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# Verbunden und gebunden. Mutter-Tochter Beziehungen in sechs Romanen der siebziger und achtziger Jahre. (Book Review)

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Katharina Aulls. *Verbunden und gebunden. Mutter-Tochter Beziehungen in sechs Romanen der siebziger und achtziger Jahre*. Frankfurt: Peter Lang, 1993. Pp. 272. DM 84,00.

In *Verbunden und gebunden*, Katharina Aulls analyzes the figuration of mother-daughter relationships in six quasi-autobiographical novels by women writers. The play on words in Aulls's title anticipates the tensions that characterize the mother-daughter relationships in these novels, tensions that are not only the stuff of fiction, but also of concrete experience in the sociology of the mother-daughter dyad.

In the Introduction, Aulls argues that the women's movement in Germany in the mid-1970s catalyzed a new interest in women's writing, feminism, and female identity. She prefaces her analysis of the six novels with two lengthy chapters on the history of women's oppression under patriarchy and psychoanalytical and sociological theories of mother-daughter relations in contemporary Western culture. These first two chapters lay the foundations of her argument that the mother-daughter relationship is both constitutive and reflective of the relationship between the self and society. Aulls portrays the history of patriarchy as a cycle in which women replicate and reinforce their own oppression through the institutionalized women-centered mothering in the nuclear family. The idealization of maternity and motherhood and the cultivation of "good mother" myths restrict and inhibit women's access to other means of realizing and developing themselves.

After devoting nearly ninety pages to the sociohistorical and sociological bases of women's oppression and to the psychoanalytical theories of mother-daughter relations, Aulls launches into the stated purpose of her study: Chapter 3 offers detailed readings of Gabriele Wohmann's *Ausflug mit der Mutter* (1976), Ingeborg Drewitz's *Gestern war Heute* (1978), Katja Behrens's *Die dreizehnte Fee* (1983), Helga Novak's *Die Eisheiligen* (1979), Waltraud Mitgutsch's *Die Züchtigung* (1985), and Elfriede Jelinek's *Die Klavierspielerin* (1983). Although grouping these six novels into two sets of three according to the "fate" of the daughter in the mother-daughter plot provides a potentially useful framework for analysis, the binary simplicity of this organizational principle is at odds with her move-nuanced analyses of the heterogeneous complexities in the individual texts. The resulting dissonance causes the reader to question why Aulls established the two categories to begin with.

Her first category centers on what she argues is the positive and affirming representation of the mother-daughter relationship in the novels of Wohmann, Drewitz, and Behrens, the second on the negative representations of the mother-daughter relationship in the novels of Novak, Mitgutsch, and Jelinek.

Aulls offers subtle and cogent readings of the individual novels, interweaving her analyses with references to the theoretical foundations laid in the opening two chapters. Given the thoroughness and coherence of her readings in Chapter 3, her conclusion, consisting of a string of synopses taken from her discussion of the novels, comes across as superfluous, and her closing statement—that the mother-daughter relationship will remain the focus of literary studies for some time to come—is disappointing in its lack of provocation. Despite her familiarity with the theoretical literature and her competence as a reader, Aulls ultimately fails to problematize the issues addressed in the six novels. Her focus on the daughter continues the practice of "othering" the mother and thus inhibits our understanding of the maternal position. Only when both literary and literal representations of the mother-daughter relationship free the mother from ideology will truly emancipatory transformations in the family structure become possible.

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