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Transfiguring the Enlightenment: J.G. Hamann and the Problem of Public Reason

The writings of Johann Georg Hamann (1730–1788) are notoriously obscure, but his stylistic eccentricities are not merely the result of an undisciplined, overly allusive wit. Rather, they constitute a conscious attack on the literary mores of the Republic of Letters. Drawing on his radical theory of language and aesthetics, this article points to the underlying unity of his project: Hamann sought to undermine Enlightenment philosophy with ‘philology’—the love of the divine *logos*. Specifically, this article focuses on Hamann’s term

'metaschematism' or 'transfiguration' in order to illustrate how he sought to counter the perceived inadequacies of public reason with mythopoetic language. Both a rhetorical device and a hermeneutic principle, 'transfiguration' locates human experience and the history of literature within the structure of the Bible. (RS)

Reinhold Münster 30
Säkularisierung im Spiegel der Aufklärungsdichtung.
Friedrich von Hagedorn, August Moritz von Thümmel,
Johann Heinrich Voss

This article argues against the thesis that religion experienced a dramatic decline as the frame of reference both within secular society and within the church during the late eighteenth century when members of the German Enlightenment made great efforts to support the movement of secularization. Three Protestant writers, Hagedorn, Thümmel, and Voss, offered significantly varying attitudes toward religion. Whereas Hagedorn expressed very little interest in religion and displayed a considerable degree of tolerance, Thümmel critiqued the shallowness of social and religious norms and values. Voss, on the other hand, attacked inhumanity and immorality prevalent in his time. For him, the marriage ritual acquires meaning for the bourgeois family only if society is governed by a good patriarch. Harmony for society can only be achieved if religion is restored as the foundation for all aspects of life. (RM; in German)

Cindy Patey Brewer 45
The Seduction of the Beautiful Soul: Anxiety of Influence in
Friederike Unger's *Bekenntnisse einer schönen Seele von ihr selbst*
geschrieben

Friederike Helene Unger's novel, *Bekenntnisse einer schönen Seele* (1806), written in direct response to Goethe's text with the same title, functions as an allegory for a woman writer's anxiety of influence as she confronts the seductive power of the patriarchal literary tradition. Unger uses sexuality as the primary metaphor to explore the barriers to independent female authorship and the conditions under which it might be possible. She challenges a long tradition that perceives art as an exclusively masculine act of creation, a begetting that requires a passive female muse to serve as both a receptacle for a man's artistic emissions and as an art object itself. Unger's main female characters, all of them "beautiful souls," are seduced by the potent authority and power of masculine art and either succumb to or resist its influence. At once attracted and repulsed by the aesthetic potency of men, the women are caught between the potential annihilation associated with surrendering to patriarchal influence and the potential isolation of complete artistic sovereignty. How the female genius, literature's "beautiful soul," will negotiate this perilous position without compromising her own artistic individuality becomes the focus and object of Unger's novel. (CPB)

Nicolas Pethes

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**“Vieh dummes Individuum,” “Unsterblichste Experimente.”
Elements for a Cultural History of Human Experimentation in
Georg Büchner’s Dramatic Case Study *Woyzeck***

The article deducts one of the basic epistemological paradoxes of human experimentation from a close reading of the Doktor-scene in Georg Büchner’s *Woyzeck*: Human experiments are generally conducted on subjects defined as ‘abnormal’ but nevertheless strive to apply the results to the average ‘normality’. Büchner’s dramatic case study on Johann Christian Woyzeck unfolds this paradox of ethical exclusion and biological inclusion and demonstrates as to how the image of human beings (*Menschenbild*) of the mid-19th century is constructed based on scientific techniques such as experiment and observation. At the same time, the play requires a new reflection on the relation between literature and science: As a literary case study, *Woyzeck* does not merely depict issues of medicine. Instead, it is in itself a mode of ‘writing knowledge’ that highlights the blind spots of scientific knowledge production. (NP)

Thomas Schmidt

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**‘Unsere Geschichte’? Probleme der Holocaust-Darstellung unter
DDR-Bedingungen: Peter Edel, Fred Wander, Jurek Becker. Teil I**

At the crossroads of Holocaust remembrance, where biographical memory becomes independent and finally manifests itself as a mediated part of cultural memory, the question of representing the Holocaust as such turns into a reflection on actual describing techniques and patterns of interpretation. But within this process, certain traces in testimonies have been largely disregarded, traces that as imprints of the respective political and cultural conditions of writing that demand critical reflection at this point of memory formation. This article closes that gap by analyzing the most important Holocaust narratives written by survivors in the GDR. Dealing with Peter Edel’s *Die Bilder des Seugen Schattmann*, Part One of this essay shows that the subjective experience of suffering undermines its intended integration into the self-concept of the GDR, causing massive narrative and thematic inconsistencies. Jurek Becker’s *Jakob der Lügner* and Fred Wander’s *Der siebente Brunnen*, however, are purposefully cut off from this integration by elaborate literary means. Part II of this essay will be published in the Fall issue (98.3) of *Monatshefte*. (TS; in German)

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