on fehlt und dass sich die polnische Seite eine Stärkung und Aufwertung ihrer Position in bilateral und europäisch angelegten Forschungsprojekten wünscht.


Put the History Back in Those Textbooks!
Interview with Katalin Morgan

Every two years the Georg Eckert Institute awards a research prize for outstanding work in the field of international educational media research; this prize is sponsored by the Westermann Publishing Group. This year the prize was presented to Katalin Eszter Morgan. She was born in Budapest in 1970 and came to Germany with her family at the age of eight. When she was 13, her parents decided to emigrate to South Africa, where she has lived ever since. Currently she is a lecturer at the University of the Witwatersrand; in her dissertation Katalin Morgan concentrated on the current state of history education in South Africa and combined theoretical approaches with textbook analysis.

You moved to South Africa when you were just turning fourteen – it must have been a challenge for you to adjust to the new environment.
I wasn't really aware of the history of South Africa when we moved there so it was quite a surprise how backward the society was. For a whole year I was really depressed, I cried every day. It was very difficult to adjust. We had to wear school uniforms. And the first English phrases I learned were »you are not allowed to« and »you have to« which was very different from my reality in Germany.

Did your parents prepare you for apartheid?
They didn't. I had this poster when we were still in Germany of this beautiful black woman and my mother just said that that wouldn't go down very well in South Africa. I didn't understand what she was saying. And that was the extent of my knowledge of racial segregation. But my parents never explained anything. I'm still upset about that.

How did you experience apartheid?
As a teenager I was completely closed off, I didn't think about politics. I just wanted to have fun. Then I went to university and things changed. This was in the early '90s and it was no longer segregated and then I learned about apartheid and history.

Why did you decide to become a teacher?
The only reason I did that is because I had two children and I didn't want them to grow up on their own. The only way to spend time with them was to become a teacher. You only
get three months maternity leave in South Africa and there are almost no part-time jobs. And in South Africa you can work as a teacher even if you are not qualified. If you have a degree and register for a teaching degree, you can teach. So I taught for three years and then I qualified as a teacher for history and technology.

Towards the end of that degree I did this »facing-history« course online and learned about the Holocaust and human behaviour – the course taught us about prejudice, ostracization and isolation and how the seeds of such things, when not checked, can grow into these horrors. That was fascinating to me because I realized that this is not just an isolated history, it's not just about Jews, it's not just about Germany, but it's about how human beings are. And I found that really disturbing. And then obviously I saw the parallels with apartheid and I wanted to know what the relationship is between race and racism and hatred. And why are Jews considered to be a race? From the South-African perspective, Jewish people are white. So they were never discriminated against in South Africa. I was really interested in this topic. So I looked at textbooks. Moreover, in South Africa we had a very new education system and I wanted to know how people would deal with this very issue that tainted the past and that is still so hurtful for many people. That is what my dissertation is based on.

**So you were mostly interested in how race is constructed socially?**

Yes, exactly. How do we justify racism today? Most of these books blame certain things on certain people. The fundamental question of what it is that makes us human beings hate other people is not really explored. I find it really important to discuss that. Otherwise there is this self-righteous attitude that it's someone else's problem and you never look at yourself: »Do I have prejudices?« Because we all do.

My husband is white, but he has a darker skin tone. In school his friends would tease him and tell him that he was supposed to work in the garden, but it was done in a very light-hearted spirit. And my friends, when we first got together, were very curious about that. I would tease them and say that the only reason I wanted to marry him was that I wanted to see what our children would look like.

Most of my students now are coloured, some are Indian, few are white. The new generation is really different. They don't bear these grudges, they don't feel this latent hurt, they don't think that all white people are evil and that they should go back to Europe – which is something you hear a lot. I think race has become less important. It's more about, »Are you a good citizen? Can you do the job? What is your attitude?«

**What about the job market?**

We still have affirmative action. But I think people exaggerate when they claim that white people cannot get jobs. If you are qualified and good at what you are doing, you get a job.

**When you analysed the textbooks for your dissertation, what surprised you the most?**

That the books were so very different even though they were for the same curriculum. If you were a kid at a school where textbook A was used, you would get a very different idea than if you went to a school that used book B, C or D. But the majority of the textbooks really had a kind of revenge attitude »Look at what the Europeans did to us. They caused all these problems. But now we don't have any more race issues, it has all been resolved«. Which is a bit of a simplification. And history becomes »themes«. I can imagine what happened. People would say, »We need to teach these kids about the history of racism«. And then they brought all sorts of histories together that had nothing to do with each other and mixed the Holocaust and apartheid. It surprised me that everything was made to be about apartheid even if it wasn't. And some of these books really convey this idea that Europeans must go home, that Africa is not a place for Europeans. And some children pick up on that.

**What conclusions have you drawn from your research?**

What I have learned is that if you want to teach history you have to be loyal to the discipline. Students in grade 11 are able to analyse and evaluate and do those things that historians do. Ask yourself: What history are we trying to teach? And not: What moral lessons are we going to teach? Let the kids come to their own
conclusions more. Don't tell them how to think and how to judge. And if you are going to ask them to make judgements, give them enough information on which to base their judgements. Put the history back in those textbooks!

Interview conducted by Wibke Westermeyer

Kunst trifft Wissenschaft
Fotoausstellung von Arno Gisinger zeigt Schulbücher des GEI

Regina Peper


Gisinger setzt sich mit dem Medium Schulbuch auf künstlerische