

The strange case of early Mock and the Classics

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Eberhard Mock is a really fictitious figure. Marek Krajewski invented him. He made Mock the protagonist of a series of crime novels, that Krajewski started to publish at the beginning of this century. They are hugely successful and translated into many languages. The action takes place mainly in Wrocław, and the six novels translated into German cover a period from 1919 to 1945. In the following, I try to give a picture of Eberhard Mock's early years, i.e. before the Nazis came into power.

Three novels are closely analysed.¹ Chronologically speaking, they are the first cases of Mock's career. Classics play a major role,² but in a very peculiar way. Three layers can be distinguished: in addition to references to antiquity in general, and to references to classical literature in particular, one can also observe how Classics connect immediately, directly, permanently, with Mock's daily work as a police officer. Since Krajewski often chose to tell the story 'from within', however, not clearly distinguishing between the narrator's 'voice' and his protagonist's mental perception, it is time and again difficult to ascertain who thinks what. One may well think that this poetic practice is due to design, and not an accident.

A preliminary remark

Paradoxically, it turns out that classical education is lost on Mock. Once, in his early life, he fell in love with Classics. As it may happen to anyone, however, if love is unrequited, it may turn into hatred – not necessarily of the object once desired, in a way mildly despising what was not or is no longer available, but violently turned into a hatred of – oneself. Perhaps, this cycle is established because one regards oneself as guilty of making others unhappy. To a certain degree, Mock shares this

¹ Krajewski's novels are cited according to their German translation. The first is *Gespenster in Breslau* (*Widma w mieście Breslau*, 2005), the second is *Pest in Breslau* (*Dżuma w Breslau*, 2007), and the third is *Der Kalenderblattmörder* (*Koniec świata w Breslau*, 2003). The novels are translated by Paulina Schulz, and the German editor equipped the well printed pocket books with wonderful illustrations on their cover.

² Despite their importance, Classics and their influence on Mock have not been studied amply. K. Zieliński treated the theme, quite recently: *The ancient quotations in Marek Krajewski's detective novels*, in: K. Dominas, E. Wesołowska, B. Trocha (edd.), *Antiquity in Popular Literature and Culture*, Newcastle 2016, 51-64. The author regards Krajewski's novels as proof that there once was a 'citation culture' that included Classics to a much larger extent than it does nowadays. This may well be true, since Classics were of more importance to European culture in general, at least until the Great War. In our particular case, it is a circular argument, however, because it mixes up the poetic reality Krajewski created and the reality that really was. In other words, Krajewski's fictitious Breslau policemen (and their jargon) cannot be regarded as proving anything else than what Krajewski wanted them to 'prove' (by making them speak their jargon). And in Mock's case, it's not simply showing off; a poor devil lurks behind his facade.

narrative, without knowing it, without alluding to it, without profiting from it, with the Homeric character Achilles.³ To a certain degree only, however, since Mock also reminds of the strange case of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde, as well as of drug-addict, well-read Sherlock Holmes. Thus, in an instant, we may turn to completely other horizons, as it happens in the case of such multi-layered texts as these. To begin with, let's stick to Classics. Classics appeal to those who love crime, as will be shown.⁴

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For the first time, we meet Kriminalassistent Mock in 1919. He is in his mid-thirties. One morning he is confronted with the atrocious murder of four young men. The fact that debauched Mock suffers from a bad hangover doesn't help him much. Mock meets his colleagues. Among them we get to know a senior police pathologist, who is called "Charon of Breslau" (*Gesperster* 8) – and this is how the references to things classical begin. The boatman of the dead, the ferryman of corpses, a *psychopompos* who crosses the lake Acheron in his two-oared skiff, known from Euripides' *Alcestis*,⁵ now resides in Breslau in an office, which he rarely leaves: a sclerotic, slightly eccentric, and probably constipated expert in cutting up corpses. Of course, in a way he resembles the man who takes the souls of the dead to Hades. The contrast sets the tone, however, and it goes on like that.

Mock, for example, is mockingly labelled 'scourge of the Lord', as if he were Attila, known as such a 'flagello di Dio'. Mock, though, by no means frightens half of Europe, as did the king of the Huns – he is just the "tamer of all the indifferent whores and syphilitic pimps in town" (*Gesperster* 45). A woman who walks her dog during the early hours, for example, can be seen in the "rose-coloured gleaming of goddess Eos" (*Gesperster* 98). The cumbersome expression renders this morning expedition by Mock and his myrmidon Smolorz almost Homeric. Obviously, it's an awkward paraphrasis of a so-called Homeric formula, i.e. 'rosy-fingered Dawn'. Again, it sounds somehow mock-heroic. And indeed, the contrast between pompous language and (less than) trivial meaning is often stressed by Mock. He cannot wash himself regularly at the place where he lives, he says, a fact that he expresses by claiming that he cannot bring offerings to Hygieia, i.e. personified Health, on a daily basis (*Gesperster* 81).⁶

Mock is not the only one who effortlessly refers to Classics. There is a police informer, for example, who learnt by heart all the Latin phrases from a reference work, because it was the only book at hand on a long sea voyage (*Gesperster* 44) – perhaps the nadir of education at all. And there is Mock's newly appointed superior Mühlhaus, who wants to play with him the "little Socratic game", which would help Mock to find the solution by himself. He, however, refuses, bluntly stating that there is no time for this kind of 'grab-assing' (*Gesperster* 109). Finally, his superior gives in, since

³ Noted by Zieliński (2016, 59, as preceding note), not developed, though.

⁴ Similarly, those who adore crime-novels claim to have a penchant for classical tragedy and poetry, as Patrick Raynal, the editor of Gallimard's *Série Noir*, put it. He wrote a few introductory lines to Didier Lemaçon's retelling of Sophocles' *Oedipus rex: Œdipe roi*, Paris 1994, 5 (shortened in the book's second ed., Paris 2017, 7). Lemaçon, a teacher of classical languages, transformed the well-known Sophoclean tragedy into a thriller. The recent, second edition is accompanied by Lemaçon's translation of the play.

⁵ Cf. T. Gantz, *Early Greek Myth: A Guide to Literary and Artistic Sources*, Baltimore 1993, 125.

⁶ In a similarly deflationary way, prostitutes checked "*in flagranti*" by Mock and his colleagues are called "daughters of Aphrodite" (*Pest* 132), or "priestesses to Venus" (*Kalenderblattmörder* 166). And again, in a mock-heroic way, the protagonist, angrily fighting with a whore, suddenly turns round "like a discus thrower in antiquity" (*Pest* 137) – an image evoking Myron's famous Greek statue of such a *diskobolos* (now in the Vatican Museum), or the *Discobolo Lancelotti* (from the Palazzo Massimo alle Terme in Rome).

Mock refuses to be Alcibiades, as he states. To this, laconic Mock adds that Alcibiades ended badly (*Gespenster* 110).⁷ The whole scene alludes not only to Socrates' so-called 'maieutic' method, by which he made people find out logical errors committed by themselves,⁸ but also to the famous anecdotes connecting the teacher of Plato (among many others) with his unruly disciple Alcibiades, a well-connected upper-class boy of uncertain tastes. We hear much about, and can guess more of their relationship in Plato's *Symposium*. The text depicts a drinking-party, to which Alcibiades arrives lately. In the *Symposium's* final part, he confesses having tried to seduce Socrates.⁹

Mock's own method of interrogation is much less refined. During one such interrogation of his friend from army days, who turns out to be the serial murderer, Mock puts him into a bath. The interviewee is terribly frightened by dead bodies, and that is the reason why Mock lets two corpses float into the water (*Gespenster* 307sq.). Eventually, the suspect kills himself. He is evil incarnate, and his knowledge of classical texts is extraordinary. This fact may indicate that Classics are not regarded, by definition, as something that makes a man a better human being. This observation is already suggested by Mock's frame of mind, thrown off balance by his daily experience, or by earlier trauma.

A manipulative pervert, the serial killer not only slaughtered the four young men from the novel's outset, but he also murdered his own daughter and Mock's father. He is enormously well-read, and Classics appealed much to him, indeed. He keeps a kind of diary, a note-book, which contains protocols from a secret society's meetings. In these notes he mentions, for example, his translation from Latin (*Gespenster* 60sq.). Furthermore, he remembers how he did translate from Latin already at high-school (75-7), remarking that he regards these translations as useless (75), i.e. merely "an inhumanly perfect brain exercise". Obviously, he is mad, using Latin words, being about to kill a prostitute (168-70). He also engages in contemplative thought on the Furies, who play a major role in Aeschylus' *Oresteia* (235-7, 242-4 & 250-2). Doing so for the last time (270), he reveals to be the secretary of a secret society.

In the very end, the murderer declares Mock's nightmares to be his Furies (307 & 309). Already earlier, not yet discovered, but somehow suspected, he proposed to Mock hypnosis as a means to discover one's real self. He cites the ancient oracle in Greek "gnothi seauton" (288), appealing to Mock to 'come to know yourself', i.e. to 'form a judgment of yourself'. A piece of paper, on which "gnothi seauton" is written, is discovered later, proving him to be the murderer (305). Needless to say that the secret order, the Brotherhood as it is called, worshipped gods from ancient Greece (283). The serial killer who acted as their secretary read Hippocrates in Greek, which was fairly dif-

⁷ Mock becomes quite angry. He can hardly contain himself. As it is usual with him, he remembers a text. This time "suddenly" an adjective from a phrase by Livy turns up in his mind: *impotens*, i.e. "powerless, and not master of oneself" (*Gespenster* 109). As a matter of fact, Livy uses expressions that combine *impotens* with *rabies* or *ira*, the Latin words denoting 'anger' or 'rage' (cf., e.g., 29. 9. 6): people are 'suddenly (*sic*) fired to a much more uncontrollable madness' – *in multo impotentiorum subito rabiem accensi* (cf. below n. 15).

⁸ Another high ranking civil servant, a director of an archive and/or library, is not only familiar with but also fond of the "Socratic midwife-method"; thus, Mock knows what he has to expect (*Kalenderblattmörder* 286). Literally, the Greek word means 'obstetric', referring to the acting of a midwife. It is metaphorically said of the Socratic way of discussing problems, often displayed in Plato's early dialogues, i.e. helping to bring forth ideas and truths from a pupil's mind by a series of pertinent questions.

⁹ Alcibiades figures also in other contemporary literature, as, for instance, in Thucydides' *History of the Peloponnesian War* (from book 5 onwards). Plutarchus, a Greek intellectual living in Rome in the first and early second century of our time, collected the anecdotes for his biography. Alcibiades remains, of course, a much disputed figure; cf., e.g., D. Gribble, *Alcibiades and Athens: A Study in Literary Presentation*, Oxford 1999.

ficult (*Gespenster* 185). Thus, classical education is used in order to qualify him as highly perverted, since Hippocrates wrote his medical treatises in order to preserve life, and not to destroy it.

Mock is haunted by his Furies, indeed (281),¹⁰ though they are thoroughly different from those who haunt Orestes in Aeschylus. Again, they are of a lower order, as is Mock, the ‘prole’, but much related to Classics – as they are taught at school.¹¹ Half-asleep and completely drunk, Mock tries to remember the first twenty lines of Virgil’s *Aeneid* (288). Unable to do so, he feels terribly sorry, in his nightmare apologising to his then teacher of Latin, promising to him to learn the first fifty lines for the next day (289).¹² And, shortly before his friend’s death, a friend who turned out to be his worst enemy for years, Mock remembers a lecture on comparative linguistics (308). In a flashback scene, he hears the voice of his then professor, who might have revealed already what is behind all (or, who might have not, we are not to know). The intensity felt by Mock may be due to the fact that Mock feels betrayed by him (and his ilk). Perhaps it was he who betrayed Mock for the first time, thus condemning Mock to remember him every time Mock is betrayed again, by whoever it may be, and in whatever occasion it may happen. This would establish a ‘primary scene’ Mock is to repeat eternally, i.e. the origin of his anger he shares with Achilles. There’s a strong case for seeing common ground between those two.

Given that perspective, Mock’s assistant Smolorz would become a myrmidon in a double sense. Metaphorically, he not only carries out any kind of order without question, since to him Mock’s words are “*suprema lex*”, the highest law, i.e. superior to all others (*Pest* 17 & 20) – just as a myrmidon is expected to do. Literally, Smolorz is one of Mock’s men, as in Homer the Myrmidons were led by Achilles, whom Mock resembles. He is as angry as Achilles, and he is driven by his anger, like Achilles was, too. In moments of distress, Mock tries to calm himself by reciting silently Latin poetry (*Gespenster* 146, 182 & 266). Time and again, while doing so, he hears the voice of his teacher of Latin (*Gespenster* 164).

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When we meet Mock for the second time, this analogy becomes more visible. The Achillean parallel, however, was prepared earlier. Once, his best friend, who turns out to be the killer, compared their friendship to that between Achilles and Patroclus (*Gespenster* 87sq.). He did so completely drunk, and the hint is not developed, then.

Now, in 1923, Mock is around forty, and has become Oberwachtmeister. His advancement is singular. At first, Mock is appointed Hauptwachmeister, a career step to which he heroically responded by spending one year heavily drinking in a prison cell, guarded by a friend. Somehow surprisingly covered by his superiors, he was even promoted further (*Pest* 36sq.).

¹⁰Again they pursue him, even more intensely, in *Kalenderblattmörder* 174 & 271. As much as Mock is haunted by his Furies, he is obsessed by ‘red-haired’ women. Effortlessly, he translates the word into ancient Greek, i.e. *pyrrhokomai* (*Gespenster* 205). Much fond of Greek, Mock discusses the meaning of *hetaira* with a prostitute, who uses the word (*Gespenster* 209sq.). Later, during their conversation, Mock mentions Alciphro’s *Dialogues of Hetairas* (*Gespenster* 211). The scenery is re-evoked again, later (233). In another scene, observing a villa and suddenly listening to a female voice, Mock compares her to a siren. He remembers himself at school, reciting from the *Odyssey* (*Gespenster* 267sq.), where the Sirens sing (273sq.).

¹¹Half in jest, half seriously, one superior suggests that Mock should put the Latin word for ‘punishment’, *poena*, on his shield – if he were equipped with such heraldic insignia (*Pest* 227).

¹²Mock attended additional lessons taught by him, on Catull and Sappho (*Gespenster* 214), as Mock kindly remembers. Unsurprisingly, he is said to have a “philologically trained mind” (*Gespenster* 271).

Right from the beginning Mock exhibits his knowledge of Classics, and it is in this context that his Achillean frame of mind is exposed. In a brothel, Mock uses quite elementary Latin expressions, describing his sexual preferences.¹³ Asked by a prostitute why he does so, Mock replies that the ancient Romans were experts in the “*ars futuendi*” (*Pest* 32).¹⁴ His behaviour is quite conceited, because the prostitute could hardly understand what he meant. Mock continues by stating that modern expressions are either purely anatomical or simply vulgar, which is probably right. It sounds, however, a bit too educational, but, perhaps, this is part of the narrative’s irony. In the end, Mock is a German, and is derided for that. We see this behavioural pattern repeated.

A few pages later, still in the context of his daily usage of Latin, suddenly Mock’s Achillean soul comes to light. All happens during an absurd, rather Chaplinesque scene, as is to be expected with low-lifer Mock. Being about to lose his trousers, Mock enters a shop. Asking for a piece of rope, he shouts the Latin adverb for ‘quick’, *cito* (*Pest* 40). To this the shop-assistant replies that he may use such a word in a pharmacy or with a dry-cleaner, but not in this place. Mock becomes incandescent with rage.¹⁵

We meet with an already familiar pattern. Each time Mock has to calm down, he tries to remember Greek or Latin lines he had learnt by heart at school. This time, however, a detail escapes him, he cannot remember properly, and he becomes very angry (*Pest* 67). It comes as no surprise that his superior considers him emotionally unstable (*Pest* 55)¹⁶ – as Agamemnon might have considered Achilles to be. Moreover, there is another parallel: Mock’s superior Mühlhaus, who imitates the pathos of school-teacher who imitates Cicero (*Pest* 52sq.), appears as an awful cynic and pompous idiot – just as Homer portrays Agamemnon. As it happens, he is not as educated as Mock, just as Agamemnon is not as skilled as Achilles: Mühlhaus does not understand what ‘tribade’ means, when Mock uses the word instead of ‘Lesbian’ (*Pest* 46).

There is something else already familiar, and now developed further. As a young man, Mock dreamt of an academic career; he wrote articles in Latin, we were told (*Gespenster* 246). Now we meet Mock, on a Sunday morning, alone in his office, looking at a photograph of his dead father (*Pest* 61sq.), a shoe-maker. Mock imagines him scolding his son for having abandoned his studies. Mock delivered even a speech in Latin at school. In those days, a schoolteacher congratulated his father on his son’s success. However, promising young Mock failed. Naturally, he lived poorly (*Pest* 206), but wanting to become admired, as was his then “Professor Morawjetz”, he was unable to pull himself together.¹⁷ Given that narrative, Mock resembles a degenerate – which he probably is. At least, more and more becomes.

At the end of the day, this second plot resembles Mock’s first case: again he faces a secret brotherhood, and again ‘they’ are educated in the classical sense of the word. Classics appeal again to those

¹³In another scene, examining corpses, Mock uses a Latin expression again, detailing those of others (*Pest* 45).

¹⁴In another text, we read the more decent “*ars amandi*” (*Kalenderblattmörder* 97).

¹⁵Or, as Livy put it (cf., e.g., 29. 9. 9), *impotens irae* – said of a person who is ‘beside himself with rage’ (cf. above n. 7).

¹⁶Sudden changes in the mood of others do not escape Mock, who characterises angry women as “Harpies” (*Pest* 55 & 136). The Harpyiai are winged creatures, agents of the Furies, and a divinely sent punishment. They are known since the *Odyssey*, where the name is used to personify whirlwinds or hurricanes.

¹⁷His low-life and his Latin are combined more funnily, when Mock buys a sausage in a butcher-shop called ‘Carnis’. At the station, he sees the name ‘Carnis’ again, printed on paper used for packing ham-sandwiches (*Pest* 76 & 194).

who love crime. A police-agent, for instance, who wants to establish a contact with ‘them’, has to put an announcement into the daily. He is asked to carefully use the wrong Latin formula “*requiescant in pacem*” (Pest 109 & 115). The new acolyte knows that the brotherhood’s name “The Misanthropists” is a Greek word and has nothing to do with the play by Molière (Pest 124). Thus, the educated are evil, or rather, the evil are educated.¹⁸ Unsurprisingly, they are the “pillars of society” (Pest 125).

In the course of the narrative, Mock’s Achillean features are more and more determining the action, they come to the forefront. Mock, for instance, becomes so angry that his usual method of calming down fails. Neither reciting Virgil on Tityrus (the opening of his *Eclogues*, composed between 42 and 37 BC) nor Horace on mount Soracte (one of his rather famous *Odes* from the first collection, published 23 BC) soothe him down any longer, lines Mock learnt by heart at school in his hometown Waldenburg (Pest 129).

Both texts alluded to are not only considered to be autobiographical reflections of both Virgil and Horace on their own position in life. Both texts also are much indebted to earlier Greek poetry: in Virgil’s case to Theocritus, a Hellenistic poet from early third century Alexandria, and in Horace’s case to Alcaeus, an Archaic poet from late seventh century Lesbos. Thus, the classical texts referenced did not only contain a second layer. They cannot be fully and properly appreciated without taking their Greek forerunners into account. By implication, this means that Mock’s personality contains a second layer, too. Thus, it is strongly suggested, and highly likely indeed, that there is something more that determines his character than one may assume in the case of a police officer in Breslau between the wars. In the same way there was something more, i.e. something Greek, and the knowledge of a great tradition, that determined Virgil’s and Horace’s poetry much more than one might assume from the fact that they were Augustan court-poets, supervised and tutored by Maecenas. At least, a classicist would think so.

Furthermore, like Achilles, Mock feels guilty. Due to the fact that he wasn’t there to help his informant, this man committed suicide, Mock reasons (Pest 131). Achilles thought something very similar about Patroclus. Just as Mock, Achilles, the leader of the Myrmidons, felt guilty (*Iliad* 18), because one of his men died in action – a fact that distinguishes him much from his Trojan counterpart, prince Hector, who only fears to make a bad, i.e. shameful, impression on the women of Troy (*Iliad* 6 & 22). A long-living cliché is established: manly West and effeminate East.

Curiously, Mock is aware that some such Greek models do exist. During an interrogation, a client of a prostitute is chained to the bedpost, while she is at his side, unconscious and chained, too. Mock starts his questioning by asking whether the prostitute’s customer has ever read Lucretius, which he denies (Pest 138). In the following, Mock rapturously lectures on what the client missed, changing to Lucretius’s Homeric model, henceforth speaking of Ares and Aphrodite (discovered while committing adultery, and immobilised by Hephaistos) and no longer of Mars and Venus.¹⁹ In the course of this interrogation, Mock, eventually, rather exasperated,

¹⁸They distinguish themselves from the crowd, referring to Classics. Decidedly, they are not simply odd or a bit strange or somehow eccentric or rather dotty, as one of Mock’s colleagues. He is the convincing caricature of a senior civil service man – a coward and stickler, without any initiative of his own, though able to produce highly imaginative reports, constantly enjoying formulas like “condition *sine qua non*”, or “*nolens volens*” (Pest 85 & 87).

¹⁹Krajewski “regularly goes back to the scene”, Zieliński notes (2016, 55 & 60, as n. 2).

announces that from now on he would be no longer “the friendly academic who converses about Homer” (*Pest* 144). Such sadistically inclined teachers of Classics are widely known.

Having proven his muscular professionalism, Mock desperately needs some pints of beer, which is called “water from the river of oblivion” (*Pest* 146). The expression alludes to the river Lethe, a word that means literally ‘the state of being hidden’, henceforth ‘oblivion’. It is the name of one place of oblivion in the lower world, sometimes imagined as a river, sometimes as a mere plain. What exactly is it that Mock so urgently needs to forget? It cannot be the truth about the murder, because he as a police officer has to discover the truth, the Greek word for which is just *a-leth-eia*, i.e. what cannot be hidden, does not remain hidden, instead, which is apparent, and openly visible to anybody. Thus, one must assume that Mock wants to forget himself, his actions. But why – may it be that he regards them, in one way or other, as disreputable, unworthy of a man of his education?

The enemy, however, has no such qualms about ethics, and never sleeps. The already quick narrative speeds up. There are three ways to join the elitist and educated brotherhood of killers, each expressed in Latin only (*Pest* 153). To make matters worse, these vicious and hellishly clever people make Mock appear as the murderer. Anger “moves swiftly through his body”, we read (*Pest* 160). In the following, humiliated, handcuffed, angry Mock is questioned by his colleagues, to whom he speaks mockingly about the rhetorical device of retardation, “already known to Homer” (*Pest* 165). Entering his prison cell, Mock is gripped by an enormous anger combined with an overwhelming sorrow – both emotions that Homer makes appear to be the driving forces of his hero Achilles (*Pest* 177). Now, at rest in his cell, educated Mock contemplates the Latin names of cockroaches (*Pest* 180), asking his myrmidon Smolorz to send him a copy of Theognis’ *Elegies*, in Greek (*Pest* 185).

Theognis’ book, from which also the novel’s motto is taken, is highly remarkable – given the situation Mock needs to survive. Theognis’ work (of which large parts are not by him) may well have been a collection of drinking songs, composed for the manly symposium. This suits Mock very well. Moreover, some of the most remarkable texts by Theognis are addressed to a close friend, whom Mock desperately misses – as did Achilles miss Patroclus. And Theognis’ texts (or at least those we think that they’re written by him) have a strong aristocratic bias, which certainly appealed to noble Mock, let alone to Achilles. Theognis is also quite disturbingly frank about his emotions, as Mock is, and as Achilles was, unfortunately and much to his disadvantage. Eventually, and perhaps most importantly, Theognis believed in, or at least expressed, “traditional tenets of Greek morality”²⁰ – as Mock and Achilles do. Given all these parallels, it comes as no surprise that Mock knows the text by heart, the text that can be seen in “the light of Selene” (*Pest* 186).

Seen by others, however, Mock’s classical education is reduced to the impression that, well, he speaks too long, citing too much from Latin or Greek, indulging in “Latin aphorisms and Greek anecdotes” (*Pest* 213sq. & 218). Regularly, education appears as arrogance (or worse) to the uneducated.

Mock’s fits of anger continue, becoming ever more severe. They threaten the balance of his mind. It may become unhinged, by the pressure exerted on it. And they are described ‘from within’ (*Pest* 243sq.). A similar *crescendo* can be observed in the stories told by members of the

²⁰Cecil Bowra put it that way, in his article on Theognis in *The Oxford Classical Dictionary* (Oxford 1949, 894).

murderous brotherhood, which are characterised as full of “*odor mortis*” (*Pest* 245). The collapse is imminent, indeed. Finally, the secret organization is dissolved. In order to honour this moment, Mock’s superior Mühlhaus gives his elegant coat to Mock, from whom he receives his usual, simple jacket – a Diomedean swap, if there is one (*Pest* 263).²¹ Alluding to a famous scene of the *Iliad*’s sixth book, where a Greek and a Trojan, Diomedes and Glaucus, change their weapons because they suddenly recognize that their families, once upon a time, have established a friendly relationship, as it is common in nobility, the author ennobles the narrative.

Few will notice, however, because nothing reveals the allusion. Only because we readers know that Mock took Classics so seriously, as a former fellow-student just confirmed (*Pest* 250), and only because we start to see how a philologically trained mind works, we notice this subtlety. Given that perspective, however, Mock turns out to be not only the protagonist of his novels, but also as their intended, primary reader. He would have been delighted by this comparison. It would not have escaped him, of course, even when he is as drunk as hell.

Since Classics are on the decline, though, meaning only to very few very much, to put it mildly, Mock’s novels must appeal to their many readers for another reason than that of alluding to themes classical. Can it be that these seemingly banal crime novels are for the same reason as attractive as was Homer’s *Iliad*? Notoriously, the *Iliad* focusses on the unpredictability of his hero’s actions, a theme that is made the more interesting because Achilles is distinguished by extraordinary forces, both physical and mental. Just like Mock is.

Moreover, the author of the *Iliad* carefully created an imaginary society, integrating into his work such fantastic pieces as Achilles’ shield, punctiliously described, or even something really surreal, as the boar’s tusk helmet, an object that is on display in some collections still nowadays. The same goes for the author of Mock’s stories.

Famously, the *Iliad*’s author invented an artificial language. Forms originating in different dialects exist side by side, which never happens naturally, and the verbs follow paradigms that differ from each other, a fact which cannot have existed at any time, let alone at the period Homer is supposed to have lived in. In other words, the *Iliad*’s artificiality clashes constantly with its realism, much to the annoyance of Classicists. Isn’t it similar with Mock, who uses these old-fashioned images of Harpies, Sirens, and Furies, all of them long dead and buried? Mock, who speaks Latin and thinks Greek, both languages long dead and buried, too? And does Mock not live in an artificial world of gentlemen who honour each other – as Achilles hoped to do? And are not both terribly disappointed by their peers – drunkards suffering from a bad hangover?

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The third time, we meet Mock in 1927/28. It is his last appearance before the Nazis get into power. We find him married to a beautiful, young, and heavily oversexed Sophie. She is 24 or 25 years old, he is called a 40 years old (*Kalenderblattmörder* 10 & 35). This time, however, Kriminalrat Mock, always with Smolorz as his aide, has not to face a secret brotherhood, as in the preceding cases, but is confronted with a lonely wolf.

²¹A “demonstration of a masculine friendship” it is called by Zieliński 2016, 55 (as n. 2).

Brutally, his young wife reminds Mock of the fact that he once studied Latin, that he wanted to become a professor. His nephew Erwin rubs it in, talking of Uncle Ebi's once published Latin article on Horace (*Kalenderblattmörder* 13sq.). In addition, his wife reveals that her husband secretly reads Horace at home, using a school-edition equipped with a glossary, most welcome by him, who already forgot so much. Perhaps, she muses, he is gay (or not) because of his wish to become a professor. Small wonder that such a dysfunctional family party inspires Mock to heavy drinking.²²

His homecoming is elaborately compared to that of Odysseus (*Kalenderblattmörder* 16): Scylla, Charybdis, a Siren, old dog Argos, and Ithaca are mentioned.²³ At home, Mock keeps editions of nearly all classical texts. His edition of Galen is bilingual, i.e. in Greek and Latin, as it suits an "unfinished classical scholar" (36 & 38).

Mock's usual habit, i.e. to recite poetry once learnt by heart in order to calm down, is referred to again. For the first time, however, we share the experience quite intensely, i.e. minute by minute, in real time. Mock wants to get information from his interlocutor. He starts silently reciting Horace's poem, which concludes his first collection (3. 30). Horace speaks about the poetry he is about to publish, and that it will secure him a position never to be destroyed by time. Mock's interlocutor is a half-wit, a fact that forces Mock to recite five lines – until the moment he cannot remember more and he begins to push the other man heavily. We readers know this only if we know the poem by heart, or look it up, for the narrator only cites the Latin text of line 6.

This text is interesting in itself for the fact that it forms an ironical meta-text to the interrogation: 'I shan't die completely', Horace states. By that he means that only his body one day will die, but never the spirit of his poetry: *non omnis moriar* (*Kalenderblattmörder* 86 = Horace c. 3. 30. 6).

Luckily, Mock remembers a bit of the text. This enables him to continue his silent recitation, heavily beating the other (87). He reaches the river *Aufidus*, which appears in the Latin text in line 10. By now, in case Mock recites rather solemnly, as it fits the poem, the man is more dead and alive. However, it is just now that Mock really explodes, and "at that moment, Mock was no longer able to recite Horace" (89).²⁴ He seems no longer able to follow a "precise grammar" (98), as it is necessary for anyone investigating a murder-case.

In other such difficult moments, however, Mock remembers properly – things that seemed "secure and stable", as were his Latin seminars, as were the poems he learnt by heart (145sq.). Perhaps, this nostalgia drives him on to lecture like a university professor,²⁵ but never too

²²One already guesses that the marriage won't survive the novel for a long time and, probably, the nephew either. And so it is.

²³Quite funnily, in the following, Argos is to turn up regularly: he has become the symbol of a peacefully kept household (*Kalenderblattmörder* 19, 37, 65, 68, 84, 117 & 151). Once the dog is away, everything goes wrong (304). Ironically, in Mock's house 'beware of the dog' is written in Latin on the entrance step (83).

²⁴In another moment of extreme anger, Mock recites Horace's *odi profanum vulgus* (*Kalenderblattmörder* 275). The poetic fiction is that of the poet-priest who asks the uninitiated or unholy to depart. It is expressed often, as, for example, also by Virgil, who makes Aeneas visit the Underworld (*Aeneid* 6. 258 *procul o, procul este, profani*). Still today it is a common joke, and/or can easily become one, among pupils at school who learn Latin.

²⁵In a similar way, Mock speaks of the 19th century as of "a really *saeculum historicum*" (*Kalenderblattmörder* 177), calling a library director "a real historian, as Herodotus was" – an outdated judgment, itself belonging to the 19th century.

convincingly, and only when he is drunk (93). As this pattern of behaviour becomes ever more frequent, one starts wondering what might have triggered it. Is it the immaturity of a self-indulgent adult? Is haughty Mock a self-destructive ‘old boy’, suffering from the weight of obligations, from which he is unable and unwilling to break free?

Who is he? We see a nasty Mock, boasting about his Latin (181). He dismisses one of his collaborators because he has no Latin (230), claiming (rightly) that in order to anticipate the next killing a group of policemen must read Latin documents – and understand them properly (243). We see a caring Mock, helping his nephew’s classmate translating a poem by Catullus, as he did already earlier help some of them, explaining to them Livy’s “complicated style” (265).²⁶ Their teacher at school is a friend of his from his student days, when they both feared their professor (266).

The novel’s climax, the Horatian monument at its end so to speak, is a pitiless portray of educated perverts. One is troubled infinitely by sorting out who resembles more evil incarnate, Mock or the murderer. The serial killer is a teacher of Latin at a grammar school, a respected ‘Gymnasialprofessor’. Mock tortures him, cynically addressing him in Latin. Mock speaks to him about the difference between being disposed to do something while at the same time being unable to do it. In order to illustrate the point he wants to make, Mock cites a phrase known from elementary Latin grammar (295). After a sadistic but successful exercise, which makes his detainee suffer enormously, Mock reveals Ovid to be the source of the quotation: *ut desint vires, tamen est laudanda voluntas* (296).²⁷

A final thought

Having browsed these novels, one wonders a bit what may become of such a lost soul when suddenly forced to live in a tyranny. One may well ask whether he revolts against or whether he takes advantage of it. Many an unhinged mind made a brilliant career, then. Perhaps, he simply would prefer to continue living as he is used to live. In any case, at the beginning of the Nazi-era, at the next novel’s opening,²⁸ we meet well-paid senior police officer Mock in a brothel. Lecturing to tired prostitutes (*Tod* 13sq.), more than ever a degenerate, he reads parts from his essays on human character to whores forced, and paid, to listen.²⁹ At the same time, we see a drunken fool and a pillar of a society, rotten to the core, that is about to murder millions.

²⁶In antiquity, Livy was known for his Latin that time and again departed from the pure Latinity sacred to authors in Rome. Horace’s, and Virgil’s, friend G. Asinius Pollio playfully charged him with ‘patavinitas’, a euphemism coined for him who was born in Venetian Padova, i.e. far away from urban refinery.

²⁷The line is from a letter, sent by Ovid from his exile to a friend in Rome. Ovid speaks of himself. While lacking in strength, he’s still determined, he says (*Epistulae ex Ponto* 3. 4. 79). Mock, however, uses the citation as a caustic comment on his victim’s failing forces. From Ovid, Mock might have cited also Medea’s reasoning. Though discerning and even approving of the good, she chooses the bad, she says, *video meliora proboque, deteriora sequor* (from Ovid’s *Metamorphoses* 7. 20sq.), as does Mock. This phrase, however, doesn’t occur in elementary Latin grammar.

²⁸The text, *Śmierć w Breslau*, was published in 2003. Doreen Daume translated it into German, *Tod in Breslau*, published 2009.

²⁹We know from an earlier novel that Mock privately sketches character studies, which resemble those of Aristotle’s pupil and successor, Theophrastus (*Kalenderblattmörder* 31).

KEYWORDS

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ABSTRACT:

For more than a decade now, Marek Krajewski is publishing crime novels, starring police officer Eberhard Mock. Although son of a shoe-maker, prole Mock went to high-school, even to university. In Wrocław between the wars, we see him remembering his classical texts, which he still reads in the original. He's not the only police man in a crime novel to do so. In contemporary Venice, Commissario Brunetti, the protagonist of Donna Leon's stories, regularly returns to classical texts, too. Good cop Brunetti, however, a calm and settled man, luckily married to a professor of English at Ca' Foscari, differs much from bad cop Mock, a more agitated character, unremittingly aroused by red-haired prostitutes. Once, Mock studied classical languages and published academic papers in Latin. Now, we find him leading a dissolute life, spending more time in brothels than at home, and this not only for reasons of duty. Perhaps, his intense flash-backs make him behave so erratically? In fact, more often than not, Mock remembers his classical education suddenly, involuntarily, as if he is reminded of a trauma. On closer inspection, these at first sight arbitrary citations comment on the narrative, a process intelligible to Mock alone, who more and more imitates the life of a highly classical loner. Since monstrous anger and over-whelming sorrow are his driving forces, Mock mirrors a great Homeric hero, Achilles.

reception of classical education

Achilles

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