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Germanic Studies. An Identity under Discussion

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Between the end of the 1990s and the beginning of the new century, broad and structured reflection was carried out in Germanic Studies¹ in Italy too on the status and possible transformation of a discipline which in that very same period was making some quite significant input in various fields. To list just some: *Storia della civiltà letteraria tedesca* (UTET) came out in 1998 under the direction of Marino Freschi, two years after the launch of *La letteratura tedesca medievale* series (ETS, 1996-1997)² and the publication of the volume *La nascita della letteratura tedesca. Dall'umanesimo agli albori dell'illuminismo* by Emilio Bonfatti and Anna Morisi. The year 2000 saw the publication of *Storia della germanistica* (Artemide) by Pier Carlo Bontempelli,³ the voluminous and provocative book *L'Ottocento letterario tedesco* by Enrico De Angelis (Tipografia Editrice Pisana) and the special issue on *Cultural Studies* of the "Osservatorio critico della germanistica" in concomitance with the academic conference held by the Associazione Italiana di Germanistica on the topic of *Simmetria e antisimmetria. Due spinte in conflitto nella cultura dei paesi di lingua tedesca* (Symmetry and Antisymmetry. Two Conflicting Drives in the Culture of German-language Countries), promoted by Luciano Zagari. If we are to look back on this selection of titles, today we can grasp those theoretical and historiographical connections that went to form a critical juncture in Germanic Studies in Italy, as it came into necessary and productive comparison with the international discipline. At the same time we can also see the attempt to come up with new methods and

¹ For mere simplification, herein Germanic Studies is taken to mean the study of German literature, without considering the complementary sphere of language, nor the wider meaning encompassing the Nordic languages and cultures.

² The four published volumes are: *Dalle origini all'età precortese*, edited by Claudia Händl; *L'epica cortese* and *La letteratura intorno al 1400*, edited by Michael Dallapiazza and *La mistica*, edited by Donatella Bremer Buono.

³ Published in English as *Knowledge, power, and discipline: German studies and national identity*, translated by Gabriele Poole, University of Minnesota Press, 2003.



topics within the university course reform implemented some fifteen years ago. Despite their variety, the quoted works are united in their discussion of the move beyond the *Geisteswissenschaften* tradition towards a new “science of culture” and of civilization through literary representation, the abandonment of classic historicism for a possible “neohistoricism” sensitive to the changing historical situations and receptive of new criteria of philological and hermeneutic research. These are highly significant issues, still central to the current debate, grounded on the awareness that literature, literary criticism and writing in general have lost their central role, and that they may once again find their legitimacy and place in a new relation and in changed hierarchies with other disciplines. Against the backdrop of what appears here as a somewhat fragmented overview, I also set out to assess the effective implication of the dense and vigorous theoretical musings on the products of historical literary studies, or if there continues to be a hiatus and a sort of impermeability between the two spheres. What is more, while attempting to make this assessment, I shall also seek to outline what have been the routes, characteristics and aims of Germanic Studies in Italy in the last twenty years as mainly expressed by generations of doctoral school-trained scholars.

To take a step back, it was again in 2000 that in “Belfagor” Luigi Russo published the text of the “supreme lesson”, held ten years before by Cesare Cases, on *Che cosa sia e a qual fine si studi la letteratura tedesca* (What is and to what end is German literature studied?), followed by the essay by Franco Fortini *Cesare Cases al paragone* (Cesare Cases under Comparison). By repositing the “Latinatinate subjunctive”⁴ used many years before by Germanic scholar Giovanni Angelo Alfero in the translation of the title of Schiller’s address at the University of Jena *Was heisst und zu welchem Ende studiert man Universalgeschichte?*, Cases grasps the ironic and relativizing vein and, with his usual “cloven hoof”, rapidly sums up the conceptions of the history of literature and of literature in itself in twentieth-century Ger-

⁴ Indeed the subjunctive mood is not conveyed in the English translation (translator’s note).



manic Studies in Italy. In his last academic lecture, Cases reasserts a solid historicistic frame to underline the “polycentrism” of German literature, and proposes a reading of the twentieth century, between apocalypses and utopia, in a critical key as followed by several scholars in the successive years. In fact, the necessity, already upheld by Roland Barthes in 1975, to re-define the concept of literature and the canons of how it can be taught has been shared in various ways by Italian Germanic scholars in recent years. The discussion also involves framing and building a literary history in which, if they are “lucky”, author and work find a place and justification. In the *Premessa* to the *Storia della Civiltà letteraria tedesca*, in which twenty scholars took part, after retracing the main stages in literary historiography and ascribing to Mittner’s canonical work “an openness to social history and the history of culture in a European sense and with an interdisciplinary slant”, Marino Freschi offers his own literary history to “stress its pluralistic vocation”, once again embedded in a historical interpretative view. It is significant that the presentation uses the metaphors of “diversified landscapes”, mapping, and a long journey in the literature of the German language. The history of literature is rooted and then unfolds in the spatiality to which Freschi himself has often been an astute guide, in particular the geography of *Mitteleuropa*. “Geographers,” observes Alberto Destro in his review of the work, “advise us that maps are reduced and symbolic portrayals of a choice of phenomena of the earth’s surface which appear as approximations [...] And so it is with historiography. We cannot escape the necessity [...] that the historiographer is inevitably arbitrary with respect to the bulk of the historical data”.⁵ They are assertions that anticipate one of the most significant works of recent Italian Germanic studies, the *Atlante della letteratura tedesca* (2009),⁶ edited by Francesco Fiorentino and Giovanni Sampaolo, a vast conglomerate of 63 papers by Italian Germanic scholars, as well as Klaus R. Scherpe, Wendelin Schmidt-Dengler and Heinz Schlaffer. The quo-

⁵ Review by Alberto Destro, in “Osservatorio critico della germanistica”, (2001), no. 11, p. 1.

⁶ This work was followed by the volume *Letteratura e geografia. Atlanti, modelli, letture* (Quodlibet 2012), edited by Francesco Fiorentino and Carla Solivetti.



tation by Kant (“The history of occurrences at different times, which is true history, is nothing other than a consecutive geography”) and that by Foucault (“The present epoch will perhaps be above all the epoch of space. We are in the epoch of simultaneity”) provide the horizon in which the literature is narrated, starting from the places, the topographies which give rise to and nourish the memory. In the *Atlante*, time, in its diachronies and in the tragic junctures of history, is attracted into the spatiality that welcomes and incorporates it, while the combination of geography and literature illuminates authors and cultural processes with new perspectives. The contextual breeding ground where literary texts originate also reveals the fluidity of their boundaries and the projection outside place produced by the hermeneutic circuits. The proposal of a hypertextual reading of the atlas-form, whose editors assert “in opting for space we opted for fragmentation, for complexity, for co-existence of the disparate”, trenchantly marks out one of the culturological directions whose theoretical status has recently been under debate. In Italy too, an intense debate has developed over the Cultural Studies which made headway in humanities departments in the 1980s and 90s, mainly in the USA. One of the main driving forces in this field was without doubt Michele Cometa, who, among his numerous leading studies, proposed a *Dizionario degli studi culturali* (Meltemi 2004, edited by Roberta Coglitore and Federica Mazzara) whose transnational and transcultural approach translates into a “cartography of study traditions based on the idea of culture”. The mapping of key concepts, open to those insertions, contaminations and the transversality constantly developing in cultural discourses, presents an extensive panorama of the methodologies of Anglo-Saxon and post-colonial Cultural Studies, *Kulturwissenschaften*, and studies on gender, historical semantics and memory. Eight great perspectives and themes of the cultural universe are moulded into groups: historical conceptual, mass media, mythical psychic, political anthropological, political sexual, historical social, semiotic social, and linguistic institutional. Cometa’s anthology therefore covers an immense disciplinary spectrum, guiding the reader in the various American and European movements: from Derrida’s deconstructionism to the New Historicism from Berkeley, from



Friedrich Kittler and Hartmut Böhme's *Kulturwissenschaften* to the new theories on the body and corporality, from subaltern studies to post-colonial, gay, queer, Jewish studies, and many more besides.

In the monographic issue of the "Osservatorio critico della germanistica" (no. 7, April 2000) quoted at the beginning, Luca Crescenzi, Lucia Perrone Capano, Camilla Miglio, Maria Carolina Foi and Roberto Venuti had already given rise to the first complex debate on Cultural Studies in its connection with literature studies, working on the results of the laudable *Storia della germanistica* by Pier Carlo Bontempelli, which came out in the same year. In particular, after reconstructing the cultural anthropological theories of Clifford Geertz and New Historicism represented by Stephen Greenblatt, for whom literature is to be thought of as a cultural system needing to be charged "with those social energies that belong to it, in that it is a historically determined product",⁷ Crescenzi nails down some critical points which every literature scholar is called to deal with. While remembering the then recent discussion in the "Schiller-Jahrbuch" in response to the question "kommt der Literaturwissenschaft ihr Gegenstand abhanden?", he holds that we must ask ourselves if, according to the culturological school, the literary text should be placed among the "undifferentiable set of texts into which the symbolic representation of a society merges" and if "art and literature, alone, are no longer sufficient to provide an overall image of a culture". A response was given in the heat of the moment to this outburst of culturological theories, again in the "Osservatorio" (no. 10, July 2001), by Marianello Marianelli who, in one of his last impassioned Germanic papers, sees the relation between the literary text and anthropological context as a chiasmus given by the "two divergent methodologies of the historicization of the text and textualization of history – which – reshuffles old and new cards of hermeneutics". Among the biggest risks, in addition to cancelling the boundaries of literary and non-literary language, what Marianelli sees happening is the impoverishment of the work of art the more it is charged with social energies and contextual materials, thereby reducing it to a "dump-

⁷ Own translation.



ing ground for history”. On the back of his experience and testimony as an intellectual, which also resulted in the *Storia della letteratura tedesca dal 1933 al 1970* (Sansoni, 1971), he exhorts the new generations not to do away with the open wounds recalled by Cases, and appeals to the responsibility of language with its potentiality and creativity. While the generation gap between the scholars may seem to impact these critical positions, support is somehow lent by Mark Anderson, American Germanist attentive to the developments of Cultural Studies in the Anglo-Saxon and Italian contexts. He traces its specific characteristics to Britain and the United States where it came about from the bottom, in secondary universities, promoted by professors from the working class, often of African origin. Herein they laid claim to a popular and not high culture, a culture of the moment extended to every kind of communication, as the marginalized social groups’ ground for contestation. “But if the history of Cultural Studies teaches us something,” Anderson writes, “it is that the new approach to culture was never the result of pure work of the intellect, but it was part of a social and institutional problem”.⁸ The debate in Italy on the cultural turn, a hermeneutic-literary turn in anthropological studies that undermined the primacy of literature as *mathesis* in its potential for universalistic representation, has continued in recent years along a research path marked by two conferences held at the University of Roma Tre in 2003 and in 2008, set down in the volume comprising 14 essays *Al di là del testo. Critica letteraria e studio della cultura* (Quodlibet, 2011) edited by Francesco Fiorentino. Beyond the approaches and trends (from Paul Bourdieu’s sociological approach in the hegemonic field to Niklas Luhmann’s systems theory, from semiotic theory to the return of thematic criticism), the different types of knowledge scattered in the globalizing dimension make it even more evident that the concept of text as well as the mechanical and “obsolete” relation with its context need to be redefined: “It no longer seems possible to describe the text,” writes Fiorentino, “as an autonomous and self-sufficient ‘organism’, but as a joint in a network of connections that produces, processes and makes information circulate” (p. 38).

⁸ Own translation.



Germanic Studies in Italy today. A possible snapshot?

In parallel to this theoretical itinerary, in which Germanic Studies and German culture represent a privileged vehicle as well as the legacy of its historiographical heritage from Nietzsche to Weber, Benjamin to Warburg, academic research and publications in the field of German literature in Italy have developed over the last twenty years into a vast and heterogeneous spectrum of themes and genres. It may seem paradoxical, but at first sight it appears easier to make a census of academic production on the basis of critical literature by author as shown in the catalogues⁹ rather than trace precise research paths. This is not just because of the traditionally individualistic nature of philological literary studies, but also owing to the more mundane growing difficulty of organizing university research teams due to the lack of ministerial funding provided for research projects of national interest (PRIN). Therefore, it is hard to define research lines and projects by teams, or as happened recently, by a research institute such as the Istituto Italiano di Studi Germanici. What actually happens is that research teams are put together for projects which are assessed first of all in terms of academic worth and feasibility. These should receive adequate funding, with obligatory monitoring of their state of progress, that is, their respect of the schedule and the results achieved in the intermediate phases before the presentation of the final expected results.

⁹ The directory of lecturers in German literature in the Italian universities, published by the Istituto Italiano di Studi Germanici in the years 1989 (edited by Andrea Landolfi and Giuliana Todini), 1998 (edited by Andrea Landolfi, Giuliana Todini and Roberto Venuti), 2003 (edited by Giuliana Todini and Roberto Venuti) and 2009 (edited by Giuliana Todini and Bruno Berni), gave a detailed bibliographic picture of every tenured lecturer's publications. Issue no. VI (September/December 2013) of the "Bollettino dell'Associazione Italiana di Germanistica", edited by Marina Foschi, was accompanied by an online update of the output of German language lecturers and an integration on German literature lecturers. There would be more advantages to online publication if each person inserted the data in real time without waiting for infrequent deadlines. Furthermore, it would also be opportune to include the publications of untenured staff (PhD students, research fellows, temporary researchers, etc.), which make up a large part of the 'new Germanic Studies', and to create fields of research in which to collect the output.



In addition, it is necessary to add that the doctorate reform from groups of universities working on well-defined fields to “generalist” schools, has modified an important academic channel. The competitions launched, also for the humanities, within the Horizon 2014-2020 European Programme enable us to wish for a real turnaround. It is also hoped that this may promote a real supranational perspective on literature studies. Although this does exist, with energetic circulation and communication among scholars, it does not receive adequate support at institutional level. Nevertheless, even though there is no organised network of research centres connected to the Italian universities, unlike for example in the Federal Republic of Germany with the Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft research agency, we can pinpoint some centres of reference and aggregation: the themed conferences organized by the Associazione Italiana di Germanistica (AIG), academic associations, specialist journals, and conference and seminar initiatives.

The AIG conferences are now held every three years. Even though the topics dealt with are inevitably broad and at times perhaps generic, they record phases when it is deemed necessary to discuss aspects and perspectives of studying and teaching German literature. It is worth listing them:

2000: *Simmetria e antisimmetria. Due spinte in conflitto nella cultura dei paesi di lingua tedesca* (Symmetry and Antisymmetry. Two conflicting drives in the culture of German-language countries)

2002: *Il senso della storia. Linguistica e scienza letteraria nei paesi di lingua tedesca* (The Sense of History. Linguistics and literary science in German-language countries).

2004: *Trascrizioni. Percorsi interculturali nella letteratura e nella lingua tedesca* (Transcriptions. Intercultural paths in German literature and language).

2007: *Der Kanon in der deutschen Sprach- und Literaturwissenschaft* (The Canon in German Language and Literary Studies).

2010: *La lettura* (Reading).

2013: *Scrivere: generi, pratiche, medialità* (Writing: genres, practices, mediality).

The sense of history in and through literature, interculturality, the ex-



pediency and need for a canon of reading, the multitude of genres and ways of writing in the media era: they are highly topical themes which definitely go beyond the perimeters of Germanic Studies, but which find fertile ground for discussion in this field. There is no doubt that, in the face of new culturological openings and outlooks, in the approach to the literary text we can still see the legacy of the philological historicist method. Established around half a century ago, it was when the generation of Cesare Cases, Giuliano Baioni, Giuseppe Bevilacqua, Paolo Chiarini and Mazzino Montinari went beyond the Crocian tradition to refer, albeit in a heterodox way, to Lukács' aesthetic materialistic approach, to reconstruct the political and cultural history of the German and Austrian bourgeoisie in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries and all the socio-economic and historical-political relations, commonly defined as the context, upon which the literary work is based. In reality, Lukács' reflection theory has hardly ever been strictly applied. On the contrary, often it has been attempted to make the contradictions, the cracks and the false conscience of bourgeois ideology emerge from the body of writing. A lot of time has passed, and it may seem anachronistic to dig up a legacy that nevertheless enables an explanation of why in time methodological approaches such as structuralism have been taken up less in Italian Germanic Studies, and the reasons for the great concentration of studies on topics and authors from the last two centuries with few excursions into the seventeenth and first half of the eighteenth centuries.

Research and the publishing market

In the panorama of literary studies and publications, in the last fifteen years in particular a forefront position has been held by numerous editions of German literature with a strict philological and critical interpretative foundation. In the year 2000, in addition to the contributions remembered at the beginning, the publishers Sansoni issued the first full Italian version of the journal "Athenaeum" by the Schlegel brothers, edited by Giorgio Cusatelli, translated and with critical commentaries by Elena Agazzi and Donatella Mazza. A few months later, two editions of Hölderlin's poems came out practically



simultaneously: from Rizzoli an extensive compilation edited by Luca Crescenzi and, in the Meridiani Mondadori series, the complete collection published by Luigi Reitani with a commentary, a revision of the German critical commentary and a piece by Andrea Zanzotto. This dual event, which, owing to the editors' different philological choices and translations, marked "the development of an increasingly intense and complex dialogue around the German poet's work in Italian Germanic Studies too",¹⁰ did not at that point receive due credit for its great ambition in hermeneutically placing translator, German or Italian reader, face to face with the poet's complexities. Nevertheless, the bases were cast for what just over ten years later would become the Associazione Hölderliniana Italiana.

The Meridiani Mondadori series, under the strict and far-sighted directorship of Renata Colorni, form a point of reference that unites translation with a large circulation and a high academic profile. This is attested by the editions of the *Opere* by Paul Celan (1998), edited by Giuseppe Bevilacqua; the narrative of Theodor Fontane (2003), edited by Giuliano Baioni; the *Opere* by Kleist (2011) edited by Anna Maria Carpi; the novels *Joseph and his Brothers* (2000) edited by Fabrizio Cambi; and *Buddenbrooks*, *Royal Highness* (in *Romanzi*, 2007) and *The Magic Mountain* (2010), edited by Luca Crescenzi. In particular, owing to its immense commentary and the no few innovative critical positions, the latter edition was also greatly appreciated in Germany where *Fiorenza* (2014), edited by Elisabeth Galvan, recently came out as part of the Thomas Mann *Große kommentierte Frankfurter Ausgabe* editorial project. Publishing strategies and scholars' philological and hermeneutic skills have come together in Italy to produce works that approach the standard of critical editions, such as the recently published *Opere e lettere. Scritti di arte, estetica e morale in collaborazione con Ludwig Tieck* (Bompiani, 2014) by Wilhelm Heinrich Wackenroder, edited by Elena Agazzi. With a different editorial framework and aims, 39 bilingual literary and theatrical works came out in the *Gli Elfi* series by "Letteratura universale Marsilio", directed by Maria

¹⁰ Review by Elena Polledri, in "Osservatorio critico della germanistica", 2002, no. 13, p. 2.



Fancelli, between 1989 and 2012. At the same time, a new series was initiated of central European classics, *Gli Anemoni*, directed by Analisa Cosentino and Luigi Reitani, which, among the new titles, boasts a world first for the preliminary version, *Il redentore*, of Musil's *The Man without Qualities*.

Historic book market trends, determining how other countries' literary products are received, also influence the state of the discipline itself. To the frequent objection that the translation and editing of a literary work is only aimed at non-specialists we need to respond that they almost always (re)initiate a critical process at various levels, in which the specialists who refer to the primary literature in the original language also take part. Italian Germanic Studies also deals with translation as transference and a means of communication and hermeneutic transmission. Indeed, at present the Istituto Italiano di Studi Germanici is carrying out a complex research project on *La cultura tedesca in Italia 1946-1968* (German Culture in Italy 1946-1968) which is set to include an investigation on *Traduzione: Estetica e pratica* (Translation: aesthetics and practice). Irrespective of specialist publishing by small academic publishers, the dialectic between publishers on one hand, and authors of monographic essays and translators on the other, cannot help but influence the direction of research, in particular in the choice of some historical-literary periods rather than others. To give some examples backed by some data: specific monographic studies on seventeenth-century German literature are rare, as are editions of primary literature, except for the novels *Simplicius Simplicissimus* by Grimmelshausen (last edition Mondadori, 1992) and *Schelmuffskey* by Christian Reuter (Mondadori, 1998), both edited by Emilio Bonfatti, and *Peace-Wishing Germany* by Johann Rist (Edizioni del Cerro, 2000), edited by Roberto De Pol and Massimo Gobber. I shall only point out the essays by Italo Battaifarano, well-known seventeenth-century scholar, among which *Probleme der Grimmelshausen-Bibliographie: mit Beispielen der Rezeption* (2008) and *Grimmelshausens Kriegsdarstellung und ihre Rezeption 1667-2006* (2011), the monograph *L'alambiccio del cuore. La scrittura del sé nel pietismo* (2008) by Maria Paola Scialdone, which takes us through time from *Vorpietismus* to *Frühaufklärung* to the final achievement of *Empfindsamkeit*. The vo-



lumes by Stefano Beretta *La ricezione della 'novela picaresca' spagnola in Germania. Le prime versioni del "Lazarillo de Tormes" e del "Guzmán de Alfarache"* (Bulzoni) and Roberto De Pol *Imago Principis. Ruoli e maschere teatrali del sovrano nel teatro barocco tedesco* (La Quercia) date respectively from 1992 and 1983, while the monograph *Paul Fleming: de se ipso ad se ipsum* (Cisalpino) by Anna Maria Carpi is from 1973. It appears singular that, for example, of Andreas Gryphius, considered one of the century's leading authors of tragedies, there are no Italian editions, except for a collection of sonnets (Marsilio, 1993) edited by Enrico De Angelis, nor are there any scientific studies of his works.

On the early Enlightenment poet, Johann Christian Günther, to whom Mittner devotes sharp and lucid pages in his history of literature, the main studies by Sergio Lupi, Francesco Delbono and Giuseppe Bevilacqua fall between 1947 and 1958, and since then only the monograph to have come out is *Johann Günthers geistliche Lyrik* (Marburg, 2010) by Laura Bignotti. There is no doubt that Italian Germanic Studies fit into the canon which takes the mid eighteenth century, significantly defined by Nicolao Merker as the *Età di Lessing* (Age of Lessing), as the starting point of literary studies. Indeed, in Italy a clear ideological perspective has taken root that modernity, with the birth of the representation of subjectivity and its unresolved crisis, commenced in the eighteenth century.

Notes on Italian Germanic Studies in the 2000s: paths and trends

What follows is dictated by the intention to show, in the eclectic and heterogeneous scenario of Italian Germanic Studies in the last twenty years, a small selection of lines and fields of research. Hence, it will give a rough idea by choosing a limited selection of monographic works that leaves out many more than it includes. Indeed, the intention is not to make a systematic bibliographical review, considering that, save some exceptions, the critical literature published in journals, which shows the full variety and spectrum of the specific research topics, has not been taken into account.



We have to thank Germanist Alberto Martino, moreover top scholar of the Baroque period, for his fundamental work, also in the international field, on eighteenth-century theatre. The volume *Geschichte der dramatischen Theorien in Deutschland im 18. Jahrhundert*, published by Niemeyer in 1972 in the German translation by Wolfgang Proß, and republished in 1998 in a reprint of the Italian edition from 1967, introduces the now consolidated principle of emotionalism as the ultimate aim of art and, *in primis*, of tragedy.¹¹ Its framing of the sphere of the sentiments and sensations in a wider sphere than the rational dimension, discussion of the ability to reconcile tragedy and theodicy in the Enlightenment period and overview of the dramaturgical theories in Europe at the time are foretastes of the direction that would be taken by anthropological studies on the eighteenth century: on the corporeity, gestures and non-verbal language codified in the *Forschungsbericht, Anthropologie und Literatur in der deutschen Spätaufklärung* (Jasl, 1994), by Wolfgang Riedel, and then further investigated in some important Italian Germanic studies, such as the monographs *Le passioni allo specchio. "Mitleid" e sistema degli affetti nel teatro di Lessing* (Istituto Italiano di Studi Germanici, 2005) by Francesca Tucci and *Corpo conteso. Rito e gestualità nella Germania del Settecento* (Jaca Book, 2000) by Elena Agazzi, which analyses non-verbal language as a medium in the interaction between various disciplinary fields and places it in the framework of bodily expression.

Even though the number of scholars of the German eighteenth century is small, and their studies heterogeneous and scattered, some very significant spheres have been explored. I shall list some: *Tipologie del melanconico nel Settecento tedesco* (Manni, 2002) by Federica La Manna¹² which can be paired with the well-known book *Melancholie und Aufklärung* (1977) by Hans-Jürgen Schings, the in-depth research by Maurizio Pirro on the idyll analysed in the work of Gessner (Campanotto, 2003), that by Ursula Bavaj on the theoretical writings of Gellert (Artemide, 2002), the collection put together by Peter Kofler

¹¹ On this see the review by Alessandro Costazza, in "Osservatorio critico della germanistica", 1999, no. 4.

¹² By La Manna I would also like to point out the recent study *Sineddoche dell'anima. Il volto nel dibattito tedesco del Settecento* (Mimesis, 2012).



of papers on Italian culture and current political and social affairs published in the journal “Der Teutsche Merkur” by Wieland (Sturzflüge, 1997), author to whom Laura Auteri devoted some important studies such as the book *Stille und Bewegung. Zur dichterischen Form bei Wieland* (Heinz, 1998). On Wieland’s works, we should also remember the monograph by Arianna Di Bella *La questione religiosa nel tardo ‘700* (Campanotto, 2007). While the anthropological direction of eighteenth-century studies has offered important results, on the other hand there is an evident scarcity of research on theories and literary genres, as well as a lack in recent times of monographic essays on authors such as Gottsched, Gerstenberg, Gleim, Bodmer and Klopstock, on whom, in 1969, Giuliano Baioni wrote the enlightening essay *L’idillio sublime di Friedrich Gottlieb Klopstock*. Goethe’s judgement of the poet of the *Messias* expressed in *Poetry and Truth* seems irremediably distant: “Everything that emanated from him was held dear and valuable”. An aspect that should not be underestimated for the purpose of studying a writer’s *oeuvre* is the importance to be given to knowledge of his models and masters in a complex process of rebuilding his past acquired baggage.

One of the most systematic contributions has been given by scholars working at the Accademia Roveretana degli Agiati, an institution whose roots are found in that very same eighteenth-century culture. Among the most active interpreters of this tradition are Giulia Cantarutti, Stefano Ferrari and Paola Maria Filippi who edited the important volume *Il Settecento tedesco in Italia. Gli italiani e l’immagine della cultura tedesca nel XVIII secolo* (Il Mulino, 2001). The miscellany *La cultura tedesca in Italia 1750-1850*, edited by Alberto Destro and Paola Maria Filippi, had already come out in 1995. In this, for the first time a reasoned census was made of the “bibliographical substance of the time, in German and translated from German”. It fit into a sector of exploration and research, up to then little developed, which had nevertheless been initiated in the 1980s by Carlo Carmassi with two monographic issues published in the “Jacques e i suoi quaderni” series on *La letteratura tedesca nei periodici italiani del Seicento e del Settecento (1688-1799)* and in periodicals of the early nineteenth-century. This case again confirms that research is likely to have a positive outcome



if investigated in a team and supported by an institution. Here the retrieval and valuation of the work of intercultural mediation by erudite Italian and German men and women of letters, at times forming genuine minor avant-gardes, lies in the terrain of 'niche' literature and in the sphere of genres considered less important or ancillary, as shown again by Stefano Ferrari in the volume *Cultura letteraria e sapere scientifico nelle accademie tedesche e italiane del 700* (Accademia Roveretana degli Agiati, 2003). This aspect of so-called minor literature is often neglected in Italian Germanic Studies too.

Continuing in this cursory chronological summary, it must come as no surprise that *Goethe-Zeit* is one of the literary periods in history subject to the largest number of studies, concentrating to a large extent on Goethe and Schiller and the Romantic movement. Here we can try to extract some general orientations. In the volume *Il giovane Goethe* (Einaudi, 1996), Giuliano Baioni paints a portrait that overturns the consolidated modes of interpretation to represent the poet and his character Werther, with all their contradictions and weaknesses, as initiators of the process of modernity and a nascent nihilism. In the opposite direction, in the book *Materialismo e masochismo. Il "Werther", Foscolo e Leopardi* (new expanded edition, Artemide, 2001) Giorgio Manacorda discusses the influence of *Werther* on Foscoli's *Ortis* and Leopardi's *Canti*, reading it not as a manifestation of the modern, by making use of the as-yet-inexistent term nihilism, but as the expression of a movement, *Sturm und Drang*, which cannot be encapsulated either in the late Enlightenment or pre-Romanticism. In the year of the two hundredth anniversary of Goethe's birth, the volume by Marino Freschi *Goethe. L'insidia della modernità* (Donzelli, 1999) helped to revitalize biographical attention to the poet, which had been widely reinitiated some years before by Karl Otto Conrady in the book *Goethe: Leben und Werke* (Athenäum, 1987). Freschi also describes the writer's life in close and specular connection with his *oeuvre*, just as, in the same year, Roberto Zapperi was piecing back together his Roman itinerary in *Das Incognito. Goethes ganz andere Existenz in Rom* (Beck, 1999), then integrated by his *Römische Spuren: Goethe und sein Italien* (Beck, 2007, Italian edition Bonanno 2011). The recent monograph *Goethe* (Salerno, 2014) by Gabriella Catalano



adopts a complex and intricate structure in order to avoid a traditional chronological slant. The scholar chooses some intelligent means to represent the wealth and variety of Goethe's work, in which intense output and planning combine. The topographical portrayal of spaces, settings and dwellings as well as the constant reference to the leading concepts of genius and classical poetry provide fertile ground for a critical reconstruction of Goethe's figure and aesthetics.

Great attention is paid to Goethe the scientist, with scientific, philosophical and literary essays coming together to form an interdisciplinary approach. The book by Elena Agazzi *Il prisma di Goethe. Letteratura di viaggio e scienza nell'età classico-romantica* (Guida, 1996) studies Goethe's Italian journey in relation to the development of scientific knowledge between the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. This same topic then comes under broad discussion in the volume, unfortunately quite a mixed bag, *Goethe scienziato* (Einaudi, 1998), edited by Giulio Giorello and Agnese Grieco. Taking a range of perspectives, looking both back and forward in time, it brings out all the issues of including Goethe's science in the historical framework in which it developed. In reality, this miscellany tends to highlight more divergent rather than synthetic stances, and in so doing radicalizes the opposition of "two attitudes – one historical-philological-philosophical, the other scientific-ahistorical-anthroposophical – which exclude each other and do not come to any real comparison". Instead, the first Italian edition of *Theory of Colours, Storia dei colori* (Luni 1997, new ed. 2008) edited by Renato Troncon takes a more univocal and useful approach. In the comments he underlines where the scientist overlaps with the poet, indeed "it is precisely the poet's eye that gives unity and expression to the questions of science". At the same time as the first edition of *Storia dei colori*, Emilio Bonfatti and Maria Fancelli published the collection of 14 essays *Il primato dell'occhio. Poesia e pittura nell'età di Goethe* (Artemide, 1997), whose central theme consists of the relationship between perceptive vision and knowledge, in the dialectic between gaze and interiority, prefiguring the pictorial taste intrinsic to the Romantics' narrative. Adopting the same structure is the monograph *Vedute e visioni. Teorie estetiche e di-*



mensione onirica nelle opere "italiane" di Karl Philipp Moritz (Bruno Mondadori, 2010) by Renata Gambino who reads his *Viaggi in Italia* as a passage from “view” to “vision”, following what can be deemed the author’s gnoseological path. On Moritz we should remember the extensive and in-depth study *Genie und tragische Kunst. Karl Philipp Moritz und die Ästhetik des 18. Jahrhunderts* (Lang, 1999) by Alessandro Costazza.

Some important monographs must certainly be pointed out among the not many systematic and critical studies of Goethe’s works. The first, *Proserpinens Park. Goethes “Wahlverwandtschaften” als Selbstkritik der Moderne* (Metzler, 2003) by Giovanni Sampaolo, is an example of the positive reception of Italian studies in Germany, in this case also justified by the Italian Germanist’s adoption of the genealogical approach of Wilhelm Emrich. In this way, he identifies the iconic motifs weaving together the novel and puts them into context. The second is *Faust in Italia. Ricezione, adattamento, traduzione del capolavoro di Goethe* (Artemide, 2009) by Paola Del Zoppo who makes an in-depth comparative investigation of the translations of the tragedy into Italian in the last two centuries, inserting them into the history of its reception in our country and into the relative historical and cultural context. In our overview, we have to stop off in 1990, the year in which the last full translation of *Faust* edited by Andrea Casalegno came out. Until then, there had never been such a long gap between one translation and the next. In the cleverly constructed monograph *Faust. Il mito dalla tradizione orale al post-pop* (Carocci, 2013), Luca Zenobi takes us through the legend of Faust as the “prototype of the modern subject”. He highlights constant features in the “critical junctures in the historical social evolution of Germany”, while also extending his research to vaster literary spheres, from Marlowe to Puškin and Bulgakov, as well as film and theatre adaptations.

With regard to the Classical-Romantic era, well summed up in one of the Laterza manuals (2009) edited by Michele Cometa, Italian critical literature on Schiller also takes the line of interpreting the relationship between politics and philosophy. There are significant and innovative analyses, for example, with a legal literary approach, such as in the essay by Maria Carolina Foi in the volume that she edited



La giurisdizione delle scene. I drammi politici di Schiller (Quodlibet, 2013). Contributing to the understandable imbalance towards the aesthetic and political rather than the philological side, which can ultimately be traced back to the contrast with Goethe, codified by Heine in *The Romantic School*, are more the philosophers than the Germanists – a distinction that moreover in the universe of research has less and less *raison d'être*. Examples are Giovanna Pinna who edited a version of Schiller's *Poesie filosofiche* (SE, 2005), *Scritti giovanili* (Armando, 2012) and published the volume *Introduzione a Schiller* (Laterza, 2012), and Leonardo Amoroso with the book *Schiller e la parabola dell'estetica* (ETS, 2014). In addition to the study by Luca Zenobi *La natura e l'arte: estetica della rappresentazione in Diderot e Schiller* (ETS, 2005) and the book that he edited *Friedrich Schiller. Modello, ideale, o provocazione?* (Vecchiarelli, 2007), also helping to rebalance and create original slants in Italian *Schiller-Forschung* is the rich collective volume *Auguri Schiller!* (Morlacchi, 2011), edited by Hermann Dorowin and Uta Treder, on the 250th anniversary of the writer's birth. This rereading does not dwell on a now hackneyed refutation of Croce's condemnation, but deals with spheres that have to date been little explored, such as the successful reception of Schiller in Italian theatre and melodrama in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, his female figures, and more in general the strong link with the culture of the *Risorgimento*.

Having to choose among the many directions in the immense amount of critical literature on Romanticism, in this article perhaps the most interesting thing to do is to underline one taken by Italian Germanic Studies that is specific or at least diverse compared to the international context. First of all, it is necessary to note the alternating phases of a high concentration of studies and others of relative silence. In the mid 1980s, the volume by Luciano Zagari *Mitologia del segno vivente* (Il Mulino, 1985), a collection of essays written in the previous fifteen years on Wackenroder, Novalis, Kleist, Arnim and Heine, caused ample debate. Zagari's guiding theory is that the Romantics' poetry is expressed through a "living writing" that can establish "a great circulation of analogy, symbolism and allegory" as this is the specifically Romantic way of projecting their



world. The mythological dimension is retrieved in the network of potential connections that nourishes the imagination. In describing the mythological grammar, Zagari noted the dual nature of the Romantics' language, which is both analogical and projective, and at the same time aims to create a process of disintegration. The scholar also linked the Romantic movement with the twentieth century, a bridge that in the following years would give fertile ground for discussion: "The most significant difference between Romantic taste and the prevalent experiences in the twentieth century indeed lies in the Romantics' tenaciously clinging onto the commitment to recover the totality that, albeit in paradoxically ephemeral forms, is presented as integral. This commitment is not overthrown, but confirmed by the nihilistic turn which of course constitutes a constant complementary aspect. Instead the taste that in our century has for decades been called modern often took as starting points many of those which for the Romantics had been at most points of arrival [...]" (p. 30).

The year before, in 1984, in the volume *Iduna. Mitologie della ragione* (Novecento, 1984) Michele Cometa had already studied the function and communicative value of mythologies alongside reason in the philosophical and literary systems of the Modern Age. It is a topic that was then further developed by several scholars (amongst whom Margherita Cottone, Manfred Frank, Giampiero Moretti and Sergio Givone) in the volume, again edited by Cometa, *Mitologie della ragione. Letterature e miti dal Romanticismo al Moderno* (Studio Tesi, 1989). In Italian critique, a propensity prevails towards the ebullient and propulsive 'laboratory' of *Frühromantik*, meant as a multifaceted movement that can be placed in an aesthetic and ideological framework whose updated legacy can be seen in the present day. So after the book by Ingrid Hennemann Barale *Poetisierte Welt. Studi sul primo romanticismo tedesco* (ETS, 1991), which in the *Frühromantik* marks out the origins of a consciousness of modernity shot through by utopian veins, numerous studies came out in the second half of the 1990s, also motivated by the publication of the great four-volume anthology of authors of the *Romanticismo tedesco* (Rizzoli 1995-1997) edited by Giuseppe Bevilacqua, an "opportunity," writes Claudio Magris,



“to reflect on the contradictions of modernity”. In 1997, preceded by the monograph by Luca Crescenzi *Antropologia e poetica della fantasia. Per una genealogia della narrativa fantastica nel romanticismo berlinese* (Scheda, 1996), no fewer than three volumes came out, two of which with the same title and the third with a title not corresponding to the original German one: *L'estetica del Romanticismo* (Donzelli) by Franco Rella, *L'estetica del Romanticismo* (Il Mulino) by Paolo D'Angelo, and the translation *Romanticismo* (La Nuova Italia, German ed.: *Frühromantik*, De Gruyter, 1992) by Ernst Behler. Despite their different perspectives and with the questionable limitation of dealing with early Romanticism alone, because the two Italian scholars consider it as having a greater theoretical weight, Behler's approach, in which he makes the texts speak to rebuild the dialogical *koine* of the group from Jena, stands out in contrast. Among the most significant studies, built around one of the Romantic categories *par excellence*, are the works by Patrizio Collini: *Il passaggio dal viaggio alla Wanderung nel romanzo romantico* (Cafoscarina, 1993) and *Wanderung. Il viaggio dei romantici* (Feltrinelli, 1996).

The less philosophical attention given to “Second Romanticism”, in which the legacy of the first period is subject to critical revision, is compensated by in-depth explorations of the works of Brentano, Arnim, E.T.A. Hoffmann, Eichendorff, Tieck and Heine, as attested, among others, by the studies of Zagari; the books by Giovanna Cermelli *Il viaggiatore disincantato. Fantasia e distanza ironica nelle novelle del tardo Tieck* (monographic issue of “Jacques e i suoi quaderni”, 1989) and *Il rumore perduto del tempo. La tarda narrativa di Joseph von Eichendorff* (Bulzoni, 1995); the volume by Maria Carolina Foi *Heine e la vecchia Germania. Le radici della questione tedesca tra poesia e diritto* (Garzanti, 1990); and the book by Matteo Galli *L'officina segreta delle idee. E. T.H. Hoffmann e il suo tempo* (Le Lettere, 1999). On literature of the nineteenth century, Italian Germanic Studies demonstrates great dynamism and versatility, analysing aspects that have been little studied and, rather than a period of stagnation, showing a German world in ferment and full of life. Among the monographic and historical literary works, I will restrict myself to remembering the collective volume *Ottocento tedesco. Da Goethe a Nietzsche* (La Città del Sole, 1998),



edited by Gabriella Catalano and Emilia Fiandra, dedicated to Luciano Zagari on his seventieth birthday by the pupils from his research doctorate courses and seminars (Miglio, Sampaolo, Perrone Capano, Cermelli, Santini, Galvan, Schininà. Gheri, Corrado, Brogelli and Crescenzi who now represent a large part of the median generation of Germanic scholars). The authors, topics and issues dealt with bring together and also multiply the fruits of Zagari's lesson. As Fiandra writes in the paper *I cigni di Hölderlin* "the Germanist taught to combine meticulous investigation of the work's smallest elements, its structural microcosms, with the text as a whole, in a constant dynamic between de-construction and re-construction, in an exegetic approach aiming to grasp that imperceptible boundary where the fullness of the sign betrays the threat of its absence". Searching the folds and the areas of literature that have remained in the shade, perhaps because they are incomplete, such as analysis of the unfinished tale *Martin Martir* by Arnim, proves to be the key to accessing wider horizons, in order to possibly bring them together. By Emilia Fiandra, co-editor of this volume, we must remember the transversal as well as original study *Desiderio e tradimento. L'adulterio nella narrativa dell'Ottocento europeo* (Carocci, 2005).

In 2006, in the series "Forme della cultura tedesca" published by Carocci, Alessandro Fambrini published *L'età del realismo. La letteratura tedesca dell'Ottocento*. The merit of this literary history is that it presents and demonstrates the variety and dissimilarity of currents and trends traditionally placed under the standardizing label of realism. The chapters *Vie parallele al realismo*, which thematize "the legacy of the fantastic", its new frontiers and the "scientific marvellous", and *Altre divagazioni: viaggi, esplorazioni, esotismo*, illustrate areas now dealt with by a varied literature, projected towards modernity.

A volume that goes against the tide and is packed with ideas, albeit not sufficiently gathered in a communicative and comparative framework, something that is indeed quite lacking in present-day Italian Germanic Studies, is the aforementioned *L'Ottocento letterario tedesco* by Enrico De Angelis. In the methodological introduction, in his function as narrator, after repeating his conviction that the upshot of literary history is only a construction displaying voids, gaps and shady



areas, and remembering that “the book is written by a non-German for non-Germans”, the author announces his underlying theory that “Germanic Studies is indeed always a derivate of Romantic criticism; both have seen a form of knowledge in *Dichtung*”. The work, divided into ten parts, embraces around one hundred years of the history of German literature, from 1813 to the early twentieth century. The division is based on ideas and topics (the popular, traditions, the great transformations in the social field, the various forms of the modern) which draw on “sociology as a topic of literary expression”. The true novelty is given by the insertion of short *excursus* in italics in the chapters, in which the narrator takes the stage as an actor in the story. Hence that hermeneutic horizon is made visible of which there is so much talk, but which does not always materialize. In one of these: *Dall’A alla Z* he states that real German literature covers a period of 182 years, from 1774, the year of *Werther*, to 1956, the year of Brecht and Benn’s deaths. The asymmetry and eccentricity of this chosen period once again is the result of proposing a strong hermeneutical involvement: “The fact is that we, whether we want to think ourselves spectators or manipulators, want to exercise our hegemony over the past: making it serve our purposes, continuing it, choosing alternatives presumed to be within it or not, feeling superior due to the mere fact that, as more time has passed, we know more things”. The firm reference to the hermeneutical approach, whose selections and hierarchies bring into being and favour that which is determined by the present context and by the scholar’s sensitivity, on one hand may seem obvious, but on the other hand, in exercising critical understanding, it should require a sort of ‘pondering’, a problematization of the hermeneutic circuit itself.

Much attention is given to the nineteenth-century classics, with numerous studies and editions: on Büchner (*Lenz* edited by Giulio Schiavoni for Marsilio, 2008, and the book by Simonetta Sanna *L’altra rivoluzione. La morte di Danton di Georg Büchner e la ricerca di più specifiche alternative*, Carocci, 2010; German ed. Fink, 2010), Kleist (editions on the *Penthesilea* and on *Michael Kohlhaas* and the biography by Anna Maria Carpi *Un inquieto batter d’ali. Vita di Kleist*, Mondadori, 2005), Heine (the volume of proceedings *Auf den Spuren Heinrich Heines*,



edited by Ingrid Hennemann Barale and Harald Steinhagen, ETS, 2006; the monograph *Parole in guerra. Heinrich Heine e la polemica* by Marco Rispoli, Quodlibet, 2008), *Stifter (Arte e scienza nella scrittura visuale di Stifter* by Maria Luisa Roli, University Word) and *Fontane* (studies by Domenico Mugnolo, Margherita Cottone, Liselotte Grevel and Giuliana Liebmann Parrinello). On the juncture of the *Jahrhundertwende* and the *Moderne*, confirming the tendency in academic publishing for manual-type works, I shall point out two volumes, which both came out in 2009: the first is *L'età del moderno. La letteratura tedesca del primo novecento (1900-1933)* (Carocci) by Aldo Venturelli who, as Fambrini observes in the review of the volume, “sets out a systematic portrait of an era marked by fragmentation and the loss of totality – while seeking the roots linking them together in the dual legacy of Nietzsche and Wagner”. The methodology of narrating a story by groups of themes and cultural aspects, with the contribution of experts on this cultural period (on George, Maurizio Pirro; on Rilke, Elena Polledri; on Hofmannsthal, Loretta Monti; on Schnitzler, Kraus and Robert Walser, Stefano Beretta) has the advantage of fitting the main figures into the teleological progress of the period. The second is *Klassische Moderne. Un paradigma del Novecento* (Mimesis), edited by Mauro Ponzi. The volume is built on a topography of the intellectual paths of authors who developed new forms of artistic expression and tried out conceptual itineraries in constellations that are still up-to-date: journalism, crisis and epiphanies of seeing, the definition of urban spaces, the relation between man and machine, word and image.

Germanic Studies and literature in German

The further we get into the twentieth century, the greater the quantity of critical literature in Italian Germanic Studies too. This is the effect of attraction and involvement, and a need for orientation and to understand the history of a century, whether we consider it short or long and in any case tragic, in which our roots are still laid down. The great historical and political caesurae of 1918, 1933, 1945 and 1989 naturally reflect both on the primary and critical literature. The



most original contribution by Italian Germanic Studies has been a revision of the conception of German literature as one, over time building up and consolidating the representation of German-language literatures as having many centres: in Austria and *Mitteleuropa*, Switzerland, Germany and East Germany. This mapping and these literary itineraries are constantly being enriched and investigated thanks to a different methodological and conceptual design from the one outlined for example by Victor Zmegač in the last volume of his *Geschichte der deutschen Literatur vom 18. Jahrhundert bis zur Gegenwart* (1984). Based on specific historical and cultural aspects, their study has led to the definition of national identity processes that interact mutually with the literature of other German-speaking countries and, in the present, transnationally. Thanks to Mittner's anticipations and the introduction of a "Habsburg canon" in the famous book by Claudio Magris *Il mito asburgico nella letteratura austriaca moderna* (Einaudi, 1963), the bases have been created for a specifically Austrian characteristic and a *Mitteleuropean*-Danubian cultural space that has been widely acknowledged and discussed in international Germanic Studies, in Austria first of all, where the key of myth applied to its nineteenth and early twentieth-century literature was met at the beginning with surprise and diffidence.¹³ Owing to historical reasons, and geographical proximity, but above all the attraction towards an intellectual, aesthetic and linguistic tradition, a sizeable part of recent Italian Germanic Studies has concentrated on Austrian events, writers, philosophers and artists, from Nestroy to Stifter, Hofmannsthal, Altenberg, Rilke, Trakl, Broch, Schnitzler, Bahr, Kraus, Mach, Musil, Soyfer, Wittgenstein, Jandl, Zweig, Mayröcker, Handke, Bernhard, Bachmann and Jelinek, from the *Wiener Moderne* to the *Wiener Kreis* up to the *Grazer Forum*. Many studies by Dorowin, Reitani, Destro, Pulvirenti, Farese, Dolei, Lavagetto, Landolfi, Rovagnati, Schininà, Larcati, Svandrlik, Wandruszka, Haas, Dacrema, Latini, Gheri, Saletta and Filippi, who is curator in Trento of the most im-

¹³ In this connection, please allow me to refer to my essay *Mythisierung und Entmythisierung in der italienischen Rezeption der österreichischen Literatur*, in *Germanistik im Spannungsfeld von Regionalität und Internationalität* (Vienna: Praesens, 2010), pp. 212-217.



portant Austrian library within an Italian institution, to cite just some names, document the breadth and wealth of the research dealing with and discussing issues rooted in Austrian culture, in particular the topic of language, reflection on it and its use in literary works, and the great question of Jewish assimilation. Besides, the more the focus on Austrian literature grows, the more the lack becomes evident of systematic works that can constitute a contemporary ‘demythical match’ for the book by Magris. Is it plausible and sensible to propose a history of Austrian literature when in Austria itself the discipline in question is referred to as *Germanistik* in the wider meaning of the discipline, when the category of national literature, in contemporary society at least, has become inapplicable even though tendencies towards regional literature are becoming stronger, in contrast to transnational trends and movements? In the volume *Eine Sprache – viele Horizonte... Die Osterweiterung der deutschsprachigen Literatur. Porträts einer neuen europäischen Generation* (Praesens Verlag, 2008), edited by Michaela Bürger Koftis and comprising the proceedings of a conference held in Genoa, the following question is often asked: “was ist deutsch an der deutschen Literatur?”. The answer lies in an increasingly frequent “schreiben zwischen den Kulturen”. If we consider the Laterza manuals, built by genre, *La poesia tedesca del Novecento* (2009), edited by Anna Chiarloni (also with contributions by Walter Busch, Maurizio Pirro and Luigi Reitani) and *Il teatro tedesco del Novecento* (2009), edited by Teodoro Scamardi (with essays by Roberta Ascarelli, Franco Buono and Pasquale Gallo), their titles already introduce an overall vision, with the adjective “German” summing up in a historical time span, from Wilhelmine Germany and the Austro-Hungarian Empire to the present day, a huge variety of cultural and literary branches, devoting specific chapters to the different national situations. In addition, the attention paid to the literature of German-speaking Switzerland must be underlined. Not reserved a great deal of space, it is nevertheless significant thanks to the studies of Anna Fattori and Francesco Fiorentino with the volume *La letteratura della Svizzera tedesca* (Carocci, 2001).

In terms of Germanic Studies above all in West Germany before reunification, the great attention and amount of studies on East Ger-



many in Italy aroused astonishment. Right from the first work on *Alcune vicende e problemi della cultura nella RDT* (Einaudi, 1958) by Cesare Cases, in Italy a dual, at times overlapping, viewpoint was prompted towards the literature of the two German states until 1989. In order to trace the reasons for the careful and constant “critical empathetic gaze” towards the GDR – to use a successful expression by Anna Chiarloni whom over the years we have to thank for her great critical contribution to the situation and literature not just of this country but also the reunified Germany in the volume *Dossier Germania. Cronache letterarie della riunificazione tedesca* (Franco Angeli, 1998)□ and to rebuild the complex picture of the relations between Italy and that country, we need to read the book by Magda Martini *La cultura all’ombra del muro. Relazioni culturali tra Italia e DDR (1949-1989)* (Il Mulino, 2009) which provides precious indications for interpreting the effects of the division of Germany and the Cold War. Ten years earlier, on occasion of the ten-year anniversary of the fall of the Berlin Wall, in the miscellany *La cortina invisibile: Mutazioni nel paesaggio urbano dopo la riunificazione* (University Press Bergamo, 1999), edited by Eva Banchelli, photographs, eye-witness accounts and essays described the changes in the urban fabric of the cities, in particular in the East, and the continuing division between the two Germanies as experienced in individual behaviours and consciousness in continual refraction with the urban space.

With great intellectual and critical commitment, the volume *L’invenzione del futuro. Breve storia letteraria della DDR* (Scheiwiller, 2009) edited by Michele Sisto contributed to the historical, cultural and literary review of the GDR. It extended the field of investigation from 1945 to 2009 with an examination in chapter III: *Cronache di Atlantide* by Matteo Galli, of the literature of the former East Germany twenty years after the fall of the Wall, and with a wide-ranging summary of events and problems of reception in Italy. As if in opposition to the prevailing line of interpretation of the twentieth-century literature as multifarious and disaggregated, in the volume *Voci del Novecento tedesco* (CUECM, 2001), Giuseppe Dolei traces an itinerary up to the 1980s which groups together many Austrian and German writers with their different fields (Trakl, Musil, Bachmann,



S. Zweig, Böll, Kipphardt, Weiss, Wolf and Johnson), placed tragically before history, which they respond to with their works based on sacrifice and redemption.

Here it is not possible to account for the immense spectrum of perspectives in Germanist research on authors and currents in the German twentieth century, even if we are to restrict ourselves to the last ten years. The range goes from attention to turn-of-the-century avant-garde movements, attested to for example in the volume *Progetto Metropoli. La Berlino dell'Espressionismo* (Silvy, 2012) by Antonella Gargano, to the many monographic contributions on the great writers: Musil (see the studies by Massimo Salgaro); Benn (on whom Nadia Centorbi wrote the important monograph *La musa estranea. Gottfried Benn (1913-1945)*, Artemide, 2009); Celan (with the book by Camilla Miglio *Vita a fronte. Saggio su Paul Celan*, Quodlibet, 2005); and above all Kafka.¹⁴ On the genre of lyric poetry, always underrepresented in the same way as theatrical literature, we can count monographs on single authors, such as the study by Chiara Conterno *Metamorfosi della fuga. La ricerca dell'assoluto nella lirica di Nelly Sachs* (Unipress, 2010). On Stefan George, Königshausen & Neumann has published two important studies: by Francesco Rossi, *Gesamterkennen. Zur Wissenschaftskritik und Gestaltheorie im George-Kreis* (2011), which deals with the topic of the cultural bases of the essay writing of the intellectuals within the circle, and by Margherita Versari, *Figuren der Zeit in der Dichtung Stefan Georges* (2013). A significant diachronic overview is instead contained in the volume by Amelia Valtolina *Parole con figura. Avventure dell'immagine da Friedrich Nietzsche a Durs Grünbein* (Le Lettere, 2010).

¹⁴ Six books have come out from 2002 to date: Guido Massino, *Fuoco inestinguibile. Franz Kafka, Jizhak Löwy e il teatro yiddish polacco* (Bulzoni, 2002); Elmar Locher, Isolde Schiffermüller (edited by), *Franz Kafka. Ein Landarzt. Interpretationen* (Sturzflüge, 2004); Marco Federici Solari, *Il demone distratto. Scrittura e personaggio nel primo Kafka* (Le Lettere, 2008); Barbara Di Noi, "In verità, non so nemmeno raccontare...". *Memoria e oblio nella narrativa di Franz Kafka* (Biblion, 2009); Anna Castelli, *Lo sguardo di Kafka* (Mimesis, 2012); Simonetta Sanna, *Kafka* (Istituto Italiano di Studi Germanici, 2013); a section was dedicated to Kafka's *Wirkung* in no. 5 (2014) of "Studi Germanici" with creative texts by 24 writers from many different countries.



If we wanted to try to define the present directions in the main areas of research while also including and taking in perspectives from international Germanic Studies, one of the most represented is Memory Studies. The vast collection of 38 essays in the volume *Memoria e saperi. Percorsi transdisciplinari* (Meltemi, 2007), edited by Elena Agazzi and Vita Fortunati, divided into six main areas (social sciences, biomedical sciences, visual culture, media, human sciences and literary studies, and religious studies) attempt to define the notion of memory from these various viewpoints, while taking the studies by Jan and Aleida Assman as a reference, and representing its phenomenology. The “obsession with the past and as a consequence the bloating of the memory”, as the symptom of living time and space differently in the contemporary globalized world, partly owing to tragic historical events of the twentieth century whose “living memory”, according to Aleida Assman, is ceasing to be, have generated cultural and transdisciplinary studies and led to a dialectic relation with primary and critical literature. This volume, also built with the help of Germanic scholars (Cusatelli, Calzoni, Catalano and Busch), accompanies the miscellany *Figure e forme della memoria culturale* (Quodlibet, 2011), edited by Francesco Fiorentino, in which cultural memory is investigated in the production of collective memories, but also in its close relation with the imagination and oblivion. In this connection, of significance are the introductory essay by Michele Cometa on *Obliosa memoria. Sulla reciprocità di ricordo e dimenticanza nella letteratura* and the essay by Giovanni Tateo, which takes us back to the midst of the nineteenth century, on *Una metafora della memoria privata in Stifter, Storm, Keller e Raabe*. This critical literature, in which an overriding theoretical structure is upheld by examples from literature, slots into a very rich and diversified vein of Italian Germanic Studies, dealing with the topic of the memory and historical consciousness found in literature of different generations from the second half of the twentieth century to date. For example, the volume by Elena Agazzi *La memoria ritrovata. Tre generazioni di scrittori tedeschi e la coscienza inquieta di fine Novecento* (Bruno Mondadori, 2003) takes a look at novels by Dieter Forte, Sebald, as well as third-generation authors, Tanja Langer, Jens Sparschuh and Marcel Beyer. The *Vergangenheits-*



bewältigung is put to problematized review, involving literature from and on the GDR, such as in the book *Identità e memoria. Lo spazio autobiografico nel periodo della riunificazione tedesca* (Mimesis, 2009) by Daniela Nelva, where the GDR is portrayed through the autobiographical works of Stefan Heym, Günter de Bruyn, Heiner Müller and Günter Kunert, and in the book by Tiziana Gislimberti *Mappe della memoria. L'ultima generazione tedesco-orientale si racconta* (Mimesis, 2009) which, while criticizing authors from the same generation, discusses the autobiographical narrative of writers from two successive generations, amongst whom Jana Hensel, Claudia Rusch and Jens Bisky. The memory is cultivated in family genealogies which become means for recovering the past through plots involving personal events. This quite widely practised manner of narrative composition is studied in the volume by Simone Costagli and Matteo Galli *Deutsche Familienromane. Literarische Genealogien und internationaler Kontext* (Fink, 2010). The miscellany edited by Eva Banchelli *Taste the East. Linguaggi e forme dell'Ostalgie* (Sestante, 2006) can also be linked to this direction of research. In it, essays from different disciplinary areas deal with the phenomenon of *Ostalgie* as a reaction to the trends of cancelling a recent past in real socialist countries and in the many forms of regret as a process of anti-repression.

A contribution to critical memory literature is also given by the work to retrieve female memory performed in the volume *Dal salotto al partito. Scrittrici tedesche fra rivoluzione borghese e diritto di voto* (Artemide, 2007), edited by Lia Secci in collaboration with Antonella Gargano, Giuli Liebmann, Maria Teresa Morreale, Luisa Righi and Stefania Rossi, in which forgotten women authors who lived in the nineteenth century are called upon to attest to the struggle against the three “Ks” (*Kirche*, *Kinder* and *Küche*).¹⁵

Linked to memory is Jewish-German literature, also studied in recent Italian Germanic Studies with notable critical sensitivity and a wealth of perspectives. Between the 1990s and 2000s three books came out that would prompt and direct the lines of research taken in the following years: the first is *Esilio, diaspora, terra promessa. Ebrei*

¹⁵ On this see the review by Uta Treder in “Osservatorio”, 2008, 28.



tedeschi verso Est (Bruno Mondadori, 1998; German ed. Jüdische Verlagsanstalt, 2006) by Claudia Sonino¹⁶ which deals with the discussion in Jewish-German culture of the question of the eastern Jews and gives a critical reading of travel journals, in particular in Poland, of German writers and intellectuals (T. Lessing, Döblin, Roth and A. Zweig).

The second is the volume of conference proceedings *Soglie. Ebraismo e letteratura europea del 900* (Facoltà di Scienze della Formazione, 1999) edited by Margherita Cottone, which in the symbolic cipher of the “threshold” and experiencing the limit deals with the tragic antithesis of memory and assimilation, Jewish-German literature in Prague and the topic of Slavic anti-Semitism. The third is the miscellany *Stella errante. Percorsi dell’ebraismo fra Est e Ovest* (Il Mulino, 2000) edited by Guido Massino and Giulio Schiavoni, which brings together 25 literary, linguistic, philosophical, historical and social essays developed along the central theme of the diaspora in its geographical and metaphorical directions.

A study that can be considered a classic is the volume *Le radici del male. L’antisemitismo in Germania: da Bismarck a Hitler* (Il Mulino, 2001; German ed. Klostermann, 2001) by Massimo Ferrari Zumbini. This innovative analysis updates the historiographical context of the birth of the first anti-Semitic movements in the last decades of the nineteenth century, reconstructing the causes of their diffusion in a kaleidoscope of political, economic, religious events and customs, and for the first time placing the figure of Wilhelm Fritsch, prophetic strategist of political anti-Semitism, in the foreground.

The critical literary picture is enriched by the volume *Dopo la Shoah. Nuove identità ebraiche nella letteratura* (ETS, 2005) edited by Rita Calabrese. The collection of essays discuss the question of the Jewish identity of the second- and third-generation “children of the Shoah” who live the experience of displaced persons and feel precluded from assimilation in the German cultural context. But the concept of *Holocaustsliteratur* goes beyond the borders of Germany and the many

¹⁶ The volume *L’asimmetria del cuore. Ebraismo e germanesimo* (Bruno Mondadori) by Claudia Sonino also came out in 2006 .



voices of young Jewish literature assume a supranational character. The critical literature on Judaism ranges between present and past, while making continual and transversal references. In the book *Spirito e storia. Saggi sull'ebraismo tedesco 1918-1933* (Aracne, 2012), Gabriele Guerra deals with the relation between theology and politics in the thinking of some German intellectuals (Benjamin, Scholem and Bloch) drawn up between the two World Wars. From his phenomenological analysis of German Judaism there emerge routes built by an “aristocratism of intelligence”, which combines mystics and anarchy, marked by the sense of uprooting of an intellectual class before the imminent catastrophe. In that same year, other important studies came out: by Lorella Bosco, *Tra Babilonia e Gerusalemme. Scrittori ebreo-tedeschi e il 'terzo spazio'* (Mondadori, 2012), by Massimiliano De Villa *Una Bibbia tedesca. La traduzione di Martin Buber e Franz Rosenzweig* (Cafoscarina, 2012) and the edition *Vecchia terra nuova*, edited by Roberta Ascarelli, of the novel *Old New Land* (Bibliotheca Aretina) by Theodor Herzl, preceded the year before by the monograph *Theodor Herzl tra letteratura e sionismo* by Paola Paumgardhen.

Slotting into this very complex vein, motivated by the purpose of critically composing the conflictual and often tragic pairing of Judaism and Germanism, is the monograph by Valentina Di Rosa *Fra Gerusalemme e Tebe. L'ebraismo utopico di Else Lasker-Schüler* (La Scuola di Pitagora, 2011).

Germanic Studies in journals and new perspectives

In recent years, even specialist journals have had to deal with great changes: first of all, assessing papers proposed for printing through the peer review procedure as the condition for accreditation and classification at the national and international levels; second, the possibility, or now the necessity even, of making use of full or partial on-line publication of the journals which, in order to have a real circulation, but also to limit costs, can only continue to exist in future if they have an Internet reference. Italian journals on Germanic Studies have more or less fallen into line with these technological changes, which reflect on writing times - getting shorter and shorter



- and the increasingly extensive use of the products. In reality, in addition to appearing in journals dedicated specifically to the discipline (“Studi Germanici”, “AION”, “Cultura tedesca”, “Prospero”, “Studia Theodisca”, “Studia Austriaca”) and those published at numerous universities, essays, papers and reviews of German literature are now increasingly appearing - as they indeed always have done - in interdisciplinary, intercultural and comparative journals. As was underlined at the days for young Germanists (23-24 September 2014), organized at Villa Vigoni by Maurizio Pirro, Massimo Salgaro and Michele Vangi on the topic of *La germanistica italiana e i suoi metodi attuali*, “a new awareness is emerging”. Indeed, as Vangi writes to sum up the discussion, “the community of younger Italian Germanists – where the word ‘young’ has to be considered in very broad terms (from doctorate students, PhD research scientists up to researchers aged around 40) – no longer see themselves as a group held together by a phantom ‘loyalty’ to pre-set disciplinary statutes, but as an open *forum* in which *germanistische Literaturwissenschaft* is perennially contaminated by contributions from other philologies and disciplines. Both because of this contamination of academic discourse, and the relationships, exchanges of information and contact among scholars, the world wide web represents a resource, if used and dosed intelligently”. The established and well-built site www.germanistica.net, maintained by Michele Sisto, without doubt goes in this direction. Its various links combine information on events and initiatives, discussions and the publication of materials; it is an open and dynamic space and is consulted quite widely on an international scale. Notable support is also given by the site of the Associazione Italiana di Germanistica and its information bulletins, which are all the more useful, the more they are “contributed to” by their users. From this overview, which is more an incomplete compilation, an impression, than a systematic summary, it should nevertheless appear clear that the spheres of research in recent Germanic Studies in Italy now reach outside the boundaries of the academic and scientific disciplinary sector, to interweave and be enriched by complementary contributions from other disciplines with culturological assimilations that can also be applied to the past. The most impor-



tant question, posed at the beginning as a thesis to be proven, nevertheless consists of whether amongst the hypertext of culture we can make out the conservation of a specific line of literature and as a consequence of philology and literary criticism. Whether literature keeps its status, albeit fostered and integrated by Cultural Studies, still seems to depend on the innate subjectivity of both writer and academic, within the grip, whether willingly or not, of “the forms of power” and “the power of forms”, whose work can explore the “symbolic capital”, to be understood at the literary and critical philological level as the explication and testimony of a subjectivity aiming to become objective, through a range of tools, in a culturological context. The precondition remains the centrality of the literary text meant for use and at the same time subject to deconstruction and re-composition by the critics. With its many voices, methodologies and topics of investigation, Germanic Studies in Italy does preserve the literary text from processes of standardization. The discipline underlines the specificity of the literary text, its language open to all devices and experimented with all its potential strength of expression, while also fulfilling its task of analysis and synthetic interpretation. A last thought: now 25 years have passed since that last academic lecture by Cesare Cases which provided our starting point. After quoting some verses from the poem *Trost-Aria* by Christian Günter: “Endlich sieht man Freuden-Thal, / Endlich, endlich kommt einmahl”, he concluded by wishing a “good utopia to everyone”. After a quarter of a century, dystopia seems to prevail over utopia and memoriality as the antidote to oblivion caused by the simultaneity of the present. The appeal/wish for good, significant, civil and creative language and a critical and reflective reading of literary works seems more appropriate and pressing than ever today. Current Germanic Studies confirms this.

Translation from the Italian: Karen Whittle