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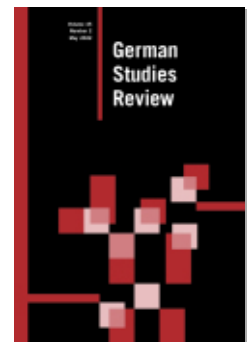
*The Short Story in German in the Twenty-First Century* ed. by  
Lyn Marven, Andrew Plowman, and Kate Roy (review)

Lydia Heiss

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them to become more sensitive and develop a sense of ethical responsibility. Both Ulrich Seidl's *Hundstage* (2001) and Valeska Grisebach's *Sehnsucht* (2006) generate feelings of discomfort and withhold the possibility for viewers to make sense of the images on-screen (such as the portrayal of accidents and suicide attempts).

Mostly summarizing the main arguments of the book's four chapters, the conclusion reiterates the stakes of the project and emphasizes again that it is critical for an assessment of contemporary German and Austrian cinema to bear in mind that "images can *move* their viewers in specific ways" (175, emphasis in original). Although digital technologies have transformed the (aesthetic) production, distribution, and reception of these films, the question of what cinema does (rather than asking what it is) dialogues with Benjamin, Kracauer, and Kluge and is still relevant today.

Overall, *Sensitive Subjects* is well-written and interrogates how the films move the audience and thus have an impact on viewers, and "by extension to the societies in which they are located" (26). The book offers a unique methodological approach and astute filmic analyses, but could have paid a bit more attention to the sociohistorical nuances in regard to German and Austrian film as well as engaged with the expansive existing scholarship on contemporary German-language film. The claim that filmic texts demand active viewer participation is an assertion that is in fact quite familiar, and it would be productive to underscore similarities and differences to what has been written about the majority of the films featured in this book. Regardless, the book speaks to scholars from a variety of disciplines such as cultural studies, film and media studies, and German (film) studies, along with a general reader interested in actively engaging with contemporary German and Austrian cinema, and can serve as secondary course readings. The ways in which *Sensitive Subjects* emphasizes a need for critical reflection is certainly an important political project that has particular relevancy at the beginning of the second decade of the twenty-first century.

Simone Pflieger, *University of Alberta*

*The Short Story in German in the Twenty-First Century*. Edited by Lyn Marven, Andrew Plowman, and Kate Roy. Rochester, NY: Camden House, 2020. Pp. vii + 345. Cloth \$99.00. ISBN 978-1-64014-046-2.

*The Short Story in German in the Twenty-First Century* sheds light on current thematic and form-based developments in German-language short story writing and fills the void created by a lack of recent academic publications on the genre. Fifteen years lie between its publication in 2020 and that of the most recent edition of Leonie Marx's important theoretical work *Die deutsche Kurzgeschichte*.

But what exactly constitutes a short story? This is a central issue the volume seeks to address. One of the masters of the genre, Edgar Allan Poe, defined the short

story in his famous review of Nathaniel Hawthorne's *Twice-Told Tales* (1842) as a story to be read continuously without interruption achieving a "unique or single effect" (61). The editors of the volume, Lyn Marven, Andrew Plowman, and Kate Roy, unfold their central thesis that the short story form is ever-changing and elusive in terms of a fixed definition. Instead, they advocate for a flexible framework for future research, in which any critical approach—be it thematic, form-focused, or based on a certain theoretical perspective—must be specifically tailored to the author, text, or collection at hand. Concerning the German-language short story, the matter of genre definition is further complicated historically and methodologically by terminology, i.e., the difference between *Erzählung* and *Kurzgeschichte*, and the delimitation against other German short prose genres like the *Novelle*. Furthermore, in the twenty-first century, the World Wide Web and digital media have especially impacted the creation and distribution of short stories.

The contributions to the volume are grouped into three sections and address form, function, and theme in the works of both well-known and up-and-coming contemporary authors. The theme-centered part of the first section begins with Katharina Gerstenberger's reflections on the "odd" hybrid genre of Berlin short stories, which takes city literature's primary focus on place and blends it with the short story's focus on plot. The second contribution with thematic emphasis by Todd Herzog explores the close link between Poe's definition of the short story and S. S. van Dine's definition of the detective story and stresses the innovative aspect of short crime fiction.

The first section's form-centered part presents the short story as a performative, ambiguous, and subjective genre with a tendency toward the political. Emily Spiers highlights that especially its "dialogic" quality and "fragmentary form" are what make the short story performative (51). Kate Roy's contribution focuses on the shortest form of short story writing, the short-short, stating that its extreme brevity underlines the importance of the implicated and the unsaid. Helmut Schmitz closes out the second part of the first section with his reflections on similarities and differences between the German *Novelle* and the American short story.

The second section comprises eight author-focused essays. In the first contribution on well-known writer Clemens Meyer, Gillian Pye detects a lack of academic attention to his short fiction despite his many prizes and wide press coverage. By showing how it is precisely Judith Hermann's sometimes criticized minimalistic style that makes the reader's own reality "present" (139), Leonhard Herrmann presents more recent works of Hermann as underrated by critics. Heide Kunzelmann expands on Austrian writer Alois Hotschnig's tendency toward open-endedness, moments of crisis, and the uncanny in the Western capitalist world and highlights how he makes the disoriented reader complicit in their construction. Through the example of Swiss author Peter Stamm's publication of his collected short stories, Andrew Plowman explores different approaches to collections, their self-reflexivity and construction. Heike Bartel and

Elizabeth Boa investigate the work of Ulrike Almut Sandig and Sylvia Bovenschen. They find that in the digital age, a time of acceleration, these authors use writing to slow down and capture ethically and socially loaded moments otherwise lost. Áine McMurtry focuses on a collection of Yoko Tawada's short stories to show how the author uses the genre's fragmentary form and open-endedness for her reflections on metamorphosis, identity, the role of literature, as well as her political agenda—namely, a critique of industrial culture. Rafaël Newman and Caroline Wiedmer demonstrate how the Swiss artists Melinda Nadj Abonji and Jurczok 1001 blend text and context by using voice, sound, and body language to perform their multilingual, political short texts. In the last author-centered essay, Margarete Lamb-Faffelberger discusses the lesser-known Austrian writer Gabriele Petricek, who goes beyond the short story genre in her “novella-novel” by using seemingly unrestricted chains of association and flows of thought to narrate the experiences of her protagonists (253).

In the third and final section of the volume, Lyn Marven offers an overview of issues and trends in twenty-first-century German-language short story writing. As concrete examples for the diversity of new trends, the third section also features English translations of short stories by Roman Ehrlich, Saša Stanišić, and Sudabeh Mohafez. The volume closes with a nonexhaustive bibliography of short stories intended as a resource for further research.

Although the volume provides neither a definition of the genre, nor a common methodological framework for textual analysis, *The Short Story in German in the Twenty-First Century* offers many great examples of current themes and forms in short story writing and demonstrates how the genre lends itself to reflections on our modern times. Despite the diversity of short stories sampled, there are recurring themes condensed by the brevity of form, e.g., performing identity, the literary representation of everyday life, fragmentation, ellipsis, the element of surprise, or interpersonal relationships. One of the contemporary short story's main qualities is its constant self-reinvention through a variety of outlets such as online platforms, face-to-face performances, or publications in anthologies or magazines. Thus, the volume successfully presents the German-language short story as a flourishing, ultracontemporary genre benefitting from new formats in the digital age.

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*Die Wiederkehr der res publica. Zu literarischer Repräsentation einer politischen Idee im globalen Zeitalter.* Edited by Dariusz Komorowski. Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2021. Pp. 273. Cloth €60.00. ISBN 978-3-525-31123-3.

Der Titel dieses Bandes *Wiederkehr der res publica* ist die zentrale These, die in vierzehn interdisziplinären Aufsätzen (ohne thematische Unterteilung) als Basis den