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Gendered History and Memory in Marlene Streeruwitz's Recent Prose

Gender, history and memory are important aspects in Streeruwitz's writings. Her investigations of historical renderings of literature and culture have immensely contributed to the representations of modern day Austrian memory. Streeruwitz's feminist approach to different forms of memory and representation has opened a new way of looking at the Austrian past. In particular, her recent novels *Nachwelt* and *Partygirl* are among those that seek to address "official" Austrian versions of its cultural past vis-à-vis individual memories.

In my paper I will address the different approaches of Streeruwitz's prose writings as well as some of her essays that have been published in German and Austrian newspapers and magazines. My analysis shows how she challenges dominant discourses and attempts to support that of marginalized (women's) voices. In *Nachwelt*, the story is concerned with an investigation of memory as the protagonist traces the story of the exile Anna Mahler and meanwhile finds her own past reflected in whatever she finds out about her biographical subject. While in *Nachwelt*, Streeruwitz rewrites the story of Mahler, in *Partygirl*, she uses a literary character taken from Edgar Allen Poe's story "The Fall of the House of Usher" and addresses the circumstances of the woman's death in Poe's story. Here Streeruwitz rewrites the past, this time not a biographical version but a literary form challenging dominant voices in Western culture. In *Partygirl*, the narrator reflects on the past, starting out with the event that occurred most recently in her memory and then begins to trace her past and that of her brother throughout the decades of postwar Austria.

Similar to Elfriede Jelinek's role, Streeruwitz plays an important part in the process of creating a new tradition of refiguring the past through critical, feminist eyes of the generation of post-war writers. The gender(ed) perspective of these two authors has contributed to Austrian cultural memory in a way that investigates the commonly held stories and transforms them. In my paper, I also draw on Streeruwitz's recent lectures held at the universities of Tübingen and Frankfurt, in which the author offers a theoretical framework for her feminist approach on the role of gender in the understanding of Western history and cultural memory. If gendered memories can be distinguished is a frequently posed question that helps to analyze cultural forms of representation, be it film, theater, fiction etc. when considering the differences between stories that are so-called gender-neutral and those that depict a gendered voice. In Streeruwitz's works, I argue, gendered memories can be distinguished as the female characters—women such as Anna Mahler and the narrator of her story, Margarethe Doblinger, as well as Madeline Ascher (Lady Usher)—partially function as mouthpieces for the author's feminist views.