

Abstract

This study focuses on different aspects related to power in the collected works of the West German author Nicolas Born (1937–1979). This is mainly done through a close analysis of Born's essays and his two most famous novels *Die erdabgewandte Seite der Geschichte* (1976) and *Die Fälschung* (1979), but references are also made to Born's first novel, his short stories and poems.

In Chapter 2 Born's essays are analysed in terms of various aspects of power, e.g. technical, economical and political power (according to Born, these 'power aspects' are components of a general system, which he refers to as the *Megamaschine*). The powerlessness of the individual as well as his or her possibilities of opposing the system of power are also discussed.

Chapter 3 contains a close reading of *Die erdabgewandte Seite der Geschichte*. The narrator's relationship with his lover, friend and daughter are characterized as different forms of power-relations. The study argues that the division between the private and the public spheres is of major importance in this novel. This division is questioned by the literary text through its theme 'women's emancipation', which is described as a sadomasochistic play where the man is silenced due to insecurities concerning his gender role. Another factor contributing to the lack of communication between the characters is the overwhelming media flow in society. The analysis shows that public discourses greatly impact the characters' private lives.

The last part of the analysis features a close reading of Born's last novel *Die Fälschung*. Similarly to *Die erdabgewandte Seite der Geschichte*, this novel deals with the central question of 'the battle between the sexes'. Affinities and differences between the two novels are pointed out. In *Die Fälschung*, however, the question of power is not only related to the German society, since the setting is Lebanon. The story is told through the eyes of the German reporter Georg Laschen, and different aspects of power are viewed partly as a result of the Lebanese civil war. Various power structures are visible in the relations between different Civil war combatants, between states and between the Occident and the Orient. The reporter's power to define (i.e. to choose what to write and thereby decide what is important) is discussed as a journalistic problem.

The final section of the work shows that power is a constant topic in the work of Nicolas Born. The results of the analysis are compared.

The methods used are related to poststructuralist power analysis (Michel Foucault), theories of feminism and gender (Judith Butler), as well as post-colonial studies (Edward W. Said, Homi K. Bhabha).

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