



PLINIO BACHMANN, ed. *Die Schweiz erzählt. Junge Erzähler*. Frankfurt a. M.: Fischer, 1998. 209 pp. DM 16.90.

The cover of *Die Schweiz erzählt* shows a young hiker dangling, chamois-like, from the top of a mountain peak. If this anthology – a collection of twenty (very) short stories from young Swiss writers – is an invitation to discover new streams in the literary landscape of that country, the cover photo seems to invite the opposite; namely, a retreat to Alpine stereotypes. Yet in spite of impressions delivered by the cover, editor and collector Plinio Bachmann has successfully brought together a succinct overview of the types of short prose emerging in contemporary Swiss literature. The dangling hiker may evoke stereotypes, but he does so with irony.

The stories contained within this volume do not attempt to conform to, or even construct, a particular *Heimat* image; the promotion of chocolate, mountains and cuckoo clocks is left to the tourist industry. This does not mean, however, that echoes of what we commonly associate with Switzerland are absent from *Die Schweiz erzählt*. On the contrary. In one particular story, Andrea Simmen (“Schokoladentauglich”) uses the traditional Alpine pastoral against itself to hilarious ends. Her story begins with a jumbo jet wobbling through the air – a wobbling which is caused by camera-wielding tourists rushing from window to window in hopes of snapping the Matterhorn. The humour reaches its peak in an epic description of the lovely *Sennerin* Lydia, a veritable Helen of the *Alm*. The passage begins: “*Mein Gott, war sie schön*” and culminates with: “*an ihrem Hintern klebte ein Melkstuhl aus grünem Plastik*” (189). This is parody at its finest, yet it is parody that takes aim not at a specific work, but which assumes an entire tradition (an entire past) as its pre-text.

In his introductory comments to *Die Schweiz erzählt*, Plinio Bachmann writes of the sublime cacophony of this youngest generation of Swiss writers. Rather than providing his writers with a particular thematic framework, he allowed them free reign in hopes of bringing together a more natural selection of these writers’ works. His forward confirms what the reader will soon discover:

“[es] gab keinerlei inhaltliche Vorgaben.” (8). The result of this non-prescriptive, and consequently non-limiting, collector’s approach is a variety of style, theme, subject matter, and language. Through translation into German, Bachmann manages to import works from each of Switzerland’s official languages, thereby making French, Italian, and Romansh literature available to his compatriots even as he exports it to the world. As it happens, this collection not only shows the German-speaking world what Swiss literature has to offer, it also shows *Switzerland* what other regions and cantons of Switzerland have to offer. Despite the emphasis on variety encouraged by Bachmann, the thematic thread of the past runs through many of these stories. However, the past represented here is more individual than collective, regional or national. The foundational effect of a personal past determining the present is particularly solid in the following highlights of *Die Schweiz erzählt*.

Ruth Schweikert’s chronicle of age and alcohol, “*Fabrizio, geb. 1926; Almut, geb. 1933*”, tracks the life of a marriage from the time of its youthful beginnings to its decline into stasis. The cause of this decline is Fabrizio’s depression and the wine-induced stupor to which it gives rise. Schweikert’s surprising conclusion reminds us that chronicles, though they provide a basis for the present by crystallizing the past, do not end. When Almut defies her marital stasis by means of action, the narrative mood swiftly shifts from despondence to optimism as our gaze turns to the future.

Milena Moser’s lyric depiction of a family trapped between ritual and routine (“*Der Hund hinkt*”) continues in the direction implied by much of Schweikert’s story. Through the eyes of a pubescent girl, we learn how her brother’s death has sapped her family of vitality, leaving it with nothing but weekly outings to the graveyard as a binding element. Death becomes the essence of contradiction: the same tragedy which threatens the family also helps to normalize relations within the family.

In Bernand Comment’s “*Der Vortrag*,” a successful artist is invited back to his home village in order to discuss art, all in the name of philanthropy. This simple invitation to headline a charitable event proves a catalyst for a stream-of-consciousness rant about, among other things, literacy in the modern age, sex and sexuality, and superficial bonds of acquaintance. Past ghosts of insecurity return to haunt the

present, leaving the reader to wonder whether one *can* “go home again.”

It would be misleading to suggest that an obsession with the past defines each of the works in Bachmann’s anthology. In many of the stories, diversity remains the sole characteristic which the works have in common. Sergej Roi’s tale, laid out with taught economy, of art and terrorism (“*Das Stendhal-Syndrom*”) is a wonderful combination of a detective story and a treatise on aesthetics. Here the links to Switzerland are tenuous: The story begins with a young Quebecois tourist apparently suffering from ‘cultural overload’ and ends with a Basque bombing. Eugène’s “*Der König der Stotterer*” provides a virtual journey through Switzerland as the protagonist drives whimsically about, determined to follow unquestioningly each green traffic light. This *Autobahn*-roulette takes place a few days before the “stutterer” is to have a biography made of his life and seems to represent the aimless quality of a life defined solely by others. As the literary journey continues, Eugène insightfully portrays a man’s creation of a personal identity, even as he searches for it and anticipates having the same defined by the biographer’s pen. Andrea Simmen’s hilariously ironic consideration of mental illness in the land of chocolate boasts of a Hannibal Lector with a sweet tooth. In “*Schokoladentauglich*” a worker in a chocolate factory meticulously catalogues the items he would like to smother in chocolate, and subsequently loses all respect for life as he strives to make his aesthetic chimera a reality.

Returning to the image of the hiker which adorns this volume, one might, after reading *Die Schweiz erzählt*, reinterpret his beckoning as an invitation to see what regions lie behind the mountain. Bachmann’s anthology takes us beyond the familiar and into the crevices of a fragmented literary scene which provides the reader with a richly diverse mosaic of short prose.

University of Toronto

Jason Blake

PETER BICHSEL. *Cherubin Hammer und Cherubin Hammer*. Frankfurt a. M.: Suhrkamp, 1999. 109 pp. DM 34.00.

“Nur das Leben, das man sich erzählen kann, ist ein sinnvolles,” said Peter Bichsel in an interview quoted on the website www.suhrkamp.de. Peter Bichsel’s 1999 novel *Cherubin Hammer und Cherubin Hammer* explores the issues of storytelling and autobiography in a way that is sometimes humorous, sometimes sad. It tells the stories of two men who share the name “Cherubin Hammer” and of the women who live with these eccentric characters.

The first Cherubin Hammer, who calls himself Hammer, is a silent, reclusive man who never smiles, seldom speaks, and is seen only in his work clothes carrying a briefcase. He works as an archivist but is fixated on the goal of becoming famous by writing his own autobiography. Hammer speculates about the road to literary fame: should he die young, like Keats, or have a breakthrough in old age, like Fontane? He buys notebooks and locks himself into his room to write his autobiography, but comes up with little more than grandiose titles: “Die Tagebücher” or “Spuren der Menschheit – eine Autobiographie.” Hammer tries deliberately to live the life of a famous writer. Each day he climbs a mountain carrying a stone to add to his pile at the top. He sees this as a vital part of his autobiography: “Er ließ sich seine Biographie nicht durch Zufälligkeiten versauen” (60). Perhaps these stones represent the words of a life story, and the autobiographer, Sisyphus-like, is destined to struggle with each one. In the end, Hammer has only a careless pile of stones to show for his ordeals. His only conscious choices in life are to become a writer, and to carry his stones up the mountain; everything else is secondary and beyond his control. Bertha, his future wife, literally lands in his bed one night and soon Hammer finds he has a family, two children, a job, a house and a garden. He’s not quite sure how it all happened.

The story of Cherubin Hammer’s namesake, who calls himself Cherubin, is told in 54 lengthy footnotes. Each footnote provides a snapshot of Cherubin’s life, and creates a series of immediate contrasts to Hammer’s life. Because of this unusual narrative structure,

the reader constantly jumps back and forth between the two stories, causing the details of two vastly different lives to intertwine in his or her mind. Cherubin of the footnotes is a large, loud man who loves to tell stories of his time in jail, throw around hundred Schilling bills, and buy rounds of drinks in the bar. He uses his unusual name to mock the police, who are often after him. A swindler and an entrepreneur, he invents businesses and tricks to make money and to have adventures. Cherubin only thinks once, in passing, of writing his autobiography: he sees it as a money-making scheme.

The narrator, someone who knows both Cherubin and Hammer, is the only moderator between the main story and the footnotes. S/he begins the story like this: “Nein, das ist nicht die Geschichte von Cherubin Hammer. Cherubin Hammer war ein anderer” (7). The narrator then goes on to tell both stories. Only few details are accurate: “Alles andere hat der Author so fantasielos als möglich hinzuerfunden” (10). The reader is left with a string of questions: Who is “der Author?” Who is the narrator? What is the relation between the two Cherubin Hammers and what is the reason for telling both stories? Are Cherubin Hammer and Cherubin Hammer even real characters? It seems more likely, as the narrator hints, that they are a product of his or her own imagination. Perhaps, I would suggest, Cherubin Hammer and his alter ego represent two different aspects of the narrator’s own personality.

Tucked in between the parts of the main story line are brief, anecdotal autobiographies of Rosa Fässler, Hammer’s wife, and Bertha Schmied, Cherubin’s girlfriend. Rosa knows how to tell a good story: she has a scar above her eye and spins tales as to how she got it. She marries Hammer because she feels sorry for him. Bertha works in Cherubin’s favorite bar and so enters his life. Neither woman expects as much from life as Cherubin Hammer and Cherubin Hammer do; neither has dreams to live out. According to Bichsel, Rosa, who is able to tell her own story, has lived a meaningful life. Both women’s lives, however, are no less disappointing as they must learn to deal with the dominance of their eccentric men.

Peter Bichsel is perhaps best known for his 1964 *Eigentlich möchte Frau Blum den Milchmann kennenlernen*, and his 1969 *Kindergeschichten*. The first is a series of brief, detailed observations of everyday events, ones that criticize the pace of modern life and

emphasize missed communications between people. In the second, Bichsel introduces characters whose lives are humorous on one level and heartbreaking on another: one man gives objects new names until no one understands him anymore; another invents things that already exist. Bichsel also writes newspaper columns that read like stories and paint colorful, critical pictures of everyday events. Max Frisch once referred to Bichsel as "ein Poet" (dust jacket, *Eigentlich möchte Frau Blum den Milchmann kennenlernen*). Bichsel's words are simple yet their meanings complex, his stories are concise yet multi-layered. In *Cherubin Hammer und Cherubin Hammer*, Peter Bichsel retains his poetic style and explores new techniques of storytelling. He deals with the subject of autobiography on many different levels. Long after closing the book, the reader is left to ponder questions of lives lived and lives told.

University of Cincinnati

Silke Schade

VOLKER BRAUN. *Tumulus*. Frankfurt a. M.: Suhrkamp, 1999. 48 pp. DM 24.00.

Volker Braun. His style is unmistakable, his satirical critiques always worldly and up to date. Dig out your lexica and brace yourself for a spatial and temporal roller coaster ride among the living and the dead. *Tumulus* means "burial mound," and death is the thread which weaves itself throughout the poems in this brief collection. From Julius Caesar to a group of schoolchildren murdered in an American high school, from Kleist to Che Guevara, to the dissolution of the German Democratic Republic (GDR), and to his own mother's pain-filled passing, Braun conjures up the dead in many different contexts and forms. Each poem serves as a separate entryway into the tumulus, evoking and preserving memories.

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Published in honor of Braun's 60th birthday, *Tumulus* unites twelve poems written between 1988 and 1997. A mix of prose and free verse, these texts demonstrate Braun's coming to terms with his existence in the GDR and post-reunification Eastern Germany, after experiencing disappointment over unfulfilled ideals in both societal systems. For him, history always stands center stage. Reflecting upon past and present events, he also examines his own role in this history. Attempting to view these events objectively and without illusions, he resigns himself to a state of perplexity, helplessness, and homelessness in the face of utopia lost.

Braun adopts various metaphors to describe his impressions of history. In "Traumtext," he compares history to a film. Playing on the dual meaning of "Geschichte," the narrator dreams he is in a movie theater where the film, i.e. story and history, has just ended. As in many of Braun's previous poems and short stories (see *Die Zickzackbrücke*, 1992), this dream can be viewed as an allegory for Braun's perception of reunification: a situation in which, for him, history had come to a sudden halt. The poem ends optimistically, however, with the start of the next film "in der ungewohnten fantastischen Gewißheit eines neuen Tags" (9).

Another film metaphor appears in "Der Totenhügel," where Braun laments the horrors of war, spanning the ages from civilization's beginnings to the Gulf War, which has now been reduced to "Küstenkino" (16). Here, he expresses an acute awareness of the simultaneity of historical events when remembered. Braun perceives his own experiences with the fall of empires – the Third Reich and the communist block – as just "Ein Lidschlag der Geschichte gegen die Verblendung / . . . Eine Minute in Meiner Zeit" (16). The capitalized letter "M" in "Meiner Zeit" emphasizes his subjective relationship to these events. Contrasting with the series of monumental historical events appearing in the poem, this intimate subjectivity adds to the poetic intensity.

In June 1993, when Volker Braun was artist in residence at the Villa Massimo in Rome, I had the opportunity to speak with him. At that time, he said that he had freed himself from all prevailing ideologies. The lack of an ideology to hold onto does not prohibit him from continuing to express anger and dismay at the state of world affairs, however. In a poem from this current collection entitled

"MATERIAL XV: SCHREIBEN IM SCHREDDER," Braun reckons harshly with his past, ashamed and resentful of the way the GDR government deluded its citizens, including himself. "[I]ch schäme mich / Mit Schweinen gekämpft zu haben / . . . Getäuscht von ihrem heldenhaften Wühlen / In der Scheiße, die die Geschichte war / Und berauscht vom Mist, der die Macht war" (22).

My personal favorite is the satire "LAGERFELD," where Braun attacks fashion designers like Karl Lagerfeld for their arrogance and greed, for their catering to materialistic desires. In an amusing play on words, he describes Rome as a "Feldlager" where models file by in "Panzerhemden" (39). In contemporary society, everything becomes "fashionable" or "unfashionable," or in any case, expendable. High school murders, a trend from America, have become the new fashion in Germany. The worst part for Braun is the general feeling of apathy and disempowerment in today's society which leads to lethargy: "Das Warten auf nichts / Das ist das Drama: es gibt keine Handlung / Wir wissen es anders und handeln nicht Nein / Wir können nicht anders Das Kleid / Ist angewachsen" (41).

Since Braun is one of the most intellectual of contemporary German poets, his poems are not easy to digest. The intellectual richness of his poems is both a strength and a weakness. As Braun himself queries, however: "Warum soll ich Mode werden / In der Wegwerfgesellschaft" (41).

University of Wisconsin-Madison

Jill Twark

PETER HANDKE. *Die Fahrt im Einbaum oder Das Stück zum Film vom Krieg*. Frankfurt a.M.: Suhrkamp, 1999. 127pp. DM 32.00.

Since the beginning of his career, Peter Handke has had a turbulent relationship with the press. He is often accused of using the press by purposefully antagonizing his critics to create publicity for his latest project. He then complains loudly when those critics do not respond favorably to his work. Whether this is an intentional strategy or not, the system has been successful for Handke, who has become one of the most well-known and one of the most controversial writers of the last three decades.

Handke's latest work, *Die Fahrt im Einbaum* continues in this controversial tradition. The drama is set in the dining room of the hotel "Acapulco" somewhere in the Balkans. Ten years after the last war (for the time being), two movie directors, Luis Machado from Spain and John O'Hara from the United States, meet in the hotel to discuss the making of a film about the war in the Balkans. A row of potential characters are paraded in front of the two directors. These include a farmer-turned-war-criminal, a beauty queen, a poet, and (combining two of Handke's favorite targets) three mountain-biking international journalists. Each person tells a story about the war from his or her own perspective. They discuss the possible causes of the war, the role of western media and western politics in the war, and the stereotypes of both sides. After listening to each of them, the two directors decide not to make their movie because it is too early in history for such a film (122). A feeling of complete insanity has enveloped the modern world, especially the Balkans, so that neither the directors nor anyone else has the ability to make sense of it anymore (124).

This play is not so much about the making of a film of a war in the Balkans as it is a criticism of western attitudes toward war in general. Handke sees the war not so much as a conflict between Serbs and Croats or between Christians and Muslims, but as a conflict between western culture – especially the one-sided western press –

against the entire Balkan region. As in many of his works, Handke takes a dialectic approach to the problem in an effort to combat what he sees as an over-simplification of the situation. For every argument there is always a counter-argument and a differing perspective on the historical events. Therefore, the "truth" as the journalists report it becomes increasingly entangled and questionable.

Handke's dialectic allows him to create a work which goes beyond its immediate subject matter. This work deals with the problems in creating real and artificial boundaries. Among other things, he examines the role of literature in politics and western culture, as well as the paradoxical relationships of truth and deception as it is used in rhetorical speech. Each truth also deceives because it excludes other possible truths. It creates empty sentences (80), hackneyed slogans – "Volk von hier, Erwache!" (39) – and a language of war (70). This empty language promotes artificial boundaries which separate one group of people from another and which cause the isolation and alienation. Thus, *Die Fahrt im Einbaum* is a play about finding a middle ground. The Dugout canoe becomes a representation of a prehistoric time when language was only a proto-language (*Urlaute*) and in which rivers formed natural borders. To travel on the river was to exist in the middle ground (*Zwischenraum*), to exist in peace (116).

The reader does not have to agree with Handke's political position to appreciate the complexity of this work. Although it is not necessary to have read any of Handke's previous works to understand this play, those familiar with Handke's writing will have an advantage in recognizing some of the finer points. Handke draws upon a number of themes from his earlier works and thereby creates a context for *Die Fahrt im Einbaum* which adds to its richness. Although the often shocking satire may offend those who read the play on a superficial level, it will give careful readers many opportunities to reconsider their own prejudices and assumptions.

University of Cincinnati

Jeff Packer

BERND HÜPPAUF und ROLF M. BÄUMER, Hg. *Signale aus der Blecker Street. Deutsche Texte aus New York*. Göttingen: Wallstein, 1999. 184 S. DM 35,00.

Die siebzehn zeitgenössischen deutschen Autorinnen und Autoren der Texte dieses Buches hielten sich alle zwischen 1981 und 1998 als Writers-in-residence am Deutschen Haus der New York University auf und wohnten in der Blecker Street. Somit stellt das Erlebnis der Stadt New York die Grundlage dar für deren Beschäftigung mit den unterschiedlichsten Themen, die in ihrer Spannweite sowohl Klischees als auch Realität New Yorks behandeln. Mitunter geht es in den Texten gar nicht um die Stadt selbst; oft inspiriert dieselbe andere Themen oder Reflektionen; mitunter sind die Texte lediglich in New York entstanden. Geschrieben in Lyrik, Prosa oder Essayform bieten die Texte den Lesern ein mosaikartiges Bild von der Begegnung mit einer Stadt.

Nach einem kurzen Vorwort der Herausgeber stellt Bernd Hüppauf den Texten ein Eingangssessay voran, das als Stimmungs- und Informationsgrundlage zum Verständnis der folgenden Werke dient. Zusätzlich helfen kurze biographische Fakten am Ende des Buches, eine Einordnung der verschiedenen Autorinnen und Autoren vorzunehmen. In seinem Eingangssessay behandelt Bernd Hüppauf New York als Touristenziel und betrachtet die damit verbundenen Erwartungen an einen Besuch der Stadt. So bemerkt er: „New York polarisiert seine Besucher, und deutsche Schriftsteller bilden keine Ausnahme. Die einen sind begeistert, die anderen angewidert. Selten liegt eine Reaktion zwischen den Extremen“ (10). Diese Erkenntnis spiegelt sich in den darauffolgenden Texten wider.

Hans-Joachim Schädlich's Momentaufnahmen, die jeweils einen Umfang von ungefähr zehn Zeilen haben, berichten von unmittelbaren Eindrücken der Stadt wie zum Beispiel die Meinung eines Taxifahrers über Frauen oder die Begegnung mit einem Straßenkünstler. Ebenso konfrontiert Günter Herburgers Lyrik die Leser mit unmittelbaren

Eindrücken der Stadt. Anne Duden beschäftigt sich in ihrem Text mit dem Phänomen des akustischen New Yorks. Sie reflektiert über die Geräuschkulisse einer Stadt, in der jederlei Schreien untergeht im alles übertönenden Lärm der Millionenmetropole. Das Gewöhnen an diesen Lärm führt dazu, daß dieser als Alltagsmusik empfunden wird. Michael Scharang präsentiert ein Gedicht über das Feuerwerk zum 4. Juli, das vom Kaufhaus Macy's spendiert wird. In Josef Haslingers humorvoller Kurzerzählung geht es um den Laptop-Computer Winnie, der an Computerviren „erkrankt“ ist und vom „Oberarzt“ Bill Gates die Diagnose der „Virusinfektion“ erstellt bekommt. Durch das „Behandeln“ Winnies mit den unterschiedlichsten Computerprogrammen kommt es am Ende zur Amerikanisierung Winnies. „Obwohl gebürtige Deutsche, ist Winnie in Deutschland nie wieder ganz heimisch geworden“ (46). Diese Worte über den personifizierten Computer lassen sich auf viele der Autorinnen und Autoren übertragen, die nach ihrem Amerika-Erlebnis nach Deutschland zurückkehrten. So setzt sich Jochen Kelter in seinem Text *Mein Allemannien. Ein mißlingender Versuch über die Wirklichkeit* mit dem Begriff „Heimat“ auseinander. In Brigitte Burmeisters Erzählung *Indianerschmuck* berichtet die Protagonistin Ines von ihrem zehnwöchigen Verhältnis mit John, einem Schmuckhändler im East Village, der sie an Winnetou erinnert. Ines, die Berliner Austauschstudentin, arbeitet schwarz in Johns Indianerschmuckladen. Während Ines John von ihrem ehemaligen Leben in Ostberlin vor dem Mauerfall erzählt, von dem sich John keine Vorstellungen machen kann, berichtet dieser von seinem Aufwachsen im puritanischen Flint, Michigan, von seiner mexikanischen Mutter, die dort als Farbige galt. Als eines Morgens plötzlich unverhofft Johns Ehefrau und dessen zwei Kinder im Geschäft auftauchen, führt dies zu Ines' sofortiger Abreise nach Berlin und zum Ende der kurzen Romanze mit „Winnetou.“ Alfred Guldens kurze Erzählung *Village Green* beschreibt einen kleinen idyllischen Blumen- und Gemüsegarten inmitten Manhattans Wolkenkratzerschluchten. *Solst sain a milioner!* behandelt die Sehnsucht eines alten Juden nach den Weinbergen der Mosel. Davon angeregt denkt der Erzähler über alles das nach, was mit Juden zu tun hat und stellt fest, daß dieses alltägliche Berühren mit jüdischem Leben und Wortschatz in Deutschland völlig vergessen ist, während man in New York damit tagtäglich in Berührung kommt. Hans Christoph

Buchs *Amerikanisches Journal* zeichnet ein durch und durch negatives Amerikabild. Gerd Fuchs, angeregt von einer Zeitungsnotiz, berichtet von der Mordgeschichte einer Frau, die ihren Mörder im Internet traf. In Uwe Timms *Das Abendessen* trifft der Erzähler auf eine frühe Bekannte im Kennedy-Airport, die ihn an eine Begegnung vor ungefähr zwanzig Jahren erinnert, die in einer totalen Katastrophe für diese Bekannte endete, indem diese entdecken mußte, daß in dem von ihrem Mann bereiteten Abendessen sich Kakerlaken befanden, was letztenendes der ausschlaggebende Faktor für das Ende dieser Ehe bedeutete. Weitere Autoren dieser Anthologie sind Gert Loschütz, Gerhard Falkner, Steffen Mensching, Robert Menasse, Durs Grünbein und Ludwig Fels.

So vielfältig sich die Stadt New York präsentiert, so vielfältig sind die Texte dieses Buches. Teilweise humorvoll wie Uwe Timm oder Josef Haslinger, teilweise ernst und zum Nachdenken anregend wie Alfred Guldens Texte, oder auch in negativ ablehnender Haltung wie Hans Christoph Buch - reflektieren alle Beiträge dieser Anthologie die direkte Auseinandersetzung mit einem Ort und dessen Menschen. In dem Sinne ist dieses Buch nicht das typische Reisebuch des New York Touristen, vielmehr kann man es als literarischen Querschnitt zum Thema New York bezeichnen, ohne sich dabei auf die Stadt allein zu beschränken.

University of Cincinnati

Monika Hobbein-Deegen

ANNA MARIA JOKL. *Die Reise nach London. Wiederbegegnungen*. Frankfurt a. M.: Jüdischer Verlag, 1999. 125 pp. DM 32.00.

Die Reise nach London is a collection of eight short texts that challenge the borders between essay and autobiographical narratives. The author, a Jewish writer who now resides in Israel, recounts her return to London in 1977. She took refuge in Great Britain between 1939 and 1950 after fleeing Nazi Germany in 1933, with stops in the former Czechoslovakia and in Poland. In 1950 she moved to Switzerland to study under Carl Jung. A year later, she returned to Berlin and examined the psychological consequences of the Holocaust both on Jews and on non-Jewish Germans (the majority) until 1966, when she settled in Jerusalem.

Although this concise eight-episode narrative gives a general impression of linearity, *Die Reise nach London* is not simply a travelog of Jokl's journey to the city she had not seen in 27 years. The narrative seems to evolve in a spiral fashion, with each segment representing one circle or even one set of circles. Her experiences are punctuated with reflections and flashbacks to other periods of her life subsequent to her initial stay in London. Each episode stands for itself and could be read independently of the others. Jokl addresses such topics as time, displacement and immigration - both from the standpoint of the host countries and from that of the immigrants - multiculturalism, memory, Israel and Jewish identity, anti-Semitism, gender relations, power, and the abuse thereof.

The running theme in this text, however, can be found in the title of her last book: *Bewältigung der Vergangenheit*. This experience is addressed at different levels; from the personal recollections of the author and the people in her past, to more collective experiences such as the Holocaust from different perspectives. During her stay she returns to old and familiar places and people. Symbolically, in Kensington Gardens she seeks a particular tree that had been destroyed during a German attack of London, and yet came back to life. Her

search was unsuccessful: "Ich fand ihn nicht mehr. Zuerst dachte ich - siebenundzwanzig Jahre sind eine lange Zeit -, dass ich ihn vielleicht nicht am richtigen Ort suchte, aber es war der richtige. Nur stand an seiner Statt ein junger Baum, von einem Metallgitter geschützt" (33). As she seeks out and confronts this chapter of her past, she observes how old friends and acquaintances process their own past - or choose not to. "Für Mitzi war, was mich beraf, die Zeit vor siebenundzwanzig Jahren stehengeblieben" (101). She discovers how, as she investigates her past by contacting old acquaintances and friends, she might have engaged some unwilling passengers on this journey back in time. She creates a mosaic of comparisons by using images from the different cultures that have formed her identity. One segment is entitled "Rip van Winkle," creating a parallel between the fairy tale character's long slumber and the author's long absence from London. Just as Rip woke up to a changed world, she has returned to a changed London, to a multicultural city, at least in appearance. She weaves together her religious experience as a Jewish woman on Yom Kippur (Day of Atonement) with her search for two familiar places while processing her memories of a failed romantic relationship. In this chapter, "Kensington Gardens - Tag der Rechnung" (Day of Settlement, a play on the meaning of Yom Kippur), she begins with an account of her personal experience during the Yom Kippur war in Israel. Jokl uses this memory and other personal encounters as a springboard into her reflections on broader issues.

Die Reise nach London is a concise but rich and multilayered text with an apparent simplicity that makes it accessible to a wide audience but also appealing to a readership able to discern the collage of discourses in the text.

University of Maryland

Cerue K. Diggs

RAFIK SCHAMI. *Sieben Doppelgänger*. München: Hanser, 1999. 168 S. DM 26,00.

In Rafik Schamis Roman *Sieben Doppelgänger* geht es nicht um exotische, fremde Umgebungen, unglaubliche Abenteuer, wie man nach den vorherigen Büchern des Autors erwartet. Den Lesern wird das alltägliche Leben des in Deutschland lebenden Schriftstellers dargestellt. Dennoch mangelt der Alltag des erfolgreichen Geschichtenerzählers nicht an unerwarteten, unglaublichen Erlebnissen. Rafik Schami bekommt jedes Jahr hunderte von Anfragen nach Lesungen und Vorträgen. Er kennt schon jede Buchhandlung, jeden Kulturverein in Deutschland und schläft jede Nacht in einem anderen Hotel. Nachmittags erzählt er für Kinder, abends für Erwachsene. Nein, sagen kann er nicht, da er niemanden enttäuschen möchte. Nach und nach wird er sein eigenes Opfer. Eines Tages fühlt er sich „glücklich, aber müde, sehr müde“ (9). Er ist erschöpft und hat keine Zeit und Phantasie mehr, neue Geschichten zu schreiben. Rafik Schami braucht dringend Hilfe.

Der Arzt, ein alter Freund, der Ruhe empfiehlt, hat die rettende Idee, wie Schami sich die heilende Ruhe schaffen kann. Er schlägt Schami vor, mit Doppelgängern zu arbeiten, die am selben Abend in verschiedenen Orten erzählen könnten. Gleichzeitig hätte der Schriftsteller die Möglichkeit, zu Hause im warmen Zimmer, in aller Ruhe an seinen neuen Büchern zu arbeiten. Nach langem Zögern wird der Plan in die Tat umgesetzt. In mehreren Zeitungen erscheint eine Anzeige, mit der ausländische Mitarbeiter zu einem Schauspiel gesucht werden. Schami bekommt eine unerwartete Lawine von Bewerbungen. Einige der Angemeldeten sehen auf dem Foto wie Zwillinge von Schami aus. In der ersten Runde werden zehn Kandidaten ausgewählt, die die harte Prüfung von Sprache, Gedächtnis, Charme und Benehmen bestehen könnten. Die Ausgewählten werden sehr gründlich auf ihre zukünftige Arbeit vorbereitet. Sie müssen viel lernen: Schamis Gebärden, das Benehmen in einer Buchhandlung und die Kunst des freien Erzählens à la Rafik Schami. Drei Kandidaten verlassen in der ersten Woche die Schulung, ihre Nerven machen das nicht mit. Die anderen absolvieren die lange Ausbildung und sind wunderbar vorbereitet. Das System scheint genau ausgearbeitet und totschick zu sein.

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Die Ebenbilder, von eins bis sieben nummeriert, beginnen ihre Arbeit. Es stellt sich allerdings heraus, daß die Idee gar nicht so vollkommen ist.

In den folgenden Kapiteln lernt man die Doppelgänger näher kennen. Sie sind sehr unterschiedliche Charaktere: ein schlampiger Türke aus Köln, der dreisprachig ist, ein verschlossener Araber aus Israel, ein Perser aus Weimar, ein geiziger Italiener, der noch nie in einer Buchhandlung war, ein Araber, der tatsächlich Rafik Schami heißt, aber einen vollkommen unterschiedlichen Charakter hat. In den ersten Wochen ist das Doppelgängertum ein voller Erfolg, bald zeigen sich die ersten Risse. Die Doppelgänger sind zu individuell und dies verursacht die Katastrophe. Einer von ihnen beginnt die Vorlesung regelmäßig spät, ein anderer sagt bei der Diskussion nie nein. Einer von ihnen haßt die Deutschen und wird einmal von Skinheads geschlagen.

Jedes Mal wenn Schami Ruhe braucht, um seine Geschichte zu schreiben, muß er in irgendwelcher Weise seinen Doppelgängern Hilfestellung leisten. Die Ebenbilder stehen nicht auf eigenen Füßen, sie brauchen immer wieder die Anweisungen Schamis. Die schon lange ersehnte Ruhe bekommt Schami nicht. Unglücklicherweise muß er nun mit den Problemen von sieben Menschen umgehen. Er soll Alkoholprobleme vertuschen, die Doppelgänger von unliebsamen Frauengeschichten befreien, einige Vorlesungen selber übernehmen. Er wird ein Doppelgänger von Schamis Doppelgängern. Einige der Doppelgänger tragen ihre eigenen Geschichten vor, ein Doppelgänger taucht sogar auf, um zu behaupten, daß er der echte Rafik Schami ist. Die Katastrophe nimmt immer größere Ausmaße an.

Der Roman wurde in der ersten Person geschrieben. Er ist leicht verständlich, liest sich wie ein Tagebuch. Man lernt viele interessante Gestalten aus Deutschland, Israel, Italien und Saudi-Arabien kennen. Die Nebengeschichten und die schwerfälligen Doppelgänger bringen die Leser oft zum Lachen. Rafik Schami schreibt sehr liebevoll über seine Leser und Zuhörer. Der Roman ist eine Liebeserklärung an sein deutsches Publikum, das ihn, den emigrierten Syrer, zu einem der beliebtesten deutschsprachigen Erzähler gemacht hat. Schami schreibt faszinierend über seine unglaublichen Abenteuer, die er als Schriftsteller erlebt. Ob die wunderbare Begegnungen und die entzückenden Geschichten wahr sind oder reine Erfindungen, weiß man nicht.

Schami behauptet, daß die Ähnlichkeit mit lebenden Personen, realen Ereignissen, Orten und Buchhandlungen nur ein Zufall sei. Dennoch sind die Begegnungen sehr überzeugend geschildert. Für denjenigen, der eine amüsante Geschichte aus dem heutigen Deutschland gerne liest, ist Rafik Schamis *Sieben Doppelgänger* genau das richtige Buch.

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