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GEORG DÖRR. *Muttermythos und Herrschaftsmythos: Zur Dialektik der Aufklärung um die Jahrhundertwende bei den Kosmikern, Stefan George und in der Frankfurter Schule*. Würzburg, Germany: Königshausen & Neumann, 2007. 380 pp. €48,80.

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This book explores the joint reception of Johann Jakob Bachofen and Friedrich Nietzsche in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, a reception characterized, according to the author, by a dialectic between the titular *Muttermythos* and *Herrschaftsmythos*. Put another way, Georg Dörr's study charts the vagaries of the conceptual pair Dionysian/Apollonian in the wake of Nietzsche and Bachofen. Dörr first lays out the configuration Bachofen-Nietzsche, which inaugurates the myth of an antique matriarchate brought to heel by a principle of domination, then traces the tangled reception of this constellation through thinkers on both the reactionary side of the spectrum (in particular Ludwig Klages, Alfred Schuler, Stefan George and Ludwig Derleth) and on the Marxist side (the Frankfurt School, and Walter Benjamin). It is precisely this ideological range that Dörr wants to explain: why could the reactionary neo-paganism of the turn of the century, the Marxist critics of the 30s and 40s, and modern-day feminism all draw on the same strange philosopheme?

It was Bachofen who first introduced the idea of an original matriarchate in his 1861 book on *Das Mutterrecht*. Dörr is interested only in those thinkers who attempt to combine Bachofen's narrative with the Nietzschean critique of culture (rather than, say the nineteenth-century reception of Bachofen independent of Nietzsche, such as Engels, for example), basically grafting Bachofen's terminology onto the historical narrative of the "Socratic" transition from Dionysian to Apollonian laid out in Nietzsche's *Birth of Tragedy* (Bachofen draws on the same pair of concepts, but to different ends). Dörr acknowledges immediately that this is of course a flagrant misreading of Nietzsche, and that Bachofen's archeology of the matriarchate in no way celebrates the original "Dionysian" feminine rule whose existence it postulates. Nevertheless, when Karl Wolfskehl first introduced Ludwig Klages to Bachofen's work, and when Klages eventually inspired Benjamin's reading, the premises were decidedly post-Nietzschean.

Somewhat puzzlingly, Dörr presents the *Kosmiker's* legacy in the Frankfurt School before actually delving into the *Kosmikerkreis* itself. The reason for this seems to lie in the fact that with Wolfskehl's circle two

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new aspects entered into the reception of Bachofen and Nietzsche: homoeroticism and community. The latter was if anything absolutized in the George-circle's Maximin-cult, which Dörr, much like the Thomas Karlauf's recent biography of George, construes as a response to the challenges posed by the *Kosmiker*-program. However, whereas the *Kosmikerkreis* (in particular Klages) undertook to rescue the Dionysian from Apollinian encroachment, the Maximin-cult revolved around a male eroticism founded on the supercession or domination of the Dionysian. According to Dörr, the repression of the maternal that animates this *Herrschaftsmythos* is of one piece with the political utopia of the *circle* or *order*, an emphatically homoerotic category somewhere between the family and the community.

Like much recent scholarship on George, Dörr is exceptionally adept at cutting through generations of (self-)mystification on the part of George and his disciples, and manages to contextualize the different stages of his work quite effectively. And unlike Manfred Frank's *Gott im Exil*, for example, Dörr's book is attuned to the nuances that distinguish the mysticism of the cosmos and the inner-wordly transcendence of the George-circle—in other words the fact that George's homoerotic *Bund* was explicitly conceived as an Apollonian figure (was, to use Dörr's terminology, a thing of *Herrschaftsmythos*)—which sheds an interesting light on the homoerotic politics of the early nationalists in Germany.

Dörr's book suffers from a problem common to many German books that begin life as (barely) adapted dissertations or *Habilitationsschriften*: a sprawling encyclopedism, where stringent argumentation is called for, and an inability to let go of a tangent simply because it distracts from the matter at hand. As a result, the narrative and argumentative thrusts wane at several vital junctures, as the author pauses to address questions like whether the *Kosmiker* are proto-fascists – interesting and important, to be sure, but not necessary in the general flow of the argument. The book is also relentless in including (often without laying out in any detail) scholarly arguments around the George-circle or the *Kosmiker*, which are little more than a *Literaturüberblick* cunningly interspersed into the main text, and which prove quite intrusive. Particularly distracting is the book's organizational system – labeling a section “8.4.3” may once have been quite helpful in guiding Dörr's *Doktorvater* through the text, but as the reader of a book one expects, well, a book, not a spreadsheet.

Thankfully, however, even if the book's argument and organization betray its origins as a German *Habilitationsschrift*, it must have been an exceptionally well-written one. Dörr's style is extremely

readable throughout, and the previously mentioned tangents are much less distracting than they could have been, thanks to the author's engaging and lucid prose. The two methodological introductions keep the readers oriented in the dizzying and shifting terrain. Dörr quotes extensively but judiciously and is exemplary in contextualizing the texts he addresses. The sections on Benjamin's reception of the constellation Klages-George show Dörr very familiar with current scholarship on the origins of the Frankfurt School, and he teases out this strange trajectory with great clarity.

Overall, there is little to criticize about Dörr's excellent study, short of a few cosmetic organizational issues. This book is a welcome addition to the intellectual history of the sexual and national politics of fin-de-siècle avant-gardes. Although it is published in a series dedicated to *Literaturwissenschaft*, Dörr's book addresses mainly questions of intellectual history – his readings of George, for instance, do not go particularly far beyond, for instance, Karlauf's recent biography of the poet. But George's historical position is of course interesting enough – as Manfred Riedel made clear last year in his *Das geheime Deutschland*. In the English-speaking world in particular, where the *Kosmikerkreis* remains still rather underexplored (short of a few passages in Robert Norton's *Secret Germany*), Dörr's book constitutes a much-needed addition to the scholarly literature. Researchers interested in the Frankfurt School, too, should find Dörr's book a boon, since it traces an interesting lineage (from Klages via Benjamin to Adorno and Horkheimer), that emphasizes the often underacknowledged fact that mid-20<sup>th</sup> century Marxism drew on a range of conservative thinkers, adapting them for their own purposes.

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GABRIELE DÜRBECK. *Stereotype Paradiese: Ozeanismus in der deutschen Südseeliteratur 1815-1914*. Tübingen: Max Niemeyer Verlag, 2007. 388 pp. € 76.00.

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As much as *Stereotype Paradiese* is about the South Sea literature written by various journalists, scientists, artists, and novelists of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, its greater focus concerns the representation and interpretation of foreign cultures. The book's aim is to expand the analytical framework of scholars such as Edward W. Said regarding Orientalism and the understanding of foreign

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