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**BETWEEN LIFE AND DEATH: THE LOVE-ART-ECONOMY INTERACTION IN THE CONTEMPORARY GERMAN NOVELS “ALL DAYS ARE NIGHT” AND “ME AND KAMINSKI”**

This paper explores the love-art-economy interaction in two novels from contemporary writers Peter Stamm from Switzerland and Daniel Kehlmann from Germany and Austria. Stamm’s novel, “All Days Are Night” (in German: “Nacht ist der Tag”), was published ten years after Kehlmann’s “Me and Kaminski” (in German: “Ich und Kaminski”). “All Days Are Night” revolves around a TV celebrity named Gillian who is seeking to put her life back together following the loss of her husband and her own nose in a terrible car accident. Stamm’s novel comes to highlight the love story between Gillian and Hubert, a poor and unsuccessful artist. On the other hand, Kehlmann’s “Me and Kaminski” can be viewed as part road novel, part satire of the contemporary art scene. The novel’s narrator, Sebastian Zöllner, wishes to write a biography on the elderly wealthy artist Manuel Kaminski, whom he hopes will soon die so his biography can quickly become a best-seller. What begins as a straightforward pursuit increasingly turns into a full-blown obsession, causing a chaotic and grotesque game between the two characters when they go to meet Kaminski’s long-lost lover, Therese Lessing. While “All Days Are Night” (2013) and “Me and Kaminski” (2003) may seem to have little in common in terms of their plots, characters, or writing styles, the author of the present paper asserts that both literary works emphasize similar topics, including: the meaning of art; how to struggle–financially and otherwise– to become a successful artist; how to find one’s own identity as a (creative) human being who lives–or tries to survive–in a money-dominated society that is full of both love and contradictions. I will show how the sensuous experiences of the now disfigured TV star Gillian and her lover in “All Days Are Night” and of the underachieving art critic Zöllner and his target-turned-friend in Kaminski bring together love, art, and economy. To this end, both Stamm and Kehlmann employ opposed concepts such as warmth and coldness, light and darkness, fullness and emptiness, as well as truth and falsehood. Gillian’s ability to smell–and to rebuild–her world despite having lost her nose, alongside Manuel Kaminski’s ability to paint the world he perceives despite being blind, illustrate how Stamm and Kehlmann tackle some of the key themes in their respective novels. Further, I will discuss how the weather plays a particularly significant role in setting the atmospheres of the novels, leading to the characters’ souls and bodies evolving between different forms of love and various ways of making, producing and consuming art. Some characters may even be considered as a form of artwork themselves– one that straddles life and death.

Keywords: love; art; economy; contemporary German literature