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## Contents

SPECIAL ISSUE: DEA LOHER

### ARTICLES

**Birgit Haas** 269  
**Dea Loher: Vorstellung**

**Bibliographie Dea Loher** 277

**Birgit Haas** 280  
**Die Rekonstruktion der Dekonstruktion in Dea Loher's Dramen,  
oder: Die Rückkehr des politischen Dramas**

Pitting Loher's aesthetics of theatre against Hans-Thies Lehmann's view of the postdramatic, this essay examines the various ways in which Loher overcomes the postdramatic theatre. Drawing on a vast range of examples from her work, the essay clarifies Loher's position in regard to mimesis. Whilst postmodernism features as a theme in Loher's œuvre, the form of her plays denies the idea of the radicalized V-effect that is typical of postmodern performances. As far as the dramatic form is concerned, Loher's plays do not adhere to a postmodern-postdramatic style. By contrast, Loher harks back to the tradition of the political theatre of Sartre and Brecht. This does not mean, however, that she merely replicates their aesthetics. Mimesis means that she employs both Brecht's "not-but" and Sartre's engaged theatre, thus distancing herself from the idea of radicalized Brechtian (i.e., postmodern) theatre. In this sense, her theater is derived from modernist ideas, namely the focus on the individual in an increasingly mechanized environment; an individual who—in contrast to the two-dimensional

figures of the post-dramatic—is still open to communication with others through language, thus being able to negotiate his/her position. Loher does not teach her audience what to think; yet she offers a dramatic framework for the struggle of the individual. (BH; in German)

**Sebastian Wogenstein** 298  
**“Meine Nachahmung eine Neuerschaffung” – Aneignung und Ent-Stellung in Dea Loher’s *Manhattan Medea***

The question how to situate Dea Loher’s drama *Manhattan Medea* in the Medea reception serves as a point of departure for a discussion of imitation, originality, and the act of copying. In their dialogues, the characters Medea, as in Euripides’ tragedy a refugee, and Velazquez, a security guard, reflect on originality and imitation. The article explores the theoretical and self-referential aspects evoked by these discussions and links them with a more general inquiry into the dimensions of interpretation in the arts. The question of originality and appropriation is expanded and problematized through focusing on radical social criticism voiced among others by the drag queen Deaf Daisy. In this context the article also examines the potential of performative signification encountered in Medea’s deadly bridal gift, especially in light of Marjorie Garber’s remark that “[w]hat gets married *is* a dress.” Transgressive in its form too, *Manhattan Medea* combines tragic elements and those characteristic of comedy. (SW; in German)

**Stephanie Catani** 316  
**Vom Anfang und Ende des Mythos. Medea bei Christa Wolf und Dea Loher**

Literary texts treating mythological subjects fulfil a myth-making function, as Horkheimer/Adorno and Blumenberg have shown in their theories of myth. As it deals with mythological pretexts, literature acts mythopoetically. This implies a self-reflexive criticism of myths. In view of its overwhelming number of literary adaptations throughout cultural history, the myth of Medea can be seen as a literary “work on myth.” On the basis of Christa Wolf’s novel *Medea. Stimmen* on the one hand and Dea Loher’s play *Manhattan Medea* on the other, the paper analyzes the mythopoetic dimension of literature with the goal of exhibiting the critical tendencies in the examined texts, and showing at the same time their decisive differences. In Wolf’s novel, myth returns to its beginnings in such a way that its problematic creative processes are expounded. Furthermore, critical reflections on myth are developed by processes of a collective memory which become relevant for the production of myths. In doing so, the novel clearly refers to the current debate on literature as a ‘storage’ of a collective memory. The paper concludes that Dea Loher’s *Manhattan Medea* radicalizes the criticism of myth that is present in Wolf’s novel: Loher’s play questions the literary work on myth. Thus Loher denies the myth’s innovative potential and brings the Medea myth to a preliminary end. (SC; in German)

**Michael Börgerding**

333

**“I’m just blue”—Der Regisseur Andreas Kriegenburg und seine Auseinandersetzung mit den Texten der Dramatikerin Dea Loher**

The article describes the working relationship between the theater director Andreas Kriegenburg and the playwright Dea Loher from their first co-operation in 1995 to the current day. It also serves as an introduction to central aspects of Loher’s and Kriegenburg’s aesthetics. Kriegenburg’s first interpretation of a play by Loher—“Fremdes Haus” in 1995—set the tone of their co-operation. He treated her work like he would have treated a classic—with respect but without exaggerated reverence. Although some critics saw a lack of faithfulness to the original text in his approach, Dea Loher felt that she could trust Kriegenburg to direct the first performances of other works as well, such as *Adam Geist* and *Olga’s Raum*. Later co-operations on *Magazin des Glücks* (2001), *Unschuld* (2003), *Das Leben auf der Praça Roosevelt* (2004) and *Quixote Material* (2005) showed a defining principle in their relationship—mutual overtaxation or simply expecting too much of each other. For the experiment of *Magazin des Glücks* Loher sent a text to Kriegenburg every six weeks (!) that he would put on stage within three weeks, while she was supposed to respond to his production with a new text. They ended up with a set of seven very diverse texts and productions. But overtaxation also refers to Loher’s increasingly non-dramatic, monologic and improbable dramas. *Das Leben auf der Praça Roosevelt*—based on Loher’s experience in Sao Paulo—works with monologic authentic stories from Latin America. Like most of her new plays it asks the basic question of how they can be put on stage at all. (MB; in German)

**Andreas Gürtler / Angela M. C. Wendt**  
**Höllische Paradiese.**

346

**Moralisches (?) Theater bei Friedrich Schiller und Dea Loher**

In an interview, Loher refers to Schiller’s early concept of the “theatre as a moral institution.” Yet this cliché is problematic since it has been decontextualised. This essay argues that Loher is concerned with the aesthetics of the late Schiller, and it draws attention to the fact that Schiller never put his idea of a moral institution into practice. (AG, AMCW; in German)

**Christine Künzel**

360

**“Vielleicht kommt die Gewalt von innen”: Dea Lohers Poet(h)ik der Gewalt**

Almost all of Dea Loher’s plays deal with violence in one way or another. But Loher’s scenarios do not seem to follow a certain concept of violence. On the one hand violence seems to “come from inside,” like an irresistible drive; on the other hand it is presented as a stroke of fate—which might be a reference to Greek tragedy. Also, the difference between victim and perpetrator is blurred in Loher’s plays. This shows that Loher questions concepts of violence which insist on a strict separation of the positions of victim and perpetrator. At the same time the problem emerges that the experience of violence can no longer

be associated with certain agents, e.g., with persons or institutions. In the worst case, violence cannot be related to anything at all. Loher's treatment of violence is characterized above all through its uncanny omnipresence that leads to a naturalization of violence. All in all, Loher presents violence as an opaque phenomenon oscillating between an essentialist model which comprehends violence as an anthropological constant and a mythico-metaphysical concept suggesting that violence was and is always already there. (CK; in German)

### **Julian Preece**

373

#### **Die Terroristin als alter ego in den "bleiernen Zeiten" und andere umgewandelte Motive in Dea Lohers Zeitstück *Leviathan***

*Leviathan* is the only literary work which depicts the leading figures of the RAF without interpreting their actions through their bloody end and failure. Loher draws on the obvious sources but diverges from them by apparently giving the decision in 1970 to launch an armed struggle against Western governments a political purpose and chance of success which it never had. Like numerous other authors Loher gives her main 'terrorist' character (Marie, based on Ulrike Meinhof) an alter ego (her sister Christine) from whose perspective the ethics and efficacy of political violence are judged. She follows the structure of Margarethe von Trotta's film *Die bleierne Zeit* (1981) which charts the lives of two sisters, based on Gudrun and Christiane Ensslin, who share a set of fundamental political beliefs and objectives, but differing in the methods they chose: one picks up a gun, the other campaigns as a journalist. In *Leviathan*, neither Christine's motives for alleviating suffering through her work as a nurse nor her wish to join her sister at the El Fatah training camp in Jordan are politically motivated. This in turn highlights the personal motivation of all the major characters in the play, based on Ulrike Meinhof, Gudrun Ensslin, and Andreas Baader. (JP; in German)

### **Artur Pełka**

389

#### **Das Theater als "lebendiges soziales Forum": Dea Lohers Dramen auf polnischen Bühnen**

As early as the mid-1990s, Polish theater critics called Loher the "most promising author." Local stages discovered her in 2001. Pawel Miśkiewicz staged her play *Claras Verhältnisse* in Wrocław shortly after the Vienna world premiere. This young stage director discovered an extremely suitable formula for a stage realization of this play which became a huge success. That success was the reason why other stage directors put on this play, for example the famous director Krystian Lupa. Only a short time after that productions of *Tätowierung* and *Blaubart—Hoffnung der Frauen* followed all over Poland. The best 'interpreter' of Loher's plays is still Miśkiewicz. This became obvious in the Cracow staging of *Unschuld* and *Claras Verhältnisse*, both of which were very successful. The attraction of Loher's works for the Polish theater people lies in their socio-critical and philosophical content, as the theater critics constantly point out. (AP; in German)

Contents vii

BOOK REVIEWS 399

BOHM, ARND, <i>Goethe's Faust and European Epic: Forgetting the Future</i> (Franz R. Kempf) . . . . .	411
DOWNING, ERIC, <i>After Images: Photography, Archaeology, and Psychoanalysis and the Tradition of Bildung</i> (Ulrike Peters Nichols) . . . . .	427
DUNKER, AXEL, Hrsg., <i>(Post-)Kolonialismus und Deutsche Literatur. Impulse der angloamerikanischen Literatur- und Kulturtheorie</i> (Todd Kontje) . . . . .	432
FINNEY, GAIL, ed., <i>Visual Culture in Twentieth-Century Germany: Text as Spectacle</i> (Eric Jarosinski) . . . . .	433
FITZON, THORSTEN, <i>Reisen in das fremdliche Pompeji. Antiklassizistische Antikenwahrnehmung deutscher Italienreisender 1750–1870</i> (Jeff Morrison) . . . . .	407
FRICKE, HANNES, <i>Das hört NICHT auf. Trauma, Literature und Empathie</i> (Carl Pietzcker) . . . . .	400
HASTY, WILL, ed., <i>German Literature of the High Middle Ages</i> (Stephen Mark Carey) . . . . .	405
HORSTKOTTE, SILKE UND KARIN LEONHARD, Hrsg., <i>Lesen ist wie Sehen. Intermediale Zitate in Bild und Text</i> (Sabine Groß) . . . . .	434
KOH, MAENG-IM, <i>Mythos und Erzählen im Werk von Anna Seghers</i> (Jennifer Marston William) . . . . .	429
KRIMMER, ELISABETH, <i>In the Company of Men: Cross-Dressed Women around 1800</i> (Catriona MacLeod) . . . . .	415
LINDNER, BURKHARDT, HRSG., UNTER MITARBEIT VON THOMAS KÜPPER UND TIMO SKRANDIES, <i>Benjamin-Handbuch. Leben—Werk—Wirkung</i> (Rolf J. Goebel) . . . . .	399
MOMMSEN, MOMME, UNTER MITARBEIT VON KATHARINA MOMMSEN, <i>Die Entstehung von Goethes Werken in Dokumenten. Band I (Abaldemus—Byron)</i> (Hans Adler) . . . . .	408
MOMMSEN, MOMME, UNTER MITARBEIT VON KATHARINA MOMMSEN, <i>Die Entstehung von Goethes Werken in Dokumenten. Band II (Cäcilia—Dichtung und Wahrheit)</i> (Hans Adler) . . . . .	409
MOMMSEN, MOMME, FORTGEFÜHRT UND HERAUSGEGEBEN VON KATHARINA MOMMSEN, <i>Die Entstehung von Goethes Werken in Dokumenten. Band III (Diderot—Entoptische Farben)</i> (Hans Adler) . . . . .	409
NÜBEL, BIRGIT, <i>Robert Musil. Essayismus als Selbstreflexion der Moderne</i> (Thomas Sebastian) . . . . .	425
REGINSTER, BERNARD, <i>The Affirmation of Life: Nietzsche on Overcoming Nihilism</i> (Ivan Soll) . . . . .	420
ROßBACH, NIKOLA, <i>Theater über Theater. Parodie und Moderne 1870–1914</i> (Alan Lareau) . . . . .	423
SAMMONS, JEFFREY L., <i>Heinrich Heine: Alternative Perspectives 1985–2005</i> (Robert C. Holub) . . . . .	417
SCHÜTTE, UWE, <i>Die Poetik des Extremen. Ausschreitungen einer Sprache des Radikalen</i> (Thomas Freeman) . . . . .	437
STEPHAN-CHLUSTIN, ANNE, <i>Artuswelt und Gralswelt im Bild. Studien zum Bildprogramm der illustrierten Parzival-Handschriften</i> (Salvatore Calomino) . . . . .	403

TABERNER, STUART AND PAUL COOKE, eds., *German Culture, Politics, and Literature into the Twenty-First Century: Beyond Normalization* (Michelle Mattson) . . . . .430

WARD, MARGARET E., *Fanny Lewald: Between Rebellion and Renunciation* (Jeffrey L. Sammons) . . . . .419

WURST, KARIN, *Fabricating Pleasure: Fashion, Entertainment, and Cultural Consumption in Germany 1780–1830* (Helen G. Morris-Keitel) . . . . .413