

## U

### **ÜBERBRETTL → KABARETT**

### **ÜBERLIEFERUNG**

The tradition of a text, e.g. oral or written. In →TEXTKRITIK, *Überlieferung* specifically means the tradition of a text, as it can be verified by the study of manuscripts and other documents.

### **UMARMENDER REIM**

Rhyme scheme, in which one rhyming couplet is enclosed by another: abba, cddc...

### **UMFANG**

The physical dimensions or number of pages of a (literary) work.

### **UMGANGSSPRACHE** (colloquial spoken form of language) →SCHRIFT-SPRACHE

### **UNGEBUNDENE REDE → PROSA**

### **UNIKUM**

The only copy (of a book) in existence.

### **UNIVERSALPOESIE → FRÜHROMANTIK**

### **UNMITTELBARKEIT**

An author's or narrator's total and immediate involvement with his creation, and with the emotions and ideas expressed therein. →DISTANZ.

### **UNREINER REIM** (imperfect rhyme)

Occurs when the rhyming sounds are not identical; e.g.:

Ach neige,  
Du Schmerzenreiche (Goethe, *Faust I*)

### **UNTERHALTUNGSLITERATUR → TRIVIALLITERATUR**

### **UNZIALEN** (uncials)

Type of script used since the 5th century. It consisted of capital letters only (→MAJUSKELN, →KAPITALE) and was more rounded in appearance than the script used previously. Later, the term *Unzialen* was applied to the non-ornate capital letters at the beginning of a book or a chapter. →INITIALE.

### **URANIA**

Muse of astronomy. →MUSEN.

### **URAUFFÜHRUNG** (première)

The very first production of a work. →ERSTAUFFÜHRUNG.

**URBILD** (archetype, prototype)  
Original model or form of something.

**URFASSUNG**  
Original version. →FASSUNG.

**URHEBERRECHT** (copyright)  
The exclusive right of an author and his heirs to control or publish his work. At present it expires fifty years after the author's death. →VERLAGSRECHT.

**URSPRUNGSMYTHEN** (myths of creation) →SCHÖPFUNGSMYTHEN

**UT PICTURA POESIS** (let the poem be like a picture)  
Phrase from Horace's *Ars poetica* it has been interpreted as meaning that literature should be descriptive and try to 'paint' its subject-matter. Lessing in *Laokoon* (1766) establishes literature as an independent art-form with its own laws.

**UTOPIE** (Utopian literature)  
Term derived from Thomas More's *Utopia* (1516). Utopia, literally meaning nowhere, was the name he invented for an imaginary island with an ideal political, social and legal system. The term *Utopie* is thus applied to a literary genre whose main feature is the presentation of idealized societies.

## V

### **VADEMEKUM** (vade-mecum)

Pocket-sized handbook or manual on a particular subject.

### **VAGANTENDICHTUNG**

Literature of the 12th and 13th century travelling students and scholars of Europe, esp. Germany, France and England. Some wrote ribald and satiric Latin verses which were termed Goliardic as they attributed them to a mythical Bishop Goliard.

### **VARIANTE → LESART**

### **VERBALSTIL**

Style characterized by the frequent use of constructions using verb-forms.  
→NOMINALSTIL.

### **VERBLÜMTE REDEWEISE**

Style in which thoughts are expressed in an oblique and allusive manner.

### **VERDINGLICHUNG**

1. Presentation or treatment of the abstract as concrete.
2. Materialization.

### **VERFASSER → AUTOR**

### **VERFREMDUNGSEFFEKT** (alienation effect)

Also *V-effekt* in Brecht's dramatic theory.

Technique in literature or art which makes that which is depicted strange and unfamiliar, in Russian formalism called *ostranenie*. Central aspect of Brecht's epic theatre (→EPISCHES THEATER) where *Verfremdungseffekt* is used to evoke critical distance rather than empathy in the spectator, in order to arouse active response or argument on political and social questions. The production aims to discourage vicarious experience or catharsis (hence non-Aristotelian theatre), *showing* events instead of creating illusion. Brecht (*Kleines Organon für das Theater*, 1948), devised the *Verfremdungseffekt* to punctuate the action and prevent the audience from identifying with the characters. *Verfremdungseffekt* may be visual, such as placards with slogans or films projected above the stage; aural, as in songs, addressing the audience directly or commenting on the action; physical, where house lights are on, smoking is permitted, actors dress on stage, wear masks or move among the audience. Similar techniques are widely used in experimental, alternative or street-theatre (→STRASSENTHEATER), whether political or not, and in new performances of classical plays. Alienation or shock effects also abound in modern art, poetry, music and dance.

M.St.

### **VERGANGENHEITSBEWÄLTIGUNG**

Term used in the Federal Republic meaning 'coming to terms with' or 'coping' with the past, i.e. the period of National Socialism (1933-1945). After 1945 the concept of Germany's collective guilt, espoused by influential thinkers such as Karl Jaspers (1883-1969), required all Germans to be answerable for the crimes committed under

Hitler's régime of terror, and not to forget what had been done in their name. Only through an honest appraisal of collective and individual guilt could the past be overcome. The attempt to 'cope with' the past in this sense was reflected in the work of many writers of the post-war period, such as Böll (1917-85), Grass (1927-2015) and Siegfried Lenz (1926-2014).

E.W.H.

### **VERGLEICH** (simile)

Stylistic device: the comparison of one word or concept to another in order to enrich the associative qualities of the expression. The *Vergleich* is much shorter and far more compact than →GLEICHNIS or →PARABEL; e.g.: stumm wie ein Fisch.

### **VERGLEICHENDE LITERATURWISSENSCHAFT** (comparative literary studies) = *Komparatistik*

*Vergleichende Literaturwissenschaft* today comprises a spectrum of critical approaches applied to a range of literatures. *Vergleichende Literaturwissenschaft* can be traced back to Goethe's humanistic interest in the literatures of the world (*Weltliteratur*) which he saw as an expression of universal human consciousness. Taken up by French and German scholars in the early 19th century, *vergleichende Literaturwissenschaft* developed in opposition to narrow nationalist tendencies and the concentration on national literatures in sharply defined departments. *Vergleichende Literaturwissenschaft* was originally concerned mainly with indicating suitable themes and subject-matter for examination, whereas more recently attention has been focused on its methods. *Vergleichende Literaturwissenschaft* disregards national boundaries and includes the comparison of one work with another, one artist with another, literary movements, literary works with other art forms, or such particulars as themes and motifs. To avoid the dangers of merely impressionist judgement, *vergleichende Literaturwissenschaft* has now shifted to methodological questions and makes increasing use of a number of theories, especially translation theory, linguistic structuralism, semiotics, Marxist theories, phenomenology, reception aesthetics and psychoanalytic approaches. Comparisons of works and their contexts can thus be formulated in terms of theoretical premises, declared procedures, and defined goals. Based on such theories *vergleichende Literaturwissenschaft* claims to act as an umbrella discipline subsuming generic, stylistic, historical, genetic, or sociological criticism. As a result of the combination of its multiple theoretical base and its readiness to study all kinds of literary texts, *vergleichende Literaturwissenschaft* encourages a certain hermeneutic self-awareness and highlights both the systemic nature of literariness and the manner in which literary discourse is integrated into its enveloping aesthetic and ideological structures.

H.R.

### **VERKEHRTE WELT**

As a reaction to the eclipse on 1st April 648 B.C., Archilochos came to the conclusion that from now on everything might be possible, the animals of the forest might look for their food in the sea etc. In the 12th century this stylistic device of stringing together impossibilities was employed to criticize one's own society, morals, the state, the world in general. The world was depicted as a place where everything was upside-down, hence *verkehrte Welt*. Thus a →TOPOS was established which has had a place in literature ever since, and has sometimes been employed to portray the gap between the generations; e.g. *Carmina Burana* (German version by Ludwig Laistner 1845-

1896).

Es blühte einst das Studium,  
Heut kehrt es sich in Bummeln um.  
Die Wissenschaft galt einst als Ziel  
Doch obenauf ist heut das Spiel.  
Wie werden heute vor der Zeit  
Die grünen Jungen so gescheit [...]

A.O.

**VERLAG** (publishing company)

**VERLAGSALMANACH** → **ALMANACH**

**VERLAGSRECHT**

Either the full copyright or parts of it which the author (→**URHEBERRECHT**) transfers to the publisher.

**VERLAGSSIGNET** → **DRUCKERZEICHEN**

**VERLEGER** (publisher)

**VERLEGERZEICHEN** → **DRUCKERZEICHEN**

**VERRAMSCHEN**

The practice of selling recently published books at reduced prices when sales are slow.

**VERRISS**

Totally negative and destructive review of a performance or book.

**VERS** (verse)

In literary criticism *Vers* always refers to a single metrical line. In general usage, *Vers* is sometimes used as a synonym for stanza (→**STROPHE**).

**VERS LIBRE** → **FREIE VERSE**

**VERSALIEN** (majuscules) = Majuskeln

Capital letters at the beginning of each verse.

**VERSANDBUCHHANDLUNG** (mail-order bookshop)

**VERSATZSTÜCKE** = Versetzstücke

The mobile parts of the theatrical set; e.g.: furniture, trees etc.

**VERSBRECHUNG** → **ENJAMBEMENT**

**VERSCHLEIFUNG**

Slurring over a syllable for purposes of versification.

### **VERSCHRÄNKTER REIM**

Rhyme scheme: abc abc or abc bac.

### **VERSENKUNG**

Adjustable part of the stage floor which can be lowered to make characters disappear.

### **VERSFÜLLUNG → FÜLLUNG**

### **VERSFUSS → FUSS**

### **VERSKUNST → METRIK**

### **VERSMASS → METRUM**

### **VERSUCH → ESSAY**

### **VERWANDLUNGSSTÜCK → AUSSTATTUNGSTÜCK**

### **VERWERTUNGSGESELLSCHAFTEN**

Associations of writers which concern themselves with the clarification of authors' rights as far as the use of their work is concerned; e.g.: books in libraries, recording, filming, etc. of books.

### **VIELGESTALTIGKEIT**

The use of more than one type of metrical foot in a single verse line.

### **VIERZEILER (quatrain) = Quartett**

Four-line stanza with the rhyme scheme: aabb, abab, or abba. →SONETT.

### **VOLKSAUSGABE (inexpensive edition) → AUSGABE**

### **VOLKSBALLADE (folk-ballad)**

A sub-genre of the →VOLKSLIED.

A ballad is a narrative poem, usually in strophic form, which is either sung or recited (→BALLADE). The term *Volk* is ambiguous and in this context has led to controversies in the past. It is now generally understood to mean 'the lower strata of a society'. *Volksballade* thus refers to a narrative poem sung by the common people who, regardless of the original author, treat it as their 'property' transforming it, consciously or subconsciously, in the course of time.

Although basically epic, the folk-ballad has marked lyrical qualities (refrain, repetitions), but is also dramatic (scenic structure, strong conflicts). Its style tends to be ornamental (rhetorical questions, exclamations). Stereotyped phrases and rhymes, repetitions, 'gaps' in logical progression, even unintelligible phrases are characteristics of the oral tradition.

The folk-ballad reached its peak in the 15th and 16th centuries when the first manuscript and printed collections appeared. It was rediscovered by the *Stürmer und Dränger* (→STURM UND DRANG) who were inspired by it to write ballads themselves e.g. Bürger (1747-1794), Goethe (1749-1832), and modern authors too e.g. Brecht (1898-1956), Biermann (1936-) have modelled some of their songs on the

*Volksballade.*

E.K.-R.

### **VOLKSBUCH** (chap-book)

A collection of prose tales of an entertaining, partly didactic nature, popular in the 15th and 16th centuries. Its sources were (a) indigenous and (b) literary themes. The first group was collected from anecdotes current among the common people, (*Dil Ulenspiegel*, 1515; *Historia von D. Johann Fausten*, 1587). The second group comprises mainly translations and adaptations of French courtly epics and romances (*Die schöne Magelone*, 1527; *Die Haimonskinder*, 1604), as well as classical and Italian works. The term *Volksbuch* was applied even to these collections of literary origin as they became widely known to the common people with the invention of book-printing; they were simplified to suit popular taste and were changed from edition to edition regardless of who the original author was. After the →STURM UND DRANG movement had awakened a new interest in *Volksbücher* the Romantics revived them by editing them and writing their own versions.

E.K.-R.

### **VOLKSBUCHEREI** (public lending library)

### **VOLKSBUHNE**

Organization of theatre lovers which tries to attract people to theatrical performances with reduced ticket prices, and aims to promote theatre generally.

### **VOLKSDICHTUNG**

Notion that a people collectively creates literature: a view which was dominant during the Romantic period, but which is not held by modern scholars. The term is currently used to refer to anonymous literature which, after a long oral tradition, was collected and recorded during the 18th and 19th centuries. →MÄRCHEN, →VOLKS-BALLADE, →VOLKSLIED.

### **VOLKSKOMÖDIE** (popular comedy) = Volkstheater

Taking →KOMÖDIE in the widest sense of the word, this somewhat infelicitous term is used to cover all kinds of metropolitan popular theatre, not only - though largely - comical (→POSSE, →SINGSPIEL, →ZAUBERSTÜCK), but also comprising dramatized romances, legends and fairy-tales e.g. *Donauweibchen*, *Zwölf schlafende Jungfrauen*, as well as melodrama and plays appealing through lavish sets and stunning stage effects (*Spektakelstücke* and *Pferdekomödie*). Parodies of serious drama and opera also featured prominently. All these plays would normally incorporate the comic figure of →HANSWURST and his descendants Kasperl, Thaddädl, Staberl etc. This popular theatre, aimed at a broad spectrum of the people, has its roots in the M.A., and in the Baroque, as well as in →COMMEDIA DELL'ARTE. It survived repeated attempts by Gottsched (1700-1766) to regulate the German stage; in the later 19th century incorporating more and more foreign, especially French influences, it gradually gave way to *Operette* and →BOULEVARDKOMÖDIE. Plays from Vienna especially dominated the German stage (including the Weimar theatre), other main centres were Hamburg and Berlin. *Volkstheater*, as opposed to court theatre or high literary drama, refers to the same concept; →VOLKSSTÜCK is generally used in a narrower sense, it lives on in the

works of Brecht (1898-1956), Horváth (1901-1938), et al.

F.W.

### **VOLKSLIED**

Since Herder (1744-1803), the concept of *Volkslied* has become twofold in German. In addition to the musical term with the same meaning as 'folksong', i.e. combination of melody and text, it is also specifically applied to a certain poetry, whether this combines with melody, or not. These verses of popular use, whose authorship is mostly unknown, are passed on by word of mouth from generation to generation, thereby undergoing constant change, yet preserving the essence of certain recurring situations in human experience; often related to specific customs, festivals or ways of life or work of a confined ethnic group, but with a universal meaning. The *Volkslied* does not as a rule seek a new approach to a topic, but reshapes traditional elements and topoi. This unrefined, seemingly artless poetry, where mood prevails over logical progression, was praised by the Romantics who upheld it as a model of poetic expression, and who initiated steps for its preservation, e.g. Arnim and Brentano with their collection *Des Knaben Wunderhorn* (1806-8). The structure of the mainly lyrical verse is as simple as its statements; though variations abound, the *Volkslied* is usually composed of rhymed stanzas of four lines with four accents per line, while ballads often directly imitate the English Chevy Chase form.

G.C.

### **VOLKSMÄRCHEN → MÄRCHEN**

### **VOLKSSÄNGER**

19th century Viennese street singers who sang popular songs (→GASSENHAUER) with instrumental accompaniment.

### **VOLKSSTÜCK**

Comic genre which originated in Vienna towards the end of the 18th century. As the name suggests, it is a play about 'das Volk', for 'das Volk', meaning the lower echelons of society in contrast to the traditional aristocratic dramatis personae and audiences. There are two distinct developments in the *Volksstück* tradition. The earlier one is associated with the →VOLKSKOMÖDIE where the term *Volksstück* is used as a loose synonym for a number of comic genres: →ZAUBERSTÜCK, *Lokalposse* (→POSSE), →BES-SERUNGSSTÜCK. The second development occurred during the later part of the 19th century when it came to mean any regional play, written in dialect, with a rural setting, which aimed chiefly at cheap entertainment, although frequently with an underlying didactic purpose. Since the 1920s the *Volksstück* has been rehabilitated as a respectable literary form, particularly through the influence of Horváth (1901-1938) who reversed the conventions of the second tradition. Urban replaces rural setting; petite-bourgeoisie and proletariat feature instead of peasants; the fluctuations of a capitalist market economy replace nature to provide the requisite 'blows of fate'. Horváth also isolated the urban dweller's loss of an authentic language as the key to his inability to master private and social problems. These themes have been continued by a new generation of dramatists in the 1960s and 1970s, such as Franz Xaver Kroetz (1946-), Martin Sperr (1944-2002) and Peter Turrini (1944-). Today one must differentiate between the *Volksstück* and the critical *Volksstück* which reacts against the expectations associated with the former to become almost an anti-genre.



## **VOLKSTHEATER →VOLKSKOMÖDIE**

### **VORABDRUCK**

The full or partial publication of a literary work in newspapers or magazines before it appears in book form.

### **VORAUSDEUTUNG**

The use, mainly in drama and fiction, of one or more techniques to give a sense of the direction in which the main action of a work is moving. Such a prophetic task can be performed explicitly by an intrusive narrator or a soothsayer, such as the old woman in Kleist's *Michael Kohlhaas*, but the purpose is more often achieved indirectly: by the use of analogical sub-plots or the fate of minor characters, or through anticipatory symbolism. In traditional drama this function was performed by auguries (e.g. the dreams in Schiller's *Die Braut von Messina* and Kleist's *Käthchen von Heilbronn* or the fork in Platen's *Die verhängnisvolle Gabel*). While similar irrational elements still occur in modern literature (e.g. the Chinaman motif in Fontane's *Effi Briest*, the vision of Minna holding her dead baby in Hauptmann's *Bahnwärter Thiel* or the *Todesboten* in Mann's *Der Tod in Venedig*), the device has generally become more accommodated to the demands of plausibility. In most contexts, *Vorausdeutung* serves to heighten tension or create a sense of inevitability, but one particular form of dramatic *Vorausdeutung* favoured by Brecht and his followers (e.g. in the use of *Spruchbänder* at the beginning of scenes) is intended to deflect attention from suspense about impending events to the manner in which they happen. →PRÄFIGURATION.

J.J.W.

### **VORBILD →QUELLE**

### **VORBÜHNE** (proscenium)

Part of the stage between the curtain and the forward edge of the stage. →RAMPE.

### **VORFABEL →VORGESCHICHTE**

### **VORGANG →HANDLUNG**

### **VORGESCHICHTE** = Vorfabel

Those events of the plot which took place before the play started and which must be related to the audience to facilitate a proper understanding of the action.  
→ANALYTISCHES DRAMA.

### **VORLAGE →QUELLE**

### **VORMÄRZ**

The literary period before the outbreak of the revolutions in Germany and Austria in March 1848. This literature is characterized by an overriding interest in social and political issues. It is sometimes dated from the 1830 revolution in France and the emigration of Börne and Heine to Paris; and sometimes from 1835 when the censors of the German Diet (*Bundestag*) clamped down on a number of radical writers including Heine (1797-1856), Gutzkow (1811-1878) and Laube (1808-1884) who

were accused of conspiring against the established order and lumped together under the name *Das Junge Deutschland* ('Young Germany'). In their prose these writers developed a trenchant Hegelian criticism of religious, moral, social and political conditions in Germany. The plays of Büchner (1813-1837) and Grabbe (1801-1836) are closely connected with this movement. Some critics (e.g. Jost Hermand) would only use the term *Vormärz* for the decade after 1840 when political interests also became dominant in Austrian, German and Swiss lyrical poetry, e.g. Anastasius Grün (1806-1876), Freiligrath (1810-1876), Herwegh (1817-1875), Keller (1819-1890), and the verse epic, e.g. Heine, Lenau (1802-1850). At that stage, the ideas of early socialism also had an impact on German radical writing. The defeat of the revolutionary movements in 1849 brought the →TENDENZDICHTUNG of the *Vormärz* to its end. Its traditions lived on in the German labour movement; they achieved new significance in East Germany after 1945 and in the FRG in the wake of the radical movements of the 1960s.

L.B.

### **VORSPANN**

1. Credits at the beginning of a film.
2. Shorts: excerpts of a forthcoming film.

### **VORSPIEL** (curtain-raiser)

Short dramatic piece (frequently one-act) performed before the main play.

### **VORSTADTTHEATER**

In the 18th and 19th centuries, a theatre situated in a suburb, which concentrated on the performance of →VOLKSKOMÖDIE, as opposed to the →HOF THEATER, situated in the inner city.

### **VORSTELLUNG** (performance)

### **VORTRAG**

1. Talk or discourse on radio or television: lecture.
2. Recitation (of poetry).

### **VORWEGNAHME**

A technique whereby chronological (usually, narrative) sequence is broken in order to furnish advance information about later occurrences in a story or to indicate the specific direction in which a plot or chain of events or some action on a character's part is leading. Unlike →VORAUSDEUTUNG, which tends to signify a less clearcut pattern of symbolic intimations or ambiguous allusions to the course a work is taking, *Vorwegnahme* operates in a relatively explicit, unequivocal manner. The effect can be achieved by the use of a prologue or anticipatory introduction (such as the *Vorsatz* to Thomas Mann's *Der Zauberberg*, 1924) or by means of an intrusive narrator's comments, often at the beginnings of chapters (e.g. in Grimmelshausen's *Simplicissimus*, 1669). Traditionally, *Vorwegnahme* is associated with didactic writing (e.g. Chamisso's *Peter Schlemihl* 1814, or Hesse's *Demian*, 1919). The device often successfully exploits the discrepancy between the moral hindsight of a mature narrator and his younger, less prudent self.

J.J.W.

**VORWORT** (foreword, preface)

Brief, introductory remarks by the author, editor, publisher etc. with a similar function to a →NACHWORT. In English the distinction between preface (written by the author) and foreword (written by persons other than the author) is not strictly adhered to.

**VORWURF →STOFF**