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Zürau and the later ones from Prague, side by side in chapter eight, he gives much more weight to the negative connotations of the latter, which bring “Skepsis, Selbstkritik und Verzweiflung zum Ausdruck” (205). This despite the fact that the Zürau aphorisms are that form of prayer, “denn sie verweisen auf das Unzerstörbare, das Göttliche im Menschen, trotz der ungeheuren Schwierigkeit von dessen Befreiung” (205). Though Nakazawa did not venture with Kafka too far into these “final things,” he calls the aphorisms “eine unvollendete Statue, die uns aber mit ihren Rätseln und tiefsinnigen Überlegungen zur Meditation über ‘die letzten Dinge’ immer noch einladen” (205). Thus, he also leaves some breadcrumbs for the next brave soul to follow.

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Halina Nitropisch, *Franz Kafkas Roman Das Schloß: Der moderne Mythos des Bewusstseins*. Würzburger Wissenschaftliche Schriften 858. Würzburg: Königshausen & Neumann, 2017. 166 pp.

Much has been and will continue to be written about Franz Kafka, one of the most fascinating and beguiling writers of the twentieth century. Kafka’s oeuvre seems to capture things both profound and absurd: the morbid bureaucratization of modern life; enchanting but ultimately desolate Prague, both of and apart from the world; the enduring mystery of Judaism and Jewishness. Kafka’s writings contain elliptical musings on such subjects as remembrance, forgetting, and loneliness and speak to what Halina Nitropisch, in her beautifully written and philosophically sophisticated new book *Franz Kafkas Roman Das Schloß: Der moderne Mythos des Bewusstseins*, calls “[Walter] Benjamins Diagnose:” “In der Moderne habe die Ideenwelt ihre Zugehörigkeit zur Transzendenz eingebüßt und von nun an sei sie im ‘Innersten der Wirklichkeit’ zu verorten” (102). *Das Schloß*, she argues, is Kafka’s attempt to reconcile the social and theological forces at work in his (our) world. Melding literature, philosophy, and theology in an attempt to explicate and unravel this most *unheimlich* of novels, we discover, she says, that “In *Das Schloß* deckt Kafka das grundsätzliche Problem des modernen Menschen auf: seine metaphysische Unbehaustheit” (48).

The theme of “metaphysische Unbehaustheit” wends its way through Nitropisch’s book. *Franz Kafkas Roman Das Schloß* is not really a literary in-

vestigation of the novel itself. It includes few close readings of long passages, psychological interrogation of characters, or explications of complex narrative formulations. Instead, Nitropisch uses *Das Schloß* as a platform to explore the literary and theological world of early twentieth-century Europe, not just the *Weltanschauung* of Kafka's writings but even more the complex relationship between (internal) being and (external) meaning. Nitropisch is philosophically erudite (it is not unusual to see references to Jabès and Valéry beside those to Plato, Barthes, Buber, and Scholem), and this would be interesting (if not particularly important) if it were not that it appears to be the means by which she assumes for herself the license to be far more creative in her readings and conclusions than one usually expects from a work of literary criticism focused on a single novel. Indeed, Nitropisch, has, in effect, written a book of historical philosophy, one that describes (and diagnoses) the modern condition. The book works *with* Kafka rather than *on* him. In *Das Schloß*, Nitropisch says, Kafka attempted to convey the way that, in modernity, intellect and language have become the sole organs of comprehension. Kafka's novel, therefore, should not be understood merely as a parable of modern society in economic or political terms. Rather, it is, far more profoundly, about the loneliness of humanity itself when it becomes isolated from the possibility of transcendence. When "de[r] säkularisierte Mensch" (107) becomes "Subjekt als auch Objekt," the inexorable result (and absurdity) is that he becomes "Täter als auch Opfer" (80), a means only to an end that interminably repeats itself, a recurring pattern of ego-centered questioning that leads always inward, a "Wesenlosigkeit" (114) that, like the narrative of the novel, always promises answers around the next corner, at the next meeting, in the next room—and never delivers.

Divided into five parts, the book weaves between a literary-contextual and philosophical-historical argument, focusing at times on the influence of other writers (Goethe, Rilke), on specific places and images (Prague, the bridge), or on theological archetypes (Plato's shadow-world, Isaac Luria's transcendent/immanent God). Nitropisch takes inspiration from Kafka's opening scene of K. standing on a bridge before entering the village below the castle: "Lange stand K. auf der Holzbrücke die von der Landstraße zum Dorf führt und blickte in die scheinbare Leere empor" (7). The bridge connects the main road, the road away from consciousness linked with transcendence, to the village, the metaphysical zone of modern society, where every action is a self-reflective gaze, what she calls (in a beautiful turn of phrase) a "leerer Spiegel"

(114). Nitropisch plays with this image of the bridge between understandings of consciousness. It animates the writing, resulting ultimately in a powerful set of readings that open Kafka's novel to a host of new interpretations. One of these concerns the relationship between Kafka and Jewish theology. This has been a source of perpetual interest and conversation among scholars since his work first appeared. Nitropisch engages with this discussion at every level, raising important questions and urging new (sometimes debatable, but always interesting) connections. Her prime interlocutors are Scholem and Buber, who give her access to the mystical worlds of Isaac Luria and Nachman of Breslov. For example, she finds Luria at the very heart of Kafka's narrative construction: "Das Lurianische Paradox, 'die absolute Transzendenz des Göttlichen, [die] im dichterischen Gleichgewicht mit seiner Immanenz ist' fand in Kafkas dörfflichen Mikrokosmos seine künstlerische Entsprechung" (115). It is this sort of reading, at once text-immanent and theologically empathetic, that lends this book its depth and nuance.

In the end, Nitropisch's book applies intricate philosophical and metaphysical categories to Kafka's novel in a way that will interest readers far beyond literary studies. It is unfortunate that it is not yet translated into English, for it subverts the trend that has for too long separated religious studies from literary criticism in the academy. In the United States, few scholarly journals are interested in publishing the sort of analysis Nitropisch engages with here. It is a book that will only grow in readership as academic criticism forgoes the twentieth-century narrative of secularization and looks toward the other disciplines to understand the radical breaks in "Bewusstsein" that define modernity.

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Susanne Blumesberger and Jörg Thunecke, eds., *Deutschsprachige Kinder- und Jugendliteratur während der Zwischenkriegszeit und im Exil: Schwerpunkt Österreich*. Frankfurt: Peter Lang, 2017. 344 pp.

English-speaking readers today may not be aware that Walt Disney's celebrated 1942 animated film *Bambi* was based on *Bambis Kinder*, written 1938 by the forcibly exiled Austrian Felix Salten, or that popular 1930s U.S. proletarian children's books were translations of works by the Austrian Hermynia von