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ARTICLES

Heather I. Sullivan

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Ecocriticism, Goethe's Optics, and *Unterhaltungen deutscher Ausgewanderten*: Emergent Forms versus Newtonian 'Constructions'

Long viewed as an anomalous assemblage of tales formulating either social or aesthetic developments, Goethe's *Unterhaltungen deutscher Ausgewanderten*, in fact, presents a sequence of perceptual categories relating to his optics and his exploration of our interface with the physical world around us. From the troublingly inexplicable sounds of the ghost stories through the embrace and renunciation of physical desires to the final, idealized visual spectrum of the *Märchen*'s colors and lights, the tales' path explores how physical perception is enmeshed with interpretation. Hence the *Unterhaltungen* relates to ecocriticism's interrogation of human-nature environments in that both Goethe and ecocriticism seek to *change* our perception itself so that we might recognize the "emergent forms" in which we inevitably participate (rather than simply "control" them). Both also seek to comprehend the artificiality of the damaging "constructions" wrought by Newtonian science (according to Goethe) or by the view that the natural world is naught but static material awaiting our "enlivenment." (HIS)

Horst Lange

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Nazis vs. the Rule of Law:

Allegory and Narrative Structure in Fritz Lang's *M*

Since Kracauer, most readings of Fritz Lang's *M* have tacitly assumed that a proper understanding of the murderer is the key element to any serious reading of the movie. However, a careful analysis of the film's narrative structure reveals that the murderer is little more than a plot function. His actions only trigger and

accelerate the action in the film while an allegorical narrative unfolds. The real struggle presented occurs not between the murderer and those trying to catch him, but between two political paradigms that vie for legitimacy vis-à-vis “the people” and in fact played prominent roles in the late Weimar Republic’s political crisis: National Socialism (represented by the criminal underworld) and a state ruled by the constitutional principle of the rule of law (represented by the police). Such a reading is able to shed new light on Lang’s political Romanticism. (HL)

Peter Morgan

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“Your Story is now My Story”:

The Ethics of Narration in Grass and Sebald

Aspects of the “ethics of representation” are explored with reference to W.G. Sebald’s critique of Günter Grass and West German literature in *Lufkrieg und Literatur* (*On the Natural History of Destruction*) and his early literary essays. Sebald takes Grass to task for failing to tell the story of the Danzig Jews as though it were his own story, and for inventing the figure of Hermann Ott, the German who does not betray the Jews, in *Aus dem Tagebuch einer Schnecke* (*From the Diary of a Snail*, 1972). Sebald’s critique of Grass is examined with reference to Avishai Margalit’s philosophical essay, *The Ethics of Memory*, and questions are raised regarding the ethics of representation in the work of both Sebald and Grass. (PM)

Monika Schmitz-Emans

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“handlung entsteht schon von wort zu wort.” Gerhard Rühms

Worttheater

This article deals with the poetry of Gerhard Rühm. Starting from the claim that the experimental styles of writing put forth by concrete poetry lead to the development of new aesthetic categories and new forms of (self-)presentation. This includes the idea of words and letters participating in the poetic process as ‘actors’ (Akteure) (as is the case with E. Gomringer, E. Jandl and F. Mon). Essential to Rühm is the idea of a ‘Spiel-Raum’ (play-room, scope) in which the verbal ensemble’s protagonists take action. His texts experiment with strategies of self-presentation of language. In particular, this is the case with *Ophelia und die Wörter* (Play 1954-1971). Rühm’s texts are dramatic texts insofar as they are not to be read as instructions for acting but—very ‘concretely’—to be read as exactly what they are: a written theatre of words on paper. This is especially illustrated by his “mini plays.” Here, those parts of traditional theater conventionally referred to as actions and props are replaced by verbal elements. Yet, the reader as a necessary condition prevails, as s/he has to watch these words play and act. (MSE; in German)

Stephan Jaeger

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The Atmosphere in the ‘Führerbunker.’ How to Represent the Last Days of World War II

In the context of the recent boom of World War II representations and German remembrance culture, this essay investigates different narrative ways to repre-

sent the last days in the *Führerbunker* in literature, historiography, and film by analyzing Joachim Fest's popular history book *Der Untergang* (2002), Oliver Hirschbiegel's movie *Der Untergang* (2004), Michael Kloft's documentary film *Tod im Führerbunker* (2004), Walter Kempowski's collage *Echolot: Abgesang '45* (2005), and Marcel Beyer's novel *Flughunde* (1995). History that seems to be often incomprehensible in its moral dimensions poses the challenge whether a historical representation can reconstruct or must restage the past. This article demonstrates that representational choices are grounded less in questions of genre, media, and the dichotomy between history and fiction, than in the tension between open and closed history, in the involvement of reader and viewer, and in the relationship between a realistic scenic representation and the meta-reflection of historical representation. (SJ)

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(K)ein Wunder, daß wir nicht singen

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