

AUTORIN

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TITEL

Literary Afterlives. Archives, Literature Museums, and the Visibility of Texts

ERSCHIENEN IN

*Textpraxis. Digitales Journal für Philologie* # 18 (2.2020) / [www.textpraxis.net](http://www.textpraxis.net)

URL

<https://www.textpraxis.net/carol-anne-costabile-heming-literary-afterlives>

URN: <https://nbn-resolving.org/urn:nbn:de:hbz:6-49099578115>

DOI: <https://dx.doi.org/10.17879/49099577811>

URN und DOI dienen der langfristigen Auffindbarkeit des Dokuments.

EMPFOHLENE ZITIERWEISE

Carol Anne Costabile-Heming: »Literary Afterlives. Archives, Literature Museums, and the Visibility of Texts«. In: *Textpraxis* 18 (2.2020). URL: <https://www.textpraxis.net/carol-anne-costabile-heming-archives-literary-afterlives>

DOI: <https://dx.doi.org/10.17879/49099577811>

IMPRESSUM

*Textpraxis. Digitales Journal für Philologie*

ISSN 2191-8236

Westfälische Wilhelms-Universität Münster

Graduate School *Practices of Literature*

Germanistisches Institut

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Redaktion und Herausgabe: Sona Arasteh-Roodsary, Christina Becher, Nursan Celik, Akshay Chavan, Lea Espinoza Garrido, Gesine Heger, Thomas Kater, Sarah Nienhaus, Hanna Pulpanek, Laura Reiling



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PUBLISHED IN

*Textpraxis. Digital Journal for Philology* # 18 (2.2020) / [www.textpraxis.net/en](http://www.textpraxis.net/en)

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URN and DOI serve the long-term searchability of the document.

RECOMMENDED CITATION

Carol Anne Costabile-Heming: »Literary Afterlives. Archives, Literature Museums, and the Visibility of Texts«. In: *Textpraxis* 18 (2.2020). URL: <https://www.textpraxis.net/en/carol-anne-costabile-heming-literary-afterlives>

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# Literary Afterlives

## Archives, Literature Museums, and the Visibility of Texts<sup>1</sup>

The literature industry (*Literaturbetrieb*) in Germany today is a multi-faceted and interconnected network of actors and industries, all of which play a role in making literary prose fiction visible and accessible to a reading public. The competitive literature market has created institutions and norms that regulate the fiction presented to the reading public and determine which authors rise to prominence. This essay takes the tension between the visibility and the longevity of prose fiction and writers in the contemporary German-language literary scene as a starting point to question how texts become canonical. It considers whether two specific actors within the literature industry, literary archives and literature museums, contribute substantively to the visibility of writers and their texts, and asks if such institutions play a role in cementing the canon as something static, or whether through engagement with the dynamism of the literary market they also can open the canon to new voices. In order to explore this question, I analyze the relationship between market forces that produce bestseller lists and the critical reception that contributes to the creation of a national literary canon.

Two 21st-century novels, Friedrich Christian Delius's *Der Königsmacher* (2001) and Klaus Modick's *Der Bestseller* (2006) take the contemporary German literary industry to task for what their protagonist-writers view as a skewed perception of what makes good literature.<sup>2</sup> Paying little attention to literary quality, the publishers portrayed in these novels focus on marketability, in other words, »What sells?« The protagonist-writers bemoan the media's disinterest in engaging concretely with contemporary fiction. As a result, both protagonists focus less on writing and more on the media, exploiting the literature industry in their efforts to produce a »bestseller« and achieve at least national stardom. These protagonist-writers confront the realities and uncertainties of life as freelance authors, where there are no guarantees for success. Convinced, however, that there is indeed a specific recipe for success, their attempts to outfox readers fail to account for the complexity of the literature industry. As French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu characterized it in his seminal essay, »The Field of Cultural Production,« we can read the literature industry as a grouping of interdependent fields operating within specific power structures. In order to understand the complexity of the literature industry, we

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1 | Research for this project was conducted as part of a faculty development leave from the University of North Texas and with the support of a Marbach Fellowship from the Deutsches Literaturarchiv Marbach. It is an expanded and revised version of a talk I held at the Deutsches Literaturarchiv on April 3, 2019 entitled »Literarische Nachleben: Vom Zusammenhang von Archiv, Museum und Kanon.«

2 | Since the beginning of the 21st century, a variety of German-speaking authors have parodied aspects of the literature industry in their prose fiction. Cf. Martin Walser, *Tod eines Kritikers* (2002); Thomas Glavinic, *Das bin doch ich* (2007); Ulrich Woelk, *Joana Mandelbrot und ich* (2008); Marlene Streeruwitz, *Nachkommen. Roman* (2014); Marlene Streeruwitz als Nelia Fehn, *Die Reise einer jungen Anarchistin in Griechenland* (2014); Ingo Schulze, *Die rechtschaffenen Mörder* (2020).

must examine it as it relates to other power structures; the literature industry is a singular field comprised of the sum of its parts: production, distribution, and consumption. A literary work derives from complex social and institutional frameworks; these frameworks in turn authorize and sustain literature and literary practice. Within this literary field, the author produces a product, whose reception is dependent on complex social relations, which at a given historical moment also determines the ›value‹ of that literary work. Indeed, the critical perspective through which Delius and Modick cast the literature industry underscores Bourdieu's claim that objective competition within the literature system creates tensions, whereby »the various categories of producers tend to supply products adjusted to the expectations of the various positions in the field of power.«<sup>3</sup>

The tensions at play in these novels reside in the relationships between the writers and their publishers, the media, critics, and even readers. At the heart of it, the protagonist-writers seek immediate fame (*Ruhm*), but give little thought to their potential posthumous reputation (*Nachruhm*) and the longevity of their authorial legacy. This focus on immediacy versus longevity provides an interesting starting point to examine the tension between the visibility (bestseller) and the longevity (canon) of texts and writers in the contemporary German-language literary scene, and explore how literary archives and literature museums, functioning as interdependent fields, have the potential to influence and manipulate the visibility of writers and their texts. Using the *Deutsches Literaturarchiv* (DLA) and the *Literaturmuseum der Moderne* (LiMo) in Marbach, Germany as case studies, this essay questions the role that such institutions play in creating and cementing the canon. Along with the Schiller National Museum (SNM), the DLA and the LiMo exist in a symbiotic relationship; indeed, the LiMo was built specifically to highlight the DLA's archival holdings. While both museums serve to build bridges between the archival holdings and a broader reading and viewing public, my focus here is on contemporary literature, and thus I will not detail the SNM and its relationship to the DLA. Collection and exhibition strategies, I theorize, contribute to the visibility of writers and their texts, and this essay questions how the relationship between these two national institutions functions. Broadly conceived literature museums like LiMo, as well as more focused author-specific museums, can expose the contexts and environments that influenced authors and their texts. Through the addition of an experiential level, the LiMo creates new avenues for visitors to engage with literature. Thus, this essay seeks not just to add to the debate about the core of the literary canon, but also to consider how literature museums' targeted programming and outreach can increase awareness about contemporary writers and their texts. Furthermore, it asks if a dynamic literary market can open the canon to new voices by probing how literary archives and literature museums contribute to the development of the canon.

## Contemporary Writers and the Creation of a Bestseller

In *Der Königsmacher*, the fictional writer Albert Rusch, whose first novel was successful, confronts the momentariness of his own fame. While young writers, particularly female writers, are crowned pop icons, Rusch struggles to arrange an advance for his third novel from his publisher.<sup>4</sup> Because his second novel sold a mere 1439 copies, not even enough to cover the advance he had received, his publisher has lost faith in him. Rusch

3 | Pierre Bourdieu: *The Field of Cultural Production*, ed. by Randal Johnson. Cambridge 1993, p. 45.

4 | This is an overt reference to »das literarische Fräuleinwunder.« *Der Spiegel* (1999) used the term to categorize an emerging generation of young, successful, female writers. Cf. Volker Hage: »Ganz schön abgedreht«. In: *Der Spiegel*. March 22, 1999, pp. 244–246.

must deliver a bestseller in order to emerge from his psychological and financial ruin. He looks for a recipe for success, a formula that he believes resides in a historical thematic.<sup>5</sup> His scheme to write a novel about the illegitimate daughter of the Dutch King Willem I and the daughter of a Berlin baker sends him on a metaphorical journey into Prussian history. Even his publisher is excited about the prospects that such a novel will bring. There is only one problem: Rusch cannot actually deliver a finished product because the trappings of the literature industry repeatedly distract him from the task. Instead of focusing on writing the novel, he obsesses about marketing, in particular, marketing himself. While conducting research on Prussian history, he stumbles upon information that links him to the lineage of Prussian kings. As a result, he crowns himself an expert on all things Prussian, joins the talk show circuit, and invents the *Preußenjahr*. His approach to his new-found heritage is both cynical and self-serving: »Ich sah nur einen Weg: mich selbst in den Vordergrund spielen, den Namen Rusch berühmt machen, ein Medienprinz werden.«<sup>6</sup> Accordingly, these extra activities distract him from writing, a fact he readily accepts because: »Erfolg hat fast nichts mit dem Text, aber fast alles mit der Person zu tun« (KM, 194). Indeed, he plans »[zu]erst einen Namen [zu] machen, zur Attraktion für die Medien auf[z]usteigen, dann das Buch fertig [zu] schreiben« (KM, 195). The pursuit of fame consumes him, as the marketing of his image overtakes his time: »das Buch kann beliebig schlecht oder gut sein, roh oder gut durchgebacken. In den Medien war ich sowieso nicht als Schriftsteller gefragt, sondern als Königsengel, PR-Mann für Preußen, Sinnstifter, als Star« (KM, 261–262). Ultimately, Rusch never completes more than a sketch of the novel, signaling the end of his writing career.

In this ironic take on the literature industry, Delius emphasizes the importance of fame and posthumous reputation for writers. Rusch focuses solely on sales and best-seller lists, indicators that measure the quality neither of a text nor of its author; sales figures quantify only the quality of advertising and promotion,<sup>7</sup> values outside the realm of a writer's artistry and sphere of influence. At the end of *Der Königsmacher*, Rusch does find fame, albeit not as the author of a bestseller, but as a live exhibit in a museum; for seven hours a day, Wednesdays through Sundays, Rusch sits at a desk in a glass display case and writes. For this task, he earns the tidy sum of 10,000 DM. Clearly, Rusch's simulation of a writer is more lucrative than the actual profession. With this novel, Delius not only pokes fun at Rusch's quest for fame, he chastises both the media and the literature industry for prioritizing fame over quality. In a similar fashion, the 2006 Ingeborg Bachmann Prize winner, Kathrin Passig, has commented cynically on this tendency: »wer viel verkauft, gerät in den Verdacht, sich allzu willig an den schlichten Geschmack des Pöbels anzuschmiegen.«<sup>8</sup> This is precisely what Rusch seeks, and it is not surprising, since the media, especially television, bombards us regularly with programming seeking the next »superstar,« programs that are more concerned with self-promotion than with discovering genuine talent.<sup>9</sup> Hubert Winkels has gone so far as to suggest that writers' public

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5 | Delius acknowledges that a *New York Times* article about the profitability of historical novels influenced his decision to approach the theme as a historical novel. DLA, Marbach, A: Delius, *Der Königsmacher*.

6 | Friedrich Christian Delius: *Der Königsmacher*. Neuausgabe. Berlin 2015, p. 210. Subsequent references will be noted parenthetically in the text with KM and the page number.

7 | Kathrin Passig: »Die Vermessung der Literatur«. In: Angela Leinen (ed.): *Wie man den Bachmannpreis gewinnt. Gebrauchsanweisung zum Lesen und Schreiben*. München 2010, pp. 7–14, here: p. 8.

8 | *Ibid.*, p. 9.

9 | The DLA houses Delius's *Vorlass*. The documentation for *Der Königsmacher* includes a collection of newspaper clippings addressing the recipes for success that such television programs follow.

appearances at the beginning of the 21st century ushered in a change in the public's perception of literature: »die neuen Darstellungsformen literarischer Akteure [haben] mit der Form und dem Inhalt der Literatur selbst zu tun.«<sup>10</sup> This change goes hand in hand with transformations in the literary market place. Indeed, the media becomes an essential participant in these transformations, because it also transmits these changes to viewers (and readers). Winkels notes that factors such as »Berühmtheit, Feuilletonakzeptanz, Aktualität, Skandalträchtigkeit, Szene-Zugehörigkeit, Image, Diskurskompatibilität, biographische Ergiebigkeit, narrative Kompetenz, Meinungsfreude und rhetorische Fertigkeit« influence the decisions that television programs make about which authors to include in programming.<sup>11</sup>

Delius's sardonic approach in this novel highlights the importance of visibility for both authors and texts. His protagonist Rusch gains notoriety and visibility through the medium of television, but his actual text remains invisible because it is never published. Additionally, Delius calls into question the idea of authenticity. He presents Rusch as an imposter, who tries to impress with his knowledge of Prussian history, rather than with the actual product – a historical novel. These issues of authenticity and authorship also are entangled. The book's preface toys with readers' expectations about authorship with a disclaimer: »Dieses Buch hat Albert Rusch geschrieben [...]. Er hat mich gebeten, seine Geschichte vorläufig unter meinem Namen herauszugeben« (KM, 5), a rhetorical technique that serves to deflect the question of authorship completely. In a ›life imitates art‹ twist, the sales of Delius's novel mimic Rusch's dilemma – *Der Königsmacher* is his worst selling book.<sup>12</sup>

Five years after Delius published this satirical view of the role that media can play in the creation of a literary personality, Klaus Modick addresses similar issues in a more comic fashion in his novel *Bestseller* (2006).<sup>13</sup> Like Delius, Modick plays with the concepts of authorship and authenticity, though much more overtly. *Bestseller's* protagonist is Lukas Domcik, an anagram of the author's own name.<sup>14</sup> Domcik's greatest desire is to achieve the fame and most especially the fortune accorded to writers of bestsellers. He has had steady, albeit measured success with his literary endeavors, but feels slighted by his publisher, Ralf Scholz, who plans to print his latest novel without publicity because Scholz does not believe it will be a bestseller: »Wichtig ist aber, was geht und was nicht geht. Was die Leute lesen wollen. Welche Bücher sie kaufen.«<sup>15</sup> Scholz encourages Domcik to write historical fiction, a plot line similar to that in Delius's *Königsmacher*. Neither the lack of publicity for his current project nor the idea of caving to reader interests sits well with Domcik at first. Ultimately, he agrees and hatches a scheme to ensure stardom. Amusingly, the plan backfires. Domcik finds inspiration for a docufiction book in the personal papers of a recently deceased distant relative, a type of ›late-life confession‹ reflecting on her complicity with National Socialism. In order to achieve his

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Additionally, clippings related to the concept of *Erfolgsautoren* likely informed Delius's portray of Rusch's attitude and critiques of contemporary themes such as »das literarische Fräuleinwunder.«

**10** | Hubert Winkels: »Eingebildet. Was Fernsehen mit Autoren und Büchern macht«. In: *Literaturen* 10 (2000), pp. 78–83, here: p. 78.

**11** | Ibid.

**12** | The novel appeared on September 11, 2001. Following the terrorist attacks that day in the United States, there was a cultural turn away from lighthearted material.

**13** | Interestingly, Delius had toyed with using »Der Bestseller« as the title for his novel *Der Königsmacher*.

**14** | Thus, like Delius, Modick blurs the line between himself and the protagonist.

**15** | Klaus Modick: *Bestseller*. Frankfurt / M. 2006, p. 71. Subsequent references will be noted parenthetically with B and the page number.

dream of a bestseller, he employs the help of a young English exchange student, Rachel Bringmann, whom he accidentally meets in his favorite pub. She is an aspiring writer, who seeks Domcik's assistance with her fledgling novel *Wilde Nächte*, a string of poorly written and machine translated stories. Domcik, like Rusch, is resentful of the success of emerging women writers, attributing such achievements to the marketability of the person rather than to the literary quality of their books: »Irgend jemand mußte Rachel erzählt haben, daß derzeit in Deutschland gutaussiehende Mädchen und junge Frauen, die das ABC auswendig konnten und mit der Tastatur eines Computers halbwegs zurechtkamen, in der Riege des literarischen Fräuleinwunders beste Karrierechancen hatten« (B, 118).

In order to market his bestseller, Domcik strikes a deal with Rachel: he will write the text, and she will submit it to his publishing house as her own work, but under a pseudonym. Drawing from the realms of theatre and television, he describes this arrangement as »Inszenierung« where he serves as »Produzent, Regisseur und Drehbuchautor in Personalunion« (B, 193). Unlike Rusch, Domcik succeeds in completing a manuscript, a fictionalized reworking of his relative's memoirs, who is reincarnated as Rachel's aunt. The real-life Nazi is transformed into a rueful former fellow traveler who redeems herself working in the underground to help Jews escape Berlin; after the war, she marries one of the men she saved. Domcik taps into the topics that sell: National Socialism, Second World War, Holocaust, and Resistance. His well-orchestrated (and well-written) ruse results in a sensation – the publishing house utilizes all its marketing capacity, and Rachel becomes the star of the Leipziger Buchmesse. Domcik's dream of fame and fortune, however, remains unfilled; Rachel betrays him in contract negotiations with the publishing house. Appalled that she had swindled him out of his dream, Domcik consults a lawyer, who informs him that he has no recourse, because he never signed a contract with Rachel for anything. Divulging the truth would expose him as a »Fälscher« (B, 255) and subject him to possible legal action.

Both Domcik and Rusch tried to outsmart the literature industry in their attempts to achieve fame as bestselling authors. Because these novels underscore the numerical quantity of books sold, Delius and Modick take the field of the literary marketplace to task for its interest in promoting ›what sells‹ over sponsoring ›good‹ literature. Moreover, the protagonists they create also seem incapable of producing good literature on their own. Their desire to write a bestseller panders to the fad of the moment, focuses on the writers' desire for immediate financial gratification, and has very little to do with quality and value, characteristics essential to admission into the canon.

## Defining the Field: Bestseller versus Canon

Bourdieu addresses questions of aesthetic value as they play out in the relationship between high art and popular culture. The structures of power within the literature industry necessarily create competition for, as Bourdieu's editor Randal Johnson writes, »recognition, consecration and prestige,«<sup>16</sup> factors that are viewed differently in the economic and cultural fields. The tension that exists between the cultural and economic fields is the distinction between high and low culture, and the literary canon is the product of this struggle. Thus, a literary work's symbolic or cultural capital determines its aesthetic or social value. Whereas cultural capital relates to forms of cultural knowledge, symbolic capital is the degree of accumulated prestige based upon the dialectic of knowledge and

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16 | Bourdieu: *The Field of Cultural Production* (ref. 3), p. 7.

recognition.<sup>17</sup> Thus, the »field of cultural production is the site of struggles in which what is at stake is the power to impose the dominant definition of the writer and therefore to delimit the population of those entitled to take part in the struggle to define the writer.«<sup>18</sup> Bourdieu further distinguishes between restricted and large-scale production, with restricted production generally associated with ›high‹ art and large-scale production associated with popular culture or ›low‹ art. From this perspective, then, bestsellers, because of their production scale, belong to the realm of popular culture, a circumstance that does not automatically exclude them from acceptance as high art, particularly when recognition comes in the form of literary prizes.<sup>19</sup> Because market forces dictate bestseller lists, these lists are fluid: many texts do not remain on the lists for very long, or their sales drop, excluding them from the list; when sales rebound, they can then return to the list (or move higher up on the list). There is little consensus about what gives a book staying power or how a bestseller becomes a classic. Likewise, not all classic books also become canonical works.

Certainly, there are authors who repeatedly top bestseller lists. According to *Literary Hub*, James Patterson, J. K. Rowling, Stephen King, Danielle Steel, and John Grisham have earned the most money in the last ten years.<sup>20</sup> Without question, these are popular novelists. Whether their texts belong to any type of literary canon, however, is not without question.<sup>21</sup> Moreover, the definition of ›canon‹ is not singular. Multiple types of canons exist: books that are mandatory reading in schools or those that are on examination lists; there are also lists for women's literature; and books organized according to decades and centuries. However, such lists do not automatically equate to a canon of literary texts. When we speak of a canon, we refer primarily to a body of texts whose preservation cultures and societies value. Indeed, usually those who wield some form of power intentionally select such texts.<sup>22</sup> Michael Minden describes bestseller lists as a type of »mini-canon« that undergoes revision each week.<sup>23</sup> Nonetheless, a focus solely on bestseller lists is problematic, because they merely indicate that a given book is a popular success, without any criteria of quality other than sales.<sup>24</sup> It is necessary to consider the commonalities among the various bestseller lists along with the elements that define a bestselling book and contribute to its longevity.

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17 | Ibid.

18 | Ibid., p. 42.

19 | For instance, after winning the German Book Prize at the Frankfurter Buchmesse, Saša Stanišić's *Herkunft* topped the bestseller list, moving from position 20 to number 1; at the time *Herkunft* had been on the *Börsenblatt* bestseller list for 31 weeks. Since then, the novel has remained on the bestseller list (number 17 as of June 3, 2020). <https://www.boersenblatt.net/bestseller/belletristik> (accessed June 3, 2020).

20 | Emily Temple: »The 25 authors Who've Made the Most Money in the Last Decade«. In: *Literary Hub* 13, March 2019. <https://lithub.com/the-25-authors-whove-made-the-most-money-in-the-last-decade/> (accessed April 1, 2020).

21 | It is interesting to note, that all these novelists write in English. It is not clear from the data, if translations into other languages are included in the net revenue.

22 | Simone Winko references canons as being made (German: »gemacht«) and notes the inherent nature of »Macht« (power) in the decision-making process. Simone Winko: »Literatur-Kanon als invisible hand-Phänomen«. In: Heinz Ludwig Arnold (ed.): *Literarische Kanonbildung*. München 2002, p. 9.

23 | Michael Minden: »Bestseller Lists and Literary Value in the Twentieth Century«. In: Nicholas Saul and Ricarda Schmidt (Eds.): *Literarische Wertung und Kanonbildung*. Würzburg 2007, p. 164.

24 | The *New York Times* bestseller list annotates some titles with a dagger to indicate that a title benefited from bulk sales. Sarah Nicolas: »A History of Buying Books onto the Bestseller List«. In: *Book Riot*, 6 January 2020. <https://bookriot.com/2020/01/06/buying-books-onto-the-bestseller-list/> (accessed April 3, 2020).



Minden views the bestseller as its own genre.<sup>25</sup> Jörg Magenau tackles this idea of bestseller as genre, addressing the often pre-conceived notion that bestsellers are written for the masses, in other words for the average reader.<sup>26</sup> He suggests that there exists a relationship between the book and the reader.<sup>27</sup> For this reason, he perceives an immediacy to bestseller lists, which locate the texts in a specific cultural moment: »Ein Platz auf der Bestsellerliste ist kein Qualitätsmerkmal für das betreffende Werk, aber doch ein Beleg dafür, dass es auf irgendeine Weise jetzt gerade, heute, zu uns spricht.«<sup>28</sup> In his examination, he focuses solely on works that possess two characteristics: »Hohe Auflagen und Aufmerksamkeit mit einer spürbaren Wirkungsgeschichte. Das Typische ist dabei wichtiger als die lückenlose Dokumentation der konkreten Einzelfälle.«<sup>29</sup> Magenau describes the German book market as »Abbild weltweiter Verflechtungen, Beeinflussungen und Interessen.«<sup>30</sup> His book *Bestseller* looks historically at the period from 1945 through 2017, and it also addresses the question of which mediators influence the meaning and value of a given text. Intermediaries such as publishers, critics, agents, booksellers, and even academies influence a work's perception in the public sphere. Delius and Modick targeted these mediators specifically and directly in their novels. Whereas Delius's protagonist achieves his fame as a museum exhibition, his career as a novelist is over. At the conclusion of Modick's *Bestseller*, readers can assume that Domcik will continue writing, though his legacy remains a mystery to readers. In the case of contemporary authors, like the fictional Domcik, no one can foresee which texts will become canonical. Indeed, temporal distance is a key component of canonicity. As Ulrich von Bülow writes, »Archive sind [...] rückwärtsgewandte Einrichtungen, [die] bereits vorhandene Kanonisierungen [verstärken].«<sup>31</sup> Thus, we cannot predict which of today's bestsellers will be of interest to future readers and scholars much less which ones will one day achieve canonical status.

Like a bestseller list, a canon also is a list, and both grow out of power relationships. Bestseller lists rely on economic power; intellectual power determines the canon. The late literary critic, Marcel Reich-Ranicki, had strong opinions about the literary canon:

Anders als in England oder Frankreich, Spanien oder Italien gerieten in Deutschland immer wieder große deutsche Schriftsteller und bisweilen sogar ganze Epochen der deutschen Literatur in Vergessenheit und mußten erst neu entdeckt werden ... Aber wenn auch kaum jemand an einen Kanon glauben will, haben erstaunlich viele Zeitgenossen eine mehr oder weniger deutliche Vorstellung, wie er [...] aussehen sollte.<sup>32</sup>

This statement takes on additional weight since the awarding of the 2019 Nobel Prize in Literature to Austrian writer Peter Handke. The Swedish Academy praised Handke »for an influential work that with linguistic ingenuity has explored the periphery and the specificity of human experience.«<sup>33</sup> Quickly thereafter, outrage erupted from multiple quarters over Handke's selection. Critics questioned whether it was appropriate to

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25 | Cf. Minden: »Bestseller Lists« (ref. 23), p. 167.

26 | Cf. Jörg Magenau: *Bestseller. Bücher, die wir liebten – und was sie über uns verraten*. Hamburg 2018, p. 8.

27 | Cf. *ibid.*, p. 9.

28 | *Ibid.*, p. 10.

29 | *Ibid.*, p. 11.

30 | *Ibid.*, p. 12.

31 | Ulrich von Bülow: »Beobachter oder Spieler? Literaturarchive im literarischen Feld«. In: Hugo Dittberner, Steffen Martus, Axel Ruckaberle, et al. (eds.): *Zukunft der Literatur*. München 2013, p. 141.

32 | Marcel Reich-Ranicki: »Die Kanondebatte«. In: Marcel Reich-Ranicki (ed.): *Der Kanon. Die Erzählungen und ihre Autoren*. Frankfurt / M. 2003, p. 13.

33 | Press release. NobelPrize.org. Nobel Media AB 2019. Thu., December 12, 2019. <https://www.nobelprize.org/prizes/literature/2019/press-release/> (accessed March 3, 2020).

honor the Austrian writer, calling attention to his support for Slobodan Milošević and his sympathies for Serbia during the war in Kosovo. Many have called him a genocide apologist.<sup>34</sup> Helen Finch notes that much discussion of Handke's achievement focused on his »elitist aesthetics,« which seem to resonate with »›traditional‹ Nobel Prize criteria.«<sup>35</sup> This illustrates how the selection committee chose to mediate Handke's image and therefore attempt to manipulate how he enters the canon.<sup>36</sup>

While there is general agreement on the definition of the literary canon as a body of texts deemed important and influential for a particular period, there is less agreement on the criteria that a work must meet in order to become canonical. The core of the canon is relatively stable, and speaks to the longevity of these texts and their authors. For this reason, Aleida Assmann describes a canon as »independent of historical change and immune to the ups and downs of social taste.«<sup>37</sup> Works not considered part of the canon often are perceived as inferior or lacking merit. The margins of the canon are nonetheless fluid, and critics and scholars continuously debate which texts ›belong‹ in the canon, providing arguments for expanding the core to make the canon more inclusive of previously marginalized groups. In the early 1990s, scholars debated questions of who was included or perhaps more pointedly excluded from the canon.<sup>38</sup> In his seminal work on canon formation, John Guillory emphasizes the institutional and social contexts of the canon, because he views canonical works as a form of cultural capital.<sup>39</sup> Further, he explains symbolic capital as »a kind of knowledge-capital whose possession can be displayed upon request and which thereby entitles its possessor to the cultural and material rewards of the well-educated person.«<sup>40</sup> In this context, exclusion does not derive from the canon itself, but rather literary works act as »the vector of ideological notions which do not inhere in the works themselves but in the context of their institutional presentation [...] in the way in which they are taught.«<sup>41</sup> Because Guillory views the politics of canon formation as a politics of representation, there will always be exclusion.<sup>42</sup> Instead, he argues that institutional factors (such as access to means of cultural production) are the agents that limit canonicity. Moreover, institutions operate in the sphere of reception. For the purposes of my argument here, then, archives and museums serve as institutions that have power both to represent and to present cultural capital, in this case literature. Guillory insists that the archive is the »resource of

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**34** | See for instance, Peter Maass: »Congratulations, Nobel Commit //theintercept. literature-prize-to-a-genocide-apologist/ (accessed March 3, 2020) and Aleksander Hemon: »The Bob Dylan of Genocide Apologists« In: *The New York Times*, October 23, 2019. <https://www.nytimes.com/2019/10/15/opinion/peter-handke-nobel-bosnia-genocide.html> (accessed March 3, 2020).

**35** | Helen Finch: »Should we teach Handke? Canon, curriculum and the Nobel Prize«. In: *Expanding German Studies*, October 21, 2019. <https://germanstudiesbibliography.wordpress.com/2019/10/21/should-we-teach-handke-canon-curriculum-and-the-nobel-prize/> (accessed April 3, 2020).

**36** | Following the initial outcry, it seems that Handke has actually ›disappeared‹ from discussion.

**37** | Aleida Assmann: »Canon and Archive«. In: Astrid Erll and Ansgar Nünning (eds.): *Cultural Memory Studies: An International and Interdisciplinary Handbook*. Berlin 2008, p. 100.

**38** | The battle took place institutionally in the form of course syllabuses and curriculum. Cf. John Guillory: *Cultural Capital: The Problem of Literary Canon Formation*. Chicago 1993, p. vii.

**39** | Cf. Guillory: *Cultural Capital* (ref. 38), p. 6.

**40** | *Ibid.*, p. ix.

**41** | *Ibid.*

**42** | Cf. *ibid.*, pp. 6–7. At the same time, he discounts an author's social identity (race, gender, ethnicity, etc.) as a condition for exclusion, because the complexity of canon formation prohibits it from reduction to a single factor like social identity.

historical scholarship,«<sup>43</sup> while simultaneously downplaying the archive's power. In Guillory's view, we do not need to expand the canon to include noncanonical works, because such works already reside in the archive and thus are available for study. An archive's collection practices are the result of decisions by those who oversee and control it. Kai Sina and Carlos Spoerhase argue that the institutionalization of archives in the nineteenth century supported the concept of nation building at that time.<sup>44</sup> A resource is not available for study if it does not reside in the archive. Such a claim to legitimacy »misrecognizes«, as Johnson writes, the underlying power relations that continually reproduce this proclaimed legitimacy.<sup>45</sup> Assmann views this differently, arguing that a tension exists between canon and archive, which manifests itself in the struggle »between the contraction of cultural memory and its expansion.«<sup>46</sup> Bourdieu's understanding of the literary field supports the idea of a shifting literary canon because he accounts for dynamic change within the cultural field. Likewise, Assmann views the archive as a repository that »provides a kind of counterbalance against the necessarily reductive and restrictive drive« of the canon.<sup>47</sup> Though Marcel Lepper and Ulrich Raulff argue that archives contain much material that is not canonical,<sup>48</sup> I propose, contrary to Guillory, that archives and museums can indeed serve as institutional sites of canonical revision. The question remains if it is also possible for these institutions to mediate their political effects in the social domain.<sup>49</sup> Whereas Guillory warns that the opening of the canon should not reduce the canon merely to a medium of images of mass cultural form,<sup>50</sup> archives and museums seem to do precisely that.

## Literature Archives and Literature Museums

To return to the literary texts discussed at the beginning of this essay, the protagonist-writers Rusch and Modick focuses their attention on the present, gauging their success against that of their immediate contemporaries. There is no indication that either of them focuses on the future, on their legacy, the gifting of their papers to an archive, or the possibility of achieving canonical status. They concentrate only on the immediacy of fame, ignoring the possibility of a literary afterlife, which as Nicola Herweg writes, the inclusion of one's life works in an archive guarantees:

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43 | Ibid., pp. 15–16. Guillory is referring specifically here to the »rediscovery« of women writers.

44 | Cf. Kai Sina and Carlos Spoerhase: »»Gemachtwordenheit«: Über diesen Band«. In: Kai Sina and Carlos Spoerhase (eds.): *Nachlassbewusstsein: Literatur, Archiv, Philologie, 1750–2000*. Göttingen 2017, p. 12. Similarly, Barbara Herrnstein Smith suggests that »»essentially aesthetic experiences« always conform to those typical of the Western or Western-educated consumer of high culture.« Cf. Barbara Herrnstein Smith: *Contingencies of Value: Alternative Perspectives for Critical Theory*. Cambridge / MA 1988, p. 36.

45 | Bourdieu: *The Field of Cultural Production* (ref. 3), p. 20.

46 | Assmann: »Canon and Archive« (ref. 37), p. 102.

47 | Ibid., p. 106.

48 | Cf. Marcel Lepper and Ulrich Raulff: »Vorwort«. In: Marcel Lepper and Ulrich Raulff (eds.): *Handbuch Archiv: Geschichte, Aufgaben, Perspektiven*. Stuttgart 2016, p. vii.

49 | Cf. Guillory: *Cultural Capital* (ref. 38), p. 8.

50 | Cf. *ibid.*, p. 9.

Die Aufnahme in ein namhaftes Archiv adelt. Wie bei Kunstmuseen, wo der Ankauf eines einzelnen Gemäldes den Wert des gesamten Oeuvre eines Malers steigern kann, steigt auch der im Archiv angekommene Autor in seiner Bedeutung und wird in den Kanon der bereits der Archivierung für würdig Erachteten aufgenommen.<sup>51</sup>

The concept of a literary archive encompassing journals, correspondence as well as published and unpublished works has remained nearly constant since Goethe first wrote about it in 1823. Dilthey further expanded our understanding in 1889, noting the archive »zeichnet alle dauernd werthvollen Lebensäußerungen eines Volkes, die sich in der Sprache darstellen: also Dichtung wie Philosophie, Historie wie Wissenschaft.«<sup>52</sup> The DLA originally was founded to collect and conserve material pertaining specifically to Friedrich Schiller and other Swabian writers. The mission subsequently expanded to focus on »unique pieces of writing and images and objects related to German-language literature and intellectual history from the 18th century to the present.«<sup>53</sup> The collection encompasses more than 1400 literary estates, as well as the papers of scholars and philosophers, and the editorial and publishing house archives of such well-known publishers as Cotta and Suhrkamp. The acquisition of such collections costs money. After a writer's death, family members may weigh compensation when offering the deceased's papers to an archive.<sup>54</sup> In a more recent trend, writers gift their literary estates to archives prior to death, the so-called *Vorlass*. As Raulff argues, »der Vorlass [ist] der Ausdruck eines lebendigen, beweglichen intellektuellen und moralischen Selbstverhältnisses, unter das der Tod den Schlusspunkt setzt und dem der Nachlass die objektivierte Fassung ist.«<sup>55</sup> In this latter case, such writers hope for a »literary afterlife,«<sup>56</sup> but the writer's overall reputation remains a deciding factor for the archive.<sup>57</sup> Through its selection and collection processes, the DLA validates the value of the writers it collects, further cementing their cultural capital. Though many of the 1400 writers whose papers are housed in Marbach are relatively unknown, these collections are of interest to research because they document literary life. As von Bülow establishes, an archive can only create the preconditions for writers' future fame: »Das Archiv schafft Voraussetzungen für den Nachruhm der Dichter, aber seine Rolle bleibt die eines Boten und Dienstleisters.«<sup>58</sup> Whether such future fame actually materializes is another story. This is one of the key issues when speaking about contemporary literature, for it is difficult to

51 | Nikola Herweg: »Literatur in Archiven – Archive in Literatur«. In: Joanna Jabłowska, Kalina Kupczyńska and Stephan Müller (eds.): *Literatur, Sprache und Institution*. Wien 2016, p. 271.

52 | Wilhelm Dilthey: »Archive für Literatur«. In: Wilhelm Dilthey. *Gesammelte Schriften 15* [Zur Geistesgeschichte des 19. Jahrhunderts. Portraits und biographische Skizzen. Quellenstudien und Literaturberichte zur Theologie und Philosophie im 19. Jahrhundert. Ed. by Ulrich Herrmann]. Göttingen 1970, p. 9.

53 | Cf. the DLA's homepage <https://www.dla-marbach.de/en/archive/> (accessed October 4, 2020).

54 | For insightful analyses of the history of the *Nachlass* see Sina and Spoerhase (eds.): *Nachlassbewusstsein* (ref. 44).

55 | Ulrich Raulff: »Nachlass und Nachleben. Literatur aus dem Archiv«. In: Stéphanie Cudré-Mauroux and Irmgard M. Wirtz (eds.): *Literaturarchiv – Literarisches Archiv. Zur Poetik literarischer Archive*. Göttingen 2013, pp. 25–26.

56 | Herweg: »Literatur in Archiven – Archive in Literatur« (ref. 51), p. 267.

57 | Friedrich Christian Delius began donating his literary estate to the DLA more than a decade ago.

58 | von Bülow: »Beobachter oder Spieler?« (ref. 31), p. 145.

gauge a lesser-known writer's potential impact. Von Bülow notes that mediators such as »Verlage, Literaturkritiker, Preisjurys, Lexika- oder Literaturhistoriker« can influence how archives think about contemporary writers,<sup>59</sup> but such opinions remain provisional: »Sicherlich kann nur mit dem, was heute gesammelt wird, morgen gearbeitet werden; doch leider ist keineswegs garantiert, dass das Aufbewahrte tatsächlich das Interesse der Forschung findet.«<sup>60</sup>

Knut Ebeling and Stephan Günzel argue that the archive inhabits »eine mediale Funktion, die in einer Dialektik von Zeigen und Verbergen oder Ein- und Ausschluss gründet.«<sup>61</sup> When readers, scholars, and critics demonstrate active interest in a writer's archive, the archive emerges from a dormancy to active remembrance.<sup>62</sup> Thus the future to which von Bülow refers cannot be predicted. This circumstance calls the archive's ability to contribute to an expansion of the canon into question.<sup>63</sup> Assmann differentiates between archive and canon as follows: canon is »the actively circulated memory that keeps the past present,« while archive is »the passively stored memory that preserves the past.«<sup>64</sup> She suggests a fluidity between the archive and the canon: »Was im Archiv gelandet ist, kann im Falle einer Umwertung und Neudeutung grundsätzlich wieder in den Kanon aufsteigen.«<sup>65</sup> In 2009, then Director of the DLA, Raulff, characterized Marbach as »die Gleichursprünglichkeit von Archiv und Museum, Museum und Archiv,«<sup>66</sup> a statement that captures the symbiotic relationship between the DLA, the Schiller National Museum (SNM), and the LiMo. In this symbiotic relationship, the museum displays archival materials, binding them, as Ernst Osterkamp writes, to »die Spuren des Subjekts – des Autors wie des Lesers – in der Geschichte.«<sup>67</sup> In this way, these archival objects gain renewed life. The LiMo's permanent exhibition, *Die Seele*, strives to present the »spirit« of German literature from 1899 to 2001.<sup>68</sup> The 280 artifacts on display draw from the holdings of the DLA. They challenge visitors to create meaning, for though grouped by dates and decades, they are presented without context. For instance, an item from 1994 is a »Spickzettel« belonging to Judith Schalansky – a crib sheet from a school biology class. Visitors unfamiliar with Schalansky or her work likely will merely wonder about the object's significance. It takes on meaning for visitors familiar with Schalansky's 2011 novel *Der Hals der Giraffe*, which is designed to mimic a school textbook and whose protagonist is a biology teacher. The museum acquired this item in preparation for its special exhibition *Zettelkästen. Maschinen der Phantasie* (2013). It is a singular item, because the DLA does not own any other items by Schalansky. The museum's director argues that such pieces are less dependent on the author than on the text. They function

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59 | Ibid., p. 142.

60 | Ibid., p. 144.

61 | Knut Ebeling and Stephan Günzel: »Einleitung«. In: Knut Ebeling and Stephan Günzel (eds.): *Archivologie: Theorien des Archivs in Wissenschaft, Medien und Künsten*. Berlin 2009, p. 14.

62 | Aleida Assmann has written about the contrastive relationship between remembering and forgetting. Cf. Aleida Assmann: *Formen des Vergessens*. Göttingen 2016, p. 12.

63 | While this certainly applies to the collection and preservation of entire literary estates, there are also more limited collections that tend to reflect the importance of the moment.

64 | Assmann: »Canon and Archive« (ref. 37), p. 98.

65 | Assmann: *Formen des Vergessens* (ref. 62), p. 19.

66 | Ulrich Raulff: »Sie nehmen gern von den Lebendigen. Ökonomien des literarischen Archivs«. In: Ebeling and Günzel (eds.): *Archivologie* (ref. 61), p. 224.

67 | Ernst Osterkamp: »Die Literatur und das Leben. Das Literaturmuseum der Moderne in Marbach«. In: Deutsches Literaturarchiv Marbach (ed.): *Denkbilder und Schaustücke. Das Literaturmuseum der Moderne*. Marbach a. N. 2006, pp. 15-28, here: p. 22.

68 | Cf. the DLA's homepage: <https://www.dla-marbach.de/en/museums/museum-of-modern-literature/> (accessed October 4, 2020).

as »Original[e] in [d]em Nachlass.«<sup>69</sup> This moves away from an emphasis on the canonical author to the uniqueness of the object and its value as object for our understanding of authorhood and literature. It also introduces a non-canonical (and female) author into the spectrum of 20th and 21st century literature. As this example shows, a literature museum like LiMo can expand our knowledge of contemporary writers and their texts, introduce visitors to lesser-known but nonetheless significant writers, and showcase objects that shed new light on writers and their creative process. Whereas Guillory would argue that Schalansky is not excluded from the canon because there are traces of her in the archive, it remains to be seen, if Schalansky's texts retain their meaning and worth into the future, elevating them to canonical status.

Rotating exhibitions supplement the LiMo's permanent exhibition by presenting archival holdings in thematic retrospectives, which are easier for visitors to understand. Recent showcases focused on Kafka's *Prozeß*, Rilke and *Russland*,<sup>70</sup> Thomas Mann in America, Dostoyevsky and Schiller, and Hölderlin and Celan, authors widely accepted as canonical. The displays attempt to move beyond the flatness of paper to incorporate a tactile, interactive program with a carefully curated network of literary experiences, exploring questions of how we understand aesthetic encounters.<sup>71</sup> In the most recent participatory program, *Hands on! Schreiben lernen, Poesie machen*, visitors could experiment with handwriting, as they attempt to answer the question »Verstehen wir literarische Texte besser, wenn wir sie in der Handschrift lesen oder selbst mit der Hand in den Raum schreiben?«<sup>72</sup> Similarly, the temporary exhibition entitled *Lachen. Kabarett* presented a series of live performances that explored the range of emotions brought about by laughter.<sup>73</sup>

While the LiMo's permanent exhibition only displays objects through 2001 because of the constraints of the building's physical space, a virtual museum expands the spatial confines of the physicality of the museum, presenting 21st-century artifacts in a virtual space. QRcodes attached to the walls enable visitors to view additional artifacts from the 21st century. For instance, visitors interested in the artifact for the year 2015 can pull up a photograph of colored pencils belonging to Lutz Seiler, who wrote the first draft of his novel *Kruso* (2014) in pencil. Additionally a museum App allows visitors to view pieces from the permanent exhibition, with the added bonus of being able to turn the pages of letters and books. In this way, the museum also inhabits a digital footprint, and objects are accessible to virtual visitors unable to be present in the physical space.

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69 | Heike Gfrereis: »Was liest man, wenn man sieht? Überlegungen zum Verhältnis von Literatur und Original, Archiv und Ausstellung«. In: Britta Hochkirchen and Elke Kollar (eds.): *Zwischen Materialität und Ereignis: Literaturvermittlung in Ausstellungen, Museen und Archiven*. Bielefeld 2015, pp. 49–50, here: pp. 49–50.

70 | Thomas Schmid (ed.): *Rilke und Russland*. Marbach a. N. 2017.

71 | Cf. the DLA's homepage: <https://www.dla-marbach.de/en/research/kooperationen/kooperationen/> (accessed October 4, 2020).

72 | The DLA's homepage: [https://www.dla-marbach.de/museen/wechselausstellungen/archiv-wechselausstellungen/detail-wechselausstellungen/news/29-september-2019-bis-1-maerz-2020/?tx\\_news\\_pi1%5Bcontroller%5D=News&tx\\_news\\_pi1%5Baction%5D=detail&cHash=fd7f6ebcb45b37881ae67f4fo11d8fed](https://www.dla-marbach.de/museen/wechselausstellungen/archiv-wechselausstellungen/detail-wechselausstellungen/news/29-september-2019-bis-1-maerz-2020/?tx_news_pi1%5Bcontroller%5D=News&tx_news_pi1%5Baction%5D=detail&cHash=fd7f6ebcb45b37881ae67f4fo11d8fed) (accessed October 4, 2020).

73 | Cf. the DLA's homepage: [https://www.dla-marbach.de/museen/wechselausstellungen/archiv-wechselausstellungen/detail-wechselausstellungen/news/19-mai-bis-15-september-2019/?tx\\_news\\_pi1%5Bcontroller%5D=News&tx\\_news\\_pi1%5Baction%5D=detail&cHash=9c7c0c7baf46440f1bb943121d4ac44d](https://www.dla-marbach.de/museen/wechselausstellungen/archiv-wechselausstellungen/detail-wechselausstellungen/news/19-mai-bis-15-september-2019/?tx_news_pi1%5Bcontroller%5D=News&tx_news_pi1%5Baction%5D=detail&cHash=9c7c0c7baf46440f1bb943121d4ac44d) (accessed October 4, 2020).

Because Gfrereis believes that museums have a »Bildungs- und Zeigeauftrag,«<sup>74</sup> there is staff dedicated to pedagogical outreach with young readers. Under her leadership, the museum expands on Ebeling and Günzel's understanding of ›medium‹: »Die besondere mediale Disposition von Literatúrausstellung besteht darin, dass sie einen Wahrnehmungswechsel vom Lesen zum Betrachten anbieten, wodurch sie die materialen Bedingungen von Literatur exponieren und somit die textmediale mit der werkmedialen Ebene korrelieren.«<sup>75</sup> Thus, the literature museum is not just a place of passive reception, but rather a space where the active co-creation of meaning can take place. As my analysis of Delius and Modick's novels underscores, the marketing of the author's image is paramount to the production of bestsellers and the attendant fame that goes with that kind of success. This success remains in the realm of economic capital, and such large-scale production rarely escapes the trappings of popular culture. The cultural capital that endows the canonical process is not dependent on such marketing. Indeed, the texts themselves take on greater meaning than the authors who created them. For the DLA and the LiMo, the text remains the central element.

## Conclusion

The novels discussed at the outset of this essay focus almost exclusively on the writer-protagonists' desire for immediate fame. They take the literature industry to task for its interest in sales and marketing, and for its near abject rejection of quality writing. The publishers portrayed in both novels are interested in ›what sells‹, an approach that forces their authors to seek formulaic responses to this charge. While both focus on the popularity of the genre of historical novels, neither writer-protagonist is concerned with accuracy. Their book projects rely on clichés and the reading public's thirst for scandals to propel them and their texts into the limelight. The wonton disregard for an understanding of ›high‹ culture lays bare the control that economic capital has over the literary marketplace. The criticisms in these novels thus bring to the forefront the tensions that exist between economic and cultural capital. According to Bourdieu, the control of economic capital does not necessarily equate to possession of cultural capital. While bestsellers may demonstrate a dominance of economic capital, monetary success does not guarantee cultural capital, which the inclusion in the canon implies. Indeed, such economic success may serve as a barrier to consecration.<sup>76</sup> In the case of Modick's Domcik, he can never even take ownership of the economic capital earned by his novel without revealing the illegal ruse behind the success, which would open him up to litigation and

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**74** | Gabriele Szczegulski: »Ich würde gerne alle ohne Eintritt einlassen«. swp.de, July 19, 2019. [https://www.swp.de/suedwesten/landkreise/lk-ludwigsburg/schwerpunkt-museen-ich-wuerde-gerne-alle-ohne-eintritt-einlassen\\_-31977991.html](https://www.swp.de/suedwesten/landkreise/lk-ludwigsburg/schwerpunkt-museen-ich-wuerde-gerne-alle-ohne-eintritt-einlassen_-31977991.html) (accessed April 20, 2020).

**75** | Christiane Holm: »Ausstellung/Dichterhaus/Literaturmuseum«. In: Natalie Binczek, Till Dembeck, and Jürgen Schäfer (eds.): *Handbuch Medien der Literatur*. Berlin 2013, pp. 569-581, here: p. 569.

**76** | Cf. Bourdieu: *The Field of Cultural Production* (ref. 3), p. 8.

even possible incarceration. The situation of Delius's Rusch is different, because Rusch essentially abdicated any claims to literary fame, when he opted instead to follow the limelight as a media star. His installation as a museum exhibition can be viewed as a type of consecration, but that will end either when his contract expires or upon his own demise. Neither of these writer-protagonists seems destined for canonical nor even archival status.

The relationship between an archive such as the DLA, a museum like LiMo, and a national literary canon is one of power. Those who decide, which literary estates to collect, which authors and texts to exhibit, have control. Similarly, those in the intellectual realm deemed to have authority have the ability to decide which texts become canonical. In Bourdieu's terms, this is a struggle »to conserve the established order.«<sup>77</sup> This established order is not static, and as Walter Erhart writes, it is possible that »Kanonisierungsprozesse heute nicht mehr länger durch konsensuelle Kriterien einer akademischen Bildungsgemeinschaft gesteuert [werden], sondern eher als ›Moden‹ und als ›Erlebnisstile‹ wirksam [werden].«<sup>78</sup> As literary scholars, librarians, archivists, and museologists, we must be cognizant of these hierarchical relationships as well as of our own influence and even our biases. We must wield that influence effectively, by calling into question the grounds upon which archival collections and museum exhibitions are determined.

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77 | Bourdieu: *The Field of Cultural Production* (ref. 3), p. 41.

78 | Walter Erhart: »Kanonisierungsbedarf und Kanonisierung in der deutschen Literaturwissenschaft (1945–1995)«. In: Renate von Heydebrand (ed.): *Kanon, Macht, Kultur: Theoretische, historische und soziale Aspekte ästhetischer Kanonbildungen*. Stuttgart 1998, pp. 97–121, here: p. 120.



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