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Gedächtnis und Geschichte in Generationenromanen seit der
Wende (review)

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Erzählstrategien. Da in dieser Studie das Werk von drei Autorinnen besprochen wird, hätte man sich häufigere Vergleiche und Verweise zwischen den drei Autorinnen in den drei Hauptkapiteln gewünscht—dies geschieht aber hauptsächlich im Einleitungs- und Schlußkapitel (der Index ist hier hilfreich, erfaßt aber nicht alle Stellen, an denen Querverweise dann doch existieren). Auch hätte der eine oder andere Verweis auf das Körperthema oder die Erzählstrategien in Texten anderer Autoren und Autorinnen desselben Zeitraums die Situierung ihres Werkes in der gesamtdeutschsprachigen Literatur bereichert.

Marvens Untersuchung spricht ein Lesepublikum aus den Wissenschaftsbereichen Germanistik, feministische Literaturwissenschaft, Minoritäten-/Migrantenliteratur und Kulturwissenschaften an, das nach einem gelungenen Beispiel für die Fruchtbarmachung von Theorien nicht nur aus der feministischen Wissenschaft und der Erzählforschung, sondern auch aus der Psychoanalyse (Hysterie- und Trauma-Theorien) sucht und sich für die drei Autorinnen, die literarische Repräsentation der Effekte totalitärer Regimes und geschlechtsspezifischer Körperbilder interessiert. Die weitausgreifende und doch effektiv in die Textanalyse integrierte theoretische Fundierung liefert ein gelungenes Modell für literaturwissenschaftliches Arbeiten im größeren Kontext einer kulturwissenschaftlich orientierten Germanistik und leistet einen ausgezeichneten Beitrag zur Forschungsliteratur über die drei Autorinnen und die Gegenwartsliteratur von Frauen. Die genaue Herausarbeitung der für jede Autorin spezifischen Repräsentationsweisen und Erzähltechniken demonstriert überzeugend die immense Skala literarischer Fähigkeiten und trägt damit bei zur Ausdifferenzierung der “Literatur von Frauen” und von AutorInnen, die oft pauschal bestimmten Kategorien zugeordnet werden, in die sie nicht oder nur zum Teil gehören.

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—Helga G. Braunbeck

Gedächtnis und Geschichte in Generationenromanen seit der Wende.

Von Friederike Eigler. Berlin: Erich Schmidt, 2005. 259 Seiten. €39,80.

Friederike Eigler's new book, an exploration of four post-1989 German books that deal with 20th-century German—and non-German—families, does not only situate the family at the intersection between the individual and society. It also places the novel in particular—and literature more generally—at the intersection between authoritative state and scientific discourses about national history on the one hand and private, more submerged discourses about history on the other. In Eigler's view, literature is privileged above many other forms of social communication as a means to explore problematic aspects of national history because of its relative discursive openness and flexibility. As Eigler suggests, “die Verschränkung von Gedächtnis mit Fragen der Identität [kann] im Bereich der Literatur gelockert oder sogar entkoppelt werden” (24). If some historians—Eigler refers particularly to Konrad Jarausch and Michael Geyer—have recently pleaded for discarding rigid chronologies and dichotomies in approaching the complex history of Germany's 20th century, then Eigler suggests that literature, with “die sprachlichen und gestalterischen Mittel” available to it, is “besonders gut dazu geeignet, dieser Herausforderung zu begegnen” (35). Among other things, then, Eigler's study is a spirited defense of literature as an important forum for the development of liberal approaches to history and identity. Eigler closes

her book by expressing the sober hope “dass literarische Auseinandersetzungen mit der Geschichte des 20. Jahrhunderts [. . .] zu einem kulturellen Gedächtnis beitragen, das die aktive Gestaltung funktionierender offener Gesellschaften im 21. Jahrhundert weniger behindert als fördert” (232).

On the way to this conclusion, Eigler devotes her book to a close analysis of four literary works written in the post-reunification period: Zafer Şenocak’s *Gefährliche Verwandschaft* (1998), Kathrin Schmidt’s *Die Gunnar-Lennefsen-Expedition* (1998), Monika Maron’s *Pawels Briefe* (1999), and Stephan Wackwitz’s *Ein unsichtbares Land* (2003). This choice of works is balanced on at least two levels: it features the work of two male and two female writers, and it also features an even balance between West and East German-centered writers, since Şenocak and Wackwitz are primarily interested in West Germany and its prehistory, while Schmidt and Maron are primarily interested in East Germany and its prehistory. (It is interesting to note that the two male authors are also the ones primarily interested in West Germany, while the two female authors are the ones interested in East Germany, but Eigler does not speculate on this particular imbalance or the reasons for it.) Since Şenocak’s novel is, among other things, also an exploration of Turkish history, Eigler’s selection of contemporary literary works also demonstrates the ways in which definitions of German identity are being questioned and expanded in contemporary literature. Eigler analyzes all four of these works—whether one wants to give all of them the genre designation “novel” is probably not an essential question, given Eigler’s insistence on the openness of literary texts, including their ability to include autobiographical as well as fictional elements—as works of metahistory, meaning that they deal with history not as something that happened once and can be rediscovered in pristine purity but as something that has to be struggled for and argued over in the present. In these works it is not just the past that is at stake but, perhaps even more important, the efforts of literary figures in the narrative present to understand and make sense of the past.

Eigler is generally positive about all four works both as literature and as attempts to approach the German—and non-German—past from a liberal perspective. She defends Maron, for instance, against the criticism that Maron uses the memory of her ethnically Jewish grandfather, who was murdered in a Nazi concentration camp, in order to legitimate her own critique of GDR authoritarianism, and she defends Schmidt against the critique that Schmidt essentializes femininity and motherhood. Eigler’s defense of these authors is well-argued, and Eigler also clearly shows at the end of each literary analysis how the work in question connects with and responds to contemporary German debates about 20th-century history. Eigler is also particularly good at connecting her own literary analysis with the insights of other scholars who have explored questions of remembrance in contemporary literature and culture, such as Amir Eschel and Marianne Hirsch.

In two illuminating introductory chapters that precede the literary analyses, Eigler situates the novels she analyzes in the context of previous German family novels on the one hand and competing conceptions of history and identity on the other. The first chapter argues that the year 1989 marked a major shift in the way that German authors approached the family novel: whereas the family novels of the 1970s had tended to condemn Nazi fathers and grandfathers in an undifferentiated way, thus exculpating their primary figures—and authors—from a context of guilt, Eigler argues that the more recent family novels involve their main characters—and authors—in a complex

historical web of responsibility. The second chapter explores theoretical concepts of memory as developed, in particular, by Jan and Aleida Assmann. While Eigler is generally positive about the Assmanns' contribution to the theory of memory as a collective phenomenon, she nevertheless sees their concept of long-term historical memory as too rigid and illiberal. She suggests that the Assmanns' concept needs to be opened up to include more liberal and multiethnic notions of identity and nationhood.

I find this discussion and critique quite fascinating; my primary criticism is that Eigler does not always differentiate between prescriptive and descriptive approaches to identity and collective memory formation. One may agree with Eigler's arguments for liberal, multicultural identities but nevertheless concede that such arguments are prescriptive and not descriptive: that is, they lay out a path that the Germans as a collective entity ought perhaps to take, but they do not necessarily describe what the Germans as a collective entity are in fact doing. Eigler also speaks positively about the destruction of "sinnstiftende Gedächtnisdiskurse" (56) but it is not entirely clear what the elimination of meaning in discourses about memory might actually lead to; and Eigler's literary analyses suggest that authors are not necessarily destroying meaning but rather problematizing it. Eigler's analysis of these novels, and of their contribution to contemporary German discourses about memory and identity, is an important and well-researched contribution on a subject that will almost certainly continue to be of great interest to German Studies scholars for many years to come.

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—Stephen Brockmann

The Turkish Turn in Contemporary German Literature. Toward a New Critical Grammar of Migration.

By Leslie A. Adelson. New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2005. x + 264 pages. \$65.00.

Over the past decade or so, there has been a palpable change in discussions of Turkish-German literature. While questions of classification of this important body of literature, its position vis-à-vis the German canon, and evaluations of ethnic identitarian politics as manifested in literature itself were central to discussions until the mid-1990s, the focus of scholarship has slowly shifted. Recent studies, such as Kader Konuk's *Identitäten im Prozeß* (2001) and Azade Seyhan's *Writing Outside the Nation* (2001) have evaluated Turkish-German writings by situating them in the larger corpus of transnational literatures, discussing thereby the intersections, confluences, and contradictions that form and inform cultural exchanges between Germany and Turkey as part of mass migrations and globalization in the latter half of the 20th century.

Leslie Adelson has been at the forefront of this change. Since her spirited debate with Ülker Gökberk on their readings of Sten Nadolny's novel *Selim oder die Gabe der Rede* (1990) in the mid-1990s, Adelson has pushed the field, emphasizing the necessity of discussing Turkish-German literature within the larger corpus of German literature, stressing the critical examination of identity, ethnicity, gender, and class. Her latest book-length study, *The Turkish Turn in Contemporary German Literature* documents some of her previously published essays, extensively reworked and expanded.

The book starts with a pertinent provocation: "If it looks like a duck, walks like a duck, and talks like a duck, don't you damn well think it had better be a duck?" (1). The "duck" refers to literary works by contemporary German authors that register