



PROJECT MUSE®

*"Blumenworte welkten". Identität und Fremdheit in Rose
Ausländers Lyrik (review)*

Jefford Vahlbusch

Monatshefte, Volume 102, Number 4, Winter 2010, pp. 640-642 (Review)

Published by University of Wisconsin Press

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1353/mon.2010.0038>



➔ *For additional information about this article*

<https://muse.jhu.edu/article/406934>

by Adorno, Benjamin, Bloch, and Kracauer (14). In fact, he insists that the *Denkbild* should not be understood as a “fixed genre.” Instead he defines it “as the formal site for singular and unpredictable—but not arbitrary or facile—acts of conceptual creation” (18). *Denkbilder*, then, are meant as aesthetically prominent structures that give rise to conceptual thought. They constitute a fluid genre that resists definition.

One way of reading the *Denkbild* is as a possible answer to the cumbersome relationship between art and philosophy, the aesthetic and thought. In Richter’s account, the *Denkbild* appears to be an entirely successful mode of intervening in the discourse of philosophy while at the same time staying sufficiently aloof so as not to succumb to the temptation of totality. Plausible as this reading is in the case of the many intriguing examples that Richter adduces and quotes at length, it nonetheless poses some problems. Are all *Denkbilder* ultimately the same? Do they all “hover” (in Richter’s precise word) in the same region between the concrete and the abstract? Are the sections of Adorno’s *Minima Moralia* indeed of the same kind as Kracauer’s extremely concrete snapshots of contemporary reality? The strength of Richter’s argument lies in the demonstration that these texts do indeed share in a common project that can best be addressed under the name *Denkbild*. But as all dialecticians are keenly aware, every strength is in some ways also a weakness. Thus, one might say that Richter proves rather too much: the specificity of Benjamin’s or Kracauer’s observations may well be lost when they are integrated into an argumentative arc that is moored at both ends by Adorno.

Richter’s perceptive chapters on Benjamin, Bloch, and Adorno follow a similar, highly effective model. In each case, a work consisting of *Denkbilder* is juxtaposed to a more systematic work of philosophy by the same author. Read with and against the more systematic treatments, the aphoristic and decidedly non-systematic *Denkbilder* emerge as monuments against totality and systematic closure. They hold fast to the remainders that do not fit the conceptual pattern. They give voice to moments of uncanniness and disturbance.

The previously unpublished chapter on Kracauer constitutes in many ways the *pièce de résistance* of Richter’s fine book. Precisely by not adhering to the structure of all the other chapters and instead playing Kracauer against Derrida’s *Monolingualism of the Other*, this chapter illustrates its own argument concerning Kracauer’s irreducible extraterritoriality. Perhaps it is no accident that these pages contain the only image in the entire book (which, quite fittingly, is also reproduced on the cover). It is a photograph of Kracauer from about 1930. The image survives only in shards from the original glass plate. The two perceptive pages that Richter dedicates to this picture are among the most beautiful of his entire book. These remarks, more than any others, constitute a veritable *Denkbild* of their own. They mark an instance of melancholy time that transcends what can be said in words.

Cornell University

—Peter Gilgen

“Blumenworte welkten”. Identität und Fremdheit in Rose Ausländers Lyrik.

Herausgegeben von Jens Birkmeyer. Bielefeld: Aisthesis, 2008. 255 Seiten. €34,80.

Most of the 13 essays in this important collection are based on papers delivered at an international symposium held in Münster in 2004. In his programmatic introduction,

symposium organizer and collection editor Jens Birkmeyer (University of Münster) calls emphatically for a new approach to Ausländer's work, one that overcomes what he sees as the "naive Lesehaltungen" of biography-based interpretations (12). Beyond the "zahlreiche" scholarly publications "zu biographischen Werkkontexten und motivischen Spurenrekonstruktionen" (8) and especially against the "ausufernde Bekenntnisliteratur" of Ausländer's "fans" (*Liebhaber*, 13) and the "Liebhaberdiskurs über Lyrikfolklore," which is "gerade auch im Schrifttum über Rose Ausländer weit verbreitet" (12), Birkmeyer argues for a "wissenschaftlich kontrolliertes Deutungslesen" (12) that would grasp Ausländer's "Stimme [. . .] in ihren Gedichten" (10) both as an invented or fictive voice and as an invented or fictive voice that itself invents itself—in poetry: "Erst wenn diese dialektische Figur in Erscheinung zu treten vermag, die das erfindende Ich in den Texten gleichermaßen erneut als erfunden erfindendes Ich und das erfundene auch als erfindend erfundenes Ich realisiert, als ein zugleich hervorbringendes und hervorgebrachtes Ich zu denken vermag, ließe sich die biographistische Aporie der Lyrikbetrachtung vermeiden" (10).

After thus freeing "die Ich-Erfindungen in der Lyrik vom empiristischen Biographismus" (12), readers should investigate Ausländer's texts, "theoriegeleitet," both "als spezifischer Teil der Selbstverständigung der Moderne und als [. . .] eine Selbstkonstituierung literarischer Sprache im Modus ästhetischer Freiheit" (10), and stop grounding explanations for "die Selbstverfassung der Sprache und die lyrische Sprachkonstellation" in the "Subjektivität des Autors (Phantasie, Fiktion, Intention etc.)" (10).

In his own contribution, on the phenomenon of radical "Miniaturisierung" observable in Ausländer's late poetry, Birkmeyer follows his own advice and finds, especially through lucid application of a Deleuze- and Guattari-based "rhizomatische Lektüestrategie," that "die Tendenz zur Verknappung [ist] in der Logik der Lyrikproduktion Ausländers selber angelegt" (110). The other authors in the volume, as Birkmeyer acknowledges, write "aus ganz verschiedenen Blickrichtungen und unterschiedlichen methodischen Zugriffen verpflichtet" (8). In large part because of this variety, these essays add up to a valuable contribution to the study of modern poetry and post-Holocaust literature in general and Ausländer's work in particular.

In "Gedichte zwischen Gebet und Gegengebet," Christoph Gellner (University of Lucerne) illuminates stages of religious thought and sensibility in Ausländer's lyrics and life, focusing both on her programmatic revisions and reappropriations of biblical and religious stories and on her changing willingness, need, or ability to conceive of God, or an otherwise unspecified Other—"Du"—as "ansprechbar."

Hans Otto Horch (Technical University of Aachen) employs an analysis of word fields and conceptual clusters in Ausländer's poetry volume *36 Gerechte* (1967) to read the collection for the first time as a lyric cycle. Horch then places the title poem, "36 Gerechte" in the context of Jewish legends about the 36 righteous people who, unseen by and unknown to all, as Ausländer has it, "halten im Gleichgewicht / die Erde" (41), and closes his essay with an assessment of Ausländer as a "German-Jewish" ("deutsch-jüdische") writer. Helmut Braun, Ausländer biographer and editor of her complete works, proposes organizing Ausländer's massive *œuvre* chronologically or thematically, and thereby offers a useful overview of her development as a poet and her manner of composition.

In "Poesie und Verlust. Zur Ästhetik in Rose Ausländers Lyrik," Leslie Morris

(University of Minnesota) suggests that the utter simplicity, banality, and repetitiveness of some of Ausländer's poetry might be conceivable as a direct expression or symptom of the poet's post-Holocaust grapplings with trauma and loss: her contribution "geht [. . .] dem Dilemma nach, ob die Banalität als ein Moment von Durcharbeitung angesehen werden soll—als Teil der Wiederholung, die notwendig stattfinden muss, um vergangenes Trauma zu bewältigen—oder ob die Banalität die ästhetischen Grenzen jeglicher Repräsentation von Auschwitz in Frage stellen soll" (72).

In "Prästabilisierte Harmonie: Fragen und Aspekte zur Einheit des Ausländer'schen Werks," Mathias Götte (University of Tübingen) describes the promising first results of his search for thematic and poetological connections between Ausländer's pre-Shoah and post-Shoah poetry. Martin A. Hainz (University of Vienna) offers extended and provocative meditations on "Trauer, Kritik und Engagement" in Ausländer and Celan, striving especially to reveal Ausländer—beyond her popular reputation as a provider of "Trost"—as a poet whose verses actually offer essential critical insights (125).

Maria Ivanytska (National University in Kiev) links Ausländer's nature images convincingly to the poet's lifelong search for identity. Mireille Tabah (Free University of Brussels) offers a new feminist reading of Ausländer's "entmythologisierende Umkehrung der patriarchalischen Geschlechterverhältnisse und die damit einhergehende Aufwertung der Frau" (176), focusing especially on Ausländer's poems about Eve, Nausicaa, Aphrodite, Ruth, Sheherazade, the Loreley, and various women poets. Francesca Melini (translator for the European Parliament in Brussels and an Italian publishing house) re-examines Ausländer's important friendship with the US poet Marianne Moore. Boy Hinrichs (Pedagogical University, Ludwigsburg) establishes that Ausländer's few literary prose texts are conceivable as "'lyrische Prosa,' die sich im analytischen Zugriff als Ikonologie enthüllt" (238).

In "Trauma oder Rettung," Matthias Bauer (University of Tübingen) continues his impressive exploration and analysis of Ausländer's English-language poems, demonstrating here, in nuanced analysis especially of Ausländer's readings and revisions of e.e. cummings, that her "relativ späte Meisterung der fremden Sprache gab ihrem Sprachbewusstsein eine neue Dimension, formte und schärfte ihr Ohr noch einmal neu und gab ihr bei ihrer Rückwendung zum Deutschen jenes 'Mehr,' das sie brauchte, damit die Sprache [. . .] wirklich zu ihrem Mutterland werden konnte" (204). Rolfrafael Schneider (author, performer, cultural organizer) closes the volume with a lively memoir of his work for and with Ausländer in the sixties, seventies, and early eighties.

University of Wisconsin—Eau Claire

—Jefford Vahlbusch

From Shakespeare to Frisch: The Provocative Fritz Kortner.

By Richard D. Critchfield. Heidelberg: Synchron, 2008. 233 pages + 28 b/w illustrations. €34,80.

Fritz Kortner war nicht nur einer der wichtigsten Schauspieler im deutschsprachigen Theater des 20. Jahrhunderts, sondern zugleich auch einer der wegweisenden Regisseure. Sein durchwegs provozierender Stil prägte das Theater der Weimarer Republik genauso wie die theaterhistorisch höchst relevanten sechziger Jahre; in diesen war er