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SPECIAL ISSUE RHYTHM

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Rhythm, the Political, and the Human: Poetic Thinking and the Construction of Reality

This article extends Henri Meschonnic's (1932–2009) *theory of rhythm* to the notion of *Poetic Thinking*, demonstrating an often neglected aspect of how language shapes our perception of the world. It starts out from the tradition of *Sprachdenken*, based on Wilhelm von Humboldt and his notion of languages as *worldviews* and Meschonnic's work on *rhythm* as *signifiante*, that is, as a meaning-making procedure, following the linguistics of Émile Benveniste. Language as our access to the world goes beyond the communication of extralingual facts: the human world is rather also the result of language processes—these are formative for our perception of things, and hence also for our world. *Rhythm* understood not as meter, but as prosody and linguistic patterns, with its aural sound aspects, plays a role in these cognitive processes. In such processes, taking into account Martin Buber's dialogical thinking, *Poetic Thinking* is the

transforming power in the interaction of the form of life and the form of language that acts when a subject constitutes itself in a creative and dialogical way, transforming the way we perceive the world. This awareness of language as poetic, that is, creative, is explained by referring back to the ancient debate of the universals. It changes our conception of reality, of truth, of ethics, of historicity, of universalism and subjectivity. By changing our epistemological beliefs and our vision of what it means to be human, it is eminently political. (MP)

Katerina Somers

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Regularizing Rhythms: Meter as Prescription in Ninth-Century German

In this article I investigate meter as a linchpin in the process by which a ninth-century literary culture encroaches on a long-standing oral tradition. I focus on two ninth-century texts, the Old Saxon *Heliand* by an unknown poet and Otfrid von Weissenburg's Frankish *Liber Evangeliorum*. Both poets tell the story of the life of Christ, but the motivations behind their texts are different. The *Heliand* is intended for recalcitrant Saxons, who still required some convincing that being a Christian subject of the Carolingian empire was a desirable state of affairs. In contrast, Otfrid self-consciously attempts to produce one of the German language's first great works of literature. I argue that their contrasting goals lead the poets to lean more heavily on one of the two main language traditions of the day—the *Heliand* poet on the Germanic oral tradition and Otfrid on the Latinate tradition of literacy—and that this relationship has a direct influence on the poems' rhythms. In the case of the *Heliand*, the poet composes in alliterative verse, whose loose meter is rooted in spoken Germanic and, thus, accommodates its rhythms perfectly. This choice has the effect of rendering the Gospel story less culturally alien to the Saxons. Otfrid, on the other hand, creates his own Latin-influenced rhyming verse, whose meter constrains and regularizes the rhythms of his spoken Frankish. This abstraction away from vernacular rhythms represents the monk's attempt to prescribe good written Frankish as something apart from the pagan sounds of the oral tradition. (KS)

David D. Kim

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Disruption: On the Rhythm of Radical Politics in Uwe Timm's *Rot* (Red)

Politics proper follows the rhythm of disruption, which recalibrates common expectations, takes issue with linear temporal trajectories, and sets in motion many different forms of communication between variously affiliated members of community. This article examines Uwe Timm's 2001 novel *Rot*, first, as a polyphonic composition closely related to bebop and, second, as a literary attempt to disrupt the status quo in contemporary German political culture. As I argue, this multivocal novel illustrates how disruption, as a paradoxically rhythmic concept, touches upon individual action and communal coordination, flow and repetition, as well as structure and mobility. As an aesthetic, historical, and political legacy of 1968, it works as a matter of intergenerational communication and in opposition to the neoliberal oracles about efficiency, pre-

dictability, regularity, synchronicity, and uniformity. This simultaneously critical and creative inquiry offers important cultural and political insights into the relationship between rhythm and memory vis-à-vis the '68 generation to which both the protagonist and the author belong. While consulting with the latest research in cultural criticism and political theory, I explain to what extent radical politics, as it is represented in the novel, is unimaginable without the disruption of rhythm in interpersonal relationships and in more abstract social contracts between citizen and state. (DK)

Britta Herrmann

71

„Nur der Rhythmus interessiert“. Überlegungen zum Neuen Hörspiel.

Authors working in the genre of the New Radio Play (Neues Hörspiel) in the decades since 1968 have repeatedly and explicitly placed rhythm at the center of their works. Shaped by impulses from *Konkrete Poesie*, which bear some distinct resemblances to Henri Meschonnic's thinking about rhythm, the rhythmic forms of these works function on one hand as work on language (*Spracharbeit*), while on the other the materiality and sound quality of rhythm often take priority over language and its semantic dimension. The genre of the radio play is uniquely placed in terms of rhythm, since rhythms can both structure and be structured by virtually every element of the radio play on virtually every level: rhythm pervades and structures the deployment of voice and language, music and noise as well as audio-technical strategies such as cutting, sampling, etc. This article considers how the phenomena of rhythm(s) might be analyzed media-theoretically and literary-theoretically for acoustic texts: as organization of the movement of meaning beyond verbal semantics, as an aesthetic concept directed at changing our perception, as a means of generating *energeia* und affective effects, as a contributor to intertextual references. The analytic model developed is illustrated via a detailed analysis of Gerhard Rühm's 2015 radio play *hugo wolf und drei grazien, letzter akt*. (BH; in German)

Sonja Boos

99

Asynchronicity of Sound and Vision. Towards a Feminist Semiotics of Cinematic Rhythm

This essay is an inquiry into the intersections between feminist experimental film and cinematic formalism since the 1970s. It sheds light on how three German filmmakers—Ulrike Rosenbach, Ute Aurand, and Anja Czoska—have explored the material properties of the medium to dismantle conventional modes of cinematic representation. By experimenting with techniques of fragmentation and distortion and by working against the conventions of continuity and synchronization, these feminist filmmakers disrupt the rhythmic patterning that is rightly understood as a hallmark of cinema. Their formal interventions into the material conditions of filmic representation can be read in the context of a larger debate in feminist film theory over how to break down and subvert the traditional roles assigned to women in the mainstream and mass media. (SB)

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