

Abstracts

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Bio-poetics: Friction and interaction between “concepts in life” and the fictional production of the dynamics of *bios*.

Current concepts of *biopoetics* deal with the analogy between evolution theory and literature as well as with the mutual challenges of evolution and aesthetics. These approaches do not take into account the fact that the relationship between *bios* and the scientific, anthropological and cultural knowledge is not given, i.e. it is not necessary in the metaphysical sense of being unavoidable. *Bios* is life in itself. Through the concept of “bio-poetics” I thus intend to deny the homology of the domains of *bios* and *poetics*, in order to find a method that does not capture life through the aprioris of conceptual frameworks. The affirmative biopolitics by Roberto Esposito, referring to the power and politics of life itself, opens up methodological perspectives for conceiving an “aesthetics of living” which, analogously, is not modelled according to exterior rules based on moral, political, social, scientific or poetological frameworks. Thus, the dynamics of living exceeds such schemes revealing itself as exceeding the operations which produce knowledge. Aesthetics means therefore the activity of material techniques that make visible the traces of life inscribed in the materiality of writings or of pictures. From these premises, I reconceive the bond between knowledge and literature referring to contemporary literary theories and analysing poetical processes and figures such as

indeterminacy in literary texts of the 19th and 20th century written in Germany, France and Italy. Eventually, this reading of literary texts demonstrates the fictional production of an “other” knowledge about the dynamics of *bios*, evolving from the aesthetics of literature.

Szilvia Gellai

Notes on aesthetics and poetics of the cobweb

The imagery of spider webs has always been characterized by a fundamental ambivalence. Disgust and admiration, transience and eternal cycle, demonization and attribution to divine genius are combined in this image much like nature and technology or woman and man. After a description of the cultural-historical roots of this dialectic relationship the paper addresses the aesthetic of the cobweb and analyses on that basis the narrative formations of the metaphor. The myth of Arachne in Ovid's *Metamorphoses* serves here as a reference for a reading of three modern texts: Hanns Heinz Ewer's *Die Spinne*, Ken Kesey's *One flew over the cuckoo's nest* and Manuel Puig's *El beso de la mujer araña*. I argue that spider webs illustrate asymmetrical and gendered power structures, in which negatively connotated spiders represent femininity. Furthermore, in literary texts spider webs seems to symbolize the eternal provisional arrangement that characterizes the life of modern figures. That may be considered as an updating of the tension between immanence and transcendence which existed since Arachne.

Jutta Heinz

Ein Ganzes schaffen. Denkmodelle von künstlerischer Schöpfung am Paradigma des Organismus um 1800

The essay deals with the role and development of organicistic ideas and concepts of aesthetic production aesthetics in the 18th century. It reconstructs und compares the structural arguments which constitute those concepts in texts of Christian Blanckenburg, Johann Georg Sulzer, Christoph Martin Wieland, Johann Gottfried Herder, Karl Philipp Moritz, Friedrich Schiller und Johann Wolfgang Goethe. As a result it presents different models of production aesthetics in connection to the organism: the artist (e.g. as genius) can be viewed as an alter ego of the Creator; or the work of art itself can be viewed as microcosm, which mirrors the laws of nature on a smaller scale. Finally the making of a work of art can be considered analogous

to organicistic processes in nature. Schiller's idea of the "lebendige Gestalt" and Goethe's idea of morphology both demonstrate, how holistic concepts of the natural organism inform production aesthetics.

Pauline Moret-Jankus

Transformisme et création littéraire chez Marcel Proust

Although several studies have explored the role of science in Proust's works, few have focused on the aesthetics of biology in *À la recherche du temps perdu*. This article looks at the influence of transformist theories (Darwinism or Lamarckism) in Proust's novel. It shows that naturalists such as Cuvier or Geoffroy Saint-Hilaire, who did not support the theory of the transmutation of species, are missing from the novel. Furthermore, the article analyses the themes of metamorphosis and hybridity in order to show how, in Proust, transformism – and specifically Lamarckism –, is linked with mythology and literary creation.

Francesco Rossi

Variazioni poetiche di modelli evolutivi. Thomas Mann e lo *Homo aestheticus*

Thomas Mann was a diligent reader, with pencil in hand, of popular science books. His works display not only a basic knowledge in biology, but also well-informed insights about microbiology, zoology, evolutionary biology and paleontology. In particular, Haeckelian themes and *Leitmotive* become evident in some major novels such as *Der Zauberberg*, *Doktor Faustus* or *Bekenntnisse des Hochstaplers Felix Krull*, so that there is a broad agreement on the significant role played by the biological discourse within his narrative fiction. Thus, this article attempts to throw light on the evolutionary features of Mann's considerations about the aesthetic individual. In this regard, after recalling the main features of Mann's conception of life as *bios*, the article considers first the idea of evolution developed from his early writings to the later ones. Second, it discusses the most important single elements of this idea, namely mimicry, natural selection and aesthetic evolution, intending it as a progression towards beauty, variety and organic completeness. Finally, the article focuses thematically on Mann's reflections on the aesthetic individual, referring to the concept of *Homo aestheticus*, which stems from the contemporary evolutionary theory.

Angelika Straubenmueller

“Transfragmentarism” – a biopoetic Strategy of literary Antimodernism

The crisis of the modern age is first and foremost a crisis of bios – this being the alienation of mankind from nature through the social impact of industrialization. As a reaction, modern literature evolved into what Adorno called “Mimesis ans Verhärtete und Entfremdete”, meaning the aesthetic adaptation to the fragmented environment.

Opposing this progressive approach, antimodernists tried to regain the lost sense of wholeness by developing an aesthetic of “Transfragmentarism”, merging insights of natural science and monistic philosophy with romantic traditions. Literature following this biopoetic strategy to strengthen the mental fitness of its readers was exceptionally successful after World War I. Nevertheless, it couldn’t achieve canonisation in German literature and from today’s perspective could be regarded as a failed method to cope with the evolution of art. The following article will pursue the aim of portraying the implications of this process by examining Erwin Guido Kolbenheyer’s main work, his *Paracelsus-Trilogie* (1917-1926). As a typical antimodernist he considered his writing to be a tribute to the survival of an imagined German *Volk* and thereby overestimated the healing influence of his art on the country’s shattered post-war society.

Steen Letet Christiansen

Room for One More Inside, Sir: William Burroughs’ Biopoetics

William Burroughs’ oft-quoted idea that language is a virus is often reflected in the many different versions of the posthuman found today. While this idea of language as virus has been behind many information theoretical readings of Burroughs’ works, it is clear that Burroughs’ poetics is as much a poetics of embodiment, or what I will call a biopoetics. In order to develop this notion of biopoetics, I will draw both on Eugene Thacker’s argument about biomedica as the conflation of information and body (Thacker 2004), or what we can call bioinformatics. However, this leaves unanswered the question of bioenergetics, or the question of the felt intensities of Burroughs’ writing. To develop this affective dimension of biopoetics, I draw on Tony Sampson’s concept of virality (2012), the way energetics and not only information is shared and transferred between bodies by way of media.

By focusing on biopoetics, we can see how written language emerges as a nonhuman force of control in Burroughs' work; his emphasis on language as alien and nonhuman reveals how human being emerges as a process of biopoetics. Burroughs' central insight is that the entanglement of word and body not only is what Sampson calls affective contagion, although certainly Burroughs emphasizes the negative affects as part of this bodily control. Burroughs underlines that this affective contagion is also one of affective control; the word spreads through affective contagion and exerts control in this manner. Control and affect are inextricably linked for Burroughs and linked precisely through biopoetics, language being primary in this case.

Salvatore Tedesco, Università di Palermo

Fra Terrence Deacon e la biologia teoretica: l'origine della facoltà estetica e la questione del gioco

Based on a comparison between the contemporary evolutionary perspective supported, among others, by Terrence Deacon, and the biotheoretical thinking of early twentieth-century Germany, this paper purports to contribute to the debate on the origin of the aesthetic faculty, enhancing the role of morphology and the question of play, meant as an exemplary manifestation of the interaction between individuals and environments.