ANNE WEBER

(1964-)



Anne Weber is a German writer born in Offenbach (Germany), living in Paris since 1983. She translates her own works from French to German and she has already authored a dozen narrative or essays. Amongst them, *Ida invente la poudre* (1998) [*Ida Invents the Powder*], *Cendres & Métaux* (2006) [*Ashes & Metals*] and *Vaterland* (2015) *[Motherland*] stand out.

Her work has been widely acclaimed by critics, both in France and in Germany and Anne Weber was awarded the literary Prize Heimito von Doderer (2004), the Kranichsteiner Prize (2010) and the translation Prize Johann Heinrich Voß (2016). In fact, it is also in the translation to French or to German of reputed authors that Anne Weber has stood out, performing a crucial role as a cultural mediator between two of the most important European nations and languages. Among the authors whose works Anne Weber has translated, there are very relevant names, such as Marguerite Duras, Éric Chevillard, Pierre Michon, Wilhelm Genazino or Peter Handke.

Deeply committed to revisiting 20th Century German history – and, inevitably, European history –, Weber's work culminates in an unusual and hard to classify text, *Vaterland* (2015), (*Ahnen*) [*Ancestors* in her translation to German]. In an inverted post-memorial interpretation of the Shoah, more specifically pointed towards the traumatic experience of the third or fourth generation of Nazi descent, this autobiographical "narrative" stems from a research work on Anne Weber's *Ahnen* (ancestors). If, in a sustained feature of the post-memorial

writing about the Holocaust, the parents' generation usually reveals or queries nothing about the involvement of previous generations in the dramas that tore apart the European continent and its conscience, the third and fourth generations have turned out to be relentlessly curious.

Thus, researching in several archives for philosophical writings by her paternal great-grandfather, Florens Christian Rang – whom she gave the alias "Sanderling" (woodcock) on account of his physiognomy and swaying thought process –, Anne Weber proceeds with the unsettling archaeology of the Nazi ideology, drawing on concepts remarked on by her ancestor, such as, "Prussianism" or "Germanism", or even loose annotations that implicitly point to the idea of "ethnic cleansing", namely in Poland under German occupation. Actually, the great-grandfather – a friend and correspondent of Jewish intellectual figures of the turn of the 20 Century, such as Walter Benjamin and Martin Buber- produced a dangerously swaying thought concerning German superiority over the rest of Europe. This finding is all the more disturbing given that Anne Weber's paternal grandfather, Ernst Jünger, had revealed himself as a staunch national-socialist, a great admirer of Hitler and an outstanding official of the SS security services, also having himself left some written thoughts.

As she is facing this baffling acquis from her paternal great-grandfather and grandfather, Weber feels challenged and disturbed as a German and European citizen by the terrible and historical ideological convergence that would culminate in the Third Reich. So, this malaise and this unease that divides and upsets the writer are transferred to the present and question the "difficulty" of being and asserting oneself as a German in today's European context.

With irony and also some acid humour, Anne Weber comments on the allegedly destiny-determined German "supremacy" and forebodes the adoption of a humble and relational posture; the same as the friendly intellectual coexistence of the early 20th Century in Europe symbolised; the same as the one she herself embodies as a Franco-German writer and translator (cultural mediator).

This forced reflection over German history, possibly still too recent, ends up bringing to light Europe as a likely overcoming of these antagonisms and demons and intra-European mobility and translation as restorative mediations.

Brief Anthology

"Na sua casa batizada "*No fundo de Deus*" com empena pontiaguda, Benjamin e Buber vêm visitá-lo amiúde. Juntos concebem um projeto de revista supostamente para aprofundar as ligações entre o cristianismo e o judaísmo. Admito que Emma, a mulher de Sanderling, contasse com uma jovem para ajudá-la na cozinha. Sanderling é o contrário de um epicurista. Come porque o ser humano tem de alimentar-se; admito que até nem beba. Com os olhos vivos, o coração transbordante, está sentado diante do prato intacto sem sequer olhar para ele. Às vezes, esquece-se para que servem o garfo e a faca que segura nas mãos. Benjamin é baixo e redondo. As conversas versam Shakespeare, Hölderlin, a essência da tradução. Falam de uma articulação dura (*harte Fügung*) para designarem uma certa poesia e um certo modo de a traduzir"

in*Vaterland* (2015: 121).

"Passou um século desde a publicação do livro de Scheler. Continua-se a invejar ou a detestar os alemães pela sua motivação no trabalho. O *Deutschtum*, a "germanitude", que outrora designava uma forma de espiritualidade própria aos alemães, tornou-se sob o nazismo um *Deutsch-Tun*, um modo de ser, uma forma de "fazer de alemão". Mais tarde, após a guerra, torna-se simplesmente um modo de fazer. *Made in Germany*. Um selo de qualidade. Hoje, pela primeira vez, oiço nesse *made in Germany* uma exclamação através da qual, ao estigmatizarmo-nos a nós próprios, nos designamos como criminosos e assassinos. Vejam só! Vejam o que foi feito na Alemanha"

in *Vaterland* (2015: 145).

Selected active bibliography

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