

## Abstracts

Günter Figal, *Hermeneutics of Ambiguity*

This essay is about the question how understanding and interpretation can adequately deal with the ambiguity of hermeneutic objects and how, accordingly, hermeneutics can be established as a reflection of ambiguity. To this end I will primarily discuss Susan Sontag's radical critique of hermeneutics and also Hans-Georg Gadamer's conception of understanding as it has become a classical in hermeneutics. I adopt reflections from Sontag without following her, and I reject Gadamer's assumption that understanding is essentially the understanding of a whole. In contrast to that I wish to show that understanding a text in each case belongs into the whole of a text space, which can only be explored in different perspectives, but cannot be definitely determined.

Hermann Dorowin, *The Husband with a Bitten-Off Nose. Theresian Vienna as a Mirror of the Farce Der Geburtstag by Franz von Heufeld*

In his unrelenting theatrical and political struggle for a 'reasonable', regular comedy and against crudeness and improvisation, the Viennese Enlightenment philosopher Joseph von Sonnenfels could rely on the support of Franz von Heufeld, a civil servant and man of theatre from Mainau. Heufeld's own production was also entirely in line with the Enlightenment model of comedy until 1766, when he wrote the comedy *Der Geburtstag (The Birthday)* in which he exposed the upper class of Viennese society to unsparing satire. Through grotesque exaggeration and stereotyping, Heufeld creates a hilarious farce in which he holds a mirror up to the characters, as Molière once did in his *École des femmes*. When Sonnenfels then severely criticizes him for this 'betrayal' of the common poetological programme, Heufeld reacts – again following Molière's model – with the metatheatrical one-act play *Kritik des Geburtstags (Critique of*

*the Birthday*), in which he mischievously reduces his former friend's dogmatism to absurdity.

Cristina Fossaluzza, *The Aesthetics of Distance. Geometries in Jakob Michael Reinhold Lenz's Dramatic Works*

The history of the well-articulated reception of J.M.R. Lenz has produced a literary discourse that has dwelt little on the specificity of his intellectual contribution in the context of the late German Enlightenment. The essay highlights how Lenz's peculiarity, at a time when theatre was searching for canons, also resides in the proposal of a new dramaturgy based on 'distance'. To illustrate this dramaturgy, the contribution focuses on Lenz's theoretical writings, and in particular on the *Anmerkungen übers Theater*, and then analyses the play *Der neue Menoza*. The 'aesthetics of distance' emerges as a productive interpretation key which, even beyond the *Genieästhetik*, brings out new poetological geometries in Lenz's theatre. It is also thanks to these geometries that the author stands out as an original interpreter of his time and as a great forerunner of the experiments of twentieth-century theatre.

Wolfgang Braungart, *Schiller's Maria Stuart and the Communion. Religion, Religiosity and Literature at the End of the Century of Enlightenment*

Schiller, a Protestant from Württemberg, shows at the end of his tragedy *Maria Stuart* being administered the Holy Communion on the open stage. This caused quite a bit of irritation in Weimar. The article interprets Maria's decision for this central Catholic ritual as an act of freedom – freedom in the conscious self-commitment to a pre-modern, visibly performed religious ritual act. But it is precisely in this way that Mary regains her agency. In the final act of the drama, religion becomes compatible with art and the old, pre-modern ritual with the idea of self-commitment in its freedom and dignity. This is clearly the core of Schiller's idealism. The article sets the drama against the humanisation of religion as demanded by the late Enlightenment (Lessing), which was becoming self-reflexive. Thus, a new sense of the religious dimensions of autonomous art itself begins to develop against the backdrop of the emerging aesthetics of autonomy.

Alberto Destro, *On the Variety of Love. After Rilke 1904: Kierkegaard Again?*

In the period marked by a creative crisis following the conclusion of *Malte*, Rilke resorts to reading significant texts (such as those,

among others, of Kierkegaard) as well as to translation as a practice of literary craftsmanship. In this respect, in the years from 1911 to 1913 three translations from French stand out along with the very intensive reading of the *Memorial* of the mystic Angela da Foligno as well as – sharing ideals, quite surprisingly – the novel *Das Exemplar* by Annette Kolb. All these texts deal with the theme of unhappy love, so much so that it is plausible that some echo of present-day reading of Kierkegaard may have had an influence in this regard. In this connection, a cursory hint in a letter in which Rilke links the love to God shown by Angela da Foligno and the ill-fated human love found in the abovementioned translations and in Kolb's novel is also discussed.

Francesco Restuccia, *Wanting to Believe. Magic and Play in Homo ludens*

Huizinga's *Homo ludens* is best known for his theory of play as distinct from ordinary life, and in particular for the notion of the magic circle, which had a great influence on contemporary game studies. Questioning this interpretation, the article analyzes the relationship between games and magic, trying to show that Huizinga's reflections on the non-ordinary nature of play are part of a broader theme that culminates in an interesting theory of voluntary illusion, aimed at demonstrating a strong analogy between play as an experience and magic. Finally, in order to protect Huizinga's insights from his own apocalyptic tendencies, an attempt is made to distinguish the experiences of play and magic through an analysis of two threshold elements: the concept of spoilsport (*spelbreker*) and the practice of illusionism. If magic and play share a partial willingness to believe, only the latter is associated with the feeling of being able to escape from it at any given moment.

Beate Baumann, «*Wörter, die Geschmack (aber auch Geruch) haben*». *On the Perception of Language in Reading and Translation Processes in the University Context of DaF – German as a Foreign Language*

In foreign language teaching geared towards the principles of multilingualism, interculturality and contrastive approaches, translation emerges in a new light, in that it is not used as a sterile grammar-translation method, but is brought to fruition in the formation of key qualifications such as intercultural and symbolic competences. Against this backdrop, the article will present an empirical project conducted with MA students in German studies at the University of Catania. The study focused on the question of how students perceive the literariness of intercultural or transcultural literary texts and the

aesthetic effect of their literary interculturality with the aim of overcoming the symbolic gap between the languages in the source texts and in the translations that they produced or that have been officially published. Within the framework of a reception/perception study, data were compiled using introspective methods, which are intended to provide insights not only into the development of cognitive aspects such as language and cultural awareness, but also into linguistic sensitization processes triggered by dealing with linguistic hybridity and ambiguity. The paper will also present some results that will shed light on the development of symbolic competence.

Paolo Dal Molin, *Giorgio Vigolo's criticism of Arnold Schönberg and the fine line between legitimising the Entartung and anti-Jewish sentiment*

Giorgio Vigolo, poet, writer, philologist and translator, also worked as a music critic from 1945 to 1976. The present contribution examines his criticism of Arnold Schönberg, comparing the articles that appeared in «Il Mondo» with pages from his personal notebooks (*Ideari*). These texts illustrate the poet's peculiar romantic and anti-modernist line in the musical field and the assimilation of elements from Western thought on Judaism. Not only does Vigolo re-legitimize *Entartung* as a key aesthetic category but, quite explicitly in the *Ideari* and, more subtly, in his contemporary musical reviews, he portrays Schönberg as the paladin of the decline and destruction of European music. He also describes him as an indecisive dualist torn between the values of 'Romantic Germany' and those of 'Israel'. Unlike the negative criticism of Schönberg found to date in the writings of other important Italian music critics of the interwar and post-war period, Vigolo's papers show that he can address the composer also on non-philological and anti-Judaic grounds.

Lorenzo Bonosi, «*Die Umkehr ist dem Menschen immer möglich*». Hilde Domin's 'late first letter' to Konrad Adenauer of 27<sup>th</sup> January 1960

Jewish-born poet Hilde Domin (1909 – 2006) returned definitively to Germany in 1960 after more than twenty years of exile. Ever since her beginnings as a translator and poet, Domin harshly criticized post-war Germany. Nevertheless, Domin – defined as the 'Poetess of the return' by Hans-Georg Gadamer – was always open to dialogue and forgiveness provided that a systematic come-to-terms would be undertaken in the newly-born Federal Republic of Germany. The letter Domin wrote to Konrad Adenauer in January 1960, first published here, is a paradigmatic example of the issues she addressed

with many public figures in Germany – writers, politicians, judges –, prior to and after her return to Germany. For its content, the letter may be regarded as a ‘First Letter’ according to David Kettler, but, considering Domin’s delayed return, it may be better defined as a ‘Late First Letter’. Domin’s plea to the Chancellor is remarkable for both its pragmatics and content, which is already showing what would be her major goal as a female writer, former exile and German citizen: to name the private and public facts constitutive of her life. With this letter Domin has made a significant contribution to the breakthrough that occurred in German society in the early 1960s, when German literature and politics began to revisit the recent German past.

Giovanni Za, *Persistence and falsification. Autobiographical aspects in Ingmar Bergman’s latest artistic production*

Ingmar Bergman’s latest films and works have generally been considered an example of ‘late work’, as in the definition provided by Edward W. Said, according to whom some critical feedback seems to connect bodily conditions with aesthetic style. *Fanny and Alexander* has been considered Bergman’s ‘last film’, although other films have been produced afterwards – involving sketches of a conclusive autobiographical statement about his experience of life and art, further exploited in later literary works. The core content of the film gave the director the chance to piece together childhood memories and a personal view of the power of artistic creation. This has therefore led critics and scholars to acknowledge a mostly autobiography-orientated interpretation, also encouraged by the director himself, while some elements in both films and novels hint at a different conclusion. The main focus for this research is to further investigate the autobiographical content in Bergman’s later work and have a closer look at the significant differences that arise between the director’s actual chronicle and the artistic narration found in his oeuvre.

