

M onatshefte

für deutschsprachige Literatur und Kultur

VOLUME 104 • NUMBER 3 • 2012

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ARTICLES

Christoph Weber

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**Santiagos Untergang – Lissabons Schrecken: Heinrich von Kleists
Erdbeben in Chili im Kontext des Katastrophendiskurses im
18. Jahrhundert**

In his novella *Das Erdbeben in Chili* (1807), Heinrich von Kleist depicts the destruction of the Chilean capital Santiago in 1647 in the wake of a series of seismic shocks. Despite Kleist's situating of the disaster within a specific spatiotemporal frame, scholars have noted that its descriptive details demonstrate strong correlations with the Lisbon earthquake of 1755. Kleist's intertextual allusions to this widely publicized catastrophe can be substantiated by means of an analysis of two source texts—the eyewitness accounts of Lisbon's downfall published in the *Hannoversches Magazin* (1779) and Theodor Nevermann's drama *Alonzo und Elvira, oder das Erdbeben von Lissabon* (1795). Contextualizing the novella within the disaster discourse of the 18th century shows Kleist's radical break with traditional modes of endowing calamities with meaning to be all the more poignant. The chaos that engulfed both royal cities testifies to a historical continuum punctuated by upheavals devoid of any transcendent meaning. (CW; in German)

Clarissa Blomqvist

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**Realism on Stage: Reflections on Language in Theodor Fontane's
Theatre Reviews**

Theodor Fontane is known for devoting a large proportion of his novels to conversations between his characters. By giving his characters their own particular tone, Fontane uses language as a means of characterization and adds to the realism of the narration. Not only in Fontane's novels, but also in his critical writing

does language play a major role. In his theater reviews Fontane combines his criticism of dramatists, dramas, performances and actors with reflections on language which shed light on his aesthetic beliefs as a realist. Disapproving of artificial poetic language, Fontane favours simple language which optimally matches the situation. According to Fontane, the choice of language is vital for the effect of a play performed on stage. It is particularly the dramatist's ability of finding the right tone which determines the success of creating a realistic representation of life in the dramatic art form, of putting realism on stage. (CB)

Oliver Hiob

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Kafka and the Rabbis: Re-reading "The Judgment" in Light of Rabbinic Law

This article focuses on the judgment in Franz Kafka's "The Judgment." It re-evaluates the father's sentence, "I now condemn you to death by drowning!" from a religious-legal perspective. To approach Kafka's text from this perspective challenges traditional interpretations of this narrative, which tend to not question the validity of the father's judgment at all. By highlighting the various transgressions of halakhah, i.e. rabbinic law, by Georg as well as his father, this essay shows that it is in fact not Georg, but his father who is guilty and therefore needs to be punished. It shows how the father transgresses halakhah on several occasions and that his sentence over the son is illegitimate. Additionally, by pointing out the connection of Kafka's narrative to rabbinic law, this essay highlights its midrashic, i.e. commentary character and relates it to the biblical story of Jacob and Esau in the Book of Genesis. (OH)

Corina L. Petrescu

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Spiel mit dem klassischen Erbe: Volker Brauns *Iphigenie in Freiheit*

This article analyzes Volker Braun's understanding of world history as *theatrum mundi* as depicted in the text *Iphigenie in Freiheit* (1992). Braun sees mankind's history as perpetually determined by forces beyond an individual's control, by war, and by murder, and suggests that the only way to escape this vicious circle is by renouncing violence. How then, Braun asks, is one to embrace this new, right(eous) way of life after the loss of belief in a political system's utopian potential? By analyzing Braun's engagement with fragments of German dramas from the 18th to the 20th centuries, namely Lessing's *Philotas*, Büchner's *Dantons Tod* and Brecht's *Der Untergang des Egoisten Johann Fatzer*, I show that while Braun's text proclaims the death of utopia, by continuing to write, Braun confirms that ultimately he still believes in mankind's salvation through fiction. However, he also realizes that unlike the classical texts, post-modern fiction is unable to mediate transcendence. It can only polemicize with itself and the world. (CP)

Virginia McCalmont, Waltraud Maierhofer 375
Juli Zeh’s *Corpus Delicti* (2009): Health Care, Terrorists, and the Return of the Political Message

The novel *Corpus Delicti: A Trial* takes place in 2057. Mia Holl, a thirty-year-old woman, must stand trial before a jury. She is charged with excessive love (to her brother), excessive intellect (she thinks scientifically), and excessive independence of mind. In a society in which the care of the body and prevention of disease has supplanted all intellectual values, to possess these inner resources is sufficient to be classified as a dangerous subject, a terrorist. Mia Holl seeks to prove that her brother, convicted for an alleged rape, is innocent. Her love for her brother, who took his own life, is part of what drives her to assume a position against the system, known as “The Method.” This article examines the issue at the heart of the novel, the freedom of the individual against the state, and Zeh’s emphasis on political opinion, consulting also related publications and statements by the author on the role of fiction, on health and health care, on civil liberties, as well as her status as a public intellectual. *Corpus Delicti* has a clear political message. (VM/WM)

Wilfried Wittstruck 393
Beleuchtungstechniken. Zur Erschreibung von Bildern in der Lyrik Jan Wagners

Modern poetry is closely related to painting. It is not only passively influenced by fine arts, but it even searches for their influence in order to gauge the depth of memory performance that is yielded by the fusion of verbal and visual imagery. Like media-related chimeras, variations of this fusion emerge from the narrative and descriptive visualizations of images in lyric. The forms and variations of making poems about images result in numerous answers regarding the question what an image-poem could be. Jan Wagner’s lyric poetry is affected by images. While some poems bear a striking similarity to “Ekphrasis” as a description of a visual work of art, others, such as his short portraits of painters, reveal only few references to photography and painting. Still others document nature and landscapes simply as narratives of everyday life. In his poetry, which partially refers to imagism and surrealism, Wagner creates the illusion of seeing a picture while reading. He stages arts by using the medium of writing. The article approaches the question whether contemporary poetry attempts to animate readers’ visual perception. (WW; in German)

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