

## Abstracts

Irene Kajon, *On the Faith-Knowledge Relationship: Regina Jonas beyond the Wissenschaft des Judentums*

Regina Jonas was a student at the Hochschule für die Wissenschaft des Judentums from 1924 to 1930, and she went on to become the first woman rabbi. This paper discusses Jonas' work in the context of the Wissenschaft des Judentums movement, and highlights the differences between Jonas and her teachers Eduard Baneth, Leo Baeck, Julius Guttmann and Ismar Elbogen, particularly with regard to the relationship between faith and knowledge. Indeed, in her writings Jonas connects sentiment with reason, and personal subjectivity with historical and scientific objectivity in a more convincing way than her mentors, displaying an affinity with Hermann Cohen, the author of *Religion of Reason. Out of the Sources of Judaism*. Cohen had died in 1918, but his influence was still felt at the Hochschule, where he taught from 1912 to 1918.

Markus Ophälders, *Depths and Reflections. Towards a Definition of Heimat*

The concept of *Heimat* and its contrary, the absence of a home, usually relates to places and, from a temporal perspective, to the traditions that link them. This is seen as the basis of our individual and collective identity. Thus, what might it mean to speak of *Heimat*, or its contrary, in this age of migration? First of all, *Heimat* is neither a place nor a tradition. Indeed, it is more apposite to consider *Heimat* as a relationship: the relationship between a person and place within his experience and memory. This provides a context for reflection, and in this respect memory, imagination, representation and perception, those mimetic and rational possibilities of making experience, can affect a rich pattern. This is not only valid for contemporary times, but also when considering the past. *Heimat* or its absence is also the one thing that can enable nostalgia, that is, when one tries to cope with the presumed loss of *Heimat* by reifying and fetishizing it. This view not



only corrects mistaken perceptions, but also presents a complete idea of the term, matching it to culture in the widest sense.

Aldo Venturelli, *The Poet and the Historian. Goethe's Relationship with Manzoni*

The present paper investigates the relationship between Goethe and Manzoni in the period from 1818 to 1832. This was a largely indirect relationship that developed under the aegis of two intermediaries: Gaetano Cattaneo – a friend of Manzoni's and a leading cultural figure in Milan at that time– and Heinrich Mylius, a businessman who worked in Milan and had close contacts with Weimar. The article provides an in-depth study of the various evidence that we have of this relationship, and explores the close dialogue that developed between the two authors in those years. Their exchanges mainly regarded the problematic relationship between artistic invention and historical reality, but also touched on other issues of importance to the cultural debate in post-Napoleonic Europe. It represents a significant episode that illustrates the concept of 'world literature' that Goethe advocated in the final years of his life.

Saverio Campanini, *In the Manner of Goethe. On a Reference in Walter Benjamin*

With a new Italian translation of the correspondence between Walter Benjamin and Gershom Scholem in the offing, this investigation is prompted by a somewhat enigmatic passage from the letters in which Benjamin supposedly cites Goethe. The identity of the text that Benjamin alludes to has led to several hypotheses (from Scholem himself, and from Werner Kraft and Siegfried Unseld, among others), none of which is particularly convincing. The author adds a further hypothesis maintaining, precisely because of this proliferation of views, that such research might well be following a false trail. Indeed, the edition of Benjamin's letters edited by Gödde and Lonitz gives rise to a completely different conjecture. Benjamin was not alluding to one particular text in Goethe or in Zelter, but to a specific grammatical point: the elision of the subject in subordinate clauses. This debate provides a starting point for the author to examine, from a distinctly individualistic viewpoint, the role and significance of Goethean references in Benjamin and Scholem.



Matteo Zupancic, *The Decline of Epic Poetry and the Rebirth of Tragedy: Paul Ernst and the Nibelungenlied*

From an initial phase of rediscovery, characterized by a comparison with ancient Greek epic poetry and the attempt to present it as poem of national identity for the German people, the *Nibelungenlied* has been the object of many renowned dramatic versions. At the height of this trend, just as the work was being co-opted by Nazi propaganda, the playwright Paul Ernst noted the decline of the epic poem, and with the theoretical support of György Lukács, re-examined the *Nibelungenlied* through a revisitation of classic Greek drama. Through an analysis of his theoretical essays and preparatory material for the tragedy *Brunhild* (1909), the present paper examines Ernst's work providing not only a further reappraisal of the reception of the *Nibelungenlied*, but also a specific case study illustrating some of the most crucial aspects of *literarische Moderne*: linguistic issues, the function of myth, classical antiquity, the decline of epic poetry and the weight of Nietzsche's legacy.

Francesco Burzacca, *Mendel Singer Goes to Hollywood. On the Lost 1936 Film Adaptation of Joseph Roth's Novel Hiob*

In 1936, the major Hollywood studio 20th Century-Fox released *Sins of Man*, the first-ever film adaptation of Joseph Roth's international bestselling novel *Hiob* (1930). The movie quickly disappeared from film theaters, and has often been wrongly considered lost by Roth scholars. This essay traces the vicissitudes behind the production of *Sins of Man*, and examines its short-lived reception, both in America and among Roth's circle of friends and German expatriate intellectuals. Additionally, thanks to an unprecedented opportunity to attend a research screening at the University of California Film & Television Archive in Los Angeles, the custodians of a surviving copy of the film, the essay offers a critical analysis of *Sins of Man* that sheds light on recurrent misunderstandings regarding the film, and opens up discussion for new critical perspectives and interpretations.

Massimiliano Devilla, *Hidden Laughter and Ambivalent Jokes: The Transformation of Hebrew Polysemy in Thomas Mann's Joseph Novels*

Following a text-oriented method, the paper discusses Thomas Mann's interpretation and re-elaboration of a Biblical linguistic structure within the semantic field of 'laughter'. Mann draws inspiration from this polysemous concept and transfuses it into his biblical tetralogy *Joseph und seine Brüder* as a vehicle to allusively hint at his most recurrent



themes, thus bringing them once more to the foreground. By making reference to two biblical passages where the terms relating to 'laughter' and 'joke' are employed with a particular sexual connotation, Thomas Mann intertwines his thematic threads. Aim of this paper is therefore to show, by way of examples rather than general considerations, how Mann's 'compositional method' works. Expanding the somewhat scanty Biblical storyline, Mann interweaves its basic narrative structure with a lot of 'associative digressions', subplots, secondary episodes which he derives not only from biblical and post-biblical Judaism, from the Christian exegesis of the Scriptures, from classical antiquity and from the imagery of the Ancient Near East, but also from the dense network created by his literary themes and motifs. He thus gives way to a vast intertextuality imbued with irony and humor, to an anachronistic juxtaposition of narrative elements and a manipulation of his literary sources. These are strategies that run throughout Mann's oeuvre, constituting the distinctive feature of his biblical 'epic novel' and of his literary production at large.

Valerio Magrelli, *French Verse in Thomas Mann's Felix Krull: From Béranger to Hugo*

As with many other texts, from the early stories to the later novels, Thomas Mann inserted (and maybe even hid) verse amongst the prose in his final masterwork, *Felix Krull*. This is a particularly significant book, also because it was almost forty years in the writing, and was eventually published unfinished in 1954, just a year before Mann's death. Not surprisingly, many critics have noted the juxtaposition between prose and poetry, a sort of metrical latency (although this aspect was totally ignored in the 1954 Italian translation). This essay analyses the verses in *Felix Krull*, interpreting them as part of a wider stylistic choice. It also provides a possible Italian rendering of this poetic material, which, it is argued, is typical of the novel's multilingual hero: Krull speaks German, French, English and Italian.

Dora Rusciano, *Memory, Identity and Literary Fiction. Reflections on Ulrike Draesner's Sieben Sprünge vom Rand der Welt*

Through a reading of Ulrike Draesner's novel *Sieben Sprünge vom Rand der Welt*, this paper examines the role of literary fiction in the creation of shared memory based on historical events. Aleida and Jan Assmann's theory of memory and the concept of *postmemory* proposed by Marianne Hirsch offer useful theoretical insights into the argument, above all with regard to how Draesner views the connection between history and



the narrative. It will be argued that through a specific use of language and reference to the medium of the web, the writer places particular emphasis on the active role of the reader in the construction of the memory of past events. The paper highlights how this implies a new interpretation of the relationship between memory, identity and the narrative, based on the questioning of established cultural identities and on the author's role as a facilitator of multiple outlooks and cultural dynamism.

Marina Foschi, *When 'Witze' Wsere 'Schertz': On the Polysemy of the German Word Witz with a Specific Focus on its Usage as a Term of the Aesthetics in Georg Friedrich Meier's Essay Gedanken von Schertzen (1744)*

Polysemy is the capacity for a word to refer to different things depending on its usage. For example, the German word *Witz* is usually present in dictionaries with its several meanings listed. A listing of different meanings for the same word does not, however, fully convey the idea of polysemy, a phenomenon that characterizes the majority of modern German words. Indeed, lexical polysemy can be interpreted from the perspective of word change, as will be shown in the present article through a discussion of the word *Witz*. In contemporary German, *Witz* belongs to two contradictory and mutually exclusive semantic fields: the first relates to the intellectual capacity of human beings, the second to the sphere of what is comic. This type of 'oxymoronic polysemy' derives from the semantic development of the word *Witz*, which was at least partly determined by the contact and mutual influence between *Witz* as an ordinary word in everyday language and as a specific term in philosophical discourse. By means of the term *Scherz*, eighteenth-century aesthetics referred to that form of comedy that in modern standard German is known as *Witz*. These characteristics are documented in Georg Friedrich Meier's essay *Gedancken von Schertzen* (1744).

Selma Jahnke, *'La Formazione di un Intellettuale Europeo: Ludwig Pollak'. Exploring Pollak's Diaries in Istituto Italiano di Studi Germanici. Perspectives of Research.*

The Istituto Italiano di Studi Germanici focus with the project *La Formazione di un intellettuale europeo: Ludwig Pollak* the early diaries of the later influential art historian, art broker, collector and network actor, born on the edge of Prague ghetto in 1868 who settles to Rome in 1895 after his years of study in Vienna and several study trips. The diaries, written in pencil in old German characters and hard to read, are going to



be transcribed and published in cooperation with their owner, the Museo di Scultura Antica Giovanni Barracco di Roma. They represent an extraordinary historical document significant for many different research questions of various scientific fields like art history, archaeology, science history, network science, cultural science (especially asking on the aspect of collecting), Jewish studies and linguistics. The ongoing project intends to draw a special attention on the aspects of education and formation of the young man, the concrete educational experiences documented in the diary, Pollak's concept and ideal of formation in contrast to developments of his time, the meaning of knowledge as elementary resource for his social position and business and the European cultural transfers the intellectual Pollak is a key figure in.

Elisa D'Annibale, «*Auf den 'italienischen' Marmorklippen*». *The Problematic Reception of Ernst Jünger in Italy and the Role of the Mondadori Publishing House (1935-1942)*

The present essay discusses how the work of Ernst Jünger was received in Italy, particularly with regard to his 1939 novel, *Auf den Marmorklippen*. The paper explores two lines of thought: it first analyses the reception of Jünger from an intellectual standpoint, focusing on the work of Delio Cantimori and Giaime Pintor, and it then considers editorial policy by examining the opinions of readers at the Mondadori publishing house. By adopting this dual approach to the problematic reception of Jünger in Italy, the paper explores the complex cultural relationships that developed between Italy and Germany in the first half of the twentieth century.

Pier Carlo Bontempelli, *The Need for a German Studies Archive*

This article emphasizes the importance of archival research with reference to the history of German Studies in Italy as an academic discipline. Recent and ongoing research carried out at the Italian Institute of German Studies shows how this institution, given its origin and history, is a major reference point for research and scholarship with regard to an awareness of the field. This paper proposes a framework for drawing up a potential history of German Studies in Italy that takes into account the features inherent in the rise and development of the discipline from when they were set down by Arturo Farinelli. This implies the construction of a specific *habitus*, an established methodology for future studies, educational and research facilities, and a classification of the objects of study and their corresponding cultural capital. Finally, it is argued that a history of German Studies in Italy must respond to such issues within the broader context of a social history of the humanities.