

Abstracts

Hans Ulrich Gumbrecht, *Knot of the Voice*

Starting with a concise reconstruction of the presence and persistence of voices in the author's personal biography, this contribution – which is intended to introduce a monograph on the topic – reviews some fundamental positions for a theory of human vocality in twentieth-century philosophy (Derrida, Barthes). The focal point of the interpretation lies in the voice as a knot binding together the abilities to perceive and produce meanings. The recollection of voices deposited in our memory has the power to revive both the corporeity of past experiences and their symbolic meaning. Thus, there is a profound affinity between the semantic field of the *Stimme* and that of the *Stimmung*, understood as an auratic dimension in which ciphers and memories, which can serve as instruments of understanding for the present, survive in a condensed manner.

Jeremy Adler, *Constructions on the Renaissance. Intertextuality and Politics in Goethe's Torquato Tasso*

This interpretation of Goethe's *Torquato Tasso* distances itself from the widespread idea that the protagonist of the drama is primarily relevant as an artist. By reconstructing the complex links that exist between the fictional character and his historical model, but above all between the content of his pronouncements in Goethe's work and the aesthetic and philosophical positions developed by Torquato Tasso in his theoretical writings and in *Gerusalemme liberata*, this essay ascribes to the character a universally human value that goes far beyond the limited scope of his mere identity as a tormented artist. This characteristic came to hold together both the Renaissance horizon, which saw the expression of a macrocosmic order in the life of man, and the theoretical work carried out by 18th-century culture, starting with Rousseau, on the themes of alienation and social constraint.

Goethe had an in-depth understanding not only of the extremely rich intellectual construction underlying *Gerusalemme*, but also of Tasso's complex strategies of positioning in the power game taking place in the court of Ferrara during a phase of decline in the strength of the Este dynasty.

Cornelia Zumbusch, *Devouring. Cultures of Energy and the Energies of Poetry in Goethe's Märchen*

Goethe's writings on the Ilmenau mines are closely related to the energy cultural shift from wood to fossil fuels. Goethe's interest in contemporary energy cultures is also evident in his literary texts. In the «Horen» fairy tale, for example, a series of characters collaborate in a complex arrangement to unearth underground treasures. As this article shows, the fairy tale not only takes up contemporary practices of the energy industry, but also foretells elements of the modern concept of energy. Thus, especially in the metabolic transformations of light, gold, and conversation performed by the serpent (Schlange), it becomes apparent that the work of redemption is based on a series of energetic conversions. Condensed in the repeated talk of devouring ('Verschlingen'), the fairy tale can be read as an imaginative exploration of the thermodynamic law of energy conversion as formulated in 1847. In the fairy tale, this conversion occurs simultaneously with the law of poetry.

Marco Rispoli, «*In permanenter Nob*». *On Punctuation in Stefan George and Karl Kraus*

The article starts by illustrating the growing importance of punctuation in poetry during the 19th century. Particularly in the German-speaking world, this phenomenon came into conflict with the progressive imposition of rules that abandoned the traditional prosodic functions of punctuation and instead followed syntactic-grammatical criteria, leaving little room for authorial choice. This was the starting point for a confrontation with punctuation at the turn of the century in Germany, which appears particularly intense in authors such as Stefan George and Karl Kraus. The central part of the essay examines the ways in which the two authors engaged with the problems of punctuation in theory and practice. Despite striking differences in their understanding and use of punctuation – in one case a blatant rejection of convention, in the other a rigorous critical reflection on the most widespread uses – their treatments of punctuation reveal a similar tension, aimed at affirming their authorship and, above all, at exploring the gap between the written and the spoken word.

Mathias Mayer, *Franz Kafka As a Nude Saint Sebastian*

This brief study aims to show a number of perspectives, starting from Kafka's diary «Ich soll dem Maler Ascher nackt zu einem heiligen Sebastian Modell stehen» (January 1912) In other words, how far is Kafka's position towards Christianity concerned? Why is Saint Sebastian so often quoted in literary texts around 1900? Moreover, Kafka's interest in the arts is confronted with his difficult understanding of nakedness, even concerning his own body, which appeared to him as near and far at the same time. Summing up, there is a brief discussion as to whether Kafka used a passage of the Persian mystic Attar, which may have come to his attention by way of Martin Buber's *Ecstatic Confessions*.

Luca Zenobi, *Fictionalizing Europe: Robert Musil's Eye on the War in the Context of the Deutsche Moderne*

In Musil's fiction and essays, World War I is presented as triggered by a European crisis that affected not only the ethical dimension, but also certain fundamental aesthetic principles of German culture. This paper traces Musil's reflections from his articles immediately preceding the war, through his essays of the 1920s, to his short pieces collected in the *Posthumous Pages*. The purpose is to bring out the peculiarity of his inquiry into the symptoms, the anthropological, philosophical, psychological, ethical causes that have produced the need for a «meta-physical bang» in European people, and the equally peculiar range of possible solutions he suggests concerning literary forms, aesthetic thinking, and criticism of ideology.

Steffen Martus, *Literary Populism? Structural Transformations in the Relations Between 'Post-1989' Literature and Public Circles, with Reference to Peter Handke and Martin Walser (and a Glance at Botho Strauss)*

In the debates on Botho Strauß' *Anschwellender Bocksgesang*, Peter Handke's texts on 'Yugoslavia' and Martin Walser's speech at the awarding of the Friedenspreis des deutschen Buchhandels, various aspects of a 'post-1989' literature are brought to the fore: What does authorship mean in a reunified Germany? What role does literature play in the conflict of different ways of perceiving things? What questions about German history can, should or must be addressed anew after the historical caesura of the fall of the Wall? From a historical distance, the tangible and superficial points of controversy often turn out to be symptoms of fundamental structural changes concerning, in particular, changed powers of expression and claims to judgement in

the (literary) public sphere and, beyond that, the position of literature in an increasingly differentiated media landscape.

Michael Micci, *Nitida saga: Relationship Between Monarchical Power and Universal Knowledge in Late-Medieval Iceland*

Nitida saga is among the most notable examples of late-medieval chivalric romances in Iceland, as it stimulates multifaceted interpretations that align it with the classics of the genre. Beneath an adventurous plot that may resemble that of a folktale, the saga conceals a complex narrative structure, a debt towards mystical and patristic traditions and a reflection on the relationship between universal knowledge and secular power. This contribution sheds light on these aspects through the analysis of the saga's fictional space, which consists of Christian allegorical designs that glorify the protagonist and legitimate a form of female power unique in the medieval Icelandic corpus. The saga distances itself from the typical *meykónga sögur* of the Old Norse tradition – stories of despotic queens who rule alone and ruthlessly reject their suitors – in order to subvert their patterns and create a literary work of surprising innovative potential.

Rita Luppi, *First Reflections On the Relationship Between Memory and Multilingualism in Narrative Interviews with Kindertransport Children*

Memory represents a research topic that has been explored in a wide variety of disciplines. Especially interesting is the interplay between autobiographical memory and narration of a 'life story', since both are closely linked to the construction and reconstruction of the self. In the case of multilingual speakers, this constellation is enhanced by the language factor, i.e. the language of encoding and the retrieval context language for mnemonic traces. On the basis of the linguistic biography of a speaker from the FEGB – *Flucht und Emigration nach Großbritannien* (Flight and Emigration to Great Britain) corpus, who emigrated from Munich to Great Britain in 1939 thanks to the operation known as *Kindertransport*, the present contribution focuses on the analysis of code-switching as a tool to explore the relationship between autobiographical memory and narration. The complex scenario that emerges reveals that code-switching goes beyond the linguistic level and is embedded in a broader discursive dimension in which, among others, the past dimension of the storytelling practice and the thematization of childhood memories are aligned with the language of encoding.

Elisabeth Galvan, *On the Genesis of Austrofascism in Maria Lazar's Novel Die Eingeborenen von Maria Blut*

The modern phenomenon of the masses becomes the subject of theoretical reflection and aesthetic representation, especially in inter-war Austria. While the essayistic and literary works of authors such as Hermann Broch and Elias Canetti are well known in this context, Viennese writer Maria Lazar was virtually unknown until recently. With her novel *Die Eingeborenen von Maria Blut*, written in 1935 during her Danish exile, published posthumously in 1958 in the GDR under the pseudonym Esther Grenen and only published under her real name in 2015, the author provides one of the earliest literary representations of contemporary mass events from a socio-psychological perspective. The essay is a first attempt to interpret Lazar's intricate and polyphonic work in the context of Broch's *Die Verzauberung* and Canetti's *Die Blendung*, which were written in the same years, and to show its innovative character as a novel composed by the masses and, at the same time, a novel *about* the masses.

Federico Collaoni, *Germany-Italy Relations in Journalism. Rhetorical Patterns in News Discourses on the 2022 Italian Government Crisis*

This paper presents and discusses the state of the art and the early findings of a study in rhetorical discourse analysis that is being carried out at the Istituto Italiano di Studi Germanici (Rome). The linguistic research is conducted within the framework project «SICIT» with the aim of investigating rhetorical strategies and fallacies in German and Italian news. Especially in times of crisis, such language patterns can influence the individual and collective perception of other cultures, potentially affecting international and diplomatic relationships. Therefore, this contribution focuses on an emblematic subcorpus of 290 German news articles published between 1st July and 30th September 2022 and dealing with the Italian government crisis and with the ensuing snap election. On the one hand, the analysis sheds light on reported rhetoric and argumentative patterns characterising political communication within the context of the Italian election; on the other hand, it takes into account topoi and stereotypes used in the related German news discourse.

