

Erstens stößt man als Leser auf Wiederholungen von Zitaten und Gedankensträngen, was seine Ursachen in einer etwas mangelhaften Struktur hat. Es werden Gedanken und Fragen initiiert, die erst später zu Ende gedacht bzw. beantwortet werden—oder auch nicht. Dies wird auch darin sichtbar, dass die drei identifizierten Entwicklungen in Schwarzenbachs Werk (in Richtung eines sachlich-subjektiven, politischen und mehrstimmigen Schreibens) nicht ausreichend aufeinander bezogen werden, sodass unklar ist, inwieweit sich diese Entwicklungen miteinander verbinden und versöhnen lassen. Zweitens wird an dieser Stelle auch eine nicht zureichende Berücksichtigung der Erkenntnisse der jüngeren Schwarzenbach-Forschung im Anschluss an die Publikation und Analyse der späteren Afrika-Schriften manifest. Diese Erkenntnisse laufen den von Wichor postulierten Entwicklungen mindestens teilweise zuwider, indem sie sich auf eine zunehmende Verinnerlichung und einen stärker werdenden lyrischen Gestus in Schwarzenbachs Schreiben sowie auf ein neues schriftstellerisches Selbstverständnis beziehen: Die Autorin will sich nicht länger als Journalistin, sondern als Dichterin verstanden wissen. Es nimmt wunder, dass sich Wichor nicht oder kaum mit diesen für die eigene Argumentation konstitutiven Forschungsergebnissen auseinandergesetzt hat.

Positiv hervorzuheben ist aber die Erschließung des medialen, publizistischen und literaturhistorischen Umfeldes, die originelle Erkenntnisse erzeugt. Diese medienwissenschaftliche Perspektive macht Wichors Dissertation auch zu einer Arbeit über Reportage und Feuilleton in Schweizer Zeitungen und Zeitschriften der 30er und Anfang der 40er Jahre sowie über die Gattungs- und Schreibtendenzen, die sich im damaligen journalistischen Bereich abzeichnen. Als ergiebig erweist sich ebenfalls die Situierung der Autorin und ihres Schreibens im System Zeitung und in der Schweizer Kultur- und Literaturgeschichte. Eine weitere Stärke der Arbeit liegt in der umfangreichen Quellenarbeit: Die unveröffentlichten Schriften Schwarzenbachs, die Zeitungarchive und Korrespondenzen, die Wichor gesichtet hat, erlauben eine werkgenetische und kontextualisierende Betrachtungsweise, die bestehende Forschungsergebnisse zu Schwarzenbach und zum weiteren literatur- und mediengeschichtlichen Rahmen vertieft und erweitert.

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—Sofie Decock

Generation in Kesseln. Das Soldatische Opfernarrativ im westdeutschen Kriegerroman 1945–1960.

Von Norman Ähtler. Göttingen: Wallstein, 2013. 456 Seiten. €29,90.

In the 15 years since W.G. Sebald's essays on *Luftkrieg und Literatur* helped to spark a renewed interest in representations of German suffering in the Second World War, historians, Germanists, film scholars, and others have been engaged in a lengthy process of re-assessing the ways in which German society 'came to terms' with the catastrophe of defeat and national shame before the rise to dominance of a Holocaust-centred culture of contrition from the early 1960s onwards. The contributions to this endeavour, particularly in the English-speaking world, are too numerous to mention, and contain much innovative work. However, the precedent set by Sebald's (ultimately untenable) claim that the bombing of German cities had failed to find representation has arguably led to a rather binary interpretation of literary texts, films, and

so on where these deal with the Second World War: the question often asked seems to be, 'does it portray German suffering and victimhood, or does it not?'

Although by no means the stated starting point for Norman Ächtler's substantial study of West German war novels until the beginning of the 1960s, the author's approach to his material offers an antidote to this rather reductive approach. Any reader familiar with the texts that Ächtler analyses in detail here will hardly be surprised to learn that they represent ordinary German soldiers and middle-ranking officers as victims of the National Socialist war machine. Especially in those texts which tend towards the popular end of the literary market, such as works by Hans Hellmut Kirst, this point is driven home so explicitly that it would be hard for the reader to miss. What is most interesting about Ächtler's study, however, is his ability to demonstrate the cultural and historic specificity of the ways in which the nature and significance of German soldiers' victimhood was constructed in the wake of the Second World War, whether in the *Unterhaltungsliteratur* of an author like Kirst or the writing of high-culture figures like Ernst Jünger. Ächtler's concern is not to establish whether the suffering of the *Frontgeneration* was represented in literary texts, since there can be no doubt that it was; rather, he is concerned to show *how* it was represented and why it was represented in that way.

The range of Ächtler's scholarship is considerable. In the first part of the book, he draws on a wide range of theories of narrative and narrative psychology in order to explain how the narration of particular experiences, as well as the mobilisation of specific literature techniques in the service of such narration, served a social function in stabilising the identities of former combatants. Denied recourse to traditional notions of martial sacrifice on account of the revelation of Nazi crimes, soldiers' experiences of suffering threatened to become meaningless, the author argues (53). By telling stories about the war, and by telling those stories in a particular way, this suffering could become meaningful and, just as importantly, soldiers could be absolved of responsibility for other aspects of National Socialism, in particular the Holocaust. As Ächtler argues, the persuasive nature of these compensatory narratives, which resonated beyond literature itself, contributed to the myth of the 'clean' *Wehrmacht* which persisted until the *Wehrmachtsausstellung* of the 1990s.

Ächtler argues that the *Kesselschlacht* referred to in his study's punning title, and which found its prototype in the German defeat at Stalingrad, provided a metaphor for the situation of German soldiers and, by extension, ordinary Germans more generally. Defining it as a chronotope in Mikhail Bakhtin's sense, Ächtler convincingly proposes that soldiers in the *Kessel*, surrounded by the enemy but also threatened by fanatics and incompetent military leaders on their own side, found themselves in a 'tragic' situation in Hegel's sense (65–8): they had sworn oaths to fight and obey, but the case for surrender or desertion was equally strong given the unjust nature of the war and the crimes of the National Socialist regime. Ächtler shows how, as the novels in question continually reduce their protagonists' room for manoeuvre within the *Kessel*, both in spatial and temporal terms, these men are forced to find means of escaping this tragic conflict while maintaining a viable sense of self. In the cases of the protagonists in the work of Jünger, Alfred Andersch, and Theodor Plievier, Ächtler demonstrates how the legacy of *Existenzphilosophie*, via Nietzsche, Jaspers, Kierkegaard, and the French existentialists, was re-worked into an activist position which sought to identify means by which individual freedom could still be expressed in these

limiting circumstances, so that the tragic subjectivity of the soldier might be transcended, if only temporarily. In the less philosophically informed writing that Ächtler analyses, including works by many authors whose novels are now largely forgotten, he demonstrates how this overcoming of the tragic takes on a more ethical than existential dimension. As in Kirst's very popular *08/15* series of the early 1950s, here the soldiers seek to remain 'decent' despite their terrible situation as means of asserting their autonomy and their distance from the ideology of National Socialism, even though they cannot escape its consequences. Clearly, the function of such narratives was to exculpate German soldiers for not having resisted National Socialism, at the same time as absolving them of responsibility for its crimes.

Ächtler has produced an impressive and lively study that is all the more interesting for its ability to demonstrate how particular narrative tropes and symbolic constellations can be observed across a range of texts that would not normally be discussed in the same context. I have no doubt that his analysis will become a key point of orientation not only for those with an interest in the literary culture of the period in general, but also for those seeking to understand canonical authors such as Jünger and Andersch in a broader cultural context. His work will also provide an excellent guide for other researchers interested in the presentation of German victimhood in fiction, in that he provides a set of analytical tools that others will be able to draw on in terms of assessing narratives of suffering in wartime. It is arguable that the rather exhaustive discussion of narrative theory and its relation to social psychology, which makes up the first 160 or so pages of what is already an extensive monograph, might have been usefully boiled down to the points most essential for the close analyses of literary texts that follow. Here I felt that the author was in danger of losing his readers by taking a very long time to get to the heart of the issue. Nevertheless, in terms of its ambition, range of reference, attention to detail, and sheer argumentative force, this is a book which scholars and other readers with an interest in the culture of the early Federal Republic of Germany will find it hard to ignore.

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Punk Rock and German Crisis: Adaption and Resistance after 1977.

By Cyrus Shahan. New York: Palgrave, 2013. xv + 192 pages + 12 b/w illustrations. \$90.00.

Cyrus Shahan's Monograph beginnt mit drei Zeilen aus dem Song "Kollaps" der West-Berliner Band Einstürzende Neubauten. Sowohl Zitat als auch der Name der Band bereiten die Leserschaft darauf vor, um was es im Buch gehen soll: Punk im noch relativ jungen, doch krisengeschüttelten Westdeutschland wird auf den Seziertisch gehievt, um über seine Entstehungsgeschichte und letztendlich sein Scheitern hinaus zu analysieren, wie sich eine heterogene Gruppe Künstler in Bildender Kunst, Musik, Literatur und Journalismus mit dem westdeutschen Umgang mit vergangenen und aktuellen Krisen und drohendem Kollaps auseinandersetzte, und um Punks ästhetische Bedeutung für die Folgezeit auszuloten.

Das Jahr 1977 wird in der Regel in Deutschland mit dem "Deutschen Herbst" assoziiert, jenem krisenreichen Zeitraum von wenigen Wochen, der mit der Entführung und Ermordung Hanns Martin Schleyers durch die RAF im September begann