

Mathäs, Alexander. *Narcissism and Paranoia in the Age of Goethe*. Newark: University of Delaware Press, 2008. 255 pp. ISBN: 9780874130140 hardcover, \$56.50.

Reviewed for Women in German by Daniel Kline

Alexander Mathäs reflects on and analyzes the occurrences of narcissism and paranoia in texts during the age of Goethe. How do concepts commonly associated with Freud apply to the age of Goethe? In this book, Mathäs attempts to show how Freudian and Lacanian psychoanalytical theories stem from the bourgeois emancipation. He is not anachronistically applying the theories, but rather focuses on the narcissistic act of creation itself, specifically that of the late eighteenth-century bourgeois artist. He examines the literary responses to the search for a stable identity during a period of profound transformations in the context of interrelated aspects that determine bourgeois self-perception, such as gender, aesthetics, ethics, language, philosophy, psychology, and anthropology (15). The main focus, however, is on masculine identity, because the bourgeois emancipation and concern with the Self were decidedly male. Furthermore, these bourgeois authors attempt to reclaim masculinity. In doing so, they feminized the Other as they sought to balance the contradictions between the ideal Self and self-perception.

Mathäs focuses his analysis on Herder's *Selbst*, Goethe's *Götz von Berlichingen* and *Torquato Tasso*, Moritz's *Anton Reiser*, Schiller's *Die Räuber*, Lavater's *Physiognomische Fragmente*, Leisewitz's *Julius von Tarent*, Tieck's *Der Blonde Eckbert*, Kleist's *Der Findling*, Hoffmann's *Der Sandmann* and Kafka's *Das Urteil*. These works span more than a century and provide a framework through which one can see the evolution of the narcissism and paranoia. Mathäs also traces the conceptions of the Self and masculinity through these authors' works. Herder's work establishes the discourse for the rest of the book, which ends with Kafka's *Urteil* in order to demonstrate how this tradition continued through and affected modernist authors. While the major focus is on the masculine identities being created by these writers, Mathäs also analyzes the feminine characters and objects in the presented texts. The nine chapters of the book align his arguments into the following themes: aesthetic narcissism and the bourgeois Self; self-observation and bourgeois art; body, mind, and soul; mapping the German body; male desire in Sturm und Drang drama; paranoia, gender, and the bourgeois artist; from self-perception to self-delusion; a doppelgänger in the family; and narcissism and cloning.

Narcissism and paranoia become evident through Mathäs' analyses and exemplify the changing bourgeois Self. This changing Self is featured in Herder's *Selbst*. Mathäs argues that the changing bourgeois Self manifests itself in its relationship to narcissism and paranoia. These two concepts and scenarios reveal uncertainty, duality, and a fear of the lack of stability. This duality is expressed through the "subjective" point of view and "objective" natural world (59) and parallels that of the contradictory self. The narcissism of creation captures both a desire for self-recognition and a yearning for an ideal Self (22). This mirrors the author's creation of an individualized world separate from his own. Moritz presents this artistic narcissism in *Anton Reiser*, emphasizing the difference between the artist and the creation. In Moritz' classicist aesthetic, the artist must be able to distance himself from his creation lest he fail as an artist, as Reiser does (42). This points toward a further duality, that of the ideal Self and a fleeting, changing one, which is visible in this and other works analyzed. Here, the stable inner Self is coded as masculine, while the fleeting is framed as feminine.

As is expected, the women presented in the texts do not get the same freedoms attributed to the men. While they may find their own paths or perspectives, they ultimately are still subjected to the masculine order. Femininity is depicted as a penetrating, devouring force that can invade the

borders of male identity (108). This is seen in *Götz von Berlichingen*. Adelheid is a master politician and deceitful manipulator. She violates the gender norms by entering politics and luring Weislingen away, thereby destabilizing masculine identity (122). Female characters are, however, not the only deviators from the gender norms, and any gender deviation is viewed as negative. It usually signifies moral shortcomings vis-à-vis the patriarchal ideals of the time (123).

Mathäs' analysis of *Torquato Tasso* further emphasizes the relationship between gender, narcissism, and paranoia. This is seen as a response to the contradictions inherent in bourgeois emancipation (142). Mathäs bases his arguments in Hegelian, Kantian, and Fichtean dialectics and then introduces Freud and Lacan. Most of the works display an urge to unite with the stable inner self. The subject unity remains the trajectory of Hegel's dialectics and it is reached only after competing with the Self (146). While all the presented texts describe this longing for unity, they also depict uncertainty and fear experienced by their authors. Just as these authors experienced the social upheaval and redefinitions of the Self, so too do their characters experience a similar division of the self. Both Goethe and Freud view paranoia and poetic production as symptoms of regressive attempts at preserving one's idealized self (147). For both, literary production serves a function of maturation. This can be seen in Tasso. His writing is tied to maturation and a narcissistic dream of rising in status. Freud then takes this connection between narcissism, paranoia, and maturation and ties it to rebellion from the father figure.

Through analyzing several texts, this study shows how Freud's thought develops from a tradition started in the eighteenth century with the beginning of the bourgeois emancipation. Mathäs highlights the narcissistic and paranoid tendencies that stem from the contradictions and dualities inherent in the uncertainty of the period. As the bourgeoisie developed, the crises of identity and artistic autonomy became central concerns, as exemplified in the works presented. Mathäs fills a void with this study of narcissism and paranoia in the context of aesthetic considerations, specifically, literary production, in the age of Goethe, because the narcissistic scenario captures the contradictions of bourgeois identity politics (22). He provides a survey of texts, which could nicely supplement a course on this period. In addition, because the chapters typically focus on one or two of the texts, the book also lends itself to being used for teaching any of the presented texts individually.

Daniel Kline, *Michigan State University*