas Emmerich’s work is judged using Jameson’s theses on postmodernism. One may very well object that Petersen’s *Das Boot* (1981) is as much a form of pastiche as *Independence Day* and that Emmerich’s *Troy* (2004) is as much a product of total commodification as *Das Boot*. After all, Petersen and Emmerich work under identical industrial conditions. In this light, it seems unfortunate that Haase, while reporting on the global marketing strategies for *Independence Day*, remains quiet about the transnational advertising campaign for Emmerich’s *Troy*.

Even though Haase's unequivocally favorable reading of Petersen's auteur-status leads her to judge the two directors by a double standard, her comparative analysis leads to an important observation: the concept of *transnational cinema* is as ambiguous as the older notion of *national cinema* that it has come to replace. Her important critique of Emmerich's globally-oriented "Hollywood patriotism" (200) leaves no mistake that the passage across or beyond the boundaries of the nation-state can mean very different things depending on who crosses the lines, by what means, and to what ends.

Not surprisingly, then, Haase develops a more intriguing notion of a transnational film practice in regard to the director Percy Adlon, who works outside the commercial film industry. Focusing on Adlon's mid-career American-German trilogy, which includes the 1987 art house film hit *Out of Rosenheim* (*Bagdad Café*, 1987), this chapter offers a superb analysis of a much lesser known body of work and, much more than the other three cases, Adlon's example perfectly illustrates the book's overall dictum: *when Heimat meets Hollywood* (not surprisingly, the book's title photo features a production still from *Out of Rosenheim*). Haase shows that, freed from the economic and formal constraints of commercial filmmaking, Adlon's move beyond national and cultural borders is always accompanied by an equal transgression of ethnicity, gender, sexuality, and social limits. Less in demand of interpretation strategies, Adlon's case provides the author with a compelling model of transnationality that is more strongly grounded in the film-texts and the filmmaking practice.

In this light, the following discussion of Tom Tykwer's work bears less resemblance to Adlon than to the two Hollywood directors discussed earlier. Making films outside of Hollywood, Tykwer is not only indebted to European and German aesthetics, but equally informed by American genre cinema. In their hybrid form of German-American sensibilities, as Haase suggests, Tykwer mirrors Petersen's auteur-status, but, in contrast, through his German viewpoint he occupies a position that "preserves cultural and local specificity while overcoming the stifling and needlessly dichotomizing division between 'Film Europe' and Film America, and between a national German cinema of art films versus one of popular entertainment" (201).

When Heimat Meets Hollywood maintains, however, the very dichotomy between the two, despite its transnational impetus. One reason for this is most likely Haase's refusal to differentiate more clearly between her film-textual analyses and their systematic historically-specific industrial contextualization, especially in the cases of Petersen

and Tykwer. In doing so, her call for a new kind of transnational cinematic and cultural practice appears highly selective and often unpersuasive. One might also assume that in a time in which cultural practices—as well as social, economic, and political structures—have long become essential parts of transnational activities, the concept of the transnational has lost its value as an effective critical and analytical term, especially for the cinema, one of the most industrial of all arts forms.

Claudia Pummer, University of Iowa

Notes

¹ See respectively: Higson, Andrew and Richard Maltby, eds. *"Film Europe" and "Film America": Cinema, Commerce and Cultural Exchange 1920-1939*. Exeter: University of Exeter Press, 1999; Hilchenbach, Maria. *Kino im Exil: Die Emigration deutscher Filmkünstler 1933-1945*. Munich and New York: Saur, 1982; Bergfelder, Tim. *International Adventures: German Popular Cinema and European Co-productions in the 1960s*. New York and Oxford: Berghahn, 2005.

² Beginning with Eric Rentschler in the 1980s, film historians made increasing efforts to reevaluate the New German Cinema's status as an autonomous aesthetic and political film movement by tracing how the term was specifically used to label and market the phenomenon abroad. See: Rentschler, Eric. *The West German Film in the Course of Time: Reflections on the Twenty Years since Oberhausen*. Bedford Hills, NY: Redgrave Publ., 1984; Elsaesser, Thomas. *New German Cinema: A History*. New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1989; or Davidson, John E. *Deterritorializing the New German Cinema*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1999.

PETER HANDKE. *Die morawische Nacht: Erzählung*. Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 2008. 561 S. € 28.00

Peter Handke's most recent work, *Die morawische Nacht*, deals with a fascinating question that has been debated for more than forty years: who writes better on Handke, critics or Handke himself? A collage of fictional and existent places, new and former Handke characters, present and alternative times, factual observations and imagined possibilities, Handke's latest work not only redefines established narrative techniques, it exposes the category "on Handke" to the rigors of fantasy.

The frame story commences and concludes with a gathering of seven friends organized by an ex-author on the boat, "die Morawische

Nacht,” a name that signifies a time and place (nighttime and the Morawa river, a Donau tributary) as well as the imaginary utopian enclave, the Balkans. One outsider among the group, a woman, becomes the object of interest as the ex-author had previously little interaction with the opposite sex. The remainder of the narration recounts the ex-author’s roundtrip through Europe, along the way challenging the possibility of a poetic language in a modern, clear-text world of sound bites, easily checkable internet-ready facts, and condensed newspaper stories. The narrator scatters the oft-used reference technique “see above” throughout the text, offering a parody of the standard form of contemporary information dissemination and its failure to justify the facts as they are communicated.

For reasons not clear, the ex-author leaves the enclave near Porodin, Serbia, to travel through Spain, Germany, and Austria. Was he searching for his own history? His parents? Was it simply an escape from the idea of a woman, or a plan to kill the actual female fan who sent the one-time-author hate mail? Throughout the journey, the ex-author assumes no less than twenty epithets – Author, Ex-Author, The Former, Still Author, Highwayman, Wanderer, etc. – implying both an oral story-telling technique and the inability to truly define an individual character or person’s motivations. Contrary to these plethoric masculine appellations are the negative descriptions of woman: Other, Strange, Evil, etc., justifying a misogynist reading.

Those familiar with Handke’s decade long literary and newspaper invectives against the West’s stance toward the Balkan region will find a new, idealized “middle region” described in a nostalgic and detached tone. For some readers, this shift may be a welcome rhetorical adjustment; yet the overt critique of journalistic writing techniques provides an underhanded jab, as if to say that modern readers just do not get it, or modern writers do not know how to convey it. The “it,” however, is never clearly defined. The Balkans? Modern writing and reader habits? Handke himself?

After a long bus ride away from Porodin, the ex-author attends a conference on “Sound and Noise” in Numancia, Spain, whose participants include a motley group of international invalids ailing under the clatter of modern life. Thereafter, he and a poet-participant engage in one of several aesthetic exchanges throughout the text where Handke’s own voice may be heard in the narration. The formal rules of modern written literature – plot, action, drama, conflict, etc. – are rebuked in favor of the asymptotic search-yet-never-find form of oral communication. This emphasis on orality is confirmed when the author

later meets an international group of mouth harp players, each with their own expressive, difficult to master, audible cultural identity.

The mixture of fantasy and reality becomes further confused as the ex-author encounters ghosts, dead authors, forefathers and characters from previous Handke texts, memories, and contemporary and historical places. The compulsion to both find and avoid the woman also leads to a new conception of time, a recurrent theme in many Handke texts: time when the ex-author and woman are together and time when they are apart, time of a thrown rock, time of a book, a letter, or a stutter. Time becomes that all-present tool: modern life is defined by counting (zählen) whereas literature is defined by re-counting (Er-zählen), allowing for an alternative reality unrelated to real time. In the story, these incongruent times converge on several occasions, the most interesting occurring when the journalist, Melchior, meets and tells the ex-author that the story of his trip is already in process of being written, in fact, is finished except for a few more facts that need to be gathered. The story is thus over before it is over, written before it is complete. However, in typical Handke mockery and contempt for literary genres and absolutes, the ex-author continues on his journey because there were more tangential descriptions to be told, more previously written historical facts to be undone.

One of the facts to be undone is the definition of the modern writer: the work of a writer is described as difficult drudgery in a vain pursuit to match a word with an idea; he is a "Luftmaterialsammler" (372). The ex-author's aesthetic conversations are mirrored in the frame story as several of the group gathered on "die morawische Nacht" take over the narration to work through possible tellings, retellings, and re-tellings of the ex-author's journey to find the one closest to the events that occurred, or were imagined to occur.

Through the intersection of the frame and recounted story, the stock characters on the boat repudiate the long tradition of this literary technique from Boccaccio's *Decameron* to 19th century novels published chapter by chapter in a major newspaper. 19th Century newspapers used to be poetic, contained real literature and difficult language that large audiences followed issue by issue. Thus the structured frame of "real life" was made meaningful by the difficult work of freedom in reading and writing. In contrast, the hollow characters on the boat render the modern frame of real life meaningless; throughout the story, their only interjections are made to 'get the facts right,' i.e. to plug standardized information into pre-established cultural categories. Questions—such as, What did he do there? What did she look like? How much did it

cost?—assume a basic linguistic frame for reality, one that cannot be found. As the characters on the boat are revealed to be fantasy—they existed merely as a tool to further the narration—the reader is left questioning the reality of the frame outside the text and the fantasy of the narration within. In “Die morawische Nacht,” fiction overtakes reality, which is also fiction.

Especially compelling is the ex-author’s engagement with characters from Handke’s own previous works. In these breaks with the created reality of the story world, the Ex-author engages previous fictional colleagues, Gregor Keuschnig und Filip Kobal, characters from Handke’s, *Die Stunde der wahren Empfindung* (1975) and *Die Wiederholung* (1989), not to mention the first person narrative and techniques of observation from the *Versuch Trilogie* (1989-1991). In the process, the very genre of writing “on Handke” becomes a fictional category. The border between texts, much like the political boundary between countries, the empty space that makes the subject, object, a word, a unit of time, and a memory become as fictional as the author himself; i.e. the public Handke is considered an “author” no matter if one has read his books (thoroughly), or if he is actually writing at the moment he is called such.

As with any frame story, *Die morawische Nacht* ends where it begins, joining two fictional narrative times into one. For those unfamiliar with or averse to Handke’s poignant language critique and aesthetic style, the last of the 561 pages could not come soon enough. For those accustomed to literature that explores meaning through meticulous language refinement, this text is like no other. As the main character, whose epithet varies with every imagined or real situation, so too will readers and critics struggle to name and define the ever-changing style and what it means to write on Handke.

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CHRISTOPH KÖNIG. *Häme als literarisches Verfahren. Günter Grass, Walter Jens und die Mühen des Erinnerns*. Göttingen: Wallstein Verlag, 2008, 43 S. € 14.00

Häme als literarisches Verfahren ist der neueste Beitrag des Germanisten Christoph König zu der seit mindestens 2003 andauernden öffentlichen Debatte um verschwiegene

NSDAP- oder SS-Mitgliedschaften von Autoren wie Peter Wapnewski, Walter Jens und Günter Grass.

König lehrt neuere und neueste deutsche Literatur an der Universität Osnabrück, mit Schwerpunkt auf dem 20. Jahrhundert und der Wissenschaftsgeschichte des Faches. 2003 erschien im de Gruyter Verlag Berlin Königs dreibändiges *Internationales Germanistenlexikon* (1800-1950) und löste eine heftige Debatte im deutschen Feuilleton aus. Auf präzise, allerdings umgehend scharf kritisierte Weise hatte König in Beiträgen zu Walter Jens und Peter Wapnewski deren bisher verschwiegene NSDAP-Mitgliedschaft ausgewiesen. König selbst geriet damit zunächst unter Verdacht, eine biografistische Germanistik wiederbeleben zu wollen. Mit dem Skandal um das Erscheinen von Günter Grass' Autobiografie *Beim Häuten der Zwiebel* (2006) wurde allerdings bald klar, dass es sich bei Königs Dokumentation der aufgefundenen Fakten vielmehr um eine lange überfällige und notwendige kritische Beleuchtung der eigenen Fachgeschichte handelte. Es zeigt sich, dass eine kritische Diskussion deutscher Geschichte sowie der individuellen Positionen innerhalb dieser keineswegs als abgeschlossen gelten konnte. Die Debatte um seine Autobiografie, die Günter Grass zunächst sinnträchtig zu inszenieren begann, nahm schnell einen vom Autor wohl kaum beabsichtigten Verlauf: Werbetechnisch wirksam noch vor Erscheinen des Romanes veröffentlicht, erklärte Günter Grass im entscheidenden Interview mit Frank Schirrmacher von der *Frankfurter Allgemeinen Zeitung* zu seiner Mitgliedschaft in der Waffen-SS: „Mein Schweigen über all die Jahre zählt zu den Gründen, warum ich dieses Buch geschrieben habe.“⁴¹ Jenes Schweigen wurde nun zentraler Gegenstand der Diskussion; war es doch besonders Grass gewesen, der jahrzehntlang mit kritischer Stimme und moralisierendem Tonfall diejenigen öffentlichen Personen der Bundesrepublik angriff, die sich nicht offen zu ihrer persönlichen Involviertheit in den nationalsozialistischen Apparat bekannt hatten. Mit Grass geriet eine zentrale Identifikationsfigur der westdeutschen linken Intellektuellen ins Wanken.

In *Häme als literarisches Verfahren* analysiert König nun Reaktionsmuster und Taktiken, mit welchen Grass (Mitgliedschaft Waffen-SS) und Jens (Mitgliedschaft NSDAP) der öffentlichen Auseinandersetzung mit ihren seit 2003 bekannt gewordenen Mitgliedschaften entgegenzutreten suchten. Während sich Walter Jens in ein „syntaktisches Schweigen“ (27) hülle, beantwortete Günter Grass die Debatte um seine Person mit Mitteln der Häme sowie mit aggressiv-abwehrenden Angriffen auf seine Kritiker. Letztlich, so König, sei bei

beiden eine Abkehr vom „offiziellen Ich“ (36) nicht zu konstatieren. Dieses „offizielle Ich“ unterzieht König einer kritischen Nachforschung. Jens' Selbstverständnis als „Spätgeborener und Epigone“ (28) wird dabei ebenso hinterfragt, wie sein Griff zur theatralen Inszenierung einer ungenauen Erinnerung. Angelehnt an Wolfgang Iser's „Kipp-Phänomen“ scheint Königs „Kippeffekt von Reden und Beschweigen“: Was nicht benannt wird, so König, „spricht – und das Gesagte dient dem Schweigen“ (26). An dieser Leerstelle in der Mitte der deutschen Gesellschaft der Gegenwart angelangt, und der ihr eigenen selektiven Erinnerungsgewalt ausgeliefert, erhebt sich uns Grass, dessen Erinnern mehr mit Scham als mit Schuld, mehr mit Häme denn mit Empathie gemein hat. So sind denn die hier nochmals von König zusammengeführten Äußerungen Grass' über Paul Celan aus dem Blickwinkel der Gruppe 47 lehrreiches Sinnbild von Unverständnis gegenüber dem Jüdischen und können ebenso als ein weiteres Indiz für Grass' stets „interessegeleitetes“ Handeln verstanden werden (18). Indem Grass jede Kritik als überhebliche Häme definiert, sucht er sich im Umkehrschluss zugleich durch die hämische Überhebung eine moralische Überlegenheit zu schaffen: „Die darin begründete Moral,“ so König, „ist der auf Entscheidungen und Sinn, auf ‚constancy‘ und Treue gebauten Dichtung Celans entgegengesetzt“ (19).

Christoph Königs Bändchen ist ein ausgezeichnete und kritisch reflektierender Beitrag zur anhaltenden Debatte um Erinnerung und Abwehr in Deutschland, um Auseinandersetzung und Ablenkung und verweist dabei in der Betrachtung der Autoren Grass und Jens ebenfalls auf die Notwendigkeit einer kritischen Wissenschaftsgeschichtsschreibung innerhalb der deutschen Germanistik. Durch den auf die Hintergründe der Debatte hinlenkenden Anmerkungsapparat eignet es sich einerseits sehr gut als eine Einführung in die Thematik und wird andererseits als kritischer Kommentar auch für den mit der Debatte bereits bekannten Leser von großem Interesse sein. Dabei stellt der Text ebenfalls den persönlichen Blickwinkel eines präzise arbeitenden akademischen Wissenschaftlers vor. Letzteres ist aus unverständlichen Gründen noch immer viel zu selten in Deutschland; ich will es daher hier besonders positiv hervorgehoben wissen. Auch die Germanisten in Deutschland sollten sich anstelle einer vorgeblich unpersönlichen Wissenschaftspräsenz unbedingt deutlicher die Position einer kritisch reflektierten Subjektivität zumuten. Auch in diesem Sinne handelt es sich bei *Häme als literarisches Verfahren* um ein lesenswertes und gelungenes Beispiel.

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CHRISTIAN KRACHT. *Ich werde hier sein im Sonnenschein und im Schatten*. Köln: Kiepenheuer & Witsch, 2008. 149 S. € 16.95

Christian Krachts erster Roman *Faserland* sorgte bei seinem Erscheinen im Jahr 1995 für eine wohlkalkulierte Provokation im Literaturbetrieb: Rezensenten und Leser empörten sich über eine vermeintlich oberflächliche und arrogante Prosa, die flugs mit dem Attribut Pop-Literatur versehen und abqualifiziert wurde. Diese Rezeption führte zu grotesken Fehllektüren und changierte zwischen der affirmativen Annahme der postulierten Distinktionsgewinne durch den habituellen Gebrauch von Kleidung und anderen Statusgegenständen und der emphatischen Ablehnung des Textes aus eben jenen Gründen. Eine tiefere Ebene wurde dem Text erst spät zugestanden. 1979, Krachts zweiter Roman, 2001 erschienen, wurde in der Kritik hingegen als Abkehr von der vermeintlichen Pop-Literatur *Faserlands* gefeiert und als Wiederkehr der ernstesten Themen – und damit als adäquater Ausdruck der Zeit nach 9/11 – begrüßt.

Mittlerweile ist Kracht jedoch – dass zeigen die zahllosen Aufsätze, der Vorabdruck seines neuesten Textes in der *Frankfurter Allgemeinen Zeitung* und das Erscheinen einer Schüler-Lernhilfe zu *Faserland* in der Reihe *Königs Erläuterungen* – nicht nur für die Literaturwissenschaft von Interesse, sondern erfährt auch von den Lesern eine vertiefte nochmalige Lektüre.

Krachts dritter Roman, *Ich werde hier sein im Sonnenschein und im Schatten*, präsentiert zwar eine völlig andere erzählte Welt als die beiden Vorgänger, nimmt jedoch die prägenden Themen von *Faserland* und 1979, die problematische interpersonale Kommunikation und Bindung zum Anderen und die utopische Weltflucht, auf und führt die Diskussion dieser fort.

Der Text präsentiert eine kontrafaktische Geschichtsschreibung, in der Lenin nicht im plombierten Zug in die Sowjetunion heimkehrt, sondern in der Schweiz einen totalitären Sowjetstaat gründet, der sich seit nahezu einem Jahrhundert mit dem nördlichen deutsch-englischen Faschistenbündnis und den südlichen italienischen Faschisten im Krieg befindet. Zudem, so die weitere Neuschreibung der Geschichte und Grenzen, droht aus Asien ein „Hindustanisches Reich“ (16) und das „Großaustralische“ Imperium; die „Amexikaner“ (137) ziehen sich in Amerika auf ihr Gebiet zurück und Afrika zerfällt in drei Teile: Der Norden ist faschistisch-britisch, der Süden burisch und die Mitte ist Teil

der Schweizer Sowjetrepublik „SSR“ (20). Die Schweiz erfährt in dem andauernden Kriegszustand eine Fokussierung auf die militärischen Interessen; der Krieg fungiert als alleiniger Sinngeber und hat sämtliche nicht-militärischen Entwicklungen soweit paralyisiert, dass die gezeichnete Welt eine hybride Mischung aus fortschrittlicher militärischer Raketentechnologie einerseits und dem archaischen Gebrauch von Pferden und Kutschen als Transportmittel andererseits aufweist. Mit der Konzentration auf den steten Krieg wurden sämtliche kulturelle Errungenschaften und Techniken – sofern sie nicht militärisch zu nutzen sind – exkludiert. Die Schriftkultur wurde in der Schweiz nahezu abgeschafft und so ist der Ich-Erzähler, ein farbiger Politikkommissar, von dessen Befehl, den Verräter Brazhinsky zu verhaften, der Text erzählt, neben dem erwähnten Verräter der einzige, der des Lesens und Schreibens noch mächtig ist.

Die Suche des Erzählers nach Brazhinsky stellt den Kern der Erzählung dar. Wie schon in *1979* führt die Suche – dort die Suche nach der Reinheit und der Buße, hier nun die konkrete Suche nach der zu verhaftenden Person – den Erzähler in die Berge. Pilgerte der Erzähler in *1979* zum heiligen Berg Kailasch, bevor er am Ende des Textes die Selbstausslöschung in einem chinesischen Umerziehungslager erfuhr, so führt diesmal der Weg zum Piz Lenin im Berner Oberland. In der gigantischen Alpenfestung, die sich in dem Berg befindet, trifft er schließlich auf den Gesuchten. Kracht führt die in *Faserland* und *1979* diskutierte Thematik des sinnentleerten Lebens fort, das in *Ich werde hier sein im Sonnenschein und im Schatten* nur noch in der Aufrechterhaltung und Weiterführung des Kriegszustandes besteht: „Es war notwendig, dass der Krieg weiterging. Er war der Sinn und Zweck unseres Lebens, dieser Krieg“ (21). Mit der Setzung des Krieges als Selbstzweck und als alleinigen Sinnstifter erinnert der Text zuweilen an eine Mischung aus George Orwells *1984*, Aldous Huxleys *Brave New World* und den Texten Ernst Jüngers. Dennoch muss der Erzähler letztlich erkennen, dass die beeindruckende und omniprésente Kriegsmaschinerie letztlich nur aus Simulakren besteht und Propaganda ist. „Das Bombastische des Réduits ist ein magisches Ritual, ein leeres Ritual“ (127). Der alleinige Sinn, der Krieg, offenbart sich wie auch die sinn- und nutzlose Alpenfestung, die das Kommandozentrum darstellt, als leeres Ritual, das in einer ewigen Dauerschleife Leere produziert – und ist damit als Strukturanalogie zum leeren Zentrum in *Faserland* und *1979* zu lesen, wo sich die Leere symbolisch in der Leere der Umkreisung des heiligen Berges manifestiert.

Das Kernthema des Textes, das wiederum an die vorigen Werke anschließt, ist jedoch die unmöglich gewordene Kommunikation, die Kracht bereits in seinem Debüt *Faserland* dargestellt hat. In *Faserland* war eine interpersonale Kommunikation und Bindung aufgrund der fundamentalen Unsicherheit des Erzählers an die Entität des Erzählten – und die Möglichkeit, überhaupt noch zu erzählen – nicht mehr möglich; die Identität des Erzählers, die Bindung an seine Umwelt und der Text zerbrachen an diesem Defizit. In Krachts neuestem Text wird nun versucht, dieses Defizit zu füllen, indem eine 'neue' Sprache präsentiert wird, die, ähnlich wie die von Hugo von Hofmannsthal in *Ein Brief* angedeutete Sprache, über die real existierenden Sprachen hinausgeht. „Sprache existiert nicht nur im Raum, sie ist zutiefst dinglich, sie ist ein Noumenon“ (44). Diese Vorstellung der Sprache als *res extensa*, die sich im Raum manifestieren kann, also geradezu physisch vorhanden ist, führt zu neuen Kommunikationsmöglichkeiten. „Ich bemerkte, dass ich die Worte, Sätze und Gedanken im Raum nach vorne schieben, ja in gewisser Weise projizieren, einfach in den physischen Raum hineinstellen konnte“ (125). Dennoch kann auch diese Sprache die Kommunikation nicht gewährleisten; die Szene endet mit einem plötzlichen Ausbruch von Gewalt, in der Brazhinsky durch einen Angriff des Erzählers stirbt.

Am Ende des Textes nimmt Kracht das Motiv der Weltflucht wieder auf, das er in *Faserland* mit der Flucht auf eine einsame Insel und in *1979* mit dem Aufgehen in der totalitären Struktur des Lagers gestaltet hat. Der Erzähler kehrt schließlich zurück in seine Heimat, zurück nach Afrika. Die utopische Schilderung des Kontinentes wird schon zu Beginn des Textes deutlich. „Wärme. Gras. Sonne. Die Kinder spielen dort barfuss, nicht?“ (35). In der Idylle, die sich sogar sprachlich in der Reduktion des Satzes auf einzelne hochsignifikante Wörter ausdrückt, erfährt der Erzähler die Regression auf ein heilversprechendes prä-modernes und prä-urbanes Naturerlebnis, in dem er endlich die Einheit mit sich selbst, seiner Geschichte und seiner Welt erlebt. „Ich trug das weiße Hemd am Halse offen, die weiße Hose meines Vaters. Unter einem brennend blauen Himmel näherten wir uns endlich der von Skorpionen befallenen Küste Somalilands. (...) Vögel waren dort, Bambo, Vögel, das Blut der Chiwa sang in unseren Adern“ (147).

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J. J. LONG. *W.G. Sebald – Image, Archive, Modernity*. New York: Columbia University Press, 2007. 224 pp. \$ 35.00

Werke der Sekundärliteratur, die sich auf zeitgenössische Autoren beziehen, haben es zumeist schwer, mehr als eine zurückhaltende Bewertung zu evozieren. Dies hat zwei Gründe. Sowohl der unsichere biographische und editionswissenschaftliche Status der Gegenstände als auch die fehlenden Ausweismöglichkeiten in der Sekundärliteratur erschweren die Einordnung ihrer Ergebnisse. Die fehlende diskursive Sättigung bietet jedoch zweifelsohne auch Vorteile. In einer Publikation können wichtige Erkundungen in verdichteter Form stattfinden; die erstmalige Deklination theoretischer Paradigmen kann maßgebliche Impulse auf die weitere Forschung ausüben. Wenn diese Pionierarbeiten zudem – wie J. J. Longs Monographie *W. G. Sebald. Image, Archive, Modernity* – klug und kenntnisreich geschrieben sind, darf man die Zurückhaltung ablegen.

J. J. Long ist die längst überfällige und im Ergebnis überzeugende Foucault-Lektüre von Sebalds Prosa-Werk gelungen. Sie wird die Bemühungen um eine Einordnung des Autors zur Postmoderne oder Moderne auf lange Sicht prägen. Zudem kultiviert sie ein Gefühl für literarische Ergänzungen und notwendige Entgegnungen zu Foucaults Denken, insbesondere hinsichtlich der Bedeutung des Archivs und der Fotografie für die Subjektkonstitution. Störend wirkt die bisweilen durch den theoretischen Rahmen arg erzwungen wirkende Auswahl der Belegstellen. Ferner werden weitere ideengeschichtliche Filiationslinien – wie Naturphilosophie und Kritische Theorie – sträflich vernachlässigt. Überdies ist bisweilen nicht klar, ob es Long um eine durch Foucaults mittlere Arbeiten angeleitete Lektüre Sebalds oder um eine durch Sebald angeleitete Lektüre Foucaults geht.

Immer dort, wo die Bezüge zur Sebald-Forschung aber deutlich genannt werden, weiß die Arbeit zu beeindrucken. Long will den 2001 verstorbenen Autor weder als einen postmodernen, noch als einen vom Holocaust als Urkatastrophe der Zivilisation ausgehenden Literaten darstellen. Vielmehr sieht er in Sebald „a historian of the *longue durée* of modernity“ (174). Diese These erörtert er durch einen weitgefassten Begriff der Modernität, die ein „meta-problem“ (1) sei. Er ordnet diesem die in Sebalds Werk wiederkehrenden Motive „Holocaust,

trauma and memory, melancholy, photography, travel and flânerie, intertextuality and *Heimat*“ (1) zu.

Diese Phänomene der Moderne werden im Rahmen von Foucaults Theorie des Archivs und der Subjektkonstitution untersucht. Zunächst benennt Long Archive als Orte der Modernität, die, weil sie die Geschichte vollends enthalten und strukturieren wollen, solchermaßen selbst außerhalb der Zeit stehen. Bibliotheken und Museen reichern das eigene und kollektive Dasein mit einem die individuelle Erfahrung übersteigenden Sinn an. Gerade durch die Entgrenzung der eigenen temporalen Verfasstheit bieten sie Ordnungs-, Identitätsmuster und Herkunftserzählungen. Sodann erörtert Long, wie das moderne Subjekt durch Techniken der Disziplinierung und des Geständnisses konstituiert wird. Selbstreflexivität erscheint als Internalisierung jener Überwachung, die Familie, Schule und Militär ausüben. Obgleich Sebald Foucaults Werke kenne und dessen Terminologie weitestgehend annehme, nennt Long jedoch abschließend drei Unterschiede zwischen Foucaults modernekritischem Ansatz und Sebalds „sustained engagement with Foucault“ (16): Erstens würde Sebald dort das Gesetz als säkularen Vertreter des Göttlichen betrachten, wo es Foucault in den Praktiken der Moderne auflöst. Zweitens sähe Sebald Subjektivität als etwas an, das außerhalb der Machtpraktiken stehe. Drittens schließlich ordne Sebald die Techniken der Überwachung totalitären Regimes zu, indes sie Foucault im Herzen moderner Demokratien verortet.

Wie man an den Differenzen erkennt, wäre hier ein Ort, Sebalds Bezüge zur Kritischen Theorie zu bedenken. Dass deren Umgang mit Subjekt, Aufklärung und Faschismus beträchtlich von dem Foucaults abweicht, ist bekannt. Man weiß, dass Sebald sich intensiver mit der Kritischen Theorie als mit Foucault auseinandergesetzt hat. Doch Long verpasst den Schritt, diesen Einflüssen zu folgen oder die Unterschiede deutlich zu machen. Was er stattdessen in seinen prägnanten Interpretationen erkundet, ist Sebalds „Material“: die Sammlungen, Fahrpläne, Notizbuch-Einträge und Landkarten. Alles sind mithin Versuche, die äußere Welt Organisationsformen zu unterwerfen. Sebald jedoch, der das Chaos in der Sammlung, die Unpünktlichkeit der Pläne, den narrativ gefassten, im Kern kontingenten Zusammenfall von Ereignissen in den Notizbüchern oder die Ungenauigkeit von Landkarten thematisiert, öffnet den Blick für etwas, das durch das Scheitern der Ordnungsversuche hindurch schimmert. Mag das Chaos menschlicher Beziehungen und die Unvorhersehbarkeit der Geschichte die rationalistische Unterwerfung der Natur überstehen, so ermöglichen es das erzählende Subjekt und sein Medium, die Literatur, aus dem Scheitern Erkenntnisse zu ziehen.

Ähnliches gelte auch für die Familienfotos in Sebalds Erzählung *Die Ausgewanderten*. Sebalds formaler und inhaltlicher Umgang mit Traumatisierungen, Erinnerungen und dem stets unsicheren Gedächtnis schaffe einen Sinn für die Konstruktion von narrativer und biographischer Kontinuität. Und diese Kontinuität, die in der für Sebald so typischen Kombination von Bild und Text deutlich werde, arbeite gegen die negativen Effekte der Moderne, den biografischen Bruch in Auswanderung und Vertreibung an. Im Hinblick auf Austerlitz, dem Protagonisten in Sebalds letzter vollendeter Prosa-Erzählung, weist Long zudem nach, wie Sebald die inkonsistenten Techniken des Geständnisses und des Archivs nutzt, Subjektivität trotz der konstitutiven Abhängigkeit des Selbst von diesen Techniken zu gewinnen. Das Erzählen, das sich aus den verstreuten Bildern, den räumlich fixierten Erinnerungen und ihren Widersprüchen nährt, erlaube eine Herstellung von subjektiver Kontinuität, die von Foucaults Annahme eines allein durch Disziplinierung und Geständnis erzeugten Subjekts abweicht. Und diese „archival nature of the subject“ (166) sei bezeichnend für den narrativen Diskurs selbst.

Angeht die Subjektthematik ordnet Long Sebald nicht als Schriftsteller ein, der im Holocaust den Abschluss der Moderne sieht. Vielmehr stellt er mit der archivarischen Natur des modernen Selbst und den modernen Techniken der Selbstrepräsentation Kontinuitäten insbesondere zum Beginn der sozialgeschichtlichen Moderne her. Was unsere heutige Subjektivität auszeichnet, setze bereits mit dieser Zeit ein, die man nach dem Historiker Reinhart Koselleck als Sattelzeit oder nach Foucault als Beginn der Disziplinierung bezeichnen kann. Mit den von Foucault entlehnten Theoremen gelingt es Long, die These eindrucksvoll am Text zu belegen. Dass er die Beantwortung der Frage vergisst, inwieweit Sebald selbst nicht auf historische Denkformen zurückgreift, ist zu kritisieren. Die archivalische Natur des poetischen Texts aufzuzeigen ist das Eine, die darin deutlich werdende melancholische und romantisierende Tendenz des Sebaldschen Werkes zu werten etwas Anderes. Sebalds naturphilosophischen Züge, seine Überschneidung von Geschichte und Literatur, seine messianischen und esoterischen Tendenzen sind nicht unproblematisch; seine auratisierend-gravitätische Sprache vernebelt vieles, was doch auch hätte klarer gesagt werden können. Und seine bisweilen hemmungslose Art, sich am Realen zu bedienen, wie es die Publikation von Marcel Atze und Franz Loquai zeigt, hätte Erwähnung finden können (Atze). So bleibt als Fazit, dass Longs lesenswerte Erkundungen des literarischen Terrains die eine oder andere ältere Wegmarke übersehen hat.

Peter Christian Pohl, Universität Bremen

ANNA MITGUTSCH. *Zwei Leben und ein Tag*. München: Luchterhand, 2007. 349 S. € 19.95

Springing onto the German literary scene in the mid 1980s, Anna Mitgutsch, a native of Linz, Austria, captured the attention of audiences and critics alike with her eloquent, intense, and emotionally packed prose. Coupling her writing style with dark familial themes, which mainly surround female protagonists who feel isolated for various reasons, Mitgutsch delves into the personal and societal realms of problems that face chaotic modernity.

Her debut novel, *Die Züchtigung* (1985), for which she was awarded the Brüder-Grimm-Preis, shines light on parental domestic violence and the difficulty of breaking the abuse cycle in later generations. Successive novels such as *Die Ausgrenzung* (1989) and *In fremden Städten* (1992) continue with the theme of women, especially mothers, situated in familial turmoil. Beginning in the mid 1990s, Mitgutsch shifted her focus to Jewish identity with works such as *Abschied von Jerusalem* (1995) and *Haus der Kindheit* (2000). This turn in Mitgutsch's writing is marked by her examining controversial politics, dual cultural identities, historic guilt, and collective memory. Notably, her ability to cross many borders, whether personal and societal or national and international, has enabled Mitgutsch to become one of Austria's most discussed authors. Mitgutsch's latest novel, *Zwei Leben und ein Tag* (2007), incorporates familiar themes of family unrest, social exclusion, and isolation, while also dealing with the concepts of homelessness and cultural displacement previously found in *Abschied von Jerusalem* and *In fremden Städten*.

Most reminiscent of *Ausgrenzung* (1989), the story of a mother's grief resulting from her disabled son's lack of communication *Zwei Leben und ein Tag* powerfully conveys the story of Edith and Leonard, and their troubled son, Gabriel. Situated on three narrative levels, which are hinted at in the title, the novel intricately reveals their family history set against the biography of the great 19th-century American writer, Hermann Melville. As the novel unfolds, Melville's life story becomes a working motif that parallels each character's life in one way or another.

The primary narrative voice belongs to Edith, who through unsent letters to Leonard after having parted, contemplates their unsuccessful life together. Now residing in her native Austria, she ponders who should bear the blame for the dissolution of their family.

Namely, what could they have done differently to save their son Gabriel from psychological distress? Edith reveals how she and Leonard were young idealists in the American North East when they met and fell in love. Edith, an exchange student, and Leonard, a PhD candidate writing his dissertation on Melville, married, had a child, and were determined to integrate their cultural backgrounds and individual dreams. Never able to find a permanent academic position, Leonard, with his family in tow, found work in America, Europe, and Southeast Asia as a library director.

Despite Edith and Leonard's earlier ambitions, they never found a sense of stability in any of the places they inhabited, causing their family structure to rupture and leading all three family members to experience a sense of homelessness and isolation. Gabriel, who descended into mental illness as a child, is the most affected and eventually occupies the central position in his mother's life.

In the opening pages, Edith employs the Hudson River as a metaphor for their eventual fate and the impermeability of their nomadic existence. Shortly thereafter, she writes to Leonard: "Wir waren jung, voll Furcht und Erwartung, damals konnte von jeder zufälligen Begegnung die Zukunft abhängen" (7). This future, as eventually indicated by Edith's letters, is hardly what they could have expected.

A second narrative level depicts a catastrophic day in the life of Gabriel two years after the death of his mother. After a life of disappointment, namely due to his inability to overcome his status as a social outcast, Gabriel is now unraveled and distraught by the loss of his sole protector and support system, his mother. The following recollection at her gravesite reveals their past mutual dependence on one another: "Das ganze Leben war ein Pensum, das er pflichtbewusst und genau erledigte. Er wollte sie glücklich machen...damit sie mit sich und ihm zufrieden war" (228). Faced with the prospect of living in the same house with his mother's ex-lover, whom he despises, Gabriel decides to leave home and live with his father in the United States. On the morning of his intended departure, Gabriel aimlessly wanders through the city with his suitcase, eventually undertaking a dismal round of events that sums up his tragic life, highlights the society that failed him, and ultimately results in his downfall.

The life story of Hermann Melville, author of the American masterpiece *Moby Dick*, is interwoven with the lives of Edith, Leonard and Gabriel throughout the text. Originally the subject of Leonard's doctoral dissertation, Melville becomes a central topic of passionate discourse during Edith and Leonard's partnership. The desire to eventually compose Melville's life biography counted among the many

hopes that sustained their marriage. Through ever realized while they were together, Melville's life story eventually comes to light in Edith's fluent prose. His biography bares a stunning resemblance to the lives of all the three characters in *Zwei Leben und Ein Tag*: nomadic wanderings, a failed marriage, a troubled relationship with his children, depression, homelessness, isolation from the outside world, and finally, personal failure. Just as Edith and Leonard never finished Melville's biography, Melville never achieved literary fame during his lifetime. Melville's perception of invisible reality, as found in a metaphor of the sea, parallels the obscurity found earlier in Edith's Hudson River: "Die unsichtbare Wirklichkeit ist wie das Meer bei hohem Seegang, ihre Oberfläche zerfällt unentwegt in unberechenbare Fragmente, während im noch Ungeformten eine grosse Beunruhigung und ein grenzloses Versprechen liegen" (75). Melville's personal life, as portrayed by Edith, serves as a historic mirror, not only for her story, but also for the plight of the individual and the modern family.

In a January 2001 interview, Günter Höfler asked Anna Mitgutsch how she created the authenticity of her characters. Mentioning the relationships between her characters as the key role, she also emphasized language as the medium to convey their stories: "Die Sprache muss das Mittel sein zu diesem Sichtbarwerden...es geht mir um mehrdimensionale Ansichten der Figuren, und nicht um eine Tapestrie." In accordance, *Zwei Leben und Ein Tag* achieves just this. Mitgutsch offers a convincing multifaceted life portrait of a distraught family and enriches it with mesmeric language and stirring imagery.

Jocelyn McDaniel, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill

MARKUS ORTHS. *Das Zimmermädchen*. Frankfurt am Main: Schöffling & Co., 2008. 137 S. € 16.90

The Hotel Eden is upscale. It is not a place to rent by the hour. The staff is discrete, the accommodation exquisite, and the rooms are all spotless. The sheets are crisp and there is a chocolate on every pillow. Everything is in perfect order - except for the maid hiding undetected under the bed. *Das Zimmermädchen* is Markus Orths' sixth and most chilling novel, offering readers an intensive look into the human psyche, and, more precisely, into the life of Lynn Zapatek, a highly detached woman struggling for control of a life she

does not understand. Born in 1969, Markus Orths is one of Germany's best-selling authors under forty years old. He lives in Karlsruhe and spends his time crafting witty and insightful short stories and novels, including the best-selling *Lehrerzimmer* (2003) and the historical novel *Catalina* (2005). His years spent studying philosophy are evident in his works, which often deal with topics such as individuality, memory and the relationship between reality and the surreal. He has won numerous awards during his compact career, including the Sir Walter Scott Prize for best historical novel for *Catalina* in 2006. He also won the Telekom-Austria-Prize - a part of the Ingeborg-Bachmann Prize - in 2008 for *Das Zimmermädchen*, which received some of last year's most praiseworthy acclaim for its tense portrayal of voyeurism and delicate balance of normalcy and delusion.

Loneliness, self-deception and disappointment are the cornerstones of Lynn Zapatek's daily existence. A maid at the Hotel Eden, Lynn is always in the background, never to be seen or heard. Similarly, she passes through life undetected, presenting an ordinary, meek exterior while waves of uncertainty and despondency churn underneath. Her self-inflicted alienation and reticent detachment represent that place in the human subconscious that welcomes introspection and isolation, making her character universally appealing. Unable to identify with her reflection in the mirror, Lynn desperately searches for something with which to anchor her existence. One night, through a twist of fate, she is forced to take spontaneous refuge under a hotel bed. With the guest breathing mere inches above her, Lynn realizes she has found something momentous. The intense feeling of security and the thrill of being caught pique her curiosity; a one-time event turns into a Tuesday night ritual. Lynn, keeping her interactions at a minimum, begins to spend more and more time at the hotel, her empty life completely revolving around a few simple cleaning tasks, anchoring her but not eradicating the feeling of spinning out of control. Lynn wipes underneath the side table, takes a toothbrush to the tile countertop, and vacuums the inside of the bureau. Adjusting herself to the tasks at hand, Lynn even lets her thumbnails grow long in order to be able to scrape off every last bit of grime stuck to the faucet (24). This abnormal focus on every minute detail allows Lynn to forget about the larger issues at work in her life, namely her purely speculative, delicate tightrope walk of normalcy and lunacy.

With *Das Zimmermädchen*, Orths has crafted an intimate *tour de force*, stitching together lengthy phrases with precision and skill, revealing little by little the protagonist's neurotic tendencies. The author's

emphasis on detail focuses the reader's attention on Lynn's thoughts and emotions. Orths' economical but poetic use of language makes it possible for the reader to become entangled in the minutiae of Lynn's everyday life, which is shaped by compulsive repetition and ritual. Assigning each day a color, she compartmentalizes her week. "Sonntag blassblau, Montag schmutzig weiß, Dienstag eierschalenfarben, Mittwoch graubraun, Donnerstag kobaltblau, Freitag knallrot, Samstag samtschwarz. Sonntag allein, Montag Heinz, Dienstag unterm Bett, Mittwoch frei [...] Donnerstag Anruf zu Hause, Freitag Therapeut, Samstag Chiara" (96). This sterile dissection of time leaves no room for self-development: just a lonely, endless secession of days, broken up only by the intense excitement and longing for Tuesday nights hidden under the beds of businessmen watching television, women delicately breathing, and couples chatting late into the night.

Orths plays with the different concepts of distance, masterfully juxtaposing the intimacy of eavesdropping on love-making with another lonesome night in front of the television. He clearly displays Lynn's penetrating alienation through small observances, made by an absent, albeit omniscient narrator. These observations draw attention to Lynn's loneliness and isolation and are reflected in her habit of scrutinizing each hotel room she enters. She does not intend to steal anything – she just wants to understand an elusive concept which comes so naturally to others: life. Her sense of smell dominates these observations – Lynn asks herself, "wie riecht der Mann, der hier wohnt? Riecht er nach Lavendel? Stinkt der Schlafanzug nach Schweiß? Mit welchem Waschmittel hat man die Wäsche im Koffer gewaschen? Pfirsich? Veilchen? Frühlingsduft?" (28). Analyzing each worn sock and half smoked cigarette, reading each scribbled note and medicine label, she pieces together inventive biographies, coming to creative conclusions, trying to satiate a curiosity that is never satisfied. This rather rigid feeling of alienation while surrounded by people is magnified not only through eavesdropping on guests who are at the same time close and far, but also by means of the daily routine of cleaning the most intimate of features – wiping urine from the bathroom floor and folding pajamas which stink of sweat. Sorting through, touching, and smelling the most personal of possessions of the hotel guests allows Lynn to orientate her life according to the lives of others - participating in someone else's existence. This intimate, unauthorized contact reflects a universal fear of no longer being able to protect one's privacy in a world getting smaller every day.

Das Zimmermädchen is a book not only about voyeurism, but also about the very puzzle that is human nature. The character of Lynn Zapatek evokes an intriguing reflection on the appropriateness of distance, professional and personal, as well as the fine line between sanity and insanity. She speaks to that part in all of us which feels like an outsider and wonders what it is like to be somebody else. The unfolding plot remains unpredictable and surprising up until the very end, but ultimately leaves the reader and prospective hotel guest with one last warning: always check under the bed.

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TODD SAMUEL PRESNER. *Mobile Modernity: Germans, Jews, Trains*. New York: Columbia University Press, 2007. 368 pp. 29 illus. \$ 46.50

*M*obile Modernity is Todd Samuel Presner's attempt to create a coherent framework to conceptualize "German/Jewish modernity." His idea is that German/Jewish modernity are inextricably interwoven, they penetrate each other, which he underlines with a discussion of the separatrix (4) and the use of the term "contaminated" (6) to describe the relationship of German and Jewish. In these discussions in the introduction, Presner argues that 'German' and 'Jewish' cannot be separated from each other in modernity. Starting with this premise, Presner offers a highly interesting discussion not only concerning German/Jewish modernity, but modernity as such. He argues that modernity is characterized by mobility and that German/Jewish modernity can be understood by looking at the German railway system. This system, with its hallmark Anhalter Bahnhof in Berlin, signifies modernity and the key feature of modernity that is mobility, to Presner. In order to ground his argument, Presner stresses that the first commercial railway line was funded by Jews in order to facilitate their business in a city, where they were not permitted to stay overnight. This increased the mobility of (modern) Jewish traders. At the same time, the emerging railway system enabled the unification of German speaking church lands, kingdoms and duchies into a nation state. Thus, claims Presner, German and Jewish modernity are inextricably interlinked; they are two sides of the same coin.

This modernity is epitomized in the Anhalter Bahnhof in Berlin. The station was the through fare for Germans and Jews from its

opening to its destruction; its ruins now act as the remainder of German/Jewish modernity. The station offers the gateway to the theoretical underpinning of *Mobile Modernity*, which is the ‘dialectics of standstill’ of Benjamin. This idea, which Presner characterizes as an “antidevelopment historiography” (8) underlies the discussions of the introduction as well as the six essays that comprise the chapters of the book.

Each of these essays debates a Benjaminian standstill of German/Jewish modernity. The first essay brings together the travel narratives of Heidegger’s journey to Delos and Celan’s “train travels through Europe” (26). The second essay looks at the *Italienische Reise* by Goethe, *Der Verschollene* by Kafka and *Railroad Stories* by Sholem Aleichem. The argument of the chapter is that German/Jewish modernity occurs in non-national spaces, in spaces where the authors of the stories are not within the confinements of their territories. The third essay brings together Hegel and Heine. This chapter, which focuses not on train but on ship travel, brings together a particularistic narrative (Hegel) and a universalistic one (Heine), with the latter subverting the former. The fourth essay offers the discussion of a topic, which remains highly problematic for Germans and Jews: nationality. Here the ideas of List and Herzl are at the heart of the discussion. The next essay focuses on the Holocaust, which brought the German/Jewish dialectic to a halt. The two protagonists discussed in this essay are Hannah Arendt, the only woman in the book, and Martin Heidegger. The last essay of the book is called “The Ruins of Modernity.” It concentrates on Freud and Sebald who both engaged with memories. Memories are not static but somehow mobile for both. This mobility is exemplified in Freud’s theory of dreams, and in Sebald’s literary work, in particular in *Austerlitz*. These essays are followed by a rather short conclusion of five pages only, two of which focus on Sebald.

The short conclusion is indicative for Presner’s challenging and innovative take on German/Jewish modernity: the book offers a lot to think about but very little in form of conclusion; granted that this is probably the case because Presner set out to write an anti-developmental historiography of German/Jewish modernity. This endeavor, I contend, is an ambitious undertaking. The destruction of Jewish culture and its people runs in the undercurrent of the book, the *Shoah* might not be verbalized at all times, yet it is constantly there. This non-verbalization and yet absolute presence is most obvious in the discussion of what German/Jewish was, historically, until its separation (or immobilization, as Presner has it). German and Jewish appear as a binary opposition in

this book although Presner tries to overcome exactly this binary. It is emphasized by the structure of bringing Jewish and German writers, historians, philosophers and intellectuals together who probably, if what has happened had not happened, would have never been brought together in this fashion or interpreted this way. If the *Shoah* had not happened German/Jewish would not be defined as a binary opposition; the tune of these two terms together would ring certainly different. By this token, Presner's claim of an anti-developmental historiography is a very interesting *Gedankenspiel*, which challenges the construction of a binary opposition, yet it cannot overcome it. But it is particularly this attempt, to rethink the framework of German/Jewish modernity that makes Presner's book so valuable.

Discussing gender would have further added to *Mobile Modernity*, because the categories German and Jewish were certainly experienced differently by men and women. Hannah Arendt is the only woman who features in the book. The choice to omit gender and the choice of individuals Presner included in his work seem somewhat arbitrary. Including scholars like Diner and Gilman could have fertilized this interesting attempt to charter a yet uncharted territory, which is overabundant with questions. Related to the questions Presner asks are, for example, why Jewish modernity in particular is underpinned by mobility, because since the destruction of the second temple Jews have been (forced to be) mobile all along, or if, as Presner states, German/Jewish encounters are facilitated by non-national spaces, what makes them than particular German/Jewish? These are questions that the highly ambitious project *Mobile Modernity* allows for because it delves into a territory which is so far under-researched. Presner's book will hopefully lead to further work in the highly complex area of material/technological development and the history of ideas, and in consequence de-essentialize and deconstruct Germanness and Jewishness as well as aid to a rethinking of 'modernity.'

Dani Kranz, University of St Andrews

INGA SCHARF. *Nation and Identity in the New German Cinema. Homeless at Home*. New York: Routledge, 2008. 235 pp. \$ 95.00

Heimatlosigkeit ist ein Thema, das mit den Inhalten des Neuen Deutschen Kinos traditionell eng verbunden ist. Obgleich diese Diskussion schon seit zwanzig Jahren geführt wird, lässt der Titel von Inga Scharfs Buch, *Nation and Identity in the New German Cinema. Homeless at Home* aufhorchen, zumal Heimatlosigkeit (*homelessness*) auch in gegenwärtigen anthropologischen und kulturwissenschaftlichen Debatten zu Migrationsfragen eine Rolle spielt. Dieser Begriff wird in der vorliegenden Studie aber nicht als wirtschaftliche, politische oder anderweitig bedingte Migration verstanden. Die Autorin beschäftigt sich auch nicht mit der selbst gewählten Heimatlosigkeit eines Wim Wenders oder Werner Herzogs. Laut Scharf ist das Neue Deutsche Kino, obwohl es innerhalb der vorliegenden Untersuchung im Mittelpunkt der Betrachtung steht, ein Medium. Das eigentliche Interesse der Autorin gilt der Beziehung des westdeutschen Individuums zu einem Deutschland, das aufgrund der historischen Gegebenheiten, also dem Zweiten Weltkrieg, dem Holocaust und der anschließenden Teilung Deutschlands in Ost und West, geprägt ist, und dem somit ein unproblematischer Zugang zur ursprünglichen Bedeutung des Begriffes Heimat verwehrt ist. Das Neue Deutsche Kino repräsentiert und visualisiert diese Spannungen zwischen Individuum und *Heimat*: Die Autorin, die selbst in Westdeutschland aufgewachsen ist, bezeichnet mit dem Begriff Heimatlosigkeit die programmatische Protestbewegung dieser Bewegung gegenüber der mangelnden Auseinandersetzung mit der Vergangenheit im öffentlichen wie auch im privaten Leben.

Scharf untersucht anhand von Textanalysen in Erzählmustern von Filmen, die zwischen 1962 und 1989 gedreht wurden, wie sich diese mit der Vorstellung von Heimat auseinandersetzen. Methodologisch und inhaltlich sieht sich der Text in der Nachfolge von Siegfried Kracauers *From Caligari to Hitler: A Psychological History of the German Film* (1947) und Anton Kaes' *From Hitler to Heimat: The Return of History as Film* (1989). Die kinematischen Texte versteht Scharf als produktive Vorgehensweise, Realität zu verarbeiten und zu sortieren. Scharf bezieht sich hier auf die philosophischen Ideen von Paul Ricoeur und die Arbeiten von Stuart Hall. Die Aufteilung der drei Hauptkapitel erfolgt nach räumlichen (*The Unsettling Setting*), zeitlichen (*A Matter of Time*) und sozialen (*Relative Strangers*) Gesichtspunkten des Heimatbegriffes.

Der Gegenpol für die Textanalysen sind die Heimatfilme der 50-er Jahre, die Scharfs Ansicht nach in ihrer konservativen Aussage und formellen Gestaltung die Angriffsziele für das Neue Deutsche Kino bilden. Die Autorin greift für das Genre kritischer Heimatfilm typische und oft zitierte Filmbeispiele wie *Jagdscenen aus Niederbayern* (Peter Fleischmann 1968/69), *Jaider - der einsame Jäger* (Volker Vogeler 1971) oder *Matthias Kneissl* (Reinhard Hauff 1971) auf. Ein Beitrag dieser Studie zum Neuen Deutschen Kino besteht darin, die Bedeutung und die Konzeptualisierung des Heimatbegriffes für diese cineastische Strömung aufzuspüren. Scharf führt damit Aussagen über individualistische Bestrebungen eines Wenders oder Herzog in auteur-geprägten Studien wieder zurück als gesellschaftlich-geprägte Symptomatik der *existentiellen Heimatlosigkeit*, die in den von ihr analysierten Filmen Ausdruck findet. Darüber hinausgehend zeigen Filme, wie z.B. *Die allseitig reduzierte Persönlichkeit* (Helke Sander 1977), *Der Willi Busch Report* (Niklaus Schilling 1979) und *Der Mann auf der Mauer* (Reinhard Hauff 1982), dass die deutsch-deutsche Grenze und die DDR problematische Elemente des westdeutschen Selbstverständnisses sind. Dies ist ein Thema, das in einschlägigen Werken zum Neuen Deutschen Kino von Autoren wie Elsaesser oder Kaes nicht berücksichtigt wird.

Leider finden in dieser kulturwissenschaftlich motivierten Betrachtung des Neuen Deutschen Kinos, die auch linguistisch und philosophisch untermauert ist, die grundlegenden filmwissenschaftlichen Werke zum Thema wenig oder keine Beachtung. Dies führt meiner Meinung nach schon in den Annahmen, die der Untersuchung voranstellen, zu problematischen Aussagen. Beispielsweise bescheinigt Scharf der Bewegung des Neuen Deutschen Kinos „a democratising influence on West Germany as it contributed to a crucial national *Gegenöffentlichkeit* which prepared the ground for further changes“ (31). Die Einbeziehung neuerer einschlägiger Untersuchungen zum Thema, wie sie von John Davidson in *Deterritorializing New German Cinema* (1999) vorliegt, bescheinigt dem Neuen Deutschen Kino eher Komplizenschaft mit dem westdeutschen Staat als *Gegenöffentlichkeit*. Eine Auseinandersetzung mit Davidsons Aussagen hätte sicherlich zu einer komplexeren Darstellung der Möglichkeiten des Neuen Deutschen Kinos geführt. Der Vorwurf einer mangelnden Kontextualisierung gilt auch für Schlüsselkonzepte der Studie: Heimat und Heimatlosigkeit. Scharf leistet weder die historische Aufarbeitung dieser Begriffe im filmwissenschaftlichen Sinne² noch kommt Reitz' Serie *Heimat*, die in dieser Diskussion eine zentrale Rolle spielt,³ besondere Bedeutung zu. Schließlich hätte der Untersuchung eine methodologische Richtung

genützt, die der aktuellen Forschung zum europäischen Kino zugrunde liegt und die der Analyse einen offeneren, deutschland-übergreifenden Rahmen gegeben hätte. Die Fixierung auf narrative Strategien, welche in kategorischer Weise in räumlich/zeitlich/sozialer Form Heimat(losigkeit) reflektieren und national-gesellschaftliche Symptome signalisieren wollen, vernachlässigt die eigentlichen Texte der betrachteten Filme weitgehend. Dies führt zu einer starren Vorgehensweise und teilweise zu fraglichen Interpretationen: Beispielsweise wird Peter Lilienthals Film *David* (1979), in dem die jüdische Hauptfigur im Berlin der Nazizeit in einem Bahnwaggon Deutschland verlässt, als geschlossenes Erzählmuster (*narrative of closure*) bezeichnet, die zu einem Dialog mit dem Zuschauer nicht einlädt. Diese Aussage ist ohne inhaltliche Referenz zum Film nicht überzeugend.

Abschließend möchte ich bemerken, dass die Suche nach einer nationalen deutschen Identität ein Projekt darstellt, das wenig neue Ergebnisse liefern kann. In einer solchen nach innengerichteten Perspektive werden inhaltliche Aussagen und ästhetische Strategien, die den Filmen der Zeit 1962-1989 zugrunde liegen, gesamtgesellschaftlich gewertet. Das Konzept der Heimatlosigkeit, das eigentlich der Emanzipation und dem Interesse diskriminierter Gruppen vorbehalten ist, misst damit Westdeutschland in neuerlicher Form Bedeutung als *The Other* zu.

Claudia Sandberg, University of Southampton

Notes

- ¹ "Warum ich nach sechzig Jahren mein Schweigen breche". *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, 11. August 2006
 - ² siehe hier insbesondere Johannes von Moltkes *No Place like Home. Locations of Heimat in German Cinema* (2005) und Tim Bergfelders *International Adventures. German Popular Cinema and European Co-Productions in the 1960s* (2005)
 - ³ siehe zum Beispiel Elsaessers Artikel „Edgar Reitz’s *Heimat*. Memory, Home and Hollywood“ (1985)
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UWE TELLKAMP. *Der Turm. Geschichte aus einem versunkenen Land*. Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 2008. 973 S. € 24.80

T*rabis* and *Ampelmännchen* make an appearance in Uwe Tellkamp's most recent novel, *Der Turm. Geschichte aus einem versunkenem Land*, which chronicles the last seven years of the German Democratic Republic. But here is none of the sentimentality that often obscures what life was actually like in narratives set before the autumn of 1989. Tellkamp's work represents - despite its melancholy title - a necessary counterbalance to the "Ostalgie" trend. The massive novel traces in encyclopedic detail the spiritual and economic decline of an extended family as it navigates - only successful at times - the turbulent final years of "real existing Socialism." The novel's principal characters, the Hoffmann and Rohde families, are all residents of "der Turm," Tellkamp's moniker for a small section of the Dresden suburb Weißer Hirsch. Christian, the most central character of *Der Turm*, is an opportunistic student approaching Abitur at the beginning of the narrative. He lives with his parents, Richard and Anne, and his younger brother Robert in Haus Karavelle, a decaying mansion, which the Hoffmann family share with three other families. In hopes of earning a coveted berth in medical school, Christian begrudgingly volunteers for extra military service, but his three-year stint in the tank corps of the East German army is unexpectedly extended after Christian is arrested for insulting his commanding officer and sentenced to a year-long term of reeducation in a chemical factory. Upon his release from service in the autumn of 1989, Christian finds himself being put out to pasture rather than ushered into a prestigious medical career.

Meanwhile, Christian's father, Richard Hoffmann, endures a similarly crushing a defeat. Richard is a surgeon at the Dresden Medical Academy whose marriage to Anne slowly dissolves before his eyes as his affairs with a secretary and Christian's girlfriend come to light. But even more humiliating is the escalating pressure placed on Richard to become an informant for the Stasi. Richard eventually collaborates, but only in a vain attempt to secure promising future careers for his children. He is forbidden to see his illegitimate daughter, and his sons drift away from him. The end of the novel finds Richard a broken and lonely man, though not untouched by the heady enthusiasm of the impending events of 1989.

The novel's third principal character is Christian's uncle, Meno Rohde, who works as an editor for the Berlin publishing house, Hermes. Meno, himself a timid author and amateur zoologist, finds it increasingly difficult to negotiate the space between official ideology and literary value. He has borrowed his oft-repeated motto from a Chinese proverb: "ein weiser Mann geht mit gesenktem Kopf, fast unsichtbar, wie Staub" (26). But Meno's caution cannot prevent him from stumbling into difficulties as he balances life in the Turm with his occupation, which often takes him to "Ostrom," a neighboring, gated district where the government functionaries hold bureaucratic court in byzantine complexity. Meno finds himself an intermediary between the two worlds, and his diary entries increasingly reveal the impossibility of this position.

Meno's occupation as an editor conveniently affords Tellkamp ample opportunity to contemplate the business of writing, to which he has obviously devoted considerable attention. Throughout *Der Turm*, Tellkamp demonstrates his mastery of many literary forms. The novel is composed mainly of prose, but Tellkamp includes quite good poetry, letters, journal entries, court proceedings, natural and truly entertaining dialogues, as well as scenes with Stasi officials that sound almost like transcripts of taped conversations. On the other hand, this stylistic virtuosity and Tellkamp's almost obsessive attention to detail make for a novel that loses momentum from time to time. In particular, the more esoteric and allusive journal entries toward the beginning of the book tend to become so elaborate that the casual reader might lose patience with a narrative that proceeds in fits and starts. Tellkamp might have done well to heed the advice of his own fictional editor. Early on in the novel, Meno observes that bad authors describe rather than evoke and are only able "eben 'Magie' zu sagen, statt aus Worten etwas herzustellen, das sie hat" (273). While Meno's observation is intended to decry the weak use of description, (which Tellkamp apparently considers his particular strength,) in the end *Der Turm* suffers under the weight of its own comprehensiveness. The central plot of the novel could have squeezed quite comfortably into a book half this size. Nevertheless, though the novel spans almost a thousand pages in arresting Technicolor, Tellkamp does manage to leave some details to the imagination, such as, for example, a brief affair between Richard Hoffmann and his son Christian's girlfriend, which is revealed quite elliptically.

It is this stylistic maturity and the plot of *Der Turm. Geschichte aus einem versunkenen Land*, which have often prompted comparison with an

equally ponderous and ominously entitled *Buddenbrooks. Verfall einer Familie*. The parallels are indeed striking: both books chronicle in exhaustively descriptive and refined language the decay of a family nestled in the upper crust of a society headed toward ruin. And yet, whereas Thomas Mann's novel hardly mentions the political changes through which its protagonists lived, focusing instead on the ruin of its eponymous family, Tellkamp's work takes the opposite tack, using the lives of a small Dresden community as an occasion to trace the political and economic decline of an entire society. Political events—from the death of Leonid Brezhnev at the beginning of the novel's first book, and that of his successor Andropov, in the second book, to the heady maelstrom of late 1989 at the novel's end—not only penetrate the private spheres of the principal characters, but also punctuate the novel rhythmically. *Der Turm* emphatically makes the point that in 1980s Dresden the private was unavoidably political.

Against this invasive political sphere, *Der Turm* becomes a kind of defense mechanism, both for its residents and, strangely enough, for its author. For its novel's protagonists, the Turm functions as a fortress of humanist, intellectual elitism—*Bildungsbürgertum*, if you will—besieged by a host of ideologues for whom the notion of a highly-educated upper crust runs against the grain of Socialism. The precariousness of this position is not lost on Richard, who observes that his social circle experiences “ein[en] Reichtum, wie es [ihn] im Sozialismus eigentlich nicht geben durfte” (226), but this wealth is not strictly speaking monetary so much as the privilege of urbane exclusivity. The district's grand turn-of-the-century villas, subdivided and run down of course, are nevertheless home to close-knit family networks that allow their members to partially insulate themselves from the everyday realities of East German living. The luxury of a telephone in the Hoffmanns' house becomes an unintentional outlet for neighbors whose relatives have fled to the West. Richard's status and reputation are taken into account when Christian applies to medical school. Similarly Meno Rohde finds that regular meetings of Urania, a scientific society, accommodate the exchange of ideas and become at least as exclusive as any upper crust West German dinner party.

Unfortunately for the inhabitants of the Turm, even the most insular society in this “Goldstaubviertel” (355) is penetrated by the all-seeing eye of state functionaries and informants whose tastes are decidedly more careful than those of the elite “Türmer.” At Richard's birthday party, for example, a series of delightful jokes pillorying the late Leonid Brezhnev is cut short by one Professor Müller, who sniffs that

one should “die Spötteleien über einen großen Toten unterlassen, den unser Brudevolk verloren hat” (63). Later in the narrative, Müller revenges his beloved Breshnev by dismissing one of Richard’s closest associates, Dr. Wernstein. The *Turm* proves itself to be an increasingly porous fortress.

It should also be mentioned that in some respects, *Der Turm* is itself a kind of defensive retreat for its author. Tellkamp’s last novel, the much-anticipated and subsequently much-maligned *Der Eisvogel* (2005), was vigorously criticized for its supposedly sympathetic portrayal of a terrorist group intent on overthrowing plebian democracy and replacing it with an aristocracy of urbane intellectuals. In *Der Turm*, Tellkamp retreats to a time and setting in which such intellectual elitism could be perceived as an acceptable rebellion against the tyranny of Socialist banality. The novel’s most obvious *Leitmotiv* reveals not only the fixation of the Hoffmann and Rohde families, but perhaps Tellkamp’s own strategy: “Dresden...in den Musennestern / wohnt die süße Krankheit Gestern” (11). The sickly sweetness of the past allows Tellkamp to restyle otherwise politically incorrect snobbery as humanism and deck a shabby *Turm* with ivory.

Nevertheless, Tellkamp’s apparent affinity for educated condescension aside, *Der Turm* presents its readers with a unique opportunity. Readers who are willing to forge ahead when the plot slows will be rewarded handsomely with an encyclopedic survey of East German culture complete with a number of delightful artifacts from the 1980s: riddles, jokes, and word plays, as well as a record of now-extinct East German military and legal jargon. Without catering to nostalgia, Tellkamp recreates a lost world at precisely the moment when it was slipping below the waves of history.

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SAMUEL WEBER. *Benjamin’s -abilities*. Cambridge: Harvard UP, 2008. 363 pp. \$ 29.95

In his 1918 essay, “On the Program of the Coming Philosophy”, Walter Benjamin, then 28 years old, offered a prediction: “in addition to the concept of synthesis, also that of a certain non-synthesis of two concepts in an another is bound to gain increasing systematic importance, since outside of synthesis another relation

between synthesis and antithesis is possible” (Weber 49). The beginnings and ends of Benjamin’s work, from mysticism and the philosophy of language through to those attempts to “arch the bow” between materialism and theology underway at the time of its author’s death, impossibly and insistently connect in the search for this “other relation”. His is a corpus that has lain in wait for readers for whom the boundaries between politics and theology, philosophy and literary criticism, and mysticism and materialism exist not so that they may be identified and promptly accommodated as grist for the mill of literary scholarship, but read as temporary thresholds of thought, demarcations which separate and join good intentions and suspicious agendas.

Since Benjamin’s fortune has undergone a radical reversal over the past decades, with the “Benjamin-industry” (George Steiner) now producing many new books a year, the waiting may well soon be over. Emerging from beneath virtual indifference, his writing has now assumed an unrivalled status. Indeed, Benjamin has become, like Kafka, a privileged name – the mark of a well worn testing ground of intellectual self-definition. Nevertheless, deconstruction, which has played no small part in this revival, may well be Benjamin’s corpus’s preferred bedfellow. In Samuel Weber that legacy finds an advocate whose own “metaphysics of suspicion”, to use Paul Ricoeur’s memorable phrase, rivals Benjamin’s own.

Weber’s new Benjamin book, 40 years in the making, seeks to leave no claim to presence unturned; the scrupulousness with which he can demonstrate a hidden binary, only dexterously to subvert it together with the wider claims upon which that binary depends, can be breathtaking. Yet the writing attains a clarity rare in this kind of undertaking, an economy of expression that is all too often missing in works that need to perform complex operations of self-reflexivity if they are to inhabit the paradoxes that follow from deconstruction’s idea of language: to borrow from Rodolph Gasché, logocentric language may be ambiguous, but there is no alternative language in which to think. The interest of *Benjamin’s -abilities* (note the hyphen) is not least that it offers an incisive and often novel reading of this seminal thinker’s work, but that it may itself be read as a kind of test case indicative of just what deconstructive rhetoric can offer up in response to the work of a notoriously difficult thinker. Weber’s work, indeed, poses an implicit question to its reader: how are we to measure an achievement that accrues not so much from the reading it offers *of* Benjamin, but rather from its capacity to demonstrate what survives its own hermeneutic operations?

If Benjamin's writing marks a kind of uncanny ability – Habermas almost called this its “*Aktualität*” – perpetually to escape the reader's determinations, Weber has in mind less the achievement of something in actuality than in its potential to become a mark as such. From Derrida's famous debate with John Searle, Weber draws on the distinction between “iterability” and “iteration” (or “repeatability” and “repetition”) (6), but readers familiar with the writings of Giorgio Agamben will detect a distinct echo of that thinker's fascination, also the product of a deep engagement with Benjamin, to turn the Aristotelian notion of actuality toward the very impossibility, or, with Agamben, the “impotentiality”, upon which the actual's coming into being always depends. While Derrida and Agamben (one could also add Rodolph Gasché, Carol Jacobs and Werner Hamacher to this list) share an attentiveness to the -ability of Benjamin's work (in German, its *-barkeit*) to open toward a possible future, or to manifest a possibility (in the idiom of Derrida) “always already underway”, Weber seeks not only to identify such moments in Benjamin's texts but hopes to extract a broader theory of “mediality” from them.

Mediality is intimately connected to the aporetic structure Weber finds enacted in the word “Mitteilung”. For what is *mitteilbar* is also simultaneously *unmittelbar*. “In short, as medium, language parts with itself and can be thus be said to constitute a medium of virtuality, a virtual medium that cannot be measured by the possibility of self-fulfillment but by its constitutive alterability” (42). Thus Benjamin's tendency to nominalize verbs offers both a way into his texts and a means to articulate how his own chosen medium turns away from its message and towards itself. This “virtual” turning, in turn, provides Weber with a model of reading that takes as its aim the transformative re-description of its objects of study.

The introduction quickly introduces those -abilities to be explored in the later chapters – communicability, criticizability, reproducibility, translatability, cognizability – but one would be mistaken in thinking that the early chapters lay the groundwork for what is to follow. After the explication of the nexus of “Benjamin's-abilities” and the articulation of the work's thesis, follows “Legibilities” – a collection of readings that, despite forming the bulk of the book, comprise less a development of the first part than an uneasy counterpoint to it. Perhaps this is not least because some of the material reproduced here is more than 15 years old, but also because of the sheer difficulty of sustaining -abilities across the range of Benjamin's texts without sneaking in an object to stabilize the movement of enquiry. “Vertigo sets in when all

sense dissolves into significance, or rather, in signifying”(307), Weber remarks in the penultimate chapter. Despite the threat of dissolution, Weber’s persistent attempts to stall the inevitable passage from -abilities toward their congealed realization as entities, and to maintain a significance for this undertaking while simultaneously preventing the vertigo that accompanies it from disappearing entirely from view, are themselves abilities that, though they may be somewhat repetitive in their methodology (deconstruction’s occupational hazard), are admirable in their intention not complacently to let sleeping intentions lie.

Insofar as one can speak of Weber’s contribution to the “study of Walter Benjamin” (as a cover note has it), it lies in its capacity to show us that in a certain sense Benjamin’s texts are *not*: like the -abilities that haunt them, Benjamin’s works, perpetually escaping the determinations of the present, are never quite “works”. Yet one cannot deny that *Benjamin’s -abilities* contains some powerful attempts to construct that work. Weber’s readings, say, of the daunting *Trauerspielbuch*, which looms large in his book, might stand here as an exemplar. His analyses of Benjamin’s recondite study of seventeenth-century drama demonstrate not only how it enacts a complex dialogue with Carl Schmitt’s notion of sovereignty and classical structures of tragedy; or how, inside a “history” lacking in a representable possibility of salvation and shorn of an eschatological perspective, the Baroque plays emerge, in Benjamin’s reading of them, to ground the modern notion of subjectivity only simultaneously to displace it. The *Trauerspiel* is paradoxically revealed as what it might have been: something that is never quite what it seems. Its very theatricality becomes nothing less than a metaphor for Benjamin’s prose itself, setting as it does a stage upon which the reader enacts just that which is never “sufficiently stable and self-contained to allow possession to take place” (104). And this place in which the reader reacts is “nowhere if not *non*” (105). That Weber should conclude his discussion of Benjamin’s -abilities with a translation of the astonishing *Schriftbild* (which to my knowledge has not appeared in English before), “Seagulls”, is thus appropriate. For what better metaphor could be found to convey the communicability of the now, the missed present that insistently compels speech and reading, if not the movement of a flock of seagulls. It’s a performance that may well make of the reader and his or her abilities “nothing more than the threshold across which the unnamable messengers, black and white, changed places in the winds” (326).

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ULRIKE WEYMANN. *Intermediale Grenzgänge. Das Gespräch der drei Gehenden von Peter Weiss, Geben von Thomas Bernhard, und Die Lehre der Sainte-Victoire von Peter Handke*. Heidelberg: Universitätsverlag-Winter, 2007. 321 S. € 47.00

Ulrike Weymann's study, based on her recent dissertation, offers an astute look at select prose works by three of postwar German literature's *enfants terribles*: Peter Weiss' *Das Gespräch der drei Gehenden* (1963), Thomas Bernhard's *Geben* (1971) and Peter Handke's *Die Lehre der Sainte-Victoire* (1980). To do so is to revisit a familiar enough tale in the history of postwar literature: the struggle, endured by many an author, to overcome a deeply seated sense of mistrust toward their chosen medium – language. Such skepticism takes many forms. At best, the written word appears to do little but foster habituated modes of expression and reception, consistently failing to achieve semantic plenitude. At worst, it seems the exclusive agent of an oppressive symbolic order, uncomfortable with ambiguities, if not dangerously complicit with the catastrophic histories of the recent past. But by bringing together these three particular texts, Weymann tailors the story line in fresh and original ways, sussing out some distinct red threads that bring these authors' work uncannily into alignment.

On the one hand, each of the texts considered here makes critical use of a literary leitmotif by no means exclusive to German letters: the walk. Weymann thus opens her study with a chapter devoted to discussing how the walk has traditionally functioned in literature, in particular as a narrative device. In the western peripatetic tradition, the walk typically structures a narrative which witnesses its protagonists set out in search of meaning. Crucially, these narratives place a certain uncomplicated faith in language's ability to relay individual perceptions and communicate meaning as it unfolds. Circumscribed by a discernible plot, foot travelers wend their way through discrete locales in space and time toward some final, indisputable dénouement, where meaning is conclusive and any messy particulars find their resolution. The literary walk, then, is tantamount to a metaphor for conventional narrative practice and trust in semantic transparency. Alas, things are not so simple for the restive protagonists – much less for the readers – Weymann's postwar subjects send on their way. If Weiss, Bernhard and Handke engage the peripatetic tradition, their collective impulse is to disarm it. Indeed, if there is a plot at stake, then this is it: to subvert

discursive conventions and interrogate language's ability to signify by subjecting it to formal experimentation.

Which brings us to the second red thread: instead of tracing more traditional literary journeys, these authors use the walk as an organizing principle for conducting exploratory forays into diverse intermedial techniques. This is a calculated choice, Weymann explains, and one surprisingly overlooked by previous scholarship, especially given the well-known fact that all three authors exhibit clear fascinations with and, in the case of Weiss, have even worked within other media. Weiss, of course, was an avant-garde filmmaker and a painter before being wholly converted by what he came to believe was language's superior efficacy as political arbiter. Bernhard, as much of his oeuvre attests to, evinces a strong interest in (absolute) music. And Handke lastly makes no secret of his admiration for the painterly techniques developed by Paul Cézanne. It should come, then, as little surprise that all three authors might seek to rejuvenate their relationship to language through liaisons with medial others – not by rejecting literature in their favor, but by seeking inspiration in their formal grammars and testing ways their most effective techniques might transfer into language and bring it new life. Weymann's unique contribution to the expanding literature on Weiss, Bernhard and Handke is that she recognizes in their walking texts their most concerted attempts to apply intermedial techniques and hence overcome the crisis of language. Thus, too, her apt choice to characterize the journeys undertaken in these three works as *intermediale Grenzgänge* or, in rough translation, “border walks” between the literary and the audiovisual.

Weymann devotes the next three chapters to meticulous analyses of each individual text and, as it were, their subtlety and nuance unfortunately preclude any concise description of them here. Suffice it to say that they are richly and convincingly fleshed out, if lost a bit at times in the expansive body of contextualizing information. This is as much the result of the dissertation format as it is Weymann's laudable desire to provide a thoughtful overview of the authors in question and situate their larger oeuvre in a thorough literary-historical context. She is also at pains to introduce and elaborate upon the necessary medial histories on which her analyses hinge.

Indeed, Weymann's study is aimed in good part at taking stock of the current explosion of academic interest in the intermedial and serves as a salient reminder of audiovisual culture's imprint on postwar literature quite in advance of the contemporary digital age. To that end, her closing chapter represents a direct attempt to assess the emerging

theories and critical vocabularies intermedial studies is generating and apply these to her findings. Consequently, we learn for example that Weiss, Bernhard and Handke all make use of diverse “Systemerwähungen qua Transposition,” to use the terminological framework Weymann takes over from scholar Irina Rajewsky. In short, each author borrows from and formally alludes to the general framework of an alternative medium (in this case film, music, or painting), be it through the arrangement of lexical, syntactic or other structuring elements of narrative. Weymann is thus able to fit her inquiry to the taxonomic demands made by intermedial studies, but this feels anti-climactic and superfluous on the heels of such superb individual analyses. This is especially ironic if one considers that intermedial experiments are so often invested in reviving language’s grasp of sensual particulars.

In the final analysis, then, Weymann’s investigation – and the emphasis here is on her individual close readings – is splendid and sophisticated nonetheless. Whatever their familiarity with the authors here treated, readers will find this a fruitful entry point into their work and a useful means of situating it within ongoing discussions of literature and intermediality.

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FERIDUN ZAIMOĞLU. *Liebesbrand*. Köln: Kiepenheuer & Witsch, 2008. 375 S. € 19.95

Shortly after surviving an unfortunate bus accident in 2007, Feridun Zaimoğlu started out a journey that he describes as “Entgiftung” (detoxication) in a *Spiegel*-interview in March of past year. The event left the traumatized author, asked to recapture the accident in an eyewitness report, very eager and inspired to rewrite the account into a novel. The highly autobiographical *Liebesbrand* therefore not only recaptures the frightening experience of the accident and the life afterward; it also remarks on the fantastic love relationship between the protagonist David, who is left heavily wounded after a bus accident and Tyra, a character that fleetingly appears at the beginning of the novel and helps him. Tyra’s guardian angel-like appearance drives David into near obsession with the need to find her: a journey that starts out in Turkey but leads from there to Germany and the Czech Republic. Only

knowing the first letters of Tyra's license plate, an obvious German one to him, David starts his journey to seek her out of the many people that he meets on the way. As time progresses in the novel and his stay in this simultaneously foreign and home country carries on, the reader is left puzzled about David's simplicity that causes a troublesome exposition. Instead of names one finds coded allusions to the characters which are at first easy to follow but leave the reader wondering why names, heavily coded with cultural, national, and religious affiliation are simply replaced by universals.

Zaimoğlu's work in *Liebesbrand* undertakes a slightly different path from the oeuvre that is normally associated with him. In his last novel *Leyla*, Zaimoğlu attempted what he called "[sich] in über 535 Seiten hinweg in eine Frau hineinversetzen," a job that he thought to be a difficult one, as his statement suggests from his March *Spiegel*-interview.¹ His perspective on women and the role of women in society shifted drastically from his early work in *Kanak Sprak* to *Liebesbrand*. In the former, the role of the man versus woman was a secondary issue that had to be addressed. *Kanak Sprak* serves as a confrontational response to everyday racism and the *Ausländerhaß* that individuals of foreign descent experience living in Germany. Naturally, his follow-up publication of *Kopstoff*, suggests a gendered battle that women and men approach differently. Nevertheless men and women both have to deal with the same internal repercussions by constantly being labeled as non-German. Zaimoğlu's reactionary stance against racist and xenophobic German minorities was not at first meant to be a commentary on gender; it rather slowly developed into a personal stance, as he calls it, as an attempt to understand women.

As highly political as his earlier works are, it is inevitable that similar ideas are still present even in his newest publication that Zaimoğlu himself describes as a *Liebesgeschichte*. *Liebesbrand* does not present David to be a confused German with Turkish roots, struggling to find an identity to hold on to. On the contrary, it actually presents David's affinity toward Tyra as a mere romantic longing. As a self-proclaimed romantic that falls into the tradition of German Romanticism, Zaimoğlu attempts to describe a modern day love story by means of escapist discourse on love, an idea that originally does find roots in German Romanticism and one that he refines to fit his own. To quote the aforementioned interview again that specifically highlights Zaimoğlu's view on identity crises as outlined by hybrid identities: "[David] hat kein Problem mit seiner Identität, und in der eigentlichen Geschichte spielt das auch keine Rolle. So ist das auch in der Realität:

Natürlich gibt es Identitätshöcker und Deutschlandverweigerer, aber die sind in der Minderheit.” Zaimoğlu makes note that individuals themselves do not acknowledge the stereotypical identity crisis in reality and that it actually makes no difference for them in their everyday life, notions that *Liebesbrand* beautifully displays.

Liebesbrand proves to be truly a remarkable work that exemplifies just how complex and yet simple love can be. Simultaneously, the novel remains a satisfying commentary on *Außländerfeindlichkeit* and immigration, two topics that continually remain major issues for Feridun Zaimoğlu.

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Note

¹ Zaimoğlu, Feridun. “Liebe ist reaktionär” Interview with Jenny Hoch. *Der Spiegel Online*. 13 March, 2008.

JULIA ZANGE. *Die Anstalt der besseren Mädchen*. Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 2008. 158 S. € 15.00

Zange’s memorable first novel is a thought experiment in archetypes. Simply put, she adopts the construct of the Lolita and its logic wholesale, names it Loretta, releases it in contemporary Kreuzberg, and offers us the opportunity to observe a case study unfurl. Loretta (Lorchen, Lo, Lo-baby, Lore, or Lola for short) with her “Puppengesicht” (27), being preoccupied with baby animals and a childish diet of steamed milk and comparable fluff, thrills at male attention – particularly that from males accompanied by a wife or girlfriend. Her doctor assistant boyfriend, Malte, consistently describes her as “klein, blond und problematisch” (40-4). Malte takes on the parent role to Loretta’s inner child, dragging a reluctant Loretta out of the bed in the morning, dressing her, and supplying her with her daily prioritized to-do list, without which she is apt to wander aimlessly through the city. He indulges her whims and punishes her infractions – sometimes in an unsettlingly sexual manner. Zange’s description of their deportment in a train lends itself to generalization, “Malte sitzt

aufrecht da, sie ist wie eine flirrende Unruhe um ihm herum" (10). For the first half of the novel, Zange employs the trappings of a plot-driven relationship novel to expose her recalcitrantly unreflective protagonist's inner life.

Loretta's frenetic and unfiltered stream of consciousness informs the narrative progress as well, resulting in the abrupt transitions similar to those in music videos conceived to have maximum impact on a cell phone screen. The prose is plastic, evocative, and highly impressionistic. On the way home from a visit to the doctor during the course of which Loretta discovers she is pregnant and decides to terminate her pregnancy, Loretta sits in the tram and shakes the baby powder from the mother and child care set she received from the receptionist. The powder envelops her in "eine weiße, wohlriechende Wolke. Boviste hingegen stäuben khakigrün und giftig, wenn man drauf tritt. Sie freut sich auf Maltes entsetztes Gesicht und einen Tränenbruch" (59). Zange refrains from commenting on the continuities and breaks between baby powder, poisonous puffball mushrooms, and Malte's disappointment at learning of her (later reversed) decision not to have the child. She leaves the interpretation of Loretta's free associations to the reader.

In the same way, the author studiously avoids providing the reader any substantial or potentially explanatory background information concerning Loretta's family circumstances, for example. Instead, the novel opens with a pseudo-scientific passage written in the style of a medical encyclopedia. The entry describes a rare and self-perpetuating condition: the *Doppelkindchen*. The phenomenon of the *Doppelkindchen* occurs when a child is born of a mother who is likewise "ein absolutes Kind im Gesicht und im Geist" (7). According to one "Dr. O.," to whom the entry is attributed and who the reader later discovers is Loretta's dubious personal physician hired by Malte, child-mothers almost exclusively have daughters. This is due to the strong scent of Lilly of the Valley that emanates from the ovum. In addition, they possess great seduction potential and rarely live to see 26. Loretta and her infant daughter, Marla (whom she delivers in a chic uptown boutique), are thus doomed to a short life dictated by seduction after a pseudo-scientific theory based on the smell of May Bells. Zange builds an irreconcilable and ever-mounting tension by deliberately endorsing a plainly faulty pseudo-scientific theory, then constructing her protagonist and the logic of the novel on it.

The disparity becomes unavoidable soon after Loretta's unconventional delivery of her infant daughter. The May Bells do not

preclude Loretta's becoming a mother in the first place, but the conventional perceptions of motherhood stand in stark opposition to the characteristics of the *Doppelkindchen*. Motherhood does not render Loretta in the least motherly, but as a mother her former identity is also impossible to maintain. With Loretta's identity in flux, the novel quickly takes a turn for the surreal. After several other bizarre instances, Loretta finds herself and her daughter before the door of the titular institution – equal parts cult, reality show, artists' commune, and feminist utopia gone awry: communal childcare, free love, abolition of personal property, mandatory church attendance, constant surveillance, decidedly undemocratic policies, and a population exclusively of lissome Calvin Klein models. Zange faces her protagonist with the false alternatives of staying at the institution on the one hand, or returning to Malte on the other. Though Loretta does eventually make a decision, her fate, and consequently Marla's, remains unresolved.

Loretta's dilemma is a case study in identity construction. Zange does not simply ask, what happens when a Lolita has a baby, but the far more engaging question, what happens to identity when a Lolita has a baby? In approaching the question, Zange is equally adept at quoting Harsdörffer and alluding to Rousseau, Nabakov, Woolf, Jeff Koons, and "The Princess and the Pea" as she is dropping name brands from Iris Nobile to American Apparel. In a similar juxtaposition, the prose is peppered with snatches of poetry. In both cases, the result reads as savvy and edgy, but also refined. The work is tightly crafted, sometimes verging on contrived, and its terseness leaves little room for humor despite the absurd settings and scenarios. These are minor drawbacks in the face of a stimulating and enjoyable first novel.

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