

Region and the Short Form in American Literature: Symposium in Honor of Jochen Achilles
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Abstract

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“Anthropogenic Climate Change Condensed: Creating Community in Very Short Plays”

In contrast to earthquakes and tsunamis, climate as such cannot be grasped through singular events. Nevertheless, theater practitioners have been actively pursuing experimental avenues of performance to communicate the topic of climate change, often with an activist agenda in mind. In the fall of 2015 and 2017, Climate Change Theatre Action (CCTA) provided sets of 50 short performance pieces by playwrights from numerous countries. Professionals and amateurs registered with CCTA and performed selected works all over the globe. In this talk, I will discuss a dozen short texts by US-based authors in order to illustrate which strategies they employ to dramatize spatially rooted environmental conditions in a manner that emphasizes the necessity of community effort. In particular, I will argue that these brief theater pieces effectively use allegorical locations as well as geographically specific locales, that they redefine anthropocentric notions of community by dissolving the dichotomy between human and non-human nature, and that they experiment with minimizing and expanding the scale on which they contemplate climate change and agency.