# *Crime Fiction in German: Der Krimi* ed. by Katharina Hall (review)


Julia Karolle-Berg

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readings of Kleist and Kafka tend to lean heavily on preexisting scholarship by a select group of German literary scholars (Campe among them), occasionally overlooking other important secondary literature on topics related to his study—amongst others, Eva Geulen's recent article on seriality in Goethe's morphology and Helmut Müller-Sievers's works on *Self-Generation* and Kleist's machines in *The Cylinder*—he more frequently reveals an impressive ability to synthesize a bewildering array of material and, in doing so, to arrive at novel insights into the functioning of literary self-thematization. Ultimately, his monograph offers a refreshingly original contribution to the topic of "autopoiesis and literature"—an as yet meager, but potentially endless discursive field.

*Occidental College* —*Bryan Klausmeyer*

**Crime Fiction in German: Der Krimi.**
*Edited by Katharina Hall. Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2016. xxxvii + 166 pages. £75,00 hardcover, £24,99 paperback. £24,99 e-book.*

The last decade in particular has witnessed significant English-language scholarship on German-language crime and detective fiction. These contributions notwithstanding, a comprehensive history of German-language crime and detective fiction (colloquially referred to by the umbrella term *Krimi*) had yet to be written. Katharina Hall's 2016 edited volume *Crime Fiction in German: Der Krimi*, which appears in the "European Crime Fictions" series, addresses this lacuna by offering "a comprehensive overview of German-language crime fiction from its origins in the early nineteenth century to the post-reunification Germany of the new millennium" (1).

An introductory chapter precedes essays written by five additional contributors and Hall. The first thematic chapter chronicles the evolution of the *Krimi* in the 19th-century German-speaking world, the following two focus on Austria and Switzerland in particular. The second half of the volume focuses on subgenres that emerged after 1945, with forays into the *Afrika-Krimi*, the *Frauenkrimi*, historical crime fiction, and the *Fernsehkrimi*. Each of the seven chapters after the introduction concludes with a short excerpt of a representative text. Generous supplementary materials serve as bookends and include a map of the German-speaking area, a timeline of significant events (political and literary), and an annotated bibliography of relevant primary and secondary sources.

Evident throughout the volume is an attentive editorial hand: the essays are conscientiously researched and engagingly written. Hall's introduction serves as an effective entrée into the volume, navigating the generic discourse and laying out key terms and tensions. The introduction additionally offers précises of the subsequent chapters, bridging content gaps between them and linking the most salient themes of the volume to existing scholarship.

Next, Mary Tannert provides an overview of early crime and detective fiction in German with the goal of documenting two complementary forces: social context that favors "causality and the exercise of inquiry and ratiocination," and the emergence of narratives conducive to detection (33). Tannert explains how the criminal-justice system in German states developed during the 19th century and, drawing on landmark crime narratives, shows how investigative models and notions of criminality

likewise evolved. The resulting impression is that a more nuanced engagement with social class, criminality, and justice existed in late 19th-century German-language crime literature than frequently assumed.

The next two chapters focus on the development of the *Krimi* in Austria and Switzerland, respectively. In the former, Marieke Krajenbrink identifies distinctive characteristics of the Austrian *Krimi* such as "a marked sensibility for language," the Viennese inclination toward satire, and an "intense engagement with Austrian society" (51–52). Krajenbrink then considers influences to the genre since the 1960s: writers such as Peter Handke and Gerhard Roth, whose provocative deployment—and deconstruction—of generic elements in anti-crime novels would inspire later writers in the genre proper. The balance of Krajenbrink's chapter focuses on contemporary Austrian crime fiction, profiling established authors who incorporate distinctive features of this country's *Krimis* while continuing the tradition of generic deconstruction.

While Krajenbrink's contribution focused primarily on crime fiction of the last fifty years, Martin Rosenstock's essay on the Swiss *Krimi* underscores a longer engagement with crime and detective fiction in that country. Consistent with most treatments of the Swiss situation, Friedrich Glauser and Friedrich Dürrenmatt enjoy pride of place here, but Rosenstock follows the lead of more recent scholarship that extends the trajectory of the genre both forward and back. Glauser and Dürrenmatt are now linked to early influences such as the 18th-century author François Gayot de Pitaval and Swiss author Carl Albert Loosli (1877–1959). Portraits of two contemporary Swiss authors who serve as standard-bearers of the Swiss legacy round out Rosenstock's analysis.

The volume's shift to a thematic approach is inaugurated by a chapter on the *Afrika-Krimi*. Here, Julia Augart provides a detailed typology of approximately 100 works that have appeared over the last forty years, including featured countries, types of investigators, and common plotlines. Given the relative novelty of the *Afrika-Krimi* in German scholarship, Augart focuses on introducing the genre rather than offering an in-depth analysis of representative works. Augart's brief but insightful treatment of Bernhard Jaumann's postcolonial *Steinland* (2012) at the conclusion of her chapter points to the tremendous potential of increased scholarly attention to the field.

In a chapter on the *Frauenkrimi*, Faye Stewart explores how these works "contest social inequality and celebrate new constructions of gender and sexuality" (100). Akin to Tannert's analysis of the literary form as well as the context in which it emerged, Stewart situates a growth in women writing for and about women in the larger cultural and political circumstances that facilitated the rise of the *Frauenkrimi* in the 1980s. Stewart retraces the contributions of women writers to crime and detective fiction from the 19th century onward, comparing them to works published after the *Frauenkrimi* became established as a distinct subgenre. Having assigned the *Frauenkrimi*'s birth to the mid-1980s and a momentous rise in socially critical women writers, Stewart then chronicles the genre's development over the decades, including its evolving social agenda, publishing landscape, and expanding cast of characters.

Hall contributes two final chapters to *Crime Fiction in German*. In one devoted to the budding subgenre of historical crime fiction, she explores how, and to what effect, recent German history is operationalized: some crime novels seek to raise awareness of key moments in German history, some build on new approaches in historiography, some rework the prevailing historical narrative. She concludes with a

close reading of two historical crime novels which, at first blush, are generic antipodes. They were written sixty-five years apart; one is based on a true case from the Third Reich, the other a counter-historical novel of a still-existent GDR. Ultimately, Hall's juxtaposition of these works underscores the manifold strategies through which the subgenre takes on "weighty themes, such as the state's capacity for criminality, police corruption, and the often elusive nature of justice" (126).

In recognition of the fact that television *Krimis* are also wildly popular in the German-speaking world, the volume concludes with a brief treatment of this form. Here, Hall chronicles the best-known series from both the FRG and GDR, highlighting Cold War tensions and, more recently, efforts toward greater representation across gender and ethnicity.

A perennial challenge of edited volumes is to provide thorough coverage of the theme in question. Yet in light of the goal of *Crime Fiction in German* to offer a "comprehensive overview of German-language crime-fiction" (1), the omission of a chapter on Germany, which would have taken up Tannert's evolutionary thread and also paralleled the regional focus of chapters on Austria and Switzerland, was somewhat curious. Such an essay would have seemed a fitting place to treat *Krimis* of the 1920s and 1930s, the prodigious publication of crime fiction under National Socialism, crime fiction in the GDR, and the post-1945 West-German *Soziokrimi*. To be sure, Hall develops these genres to an extent in her introduction, and treatment of the latter two subgenres appears interspersed in the volume. But the shift of some content from the introduction to a discrete chapter might have provided greater balance across these crucial moments in the evolution of the *Krimi*, and more concretely redressed some lacunae in this genre's literary history. This point notwithstanding, the editor's goals to present an abundant corpus of primary literature and to synthesize existing, primarily German-language scholarship for a broad readership, are objectives achieved in this volume without qualification. These accomplishments alone will quickly earn *Crime Fiction in German* recognition as a significant contribution to scholarship on the *Krimi*.

*John Carroll University* —*Julia Karolle-Berg*

**German Women Writers and the Spatial Turn: New Perspectives.**
*Edited by Carola Daffner and Beth A. Muellner. Berlin, Boston: de Gruyter, 2015. vi + 271 pages. €99,95 / $140.00 gebunden oder eBook.*

Carola Daffner and Beth A. Muellner are right in arguing that German studies has seen a growing interest in questions of space and place in recent years. Following on from Jaimey Fischer and Barbara Mennel's fascinating volume, *Spatial Turns: Space, Place and Mobility in German Literature and Visual Culture* (2010), Daffner and Muellner seek to expand the discussion by exploring the particular ways in which gender intersects with constructions of space. Their aim is to "consider how the metaphorical spaces of women's writing might help us to understand the material spaces of women's lives" (9). Combining studies of contemporary women writers with explorations of female authors from the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, the volume delivers on that aspiration with a collection of well-informed and well-argued essays.