

Book Reviews

Poetische Vernunft. Moral und Ästhetik im Deutschen Idealismus.

Von Hans Feger. Stuttgart: Metzler, 2007. 630 Seiten. €79,95.

Die Frage nach dem Verhältnis von Moral und Kunst ist so alt wie die Antike, und doch wurde sie immer wieder neu gestellt, am grundsätzlichsten und folgenreichsten in der Ästhetik des Deutschen Idealismus. Hans Fegers umfangreiche Studie ist eine gründliche, gelehrte und auch leserfreundliche Rekonstruktion der moralischen und ästhetischen Entwicklung der Philosophie von Kant bis Kierkegaard. Sie versucht, eine Entwicklungslinie aufzuzeigen, in welcher das Verhältnis der Ästhetik zur Ethik, das bei Kant auf dem Autonomieanspruch der praktischen Vernunft beruht, bei Kierkegaard ins Gegenteil verkehrt wird, so dass die Ethik aus einer Ästhetik hervorgeht, die nun wesentlich eine negative ist. Wichtigstes Verbindungsglied in dieser Entwicklung ist der poetische Idealismus Schellings, der das Verhältnis von Ethik und Ästhetik einer Neubewertung unterzieht, in deren Folge die innere Freiheit des moralischen Anspruchs an eine ästhetische Erfahrung gebunden ist, der ein absoluter Vorrang gegenüber dem begrifflichen Denken eingeräumt wird. In drei Teilen bringt Feger die philosophische, ästhetische und literarische Konstellation dieser Entwicklung in einen argumentativen Zusammenhang, in welchem die kontroversen Positionen ausführlich diskutiert werden.

Im ersten Teil, "Kritik der ästhetischen Erfahrung," wird aufgezeigt, wie die ästhetische Erfahrung bei Kant ihren autonomen Status dadurch erhält, dass sie zwischen subjektivem Urteil und objektiver Erkenntnis vermittelt und so eine Erkenntnis überhaupt erst ermöglicht, welche die Grenzen der begrifflichen Erkenntnis überschreitet. Schiller und Reinhold knüpfen hier an, modifizieren aber die kantische Konzeption moralischer Autonomie, indem sie nachweisen, dass sie ohne die Vermittlungsleistung der ästhetischen Erfahrung realitätsfremd bleibt.

Der zweite Teil, "Metaphysik der ästhetischen Erfahrung," thematisiert im Kontext des Deutschen Idealismus die ästhetische Erfahrung als ein Moment der Einheitsstiftung. Spekulativ aufgewertet wird die ästhetische Erfahrung im Kunstabsolutismus Schellings, der zwei Traditionsstränge aufnimmt: zum einen das klassische Versöhnungsmodell, wie es Schillers Konzeption einer ästhetischen Erziehung zugrunde liegt, zum anderen das frühromantische Projekt der Entgrenzung der ästhetischen Erfahrung, das Feger bei Jacobi und Novalis expliziert.

Der dritte Teil, "Existenz und ästhetische Erfahrung," thematisiert schließlich den Bruch mit der Spekulation bei Kierkegaard als einen Neuanfang, der—von Schellings poetischem Idealismus vorbereitet—wesentlich in einer Ästhetikkritik begründet liegt. Die moderne Existenzphilosophie, die den Menschen nicht mehr als Spekulierenden, sondern als Existierenden erfassen will, verabschiedet die spekulative

Überforderung, welche die ästhetische Erfahrung noch bei Schelling hat. Dies wird für die Romantikkritik Kierkegaards wichtig. Kierkegaard weist der romantischen Ironie nach, dass in ihr die philosophische Spekulation nicht an ein Ende kommt, sondern sich ins Uferlose verliert. Nur als negative eröffnet die Ästhetik eine ethische Einsicht.

Die Koda, ein kurzes Adorno-Kapitel, verbindet die Arbeit überzeugend mit heutigen Diskussionen des Moral/Ästhetik-Problems. Das ist keine vorschnelle Aktualisierung, sondern diese Verknüpfung ergibt sich fast notwendig aus Adornos Habilitationsschrift über Kierkegaard. Adorno studiert an Kierkegaard, was es heißt, wenn Kunst selbst gegen ihren affirmativen Charakter Front macht. Bei Adorno wird das kantische Modell eines autonomen Handelns auf die ästhetische Erfahrung übertragen, die sich nunmehr durch negative Bestimmtheit auszeichnet.

Was Feger im Grunde behandelt, ist nicht weniger als eine "transzendente Erzählung" des Deutschen Idealismus, deren Spannung darin besteht, dass sie eine intensive Auseinandersetzung mit Kants (und auch Fichtes) Subjektphilosophie ist—sozusagen lauter Kant/Fichte-Krisen.

Beim Untertitel der Arbeit überrascht, dass Feger nicht Kants Paragraph 59 der *Kritik der Urteilskraft*, "Von der Schönheit als Symbol der Sittlichkeit," zum Anlass nimmt, um das komplexe Verhältnis von Moral und Ästhetik zu diskutieren. Denn dort hatte Kant, zumindest andeutungsweise, vorgeschlagen, beide durch einen Analogieschluss zu verbinden, obwohl er gleich hinzufügte, dass "dies Geschäft [des Symbolisierens] bis jetzt noch wenig auseinandergesetzt [sei], so sehr es eine tiefere Untersuchung verdient." Mag sein, dass Feger sich nicht darauf einließ, da er dieses Problem schon in seiner Dissertation (*Die Macht der Einbildungskraft in der Ästhetik Kants und Schillers*, 1995) ausführlich behandelt hatte; doch wäre eine Rekapitulation hier am Platze gewesen. Zwar spielen auch in der hier besprochenen Studie ästhetische Anschauung, Einbildungskraft und Darstellungsprobleme eine bedeutende Rolle, ja sie ziehen sich als roter Faden durch die Arbeit; doch rückt Kants Frage nach einer moralischen Urteilskraft und damit die moralphilosophische Diskussion der Zeit in den Mittelpunkt, auch wenn Feger bemüht ist, die ästhetische Vermittlung immer wieder herauszuarbeiten.

Statt sich so ausführlich mit Jacobis Missverständnis und Fehlinterpretation des Kant'schen Kritizismus auseinanderzusetzen, hätten Schillers langjährige Auseinandersetzung mit Kants Ästhetik und seine Vermittlungsversuche zwischen Moral und Ästhetik noch mehr Aufmerksamkeit verdient. Es mag sein, dass Jacobis Kantkrise und seine "unbefangene Metaphysik" (Hegel) damals manchen Denker und Dichter inspirierten (Schelling, Novalis und Jean Paul); doch das ästhetische Erziehungsprogramm des Kantianers Schiller war einflussreicher und wird heute noch diskutiert. Immerhin hatte schon Hegel in seiner *Ästhetik* "das große Verdienst" Schillers darin gesehen, dass er "die kantische Subjektivität und Abstraktion des Denkens durchbrochen und den Versuch gewagt habe, über sie hinaus die Einheit und Versöhnung denkend als das Wahre zu fassen und künstlerisch zu verwirklichen."

Novalis erkennt die Aporien von Fichtes Wissenschaftslehre, die er zum Teil revidiert, indem er sie mit dem Problem der Darstellung des Absoluten verbindet. Dieses wird als Problem einer sprachlichen Darstellung greifbar, wie Feger in einer Interpretation des *Monologs* herausarbeitet. Dort kommt er zu dem Ergebnis, dass dies nicht als ein Problem immanenter Reflexionskritik zu deuten sei, sondern als Problem

eines transreflexiven Gehalts. Nur hätte man sich auch hier eine Anwendung von Novalis' Sprach- und Darstellungsproblematik auf seine Dichtungen, etwa die "Hymnen an die Nacht" oder *Heinrich von Ofterdingen*, gewünscht, um Novalis' "magischen Idealismus" auch in seinen Werken nachzuweisen.

Für den Germanisten ergiebiger ist dagegen Fegers Interpretation von Jean Pauls "Rede des toten Christus vom Weltgebäude herab, dass kein Gott sei." Bisher meist als einer der Schlüsseltexte des romantischen Nihilismus interpretiert, erfährt die Rede eine überraschend neue Deutung, indem Feger den Text in den Zusammenhang der zeitgenössischen Kritik des Religionsskeptizismus der kritischen Philosophie stellt. Rückhaltloser kann kein verwaister Gottessohn um seinen verlorenen Vater trauern und in die Leere des Nichts fallen; jedoch ist diese Rede mitnichten eine Verteidigung des Nihilismus. Schon dass der Erzähler des *Siebenkäs* sie als außerordentlich kühn, wenn nicht sogar als blasphemisch empfindet, sollte zu denken geben; erst recht ihre Charakterisierung als Alptraum, aus dem es ein gnädiges Erwachen gibt, ja eine religiöse Katharsis, die sie an eine frömmere Tagesordnung bindet. Sie ist das poetische Äquivalent zu Jacobis *salto mortale* aus der Kantkrise in eine heile Welt. Nur geht Jean Pauls Ästhetik der poetischen Inversion, die ein Grundzug seiner Werke ist, weit über Jacobis "Doppelphilosophie" hinaus. In diesem Kapitel bewährt sich Feger als Philosophie- und Literaturhistoriker.

Feger interpretiert Schelling als "Repräsentanten der Selbstkritik des Deutschen Idealismus." Schon das provokante Oxymoron des Titels deutet auf Schelling, und nicht umsonst hat Feger dem Buch ein Motto von Schelling vorangestellt: "Aus der gemeinen Wirklichkeit gibt es nur zwei Auswege: die Poesie, welche uns in eine idealische Welt versetzt, und die Philosophie, welche die Wirklichkeit ganz vor uns verschwinden läßt" (Schelling, *System des transzendentalen Idealismus*, III, 351). Entsprechend analysiert Feger Schellings Philosophie als Kritik eines abstrakten Idealismus Kant- und Fichte'scher Provenienz und dessen "poetischen Idealismus" als eine Aufwertung der Kunst, ja Feger spricht sogar von dessen "Kunstabsohlutismus." Zwar hält Schelling an Kants Autonomie der Moral fest, aber wie das reine Sollen in ein praktisches Wollen überführt werden kann, wie Freiheit möglich ist, lässt sich philosophisch nicht beweisen. Was im Denken und Handeln auseinanderklafft, lässt sich nur durch Kunst aussöhnen. Die ästhetische Erfahrung wird damit für Schelling zum Organon der Philosophie. Die Autonomie der Freiheit, die sich im praktischen Handeln als reine nie nachweisen lässt, kann in der Kunst als Möglichkeit anschaulich werden. Kunst vermittelt die Möglichkeit, dass die in der Subjektivität der Moral begründete Freiheit in die Wirklichkeit des Handelns überführt werden könnte. Sie steigert nicht nur das "Lebensgefühl" (Kant), sondern sie bewahrt auch eine Wahrheit, die in der Täuschung, dem Schein der Kunst, offenbar wird (Schiller). Der Ernst des Lebens wird in die Heiterkeit der Kunst überführt, so dass sie eine Erfahrung ermöglicht, wie die Welt sein könnte, wenn die Freiheit "ohne Hindernisse praktisch wäre" (Schelling).

Erfrischend ist der Anfang des Kierkegaard-Kapitels, "Das unendlich leichte Spiel mit dem Nichts" (489–494) mit seinen kulturkritischen Volten. In ihm wird der von Jochen Hörisch herausgegebene Sammelband *Aktualität der Frühromantik* (1987), in dem die Romantik für den nachmetaphysischen Diskurs einer gottlosen Welt der Postmoderne aktualisiert wird (Hörisch, de Man, Behler und Welsch), mit Kierkegaard einer kritischen Revision unterzogen. Hier spricht Feger als Zeitgenosse,

der die Leichtigkeit und auch das Spielerische der Postmoderne kritisiert, ohne sie zu verurteilen. Er wendet sich gegen eine vorschnelle Gleichsetzung von romantischer Theorie und postmodernen Tendenzen; doch wird die Theorie der Postmoderne nicht in Bausch und Bogen verurteilt, sondern auf ihre romantische Tradition hin befragt. Feger verfährt hier wie Kierkegaard in seiner Romantikkritik, der die romantische Ironie nicht—wie Hegel—verurteilte, sondern sie in seine “beherrschte Ironie” aufhob. Denn es geht nicht nur um Kierkegaards Entwicklung von einem ästhetisch geprägten Lebensgefühl zu einer existentiell begründeten Ethik und einer neuen, negativen Theologie, vielmehr auch um den Nachweis, dass die Ästhetisierung des Lebens “als Ausdruck und Verhüllung der Wirklichkeit” ethisches Handeln verhindert.

In diesem Kapitel schreibt Feger sich frei, wird souverän—und das kommt auch der literarischen Analyse zugute. So verdeutlicht er Kierkegaards Romantikkritik überzeugend an zwei literarischen Beispielen: Friedrich Schlegels *Lucinde* und Tiecks Lyrik. Hier holt er nach, was er bisher vernachlässigt hatte, nämlich die Theorie der romantischen Ironie (besonders bei Friedrich Schlegel) mit ihrer poetischen Form zu verbinden. Zwar geschieht das *ex negativo*, also durch Hegels scharfe Romantikkritik und Kierkegaards verstehende Aufhebung; doch immerhin expliziert Feger sie erst, bevor er sie kritisiert.

Das ist nur ein Verdienst dieses dritten Teils; denn nun folgt auch die literarische Analyse von Kierkegaards pseudonymen Werken, die ungleich aufschlussreicher ist. Um den Widerspruch zwischen Realität und Idealität im Lebensprozess praktisch aufzuheben, bedarf es einer Literatur der Existenz, der “indirekten existentiellen Mitteilung,” die sich dadurch auszeichnet, dass durch sie der spekulativ nicht begreifbare Standpunkt durch eine moralische Urteilskraft vermittelt wird. Gerade das Unphilosophische, das sich in der pseudonymen Schriftstellerei Kierkegaards wegen ihrer nicht-argumentativen Struktur von vornherein jeder Kritik entzieht, ist von höchster Bedeutung für das Verständnis von Kierkegaards “Philosophie.” Die erzählende Philosophie Schellings, als “Prosa der Rezentrierung des Menschen,” wird in Kierkegaards pseudonymer Schriftstellerei in eine “Ästhetik des Gelingens von Lebensvollzügen” transformiert. In den abschließenden Kapiteln der Arbeit wird dieses Problem anhand von *Entweder Oder* und *Die Wiederholung* herausgearbeitet und das hermeneutisch komplexe Verhältnis von Ethik und Ästhetik literarisch kommentiert. Hier kommt es zu einer tentativen Versöhnung von Ethik und Ästhetik kraft der “beherrschten Ironie.” Der Schriftsteller hat (vorerst) das letzte Wort, und Feger kann sein *opus magnum* elegant abrunden, auch wenn als aktualisierende Reprise noch ein Ausblick auf Adornos negative Ästhetik folgt—aber sie war im Laufe der Arbeit immer schon gegenwärtig.

Methodisch ließe sich die Studie als geisteswissenschaftlich charakterisieren; doch genauer wäre es, von einer historisch genetischen Kritik zu sprechen, die sich bemüht, die Autoren am Ideal ihrer Absicht zu messen, ohne sie vorschnell zu kritisieren. Daraus erklärt sich auch der klare Stil der Arbeit, eine jargonfreie, textnahe Exegese, in der sich Text und Auslegung, Zitat und Kommentar anschniegssam ergänzen—manchmal etwas zu reibungslos, so dass ein Zitat die Interpretation ersetzt oder die Analyse durch ein Zitat vorschnell abgeschlossen wird. Lobend muss auch Fegers stupende Belesenheit und Gelehrsamkeit erwähnt werden, die selbst dort sichtbar wird, wo er ausspart oder nur hinweist (etwa auf Hegel, Hölderlin oder Friedrich Schlegel). Die Arbeit ließe sich auch als interdisziplinären Beitrag zum Deutschen Idealismus verste-

hen, insofern sie Moralphilosophie, Ästhetik und Poetik in ihren Wechselbeziehungen zeigt, ein Phänomen der Epoche, das in der deutschen Geistesgeschichte seinesgleichen sucht.

University of Wisconsin-Madison

—Klaus L. Berghahn

Passions of the Sign: Revolution and Language in Kant, Goethe, and Kleist.

By Andreas Gailus. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2006. xvi + 222 pages. \$60.00.

The main body of Andreas Gailus's book is a set of three essays on the three authors cited in the title. These essays are framed by an introduction and conclusion that place the argument in a theoretical context focusing ultimately upon Gailus's notion of performative language embodied in the "energetic sign." This idea evolved out of the discourse on performativity that began with J.L. Austin and has been elaborated by the work of Jacques Derrida, Judith Butler, and Shoshana Felman. Austin's initial formulation has been transformed—radically altered, one might say—into a theory that is concerned rather less with the philosophy of language and considerably more with notions of sexuality. Gailus tries to reassert the centrality of language while at the same time maintaining the recent interest in the bodily, indeed libidinal, component in acts of speaking. At the center of his argument is the claim that "every sign incorporates in its structure the energetic cycle of its own production," which means in particular that, because language "has aims of its own," the discourse of individuals "becomes performative—modifies reality—when it succeeds [. . .] in aligning the extra-individual passions generated by the communicative exchange with the impersonal force sedimented in the sign" (14).

This is rather heavy-going, and it takes a pass through the whole book to get a handle on what Gailus is after. It may not be possible to summarize it properly in a brief compass. The complicated point the book makes involves the interaction of the conventional, extra-personal relationships that make linguistic signs useful as a means of communication with the particular, very local and physical circumstances in which such communicative acts are embedded. That requires balancing the linguistic/philosophical concerns foregrounded early on by Austin and Derrida with the attention to gendered corporeality that resides at the center of Butler's and Felman's interest.

Gailus investigates this theoretical constellation in the historical context of German reactions to the French Revolution. That is not to say that he limits himself to interrogating texts that explicitly address the revolution itself, though some such do appear. Rather, he wants to look at important texts produced in the post-revolutionary period that address what one might call revolutionary issues. Kleist's *Michael Kohlhaas* comes under discussion for this second reason. Although the story is set long before the Bastille fell, it depicts revolutionary actions and attempts to deal with the problem of the relation of the allegedly freely acting individual to the structure of social and political authority to which such individuals are subject. As Gailus reads texts like *Kohlhaas*, the political question of how one can actually change the world merges with the philosophical/linguistic theoretical question of how one can succeed in doing things with words. The paradigmatic political-linguistic gesture becomes Kohlhaas's

act of swallowing the paper containing the gypsy-woman's prophecy, a deed that has more long-term political effect than any of the horse dealer's radical deeds of revolutionary violence.

In addition to the essay on Kleist, there are investigations of Goethe's *Conversations of German Refugees* and of Kant's philosophy of history as exemplified in *The Conflict of the Faculties*, two texts that more directly address issues arising out of the French Revolution. All of this, it should be added, is interwoven with a meditation on the novella genre and its important place in any history of the discourse of rupture. For me, the discussion of the novella was perhaps the most interesting part of the whole enterprise, drawing out certain implications of the genre's history that I had only begun to wonder about in the past. Although not connected to any revolutionary political movement at the time of its early development, the novella is indeed, as Gailus suggests, nearly the perfect literary form for the depiction of revolutionary ideas and events, insisting as it does both on the historical authenticity and the inherently disruptive novelty of its subject matter.

Gailus has a lot to manage, and one is impressed that he can bring it off at all, never mind that he does so with considerable grace. The great virtue of this book is that its author is an attentive reader who reads important texts and writes well about what he reads. Even so, this is no calligraphy for school children, as the officer says in Kafka's "Penal Colony." One hesitates to recommend it to any save scholars of German culture with a thorough background in recent developments in theory. Those coming to the book less thoroughly prepared are likely to get lost early on. But that is much as it should be. This is a sophisticated work addressed to an equally sophisticated audience, for whom it will prove stimulating on several counts.

University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill

—Clayton Koelb

The Literature of Weimar Classicism.

Edited by Simon Richter. Rochester, NY: Camden House, 2005. xii + 407 pages. \$90.00.

In his opening sentence, Simon Richter immediately formulates the essential framework that this book addresses for the next 370 pages: "If literary historians agree on anything, it is that Weimar Classicism as a distinct period ought not to exist." In the following twelve contributions, all of high quality, and often as eloquent as Richter's introduction, his initial verdict is all too often supported, to an extent that one feels compelled to question Camden House's decision to separate Goethe and Schiller from Volume 6, *Literature of Sturm and Drang*, and Volume 8, respectively, *The Literature of German Romanticism* and group them as "classicist." It is as if the editor had to follow the publisher's outdated mode of a traditional literary history, and did his very best to frame and legitimize "GoetheandSchiller" once again as a single and exclusive entity for which the aesthetic term of "Weimar Classicism" had to serve.

Listen to the various attempts of classifying the term "Weimar Classicism" that almost every contributor had to ponder, including Richter's own: "Weimar Classicism is understood as explicitly offering an aesthetic solution to troubled times" (5), despite the fact that its characteristics "are perfectly consistent with those of European

Romanticism” (3). Dieter Borchmeyer’s recycled and revised essay “Gibt es ‘deutsche Klassiker’?” (1998) justly reminds us that “epochs and periods are heuristic and consensus-based attempts at bringing order to literary and cultural production” but only so that “participants delude themselves into believing their period can be defined” (47). He then concludes that “it has become clear that it is not possible to speak of classicism around 1800 in the full semantic breadth of the concept” (60). Thomas P. Saine, who portrays Herder as being “not a deep thinker” (119) even though he is the only male author in the orbit of Goethe and Schiller deemed sufficiently worthy to have a separate essay devoted to him, leaves his own sardonic judgment unanswered when he asserts that “the question why Herder should be regarded as Classical or as a Classic is not really much different than posing the same question in the case of Goethe, Schiller, and assorted lesser figures of the period” (117). Jane K. Brown seems to have an easier assignment when surveying the “Drama and Theatrical Practice in Weimar Classicism,” since “for most of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries the dramas of ‘Goethe and Schiller’ stood for Weimar Classicism” (133). While her focus on theatrical practice has to undermine to some extent the popularity of the two “professional” friends (Gail Hart) and their enterprise to “educate the German public [. . .] through the theater” (133) she declares when addressing Schiller’s late plays: “It is crucial to recognize that the full flowering of Weimar Classicism was in fact a Romantic drama” (161). Cyrus Hamlin in his essay on “German Classical Poetry” not only focuses mainly on Hölderlin’s elegy “Brod und Wein,” but goes as far as to state that “I do not accept the concept of Classicism as a distinct period in German literary history” (195). Even Elisabeth Krimmer’s analysis of five novels by women authors (Caroline von Wolzogen, Friederike Unger, Sophie Mereau, Johanna Schopenhauer, and Charlotte von Stein) has to admit vaguely: “The works discussed in this article are chosen primarily for their stylistic and ideological proximity to German Classicism” (238) before she provides an excellently conceptualized theoretical framework for the novels by stressing how the elements of “body bildung” are “set up as irreconcilable opposites” (241). Helmut Pfoth, who presents to us visual culture, makes the distinction that Weimar “later being perceived as classical, was classicistically oriented” before he too, acknowledges, however carefully expressed, that “Weimar Classicism and Romanticism were not as different as they have sometimes seemed” (267).

While Benjamin Bennett mainly enjoys dismantling and invalidating Schiller’s *Briefe zur ästhetischen Erziehung*, he only settles for the term “German Classicism” because of the high level of abstraction that “Goethe and Schiller produced during the period of their association and collaboration” and decidedly not because of its implied “nationalistic convenience” (296). Where Bennett’s tour de force maintains that by its own logic Schiller’s “aesthetics must be recognized as *irrelevant*” (318), it is Astrida Orle Tantilillo’s welcome task to show that Goethe’s “classical” science is decidedly a-classical in the sense that “Goethe’s protean understanding of nature is significant because it set him apart from traditional concepts of nature [. . .] because he viewed nature as an eternally changing entity, truth for him was not static” (342). And as if the reader could still have any doubts on the problematic nature of this volume’s premise, it is W. Daniel Wilson who reminds us that “literary scholarship has recognized since at least the 1980s that the French Revolution and its impact in Germany formed an

important context to the ‘high’ classical literature of Goethe and Schiller” (353) before he succinctly summarizes his own research on the conservative thrust of Goethe and Schiller who “both mobilized literature against the forces of revolution” (359).

In short, while there are no surprises for those who know the scholarship of our colleagues, it is nevertheless somewhat puzzling how the volume’s concept trapped them in an all too familiar and yet problematic *Sonderweg*, as evidenced by the authors’ self-conscious remarks. In the end the opportunity of framing anew the ongoing saga on “GoetheandSchiller” has been missed despite the high quality and mostly superb contributions.

Emory University

—Peter Höyng

“Verteufelt human”? Zum Humanitätsideal der Weimarer Klassik.

Herausgegeben von Volker C. Dörr und Michael Hofmann. Bielefeld: Erich Schmidt, 2008. 200 Seiten. €39,80.

Dieser Sammelband geht auf einen Workshop zurück, der im Rahmen des Forschungsprojekts “Der Humanismus in der Epoche der Globalisierung” des Kulturwissenschaftlichen Instituts Essen, mit Unterstützung des Freundeskreises des Goethe-Nationalmuseums, im Oktober 2006 in Weimar stattgefunden hat. Anlass war der 70. Geburtstag von Norbert Oellers, dem dieser Band gewidmet ist.

Im Vorwort werden Richard Alewyns Worte von “Goethe als Alibi” zitiert und ein Lippenbekenntnis gegen den “‘Zivilisationsbruch’ der Shoa” abgelegt. Statt Buchenwald wird die “Chiffre ‘Auschwitz’” eingesetzt (9). Die Herausgeber stellen die Frage, ob “deshalb die Idee preisgegeben [werden muss], dem Menschen käme aufgrund seines puren Menschseins eine hohe normative Qualität—wir nennen sie ‘Würde’—zu” (9). Dass es mit dem Wunsch nach der Rehabilitierung des “traditionellen Humanismus” nicht getan ist, darin sind sich die Herausgeber einig und fordern in Anlehnung an den Historiker Jörn Rüsen eine neue “Denkanstrengung,” um diesen Humanismus wieder “zukunftsfähig” zu machen (9).

Die Frage erhebt sich, ob die Beiträge diesem Anspruch gerecht werden. Die meisten sind einem traditionell hermeneutischen Ansatz verpflichtet, von dem der Schritt zu einer solchen Denkanstrengung kaum zu erwarten ist. Auch Volker C. Dörres dekonstruktive Lektüre der “Iphigenie auf Tauris” vermag daran nichts zu ändern. Die Herausgeber führen die Kulturwissenschaften seit den 1960er Jahren an, die thematisch ihren Niederschlag im *post-colonial turn* und in den *gender*-Kategorien fanden (10). Doch dass Thoas der Fremde bleibt (Dörr, 107) und Iphigenie als schöne Frau eine Symbolfigur der Versöhnung darstellt (Helmut J. Schneider, 130), obwohl ihre “(weibliche) Autonomie in (männlicher) Heteronomie” verbleibt (Dörr, 109), bringt keine neue “Denkanstrengung” im Hinblick auf den Holocaust.

Der Band umfasst zehn Beiträge, die das Humanitätsideal von Wilhelm von Humboldt über Herder, Wieland, Heinse, Goethe, Kant und Schiller bis zu Georg Forster untersuchen. Sämtliche Mitarbeiter sind ausgewiesene Kenner und behandeln die Materie auf einem hohen Reflexionsniveau. Wer sich in Zukunft mit diesem Thema beschäftigt, wird auf diesen Sammelband zurückgreifen müssen. Die in den Texten angelegten Aporien werden aufgedeckt. Die Autoren fühlen sich diesen Texten in “philolo-

gisch geforderter Treue" verpflichtet (159). Deshalb wagt sich auch keiner der Autoren über diesen Textkorpus hinaus. Mit Ausnahme eines Beitrags über Heiner Müller sind die Aufsätze auf die Texte der Weimarer Klassik und deren Zeitgenossen beschränkt. Selbst der Heiner Müller-Beitrag konzentriert sich auf dessen Schiller-Lektüre und Wallenstein-Bearbeitung. Doch nirgends werden die Widersprüche dieser Texte zu der politischen Situation in Weimar dargelegt, weder im Hinblick auf das 18. noch 20. Jahrhundert. Wulf Köpke spricht am Ende seines Beitrags von dem "Kontrast zwischen den Ideen, den Projekten und Hoffnungen, und der Wirklichkeit des Kleinstaats Sachsen-Weimar" (68), aber bei dieser Andeutung bleibt es auch. Bezeichnend für diese Einstellung ist die Tatsache, dass W. Daniel Wilsons *Goethe-Tabu* (München 1999) kein einziges Mal zitiert wird. Dabei hätte dieses Buch einen wichtigen Denkanstoß geben können, zumal es im Erscheinungsjahr in Weimar im Gespräch war und Wilson fünf Jahre später einen weiteren Band über *Goethes Weimar und die Französische Revolution* (Köln 2004) hinzufügte. Die Hinrichtung der Kindesmörderin Anna Catharina Höhne in Weimar im Jahr 1783 in keinem der Beiträge erwähnt.

Die im Vorwort angekündigten Erwartungen werden nicht erfüllt, aber dazu sind sie wohl zu hoch gespannt. Der Mitherausgeber Michael Hofmann hat sich in seinem Beitrag über Krise und Erneuerung des Humanitäts-Paradigmas bescheidener ausgedrückt, wenn er von einem "reflektierten und selbstkritischen Humanismus" in Schillers und Goethes Spätwerk spricht. Man kann ihm nur zustimmen, wenn er erklärt, dass "es auch heute noch legitim [erscheint], von einem selbstkritisch reflektierten und in einem spezifischen Sinne erneuerten Humanitäts-Modell der Weimarer Klassik zu sprechen" (159). Die Frage bleibt, ob dieses Modell Relevanz für einen Makroidealismus des 21. Jahrhunderts besitzt. Die Notwendigkeit, "eine bessere Welt zu denken und zu machen," besteht auch heute noch, wie es ein Leserbrief von Philip Alcott von der Universität Cambridge an *Die Zeit* vom 18. September 2008 formulierte.

University of California, Los Angeles

—Ehrhard Bahr

"Ihr liebt und schreibt Sonette! Weh der Grille!" Die Sonette Johann Wolfgang von Goethes.

Von Katrin Jordan. Würzburg: Königshausen & Neumann, 2008. 332 Seiten. €48,00.

Mit Katrin Jordans Buch liegt zum ersten Mal nach fast vierzig Jahren wieder eine monographische Untersuchung zu Goethes Sonetten vor, die zuletzt in ihrer Gesamtheit von Hans-Jürgen Schlüter in dessen Abhandlung *Goethes Sonette* 1969 betrachtet wurden. Ein Grund dafür, dass die Sonette eher selten als Gesamtwerk die Forschung beschäftigen, liegt darin, dass sie nicht als solches konzipiert und publiziert sind. Es gibt insgesamt 25 Sonette, von denen die "Sammlung Sonette" mit 17 Gedichten die zahlenmäßig größte Gruppe bildet. Es handelt sich dabei um eine 1807 entstandene, zunächst nur 6 Sonette umfassende Sammlung, die teilweise erstmals 1815 und vollständig erst 1827 in der Ausgabe letzter Hand veröffentlicht wurde. Diese Sammlung weist als einziger Teil von Goethes Sonettdichtung eine gewisse Geschlossenheit oder auch zyklische Anlage auf. Außer ihr stehen nur einzelne weitere Sonette, wie vor allem "Natur und Kunst" aus dem Vorspiel "Was wir bringen" und "Das Sonett" im Blickpunkt der Forschung.

Jordan untersucht nun nicht nur alle Sonette Goethes, sondern will diese auch als einen in sich geschlossenen lyrischen Komplex verstehen. Zum Nachweis ihrer These knüpft sie an neuere Arbeiten zur Sonettforschung im Allgemeinen und zu Goethes Lyrik im Besonderen an. Es handelt sich im ersten Fall um die Überwindung eines normativ verstandenen Sonettbegriffs und eine Hinwendung zu einem kombinatorisch bzw. historisch aufzufassenden Formverständnis in den Untersuchungen von Erika Greber, Andreas Böhn und Thomas Borgstedt (38–42), und im zweiten Fall um die Abkehr von der Bewertung der Sonette als Erlebnisdichtung und die Erneuerung eines strukturalistischen Ansatzes bei Marianne Wunsch (75–78) bzw. einer Lesart der Sonette als allegorische Dichtungen bei Gerhart von Graevenitz (78–79). Aus diesen Forschungsergebnissen gewinnt Jordan ein Interpretationsmuster, das auf jedes Gedicht gleichermaßen angewendet und mit der sperrigen Wortformel “manieristisch-topisch-intertextuell-kombinatorisch” (42) bezeichnet wird. Im Einzelnen werden darunter verstanden: die Reflexion der Form im Sonett selbst, der Einsatz vielfältiger tradiierter rhetorischer Stilmittel, die Rekurrerung auf literarische Vorlagen und die Verwendung formalartistischer Mittel wie Reim- und Zahlenkombinatorik.

Die Verfasserin wendet diese Vorgaben in einer Reihe von Einzelanalysen an. Sie geht dabei im Prinzip chronologisch nach der Entstehungszeit der Sonette vor, die im Zeitraum zwischen 1799 und 1813 verfasst wurden. Dabei teilt sie die Gedichte aufgrund formaler Merkmale in einzelne Gruppen ein, wie beispielsweise die schon bei Schlüter so bezeichneten “Polemischen Sonette,” und innerhalb der “Sammlung” die “Brief-Sonette” und “Dialog-Sonette,” wobei nicht alle Gedichte einer Kategorie zugewiesen werden. Die Sonette sind jeweils vollständig nach dem Text der Frankfurter Ausgabe abgedruckt. Die Einzeluntersuchungen bilden so weit wie möglich eine kursorische Abfolge, d.h. jede Detailanalyse versucht an vorangegangene Kapitel anzuschließen. Jordan geht detailliert am Text der Gedichte entlang und listet ausführlich formalanalytische, insbesondere metrische, prosodische und sprachlich-stilistische Beobachtungen auf. Sie behandelt ferner die Rezeption literarischer Vorlagen, was dem Nachweis des “Zitatcharakters” (309) der Sonette dienen soll, und die Verwendung bestimmter textübergreifender Motive und Themen wie z. B. die Anspielung auf antike Mythologeme.

Die Beobachtungen sind allerdings zum großen Teil bereits in der Forschung gemacht worden, wie vor allem die neueren kommentierten Ausgaben der Frankfurter und Münchner Ausgabe und die Studienausgabe von Erich Trunz erkennen lassen. Ein neuer Erkenntnisgewinn wird auch deshalb nicht erreicht, weil die jeweiligen Eigenarten der einzelnen Gedichte durch die auf einen Gesamtkomplex hin zielende Interpretation zu sehr eingeebnet werden, indem jede Einzelanalyse eine Verbindung zwischen den Sonetten untereinander nachzuweisen versucht, ohne jedoch Besonderheiten, die sich etwa aus dem entstehungsgeschichtlichen Hintergrund und aus einer sich bei Goethe verändernden Haltung zur Form des Sonetts ergeben, ausreichend zu berücksichtigen. Die Autorin konstatiert zwar eine Ungleichartigkeit (“Heterogenität,” 305) der Sonette, wertet diese aber gemäß ihrer These als Freiraum zur Variabilität dichterischen Schaffens. Das Verbindende der Gedichte untereinander sieht Jordan in einer nahezu in allen Sonetten wiederkehrenden Variation des Themas “Natur und Kunst,” wobei beide Begriffe unzureichend auf den Gegensatz zwischen erlebtem Gefühl und der strengen Form des Sonetts verengt werden (305–306), und der Verwen-

derung von "Kommunikation und Sprache" (306). Dieses Ergebnis kommt so über eine vordergründige Feststellung nicht hinaus und leistet damit auch keinen wesentlichen Beitrag zu der oft diskutierten Frage der unterschiedlichen literarischen Wertigkeit der einzelnen Sonette.

Die sprachliche Ausformung der Analysen ist nicht frei von Wiederholungen und Unrichtigkeiten. So wird der Vorgang der dichterischen Gestaltung einfallslos immer wieder mit "inszenieren," "Inszenierung" oder "in Szene setzen" beschrieben (z. B. 101, 251). Die Diktion erscheint oftmals allzu gekünstelt (z. B. "die zum Gedicht verschriftlichten [. . .] Kommunikationsreflexionen," 236), unnötig abstrahierend (z. B. "Sprecherschaften," 256) oder ins Amtsdeutsch übergehend (z. B. "Mittels Durchführung einer einseitigen zwischenmenschlichen Handlung von Liebenden," 195) und grammatisch fehlerhaft ("dem Konflikt [. . .] Herr werden," 188). Hinzu kommt eine mangelhafte Unterscheidung der unterschiedlichen Wahrnehmungs- und Gestaltungsebenen des Interpreten einerseits und des Dichters andererseits. So bleibt am Ende der Einzelanalysen ein Vorwurf an den Dichter selbst: die Tatsache, dass die Sonette, entgegen der hier vorgelegten Interpretation, nicht als ein einheitliches Werk von Goethe veröffentlicht wurden, sei diesem selbst anzulasten ("dass Goethe selbst sein Konzept nicht in letzter Konsequenz verwirklicht hat," 299), also der Dichter seinem Interpreten nicht gefolgt sei.

Zusammenfassend lässt sich sagen, dass es das Verdienst dieser Arbeit ist, die in ihrer Gesamtheit von der Forschung weniger beachteten Sonette Goethes zum Gegenstand einer eigenständigen, materialreichen und detaillierten formalanalytischen Untersuchung gemacht zu haben. Der Nutzen liegt darin, eine Reihe von textnahen und detailgetreuen Einzelanalysen zu Goethes Sonettwerk vorzufinden, die allerdings meist nur bisherige Forschungsergebnisse dokumentieren. Ein eigener, theoretisch fundierter und in kritischer Auseinandersetzung mit der bisherigen Forschung stehender Ansatz zur Interpretation der Gedichte wird nicht entwickelt. Die Abhandlung trägt der Eigenart von Goethes Sonetten hinsichtlich einer Übereinstimmung mit der zeitgenössischen Sonettdichtung und hinsichtlich einer Unterscheidung von derselben nicht genügend Rechnung. Der Aspekt der Entwicklung innerhalb von Goethes lyrischem Schaffen kommt zu kurz. So bietet die Arbeit auch keinen neuen Aufschluss zum Stellenwert der Sonette im Übergang von der klassischen Dichtung zur späten Schaffensperiode. Eine weiterführende Untersuchung zu diesem Thema ist auch nach dieser Dissertation immer noch zu schreiben.

*Akademie der Wissenschaften zu Göttingen /
Goethe-Wörterbuch Arbeitsstelle Hamburg*

—Elke Dreisbach

Literatur und Kultur im Österreich der Zwanziger Jahre.

*Herausgegeben von Primus-Heinz Kucher. Bielefeld: Aisthesis, 2007. 269 Seiten.
€29,80.*

Literary traditions can become captives to their own accomplishments. Such is arguably the case with Austrian modernism, which for most people immediately evokes images of gleaming geometric façades by Loos, contorted yet languid figures by Klimt or Schiele, or Freud's dream of Irma: Vienna, ca. 1900. When thinking of the

1920s, however, a para-Hegelian mental tick sends thoughts north, as if the spirit of German-language modernism had migrated after the war to the Weimar Republic. The present volume aims to confute this habit through detailed explorations of a range of phenomena in Austrian literature and culture in the 1920s.

One of the main ghosts being exorcized here is of course Claudio Magris's influential thesis of a "Habsburg myth": the claim that after the fall of the Empire, the major Austrian authors responded to their sense of loss, disorientation, and chaos by turning their gaze back to a Habsburg world conceived as an age of security and assurance; even skeptical or ironic authors such as Musil (according to Magris) contributed to the construction of this myth. Magris's book appeared close to a half a century ago, so it is not surprising to find scholars wishing to revise his powerfully synthesizing yet inevitably limiting account of Austrian modernism. But such revisionism is nothing new: Wendelin Schmidt-Dengler, for example, made major contributions to the process well over a decade ago. The present volume does not explicitly reflect on its own position within this revisionist discourse, which is a drawback. The essays were originally presented as individual contributions at a 2004 conference titled "Epochenprofil der 20er Jahre in Österreich" at the Universität Klagenfurt, and as such they do not follow a coordinated theoretical approach or line of argument. That, to be sure, is perfectly fine, but one does wish that the editor had opened the volume with more in the way of a general assessment of the new directions and questions for research emerging or exemplified here. Despite this lack of self-reflection on the volume's overall contribution to the deconstruction of the myth of the Habsburg myth, many of the individual essays are indeed interesting and discuss original material.

The first essay, by Karl Müller, takes up the point (first raised in the editor's introduction) that in Austria "die literarische Landschaft nach 1918 ist eben nicht auf Habsburgmythisierendes zu verkürzen, sondern vielgestaltig und widersprüchlich" (26). The essay goes on to examine one of the presumably most distinctive shapes of this paradoxical Austrian modernism: the "conservative revolution" associated most closely with the name of Hugo von Hofmannsthal and the foundation of the Salzburger Festspiel. In a volume that aims to show how Austrian writers confronted and drew inspiration from the chaotic new realities of post-Habsburg society, this is perhaps not the best place to begin. Müller himself describes this as an example of the "gegenmoderne, restaurative Konzepte" (27) prominent in Austria after the war, and the essay puts forward no argument as to why one should not regard this as evidence supporting rather than dismantling Magris's thesis. Müller does give a useful and concise account, but much of this material is by no means unfamiliar and the essay ends by characterizing Austrian modernism through predictable dichotomies of order v. chaos, synthesis v. division, healing v. destruction, and so on (46).

Next follows Primus-Heinz Kucher's examination of the letters, diaries, feuilletons, and similar "small texts" of very large figures such as Hermann Bahr, Karl Kraus, Hofmannsthal, Arthur Schnitzler, and Eugen Hoefflich. Kucher's thesis is that these texts reveal a much deeper and more systematic engagement with new social realities than do the more representative "Großformen," such as novels (48). Persuasive evidence is indeed presented, although again one could play devil's advocate: what is arguably most intriguing here is not that these figures were unable to live in hermetically sealed bubbles but that there does seem to be a disjuncture between what themes

they engaged in “minor” as opposed to “major” literary formats. Is this true, and what might explain it?

Ironically, one of the most powerful essays in the volume is Walter Fähnder’s interpretation of *Neue Sachlichkeit* in the Weimar Republic. Nowhere are contrasts to or connections with the situation in Austria discussed, so this essay reveals just how hegemonic Weimar modernism is when thinking of the 1920s. Nonetheless, Fähnder’s exploration of the habitus of *Neue Sachlichkeit* is masterful, and his setting of it in opposition to (rather than in alignment with) the avant-garde (100) is persuasive as well.

The rest of the volume presents a broad range of case studies, some on canonical authors and some on less-known figures and issues: Helga Karrenbrock examines the concept of “generation” in the 1920s (Berlin again trumps Vienna in this essay); Julia Bertschik offers a fascinating interpretation of fashion articles by Helen Hessel-Grund and Vicki Baum as part of broader discourses on “Kulturphysiognomik”; Maximilian Aue returns to the question of insanity in *Der Mann ohne Eigenschaften*; Luigi Reitani’s discussion of Schnitzler in the 1920s as well as Eva Kuttner’s examination of Schnitzler’s engagement with film most directly reveal how abandoning the “Habsburg myth” framework might alter one’s view of canonical figures; Daniela Strigl’s discussion of “Fremdheiten” in interwar Austrian lyric poetry explores the image of “das Dorf als fremd und zugleich vertraut” (179); Albert Berger traces Josef Weinheber’s complex poetic trajectory from Kraus to Hitler; Evelyn Polt-Heinzel reads Mela Hartwig’s novellas as an attempt to construct “weibliche Sichtweise und Wahrnehmung von Körperlichkeit und Sexualität” (212); and Markus Kreuzweiser and Werner Wintersteiner address the question of how to present Austrian literature of the 1920s to literature students in secondary schools (including possible alternatives to the admittedly effective pedagogical framework of “Habsburg myth”).

As an assemblage of essays on different aspects of Austrian literary culture in the 1920s, therefore, this volume has much to offer (even if a couple of the contributions do not engage particularly new material or interpretations). The attempt to pull these essays together under the rubric of dismantling the Habsburg myth, however, as well as the attempt to pull 1920s Austrian modernism out from under the shadow of Weimar, is only partially successful: at regular intervals these two bogies creep back in.

University College London

—Peter Zusi

Ernst Jünger. Die Biographie.

Von Helmuth Kiesel. München: Siedler, 2007. 720 Seiten. €24,95.

The dust-jacket of Helmuth Kiesel’s biography of Ernst Jünger (1895–1998) depicts the subject seated on a lawn chair. His legs are crossed left over right. His hands are crossed right over left and rest comfortably in his lap. The upper torso is crowned by the head, eyes gazing directly at the viewer with a pleasantly serious expression. This white-haired man of seventy or so is at peace with himself, is self-possessed. The portrait photograph invites the reader to explore the subject in *Die Biographie*, a designation suggesting that this very long book is the authoritative last word on Jünger’s very long life.

The first section is entitled “Geborgenheit und Abenteuerlust” (19–73) and is fronted by a photo of Jünger in the uniform of the French Foreign Legion (dated 1913). The gaze of the stiffly-posed young man of 18 does not engage the viewer; it seeks a future beyond the settled gentility of the villa in Rehburg on the Steinhuder Meer. His schooling was defined by dreams of adventure and by the voracious reading of the “Schulklassiker” of Germany’s imperial era as an antidote to what Walter Benjamin termed the “Elend des öden Schulbetriebs.” This “Leben in der Literatur” (43) was accompanied by his participation in the activities of the “Wandervogel” (46–47), rites so typical of the times, as well as by first attempts at writing (“Die Kunst ist auch bei uns vertreten / Durch Jünger oder den Poeten” 48), by poetry linking African adventures of the legionnaire to the homeland: “Jetzt steh ich hier in der blauen Montur, / Der verklärte Blick grüßt die deutsche Flur” (52). Later in life the adventures of his youth informed his lesser-known writings, works Kiesel treats with close attention to textual and contextual issues (56–73).

The second and third sections, “Im ‘Großen Krieg’” (75–133) and “‘De bello maximo’: der Kriegsschriftsteller” (136–261), are a must read for anyone in German Studies. Kiesel’s highly readable presentation of Jünger’s battlefield experiences and his exposition of the author’s *Verarbeitung* of the horrors of World War I define a significant tradition in 20th-century literary war narrative. In *Stahlgewittern, Aus dem Tagebuch eines Stoßtruppführers* (1920 and revisions: 1922, 1924, 1934, 1961, 1978) was, to be sure, suffused by the ideology of heroic *Kriegertum*, so much so that the text was co-opted by National Socialism (Günter Grass’s recent memoir tells of his having to read it in school). Kiesel knows full well that Jünger is hardly Remarque, whose *Im Westen nichts Neues* (1929) was banned by the Nazis, yet he treats Jünger with understanding (as does Grass in the 1914–1918 chapters of *Mein Jahrhundert*). The sections are not framed as an apologia, rather as a thoroughly researched scholarly exposition and evaluation of Jünger’s intellectual and stylistic achievement. Kiesel points to the influence of Dante, Grimmshausen, Nietzsche, Hamann, E.T.A. Hoffmann, Goethe, Spengler, Thomas Mann, and others (to include Rimbaud), enabling him to conclude: “Jünger wurde nach seiner Abwendung vom Expressionismus zu einem Vertreter dieser reflektierten Moderne, die bei ihm betont klassizistischen Zug annahm” (162). The novel is based on wartime journals, the wording and exposition of which were polished over the years (212–229). The novel may lack the Expressionistic immediacy of Trakl’s “Grodek.” It may present a vision of war at variance with that of Remarque (whose positive review of Jünger’s novel is discussed [208–209]), yet Jünger (an officer who read Ariosto’s *Orlando Furioso* when on leave from the trenches) also created a ‘modern’ classic. This assessment is objectively grounded and surely an extension of Kiesel’s book *Geschichte der literarischen Moderne* (2004).

The fourth section “Studium und nationalistische Publizistik” (263–399) is fronted by two photographs, one of a rally for Hitler, the other of Thomas Mann at a podium in 1930 with the audience turned away looking for the source of a disturbance in the back of the hall—a protesting Ernst Jünger and associate. His articles in the *Völkische Beobachter* rang out in support of the *braune Bewegung*—“Sie wird ersetzen das Wort durch die Tat, die Tinte durch das Blut, die Phrase durch das Opfer, die Feder durch das Schwert” (268), a series of articles in the *Standarte* systematically defined the ideology of a ‘new nationalism’ for the generation back from the Great War (282–297). Kiesel’s exposition is important, for it documents and contextualizes the

dark side of 'Weimar culture' in depth, but never in the sense of an apologia: "Jüngers 'neuer Nationalismus' ist aus heutiger Sicht nicht zu verteidigen. [. . .] Der Nationalismus dieser Zeit war eine grandiose Verfehlung [. . .] dennoch hat Jüngers Nationalismus Anspruch auf sachliche Würdigung [. . .]" (304). Jünger might protest the position of Thomas Mann (335–339), but Jünger's romance with Hitler and Goebbels was driven by their desire to co-opt the famous author and holder of the *Pour le mérite* (339–344), something that never occurred. He espoused anti-semitism (309–314), but declined membership in the *Akademie der deutschen Dichtung* because he chose not to be associated with any *gleichgeschaltete* institution (411–415). He moved away from the white heat of Berlin to Goslar, but did not leave Germany, opting rather for his own brand of *Innere Emigration*: "Es scheint, daß Jünger die Diktatur als Zeit der heroischen Bewährung betrachtete" (433). His literary *Abrechnung* with Nazi Germany, *Auf den Marmorlippen*, was completed in 1939 (first published 1945), an elusive critique complexly operating on "drei Sinn-Dimensionen" (461–481).

All this being said, Hauptmann Jünger served in the *Wehrmacht*, the *Pour le mérite* dangling front and center (483). In occupied Paris, he worked in the fabled Majestic. He wore gray, even as he came to know French authors like Céline, the chronicler of World War I (504); even as he took a lover, a *Halbjüdin* later deported to Dachau (505); even as he observed the bombing of Paris, a glass of Burgundy in hand (516–520). Kiesel explains the galling amorality of his gaze with reference to literary topoi (Proust had done likewise in 1917), an interesting, but ultimately dissatisfying line of reasoning. And the war ultimately came home not as an aesthetic abstraction, but in the death of his son—"Er fiel durch Kopfschuß . . ." (528).

The seventh through tenth sections of Kiesel's biography trace Jünger's fate from being blacklisted by the Allies to his demands that Germans face the atrocities perpetrated during World War II head on ("Die Ausdeutung der jüngsten Vergangenheit ist eine Lebensfrage für uns" 555). Kiesel's analysis of the utopian *Staatsroman*, *Heliopolis* (1949) offers the reader a concise evaluation of a work (558–573) with a singular failing: "Er paßt nicht in unsere Zeit, ja, er paßte schon nicht mehr in die Zeit seiner Entstehung und seines Erscheinens" (558). Nonetheless, Jünger stages a comeback from a stained reputation. He gradually becomes the white-haired *Eminenz* of the Federal Republic, hobnobbing with politicians (he joined Mitterand and Kohl at the Verdun *Versöhnungsfeier* of 1984), and retiring to his Swabian retreat to pursue entomological passions. He was not the public intellectual of the past, even though journalists had not forgotten him, especially in connection with his being awarded the Frankfurt *Goethepreis* in 1982. Kiesel documents the controversy in a balanced matter, one that reveals as much about the Bundesrepublik as about Jünger (646–651).

To the end, Jünger will be judged by *In Stahlgewittern*, by his writings during the Weimar years, by his service in Paris. At the time of his death in 1998 he had largely outlived his usefulness as a witness to German history, yet that remains his legacy. If you read the largely positive reviews of Kiesel's biography in the German press (see <perlentaucher.de>), you note that Jünger remains *umstritten*. This is possibly the most enviable position for an author and public intellectual more than a century after his birth. To be sure, others have written about Jünger, yet it is my sense that Kiesel understands him, and he passes his understanding along in this very readable definitive biography.

On Creaturely Life: Rilke, Benjamin, Sebald.

By Eric L. Santner. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2006. xxii + 216 pages. \$20.00.

Eric L. Santner's book *On Creaturely Life* is a critical masterpiece, which conceives of itself as an ethico-political intervention on the scene of contemporary cultural and literary criticism, a scene that is defined by a complex configuration of diverse material: post-modern literature and thought; post-human and material culture; post-structuralist theory. *On Creaturely Life* steps on this scene with a fascinating configuration of its own, one that draws upon and draws into proximity a number of famous texts from the German-Jewish tradition of the first half of the 20th century, among them poems by Rilke and Celan, stories by Kafka, the novels of Sebald (whom Santner reads as heir of this tradition), critical writings by Benjamin (in particular his work on baroque and modern allegory), essays by Freud and Lacan, the theological texts of Rosenzweig, the political theology of Schmitt and Agamben, and modern philosophy and contemporary criticism (Heidegger, Foucault, Barthes, Žižek, Badiou). Santner draws on all of these writers and critics, whose contributions and responses to the construction of "creaturely life" under the conditions of modernity he outlines, exposes, and explores. This modern construction of "creaturely life" and the critical responses to it present the kernel of Santner's configuration of the myriad of fragments, textual bits, and pieces, partial objects, so to speak, which form, enter into, and comprise the "body" of his text. It is, then, the effect of the discourse and interlocution of these fragments of critical and creative writings that configure Santner's book.

If Santner appears as producer of this demanding, yet illuminating constellation, it is because of his familiarity with these writers and their seminal texts. But perhaps "familiarity" is the wrong word in this context of texts that confront and display the uncanny and the strangely familiar; perhaps "proximity" better describes Santner's relation to them, since after all it is Rosenzweig's invocation of the love/concern for "the approximately proximate" ("das jeweils Nächste" 207) that Santner cites as the mode of critical intervention in the modern construction of "creaturely life." My point here is: the effect of critical intervention Santner's book calls for is as much an effect of the mode of its construction as it is an effect of its author's acumen. His configuration of fragments from diverse fields and texts as the mode of critical writing "sticks out," and in its mode of presentation practices the kind of attentiveness ("Aufmerksamkeit," a crucial term borrowed from Benjamin's 1934 essay on the 10th anniversary of Kafka's death) to creaturely life repeatedly invoked by Santner (cf. 24f. and 130f.) as indispensable for the desired suspension of "that dimension of our lives where we are delivered over to our creatureliness" (140).

This dimension, Santner argues, citing political theology (Schmitt, Agamben), philosophy (Heidegger, Foucault), and psychoanalysis (Freud, Lacan), consists of the "ex-citation" of "creaturely life" by and its exposure to a sovereign authority. Under the conditions of modernity it enforces subjection, i.e. humanization, not so much by the force of law as in pre-modern, baroque conceptions of political, divine sovereignty (to which, Santner points out, corresponds the viability of the paternal metaphor, the Oedipal Father; 194–196). Rather, in modernity, this divine authority is dispersed, and it asserts itself by deciding on the state of exception: the "master's discourse in the state of exception marks a *sanctioned suspension of law*, an outside law included within the law. Creaturely life emerges precisely at such impossible thresholds" (29).

Drawing on Slavoj Žižek's work and linking the decisional logic of the law to the decline of the paternal metaphor (captured by Freud in the myth of the murder of the primal father); drawing on Foucault's conception of bio-power; drawing on Benjamin's configuration of modernity as natural history (and the concomitant "melancholic immersion" in disfigured, creaturely life embodied, among others, in the hunchback, Gregor Samsa, and Josef K. at the end of *The Trial*); drawing on the encounter of creaturely life in the natural historical world of spectral materialism in Sebald's writings—by drawing on all these writings, Santner immerses himself in them. In this he is not unlike Sebald's narrator, about whom, à propos the "labor of reconstructing history" from a post-memory position, Santner writes: "The narrator of Sebald's works is crucial for this reason: he is forever exposing himself to the fragments and traces of other lives—traces often available only in fragments, in bits of 'material culture'—and to the enigmatic address that issues from them. These 'irritants' of the other's alterity become the stuff of his own 'dreamwork' [. . .]" (164). And about Sebald, the author, we read: "Sebald takes considerable pains to dramatize the complex process of 'inheriting,' of taking responsibility for, the various symbolic and 'proto-symbolic' transmissions from his various 'neighbors.' Sebald inscribes himself in this complexity as a crucial locus of ethical action with respect to those whose very way of being—whose 'angle of inclination' [a term coined by Celan, VK]—bears witness to traumatic histories" (166).

If I am correct, and Sebald's, Kafka's, and Benjamin's modes of "inscription" into such complexities are exemplary for Santner's own mode of inscription into the present cultural, political, and critical scene—and the reconstruction of such a scene as that of "creaturely life" is in response to a present danger—then *On Creaturely Life* does not immerse itself in the melancholic disposition with its saturnine gaze on natural history without connecting it to the "radical ethical act" of intervention. It "must itself 'learn' from melancholy how to home in on the agitations of creaturely life that materialize the persistence of deep structural stresses in the social body" (91). Connecting thereby "melancholic immersion" and the awakening to "ethico-political intervention," Santner advocates a kind of immanent critique of the writings he follows to the point where their perverse materializations of the "deep structural stresses" encounter them as an impasse from which the intervention could emerge.

Much of Santner's inscription into this complexity and his insistence on the conjunction of immersion and intervention dedicates itself to the elaboration of modes of intervention emanating from an exposure of the subject—including the reading, interpreting subject—to these impasses, these "deep structural stresses," whether they are encountered in the exposure to different modes and spaces of sexuality, signification, or "the point of exception that sustains this space" (194). Santner conceives of this intervention as a "miracle" (cf. also Benjamin on Kafka, and in a different way, Schmitt), a "suspension" of the spectral or haunted writing, of the "forces of spectral excess" (205), whose multiple figures in Sebald's texts he patiently follows and dissects. Associating the haunting double with the "deep structural stresses" that inform the mythic, violent formation of subjects, forever condemned to repeat their attachment to phantasmagoric phenomena (spectral materialism, fetishism, fantasies of totality and totalitarian fantasies, etc.), Santner, recalling Benjamin and Lacan, calls for a critique of "mythic violence." Its elements are: the already mentioned attentiveness ("Aufmerksamkeit") for creaturely life; the de-animation of the undead directed

against the bio-political animation of the creature and its lethal double; the “elevation” of the creature to the “neighbor” via love or, following Rosenzweig, “neighbor-love,” understood as an act of “sublimation” via “ensoulment” (“Beseelung”); a supplementary, “feminine mode of ‘sexuation’” as outlined by Lacan and explored by Santner in his reading of Rilke’s “Archaic Torso Apollo”; the acts of witnessing, of “transforming [. . .] creaturely *deposits* into a form of *deposition*” (75).

These are the elements comprising the field of the ethico-political act, “a dimension of the miraculous” understood as suspension, “an uncoupling from the mode of subjectivity/subjectivization proper to the sovereign exception” (15). A critique of this critical project might begin by questioning some of its elements (e.g. the notion of “Nächsten-Liebe” and the subjection to “Gebot” rather than “Gesetz”; the embrace of “Beseelung” and/as “sublimation”; the exorcism of the specter, etc.), and its matrix could be established by a different reading of some of the texts that enter into Santner’s configuration, i.e. Kafka, Benjamin’s Kafka essay from 1934, or Derrida’s book on Marx and his elaboration of a haunted ontology, a “hauntology” that invokes the specter as the double of the spirit (of criticism and metaphysics). Perhaps this criticism would proceed as a close reading of the processes of dis-figuration and the analysis of the many different modes of “stellen” (positing; placing, etc.) in and by general writing (“Schrift”; “écriture”), which play such a crucial role in the mythic, violent figuration of “creaturely life” (“entstelltes Leben” in Benjamin’s words) and its non-violent, messianic adjustment—which envisions change as a “slight adjustment” (“um ein Geringes zurechtstellen der Welt,” an often repeated citation of Benjamin in his Kafka essay which also appears repeatedly in Santner’s book, cf. 25f., 37, and 130f.). Perhaps one should not overlook the recurrence of “Recht” in this slight adjustment in the figurative processes of general writing, calling for an analysis of “the weak messianic force” (also a famous quote from Benjamin’s “On the Concept of History”) as spelling out the law of the genre of writing. If this is the case, then Santner’s repetitive quotations of this significant “Stelle” could provide a space for productive debate on the conditions and modes of the critical ethico-political intervention we are called upon to perform, a debate of Santner’s intervention with other critical writings on the same authors and texts which either are marginalized by or excluded from his book. But then again, as Santner stresses in the end, the point is to engage the text as “an open and infinite field of encounter” (206).

University of Virginia

—Volker Kaiser

Das Ende des Anthropozentrismus. Anthropologie und Geschichtskritik in der deutschen Literatur zwischen 1930 und 1950.

Von Gregor Streim. Berlin: de Gruyter, 2008. x + 434 Seiten. €98,00.

Gregor Streim has produced an exceedingly useful and reliable study of a generally rather dubious realm of philosophy or pseudo-philosophy. There are some things about bad thinking that interest us far more than good thinking. Naturally, establishing the difference sometimes counts as one of those, but focusing attention on what could emerge all too immediately about what is wrong with a body of ideas will unfailingly divert our attention from what remains as the more interesting task for a scholar. What

is so useful and so impressive about this book lies in the limitations it has imposed on itself in the stringency of its scholarly approach. It assumes a reader who does not need to be constantly reminded of the obvious—the connection between the ideas represented here and the catastrophe that fell in the same period. It also devotes its efforts to representing the material as far as possible through the sequence of its own textual expression rather than analyzing where it strays into contradictions and into void terminology. That is to say, it takes responsibility as a project in cultural history, not in philosophical critique.

There is a certain arbitrariness in the way Streim has assembled the material in so far as the boundary that encloses and connects the figures does grow less and less essential as one looks more and more closely at the positions each occupies within it. The dubious nature of the ideas they each developed contributes to the dubiousness of the realm they might be supposed to define. Chronological contemporaneity and a limited common vocabulary does imply something of an engagement in a common debate, but the indiscipline of the thinking involved leaves Streim's project with the task of documenting a set of fragments that do not add up to a whole no matter how one attempts to latch them together. Or one might put it this way: his study documents a phenomenon one encounters frequently, namely that while writers who use language with care and clarity generally use it in essentially the same way, among those whose language flounders in a welter of aggression, each flounders in it differently.

In seven chapters Streim treats the ideas of Gottfried Benn, Otto Friedrich Bollnow, Arnold Gehlen, Ernst Jünger, Horst Lange, Gerhard Nebel, and Egon Vietta. Two lines of division emerge with particular significance. Gottfried Benn and Ernst Jünger stand apart from the other writers to whom the book devotes independent chapters because these two rank so much higher in their literary achievements; also, Benn and Jünger themselves stand apart from one another in their political orientation, their personal history, their circle of relationships, and above all in their positions vis-à-vis aesthetic modernity. Jünger, characteristically, seems to have been rather patient with the way their names were often paired, which provided more cover for Benn than any benefit to himself, yet, as Streim points out, Benn came to resent that pairing simply for its patent absurdity.

Streim focuses on the ideological and publicistic side of these two figures' work at the expense of their literary significance. This strategy fits perfectly well with the chosen emphasis of the scholarly enterprise, but does produce some possible distortions of its own when a literary text is considered primarily as representation of an ideological abstraction. Jünger has repeated often enough that his novel *Auf den Marmorclippen* draws on many models and explores the experience of many situations, and hence loses aesthetic resonance when taken as a precise system of allegorical references. Nonetheless, the account of that work in the chapter on Jünger insists on finding exact emblematic correspondences to motifs that seem ill-confined by such specificity. For example, where the novel describes how "die Lust zu leben und die Lust zu sterben sich in uns einten" when the brothers are brought to see a very common weed as the revelation of a "Mysterium," Streim neglects the function of this motif in developing the characters and their place in the unfolding story, and reads it as a direct reference to and critique of Hans Driesch's neo-vitalism. This is by no means an

impossible connection, but argues for a degree of abstraction in the text that could only with the greatest difficulty support the literary suppleness and narrative coherence on which the enduring interest in the novel have depended.

In 1927, Julien Benda closed his famed book, *La trahison des clercs*, with a remarkable chapter on the species imperialism of mankind that threatened all the other forms of life on the planet. His critique of the times offered a broad swipe at all the various ideologies that had produced modern despotisms and new modes of aggression, and which everywhere threatened to annihilate an older and more harmonious, more measured conception of human values and human activities. The unlimited and unleashed centrality of mankind's energies that he feared found a vivid exposition in the *Werkstättenlandschaft* that Ernst Jünger represented in *Der Arbeiter* in 1930. It is helpful to bear this in mind because the term anthropocentrism can mean many different things, and any ideological embrace of worldly power, no matter how it may formulate its rationale, and whether it might be identified on the Left or the Right, has, throughout the history of modernity, always proved fundamentally anthropocentric in that essentially disordered and imbalanced sense of the term. In political discourse anything that is "centric" will inevitably produce an aggressive distribution of conceptual territory, and any aggressive dogma, by the inevitable dialectics of territorial distribution, will always identify a centrality it must overcome, and undertakes to end that centrality by substituting another.

Any announcements of a death or an end, and especially the beginning of an end, to an idea brought to us by tradition, reproduce the distortion attributed to the object of that rejection. The relationship between the developments in Germany in the period covered in this book and the traditions of humanism and enlightenment and *Bildung* from which they define their opposition certainly shows some parallels with the anti-humanism of more recent postmodernity, as this study suggests. Nonetheless, the humanism, and therefore its opposites, in our time are so very different from theirs that all such terminology needs the most careful scrutiny as it appears in different generations and in different nations.

With this reservation, one may regard this book as a solid resource, a well-organized account of one aspect of these two decades of German cultural history.

University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee

—Marcus Bullock

Celan-Handbuch. Leben—Werk—Wirkung.

Herausgegeben von Marcus May, Peter Goßens und Jürgen Lehmann. Stuttgart: Metzler, 2008. xii + 399 Seiten. €49,95.

Without a doubt, the *Celan Handbook* will become the standard work of reference for scholars conducting research on Celan's life and œuvre and for readers interested in the particulars of Celan's biographical and intellectual trajectory at large. Covering a broad spectrum of topics ranging from the poet's biography, poetic output, and work as a translator, to his engagement with the sciences, medicine, philosophy, music, and the arts, and contextualizing his legacy historically, culturally, politically, and geographically (including its international reception—especially in France, Romania, and Italy), the *Handbook* is the most comprehensive and detailed scholarly volume on

the German language's most keening poetic voice of the latter half of the twentieth century to date.

Divided into seven parts, the *Handbook* will, if not exhaustively answer virtually any factual question you may have about Paul Celan, the man and the poet, at least point you in the right direction. The first, introductory part provides, in addition to a concise précis of the poet's life, a summary account of Celan's critical reception during his lifetime, as well as a comprehensive list of available selected and collected works editions of Celan's oeuvre. The second part gives a detailed historical overview of the creation and publication of Celan's individual collections of poetry from his early writings and *Der Sand aus den Urnen* (1948) to the two posthumously published collections *Schneepart* (1971) and *Zeitgehöft* (1976), and caps off with a look at more recent publications from Celan's estate. The third, fourth, and fifth parts are devoted to a comprehensive chronology of Celan's prose writings, translations, and letters, respectively. The sixth, thematically most pithy part is dedicated to a detailed contextualization of Celan's literary legacy and biographical trajectory (from Czernovitz to Paris via Vienna and Bucharest) in cultural, historical, literary-historical, philosophical, and aesthetic terms. The final section traces, among other things, the significance and enduring cross-cultural impact of Celan's legacy in the fields of literature, music, and the visual arts.

In addition to a wealth of factual and cultural-historical information on matters Celanian, the *Handbook* also offers succinct critical analyses and interpretations of Celan's poetry and prose, arranged in chronological order and, thus, along the lines of the unfolding contexts of Celan's *de facto* evolution as a poet. In its comprehensive, historically organized, and topically interlaced approach, the *Handbook* is uniquely conducive to enabling its readers productively to navigate Celan's poetic universe—whether they be looking for answers to specific questions or whether they be interested in sounding the spectrum of Celan's poetic-existential concerns and interests more generally—without having to find their bearings in the burgeoning mazes of Celan studies.

Probably the most poignant and enduring impression this reader was left with after perusing the *Handbook* is that nothing would be more reductive than to think of Celan as a *German* poet (as a matter of record, we should keep in mind that Celan never had German citizenship). If anything, as the *Handbook* amply attests to, Celan was—given the international, multilingual, multicultural, and geo-political range of his poetic outlook—a world poet writing *in German*.

Columbia University

—Michael Eskin

Constructing Authorship in the Work of Günter Grass.

By Rebecca Braun. New York: Oxford University Press, 2008. ix + 208 pages. \$110.00.

As is well known, Günter Grass has been in the public limelight for nearly half a century on account of having established his reputation by means of a not entirely conventional combination of roles—that of writer of fiction of the first rank, as well as, in Timothy Garton Ash's pithy formulation, that of "one of the literary world's most

inveterate stone throwers” (*New York Review of Books*, 16 August 2007). Grass’s frequent political interventions have induced scholars and critics, Rebecca Braun claims in her revised dissertation, to engage in a “kind of positivist biographical approach to authorship” that seeks to “elucidate the perceived socio-political message” (6) in Grass’s prose fiction. In contrast to such biographically and politically oriented studies, among which she includes, to mention only one somewhat recent example, Julian Preece’s *The Life and Work of Günter Grass* (2001), Braun proceeds from the assumption that the author’s “literary self-projection” is not necessarily identical with his “public political persona” (7); rather, in straddling the realms of literature and politics, he engages in a degree of playfulness that certainly adds to the complexity of his prose fiction but may ultimately detract from both his efficacy and credibility as a tireless proponent of political causes. But, Braun avers credibly, it is precisely the hitherto neglected exploration of the “idea of literary play” (10) in Grass’s works of fiction as well as in his political writings that is deserving of close attention.

Perhaps somewhat unexpectedly, Braun excludes from her analysis the *Danziger Trilogie* and *Örtlich betäubt* on the grounds that “before 1965” Grass had not yet “actively begun manipulating his authorial image in the media-led public sphere” (10)—an assumption that may require modification in view of, for instance, “author” Oskar Matzerath’s tongue-in-cheek disquisition on an aesthetics *in nuce* in *Die Blechtrommel* (book 1, chapter 1). Conversely, there can be no doubt that *Das Treffen in Telgte* (1979), Grass’s homage to Hans Werner Richter and Gruppe 47, does indeed offer various competing “models of authorship” (12), which Braun defines via recourse to some theoretical underpinning by Roland Barthes and Michel Foucault as “the author as a political figure, [. . .] as a textual position, and [. . .] as an ironic construct” (14). The lack of an unambiguous narrative perspective, as evidenced by the elusiveness of the first-person narrator and a clearly identifiable authorial position, result in a text in which “Grass is both everywhere and nowhere” (30). Such a degree of indeterminacy contributed to the guessing game on the part of critics and scholars as to who of the seventeenth-century poets gathered at Telgte corresponds to which member of Gruppe 47 and contributed, Braun appears to imply, to an emphasis on “literary play” rather than “socio-political edification” (37).

After what amounts to a substantial exploration of Grass’s political writings (see below), Braun continues her rewarding study by exploring the extraordinary richness and complexity of the authorial images in texts ranging from *Aus dem Tagebuch einer Schnecke* [*Tagebuch*] to *Im Krebsgang* (chapters 3–6). Whereas the “autofiction” (68 et passim) of both *Tagebuch* and *Kopfgebirgen* challenges the reader with its combination of autobiography and fiction, *Der Butt* and *Die Rätin* feature first-person narrators whose biographies strongly resemble that of author Grass; furthermore, the then-topical issues addressed—the assertiveness of the feminist movement and the threat of nuclear annihilation—are indicative of his “loss of influence” in the political realm. Hence the author seeks to strive for “[n]arrative control” (121) as a compensatory measure. In both *Zunge zeigen* and *Mein Jahrhundert* Braun discerns a monumentalizing tendency in that the texts show the artist at his creative best by disregarding accepted genre boundaries via displaying a combination of “pictorial and written representation” (129); at the same time, this tendency is counteracted by indications of a loss of authorial control over the text. Beginning with *Unkenrufe*, to which Braun devotes

only a few cursory remarks, the authorial position has shifted again in that the “authorial persona” serves as the (in)voluntary mouthpiece for another figure in *Unkenrufe*, assumes “multiple authorial positions” in *Ein weites Feld* (153) as evidenced by the anonymous archivists as well as both the “narrated” and “narrating” Fonty, and, as the clearly identifiable author, pressures a journalist into narrating/writing the story of the *Wilhelm Gustloff* in *Im Krebsgang*.

As indicated above, Braun does not confine her analysis to literary texts; rather, in her substantial second chapter (38–64) she systematically examines the various stages of the author’s political writings from 1961 to 2005 in terms of the projections of his self-image in the social and political sphere, an activity that is based on an explicit rejection of the incompatibility of the spheres of “Geist” and “Macht” (45 et passim). Although there certainly is no dearth of studies investigating Grass’s role in politics, Braun’s fairly infrequently practiced approach provides sound insights as to the artistic means Grass employs for his “self-stylization” (59) in the public sphere. But she seems to essentially confine herself to an elucidation of Grass’s manipulation of his authorial image without delving into its efficacy, or, for that matter, appropriateness. To cite one pertinent instance, the author’s professed “identification” with the exiled writers during the Third Reich in the course of the unification and post-unification debates (59) appears incongruously self-aggrandizing when compared with the fate of the actual exiles (see, e.g., Brecht’s poignant poem “Über die Bezeichnung Emigranten”). In at least this case the “general levity” Braun attributes to Grass’s “public self-presentation” in general (177) would appear to be rather out of place as well as counterproductive. Whereas there can be no doubt that Braun offers sound arguments for the validity of her approach, perhaps her emphasis on “literary play” at the expense of the “political message” conveyed would not seem to do complete justice to Grass’s texts and their reception.

University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill

—Siegfried Mews

Günter Grass and His Critics. From *The Tin Drum* to *Crabwalk*.

By Siegfried Mews. Rochester, NY: Camden House, 2008. 426 pages. \$90.00.

This is a valuable addition to international scholarship on the writings of Günter Grass (though it covers only his prose works, leaving aside poetry, drama, and essays) and to Camden House’s long-running series tracing the critical fortunes of key authors or individual works. As befits such a towering contemporary figure as Grass, often feted and analyzed more abroad than in Germany itself, it is one of the longest such volumes, especially on a living author, and will be an essential research tool for all future Grass critics, having something to teach even his most experienced readers.

Siegfried Mews, who has been writing on Grass for more than a quarter of a century, has fifteen chapters, one for each of the prose works from *The Tin Drum* (1959) to *Crabwalk* (2002), though counting *The Danzig Trilogy* as a separate entity, and an epilogue devoted to *Peeling the Onion* (2006). Mews is scrupulously thorough and fair-minded, only occasionally allowing his own views to show through, as when he loses patience with charges of anti-Semitism against his author or blanket attacks on the Germans as a whole, such as that contained in Daniel Goldhagen’s bestselling

Hitler's Willing Executioners (1996). His method is to highlight and summarize the most significant reviews, both of the German original and the English translation (only once casting his view wider to account for French reactions to *Too far Afield* [272–80] in which France and French history do loom large). Each chapter is subdivided into sections which cover the main thematic aspects of the reception and critical interest. Thus for *Dog Years*, we have “A Literary Sensation,” “A Writer of International Repute,” “Weininger, Heidegger, Wagner,” “Fantastic Realism, Mythmaking, Intertextuality,” and “Artists, Children, Dogs, and ‘Magic Spectacles’”; for *My Century* “A Media Event,” “Germany’s Many Faces,” “Narrative(s) and History,” and “Heidegger and Celan; the Student Movement,” which, chosen here at random from near the beginning and near the end of Grass’s writing career, reveals several continuities. Mews, however, is reluctant to draw attention to them and holds back for page after page from making judgements or evaluations of any kind. When he does so, they are lapidary and pregnant, such as: “Literary critics writing in scholarly journals tend to be less inclined than reviewers in the *Feuilleton* to give *Ein weites Feld* poor marks” (284). This observation could have led to a discussion of the media’s relationship to Grass—which basically likes to praise him to the skies only to shoot him out of them again—and contrast it to the academic industry which grows around any major author. There are so many missed opportunities of this type that it is evidently not Mews’s intention to criticize the critics or even to identify trends or clusters. Instead, he describes and *précise*s, showing a remarkable knowledge of the material and turning up important but little-known reviews, in the English and German-speaking press. It is the best bibliography of secondary writing on Grass that exists, which makes it indispensable for researchers. His accounts of the novels will also alert undergraduates to the salient features in the criticism and to further reading. This is a reference work, to be consulted or dipped into, not read at one sitting for its own narrative or insights.

Swansea University

—Julian Preece