

*lost German colonies in the Americas*” (11; emphasis added). One wonders about the image that the editors construct here of East Germans—a bunch of exotic creatures roaming the streets of a united Germany? This suspicion seems to be confirmed when one reads shortly after about “idealistic East German readers” (12). We find yet another overgeneralization in the summary of Julie Koser’s essay on Regula Engel: “As a Swiss citizen, Engel is fascinated with Liberty” (11). One would expect that a book so dedicated to careful examinations of identities would be more vigilant and precise.

While the essays are arranged chronologically by their primary texts, there are a number of thematic connections among the chapters that could have justified a systematic grouping. David Tingey’s analysis of Gabriel Reuter’s *Kolonistenvolk* (1889) and Florentine Strzelczyk’s examination of two novels by Ilse Schreiber (1936 and 1939) show a common theme: the New World as foil for showing Germany’s superiority, promoting resistance to integration in the New World, and colonial ideas resulting in *Lebensraum*.

On the other hand, the essays by Judith E. Martin, Christiane Arndt, and Ute Bettray show how their respective writers’ engagement with the New World results in reflections on their own German-speaking culture.

The three chapters on East German authors demonstrate the function of “Amerika” as a tool for defining one’s identity. Thomas W. Kniesche shows how Anna Seghers constructs “a place where men control history but where women discover a mythical realm beyond eternal strife” (228). Her novella “Crisanta” (1951) can, therefore, be read as encouragement for women to question the status quo of the political order. In contrast, Petra Watzke’s examination of Liselotte Welskopf-Heinrich’s *Harka* series (1951–1963) shows how the pseudo-Native American protagonists serve “as role models for socialist citizens” (237) and therefore aid a domestic political agenda. Monika Hohbein-Deegen’s analysis of two post-*Wende* novels by Angela Krauß concludes that for the narrators, their trips to America (and beyond) “are in both cases more a means of further understanding themselves than primarily discovering this new world” (251).

Other thematic trajectories could be the respective genres used, or the different geographical origins of either the writers or their New World places (real or imagined).

When reading *Sophie Discovers Amerika*, it is apparent that a number of essays lack a theoretical framework that would inform their analysis. The essays are still informative and constitute a welcome addition to the scholarship on transatlantic literary history. However, the volume could have been more consistent. It will be, nevertheless, a worthwhile companion to the Sophie website.

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**Zwischen unsicherem Wissen und sicherem Unwissen. Erzählte Wissensformation im realistischen Roman: Stifters „Der Nachsommer“ und Vischers „Auch Einer“.**

Von Petra Mayer. Bielefeld: Aisthesis, 2014. 279 Seiten. €34,80.

Petra Mayer’s monograph re-examines a relationship that continues to be strained today: the complicated tensions between the sciences and the humanities. Literature in particular is singled out in such debates and frequently called upon to anchor itself

more securely to contemporary science and technology. Mayer challenges this notion of disunity by focusing her study on the symbiosis of science and literature in the second half of the nineteenth century, in the German-speaking world specifically. Though Mayer acknowledges the ways in which the two fields ought to have been incompatible, she devotes herself to those examples that illustrate instead the shared goal of an open and progressive worldview, one that is predicated on an exploration of the (at the time) fragmenting and uncertain human experience. Mayer's examples include realist literature that adapts a scientific-like method—Stifter's program of "forschen [. . .], beobachten [. . .], befragen" (102)—and scientific writing that uses a literary style to animate otherwise dry research.

The study is divided into three main sections. The first situates the reader within the historical context of Mayer's time frame, with primary consideration given to the rapidly shifting scientific and literary-philosophical climate from the 1830s onward. The mania for science took off as a result of the unique institutionalization of science in German universities near the beginning of the nineteenth century. Research was no longer just a hobby for amateurs and aristocrats: it was a well-funded and legitimate profession, one that quickly grew and splintered into several sub-fields. Scientific knowledge was no longer the "stationäres System feststehender Wahrheiten" (26) that it used to be. Rather, the field was characterized by uncertainty and change. As her main counterpoint to the scientific realm, Mayer discusses idealist philosophy and its 'identity crisis' after Hegel's death in 1831. The idealist model of an absolute and self-enclosed system is clearly shown to be at odds with the open-ended and limitless experience inherent in the prevailing scientific approach. The question that drives Mayer's study is how these two simultaneous cultural shifts—the dizzying rise of science and the downfall of idealist philosophy—affect literature. Mayer attributes the split between idealist and realist literature to this paradigm shift of moving from a closed (synthesized) conception of knowledge and experience to one defined by openness. In the remaining two sections, Mayer provides close readings of two novels, Stifter's *Der Nachsommer* (1857) and Vischer's *Auch Einer* (1878), and in so doing attempts to answer the question of how literature continued to create orientation while also engaging with the ongoing reality of disorientation.

In the second section of her study, Mayer positions Stifter as a unique author, uncommonly poised to create fictional worlds that honor both the old and new forms of knowledge. Stifter's education at the Kremsmünster Abbey prepared him in the natural sciences as well as in theology and philosophy, and as Mayer argues, his literary worlds reflect the same seamless integration. Mayer is particularly strong in her spatial analysis of *Der Nachsommer*, offering the image of concentric circles as a way to understand Heinrich's movements throughout the novel. Concentric circles signal uncurbed expansion and progression outwards, yet the rings advance in a controlled and orderly manner. Though the movement is oriented outwards, towards growth and newness, the previous turns are not negated and continue to give order to the overall structure. A second motif that Mayer dissects very well is the appeal of geology, which is Heinrich's chosen ideal science (he is an autodidact). As the study of the earth's surface, geology is essentially the study of something that we conceive of as a whole. But the surface reveals its history as a long, gradual accumulation of countless geological events. Geology holds the state of the earth in its tension of *becoming*—dynamic rather than static, the result of accumulation rather than an unbroken whole. As Mayer shows, through these and other arguments, *Der Nachsommer*

upholds the frenzy for discovery brought on by new forms of knowledge, but places the individual back in a navigable framework.

In her final section, Mayer turns to a different consequence of the research culture of the time and its impact on the project of literature: namely, the minimization of the individual subject and of human agency. As Mayer argues, *Auch Einer* is a novel about the impossibility of a unified system of the world, but also the impossibility of a unified (literary) subject. Unlike Stifter, who uses literature to restore the semblance of wholeness, Vischer is shown to give up on the idea of wholeness and resolution, even in the controlled and fictional space of literature. One of the main images to which Mayer draws attention in her analysis of *Auch Einer* is that of the atom. For A.E. (the novel's protagonist) as well as for Vischer himself, the atom presents a maddening paradox—according to Vischer, indivisibility should follow upon indivisibility, ad infinitum. Rather than providing an image for the kernel of the material universe, from which all other matter could follow (similar to Stifter's image of the earth's layers and concentric rings), the atom illustrates only the impossibility of a measurable and clearly defined universe. This dissatisfaction resulting from the atom translates to A.E.'s fictional failures as he tries in vain to replicate the universe by building models and writing a novel. Failure through 'atomization' has also been built into the form of *Auch Einer* itself, as Meyer demonstrates. Vischer leaves many of the basic elements of the novel unresolved and disjointed, such as the identity of A.E., the narrative structure, and the reliability of the narrator. For Vischer, literature cannot reconcile the overturned idealist structure.

Mayer's study is certainly a valuable contribution to German Studies, literary criticism, and the history of science in literature—not because it tackles a new problem, but because it provides balance to both sides of an old and tired tug-of-war between science and literature. All the same, there are considerations that would have been interesting to hear more about. For example, the reader does not get a clear sense of how these two novels compared to other literature of the time, both in the German-speaking world and beyond. In other words, how unique were Stifter and Vischer in the realm of literature for grappling with the cultural repercussions of the scientific boom? A second topic that Mayer chooses to sidestep is the political landscape of the time. In her first section, Mayer suggests that the German population's enthusiasm for scientific innovation was a sign of political apathy, yet the relationship is not picked up again in later sections. Given the already-wide scope of her study, this (likely intentional) absence does not diminish the strength of Mayer's work, but it is nonetheless noticeable.

Overall, Mayer offers an informative study that is insightful in its literary analyses of Stifter and Vischer, and even more so in its detailed account of the embedded histories of literature and natural science in the nineteenth century.

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—Shoshana Schwebel

**Das andere Labyrinth. Imaginäre Räume in der Literatur des 20. Jahrhunderts.**  
 Von Matthias Hennig. München: Fink, 2015. 275 Seiten + 5 s/w Abbildungen.  
 €39,90.

Labyrinthe sind in hohem Maße polyvalente Formen, mit so verschiedenen Vorstellungskomplexen wie etwa dem des Gefängnisses oder dem des Tanzplatzes verbunden