



JÜRIG BEELER. *Das Alphabet der Wolken*. Innsbruck: Haymon, 1998. 191 pp. DM 35.00.

As Niklaus Mönk returns from work one day, he finds a strange car parked in front of his house and hears the voices of his wife, Doris, and a man coming from the balcony. Mönk suspects the man to be his wife's lover by the name of Walter Tresch, a physical education teacher. He becomes overwhelmed by his wife's seeming infidelity. Quietly, he packs a bag for himself and steals the man's wallet from his jacket. He escapes to the island of Luto where Doris's family owns a summer house. Once Mönk is there, he realizes that the wallet does not belong to Walter Tresch, but to another man with whom his wife regularly does business. His suspicions were wrong. In spite of his mistake, the stay on Luto becomes a formative event in Mönk's life. His wife's actual ex-lover, Balkat, is also on Luto, hoping to bump into her again. Balkat, a sculptor, has recently been released from a clinic after setting fire to his own studio. Each man's relationship to Doris and her absence in their lives affect their creative abilities: Balkat is led into a crisis of dissolution; not only does his relationship with Doris seem dissolved, his relationship to his art is also dissolving. Mönk's separation from his wife, however, leads him to his identity as an author.

The book is constructed as a series of interior monologues and observations by the various characters of the novel. This structure allows the reader to gain an insight even into minor figures in the story. Doris's malcontent teenage daughter Vera, for example, is desperate to move to Canada where she believes she will find freedom from societal restraints. Her overt desperation heightens the futility of the attempt, not only hers but in general, to escape effectively from society. The shifting perspectives magnify the relative inability of the characters to fully realize relationships and their connections to each other. The technique also allows for ironical juxtaposition and some comical moments, which balance the tone of the story well.

*Das Alphabet der Wolken* may be read as a modern day *Künstlerroman*. A quote on the dedication page hints at the trials which the characters will be put through: "Sobald ein Genie die Welt betritt, verschwören sich sämtliche Idioten dagegen" (5). The genius does not so easily stand out against the idiot, though. It may all be a matter of

perspective. By juxtaposing the artist in crisis (Balkat) with the crisis leading to the identification as an artist (Mönk), the instructional and often optimistic message of the *Künstlerroman* genre is complicated and pragmatized.

A secondary theme of abjectness is established in a discussion on an exhibition on "Hygiene und Alltag, eine Dokumentation von den Anfängen bis zur Gegenwart. . . . Wer über die Sauberkeit rede, müsse auch über den Schmutz reden, argumentierte er [Mönk], eine Ausstellung über Hygiene müsse auch eine Ausstellung über die schmutzige Seite der Geschichte sein" (33-34). This theme underscores the other themes of the book. No *Genie* comes without *Idioten*; personal anguish may be the consequence, or progenitor, of artistic achievement. The abject is what makes us human, as when one character experiences the sensations of hemorrhoids, but also that which deviates from desired social control, as when Mönk initially calls his notes and writings "[s]eine gelehrten Stuhlgänge" (33).

The author of *Das Alphabet der Wölken*, Jürgen Beeler, lives in Zurich and has won various awards including the 1987 *Erwin-Jaeckle-Preis der Goethe-Stiftung in Basel* and the 1997 *Literaturpreis des Kantons Solothurn*. He has also published a book of poetry entitled *Tag, Steinfaut, Maulschelle, Tag* (1986) and a novel entitled *Blues für Nichtschwimmer* (1996).

University of California at Irvine

Anne R. Mocarski

THOMAS BRASCH. *Mädchenmörder Brunke*. Frankfurt a. M.: Suhrkamp, 1999. 97 pp. DM 28.00.

Who is the most popular stock character in 1990s media? The most likely answer could be the killer. Hollywood has played a leading role in this development, especially with Quentin Tarantino's film scripts—*Reservoir Dogs*, *Natural Born Killers*, and *Pulp Fiction*. More than ever, the killer embodies a secret fantasy of the audience. He acts as a rebel on their behalf, transgressing the cultural boundaries society puts on them. But with the glorification surrounding this figure, the readers and the viewers rarely ever make it beyond the superficial level of guns, Martinis and Armani suits. The killer becomes a mere sensation, a celebrity. Even in academia, where Tarantino's scripts sparked a huge wave of papers, books, and articles, the killer is *en vogue*.

The cover of *Mädchenmörder Brunke*, Thomas Brasch's first major book in ten years, suggests a similar sensationalism. It depicts a white dress blown up by an air stream, a woman's hand resting between her legs. This image immediately evokes Marilyn Monroe in *The Seven Year Itch*, the ultimate icon of sexuality in modern media. But it is a mistake to judge the book by its (misleading) cover, for there are many texts and films that are disinterested in depicting the actual crimes. Instead, they are detailed biographical studies that seek to explore the killers' psyches. From mere objects of sensationalism, their lives are transformed into case studies. In this genre, sexual killers are the most popular objects, because their crimes mark the ultimate violation of society's values. Romuald Karmakar's fine film *Der Tötmacher*, a portrait of the 1920's sexual killer Haarmann, is a prime example of this trend.

It seems that *Der Tötmacher* was Brasch's blueprint in at least one respect: like the film, *Mädchenmörder Brunke* deals with a case from the beginning of the century. Nineteen-year-old Karl Brunke's murders of two girls in Braunschweig, Germany, took place in 1905.

But there is more to Brunke than being capable of such a horrible crime. Brasch gradually uncovers the story of a broken-hearted young man who, after his father's death, tries to overcome his fear of actual sexual and emotional contact by building bizarre love machines. His narcissistic inventions are complex constructions made of rubber, wood, and metal. Brunke designs them to revolutionize the world just

as Freud's and Einstein's theories.

This is not the story of Brunke alone—he is the center of a “Neue Heilige Familie” built on sex and pleasure. When news of Brunke's projects is leaked to an appalled public, the new sexual society collapses, and Brunke eventually kills two sisters that have been part of his post-patriarchal family order. Shortly thereafter, he commits suicide in jail.

In her essay on sexual killer Jürgen Bartsch, the future terrorist Ulrike Meinhof wanted neither to glorify nor condemn Bartsch's deeds, but rather explain them in their social context: “Die Geschichte von Jürgen Bartsch und der Prozeß selbst offenbarten in unheimlicher Anhäufung das Elend der Gesellschaft, in der er gelebt und gemordet hat.” Since Ulrike Meinhof voiced her criticism, such statements have become commonplace wisdom in the German public discourse.

Brasch's story, on the other hand, merely criticizes the fact that the criminal trial against Brunke only serves the purpose, “[s]eine Erfindung vergessen zu machen, den Erfinder in einen Ermörder zu verwandeln” (51). For Brasch's narrator, the true scandal is not that the society rejects its joint responsibility for the crimes, but that it tries to discredit a genius by reducing him to a mere killer, as if the killings did not matter.

However, it is difficult to accept this accusation. This book is not only the tale of Brunke himself; it is also the story of writing his biography. An architect by the name of D.H. tries to reconstruct Brunke's life, first by researching his story and then by rebuilding Brunke's “Liebesmaschine 1-16” (19). D.H. abandons his old life and his girlfriend entirely, and writing and building machines become his strategies to achieve ecstasy—much like Brunke some ninety years earlier. Eventually, Brunke seems to take possession of D.H. until their respective handwritings become identical and the architect speaks of the young man in the first person. Finally, D.H. dies at a point where he has almost totally merged with Brunke. At the moment of his death, D.H. is seated in a rebuilt love machine that resembles a gynecologist's chair—the adequate place for giving birth, even if it is to a mere text. Bursting with sexual desire, D.H.'s movements cause his death. At the moment of orgasm, his pen crosses out the last page of the manuscript.

This double story is packed within a complex narrative framework. The narrative shifts back and forth between the perspectives of D.H., Brunke, and a narrator from an outside institution, *Die Maßnahmebehörde*, that examines the case of D.H. In these sudden shifts, the reader becomes unsure of his/her point of view. This blurred vision is heightened by dreams and surreal scenes in which various times and places merge. When D.H. interviews Brunke's son Alfred in Alcatraz, the old man rejuvenates and slowly transforms into his dead father (69). But does that transformation occur in reality or in D.H.'s mind? The architect's study gradually gets lost in a surreal wilderness. Instead of solving the enigma of Brunke, both his biographer and the reader are only drawn deeper and deeper into a jungle where all subjects dissolve.

Sexual desire and the desire to narrate, to write, become one—or they have been the same thing all along. In becoming Brunke, D.H. turns schizoid. It is this schizophrenia that liberates his desires, very much like Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari advocated in their famous *Anti-Oedipus*. But the price of D.H.'s transgression is death.

Ultimately, Brasch's text is a clever approach to themes relevant to the 90's zeitgeist, masking them in the events that took place almost a century ago. But the text does not only approach the relatively abstract and philosophical question of identity and its dissolution. It also feeds on the aforementioned interest in killers and the recurring fantasies of sex in virtual reality, a current theme in popular German magazines of the mid-1990's. Brasch's treatment of commonplace discourses of our own decade places them on a higher aesthetical level.

At the same time, *Mädchenmörder Brunke* fits well with the author's previous oeuvre. Born in England in 1945 and raised in the GDR, Brasch clashed with East German authorities numerous times, until he had to leave the country for West Germany in 1976. Many of his heroes are dissidents, outsiders like Brunke and D.H., who turn their backs on society or rebel against its institutions. In this light, it is not a coincidence that D.H. gives up his job at the very moment his bosses want him to participate in the rebuilding of Berlin as Germany's splendid new capital (20), a process that has found its preliminary climax in the recent inauguration of the remodeled *Reichstag*. It is this “official” world to which the third narrator, the *Maßnahmebehörde*,

may belong.

*Mädchenmörder Brunke* is actually the condensed version of a much larger project. Brasch literally wrote thousands of pages for a novel on this subject that was going to be 2700 pages long. But just as D.H. never reconstructs the love machines to a point where they would actually work, a full reconstruction of Karl Brunke's mind is possibly out of reach. The organizing principle that holds the text together is the "Fuge"—the German word for "gap, crack, joint," but also for "fugue." In Brunke's interpretation it refers to the gap in his head as well as the opening in his mother through which he entered the world. But "fugue" is also an adequate term for the structure of this novel, so rich in themes and counterpoints that the piece becomes difficult to follow in its complexity.

Although the Monroesque cover suggests otherwise, Brasch's text is not only closer to *Der Totmacher* than to *Pulp Fiction*, it ultimately transcends both. *Mädchenmörder Brunke* is a complex prose experiment, in its best moments intriguing. Here, the stock character of the killer functions mainly as a vehicle for Brasch's narrative explorations. However, Suhrkamp obviously decided to use a cover design more appropriate for a tabloid article. This strategy may draw attention to an interesting piece, but it remains on a much more sensationalist level than the text itself.

University of Oregon

Stefan Höppner-Stone

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HANNS CIBULKA. *Tagebuch einer späten Liebe*. Leipzig: Reclam, 1998. 96 S. DM 14,00.

Seit mit dem Beginn der 70er Jahre naïve Fortschrittsgläubigkeit der ostdeutschen Landschaft mit ihren industriellen Dreckschleudern immer härter zusetzte, beklagte Hanns Cibulka in seiner ökologisch-

kritischen Naturlyrik den Raubbau an der Natur und forderte eine „Revolution gegen uns selbst, gegen unsere eigene Trägheit, den Egoismus, den Machtinstinkt, eine Revolution, die uns lehrt, ganz anders über den Menschen zu denken als bisher.“ Wie Franz Fühmann, Peter Huchel und Johannes Bobrowski gehört Cibulka zur Generation der älteren Kriegsheimkehrer und teilt mit ihnen, nach zunächst hoffnungsvoller Zustimmung, die Skepsis an den Entwicklungen in der ostdeutschen Gesellschaft inmitten einer Phase allgemeiner Aufbaueuphorie. Zu dieser Skepsis gesellt sich bei den Autoren jener Kriegsgeneration eine beharrliche Auseinandersetzung mit der (eigenen) nationalsozialistischen Vergangenheit—am eindringlichsten bei Fühmann und Bobrowski—zu einer Zeit, als dies nicht opportun war und von der offiziellen Literaturkritik gemeinhin als Überwindung spätbürgerlicher Positionen auf dem Weg zur entwickelten sozialistischen Persönlichkeit gedeutet wurde.

Was den Status ihres literarischen Werkes anbetrifft, zählen Fühmann, Huchel, Bobrowski und Cibulka besonders in den 60er Jahren zu den wichtigsten Stimmen der ostdeutschen Lyrik und—im Falle von Fühmann und Bobrowski—der Prosa, die sich als einige der ersten auf jeweils sehr unterschiedliche Weise gegen die politische Inanspruchnahme der Poesie in ihrem Land wenden. Huchel erweitert das Naturgedicht zu einem lyrischen Schauplatz gesellschaftlicher Konflikte und übt durch diese Sprengung normativer ästhetischer Vorgaben einen weitreichenden Einfluß auf nachfolgende Lyriergenerationen aus. Besonders auf Bobrowski, dessen lyrische Sprache in der für ihn zur Chiffre gewordenen Welt Sarmatiens der Erinnerung an den europäischen Osten nachgeht und den Blick auf die Geschichte durch die Prismen der Landschaft, Mythen und Sagen in eine komplexe Textur rhythmischer und bildlicher Assoziationen ausweitet. Auch in den besten Werken von Fühmann geraten Mythen und Märchen zu poetischen Gleichnissen für die Idee von einer neuen Gesellschaft, die noch nicht konsequent gedacht wurde, die mit sich uneins ist und nach einer neuen Sprache sucht.

Cibulkas Suche nach einer eigenen Sprache mündet in stilistischer Knappheit, besonders seit seinem Band *Arioso* (1962). Immer wieder erschüttert vom Nachbeben der Kriegserfahrung und dem Verlust der Heimat, reflektieren seine Gedichte das Vergangene im Gegenwärtigen einer Landschaft, die von Technophilie verwüstet

ist und kaum noch Refugien der Unversehrtheit bereithält. Auch das Wort ist der Zersetzung anheim gegeben und verhärtet unter der Last der Zeugenschaft: „Wir Worte,/sind grau geworden/an der Klagemauer/der Sprache“ („Wir Worte“ 1973). Und doch gelang es Cibulka in vielen seiner frühen Gedichte, der Gratwanderung in der Grauzone zwischen dem Traum von einer besseren Gesellschaft und den Alpträumen der Menschheitsgeschichte Verse von beeindruckender Schönheit abzugewinnen—bis zu dem Zeitpunkt, als seine Wortlandschaften zunehmend vom Pathos kulturpessimistischer Warnungen geschliffen wurden. Eingebettet in den tagebuchartigen Text *Swantow. Die Aufzeichnungen des Andreas Flemming* (1982) kulminieren Cibulkas zivilisationskritische Reflexionen in dem fünfteiligen Gedichtzyklus „Lagebericht.“ Die minutiös dargelegten Gefahren ungehemmten wissenschaftlich-technischen Fortschritts für den Naturkreislauf dienen als Aufhänger eines Diskurses, der die tragenden Ideen der modernen Industriegesellschaft als selbstzerstörerisch entlarvt. Gegen das naturvernichtende Wachstumsdenken materialistisch ausgerichteter Gesellschaftsmodelle sozialistischer und kapitalistischer Prägung entwirft Cibulka eine altkonservative Wachstumskritik, die als einzig möglichen Ausweg aus der ökologischen und geistigen Krise einer vormodernen Einheit von Mensch und Natur das Wort redet. Eine zweifelsohne berechtigte Kritik an den strukturellen Fehlentwicklungen der Moderne gerät so zu einem antimodernistischen Programm, das die Rückkehr zu einem Ursprünglichen apostrophiert, statt die vom Autoren selbst beständig vorgebrachte Forderung nach einem anderen Denken über den Menschen einzulösen. Für seinen stark romantisch eingefärbten Aufruf zur Umkehr wollten Cibulka Ende der 80er Jahre die Verse nicht mehr gelingen, so daß er sich von nun an verstärkt der Tagebucherzählung widmet.

Nach den letzten beiden Tagebucherzählungen *Am Brückenwehr* (1994) und *Die Heimkehr der verratenen Söhne* (1996) bezeugt das *Tagebuch einer späten Liebe* am bedrückendsten Cibulkas Schwierigkeiten, dem von ihm wahrgenommenen Kulturverfall originelle Gedanken abzugewinnen. Der Titel bezieht sich sowohl auf die Liebe eines Erfurters zu seiner Heimatstadt, die er auf ausgedehnten Spaziergängen für sich wiederentdeckt, als auch auf seine Liebesbeziehung zu der Gärtnerin Gundula. Mit ihr erlebt das Alter

ego des alternden Dichters noch einmal zärtliche Zuneigung und das unvergänglich Schöne seiner Heimat. Ohne rechte Überzeugungskraft dargestellt und nur mühevoll in den Text eingefügt, soll von dieser Liebesgeschichte ein letzter Hoffnungsfunken ausgehen vor dem Hintergrund der melancholischen Zeitdiagnosen, die auf den Spaziergängen durchs thüringische Erfurt gestellt werden. Es ist der Alltag im deutsch-deutschen Kleinstadtmief, der dem Erzähler zu schaffen macht: das Geld regiert, die Politiker sind korrupt und von ‚blühenden Landschaften‘ keine Spur. Man möchte ja zustimmen und mit ihm gegen die grasierende Konzeptlosigkeit in Politik und Wirtschaft bei der Bewältigung zentraler Fragen wettern, doch macht es Cibulka seinen Lesern sehr schwer. Mit der oberlehrerhaften Geste des erhobenen Zeigefingers—in schräg gedruckten aphorismusartigen Sprüchen—belehrt er den Leser über die Ursachen der Mißstände: „Die kleine Münze Charakter, wer ist heute noch bereit, mit ihr zu zahlen?“ (28). Oder: „Es sind die Fadheiten des Lebens, nach denen es den Menschen immer wieder gelüftet“ (41). Die Unerträglichkeit der den gesamten Text durchziehenden Gedanken zur Lage der Nation hat mit diesen Platitüden ihr Maß noch nicht erreicht. Ungleich verstörender als jene Binsenweisheiten wirkt das deutschtümelnde Sentiment, das an einigen Stellen des Buches dumpf hervorbricht. Da wird beispielsweise der Substanzverlust der Alltagssprache beklagt, die sich Angriffen aus dem englisch-amerikanischen Wortschatz ausgesetzt sähe und so zu einem „pidginisiertem Deutsch“ verkomme, das „im Sprachraum einer Nation“ keine Berechtigung habe und dazu führe, „daß wir in Ansätzen bereits amerikanisch denken“ (91).

So beklemmend derartige Passagen anmuten mögen, zählt Cibulka keineswegs zu jenen, die sich seit geraumer Zeit dazu berufen fühlen, in ‚anschwellende Bockgesänge‘ einzustimmen. Ein wiederbelebter Stolz aufs deutsche Vaterland ist bei ihm nicht zu finden. Vielmehr ordnen seine wehmütigen Mahnungen vor den Marotten unseres Zeitalters und die Zuflucht in quasi-religiöse Natur- und Heimatverbundenheit das *Tagebuch einer späten Liebe* dem Genre der sentimentalischen Heimatliteratur zu. Wohl um den durchweg trivialen Reminiszenzen und Beobachtungen der Erzählerfigur philosophische Tiefe zu verleihen, werden auf den knapp einhundert Seiten von Meister Eckehardt bis Heidegger unzählige Geistesgrößen bemüht und zitiert. Obgleich man sie alle vor der wiederholten Inanspruchnahme in Schutz

nehmen möchte, sind es gerade die Stimmen von Nelly Sachs, Günter Eich oder Stefan George, die den hehren Ton des Tagebuches auf das Angenehmste unterbrechen. In einer Passage wird die Verdrängung des Sprachgeistes durch die heutige Computersprache diagnostiziert und Bobrowski mit seinem Gedicht „Sprache“ (1963) als Kronzeuge aufgerufen. Das Gedicht endet mit den Zeilen: „Sprache/abgehetzt/ mit dem müden Mund/auf dem endlosen Weg/zum Hause des Nachbarn“ (58). Bobrowskis Sprache, die nie ankommt, die sich am Rande des Schweigens bewegt, versucht noch in ihrer letzten Silbe das Gespräch mit einem Anderen. Diesem Ansinnen scheint sich Cibulkas *Tagebuch einer späten Liebe* zu sperren.

New York University

Peter Rosenbaum

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HANS MAGNUS ENZENSBERGER. *Voltaire's Nefte: Eine Fälschung in Diderots Manier*. Frankfurt a. M.: Suhrkamp, 1996. 70 pp. DM 19.80.

After *Diderots Schatten* (1994), a collection of works inspired by his self-described “Diderot-Manie,” Hans Magnus Enzensberger offers his latest play, *Voltaire's Nefte*. The work itself is an adaptation of Diderot's play *Le neveu de Rameau* which, through Enzensberger's re-writing, becomes a counterfeit Diderot work, as the play's subtitle suggests. The original play involves a chance meeting in the garden of the Palais Royal in Paris between a Philosopher, ostensibly Diderot himself, and Jean-François Rameau, the nephew of the composer Jean-Philippe Rameau. In Enzensberger's version, the Nephew is related to Voltaire, while Diderot himself is mentioned only in passing. The content of the pair's conversation also changes in the counterfeit play. Whereas Diderot's version centers around discussions on philosophy, music, food, bourgeois manners, education, and more carnal pursuits, Enzensberger's version deals with colonialism, the slave trade, politics, economics, and questions of identity.

The play begins in the foyer of a Paris auditorium. After some noise offstage, the bloody-nosed Nephew is thrown out by servants. After a moment of self-recomposition, the Nephew is approached by the Philosopher, who offers him a handkerchief and asks what he has done to deserve such ill treatment. The Nephew admits that he attempted to attend the meeting inside the auditorium without a proper invitation. Instead, he used an invitation addressed to his uncle, Voltaire, the highly-esteemed philosopher and member of the *Academie Française*. The Philosopher is surprised at the younger man's audacity; however, the Nephew explains that he finds it amusing to witness a gathering of the supposedly-great, of whom he says, “das sind keine großen Geister, das sind Versager” (12). The sudden appearance of an African man, Aschoa, described by the Nephew as a “verdammter Gorilla” (15), interrupts the conversation, which later moves on to the Nephew's hatred for his uncle, whom the Nephew implicates as a slave trader. The Nephew tells the Philosopher that he thinks his uncle is a fraud. The Nephew also talks about his patron, the Madame Bertin, with whom he fell out of favor since he refused to fawn upon her. His rejection of cajolery has left him ruined. Returning to the subject of philosophers, the Nephew mentions La Bruyère, Rochefoucauld, and his favorite, Molière; however, he says that all he has to learn from philosophers is how to succeed in polite society and business without appearing to be unethical or treacherous.

Moving on to the subject of the meeting at hand, the Nephew begins an impersonation of the luminaries assembled inside the amphitheater, who speak of the slave trade as the French's moral obligation vis-à-vis Africa because it allows them to save the “poor natives” through Catholicism. Outraged, the Philosopher begins walking up and down the stage, cursing the Europeans, who created the colonial slave trade. After the Philosopher has finished his diatribe against the Western slave trade, the Nephew calls his bluff. Accusing the Philosopher of hypocrisy, the Nephew tells him that he suspects that the anti-colonial sentiments expressed in Raynal's book are actually the Philosopher's. Moreover, he tells the Philosopher that he knows about his lover, and that the Philosopher secured his lover's nephew a position as Secretary to the Governor of Guyana. The Philosopher, unwilling to let himself be outdone by the Nephew, attacks the legitimacy of the Nephew's familial lineage. Pretending to be Voltaire, he

engages in an imaginary dialogue with his niece, and explains why he needs "den Kleinen" (65). As Voltaire, the Philosopher tells her that he can be put to use in ordering his papers, but not to worry, as he would only stay for a couple of weeks. The imaginary dialogue continues, as "Voltaire" discovers the treachery of the Nephew, who steals anything not tied down and dares to wander around Paris calling himself "Voltaire's Nephew." He tells his niece, who has warned him about the boy, not to worry, because he has called his notary and had the Nephew disinherited, should he try to claim the fortune of his "uncle." The Nephew, shocked at his apparent misfortune, begs the Philosopher to tell him where he got his information. The Philosopher simply tells him that the Nephew had probably thought that the Philosopher, like all philosophers, was a know-nothing. The Nephew, realizing that he had been had, admits that he had wronged the Philosopher.

Suddenly, the Philosopher announces that they need a pick-me-up and removes a cover from one of the Louis XIV tables, revealing an espresso machine. While drinking coffee and pondering the world that had brought them to that point, the Nephew's cellular phone rings. Madame Bertin wishes to see the Nephew immediately. After hanging up, the Nephew calls her a "blöde Kuh" (70) and announces that he must leave. Quoting directly from Diderot's play, the pair ponders the aphorism "plus ça change, plus c'est la même chose" (70). Ending the play with the same thought, Enzensberger has the various officials from the meeting return to the stage in modern dress, and the Philosopher and the Nephew remain the only characters in 18<sup>th</sup> Century dress.

Enzensberger's counterfeit Diderot play is both true to the former's vision of wit and vulgarity, yet quite different from the original's critique of current cultural figures and practices. The new version of *Le neveu de Rameau* becomes a strikingly strong critique of the economic desires that drove colonialism and the slave trade that developed from it. Through the defamiliarizing effects of modern dress at the play's conclusion, Enzensberger's ideas about colonialism and its legacy become clear: *plus ça change, plus c'est la même chose*.

GABRIELE KEISER. *Mördergrube*. Leipzig: Reclam, 1998. 226 pp. DM 16.90.

Nina Lorenz has had enough of her boring life and is ready for a change. As a medical assistant, she spends her days collecting urine samples and attempting to prevent an endless array of sick patients from passing out at the sight of the needle. She is tired of the drudgery of her uneventful life and cannot bear the thought of hearing one more story from another incurable hypochondriac. Just when she thinks she simply will not survive another day, her prayers are answered.

When Uncle Hermann suddenly dies, her life is forever changed, all because of one thing—an inheritance. No one would have believed that stingy Uncle Hermann could have put away anything for posterity; he lived in the most frugal way. Even so, Uncle Hermann is dead and Nina's mother is the sole heir to his estate, which includes a tidy sum of money and an old house in the small village of Birkenbach. Nina's mother has always wished for more happiness for her daughter and it occurs to her to offer the inheritance to Nina, hoping it will change her life. Nina has inherited a way out of her drudgery—a house in the country! She has always dreamed about getting away, living among the fruit trees in a place far removed from medical clinics, syringes and those depressing patients. She celebrates with Madeleine, her free-loving free-spirited best friend (who, incidentally, resembles Botticelli's Venus), and she begins making plans for her new life.

Nina shares the news with her married boyfriend Harry. He has been married for years and Nina has no desire to change that fact. She is happy occasionally to have someone to warm her bed, someone with whom she does not have to spend too much time. If the truth be told, Nina is a loner, preferring time at home to anywhere else. Harry and Madeleine are there for support when they are needed and Nina prefers it that way. In any case, Harry is quite well-off. Having worked in business for years, he has acquired quite a comfortable life style. Nina convinces Harry to help her financially while she renovates her new house. He agrees to provide her with enough money so that, for a time, she is able to take a leave of absence from her job and devote herself to her new domicile in the country.

Driving out to Birkenbach for the first time, Nina is struck by the serenity of the place. Farmers are tending to their fields and the

fragrance of cherry blossom wafts in the air. It is such a stark contrast to the stench of the city! Here she can breathe freely. She feels liberated. Even the street where she will soon live has a poetic ring to it: "Unter dem Gedankenspiel." She is full of anticipation and hope. This place reminds her of her childhood summer holidays spent with her grandmother in the country. These are sweet memories, full of innocence and awakening. Will this place be just as innocent?

There is much to be done to the old house, but to Nina it is a fresh canvas, lying in wait for her creative potential to be realized. She moves in right away. Harry drops by the new love nest for dates (he is much more at ease in the country, as surely no one will recognize him so far away from the city and his wife) or occasionally to help with the more complicated renovation chores. The house indeed has potential. There is a nice garden in the back and the house itself is large, complete with a very large cellar in the basement. The stairs leading into the cellar are so old and in such bad condition, however, that Nina does not trust herself to go down them. She decides to work on the first floor first and eventually fix the staircase and remodel the basement but she will have plenty of time for that later.

In the meantime, she makes an attempt to get to know her neighbors, most of whom are quite older than she. The peculiar thing is, that as soon as they learn which house is Nina's, they act very strangely but will not say why. Nina is mystified by their reactions and is determined to find out what is behind their nervousness. She searches out the women in the village who seem to know all the business of all the residents who ever lived in Birkenbach, and a story begins to unravel. A man has been missing in Birkenbach for quite some time. It was a very well-publicized event in such a sleepy village. The man was the butcher in the town and also happened to have lived in Nina's house. Soon Nina becomes obsessed with researching the history of her house and is relentless in asking questions, which proves to be a great annoyance to her neighbors.

Meanwhile, Nina begins to unpack the content of the dusty boxes left by the former resident. There is a great preponderance of books, most of which are mysteries or gothic thrillers. There are many books by Edgar Allan Poe in which many passages are strangely underlined, especially in his *The Fall of the House of Usher*. Alongside the books are box after box of pornographic magazines. Nina's curiosity

has been peaked. She wants to go searching through her basement but has an aversion to going down there. As a child, she had been the one to discover her own father, dead of a heart attack, lying prostrate on their cellar floor. Since then she has not been fond of dark cellars, but one could see the mold growing rapidly over the stone walls leading downstairs and she cannot put off cleaning down there much longer. She carefully makes her way downstairs and notices a fierce odor, which she blames on rotted vegetables that she finds in the sand bottom of the cellar. The smell is so overpowering she goes back upstairs, promising herself to have the area cleaned as soon as possible.

In the next weeks she finds out more facts about her house from a few villagers who are willing to talk. She discovers the missing man was actually homosexual and some believe that he staged his own disappearance to fool his wife into thinking he was dead. Nina remembers a box of pornographic magazines she found in her house. She goes home and eventually begins to dig out the sand in her cellar, where she finds a surprise indeed. She discovers what happened to the missing man. He has been buried in her basement all this time. What concludes is the search by the police to find out what happened to him. He has been murdered but by whom? Nina has a nervous breakdown—serenity, indeed.

This novel by Gabriele Keiser (born in 1953 and today living in Marburg) is an intriguing murder mystery. The premise is engrossing and the story exciting. Having grown up in the countryside, Keiser's descriptions of village life are believable and exact. The characters are fascinating and well developed, with each contributing to the intricacies of the unravelling story. One identifies with Nina's plight so closely that one feels every emotion that races through her mind. Keiser tells the story with intermittent diary excerpts which by the end of the novel help to explain the murder itself. This is a modern German mystery novel complete with adventure, intrigue, and murder which combine for a very pleasurable read.

*University of Cincinnati*

*Tonya Hampton*



RENATE MÖHRMANN. *Tilla Durieux und Paul Cassirer: Bühnenglück und Liebestod*. Berlin: Rowohlt, 1997. 175 pp. DM 34.00.

Renate Möhrmann is a magical storyteller. In less than 175 pages, she weaves the story of two lovers like a fairy tale, leaving the reader to wonder if the events are actually fact or a marvelously concocted fiction set against the backdrop of the culturally and politically turbulent turn-of-the-century Berlin. In fact, she touches upon this detail in the introduction, pointing to the difficulty of re-visioning a past reality that at the time was perceived differently even by those involved. Instead, she suggests she will retell how it might have been.

Möhrmann begins her tale with background information about her two protagonists: one, a successful art dealer, a womanizer, a Jew, a distinguished blue blood who, like other family members, uses his wealth and influence to fashion Berlin culture according to his own enterprises; the other, a naïve yet erotically charged woman, dark in complexion, whose silent childhood in a bourgeois home drives her to become one of the most admired and disliked members of the German stage. At a salon gathering Paul Cassirer, Berlin's own Medici, pioneer for modern art and determined supporter of all that challenges imperial classicism, and Tilla Durieux, Circe-like, whose presence and charm should win her artist husband entrance to the much-desired Berliner Secession, are stricken by the force of their attraction: "Am liebsten wäre ich . . . gleich mit Paul Cassirer auf und davon gerannt" (71). Durieux divorces her husband shortly thereafter, and the two become lovers.

Thus begins a whirlwind of passion for art, music, theater, dance, and for each other. The love story has moments of ecstasy that can be bested only by ensuing moments of despair. The art dealer Cassirer yearns to be an artist; his creation: Durieux. He becomes her mentor, her biggest critic, and she accepts, even seeks his direction in her development as an accomplished actress, a master of her profession. Their individual obsessions with art per se drive them together to become more than lovers; together they will usher in the revolution of modern art forms. Their circle of friends is one of artists, authors, and musicians, including such influential people as Max Liebermann,

Frank Wedekind, and Lovis Corinth. Durieux's widely applauded excellence as an actress and her highly erotic stage presence are revealed in the impressionists' demand to have her as a model. Cassirer's pioneering in the area of art arrangement and salon management increases his influence and esteem. But their Bohemian bliss does not last, and Durieux chooses to accept the roving nature of her future husband rather than abandon her newfound soul mate. Marriage proves to be a forum for power relations, and Durieux soon realizes her position as the weaker. Yet their predilection for the artistic dominates their relationship, and soon Berlin's high society is fawning at their feet. The First World War brings all of this to an end, and marks the opening of their personal finale. While away on duty, Cassirer's unfounded jealousy grows into madness. His attempt to kill Durieux and himself strangely brings them together, yet the end is imminent. Fleeing to politically neutral Switzerland, they attempt to re-establish the lost glamour of Berlin society in Zurich. But it is impossible. The love affair ends in tragedy.

Möhrmann depicts a romance so moving, so fervent, one would expect it to be a work of fiction. Her knowledge of theater history and women's liberation are evident in her close description of Durieux's own difficulties as an actress in what was considered a man's profession. Her depiction of the salons reveals her extensive research in art history. Incorporating numerous photos of Durieux and Cassirer, as well as countless quotes from their contemporaries, Möhrmann creates an inviting and comprehensive picture of the lovers and the socio-political circumstances surrounding their passion. Her style is enticing, propelling the reader from one page to the next with a lush description of Berlin's growth as a cultural metropolis and the individuals who incited such growth with their own aspirations. Möhrmann provides us with instantaneous access to these larger-than-life characters, allowing us to feel their presence as if no time has elapsed between their existence and ours. Currently a professor at the Institut für Theater-, Film- und Fernsehwissenschaft at the University of Cologne, Möhrmann has published and edited numerous books concerning the history of the theater.

University of Cincinnati

Jennifer L. Creech

CLAUDIA ROSENKRANZ. *Keiner verläßt den Raum*. Leipzig: Reclam, 1999. 216 pp. DM 15.90.

Claudia Rosenkranz's intriguing, ambiguous and erudite novel *Keiner verläßt den Raum* discloses the darker layers of a manipulative relationship. It also portrays the desires and fears that can evolve from such layers. One plot line revolves around a theater workshop and the play performed there—in a factory that retains its industrial ghosts. Locked up in a room on stage, the three actors in Sartre's drama *Huis Clos* [*Closed Society*] discover hell in its most banal state—they cannot leave the room. One of the actors is the novel's main character, Sybille, a 40-year-old psychologist in Hamburg. She finds in this production of Sartre's play an ominous message from its director, her former lover Robert whom she had left 20 years ago. A surprising twist at the novel's end displays Rosenkranz's writing skill which could appeal to a large reading audience.

The novel opens with Sybille's unexpected encounter with Robert; their first in 20 years. Sybille flees the scene, a response that illustrates the psychologically troubled aspects of their relationship. Suddenly paranoid, Sybille is convinced that Robert has tracked her down.

Using flashbacks throughout the first half of the novel, the author unfolds Sybille's past and the uncertainties surrounding her rash departure from Munich where she had lived with Robert. Now a successful psychologist with her own practice, Sybille and her lover of many years, Stephan, enjoy a comfortable routine of classical music, passionate weekends and phone calls during the week—a routine that allows both of them to pursue their individual careers. Robert's sudden reappearance and the memories that come with it rip apart the imperturbable existence Sybille believed she had.

Interspersed with the sounds and signs of the city transportation in which she is riding, Sybille's trance-like flashbacks lead the reader through her student days in Munich—and through a lifestyle which included marijuana, radical theater, and various sexual affairs. Because her present existence sharply contrasts these youthful experiences within a crowd of anti-bourgeois artists, Sybille hides the details from Stephan and her best friend Margarete. Behind Sybille's reliable

and regular façade pulse the energetic, passionate memories of her former lover. Sybille's lust for a life with Robert awakes again. The danger within this lust remains part of the desire.

Sybille's and Margarete's interactions reflect the salient inconvenience family issues bring to the intentionally childless Sybille. This novel does not present any "complete" family unit: Stephan is divorced and has two adult daughters whom the reader does not meet; Margarete, also divorced, never mentions her two daughters' names; there is no discussion of Sybille's or Robert's families. Rather than problematizing the family issue, Rosenkranz wisely and subtly allows these unstated and perhaps non-existent relational bonds to fester and become apparent only as part of Sybille's and Robert's difficulties with interpersonal intimacies in general.

Born in 1948, Claudia Rosenkranz studied theater, sociology and German literature. She lives in Gießen and is the author of *Die letzte Fiesta* (1996). Her second novel, *Keiner verläßt den Raum*, profits well from the backdrop of Germany and the specifics of Hamburg. And in using her main character's professional discourse, Rosenkranz applies her own knowledge of psychology and intensifies Sybille's and Robert's shrewd verbal interactions. In addition, Rosenkranz's technique of careful foreshadowing intertwined with parallel developments of events provides the discerning reader with suspicions of the otherwise unanticipated ending. Reading past some of the dense scenes in which Rosenkranz slowly unfolds Sybille's memories, one finds a tautly written novel of obsession and its complicated results.

University of Massachusetts-Amherst

Beret Norman

GERHARD ROTH. *Der Plan*. Frankfurt: Fischer, 1998. 297 pp. DM 38.00.

In Gerhard Roth's latest novel, *Der Plan*, the reader is once again confronted with a main character who stands in conflict with his environment as seen in other Roth works, such as *die autobiographie des albert einstein* (1972) and *Landläufiger Tod* (1984). Departing from a setting in his native Austria, Roth takes the reader on an adventuresome journey through Japan alongside an Austrian librarian by the name of Konrad Feldt. The action arises out of Feldt's conflict with this foreign culture as well as out of an inner conflict resulting from his seemingly out-of-character decision to take part in criminal activities.

Roth has the reader believe that Feldt has led a rather uneventful life as a librarian until his superintendent, Glaser, hands him a stolen artifact shortly before he commits suicide. Feldt, a rational man whose only passion in life has been his books and other such artifacts found at the *Nationalbibliothek Wien*, would be expected to return the priceless article to its rightful place in the library. Instead, the action/adventure novel vividly describes Feldt's encounters with the criminal world of Japan as he attempts to sell the artifact while guest lecturing throughout the country.

Those of us unfamiliar with Japan are unable to pass judgment upon Roth's portrayal of Japanese culture. Yet, having been in a foreign country at some point in our lives, most of us share in Feldt's expected confrontations with the unknown. However, one might question the lack of apprehension in Feldt's actions. Unfamiliar with the language, he displays no inhibitions in exploring the various cities, sleeping with his interpreter and with a prostitute, while engaging in numerous criminal acts, such as smuggling and fleeing the scene of a crime. These activities seem bizarre for an asthma-stricken bookworm.

Why the title *Der Plan*? What was Feldt's plan? Was it to escape the mundane life of an Austrian librarian hindered by the iron corset of asthma? Did Feldt have a plan at all? His intent was indeed to travel to Japan in order to sell the artifact to a certain Dr. Hayashi, yet, Feldt's adventures are more those of mere coincidence rather than keen planning. The only obvious plan which he had at his disposal throughout the novel is his *Stadtplan*. Feldt views maps as guides which could

lead him to freedom. This is especially noticeable in the final chapter of the novel where Feldt examines the hotel map for possible escape routes. Rather than guiding him to freedom, however, the various maps which Feldt attains appear to lead him into danger, as many are provided by Drs. Hayashi and Chiba, the assumed buyers of the artifact.

From a critical vantage point, the overwhelmingly significant roles of coincidence, fate and foresight must be analyzed. From the onset, Feldt is aware that he will most likely never return to his homeland. Yet, he embraces this risk accompanied by a false sense of security provided by a copy of *The Divine Comedy* which he carries in his pocket. Feldt observes warnings of disaster, yet they have little or no effect on his actions. Buzzards circle the sky during times of danger, yet Feldt ignores their possible warning. A fortune teller also predicts danger in his immediate future—this warning also goes unheeded. Finally, constant coincidental meetings with Prof. Kitamura, a famous geologist, foreshadow the pending earthquake in the region.

Roth also provides us with a text rich in literary references. Especially intriguing, because of their grotesque nature, are those passages concerning Thomas Mann's *Tod in Venedig*, E.T.A. Hoffmann's *Die Fräulein von Scuderi* and *Der Sandmann* and Dante's *The Divine Comedy*. Like Aschenbach in Mann's novella, Feldt finds himself in a foreign land, an environment of decadence, from which he chooses not to escape. Feldt also resembles the character of Cardillac in Hoffmann's work, who was aware of his crime but obsessed with it and thus unable to stop himself. Feldt often contemplates fleeing, but an inner drive leads him to pursue his plan. *The Divine Comedy*, Feldt's constant companion, is a reference of enormous importance. It is within this volume, more precisely, at a passage which portrays thieves being strangled by serpents, that Feldt hides the artifact. Feldt appears to be very conscious of his criminal act and the punishment associated with it. On numerous occasions, Feldt elaborately describes the various portrayals of hell seen and read in Dante's work. Feldt's fascination with hell can be viewed on a more apparent level. Through his associations with Prof. Kitamura, Feldt is persistently reminded of the ever present threat of volcanic eruptions which spew fire over Japan, and of the earthquakes which crack the earth providing a gateway to hell. Yet, aside from the obvious references to hell, a heavenly presence must also be noted. Feldt spends much of the novel visiting Buddhist

temples and, thus, is often surrounded by monks. He sees monks on the street as well as on the train. It might, therefore, be possible to view Feldt's adventure as his own personal struggle between heaven and hell.

Roth must be commended for his simple and clear writing style. *Der Plan* can be categorized as entertainment literature, while also providing us with a novel which is intertextually rich and intellectually stimulating, thus allowing for different levels of reading.

University of Massachusetts at Amherst

Amanda C. Benis

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RAFIK SCHAMI. *Milad: Von einem, der auszog, um einundzwanzig Tage satt zu werden*. München: Hanser, 1997. 169 S. DM 29,80.

Rafik Schamis Roman *Milad* ist ein Märchen für Erwachsene, das entzückt, bezaubert und seine LeserInnen in eine unglaubliche Welt transportiert. Möchte man über fremde Umgebungen, abenteuerliche Erlebnisse, zauberhafte Feen, Träume und ungewöhnliche Lebenshaltungen lesen, dann ist *Milad* genau die richtige Lektüre.

Die Erzählung beginnt mit Schamis Beteuerung, eine wahre Geschichte geschrieben zu haben. Interessanterweise hatte der in Damaskus lebende Autor schon 1967 versucht, Milads Geschichte zu veröffentlichen. Doch hatte damals kein Verleger Interesse gezeigt. Schami konnte sein Werk erst viele Jahre später in Deutschland publizieren, als Abschlußkapitel zur ersten Auflage seines Werkes *Märchen aus Malula* (1987). Schami ist besonders stolz, daß sein Roman dreißig Jahre nach der Niederschrift „als unglaubliche, aber wahre Geschichte zum erstenmal in vollem Umfang“ erscheinen kann (23).

Milad ist der Erzähler der Geschichte, und in acht Kapiteln

werden die LeserInnen eingeladen, seinen Lebensweg zu verfolgen, der wie eine Mischung aus Grimmelshausens *Abenteuerlichen Simplicissimus*, Novalis' *Heinrich von Ofterdingen* und den Märchen aus 1001 Nacht anmutet. Milad beginnt seine Geschichte mit der Geburt seines Vaters, und schon auf den ersten Seiten wird deutlich, daß Milad in eine arme und hungrige Welt hineingeboren werden wird. Die LeserInnen begleiten Milad durch die schwere Zeit seiner Kindheit, geprägt vom Tod des Vaters und der Einsamkeit der Mutter. Doch in seiner Jugend „taucht[] eine Prophetin auf“ (41), die ihm helfen möchte und ihn auffordert, den kläglichen Lebensumständen zu entfliehen. Auf der Flucht erscheint ihm in einer Felshöhle eine Frau in einem blauen Kleid, seine Fee. Sie verspricht Milad Herzensfreuden unter der Bedingung, daß Milad einundzwanzig Tage lang genug zu essen findet. Milads Beschreibungen erinnern an Ofterdingens Erlebnisse, an sein Verlangen, die blaue Blume zu finden, und weisen Parallelen zum Klingsohr-Märchen auf. Besonders die Fee Ginnistan kann mit der Erscheinung im blauen Kleid verglichen werden.

In den folgenden Kapiteln steht—wie in 1001 Nacht—jedes Kapitel für eine Nacht, und wir begleiten Milad auf seinen Bemühungen, sich satt zu essen. Auf seiner wundersamen Reise trifft er einen frommen Mann, wird unfreiwillig in die russische Revolution verwickelt, findet Unterkunft bei einem Grabräuber und lernt die Moral eines Bordells kennen. Hier nun können Vergleiche zu *Simplicissimus'* Lebensweg gezogen werden, der wie Milad umherzieht, einem frommen Einsiedler begegnet und sich ohne sein Zutun wiederholt im Kriegsgeschehen wiederfindet.

Das interessante Echo deutscher und arabischer kanonische Texte in *Milad* wirft die Frage auf, inwieweit Schami diese Texte bewußt als Vorbilder benutzt. Besonders faszinierend erscheint eine mögliche Intertextualität arabischer und deutscher Vorlagen. Ein sorgfältiger Vergleich der erwähnten Texte dürfte sich ergiebig zeigen und mögliche Aufschlüsse über Schamis Popularität in Deutschland geben.

University of California at Davis

Christina Frei

DÖRTE VON WESTERNHAGEN. *Und also lieb ich mein Verderben*. Göttingen: Wallstein, 1997. 262 S. DM 38.00

Dörte von Westernhagens Roman *Und also lieb ich mein Verderben* ist die Geschichte eines tragischen Liebesverhältnisses Ende des siebzehnten Jahrhunderts am hannoverschen Hof. Das Buch besteht aus sechs Kapiteln, einem Epilog, in dem die verbleibenden Tage der Nebenfiguren beschrieben werden, einem Anhang, einem Personenverzeichnis und Verwandtschaftstafeln der zwei Hauptfiguren. In den sechs Kapiteln nimmt von Westernhagen die historisch getreuen Fäden des hannoverschen Hoflebens zwischen 1690 und 1694 auf und verwebt sie zu einer Geschichte von Liebe, Intrige, Komplott und Mord.

Die Prinzessin Sophie Dorothea, Tochter des Herzogs Georg Wilhelm von Celle und der Herzogin Eleonore D'Olbreuse, ist mit dem Erbprinzen Georg Ludwig, Sohn des Herzogs Ernst August von Hannover und der Herzogin Sophie von der Pfalz, verheiratet. Im Gegensatz zu der glücklichen, liebevollen Beziehung ihrer Eltern führt Sophie Dorothea eine unerfüllte Ehe. Ihr Gemahl hat mehrere Mätressen und kümmert sich wenig um seine Ehefrau. Enttäuscht über den Verlauf ihrer der Ehe verliebt sich Sophie Dorothea in den schwedischen Grafen Philipp Christoph Königsmarck, welcher ihre Gefühle erwidert. Die zwei tauschen heimlich Briefe aus, in denen sie sich sowohl ihre Liebe erklären als auch ihre Frustrationen äußern. Wann immer sich die Möglichkeit ergibt, entfliehen die Liebenden den wachsamen Augen des Hofes, um ihre Liebe körperlich auszudrücken. Ihre Diskretion ist jedoch vergeblich, denn einige Briefe werden entdeckt, und der Hof wird der Affäre gewahr. Sophie Dorotheas Gemahl Georg Ludwig vertraut daraufhin seinem Vater an, daß er annehme, seine Gemahlin wolle von ihm geschieden werden, was auch ihm recht wäre. Als Antwort darauf erwidert der Vater: „Wir sind Ihrem Wunsch nicht völlig dawider, aber man muß einen gangbaren Weg finden“ (213).

Der „gangbare Weg“ besteht darin, Königsmarck zu ermorden und Sophie Dorothea nach vollzogener Scheidung wegzusperrern, da die Ehre des hannoverschen Hauses gewahrt werden soll und die Legitimität der Nachfolge nicht in Frage gestellt werden darf.

Königsmarck wird umgebracht und sein Körper in einem Sack in tiefem Wasser versenkt. Die Prinzessin wird für den Rest ihres Lebens in das Amtshaus in Ahlden gesperrt. Sie sieht weder ihren Vater noch ihre Kinder jemals wieder.

Obwohl das Liebesverhältnis zwischen Sophie Dorothea und Königsmarck im Mittelpunkt steht, finden sich im Roman zahlreiche Nebenhandlungen. Zum Beispiel werden Kriege und Spannungen zwischen Frankreich, Dänemark, dem Deutschen Kaiser und den kurfürstlichen Kindern oft im Detail beschrieben. Ebenso werden das Erstreben der Kurwürde und deren Erlangung in allen Einzelheiten dargestellt. Diese Nebenhandlungen dienen dazu, die kulturelle und historische Atmosphäre zu vermitteln und die Handlung vorzutreiben.

*Und also lieb ich mein Verderben* liest sich wie ein Text aus dem siebzehnten Jahrhundert, was natürlich für das Kenntnisreichtum der Autorin spricht. Aber die häufige Verwendung von Wörtern und Phrasen in anderen Sprachen macht den Text oft schwer zugänglich. Man verbringt viel Zeit entweder mit einem französischen, lateinischen oder plattdeutschen Wörterbuch oder mit dem Versuch, die fremden Sätze aus dem Kontext heraus zu entziffern. Manchmal geht von Westernhagen in ihrer detaillierten Erzählung so weit, daß man vergessen könnte, welches die Hauptgeschichte und welches die Nebengeschichte ist. Es ist zu bedauern, daß von Westernhagen sich nicht mehr auf das Verhältnis der beiden Liebenden konzentriert. Meiner Meinung nach ist der Roman ein interessantes Porträt höfischen Lebens im 17. Jahrhundert, das allerdings fesselnder hätte sein können, hätte die Autorin Nebensächlichkeiten weniger Bedeutung zugemessen.

University of Cincinnati

Michael H. Rice