

**Kleinkunst aus Amerika.**  
**Gedichte, Chansons, Prosa von in Amerika lebenden Autoren.**  
 Mimi Grossberg, ed. (Wien: Europaeischer  
 Verlag, 1964, 62 pp.)

A literary potpourri awaits the reader of this collection. Most of the nine representative authors (Friedrich Bergammer, Alfred Farau, Mimi Grossberg, Norbert Grossberg, Erika Guetermann, Greta Hartwig, Erich Juhn, Margarete Kollisch, Lili Koerber) are Austrians by birth, and were born in this century. Their work shows a great dissimilarity in style and quality. Hackneyed melodies and monotonous rhymes abound. There are, however, some poems that display originality of perception and expression. Of the forty-nine poems contained in this slim volume, those by Friedrich Bergammer appear to be the most original and hermetic poems. Not only is his poem entitled "So" vibrantly daring in style, but it is also thought provoking, and merits being quoted *in toto*:

So! So!  
 und nicht anders.  
 So, so  
 und doch anders  
 als so.

Also  
 anders so  
 oder  
 noch so  
 und noch nicht  
 so:

Hoeren mich  
 Stimmen

The unsettling and vacillating element in man's character is strikingly captured here. Perhaps the "Stimmen" are meant to be people, who, all in a quite different way, perceive and attempt to interpret enigmatic human nature. But since truth is relative and illusory, no man can ever hope to completely comprehend human nature. The judgement of each one of the "Stimmen" therefore has to be simultaneously correct and fallacious.

Similarly experimentally oriented is Erika Guetermann's "Vor Paul Klee's Bild: Roter Ballon". The metaphor of a red balloon rising into the sky is symbolic of the childhood paradise which slowly recedes from us as we grow older:

roter Ballon  
 rot rund gross  
 roter Ballon  
 steigst steigst  
 schwebst  
 rotes Kindherz  
 in den verlorengelenden Himmel

Because Erich Juhn's and Greta Hartwig's chansons are unpretentious poems, but nevertheless full of irony and often spontaneous humor, they are refreshing and make delightful reading. In "Indiana Marsch", also a humorous poem, Margarete Kollisch achieves a montage-like effect through juxtaposition of a number of different languages. The poem is to be accompanied by the music of "O, du mein Oesterreich":

Gruess Gott und dobri den,  
 how are you, gentleman?  
 bon giorno, jo napod,  
 thanks, not so hot.

The arrangement of the selections in *Kleinkunst aus Amerika* is a very simple one--alphabetically by author. Whereas conventional rules of orthography are generally adhered to, Erika Guetermann's "Sonntag im Central Park", and "Vor Paul Klees Bild: Roter Ballon" are almost totally lacking in punctuation of any kind. And the (at first glance) arbitrary punctuation in Friedrich Bergammer's "So" actually provides us with an important clue when we try to decipher the poem. And then again it doesn't! Particularly ambiguous are the last two lines. Should they be understood as an exclamation? Or a question? Or just a simple statement?

A scene from Alfred Farau's drama about the life of Grillparzer, *Schatten sind des Lebens Gueter*, and some of the poems may perhaps be called typically German-American, i.e. the emotional ties with Europe constitute the author's most important creative impulse. Mimi Grossberg, editor of this book, says as much in the preface: ". . .denn die Beitraege sind wohl alle 'aus Amerika', aber bei genauem Hinsehen stammt einiges davon noch--aus Oesterreich!" Literature of this kind, laced with a yearning for something that can never again be, regardless of its artistic value, helps to illuminate the thoughts and feelings of the German speaking emigre in America. However, unlike the great body of nineteenth century German-American literature, several poems in this volume are not mere vapid imitations. Instead there are a few voices that seem to have found their own unique manner of poetic expression.

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