



PROJECT MUSE®

*Geselliges Vergnügen. Kulturelle Praktiken von Unterhaltung
im langen 19. Jahrhundert* ed. by Anna Ananieva, Dorothea
Böck und Hedwig Pompe (review)

Robert S. Bledsoe

Monatshefte, Volume 105, Number 2, Summer 2013, pp. 336-338 (Review)

Published by University of Wisconsin Press

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1353/mon.2013.0040>



➔ For additional information about this article

<https://muse.jhu.edu/article/510034>

a danger in stretching the term too thin, in relying on vague analogies and ahistorical essentializations—a fear that is unfortunately confirmed by several contributions in the collection. One might, for example, be compelled to point out similarities between actual phonographic inscriptions, on the one hand, and onomatopoeia and naturalistic styles of writing in the late nineteenth century, on the other (179–188). But without looking closely at how the phonograph was discussed at the time, and in lieu of any direct reference to the device by Naturalist authors, the analogy at best recasts pre-existing scholarship in a new terminology unsupported by primary texts.

This is what makes Heinz Hiebler's contribution, "Phonogramme der Wiener Moderne," stand out as one of the most interesting essays in the collection (189–208). Not only does Hiebler analyze the literary appropriation of phonographic recording as a narrative strategy in early works by Hugo von Hofmannsthal, he juxtaposes these literary 'phonograms' with a detailed study of previously ignored phonograph recordings from the same period. In a similar manner, Caroline Pross's fascinating and highly original study of the literary author and radio theorist Arno Schirokauer (347–365) situates media-theoretical speculations about the new medium's alleged influence on written and spoken language alongside a close reading of Schirokauer's own radio plays. In this way, both essays give historical flesh to the notion of 'writing sound,' demonstrating the reciprocal interaction between written texts and concurrent technical modes of recording sound, without reducing either to a set of superficial generalizations regarding their 'inherent' representational capabilities or calcified stylistic traits.

In its least compelling moments, *Phono-Graphien* is simply a motif study of sound and hearing within the German-speaking literary tradition, a chronicle of various instances of acoustic phenomena, which, taken together, do little to advance our understanding of specific works, literary movements, or historical periods. At its best, the collection demonstrates literature's unquestionable role in both registering and actively participating in modern auditory culture and reveals the scholarly blind spots left open by extant accounts of sensorial transformation that focus exclusively on vision and operate according to now untenable narratives of vision's uncontested rise to the top of the hierarchy of the senses within modernity. Either way, the collection is by far the single most thorough and informative study of sound in German literature and will be of particular interest to scholars working on literature, media, and the history of the senses.

Columbia University

—Tyler Whitney

Geselliges Vergnügen. Kulturelle Praktiken von Unterhaltung im langen 19. Jahrhundert.

Herausgegeben von Anna Ananieva, Dorothea Böck und Hedwig Pompe. Bielefeld: Aisthesis, 2011. 353 Seiten + 10 farbige Abbildungen. €34,80.

This volume of scholarly essays traces aspects of transformation of "Unterhaltung" from "Gesprächskultur" to "Freizeitvergnügungen" of all types. It considers both conceptualizations and practices of entertainment and pays special attention to the dif-

ferent media contexts in which these take place. The volume grew out of a research project at the Rheinische Friedrich-Wilhelms-Universität in Bonn entitled “Von der ‘Aufklärung’ zur ‘Unterhaltung’: Literarische und mediale Transformation in Deutschland zwischen 1780–1840,” which may account for the potentially misleading subtitle. Although the subtitle mentions the long nineteenth century, most of the essays focus on the first half of the period. Only in the few last essays is material from the second half of the nineteenth century considered.

The volume contains fourteen essays and is divided into three sections: “Räume und Praktiken,” “Zwischen den Künsten,” and “Erfolgsszenarien.” There is only a brief two-page foreword that quickly sketches the scope of the volume. I would have appreciated a lengthier introduction that both established the significance and the range of the meanings attached to concepts such as “Geselligkeit,” “Vergnügen,” and “Unterhaltung” that are essential to the project, as well as positioned the essays in the current state of research. The lack of a substantial introduction is unfortunate, because the essays—despite working from a common set of assumptions about the practice of literary and cultural studies grounded in historical and sociological discourse about the developments in this period—rarely engage at length with relevant theoretical work from the areas of cultural studies and sociology, etc. A discussion of the elements would help the reader to bring the essays into dialogue with each other and other related work; without this connective tissue, the essays remain individual case studies.

The essays cover a wide range of materials and practices. The first section, “Räume und Praktiken,” includes four essays, two each on spaces and on practices of social entertainment. Karin Wurst shows that the types of gardens developed by members of the *Bürgertum* create a type of topography of *Geselligkeit* that can be used to map the differentiation of life styles and sociability within the *Bürgertum*. Burkhard Fuchs examines spas as spaces whose architecture and functions are transformed in response to the influx of visitors from the *Bürgertum* into spaces that prefigure the culture of tourism and leisure that develops later in the nineteenth century. In the two essays on practices, Anna Ananieva considers the performative and narrative potential of play with the yo-yo, and Christiane Holm looks at the shift of the role and perception of women’s needlework and other crafts from necessary handicrafts to leisure activities whose social value is bound more to the process than the object itself.

The second section “Zwischen den Künsten” looks at different aspects of the arts, emphasizing the role that entertainment asserts, in considering the development and multivalent status of the pianoforte (Bettina Schlüter), children’s literature (Maren Butte), Kotzebue’s melodramas (Irmgard Nickel-Bacon), and Kleist’s experiment with the *Berliner Abendblätter* (Manuela Günter and Michael Homberg). The “Erfolgsszenarien” of the third section of the volume are more closely tied to literary and critical experience. It opens with York-Gothardt Mix’s essay arguing that calendars, almanacs, and pocketbooks served as a means to initiate readers into literary culture. It also includes Hedwig Pompe’s essay on Knigge and “der gute Ton,” which draws out the ambivalent implications of the term, and Olaf Briese’s essay distinguishing three phases of criticism of the *Bürgertum*’s habits of entertainment in Berlin between 1810 and 1850. The volume closes with an essay by Michael Gamper, who sees Robert Prutz’s advocacy for *Unterhaltungsliteratur* as a productive way out of the

dichotomization of German literature, and a study of Storm's "Immensee" by Günter Butzer showing one way that this could be achieved: namely in the double encoding of literature—combining literary symbolism with suspense—to create literature that could be read and enjoyed on multiple levels.

Overall, this is a successful volume. Although I missed a discussion of theoretical frameworks that would integrate the findings presented in the volume, the collection maintains a consistent focus on the practices and medial contexts of entertainment in the nineteenth century. Some of the essays feel a bit incomplete: Wurst and Fuchs can only sketch out their arguments with brief discussions of examples; Dorothea Böck writes a dense essay that reads Schiller and Friedrich Schlegel as the first media theorists to outline the shape of culture and entertainment of the modern era; however, the "ästhetische Prügeley" between the circles of Carl Spazier and Johann Daniel Sander highlighted in her title is mentioned only in the last paragraph of the essay. But the contributions are well-conceived and well-executed studies of source material. I look forward to seeing more work on these topics from these scholars.

Georgia Regents University

—Robert S. Bledsoe

Enlightened Reactions. Emancipation, Gender, and Race in German Women's Writing.

By Traci S. O'Brien. Bern: Peter Lang, 2011. ix + 341 pages. \$66.95.

In this monograph, O'Brien examines "the rhetoric of emancipation" used in works by Ida von Hahn-Hahn (1805–1880), Fanny Lewald (1811–1889), and Ottilie Assing (1819–1884). The unifying concept of this analysis is not an emphasis on a narrowly defined message but on a common rhetorical strategy. All three authors are critical of the nineteenth-century, bourgeois liberal, exclusionary, white-male enactment of the Enlightenment's universal notions of personhood and citizenship and argue for the inclusion of women (Hahn-Hahn and Lewald), Jews (Lewald), or blacks (Assing). However, as O'Brien demonstrates, "their expanded view of selfhood or individuality" is equally rooted in these Enlightenment ideals and thus re-enacts the same exclusionary-inclusionary dynamic (56). O'Brien's purpose is to make her readers aware of the contradictory "logic of these texts" (86) which allows for an arguably progressive "defin[ition] of the individual" but one that is based on an "excluded non-individual" (154). Specifically, each author makes use of a racialized other—the Oriental (Hahn-Hahn, Lewald), the black (Hahn-Hahn, Lewald), or the Native American (Assing)—to support her expanded definition of personhood.

In setting up her theoretical framework, O'Brien uses Isabel Hull's *Sexuality, State, and Civil Society in Germany, 1700–1815* (1996) to lay the foundation for her argument that "universal rights and particular exclusions could come to peacefully coexist" in bourgeois liberal society (25). For O'Brien, Hahn-Hahn, Lewald, and Assing use "the universal concept of the individual as a source of power for women" (44). This allows them, primarily through their writing, to be contributing members of society, a central pillar to their understanding of personhood. O'Brien then goes on to layer this theoretical cornerstone with theoretical discourses on gender (Frevert et. al.), race (Eigen and Larrimore et. al.), colonialism (Zantop et. al.), orientalism