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ARTICLES

The Edge of the Page: Alfred Polgar, the Feuilleton, and the Poetics of the Small Form
PATRIZIA MCBRIDE

This essay examines Alfred Polgar’s engagement with the literary miniature by situating it within the phenomenal growth of commercial journalism in Weimar Germany and the Austrian Republic. Drawing on reflections on the small form developed by Hugo von Hofmannsthal, Walter Benjamin, and Theodor W. Adorno, this paper reconstructs Polgar’s practice of engaged writing, which enjoins an ornamental style and imagistic rhetoric forged in the tradition of the Denkbild to mobilize readers to take a stance on contemporary events. Polgar’s embrace of ornamental writing granted him special insight into its perils, placing him in a singular position to respond to the falsehoods of National Socialism in the 1930s. In his eyes, a media environment controlled by totalitarian rule made it impossible to combat the Nazis’ mendacity by simply calling out their lies or insisting on separating factual from fake reporting. One should rather turn the ornament against itself with parodic writing that was unafraid of stepping into the mucky arena of blatantly deceitful communication.
Keywords:  Alfred Polgar – small forms – journalism – political writing – National Socialism

The End of Abstraction and the Beginning of the People: On Law and Representation in Arnold Schoenberg’s Moses und Aron
ADI NESTER

This essay links the crisis of representation in modernist art with the problem of political representation in Arnold Schoenberg’s unfinished opera Moses und Aron. It reads the opera in light of Schoenberg’s unpublished political drafts concerning the nature of democracy as well as against the writings of political theorists such as Schmitt, Hobbes, and Rousseau, and proposes an understanding of the opera-fragment as Schoenberg’s own attempt to study the concepts “Law” and “the People” as abstract
ideas whose particularized representation involves an inevitable corruption of the ideas behind the representation. Thus the compulsion to represent that which cannot be represented in the opera is translated into two separate problems: the embodiment of an abstract law through its interpretation in particular cases, and the question of representing a heterogeneous group through a unified concept like the People as well as the group’s diverse demands as the general will.

Keywords: Arnold Schoenberg – Moses und Aron – the law – the people – heterogeneity representation

Reconstructing the Self and the City: Wolfgang Koeppen’s Rubble Film Bei Betty (1946-1948)

KATHRYN SEDERBERG

This article discusses Wolfgang Koeppen’s to date unpublished screenplay Bei Betty (ca. 1948) and makes a case for its importance both within Koeppen’s oeuvre and as an artifact of postwar German culture that helps us understand the category of the Trümmerfilm as well as the complexity of the zero hour. In contrast to other rubble films, Bei Betty portrays postwar reconstruction (Wiederaufbau) as an ambivalent process, allowing some individuals to “remake” themselves while others remain damaged by the war. This visual narrative thus links physical reconstruction with acts of self-refashioning in the aftermath of the war, highlighting the political and social stakes of performing a “new” self in response to the Allied occupation. In contrast to Koeppen’s novels, full of interior monologue, the screenplay emphasizes the impenetrability of surfaces and performed social selves, the acts of concealment and masquerade that proliferated after the war’s end.

Keywords: Wolfgang Koeppen – screenplay – Trümmerfilm – postwar culture – the social self

Ellipsis as Resistance in Heinrich Böll’s “Wanderer, kommst du nach Spa...” (1950) JENNIFER BJORNSTAD

One of the most salient features of Heinrich Böll’s short story “Wanderer, kommst du nach Spa...” (1950) is its prominent and liberal use of typographical ellipsis. The ellipses that permeate this wartime story both underline the theme of loss and enable the narrator to use his tale to exercise one last measure of resistance to his fate. As part of a first-person narrative, the ellipses can be read as an assertion of
narrative authority and authenticity. Through the refusal to say certain words and phrases and by rejecting physical and chronological restrictions, the young narrator rejects Nazi ideology and creates for himself a limited yet meaningful sense of freedom. His resistance is mirrored by the final image of the text, an indelible cross on the wall which, like a textual ellipsis, persistently marks that which has been erased.

Keywords: Heinrich Böll – short story – ellipsis – loss – resistance – Nazi ideology

Willi Barthold


Keywords: Abbas Khider – Der falsche Inder – stereotypes – German identity – literature of migration

Olivia Landry
This essay explores Christian Petzold’s 2018 film *Transit* through the lens of waiting. In many ways a condition of our historical present, waiting is frequently perceived and conceptualized by contemporary theorists as an exercise of utter emptiness, entrapment, and submission. A portrait of German refugees in transit in Marseille during World War Two and based on Anna Seghers’s 1942 novel by the same name, *Transit* is attuned to the experience of flight and exile in both the past and the present. But instead of simply offering an experience of transit and waiting fraught with despair and suffering, Petzold’s film opens itself up to a reading in line with Siegfried Kracauer’s sustained aesthetic conceptualization of waiting and the space of “the anteroom.” This space of the anteroom conceptually resonates with Petzold’s own notion of the “transit-zone” present throughout his films. Kracauer provides the frame to contemplate the wondrous beauty and possibility to be found in the formal elements of *Transit*, despite the fact that it is effectively a film about the precarity of waiting that can lead to violence and death. Close analyses of the film’s mise-en-scène, cinematography, and sound give us access to these affirmative, even utopian, qualities of waiting and show us another side of things.

Keywords: Christian Petzold – *Transit* – flight – exile – waiting – space – entrapment

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