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German Text Crimes: Writers Accused, from the 1950s to the 2000s ed. by Tom Cheesman (review)

Siegfried Mews

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representation. Moving beyond a merely thematic discussion of melancholy, Cosgrove thus shows how postwar German authors mobilize melancholy's performative potential as a literary discourse that demands to be interpreted and as part of a larger quest to create an ethically appropriate poetics of post-Holocaust remembrance.

The greatest strength of *Born under Auschwitz* is its careful and erudite analysis of a range of thematic intricacies, such as the distinctive treatments of melancholy depending on whether the narrator (or author) speaks from the perspective of the perpetrator or the victim, as a man or a woman, as an individual or a collective, etc. Clearly, Cosgrove's analysis goes along with a keen analytical grasp of the theoretical and conceptual issues involved in the problem of melancholy. For instance, her reading of Weiss's *Aesthetics of Resistance* contributes to the critical discussion of melancholy, which has so far intersected with gender primarily on masculinity, by showing how Weiss's novel foregrounds the limitations of traditional masculine melancholy while creating an image of the mother that points toward a possible ethical empowerment through (female) melancholy. This chapter resonates well with Cosgrove's discussion of Iris Hanika's ironic caricature of contemporary German society in her novel *Das Eigentliche*, casting both male and female characters through the early Christian plight of *acedia* to insinuate that there is no authentic memory discourse—only failed commemoration.

Given the scope of the study—with its focus on five major novels and several smaller prose works—the author cannot engage in the kind of close readings that would tease out the ambiguous meanings at play within the textual landscape of melancholy as a discursive practice that is fundamentally ambivalent and rhetorical in its constitution. Despite Cosgrove's emphasis on textual exegesis, and her sustained effort to reveal textual paradoxes and structural conflicts at all levels of the texts, she fails to fully draw out the conflicting logics of sense and the heterogeneous implications that emerge from these literary treatments of melancholy. A more open-ended method of textual analysis that would not only interrogate the conflicting values assigned by these memory discourses to melancholy but also reflect critically on how narrative as an unstable and highly subjective textual practice subverts these discourses would be warranted to do full justice to this fascinating object of study.

The book is an important, precise, and thorough study that breaks new ground and advances our understanding of a set of major German novels in the social and cultural context of memory studies. Overall this is a graceful work of remarkable erudition that will be greatly appreciated as a landmark study about both postwar German literary history and theory, and memory discourse in the humanities.

University of Oregon

—Sonja Boos

German Text Crimes: Writers Accused, from the 1950s to the 2000s.

Edited by Tom Cheesman. Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2013. 242 pages. \$73.00 hardcover, \$66.00 e-Book.

The term "text crimes" hardly enjoys wide currency; for instance, the *OED* (checked in December 2014) does not include it at all. However, the editor of and all nine contributors to the present volume use the term more or less frequently in their respective essays (albeit some contributors prefer to put it in quotation marks—presum-

ably to indicate its novelty). In his introduction the editor acknowledges the fact that “[t]exts are more often incriminated for violating cultural norms than for breaking actual laws” (1)—thereby emphasizing the significance of the respective text and virtually ignoring its author. Indeed, the “Literaturskandale” (18, n. 13) that usually follow the publication of controversial texts ordinarily are not settled in a court of justice, but they do tend to attract a considerable degree of attention in public media.

As is evident from both the introduction and the various essays, there certainly is no dearth of “Literaturskandale” of numerous kinds in the time frame covered in the present volume. Actually, the term “Literatur” is not strictly confined to *belles lettres*; most noticeably, the first contribution by Duncan Large deals with philosopher Martin Heidegger as perceived by Ulster poet Tom Paulin. Although Large emphasizes that Heidegger “was one of the most literary of philosophers” who engaged in publishing “a monograph on Hölderlin” in addition to “important essays” (25) on other poets, Large engages in outlining Paulin’s critical engagement with Heidegger but also his “ambivalent fascination and indeed identification” (38) with the philosopher.

In her essay on Ingeborg Bachmann, Áine McMurtry analyzes Bachmann’s poetic drafts from the 1960s, which were published posthumously by her siblings, and explores Bachmann’s eventual turning from her “subjective crisis” to a “critique of unspoken [and unidentified] crimes in the post-war order” (70). From poetry to drama: David Barnett explores the “Director’s Theatre [Regietheater] and the ‘Werk-treue’ Debate” and emphasizes the creative role of the director in Germany—in contrast to that of the director in England and the US—in theater productions. Barnett discusses productions of Theresia Walser’s *Wandernutten* (2004) and Rolf Hochhuth’s *Wessis in Weimar* (1993); particularly the staging of the latter play incensed the playwright, but Barnett concludes that ultimately it is the director who is in charge of the production of the respective play.

Perhaps the novels *Lust* (1989) by Elfriede Jelinek and *Feuchtgebiete* (2008) by Charlotte Roche, discussed by Heike Bartel, come closest to representing actual “text crimes” in that both texts have been “publicly labelled [sic] as pornography” (99); moreover, one member of the committee that awarded Jelinek the Nobel Prize for Literature in 2004 resigned in protest against bestowing the coveted prize upon a female author who engaged in writing pornographic novels. Yet Jelinek in particular has voiced doubts as to female writers’ suitability for engaging in the portrayal of pornography, a domain clearly dominated by male writers.

If pornography is generally considered a “text crime,” politics also clearly qualifies as an important topic, as is evident from David Robb’s essay on singer and songwriter Wolf Biermann and the lesser-known Steffen Mensching and Hans-Eckard Wenzel who, in the view of the GDR authorities, appeared to inveigh against their cherished “Revolutionary Heritage” (126). In the case of Biermann, his refusal to toe the party line of the SED in his songs eventually resulted in his exclusion from the GDR—while on a concert tour in West Germany in 1976, he was barred from returning to East Berlin.

The wide range of “text crimes” is evident from Stuart Parkes’s article on Martin Walser’s novel *Tod eines Kritikers* (2002), which was interpreted as an attempted character assassination directed at the Jewish star critic and *Literaturpapst* Marcel Reich-Ranicki (1920–2013), who had become widely known as the host of

Literarisches Quartett on (West) German public television from 1988 to 2001. Although Walser was supported by some fellow writers, notably among them Günter Grass, he was repeatedly charged with engaging in anti-Semitism. Parkes concludes his essay on a pessimistic note by stating that in Germany the “allegation of anti-Semitism” is closely related to a “text crime” (160) that likely is not going to disappear from public discourse.

In her essay entitled “Justice for Peter Handke?” Karoline von Oppen addresses the “controversy” that arose upon the publication of Handke’s “travelogue” *Eine winterliche Reise zu den Flüssen Donau, Save, Morava und Drina oder Gerechtigkeit für Serbien* (1996), which was perceived as “deliberately provocative” (176) in belittling Serbian war crimes committed during the Yugoslav wars of the 1990s. But von Oppen draws attention to the German (and Austrian) war crimes committed in Serbia during World War II; she claims rather persuasively that it is the “historical context” of this war that “frames and shapes Handke’s account” (183).

Critics’ divergent responses to the publication of Bernhard Schlink’s extraordinarily successful novel *Der Vorleser* (1995), which has been translated into twenty-five languages, are discussed by Katharina Hall. Hall emphasizes the “‘crimes against the [...] Holocaust’” as well as the “‘crimes against literature’” (193) allegedly committed by Schlink by analyzing the reception of the novel in “German- and English-speaking” countries. But she also emphasizes the “diametrically opposed critical opinions” (194) the publication of the novel elicited and concludes that ultimately the reception of both the novel and its film version are indicative of a widespread reluctance within Germany to face the unadulterated Nazi past.

The concluding essay by Julian Preece, perhaps somewhat sensationally entitled “Incitements to Murder? The Killing of Businessmen in Fiction and Drama of the 2000s,” is indicative of the perpetuation of “text crimes” in the twenty-first century. Franz-Maria Sonner’s novel *Die Bibliothek des Attentäters* (2001) and *Tod eines Trüffelschweins* (2007) by Thomas Weiss as well as Rolf Hochhuth’s play *McKinsey kommt* (2003) are concerned, Preece posits, to varying degrees with “the legacy of Baader-Meinhof terrorism” (209)—as is evident, for example, in Weiss’s novel in which the protagonist kills an American financier. Preece’s essay appears to be an appropriate conclusion to a volume that seeks to address various “German text crimes” in that in his conclusion he assumes the role of accuser of both authors and critics by citing Émile Zola’s “J’accuse.”

University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill

—Siegfried Mews

Morte a Venezia. Thomas Mann / Luchino Visconti: un confronto.

Edited by Francesco Bono, Luigi Cimmino, and Giorgio Pangaro. Soveria Mannelli, Italy: Rubbettino, 2014. 238 pages + 6 b/w illustrations. €14,00.

Franz Kafka / Orson Welles: Il Processo.

Edited by Luigi Cimmino, Daniele Dottorini, and Giorgio Pangaro. Soveria Mannelli, Italy: Rubbettino, 2010. 201 pages. €14,00.

Francesco Bono, Luigi Cimmino, and Giorgio Pangaro’s *Morte a Venezia. Thomas Mann / Luchino Visconti: un confronto* (2014) is the first volume in Rubbettino’s