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*Housing Problems. Writing and Architecture in Goethe,
Walpole, Freud, and Heidegger* (review)

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Goethe Yearbook, Volume 17, 2010, pp. 395-398 (Review)

Published by North American Goethe Society

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1353/gyr.0.0049>

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der "Politik des Erzählens" die "Medien" und "Poetiken des Erzählens" zur Diskussion. In der minutiösen Nachzeichnung des Goetheschen Umgangs mit der orientalistischen Philologie in den "Noten und Abhandlungen" zeige sich nach Ansicht des Verfassers, wie Goethe den philologischen Diskurs vom "Standpunkte der Poesie" in Anspruch nimmt, "indem er die Grenzen zwischen philologischem Kommentar und poetischer Darstellung immer wieder verwischt und beide kaum unterscheidbar zu machen sucht" (451). Das Kapitel über die *Lehrjahre* ist der Rezeption des Romans durch Friedrich Schlegel gewidmet, wobei der *Wilhelm Meister* "für ihn eine 'allgemeine Formel für ein[en] Rom[an]' darstellen soll und als solcher die erste Ahndung eines zukünftig zu realisierenden romantischen Romans" sei (366). Höhepunkt und Abschluß bildet das Kapitel über die *Wanderjahre* als "philologisches Kompendium" (381). Im Rückgriff auf das Wolfsche Modell ermögliche diese Form "die Bildung eines inneren Zusammenhangs scheinbar disparater Materialien." Die philologische Poetik stelle ein Modell dar, "diese neue Disparatheit als Realismus produktiv zu machen" (453) und damit einen Beitrag zur Gegenwartsdiagnose zu liefern. Nur der Schlußfolgerung, dass die *Wanderjahre* "ein romantischer Roman" und nicht ein moderner Roman—"après la lettre" seien (444), vermag man nicht zuzustimmen.

Für das 19. und 20. Jahrhundert stellt der Verfasser "eine immer größer werdende Kluft zwischen Literatur und Philologie" fest, die Nietzsche noch einmal zu überbrücken suchte (454). Das Verdienst dieser Monographie besteht darin, die Diskussion der Modernisierungskrise im 18. Jahrhundert auf ein neues methodische Niveau zu erheben und erhöhte Aufmerksamkeit auf das Problem der Mündlichkeit/Schriftlichkeit bei Goethe zu richten. Ob die gegenwärtige Rephilologisierung der Literaturwissenschaft gelingt, wird sich daran erweisen, wie diese mit dem Ende der Ära des gedruckten Buches fertig wird.

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Susan Bernstein, *Housing Problems. Writing and Architecture in Goethe, Walpole, Freud, and Heidegger*. Palo Alto: Stanford University Press, 2008. 216pp.

In her introduction, Susan Bernstein describes "housing problems" as the "limit to thinking" or "desire and necessity to control and contain" indicated by the "facticity of the house" (14). Central to the challenge of her compelling examination is the diversity of the subject matter these problems involve. This extends from the houses and built interiors authors occupied and designed, "actual," "empirical" houses (3) since made into museums expected to display a "homology between self and house" (89) (Goethe's house in Weimar, Walpole's Strawberry Hill, and Freud's "analytic chamber" [89] in Vienna before and after being reconstituted in London); to the theoretical implications of housing these authors represented in their fictions (*Wilhelm Meister's Apprenticeship*, *Elective Affinities*, *The Castle of Otranto*), and speculative writings (Goethe's essays on "German Architecture," Freud's "On the Uncanny" and personal correspondence, H. D.'s reflections on Berggasse 19 in *Tribute to Freud*); to Derrida's reminder that the original and "only meaning" of "archive" is that of "a house, a domicile" (99), in remarks delivered at the Freud House, London; and, finally, to Heidegger's interweaving of building, residing, and thinking and definition of language as "the house of Being" ("Letter on Humanism" and elsewhere) and George Oppen's incorporation and intercalation of his readings of Heidegger into his long poem, "Route."

A grammatically ambiguous phrase used by Arendt in describing the problem of conceptual language (with “house” as example) (133–34), “housing problems” thus refers here to “problems” of “housing,” understood as a genitive noun, as well as to those (ill-)contained by “housing,” understood as a gerundive action, problems in which the physical, fictional, and metaphysical or theoretical (sometimes twin of *poiesis*) are intertwined. Interspersed with Bernstein’s careful disentanglement and interrogation of these distinct functions of architecture in and outside of writing, are unidentified photographs of architectural details, usually appearing alongside their own counter-image or *mise-en-abîme*, whose stated function is to “work along with the text to critique the desire for containment and stability inherent in the theme of the house” (18). Negatively recollecting and replacing the Engelmann photographs of the former contents of the Berggasse rooms from which Freud was forced into exile—rooms now empty of all but simulacra and textual metonymies of objects (“a display of photographs, etchings, first editions, and other documents about Freud’s life and work” [105])—these “nonrepresentational” (18) images attributed to the openly uncannily named “Suzanne Doppelt,” represent, rather, the double, empirical and conceptual identity of housing investigated by the other (authorial) “Suzanne” throughout “the text.”

The dynamic of doubling—of the “outside and the inside, the setting and the interior” [48] (or the habitual [*gewöhnlich*] and inhabital [*ungewöhnlich*])—pervades both the object and agency of Bernstein’s book. Its best conceptual designation remains Freud’s “uncanny,” one of the first names for housing problems (*das Unheimliche*), and the discussions of the uncanny, as joint problem of housing and signification, are the strongest in the book. Suggesting that Goethe’s *Elective Affinities* might well be considered one of the genre (40), Bernstein centers her explications of the uncanny on the Gothic. Of these highly stylized compositions of excess, in which uncanniness most clearly, i.e., conventionally *and* forcefully, resides, she writes: “The uncanny action of the Gothic, often overlooked in accounts of its machinery or its resolutions, takes place when signifiers are seen to produce and participate in the signified. The Gothic building exudes a kind of atmosphere that gives rise to the spirits, supernatural events, ghosts and evil people it contains. The Gothic castle contains by failing to contain itself . . . the role of architecture in the Gothic can be seen not only or not simply as a historical question, but rather as a problem of signification” (48–49; see also the fine discussion of the shifting referents of “Gothic”—along with those of “barbarian,” they are alternately German and Roman—and postfactum, revivalist introduction of the term into architectural history, 44–45). It is in reading *The Castle of Otranto*, first Gothic novel and novelization of already dated Gothic style in building (itself in “off balance” relationship to Walpole’s explicitly incoherent replication of the Gothic at Strawberry Hill [49]), that *Housing Problems* comes most alive—not in the “spirits” of dispossessed inheritors, whose “dismembered [body] parts” suddenly “quiver into life” (57), but in the spirit of housing it reveals to be ever-living “in” philosophy and literature.

The wild physicality of Walpole’s narrative may underlie the power of Bernstein’s reading of it, and Bernstein herself might suggest, self-critically (for this reader, inaccurately), that such a reading, like the book in which it appears, “is something of a parody” (154). In that it attempts to bring the unsaid (the external, the architectural) into the said, to bring the outside of the outside, the literal housing of the body that houses spirit, into spirit, the signifiers of the signifier

into the signified, Bernstein performs a critical “undoing or inverting of the letter/speech hierarchy” (63) long doctrinally established, she reminds us, by the expulsion of the letter from an interiority henceforth defined as embodied in Christ alone, the anti-linguistic dogma *written* (without irony and with immediate and ongoing empirical and political consequences) by Paul (62–63). While Bernstein summarizes this historic devaluation of the letter with characteristic modesty (“The disparity between sign and meaning becomes an issue in the New Testament” [62]), her *Housing Problems* must brave the further problem of its own fear of “parody”: of the historical devolution of house into tourist destination and of architectural detail into “kitsch” (84).

Yet it is, rather, the camouflage, cover-up, or refusal of the insistence of the external and empirical that gives safe harbor to the spirit of real empirical horrors, a spirit immune to parody and worried least of all about being kitsch. In her chapter on *Elective Affinities* Bernstein argues classically that the problem with housing in the novel is its inability to provide the novel with a “solid ground,” that even the groundstone-laying ceremony “presents grounding as ungrounding” through the “occlusion of its foundation” (81). Yet, truer to the (wildness of the) letter here (as of the story of which housing is a necessary part) are the stark physical facts Goethe’s mason’s speech and detailed narration of the groundstone-laying ceremony relate: that the grounding of a building must be constructed underground, out of sight, and that rather than equaling the ungrounding of building, such building underground in fact constitutes the foundation of building on the ground precisely by remaining external to habitation, invisible *for the time being*. Houses (like history), Goethe’s novel suggests, are inherently *unheimlich* in part because their foundation must be occluded if it is to ground and found present and future acts at all. Similarly, Bernstein’s equation of *Bildung* with building, via the Latinate “edification” and the admittedly “specious” phonetic “resonance” between the terms (22), works in too “classicizing” (38), too little Gothic, a manner, too little like the intractable materiality of the housing problems she so adeptly identifies, in looking past the central *Bild* in *Bildung* (and with it, the “aesthetic” in “aesthetic ideology” [22]), such as the actual paintings and art objects collected by Wilhelm Meister’s grandfather. The housing of the collection in separate architectural contexts, it can be argued, does not erect “a wall” separating “interior” from “exterior,” “the blind spot or gap that divides the subjectivity that *Bildung* ought to render whole” (22) (though these seem opposite, not synonymous) by virtue of the non-identity of differing walls. The housing of the collection in any spatial “interior” points, from the beginning, to the “overarching” problem of identifying the concrete image (*Bild*),—much less synchronous image collection—with the concept of gradual internal formation incongruously grounded in and containing it (*Bildung*). This, one could say, is what Goethe makes overly or, to use Bernstein’s apt word from another context, “spookily” (155) evident in his relentless identification (in multiple architectural contexts) of the maddeningly (or blissfully) *Bildungs*-free Ottilie with her “own,” purely external, repetitive mimetic imaging.

Few works worry parody and the proximity of Buchenwald to Weimar alternately (40), and part of the strength and intellectual integrity of *Housing Problems* stems from its willingness to confront rather than paper over both these extremes of the empirical. In closing, Bernstein candidly admits her unwillingness to make the pilgrimage to Todtnauberg and calls this (understandable) “dread” “a blind spot” (155). Yet, even while noting the “thetic,” “primordial,” “myth-

ological," "primal," and "mythic" language with which Heidegger "defin[es]" housing (134–35), and rightly alert to the real housing problem, rather than mere "false" or "bad reading," indicated by Heidegger's remarkable (in his own words, nonfigural ["keine Übertagung"]) equation of "language" with "the house of Being" (a most non-Nietzschean extension of a phrase possibly borrowed from *Zarathustra*) (132–33), it is her discussion of Heidegger's texts that remains in the main periphrastic, a cautiously conservative restatement rather than questioning of the inordinate, one might even say parodic, role of housing (as language's own signified) in Heidegger's identification, in discourse, of discourse with ontology. Still, these quibbles regarding intermittently classicizing theoretizations aside—after all, if it weren't hard to do, and, moreover, hard to find, we wouldn't call it walking on the wild side—*not* taking the walk on the "Martin Heidegger Rundweg" is not even an evasion of this kind, unless walking it were less like circling "a haunted house in the depths of the forest" (155) than avoiding a Schwarzwälder version of the theme scene from "The Sound of Music." In *Housing Problems*, Bernstein demonstrates convincingly she knows these two scenarios can become one, that "actual" housing can not only constitute but, more "spookily," "collapse" them (155), and that the relationship of writing to architecture both indicates that "suffocating" (155), truly Gothic possibility at every turn and, maintaining the difference between writing and architecture, as between housing and signification, keeps it in mind. For all it brings to mind, *Housing Problems* constitutes a significant work of reflection on a critical relationship too often occluded even when indicated, left unthought, and for that reason, for all its worries, a brave one.

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Chenxi Tang, *The Geographic Imagination of Modernity: Geography, Literature, and Philosophy in German Romanticism*. Stanford: Stanford UP, 2008. 356 pages

This remarkable book is divided into two major portions: either one could readily have served as a book unto itself. In the first half, Tang maps out the broader discursive shifts that lead up to the formation of the geographical science most commonly associated with Alexander von Humboldt. The opening chapter places Tang's central thesis in relation to Reinhart Koselleck's characterization of the *Sattelzeit* and the emergence of a modern semantics of history around 1800. Tang argues that the historicization of society was coupled with the discovery of modern geographical space. The first chapter outlines discursive shifts in the discipline of geography across the eighteenth century. The second and third chapters expand the argument to demonstrate how lyric poetry and Idealist philosophy contributed to geography's methodological transformation.

German scholars have long focused on the description of landscapes and urban densities in literature. Kate Rigby's *Topographies of the Sacred* is but a recent, eco-critical example. Chenxi Tang seeks not only to foreground spatial relations within romantic poetry, he also explains the intellectual basis upon which geography became a new field of knowledge. In order to explain the discipline as it emerges around 1800, Tang distinguishes between the descriptive geography of classical epistémé, with its moral classification of the empirical world, and modern geography, with its sensitivity to cultural history and the perspectives of individual observers. Lyric poetry, Tang argues, became a privileged medium for describing nature. He contrasts the landscape descriptions in Albrecht von Haller's alpine poetry