

describes as an aesthetics of restraint. Critical of sensationalist and melodramatic approaches to rape, Zeh's text reflects openly on the problems of finding an appropriate form of representation, on Zeh's own reactions to graphic descriptions of sexual violence, and on the absence of other women and her own sense of unease as a female travelling alone. As Smith shows, Zeh uses silences not to silence these experiences but to highlight the failings of words and the shortcomings of literature that sensationalises them. Although Zeh's text has been analysed through the lens of writing on the Balkan wars, gender has rarely featured in discussions: in her contribution, Smith shows how productive this can be.

Helga Druxes's chapter on the criticism of neoliberalism and communism in works by Judith Schalansky and Julia Schoch (both originally from the GDR), as well as Katharina Hacker and Nikola Richter (originally from the FRG) provides a complex analysis of the corrosive effects of economic systems on female lives. Although she identifies a waning influence of feminism in these texts, Druxes shows how these authors outline the impact of increased competition and precariousness on women's work lives, interpersonal relationships, and emotional wellbeing. This is an important contribution which reflects on identity performances and conformism and the problems of uncritical adaptation to systemic changes.

Overall, this is a very useful volume which takes stock of women's writing today while also exploring how women have been affected by socio-cultural, political, and economic changes. It is particularly of interest for those with an interest in contemporary German-language writing.

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—Linda Shortt

### **Zeit und Technoimagination. Eine neue Einbildungskraft in Romanen des 21. Jahrhunderts.**

Von Gundela Hachmann. Würzburg: Königshausen & Neumann, 2015. 164 Seiten. €29,80.

Gundela Hachmann's *Zeit und Technoimagination. Eine neue Einbildungskraft in Romanen des 21. Jahrhunderts* is an ambitious study of novel conceptualizations of time in selected German-language novels of the early twenty-first century. Using Vilém Flusser's phenomenological approaches to cultural theory as a framework, Hachmann focuses on four works of fiction published between 2001 and 2005—W.G. Sebald's *Austerlitz* (2001), Helmut Krausser's *UC* (2003), Thomas Lehr's *42* (2005), and Ulrike Draesner's *Spiele* (2005)—to explore how those texts interrogate time, temporality, and history. Asserting that those novels are not "Zeitromane" in the traditional sense—they are not a portrait of their own time and not concerned with the socio-political perception of contemporary reality—Hachmann argues skillfully that they employ new techniques to analyze how time, history, and memory are experienced and processed, an approach she considers an extension of the global memory discourses of the 1980s and '90s. She also points to the role of new media, insisting that "[r]adikale Veränderungen unserer Kommunikations- und Speichertechnologien machen es notwendig, ganz grundsätzlich neu zu erklären, was Begriffe wie 'Vergangenheit,' 'Zukunft,' 'Gegenwart,' 'Möglichkeit' oder 'Geschichte' für uns bedeuten und wie sie unser Selbstverständnis informieren" (7). Moving away from

the concept of intermediality, which she views as insufficient, her study proposes what she calls a “transmediales Spielen mit dem Imaginären” (9) or, to use Flusser’s terminology, “Technoimagination” to investigate how those texts represent or challenge an era newly marked by the ubiquity of images.

As Hachmann points out in her introduction, contemporary literature and scholarship share a focus on theorizing the present moment. In tandem with other recent studies, such as *Die Unendlichkeit des Erzählens. Der Roman in der deutschsprachigen Gegenwartsliteratur seit 1989* (2013) edited by Carsten Rohde and Hans Georg Schmidt-Bergmann [ed. note: see review in *Monatshefte* 108.1, Spring 2016, 162–164], *Poetiken der Gegenwart: Deutschsprachige Romane nach 2000* (2013) edited by Silke Horstkotte and Leonhard Hermann [ed. note: see review in *Monatshefte* 108.1, Spring 2016, 164–167], Hans Ulrich Gumbrecht’s *Unsere breite Gegenwart* (2010), or *German Literature in a New Century: Trends, Traditions, Transitions, Transformations* (2008) edited by Katharina Gerstenberger and Patricia Herminghouse [ed. note: see review in *Monatshefte* 101.4, Winter 2009, 612–614], Stuart Taberner’s *German Literature of the 1990s and Beyond* (2005), and the edited volumes *Contemporary German Fiction: Writing in the Berlin Republic* (2007) and *The Novel in German since 1990* (2011), Hachmann addresses new trends and possibilities in contemporary writing, including the influence of an increasingly pervasive media landscape. In addition, she places special emphasis on what she identifies as a thematic preoccupation with time in literature, hence a current need for new theoretical approaches to conceptualize time and the perception of reality.

As she elaborates in her first chapter, Hachmann grounds her analysis on Flusser’s complex ideas concerning time, writing, history, and subjectivity. Here, she goes to great lengths to situate Flusser among other theorists, such as Jean-Paul Sartre and Wolfgang Iser, and make his philosophy accessible to an academic audience interested in contemporary writing but not necessarily familiar with Flusser’s difficult work, which is one of the strengths of this study. Specifically, she focuses on what Flusser refers to as the end of history, a radical reevaluation of the perception of reality at a time when texts are replaced by images (such as photography, film, television, or pictograms—what Flusser describes as “Technobilder” to emphasize the difference to traditional images) as the primary means of communication. Key here is, however, not just the idea of a new perception but rather a new imagination of reality and historiography that no longer regards those dimensions as linear and teleological. With Flusser, Hachmann rethinks time, temporality, and history as increasingly complex, multiple, and fragile, and as restructured, fractured, permeated, and interconnected by images that exist in a constant feedback loop (“Entropie” 37) and are progressively decoupled from historical reality. “Technoimagination” thus emerges as a new ability to describe the world and oneself, and create and decode images of text, reality, and language that are more than descriptions (“stellen nicht nur dar”) but represent “Standpunkte, Haltungen und Einstellungen zur Welt” (25).

Accordingly, following Theodor Adorno, Michael Rothberg, Walter Benjamin, Henri Bergson, and Gilles Deleuze, Hachmann uses Flusser’s deliberations to articulate a new approach to literary texts that are not only concerned with time or history but also foreground the ethic and aesthetic demands of writing after the Holocaust. Mobilizing Flusser’s concept of gestures, phenomenological acts to come to terms with a new culture of images, including the human elements of unpredictability, creativity, and skepticism, Hachmann proceeds with a skilled and strong close reading

of the four novels. In her discussion of *Austerlitz*, for instance, she focuses specifically on the gestures of photography and filmmaking to highlight the unreliability of representation and the subjective quality of reality. In this reading, the gaze of the photographer visualizes time as preemptive of a chronological logic and constituted through unexpected openings, narrative strands, spirals, circles, or slow motions, a “höhere Stereometrie” (47) in the words of the narrator. By collecting such impressions, the novel therefore offers a multi-layered model of time that embraces proximity, distance, possibility, and impossibility to reevaluate the more traditional concepts of past, present, and future in favor of a thinking subject engaged in remembering, empathy, and conjecture. Similarly, Krausser’s *UC* emerges as a novel in which time manifests as a multi-dimensional hyperspace, an “Ultrachronos” (79), this time manipulated through the gesture of editing and structured around multiple perspectives of a crime without resolution, which Hachmann reads as an indirect commentary on the question of postwar guilt. The characters in Lehr’s *42* are equally confronted with a crisis of the world and identity. Here, time literally and figuratively stands still and urges those caught within this still image to explore its causes and find new meanings, putting forth a critique of progress and enlightenment vis-à-vis the gesture of producing film. Finally, Draesner’s *Spiele* focalizes the concept of play in its attempt to retroactively link the Olympic Games in Munich with the terrorist attacks of 9/11 by questioning power structures, the manipulation of images, and the protagonist’s (who happens to be a photojournalist) own view of history. This novel suggests a spiral approach to the past based on the vectors of chance and unpredictability.

All four texts thus deconstruct an absolute concept of time by questioning causality, linearity, and universality, and it is indeed because of Hachmann’s comprehensive study of Flusser that she offers a new and compelling way to understand temporality and an intriguing analysis of the texts she selected. Hachmann’s study, however, despite her focus on time, the present moment, and contemporary media culture, feels somewhat disconnected from the present day. Although she argues for the unique potential of literature to address the challenges of the digital age in her conclusion, she does not mention any texts beyond the ones she discusses, the latest of which were published in 2005. Photo- and video-sharing, and social networking services as actual platforms or as employed in literary texts, are completely absent; the reader might have expected at least an outlook on further applications of Hachmann’s meticulous analytical reflections. Nonetheless, Hachmann’s theoretical framework and her reading of Flusser’s concepts of gestures and technoinagination seems promising. Flusser’s philosophy might be very specific but Hachmann’s monograph certainly has the potential to inspire more than just scholars of Sebald, Krausser, Lehr, and Draesner.

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—Christiane Steckenbiller

**After the Fact: The Holocaust in Twenty-First Century Documentary Film.**

By Brad Prager. New York: Bloomsbury 2015. vi + 291 pages + 36 b/w illustrations. \$100.00 hardcover, \$29.95 paperback.

Dokumentarfilme über den Holocaust, so die These, die Brad Pragers Monografie *After the Fact* zugrunde liegt, berücksichtigen und reflektieren implizit oder explizit