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2004

## Review of Little Detours: The Letters and Plays of Luise Gottsched, by Susanne Kord

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### Recommended Citation

Leibiger, Carol A. Little Detours: The Letters and Plays of Luise Gottsched, by Susanne Kord. Seminar: A Journal of Germanic Studies, vol. 40, 2004, pp. 69-70.

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Susanne Kord. *Little Detours: The Letters and Plays of Luise Gottsched*. Studies in German Literature, Linguistics, and Culture. Ed. James Hardin. Rochester: Camden House, 2000. 222 pp. US\$ 59. ISBN 1-57113-148-5.

Luise Adelgunde Victorie Gottsched was considered the most erudite woman of her day. Susanne Kord's monograph examines aspects of Gottsched's work and demonstrates that, while Gottsched supported her husband's cultural program, she eventually developed beyond him, delving into areas considered male domains – for example, the writing of tragedy and the engagement with the Cult of Friendship. Kord brings together important scholarship on Gottsched and unifies earlier studies on important topics in women's literature, including naming, pseudonymity, and anonymity in Gottsched's day; the application of critical standards to women's writing; and the value attributed to originality and genre in literary movements.

After providing a short biography of Gottsched, Kord initiates a discussion on the naming of women authors. She argues convincingly that J. C. Gottsched's wife should be referred to as "Gottsched" rather than, for example, as "die Gottschedin," which is derived from the male "Single Name" and suggests that her importance lay in her association with her husband, or with the (to this reviewer's mind) overly familiar "Luise" – both of which "perpetuate [women's] invisibility in the canon and in scholarly discussions" (xiii). Kord also provides a distillation of her discussion in *Sich einen Namen machen* (1996) on female pseudonymity and anonymity and their increase in the Ages of Enlightenment and Sensibility, when female roles were becoming constrained to that of the "angel in the house" and women found it necessary to disguise or hide their gender (or at least to appear to do so) when it was obvious from their works that they were females.

Discussing the application of (male) critics' standards (based on men's writings) to female works, which in Gottsched's day were mostly translations and comedies, Kord pinpoints the arbitrariness with which these standards were applied. She demonstrates that Gottsched's purported lack of originality and her propensity for writing comedies (both typical criticisms of female authors' work) were due to her reliance on her *Vorlagen*, which contemporary custom frowned upon revising unnecessarily, and to her providing her husband's *Deutsche Schaubühne* with commissioned works – which, incidentally, demonstrate her abundant talent as both dramatist and humorist. *Die Pietisterey*, which Gottsched reworked from Bougeant's French satire on Jansenism into a German criticism of Pietism, and her *Panthea*, in which she blazed new territory in her rejection of poetic justice in favour of realism, amply indicate her ability both to adapt an original work as needed and to write tragedy.

What Gottsched did not do, for which she has been criticized by feminist authors, was to engage in overtly feminist actions as we understand them today. Yet in Gottsched's milieu, the ability to engage in "unfeminine" activities was dependent upon the patronage of a dominant male cultural figure such as J. C. Gottsched – which, as Kord demonstrates, Gottsched appears to have rejected when she could. Her writings demonstrate, in addition to her disregard for what were then considered gender-inappropriate activities, her concomitant ability to use current gender-appropriate behaviour to assure herself the goodwill and approval of dominant males (such as her

fiancé/husband) for her authorial work and greater personal freedom – for example, when she used the deaths of her parents to postpone her wedding with J. C. Gottsched (46–47).

Kord's discussion of Gottsched's work pays ample attention to the question of the relationship between female authorship and editorship. Works such as *Das Testament* reveal the female author's reliance on the standards of male editors and publishers standards – a point on which Kord cites Arnd Bohm (145–46). She includes as well the work of Magdalene Heuser on Gottsched's correspondence with Dorothea von Runckel, which the latter published after Gottsched's death (26–32, 155–74). As Heuser has demonstrated, Runckel radically edited the letters to produce a portrait of Gottsched as a perfect wife, possibly to hide a homosexual or homoerotic relationship between Gottsched and Runckel. The correspondence between the two treads new ground by applying the male language of the Cult of Friendship to a female relationship. This denies J. C. Gottsched a dominant role in his wife's emotional life and also shows her to be more progressive than her husband.

Kord has offered a commendable new discussion of Gottsched's work. By bringing together interesting studies of this erudite Enlightenment writer, it fosters a multiplicity of critical approaches and encourages further examination of Gottsched by feminist critics that will surely lead to a new insights on a woman who has already received so much attention from male literary critics.

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Martin Swales and Erika Swales. *Reading Goethe. A Critical Introduction to the Literary Work*. Studies in German Literature, Linguistics, and Culture. Ed. James Hardin. Rochester: Camden House, 2002. 200 pp. US\$ 59. ISBN 1-57113-095-0.

*Reading Goethe. A Critical Introduction to the Literary Work* attempts to reclaim Goethe for the modern reader, arguing, among other things, that his works retain special relevance for our time. The study's chapters, aside from the introduction and conclusion, discuss the various genres in which Goethe produced – poetry, narrative fiction, drama, and discursive writings. Without exception, these chapters are extremely readable. They maintain clear and interesting foci that relate the works to one another. They never degenerate into the list-like series of expositions commonly found in general works introducing an author. Despite the book's aim – “to encourage the reading of Goethe's works” (163) – it also holds the interest of more specialized readers. Perhaps translations of the German quotations could have been included to make it more generally accessible, to graduate students in other disciplines, for example, who cannot (yet) read German.

While narrating Goethe's biography and elucidating a number of his creative principles, the introduction maintains a complex discussion of the reception of Goethe's life and work – his image – as a symbol of wholeness. Although the authors themselves are wary of bringing Goethe's life into their analyses, they discuss three English-language biographies of Goethe both to illustrate the continued “urgent sense that Goethe's life matters profoundly” (9) and to show just how