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flanzendörfer: unmöglich es leben

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“proving” themselves through violence; female Skins are “emancipated” in orientation, and thus tend to avoid neo-Nazi groupings. Chapter 5 addresses the rise of the British and German *S.H.A.R.P.-Skins* (Skinheads against Racial Prejudice); Chapters 6 and 7 contain lengthy interview-accounts outlining Skin views on racism, political activity, and violence. One of the most disturbing revelations here is the fact that even anti-racist Skins harbor the belief, *Gewalt macht Spaß*.

The concluding chapter reflects the authors’ third aim, to challenge the Skinhead-image prevailing not only in the media but also in the scholarly realm to date. They seek “scientific legitimacy” by presenting the results of their own “unrepresentative” albeit interesting mail-in surveys, and by exploring consumption patterns with regard to scene-internal publications [*Fanzines*]. They argue that left-liberal social scientists—youth-rebels of the 1960’s who now enjoy the privileges of an elite, academic existence—have consciously avoided research on the extreme-right, reluctant as they are to abandon personal visions of the youth as a progressive force heralding *den Aufbruch in die neue Gesellschaft*. Conservative politicians, meanwhile, are spared a painful confrontation with day-to-day acts of German racism by projecting all blame onto Skinheads, the new scape-goats of the nation. The last chapter, had it appeared first, would have provided a more compelling framework for academic readers; at the same time, a reordering of the contents would undermine the book’s other two priorities, self-expression and dialogue. Those looking for a broader picture might consider: Bernd Wagner, *Jugend-Gewalt-Szene. Zu krimino-logischen und historischen Aspekten in Ostdeutschland* (Berlin: Berlin-Brandenburger Bildungswerk, 1995); Max Annas and Ralph Christoph, *Neue Soundtracks für den Volksempfänger. Nazirock, Jugendrock & Rechter Mainstream* (Berlin: Edition ID-Archiv, 1993); and Petra Wlecklik, ed., *Frauen und Rechtsextremismus* (Göttingen: Lamuv Verlag, 1995).

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flanzendörfer. *unmöglich es leben*. Berlin: janus press GmbH, 1992. 191 pp. ISBN 3-928942-00-X. DM 52.

flanzendörfer is the pen name for Frank Lanzendörfer, who created a multimedia body of work—poems, prose, drawings, photography, collage, paintings and Super 8 films—most of which he burned in a friend’s garage shortly before his suicide in 1988, at age twenty-five. This book consists of the fragments, or in flanzendörfer’s term, *wrackmente*, which escaped the flames. These fragments are printed as they were found, complete with photographs, graffiti-like scrawls, typographical errors and doodles.

The work collected here was created in the 1980s and shows influence of the “linguistic turn” of GDR writing of the time. It is heavily-laden with (self-)conscious manipulation of language. This manipulation can be playful, as in the following poem written in 1982, and consist of combinations and re-combinations of word-fragments:

wald ist löschpapier
wolken sind gummireifen
vögel sind kugelschreiberminen
& ich bin der kotflügel

(löschwaldpapier
gummiwolkenreifen
kugelvögelschreiberminen
kotichflügel.)

Generally, however, any playful tendency is subordinated to the desire for self-expression on the part of a fragmented self (“ein vorläufer, vorläufiger ich”). flanzendörfer strove for a “schreibhaltung die mich einschließt” (double meaning intended), a way of writing for one who views himself as transient and fragmented, and language as a lie. In the absence of such constructs as self and truth, the only task left flanzendörfer is to lie well: “Was wahrdran mich rundreht, lüge gleich fort,” to be able to say he has lied “um einiges klüger.”

With this detachment from language comes a sense of isolation from others, from the world outside the self: “weit ab eine frau. eine straße, ein auto”, “ich rufe. keine antwort, hall im kloakentunnel.”

This isolation brings about a sense of claustrophobia. The poem which begins “gekrümmt im mutterleib” expresses a desire to be expelled from

the womb: “bin vollendet, will raus,/ durchkommen. laß mich raus.” Yet the very expression of this desire brings about a wish for its opposite: “es ist kalt hier./ wo bringt ihr mich hin/ o furchtbare welt.” This poem, or poem fragment, ends with a contradiction: “ist ja gut, ist ja gut, . . . NEIN/ es ist nicht gut.” Fragment, outcry, contradiction, claustrophobia, desire for shelter. All these characterize flanzendörfer’s work, and—since in his own words, “der Text bist du selbst”—its creator.

One may spend a lot of time trying to de-code this book, asking, for example, why a particular text is written (or printed or scrawled) near, on or below a given photograph or drawing. Is it enough to say that such inscriptions are anti-captions, thus coining a new word in the manner of flanzendörfer?

A reviewer is generally expected to evaluate the quality of the work reviewed. I do not believe this is possible or desirable in the case of flanzendörfer. As an “in schrift” (sic) to the book, the following may be read: “wenn gemeinsamkeit dunkelkammer ist,/ sind wir allesamt belichtet & als solche tragbare . . .” In light of these words, *unmöglich es leben* is best viewed as a coffin containing the remains of flanzendörfer’s text/self.

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Haufe, Eberhard, ed. *Johannes Bobrowski . Peter Huchel: Briefwechsel. Marbacher Schriften 37.* Stuttgart: J. G. Cotta’sche Buchhandlung, 1993. 73 pp. ISBN 3-7681-9998-3. DM 30.

Scholars interested in Bobrowski and/or Huchel will find in this volume information on their professional lives as well as some primary material concerning GDR literary history. It contains letters, written between 1955-1964, by two of the greatest writers of the former German Democratic Republic. Despite that fact and the expectations it may raise, the heretofore unpublished letters do less to provide impetus for reexamination and continuing analysis of these authors’ works, than to shed light on their complex personal and professional relationship. Even this light is dim without Haufe’s illuminating afterward. There is no philosophical profundity to be found in the correspondence nor does it provide new, instructive insights on the authors and their work.

Thus, one should not expect the literary caliber of the published correspondences of Goethe and Schiller, Benjamin and Scholem, or Wolf and Reimann. Instead of aesthetic positions, literary issues, or philosophical explanations we have business-like exchanges between publisher/poet (Huchel) and a nascent literary talent (Bobrowski). Still, this handsome volume informs the reader about the professional relationship of the two writers. Moreover, it contains one more example of how the East German state showed its approval or disapproval of literary activity, playing the political and psychological game of granting visas to some and not others: here Bobrowski was granted permission to travel to West Germany for professional visits while Huchel was denied.

As editor of Bobrowski’s collected works and with personal contacts to Huchel’s family, Eberhard Haufe was in an excellent position to bring this correspondence to print. He contextualized it with his extensive knowledge of the professional and private lives of the two authors. Although the letters deal with the business of literature and a few personal exchanges, they touch upon two major events in GDR literature: Bobrowski’s discovery as a literary talent and Huchel’s resignation as editor of *Sinn und Form*. The two events are connected as Bobrowski, having gotten his start from Huchel in *Sinn und Form*, went on to win prize after prize for his poetry, while Huchel came increasingly under pressure to refocus *Sinn und Form* to help the development of a “sozialistischen Nationalkultur.” As Haufe points out, both authors desired to affirm literary expression in its value to humanity, and thus could not allow its usurpation for the narrow interests of the state. They both approached literature from the broader perspective of national or international culture as opposed to serving the purposes of a specific ideology. This common attitude laid the ground for a professional friendship. Still, each had to deal with the state in his own way. Huchel, taking a more confrontational approach, eventually resigned the editorship of *Sinn und Form* as pressure on him grew to produce what would amount to another *Parteiorgan*. Bobrowski was not interested in becoming an exclusively “East German” poet: “Entweder ich mache deutsche Gedichte oder ich lerne Polnisch” (52). In an evasive move he contracted with the Unionverlag of the Christian Democratic Union of the GDR to create distance