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Christa and Gerhard Wolf: Ins Ungebundene geht eine Sehnsucht. Gesprächsraum Romantik, Prosa und Essays

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Damit läßt es sich auskommen, auch wenn er später in Iowa statt Mais Weizen wachsen läßt. Seine Kritik richtet sich gezielt auf greifbare Details, keine Breiten auf Amorphes wie das Bankensystem, und bleibt daher letzten Endes glaubhafter, wirkungsvoller. Auch sein Stil, obwohl durchweg ironisch, ist genauer und nicht pennälerhaft. Nach dem Anderen Planeten ist Zwischen New York und Honolulu eigentlich nicht notwendig gewesen, denn wesentlich Neues tritt nicht zu Tage. Und den Eindruck, den ein DDR-Bürger haben muß, der 1974 Den anderen Planeten las und jetzt das Jendryschik-Buch, ist der, daß sich die Situation in den Vereinigten Staaten in den letzten 12 Jahren auf allen Gebieten enorm verschlechtert hat.

Zweimal in seinem Buch kündigt Jendryschik große Reisemüdigkeit an, und auf Ellis Island stellt er sich sogar die existentielle Frage "...warum war ich eigentlich hier!" (S. 194). Leider bleibt diese Frage in jeder Hinsicht unbeantwortet.

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Ins Ungebundene geht eine Sehnsucht. Gesprächsraum Romantik, Prosa und Essays. By Christa Wolf and Gerhard Wolf. Berlin und Weimar: Aufbau Verlag, 1985.

Ins Ungebundene geht eine Sehnsucht is a collection of literary and critical texts written between 1968 and 1984 in which Gerhard and Christa Wolf read in a new way the works of certain authors at the periphery of the Romantic era. Gerhard Wolf's "Der arme Hölderlin" heads the volume as it was historically among the first reinterpretations of how early Romantics such as Hölderlin and Kleist were unable to influence society during the "Zwischenzeit" between the French Revolution and the restorative phase in Germany. For Gerhard Wolf it was the 1968 riots in Paris and Prague, as well as the Berkeley protests against US involvement in the war in Vietnam which motivated him to write about Hölderlin's work as a way of opening a "Gesprächsraum" (402). The expulsion of Wolf Biermann from the GDR in 1976 and the suppression of

criticism of that action brought about Christa Wolf's need to enter that discursive space through the printed medium. As she states in "Projektionsraum Romantik," she sought the "Voraussetzungen von Scheitern" of marginalized women and intellectuals during early Romanticism (376, 378).

Who are the Romantic writers representing utopian longings which could not be realized at the onset of the 19th century? Bettine von Arnim is for both Christa and Gerhard Wolf the revolutionary of the early Romantics whose political inventiveness and patience identify her as a forerunner of the socialist personality. At the same time Bettine's writing process of constantly shifting patterns of desire--"Die Sehnsucht hat allemal Recht"--goes beyond the strictures of bourgeois personhood. Achim von Arnim's texts show, with Gerhard Wolf's rereading, the tensions between patriotic ideals, the "Trösteinsamkeit" of farming in Wiepersdorf to support Bettine and their children in Berlin, and attempts to negotiate between reactionary and liberal politics with the "Christlich-Teutsche Tischgesellschaft" (274-275). Hölderlin, Heinrich von Kleist, and Karoline von Günderode are the subjects of painful inquiries into the societal conditions which foster suicidal despair and its literary voice. Gerhard Wolf explains the social coordinates of the Napoleonic era which lead to Hölderlin's desperation, while Christa Wolf dramatizes in "Kein Ort. Nirgends" a possible meeting between Kleist and Günderode in which they express their own feelings of alienation. Gerhard Wolf's rereading of Hölderlin opens a "Gesprächsraum" for authors and critics to discuss the conditions surrounding writing during Romanticism when society seemed not to need critical perceptions. Christa contributed to this discursive space with her rereading of Günderode and Kleist by identifying how the separation of a male public from a female private sphere established at the onset of the bourgeois era expressed itself in women's desire for social influence and men's repressed fear of irrationality. (See especially "Kleist's 'Penthesilea'") Industrial society, whether under capitalism or socialism, is based on this "Riß durch die Zeit" which the Romantic writers mentioned here describe.

This volume allows new interpretations of these early Romantic writers to enfold in a discussion involving literary and fictional texts in section one, and literary critical articles in section two. Christa Wolf's texts, which are more familiar to a western and particularly to a feminist audience, can be read as part of an intertextual process. Juxtaposing "Der arme Hölderlin" and "Kein Ort. Nirgends" highlights for example aesthetic choices in portraying the disunified speaking subject during the Romantic era. Where Gerhard Wolf's Hölderlin piece relies heavily on narrative descriptions of actions and distinctions between the author's comments and the character's psyche, the writing subject in "Kein Ort. Nirgends" takes part-- "Wer spricht?"--in the discussion between the internal personal and social voices of Günderrode and Kleist. The "konspirative Kraft ... die aufregen und zur Selbsterkenntnis verführen kann" (293) which Gerhard Wolf finds in Bettine von Arnim's writing is at work here provoking questions about the networks of friends surrounding the early Romantics, about the place of homoeroticism in their works, and about the contours of what Angela Drescher refers to as Gerhard Wolf's "ganz eigene Methode des objektivierten Erzählens" (396) in comparison to Christa Wolf's "vierte Dimension" of the narrator's questioning process within the fictional account. It would be fascinating to read Gerhard and Christa Wolf's separate articles on Bettine von Arnim and Heinrich von Kleist for "The Gender of Authorship", which Helen Fehevary asserts is inscribed in Heiner Müller's "Hamletmaschine" and Christa Wolf's "Kein Ort. Nirgends."

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Respektloser Umgang. By Helga Königsdorf. Berlin: Aufbau Verlag, 1986. 115 pp. (Also available in a Luchterhand edition)

With this volume Helga Königsdorf departs from the form of the short story for the first time (see her

two earlier volumes: Meine ungehörigen Träume, 1978, and Der Lauf der Dinge, 1982), and presents us with a closed narrative composed of several layers encircling the first-person narrator. In 52 short chapters, Königsdorf carries the reader back and forth between the various thematic and narrative levels.

A terminally ill, middle-aged scientist sits alone in her study, surrounded by her work--sheets of paper overflowing with abstraction--a candle burns on the desk beside her: "Kaum wahrnehmbar das Atmen, mit dem sie sich verzehrt." (5) But the solitude of this space of intellectual activity is disrupted by the appearance of a ghost: Lise Meitner, nuclear physicist (1878 - 1968), has broken the physical laws of time and space in order to challenge the narrator with questions about her work and her life. Meitner comes with a vague message about an "Auftrag" which she was unable to carry out and is now to be passed on to the narrator. The ensuing confrontation with Meitner, with the parallels as well as the differences between their lives, forces the narrator into a dialogue with herself as well, and it is this double movement, or double vision, that constructs the text. By coupling these two figures, Königsdorf creates a vehicle for communication between the present and the past on several thematic levels: Jewishness, fascism, the ambivalent entry of women into the "male" world of science, responsibility and resistance in the atomic age. Separate stories interweave and present a constantly shifting pattern of connections, of meanings.

The ordering principle beneath all of these layers is not the search for a definitive answer to the questions of history, but rather for the place of the individual in the midst of so many social forces. This is the fascinating aspect of Königsdorf's text. Moral and ethical questions of global import are ultimately posed on a regional level, beginning and ending with the narrator herself. Indeed, the essence of the text is perhaps not the pinpointing of specific issues as much as it is involvement in the process of engagement.

For the narrator, the path toward the engagement involves an exploration of her own corporeality. Initially, she is at pains to maintain within herself the classic Western split between mind and body: "Ich habe mich entschlossen, die Kontrolle nicht zu ver-