

Swarthmore College

Works

German Studies Faculty Works

German Studies

2002

Review Of "German Studies In The Post-Holocaust Age: The Politics Of Memory, Identity, And Ethnicity" Edited By A. Del Caro And J. Ward

Sunka Simon

Swarthmore College, ssimon1@swarthmore.edu

Follow this and additional works at: <https://works.swarthmore.edu/fac-german>



Part of the [German Language and Literature Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Sunka Simon. (2002). "Review Of "German Studies In The Post-Holocaust Age: The Politics Of Memory, Identity, And Ethnicity" Edited By A. Del Caro And J. Ward". *Colloquia Germanica*. Volume 35, Issue 3/4. 376-377.

<https://works.swarthmore.edu/fac-german/8>

This work is brought to you for free by Swarthmore College Libraries' Works. It has been accepted for inclusion in German Studies Faculty Works by an authorized administrator of Works. For more information, please contact myworks@swarthmore.edu.

Jews in Austria; he does not embed the Holocaust in a deeper understanding of Austrian fascism, however. It is therefore wise that this «workbook» leaves so much room in the margins for reader notes: there is much to be added.

Center for Public Intellectuals, Chicago

Cary Nathenson

ADRIAN DEL CARO AND JANET WARD (Eds.): *German Studies in the Post-Holocaust Age: The Politics of Memory, Identity, and Ethnicity*. Boulder: UP of Colorado, 2000. v + 244 pp. \$ 55.

Published as the selected conference proceedings of a symposium held at the University of Colorado in Boulder in 1995, the twenty-three articles in this anthology provide both the uninitiated and the expert with a quick glimpse of the ongoing, multifaceted memory debate in German Studies. While the editors' choice to divide the volume into four sections – Cultural Philosophy and Ideologies of Identity, Post-Holocaust Identity Debates, Poetry and Images after Auschwitz, and Sites of Meta-German Multiplicity – is a well-intentioned attempt to organize the necessarily co-dependent approaches towards Post-Holocaust identity and memory construction, the result shows up its own structural problems. What appears under «Identity Debates,» namely Todd Herzog's deftly argued exploration of «Germans and Jews after the Fall of the Wall: The Promises and Problems of Hybridity,» Susann Samples' essential but somewhat belated introduction to the struggle of and for Afro-German identities (for a comparison, see *Women in German Yearbook* 9, 1994), and Ruth-Ellen B. Joeres' critical reflection of the uneasy relationship between German Studies and Feminism, speaks much more to «sites of meta-German multiplicity» than any of the articles devoted to Swiss, Austrian, and Norwegian national literatures about the Nazi legacy that appear under that rubric.

In this fourth section, two articles seem equally out of place. Kari Grimstad's assessment of the development of Canadian German Studies, which appears here as the lone representative of disciplinary history, could have initiated a welcome chapter on cross-cultural investigations of Post-Holocaust German Studies as a discipline (especially since the anthology features an impressive culturally diverse cross-section of German Studies scholars). Subsequently, Thomas Nolden's elaboration of the project of anaesthetics in contemporary Jewish literature could have instead added important theoretical stimulus to the third section, «Poetry and Images after Auschwitz.» All in all, the question of «belonging» is less one of editorial displacement but one of structural tensions that actually replay some of the articles' arguments about identity and identification on its surface. This becomes especially poignant considering Adrian Del Caro's provocative insistence on the overly simplistic identification of German language speakers with «being German» (113). Making an important culturally complex argument both in the foreword and in his article on Celan's antithetical use of his *Muttersprache*, Del Caro's gesture is preempted by his own volume's reduction of anything «meta-German» to national boundaries of non-German German, while feminist, ethnic, racial, and national hybrid formations are categorized as and by «identity debates.»

Despite the genre-typical shortcomings of edited conference papers, this anthology features several gems in addition to some of those mentioned above: Rainer Hering's solidly researched article on the anti-Semitism of the German Judiciary opens up an archive for anyone interested in continuity studies; Erk Grimm's witty comparative analysis of Durs Grünbein's, Dan Pagis's, and Thomas Kling's poems establishes a dialogue on «personal memories and the «cool memories» of media» (129); Kathrin Bower's lucid investigation of the «displacement of true *Trauerarbeit*» by the «discourse *about* mourning and memory» (137–38) marks a long overdue self-reflection of Post-Holocaust German Studies' infatuation with memory projects; and Janet Ward's expert reading of the lure of Riefenstahl's Nazi iconography is an inspired precursor to her impressive *Weimar Surfaces* (2001). While readers will surely enjoy Alexander Honold's bio-literary comparison of Peter Weiss and Uwe Johnson, the article ends too abruptly to account for the difference in historical reflection, a fate that the anthology shares as a whole, but which should send eager German Studies, History and Memory scholars, and Post-Holocaust literature students out in search of more extensive works by the featured authors and their colleagues across the globe.

Swarthmore College

Sunka Simon

FRIEDRICH SENGLER: *Moderne deutsche Lyrik. Von Nietzsche bis Enzensberger (1875–1975)*. Mit einem Nachwort von Manfred Windfuhr. Ed. Gabriele Schneider. Beiträge zur neueren Literatur-Geschichte 179. Heidelberg: Winter, 2001. 414 pp. € 31.

Der Leser, der an dieses Buch mit den Erwartungen herantritt, die auf dem von Friedrich Sengle verfaßten Standardwerk über die Literatur der Biedermeierzeit basieren, wird in mehrfacher Weise gezwungen, diese zu revidieren, um dem Buch gerecht zu werden. Denn zum einen handelt es sich dabei um die Vorlage zu Sengles Vorlesung «Moderne deutsche Lyrik», die er im Zeitraum von 1952 bis 1975 mehrfach gehalten hat. Aus dem Vortragsduktus erklären sich einfacher Satzbau, leicht verständliche Sprachebene und persönliche Wertungen. Sengle tritt auch nicht als Experte über die Moderne im allgemeinen oder über die moderne Lyrik im besonderen auf. Stattdessen läßt er die Dichter sprechen, stellt sich den lyrischen Texten und bekennt sich zu der Vorläufigkeit vieler seiner Urteile, wodurch der Leser gezwungen wird, sie selbst zu überprüfen. Auch folgt Sengles Modernitätsbegriff nicht dem üblichen Verfahren, die Epoche der letzten hundert Jahre aus der Perspektive eines selbst gesetzten Höhepunkts als Maßstab oder Einstufungsprinzip zu beurteilen (394). Stattdessen sieht Sengle in dem ständigen Bemühen um einen «Ausgleich zwischen Literaturrevolution und Tradition» ein echtes Wertungskriterium und verbindet damit die Hoffnung, daß als Folge auf das «hemmungslose Experimentieren, [das] für die erste Jahrhunderthälfte auf allen Gebieten der Kunst bezeichnend [ist], das Maß, die Menschlichkeit und Tradition wieder etwas gelten» (199). Unter allen literarischen Gattungen hält Sengle die Lyrik für geradezu prädestiniert, trotz des allgemeinen Zwangs zu Esoterik und Exklusivität von moderner