



Reviews

Till Raether

Treue Seelen

Hardcover, 352 pages, 20 €

btb, The book will be published on May 24, 2021

In the summer of 1986, Barbara and Achim move to West Berlin because Achim has gotten a job at the Federal Institute for Materials Research and Testing. But the promises associated with the move from provincial Bonn— the departure, the adventure, freedom in isolation —do not materialize. Achim and Barbara have to secretly admit to themselves that their relationship was not in the best of shape even beforehand. Added to this is the radioactive cloud that has been hovering over East Germany since the Chernobyl reactor accident and thus also over West Berlin, which is why Barbara hardly ever leaves the terraced housing estate where they live in Zehlendorf. Similarly disillusioned with her relationship is Marion, who lives in the same estate, is married to Volker, and has two children. She fled the GDR years ago, but nothing has gone her way for a long time.

And so it happens that Achim and Marion find each other in the attic, where they now hang their laundry, as it is no longer possible to hang it outside due to Chernobyl. Together they drive to the eastern part of the city, where they meet Marion's sister Sybille. There, an outrageous and adventurous plan takes shape.

With *Treue Seelen*, Till Raether, known for his columns in *SZ-Magazin* and *Brigitte*, and for his crime series featuring the investigator Adam Danowski, has written a coherent novel that shines out of the past and takes its readers into a very authentic 1980s West Berlin.

Edgar Rai



Jörg Fauser
Caliban Berlin
Hardcover, 368 pages, 24 €
Diogenes

Jörg Fauser is probably best known for his crime novels published in the 1980s. Compared with “Der Schneemann,” “Rohstoff,” and “Das Schlangenmaul,” much of what was known hitherto from German-language crime authors suddenly seemed dull and monotonous. Still today, Fauser’s crime novels stand on their own in the German crime fiction landscape, and so it is very good that Diogenes-Verlag has just reissued them.

What many readers will not know, however, is that Fauser wrote a series of columns for the Berlin city magazine *tip* in the early 1980s under the pseudonym “Caliban.” In them, he ruthlessly settled accounts with individual politicians, took a close look at what was going on behind the scenes in the metropolis, but also wrote about boxing matches or the Pope’s visit. Diogenes has now published fifty-five of these columns in book form, and anyone who wants to remember how things were in Berlin back then will find more than enough in this volume, which provides an entertaining introduction to a political landscape in which parties were still run like district league clubs.

Edgar Rai

Carolin Würfel
Ingrid Wiener und die Kunst der Befreiung
Wien 1968 / Berlin 1972
Hardcover, 196 pages, 23 €
Hanser Berlin

The EXIL: a legendary pub on Paul-Lincke-Ufer in Kreuzberg. I knew that much when I went there after the fall of the Wall as a twenty-something. Dim and somehow deserted, a cool old lady behind the bar, music wafting from the record player, goulash and apricot dumplings ... and the distinct feeling of having arrived too late.



Twenty years earlier, the couple Oswald and Ingrid Wiener had opened this restaurant together with the current landlord of the Paris Bar, Michel Würthle, and everyone came: first their friends, West Berlin writers, musicians, and theater makers, and finally international celebrities. Oswald stood behind the counter until dawn, Michel waited tables, and Ingrid cooked the Viennese dishes that everyone was so wild about.

It all started when those who had moved there from Vienna simply didn't know where to go to eat and drink in West Berlin, which had been abandoned by all good spirits: this former German capital divided up by the Allies, this place of disillusionment and the painfully noticeable absence of the bourgeoisie and intellectuals. For this very reason, however, it was also a refuge for those who had refused military service, or renounced their parental home or society, now having no pressure to conform or social expectations.

Oswald and Ingrid fleeing the latter when, at the end of the sixties, they found shelter in Zehlendorf with the now famous art collector Heiner Bastian and his wife Céline. In Vienna, they had resisted reactionary social forces, had caused an uproar and indignation with public actions, determined to lead a freer life.

But at the center of this life story written by Carolin Würfel is Ingrid Wiener, who was already rebellious and fearless as a schoolgirl, and later instinctively in search of self-liberation and departure. In Berlin, she was the good spirit of the group around Oswald Wiener, later a weaving (chair) artist and dropout.

An exciting and somewhat wistful story about freedom and voids that needed to be filled, something that would no longer be possible today.

Katherina von Uslar



Ulrich Peltzer

Das bist du

Hardcover, 288 pages, 22 €

S. Fischer

In search of lost time: This novel seems a bit like that when the main character, alias Ulrich Peltzer, wanders through what is now the western part of the city to find the places he remembers again. This West Berlin, where the psychology student was one of many who wanted to fill the void with new thoughts, new music, new drugs, and new idols. He captures the coldness and abandonment of this city to a tee, the lack of time and plans, and describes the struggle for a relationship to masculinity and status. It is about his career as a writer, based on the belief that he can justify his existence with texts. Leonore, with whom he falls hopelessly in love and with whom he almost begins a bourgeois life, plays a major role here.

Anyone who was there can conjure it all up again: the evenings at the DSCHUNGEL, the cab rides through the city at night, dawn at the counter of the SHIZZO, rejecting girls, drugged-up boys, walks on the snow-lit Hohenzollerndamm, ROSTLAUBE, and beloved Charlottenburg art-house cinemas.

A kind of dream world that becomes all the more true, thunderous, intense, and heartbreaking in hindsight, but then thankfully evaporates due to the peaceful certainty that it was all worth it: For Ulrich Peltzer has indeed become the author of many successful novels, and West Berlin remains his true love.

Katherine von Uslar