

*Werk neben dem Werk: Tagebuch und Autobiographie bei Robert Musil.* By CONSTANCE BREUER. (Germanistische Texte und Studien, 82) Hildesheim: Olms. viii+356 pp. €49.80. ISBN 978-3-487-13944-9.

Musil wrote around 1900 in his *Tagebücher* that diaries are a sign of the times: they are the easiest and least disciplined form, so that in the future perhaps only diaries would be written. He attributed to the diary form both much and little importance, suggesting a paradox that is reflected in his own itinerary as a writer. Among Musil's first writings are fictional diary entries, found in what may, or may not, be real diaries; and at the end of his life he was writing other fictional diaries for his protagonist Ulrich, who, in the unpublished chapters of *Der Mann ohne Eigenschaften*, is writing them to describe his quest for something like utopia. Musil apparently did not intend to publish the miscellany of manuscripts now called his diaries, and it is not even clear what part of the extant unpublished novel manuscripts he would have published, if any, had he lived long enough to finish the novel.

In dealing with these complexities, the strength of Constanze Breuer's study of the diaries is to show that selected passages from them can illuminate some themes as well as the nature of fiction in several of Musil's works. Notably, these considerations allow her, for example, to contest the idea that the final version of *Die Versuchung der stillen Veronika* is to be understood as a diary. And she argues that the diaries show that Musil's reaction to World War I is of paramount importance for understanding him. Much of what is presented here is not new, although two of Breuer's interpretations do strike me as contributions to the ongoing debates about Musil's work.

First, Breuer argues that certain brief passages in the diaries suggest that Musil was using a religious framework for his enigmatic novella *Die Amsel*. Breuer contends that the three framed stories in *Die Amsel* refer obliquely to Whitsun, Epiphany, and Easter, but in such a way as to show that the 'secularization of religion' contests the possibility of religion today (p. 194). By referring obliquely to a religious model, the tale shows that the narrator's experience is 'incommensurable' with a religious explanation, for there is a break between the two worlds. This rather ingenious interpretation perhaps draws upon interpretations of Kafka to show that the religious text exists in the narrative text even as the narrated text annuls it.

Secondly, Breuer argues that the utopian idea of 'another condition' that Ulrich seeks in *Der Mann ohne Eigenschaften* should be understood in terms of classical aesthetics. Breuer's interpretation of the 'other condition' is that Musil wanted to develop the idea of an individual utopia in order then to show that it could not exist; with this her interpretation affirms that the telos of the novel would have been a critique of its own utopia from a rationalist viewpoint. In this regard it is similar to several recent interpretations, but Breuer draws upon the diaries, especially 'Heft 35', to argue in addition that the other condition is neither a mystical state nor Romantic effusiveness, but an aesthetic experience dependent

upon a recognition of the limitations of the subject (p. 329). Drawing analogies with Goethe's analysis of aesthetic sensation, Breuer's interpretation is persuasive. It places Musil in the mainstream of German aesthetics, and for the reader who finds that the 'other condition' is an opaque notion, she shows that Musil, like Joyce and Proust to whom he is so often compared, believed that somehow literature is a transcendental matter in a world without transcendence—and cannot offer a utopian solution to the historical problems that had driven Musil into exile.

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*Kafka lesen: Acht Textanalysen.* By MARKO PAJEVIĆ. Bonn: Bernstein. 2009. 112 pp. €12.80. ISBN 978-3-939431-37-4.

'Verkehr mit Gespenstern': *Gothic und Moderne bei Franz Kafka.* By BARRY MURNANE. (Klassische Moderne, 12) Würzburg: Ergon. 2009. 413 pp. €48. ISBN 978-3-89913-599-2.

These two new approaches to Kafka could in many ways hardly be more different. Marko Pajević's *Kafka lesen* provides, as the title suggests, 'eine präzise Lektüre' (p. 8) of seven of Kafka's short texts plus the opening of *Das Urteil*, focusing on the textual details and what they can reveal about 'wie Sinn hier eigentlich entsteht' (p. 7). Barry Murnane's *'Verkehr mit Gespenstern'*, by contrast, takes a broad view of how Kafka's Modernism—and Modernism in general—can be seen as imbued with the tropes and structures of the Gothic.

Pajević makes a strong case for a book on Kafka that does what his does: he notes that since Kafka's language offers a combination 'des sofort ins Auge fallenden inhaltlichen Interpretationsbedürfnisses und einer auf den ersten Blick relativ klaren nüchternen Sprache' (p. 7), critics have largely neglected to make detailed analyses of the language in itself. He is right that it is very tempting with Kafka to leap instantly to the level of thematic interpretation, assuming the words to possess some kind of transparent neutrality that need not be explored in the way more flamboyantly Modernist wordplay demands. He also notes the existence of 'das suggerierte Plus oder Dahinter an Bedeutung' (p. 7) in Kafka's texts, which seduces one to grander exegesis. He stresses the need to ground critical 'Interpretationsmuster' (p. 9) firmly in the textual details, and presents his own study as an alternative to criticism which treats texts merely as illustrations of one or two major themes, or of an overarching metatheory.

This is all eminently persuasive: a careful analysis of revealing intricacies in manageable chunks of Kafka's language, without any thematic blinkers to accurate reading, sounds thrillingly apposite. And Pajević's close reading provides some satisfying insights: discussing 'Der Kreisel', about a philosopher trying to attain ultimate knowledge by chasing a spinning top, he traces the ways in which a parallelism and final equivalence is set up between the philosopher and the spinning top itself. He neatly identifies 'eine Verschiebung von Intellekt zu Sinnlichkeit' (p. 10) at the moment when the search for knowledge disintegrates into the hearing of

children's screams. In the analysis of 'Eine kaiserliche Botschaft', about someone who dreams of an emperor sending him a message, Pajević also makes illuminating remarks on the ending—'Du aber sitzt an Deinem Fenster und erträumst sie [die Botschaft eines Toten] Dir wenn der Abend kommt': he shows how the last word evokes the disconnection between the evening coming and the message that never does (p. 47). Such insights are of a modest but important sort; they would probably be overlooked by a more interpretatively ambitious approach. Pajević's summaries of textual movements, grammatical and semantic, are often illuminating in the most concise and incontrovertible ways. However, this precision of analysis is at other times marred by a predilection for grand abstractions, often not textually justified: in 'Der Kreisel', for instance, he makes a generalized statement that 'Von Kindern wird [. . .] behauptet, dass sie einen direkteren Zugang zum Sein haben' (p. 16) and apparently uses this to underpin a whole opposition-based schema of 'Natürlichkeit und Unmittelbarkeit' (p. 20) versus reason, 'Theorie und Sein', 'Ratio und Lebendigkeit' (p. 22). The seduction of categorized meaning recurs throughout: invocations of allegorical meaning where none is certain, over-grandiose extensions of textual observations, and simplistic distinctions between different 'Textebenen' or 'Beschreibungsebenen' that overshadow more subtle interplays of meaning. The method itself also entails a somewhat tedious line-by-line exposition, often reduced more or less to paraphrase. Finally, while Pajević asserts that the selected texts have hitherto been the subject of 'nur vereinzelte Untersuchungen' (p. 10), many of them, especially 'Eine kaiserliche Botschaft', 'Die Brücke', and 'Auf der Galerie', have been repeatedly discussed, including by such eminent Kafka scholars as Elizabeth Boa, Clayton Koelb, Hans Dieter Zimmermann, and Judith Ryan. A slightly longer introductory section outlining the major lines of enquiry into these texts would be a far better grounding for the study than a simple denial that these exist at all.

Murnane's use of existing Kafka criticism is at the opposite end of the spectrum: the author's own opinions are often all but occluded by those of others. This is partly because Murnane covers such a huge terrain: his focus is on Kafka, but his thesis depends on invocations of intertextuality which demand that he do justice to other Modernist greats such as Rilke, Joyce, Henry James, and T. S. Eliot. Murnane's core argument is that Modernism is on a continuum with Gothic literature, and that this connection is especially clear in Modernist evocations of various constellations subsumed within the concept and metaphor of 'Verkehr' (the body, the city, crowds, and the consumerist world), as well as in Modernism's self-reflexive and intensely 'psychological' styles of narration. Murnane's approach opens up a new field of enquiry in Kafka studies, one which allows us better to appreciate the equivocations and ambiguities of Kafka's writing as oscillations between the 'modern' and the 'anti-modern'. Murnane also provides some masterly examples of close reading that bind theory and its supporting textual evidence in seamlessly persuasive form—the discussion of 'etwas Gespenstisches' in the story 'Unglücklichsein', for instance (pp. 68–69). Kafka's texts can also be valuably il-

luminated by the contextualization Murnane offers: *Der Proceß* in its relation to Prague 'Schauerliteratur', and *In der Strafkolonie* in its historical context.

Too often, though, Murnane gives long quotations—of both primary and secondary sources—and barely comments on them, so that we are given more a retelling of Kafka's texts in a patchwork of quotation and paraphrase than any real illumination. There are also simply too many sentences that bewilder with unnecessary length and syntactical complexity. Close reading, where it does occur, often seems wilfully oblique; the emotional force of, say, the very end of *Der Proceß* is discussed in the driest possible terms: 'Das Zeichen dieser osmotischen Kontamination verschiedener Sphären ist Josef K.s "Schuld"' (p. 232). Murnane relies a good deal on theorists such as Derrida, Adorno, and Max Weber, but the terminology that derives from such sources ('hantology', 'magisches Denken') is introduced and employed without sufficiently clear definition. Above all, the titular 'Verkehr' is at no point clearly set up, nor is its ambiguous conceptual/metaphorical nature properly elucidated.

Murnane's volume will interest those who have some knowledge of both Kafka and the Gothic, while both students of Kafka and Kafka experts will learn much from Pajević's readings. Despite their many differences, these books both seem in varying degrees to impose theory and abstraction upon the process of close reading rather than allowing close reading to yield the theory.

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*Ewig auf der Rutschbahn: Briefwechsel mit dem Rowohlt-Verlag.* By HANS FALLADA. Ed. by MICHAEL TÖTEBERG and SABINE BUCK. Reinbek: Rowohlt. 2008. 464 pp. €24.90. ISBN 978-3-498-02121-4.

*In meinem fremden Land: Gefängnistagebuch 1944.* By HANS FALLADA. Ed. by JENNY WILLIAMS and SABINE LANGE. Berlin: Aufbau. 2009. 333 pp. €24.95. ISBN 978-3-351-02800-8.

From 1933 to 1940 a novel by Hans Fallada (i.e. Rudolf Ditzgen) appeared annually in London and New York, published by Putnam. Beginning with *Little Man—What Now?* his books were regularly noticed in Britain by Sunday and weekly reviewers such as J. B. Priestley, Raymond Mortimer, and Graham Greene, as well as by *The Times Literary Supplement*. In Germany reviewers included Kurt Tucholsky, Hermann Hesse, and Carl Zuckmayer, and Thomas Mann wrote to Fallada's publisher, Ernst Rowohlt, to say that he hadn't read anything as endearing as *Kleiner Mann—was nun?* for years.

This changed in 1933. The socially conscious Fallada had not a political bone in his body. He stayed in Germany, a non-Nazi, yet outwardly inactive, who made the necessary compromises in order to be published in Hitler's Germany (his royalties were his family's only income). Thomas Mann noted what Fallada was reduced to, when he commented in his diary for March 1934 on Fallada's preface to his prison