

# Introduction<sup>1</sup>

HANNAH VANDEGRIFT ELDRIDGE AND SABINE GROSS  
*University of Wisconsin, Madison*

## I.

We live within layers and realms of rhythm. Rhythm is anthropologically foundational, as an essential dimension of our biological existence and of our sensory, physical, and verbal interactions with our environment and each other. It is a physiological given, starting with our heartbeat and—from the moment of birth—our breathing. This does not mean, of course, that breathing and heartbeats are everywhere the same; as we write in the middle of a pandemic that invades through the breath, an environmental catastrophe that chokes the air, and perpetual systemic violence that forces breath from the bodies and stops the hearts of those deemed Other, it is all too clear that those rhythms are subject to external forces that reach into the physiological processes themselves.

Rhythm extends to past and future, in that it is dependent on recall of what went before and drives anticipation of what is yet to come. Governing space as well as time, the natural world as well as small- and large-scale social processes, the built environment (architecture) and abstract thought (mathematics), it can be measured in eons and milliseconds, in miles and millimeters. Not all rhythms—at the social, economic, political, or aesthetic level—are created deliberately, and many exceed human influence. Rhythm mediates between the individual and society in numerous ways, shaping our modes of inquiry and interaction and structuring human endeavors of all kinds, in work, leisure, and the arts, in all relationships from birth on. It taps into two of the most fundamental paired differences that guide human perception, cognition, and memory—of sameness and difference, presence and absence. Rhythm can be considered a universal phenomenon whose reach extends to many features of the natural and human world.

At the same time, rhythm is fundamental to our use of language.<sup>2</sup> The prosodic rhythms of spoken language(s) are a basic feature of human speech.

Human face-to-face communication (even if moved on-screen) would quickly founder without our preconscious but highly effective awareness of the multiplicity of rhythms that govern our exchanges. Much of the classical system of rhetoric and oratory is in effect a study of the rhythms of language. French philosopher Henri Meschonnic, whose work on rhythm as central to subjectivity and communal life is illuminated in the first article of this special issue, polemically rejects any analyses of rhythm outside language, but other theorists see music as the art form most suited to presenting rhythm without the interference of meaning or ‘content.’ Both angles of approach leave open what to make of media such as film or the radio play, investigated in two of the following articles, in which language *and* sound/music appear and interact.

Music and language, as the two primary systems in which manifestations of rhythm tend to be located, are more firmly anchored in time than in space; indeed, a number of critics limit rhythm to the temporal realm.<sup>3</sup> Yet those two domains have competition from (or, we might prefer to say, are complemented by) spatial conceptions of rhythm—applicable to landscape and geography, of course, but also to the built environment and architectural design.<sup>4</sup> In the realm of the arts, not only do the visual arts of painting (especially Op Art) and sculpture qualify as rhythmical phenomena; the literary arts feature classical traditions and modern genres such as *carmina figurata*, pattern poems, or *Visuelle Poesie* where visual/spatial arrangement is experienced as rhythm.

Still other thinkers attempt to abstract or differentiate rhythm as an ordering force from what it organizes. This distinction dates back at least to Aristoxenus of Tarentum in the 4<sup>th</sup> century BCE, whose *Elementa Rhythmica* argues that rhythm is a pure organization of time separate from what he calls the *rhythmizomenon* (ῥυθμιζόμενον), that is, the material that can be shaped by rhythm, but can equally well exist without rhythm.<sup>5</sup> The distinction between language and music as the primary routes to the study of rhythm persists, as demonstrated by the most recent edition of the *Princeton Encyclopedia of Poetry and Poetics*, where Derek Attridge notes, “The disagreement between the *metrici* and the *rhythmici* in ancient Greece reflected two approaches to verse, one strictly quantitative, the other musical” (Attridge 1197).<sup>6</sup> Where and to what media rhythm belongs remains open.

Given the ubiquity of rhythm, it is not surprising that attention to the phenomenon and attempts to define it go back to antiquity; nor should it surprise us that it seems to elude precise definition, not only between disciplines—in the aesthetic realm, music vs. literary studies or philosophy—but even within each discipline. Vera Viehöver sees the term “rhythm” as part of a repertory of empty phrases (“Floskelrepertoire,” i) and continues:

Doch in den meisten Fällen ist die Rede vom Rhythmus nicht mehr als eine Metapher, die besagen soll, dass es im jeweils in Rede stehenden Kunstwerk irgendein Phänomen der Repetition gibt, ein Auf und Ab, eine Wiederkehr des

bereits Bekannten, einen planvollen Wechsel von intensiven und entspannten Momenten. Analytische Kraft hat der Begriff nur in seltenen Fällen [ . . . ]. (Viehöver i)<sup>7</sup>

Viehöver finds such cases especially in verse language or in music. Wilhelm Seidel seconds her diagnosis, complaining: “Heute wird zwischen Rhythmus und Form kaum mehr unterschieden.“ (“Today, hardly any distinction is made between rhythm and form.” *Grundbegriffe* 295) Existing definitions of the term vary widely, indeed dramatically, evidence of what Ben Glaser (2) describes as “the messiness and power of rhythm as it is called up by criticism.”<sup>8</sup>

Variations of opinion frequently go back to two fundamental categories and their relationship: that of order and repetition to variation and deviation. For some philosophers and scholars, rhythm is defined by regularity and structure, while for others it is precisely the variation and divergence from regularity that makes rhythm distinctive. The proportion and relation of the two elements of sameness and difference has stimulated lively debate and diverging opinions since at least the eighteenth century. In the second edition (1794) of his *Allgemeine Theorie der schönen Künste* (*General Theory of the Fine Arts*), Swiss-German critic Johann Georg Sulzer starts out with rhythm’s regularity (91), which he then qualifies through the terminology of variation. Following analyses of a number of examples, he arrives at a definition of rhythm as “eine periodische Eintheilung einer Reihe gleichartiger Dinge, wodurch das Einförmige derselben mit Mannichfaltigkeit verbunden wird.” (“a periodic arrangement of a series of similar things which combines their sameness with variation,” Sulzer 96) Some 150 years later, Emile Benveniste traces the history of the conceptual shift from continuous flow to fixed form, noting Plato as the transition point.<sup>9</sup> In a recent and informative survey of “rhythm” in the humanities, linguist Isabel Zollna aims to circumvent the debate between scholars who view rhythms as quantifiable, “meßbare Wiederholung eines Gleichen” (“measurable repetition of something identical,” 13) and those who consider it “Abweichung von einer Regel, individueller Ausdruck” (“deviation from a rule, individual expression,” 13), as something defined by quality more than quantity. Zollna opts for a broad definition of rhythm with a significant distinction at its core, as “Wiederholung eines Ähnlichen und nicht Gleichen” (“repetition of that which is similar, not identical,” 14).

In literary studies, rhythm in verse has received extensive attention, much more so than prose, in conjunction with questions of meter that exercised previous generations of scholars and centuries to a degree that is difficult to imagine in the 21<sup>st</sup> century—a discussion that happily flowed alongside non-scholars using a variety of meters in song and poetry. In his account of the origin of poetry in “Gay Science” (II, 84), Nietzsche characterizes the introduction of rhythm into language as “jene Gewalt, die alle Atome des Satzes neu ordnet” (“that force which reorders all atoms of the sentence,”

eKGWB/FW-84). Such re-ordering with a view towards similarity and parallel structures is part of what Roman Jakobson called the “poetic function” of language, whose workings he defined with admirable concision in his “Linguistics and Poetics”: “The poetic function projects the principle of equivalence from the axis of selection into the axis of combination” (71). In executing this projection, artists transform mere sequence into a pattern that highlights sounds or rhythm, introducing repetition and variation as active principles.

Where Jakobson’s emphasis might seem to be on regularity and repetition (although he certainly makes allowances for individual readings/performances), others join the debate on the side of freedom from what is perceived as rigidity and constraint. Bertolt Brecht, for example, favors and defends “irregular rhythms,” opposing them to the regularity of meter as evident, for instance, in the “ölige Glätte des üblichen fünffüßigen Jambus” (“oily smoothness/slipperiness of the customary iambic pentameter,” 358). Reuven Tsur would disapprove, as he warns à propos the “archetypal iambic line”: “Deviation from versification patterns generates tension only if the versification pattern as well as its nearest superordinate are preserved in active memory. Otherwise it generates chaos” (412). How conspicuous must rhythm be to be acknowledged as rhythm? Not too conspicuous, apparently, if we follow Aristotle, who held that prose was characterized by rhythm as verse was by meter and decreed: “Wherefore prose must be rhythmical, but not metrical, otherwise it will be a poem. Nor must this rhythm be rigorously carried out, but only up to a certain point.” (Rhetoric III.8.3) The verse/prose distinction does not, however, resolve the issue, since different poets and theorists disagree vehemently about the degree of license within a given verse type, while authors of prose may use meter, repetition, rhyme, alliteration, and other rhythmical figures within sentences or paragraphs—and of course the boundaries between prose and verse are nearly as contested as those between meter and rhythm.

Attridge references the quarrel between *rhythmic* and *metric*, as noted above, in his discussion of the vexed relation between rhythm and meter. Is meter in its regularity the prototype of rhythm, its sub-category, or its Other? Thomas Cable seems to oppose the two when he reaches for a metaphor to characterize a relationship in which “the steady progression of posts along the roadside gives us the *meter*; the uneven surface between the posts is what we can call *rhythm*.” (184; emphasis in orig.) Some authors equate rhythm with a steadiness of pattern, beat, or *Takt*, while for others it is the counterweight to pattern and meter, providing structure only as transformed into movement. Christiaan Hart Nibbrig waxes poetic when he states that rhythm “vollzieht ein anderes Wieder-Holen: als Verwandlung und Erneuerung” (“executes a different repeat/capture: as transformation and renewal,” 93), while Hans Lösener states categorically: “Der Rhythmus braucht kein Me-

trum.” (“Rhythm does not need meter,” *Rhythmus MLL* 654) Brecht would likely agree. One may locate rhythm in the movement from written language (or musical score) to actual performance, or in the tension between metrical schema as a formal abstraction and rhythm as its concrete realization by poet and/or reader<sup>10</sup>—but there is no general agreement which of the two is the schema and which the realization.<sup>11</sup>

While humans live within rhythm at the level of pre-conscious embodied experience, rhythm can also be or become an essential dimension of our deliberate and pleasure-seeking engagement with the literary, visual, and musical arts, in our enjoyment of artistic expression and its artifacts. This pleasure is not predicated on rational assessment or powers of analysis (as required, for instance, to conduct investigations of poetic meter). Jürgen Kühnel concludes with reference to rhythm in verse: “Die rhythmische Gestalt eines Verses entzieht sich uneingeschränkter rationaler Deutung und Analyse.” (“The rhythmical shape of a verse eludes unqualifiedly rational interpretation and analysis,” 392) Rhythms come alive in our ability and desire to experience them. This experience need not be confined to a single—visual or auditory—sense. Rhythm may be so challenging to analyze and define precisely because its perception and enjoyment potentially constitute a holistic, coenesthetic, multi-modal experience based on what Jost Trier, in an introduction to a 1949 special issue on the topic of rhythm, perceptively characterized as the human desire to join a harmony of vibrating or pulsing motion (a rather unsatisfactory attempt to translate his term “Einschwingungsstreben”).<sup>12</sup> In Trier’s definition: “Rhythmus ist die Ordnung im Verlauf gegliederter Gestalten, die durch regelmäßige Wiederkehr wesentlicher Züge ein Einschwingungsstreben erweckt und befriedigt.” (“Rhythm is the processual organization of structured forms that awakens and satisfies a drive to join in a vibrating or pulsing motion,” 136)<sup>13</sup> Musicologist Seidel similarly postulates an innate human enjoyment of rhythm when he considers the conception of the term since antiquity: “die Ordnung der Bewegung oder der Zeiten, die dem menschlichen Sinn unmittelbar und deutlich faßlich ist und die die Menschen deshalb mit Lust wahrnehmen.” (Seidel, *Grundbegriffe* 291)<sup>14</sup> Whether rhythmical pleasure derives from order or its disruption, repetition or its variation, individuality or communality, it lays claim to an immediacy of experience.

## II.

This brief sketch offers at least a glimpse of the anthropological and aesthetic ubiquity of rhythm, of a landscape within which the following articles are situated. Rhythm hovers at the outskirts or along the foundations of scholarly inquiry in many disciplines, even when it is not named explicitly: it is certainly possible to talk about rhythm without using the term or by substituting other terms.<sup>15</sup> Despite the pervasive presence of a multitude of rhythms in

human lived experience, one should be careful not to universalize or essentialize rhythm and the human desire for its manifestations. Positing such a view of rhythm would ignore the extent to which it is culturally conditioned as well as the political dimension that both rhythm and its disruptions (more on that below) may take on. Rolf Großmann references three dimensions of rhythm (in the domain of sound, but generalizable to an extent): its production, its active sensory appropriation on the basis of neurophysiological receptivity, and the degree to which this reception is shaped by cultural patterns and expectations (“kulturell etablierte Erwartungsmechanismen,” 72). Our approach to rhythm and that of the contributors to this issue locates it within a mainly German-language context in terms of sources and knowledge domains and of topics covered. The introductory article by Marko Pajević lays out the implications of French linguist, translator, and philosopher Henri Meschonnic’s work on rhythm, inviting others/Others into a dialogue and presenting rhythm via Meschonnic as a quality and practice that can potentially be shared among humans broadly. The four following articles address specific artistic media, language phenomena, and time periods ranging from the 9<sup>th</sup> century AD to the early 21<sup>st</sup> century. They offer case studies of rhythm: investigations of genres or texts that are newly illuminated as they are regarded through the lens of rhythm. And while all four stay firmly within the confines of European—largely German-speaking—high-cultural production, each highlights the political dimension or the counter-hegemonial potential for disruption inherent in specific uses of rhythm.<sup>16</sup>

Given the definitory challenges sketched above, it is not surprising that none of the essays in this issue begin with a conceptual definition; rather, rhythm emerges gradually through the movement of the arguments. This approach demonstrates the complexity and heterogeneity inherent in rhythm as a critical category. The essays span a broad historical range, illuminating elements of rhythmical theory and practice that resonate with and challenge one another. Marko Pajević’s essay, in considering Meschonnic’s work and its significance, references eras from the Biblical to the post-structural. Katerina Somers reveals that the rhythmic shape of two ninth-century German texts bespeaks their respective authors’ cultural positions and ambitions. David Kim teases out the political implications of rhythm in his discussion of Uwe Timm’s 2001 novel *Red (Rot)*, elucidating the multiple uses Timm makes of rhythm. Britta Hermann’s and Sonja Boos’s articles move beyond the purely linguistic, directing our attention to specific media genres in the latter half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century—analyses of the “Neues Hörspiel” and of feminist experimental film, respectively. While the first essay is broadest in scope (albeit by way of Meschonnic), the essays trace an expansion in terms of media or medium: after Pajević’s account of the vital work to be done in and through a theory of rhythm in language, the essays turn to verse with Somers’s analysis of meter, then to prose (Kim’s discussion of rhythm in novels),

next to Hermann's examination of radio plays (combining heard language with other sounds), and finally to film or video (in which all of music, words, images, and movement interact, as Boos highlights).

What rhythm is in each of these media, and how these media might interact or conflict with one another, the essays themselves reflect. All of the essays show that rhythm prevents the drawing of any clear distinction between form, meaning, medium, or material. They follow rhythm as a phenomenon that operates on all of these levels at once, in ways that sometimes converge and sometimes conflict. All of the contributors show that and how rhythm is political, undercutting the widespread idea that rhythm is somehow essential or natural, prior to cultural shaping. At the same time, all the essays emphasize the complicated ways rhythm is produced and experienced in the body or bodies.<sup>17</sup> Thus Pajević demonstrates how Meschonnic's account of rhythm as the emergence of meaning (*sens*) in a particular language through a particular subject at a particular time entails a political and ethical re-orientation, in which language emerges from and shapes a form of life. In her detailed analysis of how ninth-century German authors drew on either Latin or Saxon traditions of written and oral language, Somers likewise reveals that what we may think of as the neutral or objective patterning of syllables in metrical practices is anything but: rather, the metrical practices of each author emerge from their cultural-political (thus, in the ninth century, religious) commitments, and those commitments themselves affect not just their meters but the way authors count and perceive the phonological elements of their language.<sup>18</sup>

Kim, Herrmann, and Boos see the political potential of rhythm in a kind of disruption. Kim shows how Uwe Timm's novel *Rot (Red)* uses thematic references to jazz and compositional strategies that mirror jazz's improvisatory and polyphonic characteristics to disrupt the rhythms of teleological narratives of post-1968 German political life. In the "Neues Hörspiel," as Herrmann explains, the rhythmical practices of repetitive but non-semantic sound disrupt expectations of plot and narrative established in earlier and more traditional radio plays. Rhythm helps listeners to expand the boundaries of the audible when the creators of radio plays take up traditional rhythmical-metrical organizations to play them off each other, producing distortions and disruptions that foreground the materiality of the aural-acoustic medium. The interactions between different media and their rhythmic possibilities likewise aid the experimental feminist film-makers that Boos considers in challenging the drive towards cohesion or totality that her examples take as paradigmatic of traditional and patriarchal filmic representation. As each film-maker creates mis-matches between image, sound, movement, and words, their works resist unity and wholeness.

These strategies—and, in fact, the disruptions of German phonology that Somers identifies in 9<sup>th</sup>-century metrical practice as well as the challenges posed by rhythm to binary thinking that Pajević elaborates using Me-

schonnic—raise the question of how rhythm and disruption interact. Is rhythm what gets disrupted, or what disrupts? Do rhythmical disruptions open the possibility of a different kind of non-totalizing cohesion—polyphonic, multi-medial, non-discursive—or do they forbid such cohesion? Does the relation between rhythm and disruption create a new kind of rhythm? Whether these interrelated rhythms and disruptions create some sort of more open cohesion or whether they reject cohesion altogether remains a productive tension.<sup>19</sup>

Several other tensions likewise emerge within and between the essays, once again foregrounding the conflicts and contradictions within the concept of rhythm. To begin with, the essays differ in the ways the authors and the works they consider approach the relation between rhythm and meaning.<sup>20</sup> As Pajević explains, for Meschonnic, rhythm is centrally and crucially a semantic and not a formal principle—as the organization of meaning in discourse, rhythm becomes a fundamental mode of sense-making.<sup>21</sup> At the same time, “meaning” for Pajević hardly reduces to informational content; Meschonnic’s theory of rhythm contributes a view in which all the manifold elements of a written or spoken utterance participate in meaning in a broad sense, irreducible to the signification of the words as signs. This view of rhythm and/as meaning might, perhaps, be compatible with the disruptive functions that Herrmann and Boos draw out, in which rhythm disturbs and reshapes narrative teleologies with interpretable discursive messages. While Kim reveals a tension in Uwe Timm’s work between rhythm as part of the smooth narrative that is disrupted and also as a resource of language for that disruption, an understanding of rhythm as singular and emerging rather than repetitive and coordinating might be able to encompass both. And yet, as Somers shows, the meaning-making of rhythm can coalesce into a cultural-political agenda, in this case either elevating the cultural prestige of Franconian by shaping it like Latin or forming the Gospel in the rhythms of Old Saxon.

Like a number of other proponents of rhythm, Meschonnic polemicizes against meter (most directly in a section of his monumental *Critique du rythme*, “Metrics: Pure Metrics or Discourse Metrics”), but at the same time points to Homer’s revolutions in Greek meter to argue that “many examples show that a metrical scheme is not a linguistic emanation, but rather a relation between culture and language” (Bedetti/Meschonnic 93). Somers’s study of ninth-century German texts demonstrates precisely that and how there can be multiple concurrent relations between cultures and languages that authors inherit and mobilize to make works effective for their audiences. Meter might seem less important in prose texts, and yet the improvisational jazz style Kim foregrounds in Uwe Timm’s novel relies to some extent on the consistency of meter to undergird the harmonic and polyvocal complexities, while Herrmann’s examples show Gerhard Rühm using metrical time signatures to organize non-linear temporal structures. And what kind of meters are present in one of Boos’s examples, in which an image moves increasingly out of sync



with the music that plays a waltz in  $\frac{3}{4}$  meter? All of the essays thus foreground that we can neither neatly separate rhythm as musical (or even multi-medial) and meter as linguistic, nor divide them into schema and realization.

In sum, then, the authors in this volume open a wide terrain and track some of its features, showing how questions of rhythm and meaning, rhythm and language, rhythm and music, and meter versus rhythm remain open. Indeed, taken as a collection, the essays demonstrate that to resolve these questions once and for all would not only oversimplify the phenomenon of rhythm, but elide one of its most central characteristics. The essays make a polyphonic and contrapuntal case that perhaps the conflicts and contradictions are themselves the source of rhythm's powers and our own rhythmic experiences.

<sup>1</sup>We gratefully acknowledge generous support from the University of Wisconsin–Madison's Anonymous Fund and University Lectures Committee that allowed us to bring a number of participants together for a conference on "Rhythm" in the fall of 2019, where the ideas developed in the articles published in this issue were first presented and discussed. We thank Rolf Goebel for helpful comments on this Special Issue.

<sup>2</sup>Nor, importantly, is this language use limited to humans who use spoken language; Ralph Savarese's collaborations with Tito Mukhopadhyay and other nonspeaking autists underscore that non-neurotypical sensory perception in no way precludes vibrant sensory experiences of the material of language, including rhythm; attention to autists' experiences with poetry may open up new modes of bridging neurotypical and non-neurotypical aesthetic experience and linguistic cognition (Savarese).

<sup>3</sup>For instance, Arndt/Fricke define it as "die *zeitliche* Gliederung sinnlich wahrnehmbarer Vorgänge" ("the *temporal* structuring of processes accessible to sensory perception," 301, emphasis HVE/SG).

<sup>4</sup>Streisand focuses on rhythm as a spatial experience, beginning with a brief and informative review of the explosion of interest in rhythm across culture and the arts in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century.

<sup>5</sup>See Aristoxenus 5. Lionel Pearson, the translator, renders *rhythmizomenon* as "rhythmicizable," conveying the potential or capacity for the material to be made rhythmic.

<sup>6</sup>For further analysis of the distinction, see Brogan 878.

<sup>7</sup>"But in most cases the talk of rhythm is no more than a metaphor that indicates that there is some kind of phenomenon of repetition at play in the artwork under discussion, an up and down, a return of the already familiar, a systematic alternation of intensive and less-intensive moments. The concept only has analytical force in rare cases."

Given the interdisciplinary scope of work on rhythm, we have elected to include English translations of quotations whenever possible. Short phrases are translated in parenthesis following the original; longer quotations are translated in the footnotes. When no translator is noted, the translation is by the authors.

<sup>8</sup>David Nowell Smith interrogates this difficulty with reference to the meaning-generating potential of rhythm: "Why should the definition of rhythm pose itself as a problem? Part of this reason lies in the expansiveness of its concept: 'rhythm' expands beyond the domains of prosody and versification, and even of music and dance, to encompass the broader dynamics of sense-making" (40).

<sup>9</sup>See Benveniste as well as Marko Pajević's analysis of Benveniste's narrative and its implications on pp. 14–29 below.

<sup>10</sup>Thus Kühnel in the entry on "Rhythmus" in the 1990 Metzler Literaturlexikon (392). The entry on the term in the 3<sup>rd</sup> edition (2007), was authored by Lösener, who directly challenges his predecessor's point of view, stating: "Tatsächlich lässt aber die Unterscheidung zwischen abstraktem Schema und jeweiliger Realisierung den Rhythmus im Metrum verschwinden, da

er nur als dessen Konkretisierung beschreibbar wird.” (“In fact the distinction between abstract schema and particular realization lets rhythm disappear into meter, as rhythm becomes describable only as meter’s concretization,” 654).

<sup>11</sup>See as well Kühnel 392. Two overviews in German illustrate this point: Christine Lubkoll explains “[w]ährend das Metrum die Taktart, gewissermaßen die abstrakte Ordnung eines Verstextes darstellt, ist der Rhythmus die den prosodischen Gegebenheiten der Sprache angepaßte konkrete Realisierung” (“while meter is the time signature, as it were the abstract order of a verse text, rhythm is the concrete realization fitted to the prosodic factors of the language,” 117), while Seidel argues „[i]m Gegensatz zum Terminus Rhythmus bezeichnet der Terminus Metrum nie ein Prinzip, sondern immer nur eine Manifestation des Prinzips Rhythmus” (“in opposition to the term rhythm, the term meter never designates a principle, but always a manifestation of the principle of rhythm,” *Grundbegriffe* 293).

<sup>12</sup>“Coenesthetic” denotes a form of undifferentiated depth perception found in infants that stands in opposition to “diacritical” perception routed through separate and distinct sensory modalities. For René Spitz, who introduces both terms in his research on infant object relations and perception, the coenesthetic “signs and signals” that an infant in the first months of life receives include “equilibrium, tension (muscular or otherwise), posture, temperature, vibration, skin and body contact, rhythm, tempo, duration, pitch, tone, resonance, clang, and probably a number of others of which the adult is hardly aware and which he [sic] certainly cannot verbalize” (135). Spitz’s characterization seems to echo the definitory challenges the term “rhythm” poses.

<sup>13</sup>Trier is a philologist and his 1949 text in *Studium Generale* 2.3 (a journal with interdisciplinary focus founded in 1947) is studiously unpolitical, going back to classical antiquity and the etymology of rhythm and related concepts, discussing topics such as feast and community along with time and the distinction between arts and nature. Consequently, he does not offer a diagnostic look at the potentially alarming desire of the individual to join in a self-subsuming harmony from the political standpoint of 1949 and the preceding decades; the publication date of his article and the cluster on “Rhythmus” that it introduces, however, can serve as a reminder that nothing ensures that the desires and cohesion activated and achieved by rhythm will not be destructive or cannot be turned to exclusionary and dehumanizing purposes.

<sup>14</sup>“The organization of movement or of times that can be immediately and clearly apprehended to human perception and that human beings therefore perceive with pleasure.” Seidel’s article on rhythm in *Ästhetische Grundbegriffe* is noticeably inflected towards music and echoes his entry on “Rhythmus, Metrum, Takt” in *Musik in Geschichte und Gegenwart*. For him, the human enjoyment of rhythm is located more on the side of regularity—he attributes it to a “Verlangen des menschlichen Sinns nach Ebenmaß” (“desire of human perception for symmetry,” Seidel, *Musik* 261). The definition in *Ästhetische Grundbegriffe* (cited above) is largely identical with the wording he offers in *Musik in Geschichte und Gegenwart*, which however moderates the pleasure to “Gefühl des Wohlgefallens” instead of “Lust” (Seidel, *Musik* 257).

<sup>15</sup>In a recent article, Frederick Turner insightfully provides examples of the relationship of meter and rhythm—discussing “metric and variation” in the context of “the tempo of poetry”—without once using the term “rhythm.”

<sup>16</sup>Although all of the authors work more or less within a broadly conceived “German Studies,” the essays themselves show the porousness of any given language tradition: Pajević finds echoes and nuances for Meschonnic’s arguments about language in Martin Buber, while Meschonnic takes Heidegger as one of his great intellectual enemies; Somers shows the fluidity between Franconian and Latin structures in 9<sup>th</sup>-century German; Kim points out the importance of a particularly African-American music genre for the composition of Timm’s modern German prose; the radio plays Hermann considers explore the sounds of language as sounds rather than signifiers in any given language; the avant-garde feminist film sphere in which the films Boos analyzes arise is international and sometimes multilingual, sometimes non-linguistic.

<sup>17</sup>Friedrich Nietzsche enters perhaps the most self-aware account of the ways in which the effects of rhythm on the body are always already culturally transmitted and received, primarily in his notebooks for courses on meter and rhythm at the University of Basel (see e.g. Nietzsche, *Vorlesungsaufzeichnungen* 157, 309, 322).

<sup>18</sup> Mikhail Gasparov's magisterial *History of European Versification* broadens this point to a principle of versification in general, noting that at least for a "learned minority," "cultural traditions and influences are sometimes stronger than linguistic givens" (Gasparov 89).

<sup>19</sup> Of course, unified or closed forms can themselves be disruptive, as Caroline Levine has argued.

<sup>20</sup> For a reading of the relation between meaning and rhythm as inherently conflictual, see Gumbrecht.

<sup>21</sup> Hans Lösener has adapted Meschonnic's ideas to a pedagogy that allows a different kind of encounter with texts than that permitted by current instructional practices; for him "[tritt] im Rhythmus die Verbindung zwischen Subjekt und Sprache zu Tage [. . .]." ("in rhythm the connection between subject and language makes its appearance," *Rhythmus MLL* 654); he views rhythm as movement rather than regularity, as creative engagement rather than adhering to a pattern. See Lösener *Rede* and *Fallen*, as well as his website, which includes a section "Den Rhythmus entdecken" and is subtitled "Henri Meschonnic weiterdenken."

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Hannah Vandegrift Eldridge, Sabine Gross  
University of Wisconsin–Madison  
1220 Linden Drive, Van Hise 807  
Madison, WI 53706  
USA  
heldridge@wisc.edu, sgross@wisc.edu