

tions cannot cancel out its central plot, which warns against the consequences of Jewish infiltration into Gentile society, this time in the form of a seductive Jewish woman. Some German studies scholars are sure to object to her thesis that anti-Semitism is at the core of the German literary canon. But none will be able to deny that her book asks us to rethink how we read hatred of Jews and other “others.”

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**Kord, Susanne.** *Murderesses in German Writing, 1720-1860: Heroines of Horror.* New York: Cambridge University Press, 2009. 276 pp. \$90.00 cloth.

*Murderesses in German Writing* is a fascinating study that expands our growing understanding of gender codes by examining the stories of eight famous murderesses in Germany in the years 1720–1860. The point of departure for Susanne Kord is the body theory of Michel Foucault, famously presented in his *Discipline and Punish*, and Victor Turner’s concept of “modes of symbolic action,” as defined in his book *The Anthropology of Performance*. Against this theoretical background, her analysis focuses on legal, psychological, philosophical, anthropological, sociological, and literary writings, while exploring different texts and genres—from poetry, ballads, novels, and biographies to court records, journal articles, and legal reform texts. This analysis is embedded in the structure of the book: its aim is not to present a chronological narrative, but to decode cultural phenomena, such as “the subordinate, the trivial, the uncanny, the irrational, the scandalous, the sensationalistic, the low brow, the unsubtle and the inexplicable” (5).

Kord brings her extensive knowledge of women’s literary history to bear on the issues of female criminality that have garnered considerable attention in German writing in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. She calls her book “a study of paradoxes” (3), as she explores the impact of two contradictory statements about criminal women of the past on the construction of the gender norms of the present: on the one hand, all women are biologically predestined for crime; on the other hand, however, female criminals are closer to savages because of their masculine characteristics. Kord demonstrates convincingly how these two contradictory perceptions of the nature of women influenced legal and cultural discourses about criminality and gender that still permeate the literature today by focusing on the most extreme cases of criminal women—from witches and vampires to husband- and child-killers and poisoners. Above all, she brilliantly engages with the way writers about murderous women communicated broader issues such as authority, sexuality, and the emancipation of women.

Chapter Two, on witchcraft, focuses on the motif of the “evil eye,” which Kord introduces to show how the seventeenth-century witch beliefs that underlay the highly publicized murder trial of Anna Göldi in 1782, instead of being eradicated by the Enlightenment, went underground, to reemerge not only in the fairy tales of Romanticism, but also in the scientific writings and aesthetic theories, for example, in Johann Caspar Lavater’s theories of poetic genius and his physiognomic descriptions of Anna Louisa Karsch in *Physiognomische Fragmente* (1775–78). The next chapter examines the

scientific and literary discussions about vampires around 1730, most notably represented in the story of Elisabeth Báthory (1560–1614), “history’s busiest female vampire” (54), who reportedly murdered close to 650 maidens and bathed in their blood to preserve her youth. Kord shows how the renewed interest in the case of the sixteenth-century female vampire shaped literary debates about gender norms, turning “the female un-dead of myth [...] into the dead women of literature” (80–81). Chapters Four and Five are devoted to husband- and child-killers. Focusing on two notorious cases of husband-murderesses, Maria Katharina Wächtler in 1786 and Christiane Ruthardt in 1845, Kord broadens her analysis to show that the legal discussions about torture and the death penalty, expressed in the capacity to think in terms of “either-or,” were complicated by literature’s “ability to distinguish between the specific and the general, between cause and potential effect, between the case and its possible consequences” (104). She then looks at infanticide to demonstrate how the treatment of the real-life infanticides, as presented in court documents and other legal texts, was challenged by the literary representations of innocent child-killers, raising issues that could be resolved by bringing into consideration not only the gender but also the lower-class status of the murderer. Finally, the chapter on women and poison discusses the case of the serial poisoner Gesche Gottfried, whose crimes, according to Kord, were the only way to break free from the traditional roles offered to women around 1800, namely those of “daughter, wife, mother and charitable widow” (182). The concluding chapter of the book focuses on “the etiquette of execution,” bringing together, for the first time, issues of gender, public power, and execution.

If the aim of this book, as stated by Kord, is to examine rather than to explain “puzzling inconsistencies” and “uncomfortable questions” (4), then it achieves more than that. Theoretically astute and exceptionally well researched, the book stands as a model for further exploration of women and crime in eighteenth- and nineteenth century European culture.

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**Kortländer, Bernd, and Enno Stahl, eds.** *Zensur im 19. Jahrhundert. Das literarische Leben aus Sicht seiner Überwacher*. Bielefeld: Aisthesis Verlag, 2012. 269 pp. €28.00 paperback.

Given the difficulties that Heinrich Heine suffered at the hands of the censors in the German states of his day, and the mockery with which he avenged himself on them for perpetuity (for example, in his *Ideen. Das Buch LeGrand*), it is somehow fitting that this useful and instructive volume on literary censorship in nineteenth-century Germany has come from the Heinrich-Heine-Institut in Düsseldorf. The essay collection reviewed here is an example of the recent trend in censorship studies to cast a more objective eye on the institution of censorship and on the censors themselves; readers with an interest in literary production in Imperial Germany will be familiar with Gary Stark’s work in this vein. The essays also have another aim in mind, which is to make literary scholars more aware of the value of archival research.