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*"... der Zündstoff liegt, der diese Mine donnernd sprengt  
gen Himmel." Strategien der Ordnungsdestruktion in Franz  
Grillparzers dramatischem Werk (review)*

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**“... der Zündstoff liegt, der diese Mine donnernd sprengt gen Himmel.”  
Strategien der Ordnungsdestruktion in Franz Grillparzers dramatischem Werk.**  
Von Caroline Anders. Würzburg: Königshausen & Neumann, 2008. 292 Seiten.  
€39,80.

The cover text of Anders's book proclaims that it is directed against the commonly-held notion that Grillparzer is boring, pedestrian, and epigonic. In the past several decades scholarly attempts at rehabilitating Austria's major nineteenth-century dramatist have been undertaken, but Anders's approach, based on a theory of space and boundary-crossing, is quite original. In certain places, notably in the beginning, Anders's book still reads like an apprentice piece. Indeed, the book has emerged from her little-revised doctoral dissertation. Toward the end, however, she draws astute conclusions that challenge and surpass much of earlier Grillparzer scholarship. The more Anders departs from the procrustean bed of her methodology of space, reflecting ideas of Jurij Lotmann (1972/4), Michael Titzmann (1970s and 1990s), and more recent works by Karl Nikolaus Renner, the more lucid and convincing her readings are. Anders's initial focus and discussions on "Räume, Grenzen und Grenzüberschreitungen" (spaces, boundaries, crossing boundaries) can and do serve as a device to bypass the vast body of theoretical literature generated in the late twentieth century—new historicist, gender, postcolonial, and poststructural theory as well as psychoanalytic and sociological literary criticism—all of which have had an impact on Grillparzer criticism. Conceding that considerations of spatial relationships are not entirely new to Grillparzer scholarship, Anders asserts that the concept of space used in earlier studies has been imprecise, but she claims that her systematic exploration of structures of space and events will lead to an understanding of the texts' deep structures (28).

Yet space as defined by Anders is no less vague than the use of the concept in earlier studies. Not only does the scholarship pertaining to narrative prose which Anders uses require a recasting to fit the genre of drama, it turns out to be sufficiently imprecise to allow for discussions of a host of topics that fall outside the parameters of space and boundary as customarily understood. But resorting to the space-boundary nomenclature makes it possible to circumvent current critical debates. To this end Anders expands the category of space to include geography, culture, sexuality, and gender as well as political and social concerns. With reference to Lotmann she asserts that topographic space is "enriched" with non-spatial semantic characteristics to create a "semanticized" space (29). Thus it would seem self-evident that space is a major structural principle in Grillparzer's work. Yet in view of such inclusive notions of space and boundary, the same would apply to any other dramatic work as well. But surprisingly little attempt is made to contextualize the analyses of Grillparzer texts with other nineteenth-century dramatists in order to support the somewhat unexpected conclusion that Grillparzer's dramas are the expression of a by-and-large conservative mindset.

Except for its unwieldy superimposed methodology Anders presents rather convincing New Critical (*werkimmanent*) text analyses relying on close reading. Her literary interpretations are embedded in detailed plot summaries shaped to suit her critical intentions. Fittingly, her bibliography lists secondary literature mostly on Grillparzer and his dramatic production. Ultimately, Anders's interpretative narrative focusing on spatial relations and boundaries and her text-internal approach do not actually induce the interesting findings at the end of her study. Here, a comparative approach with

Austrian authors such as Stifter and with the German *Vormärz* would have been more productive. Similarly, the use of quotes from nineteenth-century encyclopedia entries to illuminate the significance of gender and gender roles in Grillparzer's era appears to be a strategy to avoid the complex critical literature on the topic. Another problematic issue is the literalness with which Anders interprets Grillparzer's characters. She ignores, for example, linguistic codings that provide interpretative signals to the dialogues, e.g., the use of the Austrian idiom versus northern "High" German. Looking beyond the surface structure of Grillparzer's dramas might further reveal that the opposition of East and West, while it is present throughout, is less important than that of North and South, of Catholic Austria and Protestant northern Germany. Anders's use of the terms "Ostler" and "Westler" (36) is particularly misleading since it evokes the German post-Wende situation and modern conditions. A discussion of space in Grillparzer would at least need to include Grillparzer's own views on the subject in his diaries and notebooks. Finally, Anders gives no consideration to rhetoric, preventing an assessment of irony and satire, author position, and circumstances such as censorship that shaped Grillparzer's dramatic practice.

All this notwithstanding, Anders identifies and describes two structural dramatic models that deserve attention. Dramas that follow the structural Model I were conceived between 1817 and 1848 (the majority of Grillparzer's dramas), structural Model II applies to two later works, *Ein Bruderzwist in Habsburg* and *Die Jüdin von Toledo*. Anders argues convincingly that in Model I dramas the characters endangering a particular dominant order are forced by representatives of this order to end their transgression, while in the later dramas disorder, heterogeneity, and conflict constitute the norm and the order. While the former works end with the return to an order that, Anders maintains, the text defines implicitly as normative, in the latter works struggle and guilt are assumed to be part and parcel of life itself, and no alternative to them is shown to exist. In digressions to a variety of briefly introduced nineteenth-century discourses Anders demonstrates how uncomfortable Grillparzer's late dramas were and are since they negate the notion of a moral world order and expose the constructedness of allegedly "natural" concepts such as male and female, sickness and health, sanity and insanity. The order to which all of Grillparzer's main characters ultimately aspire is elusive—in Model I dramas it can be achieved with great difficulty, in Model II dramas that is impossible.

Anders's "... *der Zündstoff liegt, der diese Mine donnernd sprengt gen Himmel*" makes for stimulating reading despite the cumbersome title and pronounced methodological weaknesses. Her individual interpretations are engaging and thought-provoking, and her observations on the structure of Grillparzer's dramas are certain to inspire further research.

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### **Between National Fantasies and Regional Realities: The Paradox of Identity in Nineteenth-Century German Literature.**

By Arne Koch. Bern: Peter Lang, 2007. 266 pages. €47,40.

Although historians such as James Sheehan, Celia Applegate, and Alon Confino have, by now, undermined the Prusso-centric view of German history that unfortunately still