

Zeitschrift: Colloquium Helveticum : cahiers suisses de littérature générale et comparée = Schweizer Hefte für allgemeine und vergleichende Literaturwissenschaft = quaderni svizzeri di letteratura generale e comparata

Herausgeber: Association suisse de littérature générale et comparée

Band: - (2009)

Heft: 40: Probleme der Gattungstheorie = Problèmes de la théorie des genres littéraires = Problems of genre theory

Artikel: "Vergifterin - Verderberin, und was noch um Gottes Willen?" : The fictionality of historical records in the film Anna Göldin - Letzte Hexe

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DOI: <https://doi.org/10.5169/seals-1006345>

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“Vergifterin – Verderberin, und was noch um Gottes Willen?”

The Fictionality of Historical Records in the Film *Anna Göldin – Letzte Hexe*¹

This article investigates the 1991 film adaptation by Gertrud Pinkus of the novel *Anna Göldin–Letzte Hexe* (*Anna Goeldi – The Last Witch*, 1982) by Swiss writer Eveline Hasler.² The maidservant Anna Göldi (1734–1782) was one the last persons, if not the last one, to be put on trial for witchcraft in German-speaking countries in the late 18th century,³ deep into the so-called Age of En-

- 1 Research on this article has been generously supported by the Alexander-von-Humboldt foundation and The University of Iowa. An earlier version was presented at the annual conference of the American Society for Eighteenth-Century Studies.
- 2 Eveline Hasler, *Anna Göldin – Letzte Hexe*, Zurich/Cologne, Benziger, 1982. Gertrud Pinkus, dir., *Anna Göldin – Die letzte Hexe* [*Anna Goeldi – The Last Witch*] (Germany, Switzerland, France, 1991). DVD (= Swiss Film Collection Z5 09428), Zurich, P&P Film/Columbus Film, 2005. The cover text informs one that it is based on the novel by Eveline Hasler (“Nach dem gleichnamigen Roman von Eveline Hasler”). Cast: Cornelia Kempers, Rüdiger Vogler, Pinkas Braun. Languages: German and Swiss German with English subtitles. (Dubbed versions in French and Spanish are also available.) In the following, the film is quoted by chapter numbers of the recording. “Göldin” is the old feminine form of “Göldi”; I am using the latter in the English translation (spelled “Goeldi” for the fictional character, “Göldi” for the historical person), while Hasler consistently speaks of “Göldin”.
- 3 The dubious honor of “last witch” is contested: The last place a person was arrested (but not tried) for witchcraft in Europe was in England in 1914, while the last place a person was tried and convicted was in Scotland in the 19th century. The trial of Anna Maria Schwägelin (executed in Kempten 1775) is also referred to as the last witch in both biographical and fictional writing (cf. Wolfgang Petz, *Die letzte Hexe. Das Schicksal der Anna Maria Schwägelin*, Frankfurt a. M., Campus, 2007; Uwe Gardein, *Die letzte Hexe. Maria Anna Schwägelin*, Messkirch, Gmeiner, 2008). Schwägelin was not the last one in the Holy Roman Empire, though. In the city of Posen, taken over by Prussia after the partition of Poland, two execu-

lightenment. The accuser was a well-educated and respected physician, as was the medical expert consulted. The trial gained much publicity beyond the borders of Switzerland and was much discussed by contemporary lawyers and theologians.⁴ The German historian and professor of political science August Ludwig von Schlözer coined the term “Justizmord” (“judicial murder”) with regard to the case, arguing that an innocent person had been murdered, “vorsetzlich, und sogar mit allem Pompe der heiligen Justiz” (“wilfully and even with all the pomp of holy justice”) by the agents of jurisdiction.⁵ The trial was led according to the criteria for a witchcraft trial which was anachronistic at the time. According to the legal procedures, though outdated, only the accusation of witchcraft allowed the application of torture. The verdict demanding the death sentence, however, made no reference to witchcraft and was very vague in its justification. Historians and law historians have been puzzled by the fact that the trial was conducted as a witchcraft trial but the death sentence was for poisoning. Parts of the records appear to have been destroyed, others disappeared and were given to archives decades later, and there is a strange declaration that there were no sexual relations between the plaintiff and the accused, which is not addressed anywhere else in the interrogation. Also involved in the trial and its second victim was Rudolf Steinmueller, a 59-year-old married man, master metal worker, and citizen of Glarus. The complex Enlightenment discourse in the historical records has been the focus of research so far, most recently and extensively by Susanne Kord.⁶ Instead, this article draws atten-

tions took place in 1793, both of dubious legality; cf. Maria Bogucka, “Law and Crime in Poland in Early Modern Times”, *Acta Poloniae Historica*, 71, 1995, pp. 175–195. Other narratives include: Thomas Willard Robisheaux, *The Last Witch of Langenburg. Murder in a German Village*, New York, W.W. Norton, 2009.

- 4 I cannot go into detail here about the reception of the trial. Walter Hauser, an eminent legal expert on the Göldi trial, its reception, and legal issues provides an excellent overview: Walter Hauser, *Der Justizmord an Anna Göldi. Neue Recherchen zum letzten Hexenprozess in Europa*, Zurich, Limmat, 2007, here especially pp. 11–16, 144–150.
- 5 Quoted in Hauser, *Der Justizmord*, p. 146. Schlözer published two articles in 1783, in the German newspaper *Reichspostreuter* and in the periodical *Stats-Anzeigen* published in Göttingen; cf. August Ludwig von Schlözer, “Abermaliger Justizmord in der Schweiz”, *Stats-Anzeigen*, 2/VII, 31 January 1783, pp. 273–277.
- 6 Susanne Kord discusses the trial in the context of the Enlightenment debate and gender issues in several publications: Susanne Kord, “Ancient Fears and the New

tion to the trials’s late twentieth-century retellings in fiction and film and investigates their popularity. Hasler’s novel tells the story of Anna Göldi, especially the trial, making expansive use of documents such as trial records and private and official correspondence,⁷ and attempting to fill the gaps that historical research left with the means of fiction. The 1982 novel was a bestseller in German-speaking countries and was translated into several languages.⁸

Anna Göldi is remembered not only in fiction,⁹ although the novel’s popularity may have even influenced local politics and sparked historical research and legal efforts to rehabilitate her. In 2007, in the town of Glarus, Switzerland, the Anna Göldi Foundation

Order: Witch Beliefs and Physiognomy in the Age of Reason”, *German Life and Letters*, 61, 2008, pp. 61–78; Susanne Kord, “From Evil Eye to Poetic Eye: Witch Beliefs and Physiognomy in the Age of Enlightenment”, *Practicing Progress: The Promise and Limitations of Enlightenment*, ed. Richard E. Schade and Dieter Sevin, Amsterdam, Rodopi, 2007, pp. 35–58. Slightly revised in the first chapter of her book, *Murderesses in German Writing, 1720–1860: Heroines of Horror* (= Cambridge Studies in German), Cambridge UK, Cambridge University Press, 2009.

- 7 In addition to trial transcripts and the verdict, Hasler quotes from testimonies, medical attestations, the arrest warrant, descriptions of Anna Göldi, the Tschudi household and Glarus as well as a witchcraft manual.
- 8 Hasler’s fiction and children’s books have been translated into several languages, but *Last Witch* is not yet available in English. I am currently collaborating on such a translation. The DVD recording of the film has English subtitles but the earlier VHS recording does not.
- 9 Already two months after the execution, the German Heinrich Ludewig Lehmann who had studied theology in Zurich, interviewed people in Glarus and published a two-volume account of the trial in letters together with the text of the death sentence, the two medical attestations, and drawings of the pins found. There were several fictional treatments of the subject before Hasler: *Die letzte Hexe. Dramatisches Kulturbild aus dem vorigen Jahrhundert*, a five-act tragedy by Arnold Diethelm (Lachen 1892) and in particular a narrative from 1945 by Glarus teacher and popular author Kaspar Freuler, titled *Anna Göldi. Die Geschichte der letzten Hexe in der Schweiz* (Zurich/Frankfurt a.M., Büchergilde Gutenberg, 1945). It saw nine editions and became quite successful for the time. A new and expanded edition appeared in 2008 (Glarus, Baeschlin). The story was also adapted as a play in 1948 and aired as a *radio feature series* in 1975 (Linsmayer 167). It was even performed as an opera with music by Martin Derungs which premiered in 1991 (cf. Martin Derungs, *Anna Göldi. Musiktheater in zwölf Bildern*. Text Martin Markun, nach dem Roman *Anna Göldi* von Kaspar Freuler, 1989–1990. Premiere: Biel, 8 March 1991; producer Daniel Kleiner, dramaturge Martin Markun, perf. Heidi Brunner as Anna; Nr. 41 of Nachlass Martin Derungs, Zentralbibliothek Zurich).

was formed. According to its Web page it supports not only the memory of one particular woman, but also aims to help members of minorities, marginalized groups and victims of arbitrary judicial decisions.¹⁰ Mollis, another town in the canton of Glarus, dedicated its town museum, the Zwicky-Haus, to the memory of Anna Göldi.¹¹ In 2007, the 225th anniversary of her execution, Fritz Schiesser, as representative for Glarus in the Swiss parliament, called for Anna Göldi's exoneration. In September 2007, the Swiss parliament decided to acknowledge Anna Göldi's case as a miscarriage of justice – news which made it even to *BBC World News* and with that video clip to *Youtube*.¹² Finally in August 2008, the cantonal administration of Glarus followed suit and officially rehabilitated Göldi.¹³

Anna Göldin – Letzte Hexe:

The Novel by Eveline Hasler and Its Film Adaptation

I have investigated the novel in more detail in my introduction to an English translation. A few observations will have to suffice here and provide necessary background information. Hasler's novel tells the

10 Anna-Göldi-Stiftung, Glarus, <http://www.annagoeldin.ch> (accessed 1 June 2008; unless otherwise stated all web sources were accessed in June 2008). Its president is Fridolin Elmer.

11 Orts- und Anna-Göldi-Museum Mollis, <http://www.annagoeldin.ch/Museum.htm>.

12 Imogen Foulkes, "Europe's Last Witch-hunt", *BBC News, Switzerland*, 19 September 2007, news.bbc.co.uk/go/pr/fr/-/2/hi/programmes/from_our_own_correspondent/7003128.stm (accessed 9 February, 2008). "Europe's Last Witch", *Russia Today*, 15 November 2007, also on http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ynCSUC_2-JI. "Switzerland Refuses to Pardon Last Woman Executed As a Witch", *BBC World News America*, September 19, 2007, also on www.youtube.com/watch?v=We1x6b8dr2M. A detailed list of news coverage with links is on the Web page of the Anna Göldi Foundation (www.annagoeldin.ch/pressespiegel.htm).

13 This was widely covered in the Swiss press but according to my search did not make international news; for example "Last witch in Europe' cleared", *Swissinfo online*, 27 August 2008, www.swissinfo.ch/eng/news_digest/Last_witch_in_Europe_cleared.html (accessed 15 June 2009). "Anna Göldi soll nun doch rehabilitiert werden", in *Neue Zürcher Zeitung*, 11 June 2008. An extensive list of press coverage, including in Germany, Austria, France, Argentina, is on www.annagoeldin.ch/pressespiegel.htm.

story of Anna Göldi, especially the trial, making expansive use of documents such as trial records and private and official correspondence, and attempting to fill the gaps that historical research left with the means of fiction. The 1982 novel was a bestseller in German-speaking countries. According to the film, it was Mrs. Tschudi's¹⁴ jealousy and superstition and even more her accusations of medical ineptitude that started the investigations. But it might have been another close relative, a theologian, who provided the main impetus out of fear and ambition to preserve the family's honor and power. According to the film, initiating a witchcraft trial did not damage the Tschudi honor as much as rumors of an affair and was preferable. The people still believed in witchcraft, and more enlightened members of the magistrate were overruled and browbeaten by Tschudi. The fact that such rumors existed is even emphasized by public denial as part of the trial. Only the revision of the trial records omitted all references to witchcraft and a pact with the devil, turning the witchcraft trial in retrospect into a trial for poisoning. The excitement of the witchcraft trial overrides any interest in a possible affair between the doctor and the maid.

Hasler's novel retold events of the trial with a feminist agenda, claiming equal rights for women by pointing to the utmost negative example in Swiss history. *Anna Göldin – Letzte Hexe* appeared in 1982, the bicentenary of Göldi's execution. The women's movement was in full swing even in Switzerland, and equal rights for women was an intensely debated topic. In Switzerland, it was only in 1971 that women had been granted suffrage on the federal level and in 1981 equal rights for men and women finally became part of the federal constitution. Individual cantons were still slower to institute such measures, and the last one (Appenzell-Innerrhoden) was forced by federal law in 1990 to let women vote and run for political offices.

At that time Hasler (born in 1933 in Glarus) collaborated with Swiss filmmaker Gertrud Pinkus (born in 1944 in Solothurn) on the script for the film adaptation of *Anna Göldin*, a Swiss-German-French coproduction which was completed in 1991. Pinkus is now an acknowledged veteran of filmmaking, but only four out of the eighteen Swiss feature films produced in 1991 were directed by women; moreover, according to the filmmaker Patricia Plattner "most of the films

14 Historically, Elsbeth Tschudi, née Elmer (1752–1789); she bore twelve children.

made by socially engaged women filmmakers” were then circulated “only by the sixteen-millimetre distribution centres of religious institutions”, whose main function was to deliver films for schools and private screenings.¹⁵

Historical Documents: Real Facts or Constructed Reality?

The writings of the school of *New Historicism* (especially Hayden White and Jörn Rüsen) have emphasized that even historical documents are never without narrative elements. Recent linguistic and historical scholarship has investigated the linguistic and communicative aspects of trial records and replaced the earlier model of “closeness to reality” with that of “constructed reality”.¹⁶ Simply put, records of witchcraft trials are never objective but fictional. The last section of this article argues that the character of the scribe in the film draws attention to the constructedness of the records. With regard to witchcraft trials recent historical scholarship has pointed out that trial records were indeed anything but objective, although the procedure including its extensive written documentation was highly regulated. Historian Lyndal Roper aptly describes the common style of written documentation as a part of the baroque mind-set and culture, with its extremes and opposites, excessive ornamentation, and taste for the extra-ordinary.¹⁷ It is not unusual that only parts of the documents are extant, as is the case in the Goeldi trial. The documentation normally included re-written protocols of the interrogation, witness reports, legal opinions, the end verdict, and accounting of costs. Historian Burghart Schmidt states in his study of historical trials and nineteenth-century narrative adaptations by Ludwig Bechstein, an eminent editor of fairy tales, that at the end of a trial much of the ongo-

15 Suzanne Buchan, “‘Cinéma des copines’ and an Interview with Patricia Plattner”, *Women Filmmakers: Refocusing*, ed. Jacqueline Levitin, Judith Pessis, Valerie Raoul, and Judith Plessis, New York, Routledge, 2003, pp. 188–199, here p. 190.

16 Cf. Burghart Schmidt, *Ludwig Bechstein und die literarische Rezeption frühneuzeitlicher Hexenverfolgung im 19. Jahrhundert*, Hamburg, DOBU-Verlag, 2004, p. 252.

17 Lyndal Roper, *Witch Craze: Terror and Fantasy in Baroque Germany*, New Haven, Yale University Press, 2004, pp. 18–19. Marion Gibson, *Early Modern Witches: Witchcraft Cases in Contemporary Writing*, London/New York, Routledge, 2000, traced the documentatin of cases in England.

ing documentation, including immediate protocols, drafts of the interrogation, statements by relatives, a priest, etc., were usually no longer kept.¹⁸ Little is known about how the scribes proceeded and what was communicated in what way. Trial records were the written output of asymmetrical communication under extreme pressure.¹⁹ The accused often spoke only dialect – if he/she could speak at all after the application of torture. The final documents were written for judicial purposes and for legal colleagues, they were part of the legal procedure and its legitimization. They were shaped by institutional modifications and institutional language, patterns, and strategies. The roles and functions of the persecutors and victims were pre-established. A certain form and style was required for the final records. All this means that the records of any witchcraft trial were heavily manipulated and compressed. They had to be transcribed in indirect speech, free of dialect and regional elements which dominated the interrogation, and had to be brought into a linear and logical sequence. Only in a few cases where immediate protocols are extant is it possible to examine what was left out and glossed over in the final record and how fragments of senseless utterances under torture were retold to make up an elaborate and consistent confession.²⁰ In sum, records of any witchcraft trial were to a certain extent fiction. Furthermore, common ideas about witchcraft and well-known stories heavily influenced and shaped the trial protocols and the confessions.

The Trial of Anna Goeldi

Today we know more about the actual trial than Hasler found when she researched it. Recent historical research has pointed out that Anna Göldi, who came from the countryside near Zurich and was a foreigner in the canton of Glarus, was the victim of a power struggle between two of the leading families in the canton of Glarus, the Tschudis in Glarus and the Zwickys in Mollis. Although the canton of Glarus was one of the “Landsgemeinde-Demokratien” (“country community democracies”), it was like most Swiss cantons a feudal

18 Cf. Schmidt, *Ludwig Bechstein*, p. 250.

19 Cf. *ibid.*, pp. 249–250.

20 This and the following criteria after *ibid.*, pp. 251–254.

oligarchy and ruled essentially by a small number of families. Jurisdiction was in the hands of the executive power, the Council, and the councilors were in their office for life. The accuser Doctor Johann Jakob Tschudi (1747–1800) held high offices in Glarus as a member of the cantonal council and judge. Recently, Swiss law historian Walter Hauser has convincingly argued that Tschudi had had an affair with the maid and needed to be officially whitewashed in the trial.²¹ More importantly, however, the trial drew attention to the servant's earlier affair with a young man (Johann) Melchior Zwicky, from the competing family where Göldi had been employed from 1768 to 1774. Zwicky had to pay a hefty penalty and was prohibited from all public offices.²² The Zwicky family lost its honor and public standing.

The death sentence was officially for “Verderben” (“corrupting” or poisoning) the child Anna-Maria Tschudi (1773–1810) rather than witchcraft, even though the law at the time did not impose the death penalty for non-lethal poisoning, and witchcraft, including the “verderben” of children, had been eliminated in the Glarus “Blutgerichtsordnung” (criminal code) of 1698.²³ In addition, the canton had three types of council, a protestant, a catholic, and a common one, and the Göldi trial was held by the Protestant Council, not by the “Gemeiner Rat” (“Common Council”) which was the only one in charge of cases demanding the death sentence. Nevertheless it was the Protestant Council that sentenced Göldi on 6 June 1782 with a tight vote of 32 voices for death, 30 against.²⁴ Thus the trial was illegal, argues the law historian in his 2008 monograph on the case. However, the trial successfully reinforced the power of the Tschudis in the canton of Glarus and eliminated their competitor, the Zwickys.

The Tschudis appear to have been so intimidating that no one stood up against them, even when Dr. Tschudi requested that all members of the Protestant Council who were related to Zwicky request “Ausstand” (recuse themselves).²⁵ Even the Common Council apparently had no strong interest in opposing the Tschudis, and Dr. Tschudi insisted repeatedly that the case was to be judged solely by

21 Cf. Hauser, *Der Justizmord*, pp. 65–68.

22 Cf. *ibid.*, p. 42, 183.

23 *Ibid.*, p. 102.

24 *Ibid.*, p. 142.

25 *Ibid.*, p. 185.

the Protestant Council.²⁶ Early in the interrogations the Protestant Council made a move to pass the case to the Common Council but the request was denied, stating that it was already in good hands and reports would be sufficient.²⁷

Hauser also found that involving the metalsmith Steinmueller in the accusations was not coincidental. Not only was he friends with the servant (she stayed with him after she left the house of the Tschudis and deposited her belongings with him) but he was possibly already an eyesore for the authorities because he had a reputation for reading forbidden books critical of the aristocracy and making mysterious mixtures and experiments.²⁸ Above all, Rudolf Steinmueller was from an immigrant family that had only recently gotten rich and his brother Jakob had married a sister of Dr. Tschudi. There might have been a fight between the two families over the inheritance.²⁹ Rudolf Steinmueller was married to a distant family member of the Tschudis who no longer had contact with the Tschudis, and he raised the surviving daughter of his brother who in 1777 married one of the Zwickys.³⁰ Thus, he was already caught between the two competing families and was not only on Goeldi's side but also on that of the Zwickys. Even before Goeldi was arrested, both Johann Melchior Zwicky and Steinmueller were interrogated in Glarus on 4 December 1781.

The trial clearly served to enforce the established powers in Glarus and to suppress criticism of the oligarchy and the church. Also, the council confiscated the belongings of Göldi which were unusual for a servant, and the estate of Steinmueller and his widow. The city of Glarus had a monetary gain of 754 guilders from the trial after all costs – which today would amount to several thousand Swiss Francs.³¹

²⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 100–101.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 101. After Göldi's arrest, the Protestant Council had to ask the Common Council for approval to proceed – which it did on 25 February 1782, although not in open terms and with some clause for intervention. Cf. Hauser, *Der Justizmord*, pp. 100–101.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 96.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 97–98.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 98.

³¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 142–143, 183.

Trials in Switzerland were held in secret. The verdict on the one hand referred to a “Malefizprozess” (“witchcraft trial”) but on the other hand not to a witch but a “Vergifterinn” (“poisoner”).³² Criticism of the trial was to be punished in Glarus. Nevertheless word got out and Glarus officials were criticized and ridiculed from outside for believing in witchcraft and conducting such a trial. Contemporary investigations were at first obstructed by resistance from the officials in Glarus and by the fact that the trial records disappeared.³³ Only parts were found in a *copia*, a handwritten copy, three decades later from the estate of one of the examining judges, Jost Heiz, and given to an archive.³⁴ Censorship in Switzerland prohibited critical discussion of the Goeldi trial, but it immediately gained widespread attention through publications in more liberal and enlightened regions in Germany, Denmark, and Holland.³⁵ The satirical author and journalist Wilhelm Ludwig Wekhrlin published in his periodical *Chronologen* (Nuremberg) a satirical article in which he ridiculed the belief in witchcraft and accused the council of being inconsistent and allowing themselves to be deluded by a naughty child’s scam.³⁶ He was declared an outlaw in Glarus. Two months after the execution, another German, Heinrich Ludewig Lehmann, who had studied theology in Zurich, interviewed people in Glarus, who were led to believe that he was writing a defense of the trial. His two-part publication on the witchcraft trial included the text of the death sentence, the two medical attestations, drawings of the pins etc. and other secret documents.³⁷ Lehmann criticized the political system in Glarus, in that its concentration of power lay with a few families, but took no definite stance against the belief in witchcraft. In a letter to Glarus officials of 10 June 1783, Lehmann made it clear he believed that the two fami-

32 “MALEFIZPROZESS und URTEIL”, quoted in Hasler, *Anna Göldin*, p. 219.

33 Cf. Hauser, *Der Justizmord*, pp. 26–27 and Hasler, *Anna Göldin – Letzte Hexe*, p. 252.

34 Hauser, *Der Justizmord*, p. 27.

35 For details see *ibid.*, pp. 11–16, 144–150. For Enlightenment elements in the legal reception of the trial see Kord, “From Evil Eye to Poetic Eye”.

36 Cf. Wilhelm Ludwig Wekhrlin, “Hexenprozess in Glarus”. *Chronologon. Ein periodisches Werk*, Frankfurt/Leipzig, 10, 1782, pp. 213–224. Cf. Hauser, *Der Justizmord*, pp. 11–14.

37 According to Hauser, *Der Justizmord*, p. 37, it must have been Johann Melchior Kubli, member of the council and scribe of the trial records, who gave the secret documents to Lehmann.

lies, the Tschudis and the Zwickys, used the trial to fight each other and wanted to show who was "Meister" ("Master"),³⁸ an interpretation affirmed by Hauser's recent research.

Despite Hauser's additional findings several important points and contradictions of the trial remain unexplained. It appears that at first Dr. Tschudi only regretted letting Göldi leave the canton and demanded a statement revoking public rumors about an affair with the maid.³⁹ The only way to silence her forever was accusation of witchcraft. Only because of his authority as a medical doctor and his power in the council was he able to press for a trial and obtain a medical expert who would also support his case. Similar cases of pin-spewing were resolved simply by observing the children alone.⁴⁰ The questions remain, however, did he, more or less accidentally, give in to superstition and religious zeal around him and get caught in the dynamics or was it a thought-out plot including the dramatic pin-spewing to indirectly get to the rival family? What role did the wife play? Was the theologian involved in this plot or was he a strict believer in witchcraft who felt the authority of the church threatened or simply a misogynist who meant to use the case as a warning against looser morals? In 1775 an office had been reinstated that was in charge of improving morality,⁴¹ but maybe it was not efficient enough in Vicarius Tschudi's view. The film suggests a few answers to these open questions without offering simple solutions.

38 Lehmann, quoted in Hauser, p. 99.

39 Hauser, *Der Justizmord*, p. 59.

40 After the trial there were several similar cases of children spewing metal and stone objects, most of them were resolved very quickly and did not result in trials. Cf. Hasler, *Anna Göldin*, p. 222.

41 Cf. Hauser, *Der Justizmord*, pp. 159–160: Among other rules, unwed mothers had to wear a red cap and women who became pregnant from non-citizens in Glarus (its citizens would never be the cause!) had to be in the pillory and were banned from the canton for three years.

The Film *Anna Goeldin* (1991)

Although *Anna Goeldin* by Gertrud Pinkus has occasionally been referenced as a documentary,⁴² it is an adaptation of a fictional work. If one were to attempt to apply a textbook category of comparing literary work and film adaptation, *Anna Goeldi – The Last Witch* (1991) is a “close” to “intermediate” adaptation of the novel, given the specificities and differences of both genres.⁴³

The film visualizes Anna’s memories as flashbacks. They all take place in the first half of the film, while the atmosphere in the second half grows continuously darker and grimmer, without interruption by flashbacks. Additional attention to the process of documentation takes the place that Goeldi’s memories hold in the second half of the novel.

The plot may be briefly summarized as follows. Anna Goeldi (played by Cornelia Kempers), a robust woman of about forty, arrives in Glarus and is employed by the Tschudis (Rüdiger Vogler and Ursula Andermatt) (chapter 1). Her daily work and the life of the Tschudis unfolds in several slow-moving scenes. Doctor Tschudi begins to behave amorously toward the goodlooking, voluptuous and self-confident Goeldi. He harasses and threatens her with his knowledge of her past. We learn that years ago the young maid had a child out of wedlock, was accused of infanticide and in the doctor’s opinion punished “too mildly”.⁴⁴ She vehemently rejects this suspicion

42 Kord, “Ancient Fears and the New Order”, p. 65 note 22, labels it a documentary.

43 Cf. John M. Desmond and Peter Hawkes, *Adaptation: Studying Film and Literature*, New York, McGraw-Hill, 2006, p. 3 who follow years of theoretical practice in dividing adaptations into three categories – ‘close, loose, or intermediate’ depending on the degree of freedom with which they treat their sourcetexts. Stam and Raengo sought to reorient adaptation studies decisively from the fidelity discourse universally attacked by theorists (cf. *Literature and Film: A Guide to the Theory and Practice of Film Adaptation*, ed. Robert Stam and Alessandra Raengo, Malden MA, Wiley-Blackwell, 2004). They provoked a burst of diverse work on adaptation which here cannot be discussed in detail, most prominently Linda Hutcheon, *A Theory of Adaptation*, New York, Routledge, 2006.

44 Here and in the following the English translations of quotations from the film follow the subtitles as they are a published version, although often simplifying the dialogue. The film and the novel are vague as to dates and names. The background facts are: Göldi’s first child, which she bore in secret in 1765 during her

but also wants to keep her job. A flashback to the birthing scene and her being discovered with the dead baby visualizes her hardship without any additional explanation (chapters 2 and 3). Goeldi is then shown spending time and playing with the middle child Anna Maria Tschudi (in the film called “Anne-Miggeli”, played by Luca Kurt). The girl is outspoken, curious, and lively. She reveals Goeldi’s secrets, her good clothes and stack of letters, to her controlling and strict mother. Anna Maria spends more time alone with the servant and increasingly exhibits a lively imagination and interest in magic and death. The doctor’s close relative, addressed in his profession as *Vicarius* or vicar (Stefan Gubser), or by Mrs. Tschudi as uncle, a strict theologian, also lives in the same house.⁴⁴⁵ He has a keen, distrustful eye on every step and glance of Anna as well as on Dr. Tschudi’s advances.

Unlike the novel, the film has to give the main characters corporeal presence, concrete features, and through them, immediate motives for their actions. Goeldi is a sensual woman with non-modest behavior, and the Vicarius, strict, serious, and disagreeable, is from first glance her opponent, constantly observing her and questioning the girl Anna Maria about her, leading her to betray the servant’s secrets.

An added short scene – replacing memories in the novel – with the Vicarius interrogating Goeldi about letters she keeps, reveals her past affair with the son of her previous employer, Melchior Zwicky, who wanted to marry her. The Zwickys are another important patrician family in the town of Mollis in the canton. Flashbacks introduce the young Zwicky as a student who is much influenced by Rousseau and other new writing, but he cannot stand up to his mother’s oppo-

time as a servant in her home parsonage in Sennwald, died of suffocation during its first night. Göldi’s boyfriend, the father of the child, had left and enrolled in the army. Without a trial, Göldi was put in the pillory as a child murderess and condemned to six years of house arrest but escaped and found work in the canton of Glarus (cf. Hauser, *Der Justizmord*, pp. 53–54).

45 The historical person was, like the doctor, named Johann Jakob Tschudi, and Hauser distinguishes him from the doctor as the *Camerarius*, although he was awarded the office of *Camerarius* (chamberlain) only later in the year 1782, the highest office of the Protestant church in the canton at the time (Hauser, *Der Justizmord*, p. 153). He was also a family historian, who wrote a ten-volume history of his “uralten adelichen Geschlechts” (“ancient noble family”; quoted in *ibid.*, p. 154), a phrase that the film takes up in the dialogue (see below).

sition to legitimating such a revolutionary relationship. Goeldi leaves quietly, and a dead child is suggested only by her departure from a grave (chapters 3 and 4).

The servant and the eight-year old Anna Maria grow closer; we see Goeldi caress and kiss the girl who crawls into the attic into the maid's bed when she cannot sleep or the girl touching the voluptuous woman's breast. After Goeldi had been working for the Tschudis for a year, on three days needle pins are found in Anna Maria's milk and bread. Without further investigation, Goeldi is laid off for trying to harm the child (chapter 5). Goeldi demands her belongings from Tschudi and without an apology which is demanded of her, leaves Glarus. She assists her cousin Catharina in her work as midwife and emergency nurse for peasants, an aspect not in the novel. Catharina is outraged by poor health care and unaffordable doctors. Meanwhile back in Glarus Anna Maria has developed a mysteriously crippled foot. As in the documents, they are referred to as "gichterische Anfälle" ("goutish seizures").⁴⁶ Her parents find her vomiting pins. The Vicarius meticulously records the pins and presents them to prying people in Glarus. Urged by his wife Elsbeth, Dr. Tschudi goes to the council and demands action against Goeldi for bewitching his child (chapters 6 and 7). Again, the film takes more liberty than the novel and shows a possible motive in Dr. Tschudi being put down by his wife for not being able to heal his child and fearing ridicule. He therefore accuses the former maid of causing the disease and pain by magic powers, which is first met with astonishment and disapproval by the council. Goeldi receives a warning sent by Johann Melchior Zwicky, her earlier lover, she flees further away and works at an inn in a distant region. Goeldi is betrayed, arrested, and brought to Glarus for investigation (chapter 8). An outside medical expert⁴⁷ advises that only Goeldi can heal the child. It was a common superstition that only the one who bewitched a person could heal it. Goeldi still denies having done any damage, but is threatened with torture if she does not attempt to heal the "goutish" foot. After several attempts,

46 Cf. Hauser, *Der Justizmord*, p. 8.

47 Without any details here; historically Dr. Johannes Marti (1745-1819) who was the physician of the highest renown in the canton of Glarus (cf. Hauser, *Der Justizmord*, p. 15, 18). Hauser has a chapter on him and his friendship with Dr. Tschudi.

she succeeds by massaging the cramped foot until it relaxes (chapter 9).

Despite Goeldi's success the investigation continues. She is accused that she, with the help of the devil and an accomplice, gave a magical treat to Anna Maria which contained the seeds for the pins to grow in the girl's stomach. The council demands a confession, brings in the executioner, and the trial continues with torture (chapter 10).⁴⁸ Her friend, the metalsmith, known as a "Freidenker" ("freethinker", says one of the townsmen in chapter 11) who speaks out for changes in the economy is accused as her accomplice who prepared the treat for the girl. In the film Steinmueller is also visually marked as an outsider because he is a hunchback. His involvement in the trial appears coincidental and based solely on the fact that the girl was fascinated by earlier visits with Goeldi to his workshop and mentions him in her testimony. He supposedly helped Göldi prepare a sweet, poisoned treat. The film leaves out his interrogation and confession under torture, but shows that he is found dead. He hung himself in prison.

In the last scene, which will be considered in more detail below, the council's vote on the death sentence is brought to Göldi. The film ends with Göldi's blank stare rather than with a scene depicting the execution (chapter 11). The credits are shown against a shot of the sunrise over the Glarner overthrust, an unusual geological formation.

A few observations about the adaptation are in order, before the focus of this article is approached. Period or costume films as all historical fiction gain some of their fascination and popularity with the general audience from presentification of the past.⁴⁹ *Anna Goeldi* provides a straightforward historicizing approach of how the events

48 The film simplifies the process. After torture was applied, Göldi confessed on 11 April 1782 that the devil had helped her prepare the sweet treat. There was some back and forth in the "confessions" because a confession under torture had to be repeated without it. After the child Anna Maria stated that Rudolf Steinmueller had made the treat, Göldi confessed to this version two days later on 13 April (Walter, *Der Justizmord*, pp. 8–9).

49 I am applying here a term made popular by literary historian Hans Ulrich Gumprecht, who uses it for placing people in an alternate, unfamiliar world which includes good history classes and Renaissance festivals; Hans Ulrich Gumprecht, *Production of Presence: What Meaning Cannot Convey*, Palo Alto/CA, Stanford University Press, 2004, pp. 133–140. "Presentification" of the past was originally coined by Claudio Naranjo in the 1970s as a technique in *Gestalt* therapy.

could have taken place. The mise-en-scène takes the viewer to a specific time and place in the distant past. There is no narrator. The main characters including the maid speak Swiss High German rather than Swiss German dialect, making for wider accessibility. This may emphasize that the film does not attempt a realistic portrayal.

Because the town of Glarus has changed dramatically in the two hundred years since, the film was shot in the *Freulerpalast Naefels* and in the living history open-air museum Werdenfels (credits). The auteurs added and incorporated many long shots of everyday life and work of a servant, living conditions of peasants, long journeys on foot through deep snow, etc. which open up the fairly short narrative to cinema time and space. They also emphasize the class barriers, to which Göldi was perceived to be a threat, for example in a conversation about her inappropriately ornate clothing and in a conversation with Mrs. Tschudi who envies the maid for her independence. Views of the mountain Glarner, especially against the setting and rising sun, serve to structure the film in a way similar to repeated description and recurring references to the mountain in the novel.

Anybody expecting sensationalist interrogation, graphic torture and execution scenes from *Anna Goeldi* will be disappointed. The director managed to represent torture effectively without a single direct scene. There is only one short shot of the tortured Goeldi hanging in the dark background along with a close-up of her expressive face during further interrogation, and another where the pain of the lashed woman is reflected in the close-up of the bailiff's compassionate face, underscored by the sound of her screams. The execution is represented by a long shot of Goeldi's blank stare when she hears the death sentence read to her by a very sad and quietly compassionate bailiff, and the shot transitions to a view of the rising sun over the Glarus overthrust, with glaring light streaming first through the hole in the rock and fading-in to white.

Similarly, the director and writer appear aware of edgy potential in the intricacies of their story without exploiting it. They suggest, as mentioned above, fears of Anna as a potential pedophile as well as a homoerotic interest by Mrs. Tschudi in a scene where Mrs. Tschudi asks the maid to massage her aching head. Thus, the film begins to explore additional motives why Mrs. Tschudi might have insisted on getting rid of the maid and might have been offended by and jealous of her husband's affair in more than one way. The filmmaker obvi-

ously did not want to make the story of the “last witch”, a wrongly silenced woman, into a fashionable lesbian story. Elements of romance are also kept to a minimum. A sentimental approach would have added to and embellished much more Goeldi’s romance with the Zwicky son and her departure from him which in the film is represented in flashbacks while Goeldi reads his letters. Goeldi’s first love is reduced even more than in the novel to the birth of the child, who died during its first night. The film is interested in the power play and intrigues that lead to the trial, not sentimentality or thriller and horror effects. The film leaves it open whether Doctor Tschudi’s advances actually led to sexual relations with the maid or not. Again, the viewer is denied voyeurism and sentimentality or a simplified moralistic judgement. It is obvious, however, that the maid feels secure and independent enough to tell him off, and also that the sheer possibility and the maid’s sensuality upsets both his wife and his moralistic uncle and drive them to extreme measures.

The film carefully and in detail develops a tender relationship between Goeldi and Anna Maria. The girl is cute, appearing inquisitive and playful but also lonely and deprived of parental love and attention. (In one scene after Goeldi left, she kisses the window pane!) Goeldi behaves very lovingly with the girl, as if taking her on as her surrogate child. Anna Maria becomes very trusting and close, even intimate with the maid.⁵⁰ Given the medical fears of the time about sexuality, there might have been accusations against Goeldi of having ‘corrupted’ the girl with sexual acts, assumes Hauser.⁵¹ The film, however, does not go as far as to explicitly fantasize about such a possibility. The maid has a definite physical presence and approachability for the girl, something her strict and migraine-prone mother definitely does not provide. This suggests that while the first pins found might have been the girl’s prank and revenge for an earlier fight, it was not the girl who started the allegations after Goeldi left. In the healing scene Anna Maria, the formerly lively, talkative girl, is astoundingly silent and does not say a word, as if prohibited and under threat, but she does not turn those big eyes away from Goeldi.

50 She sleeps in Goeldi’s bed, hugging her, and, for example, they have a competition of weeing “with or against the wind” in a storm, and, in another scene, Anna Maria asks the maid whether she could touch her breasts.

51 Cf. Hauser, *Der Justizmord*, pp. 68–75, 86.

They begin to shine as she is touched. Her later allegations against Goeldi are only read out by the scribe. Anna Maria is shown in only one more scene, alone in the garden, sad and lonely, obeying her mother's call to return to the house.

Like any good film adaptation, the film by Gertrud Pinkus is a cultural artifact in its own right. It transforms the novel's montage of old documents and modern-style descriptions, dialogues, and reflections into scenes and dialogue presented to the viewer in a seemingly objective yet partial manner. There is no personal narrator who interprets actions and characters and their feelings beyond what is seen and said. The main characters are not very talkative, leaving much to the power of images and sounds. Background music is used extremely sparingly. Anna's memories are visualized in flashbacks. Her perspective is transformed into the sympathetic way the camera captures her facial expressions and those of people who feel for her: the bailiff Blumer (Peter Wyssbrod) and increasingly the council scribe who will be discussed in detail in the next section.

The Scribe: Words of Justice and Words that Kill

The film adaptation expands the role of the scribe who in the novel is mentioned only in passing. The historical trial records were written by Johann Melchior Kubli (1750–1835) who was a member of the Glarus council and according to Walter Hauser became a senator of the Helvetic Republic during the Napoleonic era and an opponent of the death penalty.⁵² The scribe in the film is indeed named Kubli (Dominique Horwitz) but not a member of the Glarus council. He is a young man who also does writing jobs for another expanded character, the owner of a textile dyeing and printing mill in Glarus who is also an enlightened politician and as such a member of the Glarus council (chapter 1: Intro). In the film he is not introduced by name but as *Landammann*, referring to his office as elected chief magistrate of the canton.⁵³ The *Landammann* represents progress and a changing

52 Hauser, *Der Justizmord*, pp. 42–43. For the fate of the Tschudis after 1782, also see Hauser.

53 Historically the Glarus *Landammann* at the time (1781–1783) was a medical doctor by profession and, like the plaintiff, a Tschudi (Tschudi Johann Heinrich,

economy, both of which pose threats to the old social order. He employs a French chemist and color expert named Jeannerett in order to win the race for inventing the best and brightest red fabric dye against his competition in Zurich. Kubli’s job is to write down and keep track of Jeannerett’s experiments and recipes. During a dinner conversation celebrating his new office as judge in the film’s introduction Doctor Tschudi expressed outright envy of entrepreneurs who get rich fast in this new industry, competition for the old powerful families. It is also the *Landammann* who presides over the Council and speaks out against a witchcraft trial at the initial denunciation (chapter 6). In the novel it is him who seeks to hand Goeldi over to authorities in Zurich who had offered to imprison her instead.⁵⁴ He fears Glarus being ridiculed for antiquated beliefs in witchcraft – “noch in zweihundert Jahren” (“even in two hundred years”), he says in the film, a self-reference to the film’s time.

The film fictionalizes how the scribe ‘documents’ the witchcraft trial. Following Tschudi’s first allegations in front of the Council and the change in council to assure impartiality (chapter 6), the scribe explains that there is not enough time to record directly during the testimonies and interrogations; therefore he is asked to compose the minutes from his notes, which he does in the factory, reading out loud to Jeannerett who is partly outraged, partly amused by the backwards beliefs of the Council. The viewer first sees Kubli as scribe in the *Landammann*’s workshop, then after Dr. Tschudi reports about the pin spewing and makes his first accusation of Goeldi and her alleged misdeeds in front of the Council (chapter 5), one month after Goeldi left. Kubli interrupts Tschudi, “Halt, nicht so schnell”. (“Not so fast”), while Tschudi describes the pins. Kubli is seen writing quickly, mumbling, trying to keep up with what Tschudi says. The *Landammann* advises him, “Mach er doch Notizen und schreib er

1728–1783), although from the catholic side of the family (“Die Landammänner von Glarus seit 1265”, www.familytree.ch/Privatauftritt%20Landammaenner.htm#heer5, accessed 16 June 2009).

54 Like many of the small facts in the film and novel, this is historically correct, though omitting details, here that Göldi was a citizen of Zurich and on 24 May 1782 several members of the council asked the magistrate in Zurich to imprison the accused in Zurich in the case that she was not executed, and the Zurich magistrate agreed (Hauser, *Der Justizmord*, p. 149).

nachher ins Reine. Die Zeit ist rar, Kubli. Der Rat hat heut viel Beschlüss.” (“Take notes. Make a fair copy afterwards. We still have lots of decisions.”) The camera focusses on the sheet of paper (the audience may be able to decipher the title “Evangelisches Rat-protokol. / Glarus, 26. November 1781”) on which Kubli now records what we hear his voice say, “klagend angezeigt worden, dass Anna Göldin dem Kind Gufen in die Milch hat getan” (“lodge a complaint against Anna Göldin, who put pins in the child’s milk ...”). In the next shot of Kubli we realize he is writing this while he is already somewhere else, namely in the workshop and from memory. He continues, “so haben” (“Thus my ...”) when he is interrupted by a voice – “Kubli, schreib auf” (“Kubli, write ...”) – and we now see him in the manufacturing room, with Jeannerett talking to him, demanding to note down his recipe for dye instead, while the scribe continues, now louder: “meine gnädigen Obrigkeiten den Beschluss gefasst” (“... have decided ...”). When the chemist reminds Kubli to write what he gets paid for, the young man counters enthusiastically that words about ingredients are worthless:

Das hier, das sind Worte, Worte der Wahrheit, Worte der Gerechtigkeit! Worte!
(These are words, words of truth, words of justice, words!)

In contrast, the chemist wants Kubli to record the exact numbers for ingredients in his new dye. In this very scene it is cow manure which the chemist is certain is the last and most important ingredient for bright red color and will turn to gold but he cannot convince the scribe Kubli of the value. Triumphant, Kubli continues:

Den 20. Christmonat 1781. Herr Doktor und Fünferrichter Tschudi wird befraget, wann und unter welch Umständ die gesuchte Person in seine Dienste getreten. Antwort: Das sei zu Martini im Vorjahr gewesen.

(20 December 1781. Doctor and judge Tschudi is asked when and under what circumstances the wanted person entered his service. Answer: That was last Martinmas.)⁵⁵

This is also how the viewer learns how much time has passed since her arrival at the beginning of the film: a little over a year. The English translation does not convey the specific tone of trial records in German which always use distancing indirect speech.

55 St. Martin’s day, that is 11 November.

Kubli is excited about the investigation of Goeldi, all the allegations he hears about, and also his important role in documenting the trial. He seems convinced that he is on the progressive side, as he looks down in disgust on the chemist and his cow dung. In another such dialogue after Anna’s imprisoning and the successful attempt of healing the child, Kubli literally puts up a shield, a room divider, against such experiments and entrepreneurial spirit, and thus sheltered continues producing a clean copy from his notes, summarizing the outcome of the procedure and the council deferring judgement to higher authorities, while one of the workers declares Anna a witch (chapter 10). Kubli says what he is about to write:

Das Kind Anne-Miggeli Tschudi sagt vor der ehrenwerten Kommission aus.
(The child Anna-Maria Tschudi declares before the honorable commission.)

With a sharp cut the scene switches to a dimly-lit close-up of Goeldi’s sad face in prison, as Kubli continues in voice-over. Goeldi is not responding to these words, but appears numbed, silenced, and broken, her gaze fixated somewhere in the distance beyond the viewer as if already knowing that her words have no power, she is not believed and will have to renounce this world. We hear Kubli continuing with Anna-Maria’s testimony:

Es sei am Johannistag gsin. Da sei der Rudolf Steinmüller bei der Anna auf der Mägdekammer oben auf dem Bett gesessen. Und da sei einer am Boden herumgehopppt ohne Arm und Beine. Da habe die Anna ihr aus einem Töpfchen eine überzuckerte Leckerei geben, die sie in der Kammer hat essen müssen.
(It was on Midsummer day. Locksmith Steinmueller was also up there on Anna’s garrett, sitting on her bed. Someone was hopping around without arms and legs. Then Anna gave her a sugared sweet out of a jar which she had to eat in the room.)

The council pressed for evidence that Goeldi received help by the devil, and the child’s vague description of a creature hopping around appears to have been enough. The testimony is removed from the speaker in both time and space and undergoes omissions and changes, as the scribe rewrites his earlier notes. The transmission of information from the witness to the viewer is indirect and removed from the visible presence of both the witness and those who heard the witness. The contrast between the scribe’s confident exact voice recalling the child’s testimony which was understood as a description

of the facts, and the accused's numbed silence is striking. The voice-over causes the archival material, which was ostensibly intended to document the process of finding the truth, to seem to "offer evidence with an uncertain status".⁵⁶ Kubli's voice stops here, and in the next short shot Goeldi is seen turning towards the stone wall in prison, praying quietly but fervently, desperately. The following interrogation scenes make it clear that the answers Kubli puts down are not what the prisoners Anna Göldi and Rudolf Steinmüller say.

The film is more explicit than the novel in offering an explanation as to what might have happened on the Tschudi side. At the beginning of the last chapter (11: "Der rote Bach"), after the torturing of Anna, the Tschudis consult in their home, apparently a bedroom, about the consequences if Goeldi were released to the authorities in Zurich. Auteurs Pinkus/Hasler propose here that the outcome of the trial and the manipulation of the records were a matter of family honor of which the men were very aware. It resulted in pressure on the council and abuse of power. In this chapter first a pale, gently-speaking, controlled Mrs. Tschudi, apparently very pregnant, sitting in a chair, ponders, "Man sollte die Anna auf freien Fuß setzen, damit sie außer Landes gehe. Ich fürchte ihre Rache." ("Anna should be set free so she can leave the country. I fear her revenge.") Elsbeth Tschudi is afraid of more witchcraft directed towards her unborn child, and she says it seriously enough to convey that she believes it herself. Doktor Tschudi and the Vicarius, however, clearly argue in terms of honor and use such superstitions only to reach their goal and clear their good name. The family patriarchs are agitated: the stern Vicarius is pacing back and forth and Doctor Tschudi is turning his back to his wife and looking out the window. The Vicarius in a cold and calculated voice hints at the doctor's misbehaving as cause of the matter: "Vor Annas Rache, scheint mir, soll sich ein anderer fürchten." ("Someone else should fear her revenge.") Historically, intimate relations between Tschudi and Goeldi are not documented, and neither novel nor film fantasize anything beyond unsuccessful attempts but still suggest the likelihood. Tschudi now stands next to his wife, while the Vicarius, the defender of the family honor, continues

56 Robin Curtis, *Conscientious Viscerality: The Autobiographical Stance in German Film and Video*, Berlin, Edition Imorde, 2006, p. 149. Curtis applies this reading to the use of voice-over in recent autobiographical films.

reproaching his close relative and head of the family most sternly and with growing urgency, while the camera’s gaze goes back and forth between the two men who become increasingly emotional in voice and demeanor:

VICARIUS TSCHUDI: Noch kann sie über dich auftischen, was sie will, mein teuerster. Schlimmer noch – wenn es den Besserwissern gelingt, sie nach Zürich zu bringen, ins Schellenwerk zur Haft, so wird man ihr dort den Mund noch einmal öffnen. Die Züricher, die mischen sich in alles ein. Man wird es schon zu drehen wissen, ihr gewisse Kalimitäten zu entlocken. Unkeusches wird gern gehört, das Volk lechzt nach solchen Geschichten. Das Fünferamt bist du dann los. Wer weiß, ob Anna nicht Beweis anführen könnte – wenn sie’s nicht bereits getan hat. – Ein Schandfleck!

DOKTOR TSCHUDI: Um Gottes willen, die Protokolle! Wir müssen die Protokolle bekommen. Wer weiß, was da alles aus Anna herausgepresst wird. Das ist ja – . Nein, diese Ungewissheit – .

VICARIUS TSCHUDI: Ein Schandfleck für unser hochangesehenes Geschlecht. Über Generationen hinweg!⁵⁷

The Vicarius storms out of the room, banging the door; there is a sharp cut to the next scene. It becomes obvious that they will not let Goeldi survive, fearing accusations of an affair which would be the end of Doctor Tschudi’s high offices and the Vicarius’s advancement.

In the following scene, we witness only Kubli’s reaction to what must have been Doctor Tschudi demanding from the Council the minutes of everything Anna said during the interrogations about him to be destroyed. Kubli rises from his seat and replies in an upset voice: “Es gibt keine solchen Protokolle!” (“There are no such minutes!”)⁵⁸ Tschudi now insists that Goeldi testifies before the Council

57 Chapter 11. In the translation of the subtitles:

VICARIUS: She can say what she wants about you. Worse still: If your opponents manage to get her imprisoned in Zurich she’ll be made to talk there once again. That Zurich lot always interferes. They’ll manage to get “certain calamities” out of her. People like to hear of unchaste things. You’ll have done away with your office. She may even be able to produce evidence. If she hasn’t done so already. What a disgrace!

TSCHUDI: The minutes! We must get hold of the minutes! Who knows what will be tortured out of her! This is, no ... What an uncertainty!

VICARIUS: A disgrace for our esteemed family! Throughout generations!

58 As mentioned above, part of the records turned up again later. Hauser’s book includes the minutes from the interrogation and confessions under torture. Cf. Hauser, *Der Justizmord*, pp. 108–139.

about their relationship and clears his name. Despite mumbling protests by a few of the councillors, Goeldi is called before the Council again. She had been tortured, is not able to walk by herself, and makes a totally broken and hopeless impression. Tschudi, looking down his nose, avoiding her gaze, asks her in the name of the "Glarner Öffentlichkeit" ("Glarus public") whether he, Doctor and Judge, had "jemals fleischlich Umgang mit ihr gehabt oder Unsittliches von ihr verlangt" ("had carnal relations with [her] or demanded indecencies"). After a long gaze out the open window into the green, as if realizing she will never be free again, while we hear birds singing, Anna mumbles, "Da war nichts." ("There was nothing.") The scribe shakes his head in disbelief. Neither does the audience believe. The fact is, however, that her stating the opposite would not change her situation but prolong torture. At this very moment one of the councillors brings the news of Steinmueller's suicide. In the next shot various town's people discuss the suicide of the free-thinker, but they are soon distracted by news that the river is all red, and they rush to see the ominous bloody water for themselves. The rational explanation, however, is simply that it is run-off from red dye. The *Landammann*'s workshop has succeeded in making real red prints as is revealed in the next scene. The entrepreneur celebrates his success with his workers, and his chemist Jeannerett takes leave of Kubli, but the scribe is preoccupied with the trial records and frustrated.

The council fears public ridicule for belief in witchcraft, but the Tschudis cannot let Anna Goeldi live. Kubli has to rewrite the records and eliminate all references of belief in witchcraft. Kubli does not participate in drinking with the *Landammann* to "Gesundheit und Wohlstand" ("health and prosperity"). The audience sees this connection as Kubli explains to Jeannerett why he has not documented the recipe for the successful red dye: "Ich muss sämtliche Protokolle über Nacht neu schreiben. Alle Hexenworte muss ich durch andere ersetzen. Der Rat hat's befohlen." ("I have to rewrite the minutes. The word 'witch' has to be avoided. Orders from the council.") Jeannerett responds over his shoulder: "Wahrheitsworte ersetzen." ("Words of truth are replaced.") And after hugging Kubli good-bye, he adds in a sad voice, "Warum machst du das, Kubli?" ("Why do you do this?") It is not a question, just sad amazement. Kubli does not want to think about it. He turns around and with a gesture of

frustration continues his deliberations, “Vergifterin – Verderberin – Herrgott, was denn? – Kindsmörderin – Unholdin – ” (“Poisoner – corrupter, and what else, for God’s sake? Infanticide, monster ...”). His final choice would be “Vergifterin”, as we know from the verdict. Before he has uttered the last two words, the scene has already cut to a close-up of Goeldi in profile, her hair cut very short, ready for the execution. The scribe is rewriting and changing the trial records in voice-over. In these additional scenes which were not in the novel, film script author Eveline Hasler and director Gertrud Pinkus explicitly represent the possibility that the trial records were revised and rewritten for fear of critique in enlightened and progressive Zurich and elsewhere. The record is all but objective; it is the result of manipulation, composed for outside perception and with the reputation of Glarus officials in mind. Only the scribe, who has the least authority in the council but who is left in charge of these changes, becomes more and more sceptical, pensive, and compassionate. The last we hear of him through the bailiff, who brings the result of the vote and verdict to Anna in this last scene, is that Kubli tried to stand up for the defendant after the vote by the council – in vain.

Even without the word “witch” the trial was immediately recognized both inside and outside of Switzerland as an anachronistic and unjust witchhunt.

Conclusion

The novel *Anna Göldin* made extensive use of documents and visually marked them in italics. The film also incorporates quotations from the historical documents, but does not set them apart and given the nature of the medium they are much shorter. Instead, the process of documentation is thematized in additional scenes. With this approach the film gives a fictional answer for puzzling issues in the extant documents. The film presents a fictional but believable scenario as to why and how large parts of the Goeldi trial records were destroyed and why the language of the verdict was inconsistent with the interrogation method and major components of the trial, namely the application of torture and insistence on a confession to being helped by the devil as well as the healing attempt. The film’s added subplot on documentation emphasizes not the reality but the fictional aspects of the records. It emphasizes the process of documentation as subjec-

tive and coincidental, as dependent on memory and formed by convention. When the scribe ponders whether he should write in the death sentence “poisoner, corrupter, infanticide, monster ...,” this important record of the events is anything but objective. What was elided in the extant records, cannot be reconstructed with certainty, mostly because the real agenda, harming the rival family Zwicky, remained hidden. The scribe, who earlier was so enthusiastic about the power of words in finding out the truth and speaking justice, realizes at the end that his words hide the truth and enable injustice. The film leaves the viewer pondering this issue and the question, will the truth eventually come out – like the sun rising over the Glarus overthrust in the final shot?⁵⁹

The film *Anna Göldi – Letzte Hexe* by Gertrud Pinkus is not a feminist manifesto, but it addresses the issue of equal rights for women in a way that reaches out to a wider audience and is intuitively understood.⁶⁰ Pinkus/Hasler use a historical case to make a strong statement about gender roles and abuse of power that continue to resonate in the present. Further, both the novel and the film make a strong case for learning from the past about injustice and maltreatment of outsiders not because injustice and abuse of power are things of the past, rather because they are clearer to see in the past than in the present.

59 Incidentally, in 2008 the Glarus Overthrust was designated a UNESCO World Heritage site, a monument that the canton could welcome with much less controversy than the Göldi museum.

60 As apparent in reviews such as those in the *Neue Zürcher Zeitung*, 28 November 1991.

Abstract

Dieser Artikel untersucht, ausgehend vom neueren Interesse an den Akten des Falles Anna Göldi und den Rätseln, die der Prozess noch immer aufgibt, die Verfilmung des Romans *Anna Göldin – Letzte Hexe* (1982) der Schweizer Schriftstellerin Eveline Hasler. Hasler nutzte in ihrem Roman ausführlich historische Quellen und zitierte u.a. aus Gerichtsprotokollen sowie privater und offizieller Korrespondenz, aber ihre Geschichte unternimmt nicht, die Lücken und Widersprüche zu füllen, sondern zeichnet das Bild einer ursprünglich starken und selbstbewussten Frau aus der unteren Schicht, die in ein Netz politischer Intrigen und Machtdemonstration gerät, als die Aufklärer schon die Gleichheit der Menschen proklamieren.

Die Dokumente spielen in der Verfilmung von Gertrud Pinkus, für die Hasler selbst das Drehbuch schrieb (1991), eine andere Rolle als im Roman, wo sie vom Erzähltext visuell abgehoben sind. Der Aufsatz analysiert anhand der zusätzlichen Szenen um den Schreiber, wie der Film den Prozess der Dokumentation thematisiert. Der Film präsentiert damit ein im Roman nicht enthaltenes fiktives Szenario, das eine Erklärung dafür gibt, warum die Sprache der Urteilsverkündung im Widerspruch stand zur Verhör-Methode, der Anwendung von Folter und dem Beharren auf einem Geständnis der Hexerei und Mithilfe des Teufels. Der Film betont die fiktionalen Aspekte der Prozessakten. Der Vorgang der Dokumentation erscheint subjektiv und zufällig, abhängig vom Gedächtnis eines Individuums und zustandegekommen in einer Mischung aus Konvention und Zwang. Die Verfilmung von *Anna Göldin* ist damit nicht nur als feministische Erinnerung an einen Justizskandal von Interesse, sondern teilt und popularisiert mit den Mitteln des Historienfilms ein wichtiges Thema der neueren Geschichtswissenschaft, nämlich dass Gerichtsakten und Urteilsverkündigungen immer fiktiv sind.

