Germanic Philology

Perspectives in Linguistics and Literature

Edited by

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Series in Language and Linguistics

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For H. – a courageous heart.

Table of Contents

Acknowledgments vii

List of Tables ix

List of Figures xi

Contributors xiii

Abbreviations xvii

Introduction xix

Tina Boyer
Wake Forest University

Chapter 1 **On Language History and Extralinguistic Periodization in Germanic** 1

Adam Oberlin
Princeton

Chapter 2 **Metaphor and Metonymy in Germanic Noun Periphrasis** 27

John Paul Ewing
Indiana University Bloomington

Chapter 3 **Scribal Errors and Peculiarities in the *Hildebrandslied*** 55

Robin Cummins
University of Wisconsin Madison

Chapter 4 ***gedencken der pender:* A New Reading of Hugo von Montfort's "min dienst und gruzz me tausent stunt" (no. 6)** 75

Alexander Sager
University of Georgia

Chapter 5 **Yiddish, Power, and Compassion: Emotive Language in Wagenseil's Belehrung (1699)** 91

Annegret Oehme
University of Washington

Chapter 6 **Gendered Variation in Spoken German: Has Prescriptivism Affected the Vernacular?** 111

James M. Stratton
Pennsylvania State University

Chapter 7 **Dialect contact and language death: Morphological leveling in an Indiana German heritage variety** 137

Karen Rösch
Indiana University - Purdue University in Indianapolis

Chapter 8 **Nineteenth-Century American Translations of German Philology** 177

Ulrike Wagner
Bard College Berlin

Index 203

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List of Tables

Table 6.1:	German Participant Profiles	119
Table 6.2:	Swiss Participant Profiles	119
Table 6.3:	Distribution of Variants for Describing Mixed-Sex Referents (real words)	124
Table 6.4:	Distribution of Variants for Describing Mixed-Sex Referents (pseudowords)	124
Table 6.5:	Logistic Regression of Factors Conditioning Use of Generic Masculine to Describe Mixed-Sex Referents	127
Table 7.1:	Gilbert Translation Task: 'he's putting the chair under the tree'	156
Table 7.2:	Gilbert Translation Task: 'the dog bit that bad man'	156
Table 7.3:	Gilbert Translation Task: 'boil that egg in hot water'	157
Table 7.4:	Gilbert Translation Task: 'he's helping me now'	158
Table 7.5:	Gilbert Translation Task: 'he came with me'	158
Table 7.6:	Gilbert Translation Task: 'give her two pieces'	159
Table 7.7:	Gilbert Translation Task: 'he is already in the room'	160
Table 7.8:	Gilbert Translation Task: 'there is something in your left eye'	161

List of Figures

Figure 2.1:	Subtypes of Metaphor in Germanic Noun Periphrasis	35
Figure 2.2:	Subtypes of Metonymy in Germanic Noun Periphrasis	45
Figure 3.1:	Manuscript Evidence	62
Figure 3.2:	Manuscript Evidence	63
Figure 3.3:	Manuscript Evidence	63
Figure 3.4:	Manuscript Evidence	64
Figure 3.5:	Manuscript Evidence	65
Figure 3.6:	Manuscript Evidence	65
Figure 3.7:	Manuscript Evidence	65
Figure 3.8:	Manuscript Evidence	66
Figure 3.9:	Manuscript Evidence	66
Figure 3.10:	Manuscript Evidence	67
Figure 3.11:	Manuscript Evidence	67
Figure 3.12:	Manuscript Evidence	67
Figure 3.13:	Manuscript Evidence	68
Figure 3.14:	Manuscript Evidence	68
Figure 3.15:	Manuscript Evidence	68
Figure 3.16:	Manuscript Evidence	69
Figure 3.17:	Manuscript Evidence	69
Figure 3.18:	Manuscript Evidence	69
Figure 3.19:	Manuscript Evidence	70
Figure 6.1:	Image R – *Zwei Selfiemacherinnen*	122
Figure 6.2:	Image T – *Ein Dabtänzer*	122
Figure 6.3:	The Use of the Generic Masculine in Apparent Time	126
Figure 7.1:	Dubois County Townships: Location of Jasper and Ferdinand, IN	143
Figure 7.2:	Occurrence of Nominative Forms in SG Accusative and Dative Contexts	147
Figure 7.3:	Jasper Area Participants	150
Figure 7.4:	Ferdinand Area Participants	151
Figure 7.5:	SG Masculine Definite Article Declinations for 'The Man'	153

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Abbreviations

acc	=	accusative
b.	=	born
con.	=	contraction
dat.	=	dative
def.	=	definite article
dem.	=	demonstrative
Eng	=	English
fem.	=	feminine
Fig.	=	Figure
gen.	=	genitive
IPA	=	International Phonetic Alphabet
J-F	=	Jasper-Ferdinand (German heritage variety)
jf	=	J-F determiner forms described by Freeouf (1990)
LAlem	=	Low Alemannic
masc.	=	masculine
neut.	=	neuter
nom.	=	nominative
NP	=	Noun Phrase
pos.det.	=	possessive determiner
pro.	=	pronoun
red.	=	reduced
SG	=	Standard German
OHG	=	Old High German
MHG	=	Middle High German
OS	=	Old Saxon
OE	=	Old English

Introduction

Germanic philology in the twenty-first century

Tina Boyer
Wake Forest University

Philology in the twenty-first century is a complicated topic. This complication stemmed from the turmoil of the twentieth century. In the context of Germanic languages and their study, the century turned into a political, social, and ideological battleground. As a result, philology faded into the shadows. Some scholars reduced its status to historical linguistics, which was true, and others considered it a waste of time, old-fashioned, and unnecessary. Consequently, since the end of the century was influenced by critical theory, philology was categorized as a branch of linguistics. In contrast, critical theory took over Germanic language studies' social and cultural aspects.

However, what do we mean by philology, specifically Germanic philology, as a concept and field of study? The definitions for philology are endless. Haruko Momma's study provides a philological excurse on philology and philologists.[1] Some essential takeaways are:

> The first one, which is popularly accredited to Roman Jakobson, states that 'philology is the art of reading slowly' (see, for example, Watkins 1990, p. 25, and Ziolkowski 1990b, p. 11, n. 7). This dictum, whose underlying concept may be attributed to Nietzsche, tells us that philology is less concerned with *what* we read than *how* we read (see Pollock 2009, p. 933, n. 11).[2]

Reducing the practice of philology to "how we read" improves all other definitions. The essential task of a researcher is to read and read well. This type of reading constitutes open-mindedness and critical thinking. With these assets, philology focuses on the text and adds specializations as necessary.

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[1] See Haruko Momma, "Introduction: Where Is Philology?," in *From Philology to English Studies: Language and Culture in the Nineteenth Century* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 1–27.
[2] Ibid., 26.

Therefore, philology can expand into various approaches and use countless disciplines on how to read a text.[3] Momma continues:

> [t]he second definition states that philology is 'what philologists do.' However tautological this definition may sound, it reminds us that studies of language and literature are philological if they are so recognized by those who conduct them, and that students of language and literature *become* philologists when they acknowledge themselves as such.[4]

Essentially, philology is self-determined. Therefore, when researchers read philologically, they are philologists.[5] The text or medium of knowledge lies at the heart of philology. Without it, there is no research. Consequently, as long as we have language and conveyors of these languages, we can and should read philologically. The challenge, however, rests in Germanic philology's faded and tainted reputation.

One reason for Germanic philology's fading influence in the academy appears in its beginnings. In the German context, for example, philologists of the nineteenth century (Herder, Grimm) anchored their research in the desire to create national unity among the many states of Germany and as an answer to Napoleon's march across Europe. For these philologists, national unity would follow by providing an origin of the language and its people.[6] Myths, folklore, and other forms of cultural transmission were integral in this work. Germany's unity in the nineteenth century did derive in part from philological research; however, the political and ideological currents, like the belief in Social Darwinism and eugenics, some of the worst examples, mixed with philological research (myths, folklore, language studies, medieval literature) and set the stage for the horrors of the twentieth century. Germanic philology became

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[3] We also want to add that words in and of themselves are worth reading and that language is a text. Chapters six and seven in this volume are language studies, one interested in language change and the other a case study of marginalized languages in the United States.

[4] Momma, "Introduction: Where Is Philology?," 26.

[5] Chapter eight discusses how to read philologically.

[6] While the argument for national identity formation in the nineteenth century is predominant; the early modern period provided a good foundation for the ideologies of the nineteenth century. See: Karl Enenkel and Konrad Ottenheym, "Introduction - The Quest for an Appropriate Past: The Creation of National Identities in Early Modern Literature, Scholarship, Architecture, and Art," in *The Quest for an Appropriate Past in Literature, Art and Architecture* (Leiden: Brill, 2018), 1–11. Also see chapter eight on the prominence of philology in the nineteenth century.

enmeshed with racist and bigoted pseudo-sciences to validate northern Europe's white supremacy. To this day, Germanic philology is a thorny topic.

On the one hand, it is alive in historical linguistics and other linguistic analyses, but on the other hand, the field of influence has diminished not only in publications but in the genuine lack of academic positions at universities. Philology will diminish even more by not providing academic freedom and financial support. Young scholars struggle to find posts to continue their research; older scholars do not receive wider recognition than the very small circle of historical linguists within which they exist. In North America, philology is going extinct.

This collection focuses on the Germanic branch of philology and seeks to continue what was started (with goodwill) in the early modern period and gained significance in the nineteenth century, looking to redeem the loss of reputation and abuse of knowledge. Philology, in this respect, is an umbrella term encompassing different ways to understand the text.[7] It is vital to continue defining the concept of philology because, in the very essence of its being — *philo* and *logia* — it allows many different approaches to understand and love words. There is no reason that philology cannot exist and thrive in the twenty-first century. On the contrary, philology's growth to include the knowledge of the twentieth-century hints at a continued future.

In a way, the chapters in this edition mirror the 'old-fashioned' approaches (rhetorical analyses, paleography, etymology). However, they also show what has been learned in the last century (cognitive and social linguistics, textual interpretation with critical theory, and culture). The goal of this edition is simple. It grew from the Germanic Philology sessions at the Modern Language Association and provides an overview of some of the ongoing philological research. It ensures that Germanic philology (with a healthy dose of criticism of its tainted past) has a future.

Since this book resulted from presentations on Germanic philology at the MLA, regarding this publication, we found that the MLA never initiated a Germanic linguistics project as an edited edition.[8] In fact, in the English-

[7] In his essay, Nikolaus Wegmann defines philology by way of Nietzsche: "Nietzsche employs an ambivalent neologism—*vielspältig*, multi-columned—to indicate that philology's traditional heterogeneity comprises things that are not only diverse but ultimately incongruous" ("Philology - An Update," in *The Future of Philology: Proceedings of the 11th Annual Columbia University German Graduate Student Conference*, ed. Hannes Bajohr et al. (Newcastle-upon-Tyne, UK: Cambridge Scholars Publisher, 2014), 28). It seems that incongruity and ambiguity define philology very well.

[8] The MLA has published many editions and anthologies between 2005 and 2020, mainly dedicated to English literature and Critical Theory.

speaking market (specifically North America, Great Britain, and Australia), hardly any edited volumes on Germanic philology have been published in the last fifteen years.[9]

However, several edited volumes have been published in Germany in the previous two decades, with Germanic philology as their topic.[10] On the other hand, many books by individual authors in the Anglophone market discuss general or specific aspects of Germanic philology. Often, these books have as subject the history of a specific Germanic language in its entirety,[11] or they discuss particular elements of a Germanic language.[12] Unfortunately, only a handful of edited volumes were published between 2005 and 2020. These are, however, either dedicated to one topic[13] or so-called Handbooks, i.e., large-scale anthologies about a general topic.[14] The closest publication related to our project is a series of monographs by Routledge called *Routledge Studies in*

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[9] Although English is a Germanic language, our intention from the beginning was to exclude contributions that dealt with English directly due to the over-emphasis on English-language studies in linguistics (and in many other academic disciplines). We believe it is essential to provide different philological approaches for various Germanic varieties, including English, but not as the primary research target in this volume.

[10] These are so-called *Festschriften* (books that honor respected scholars). They are usually edited volumes and consist of contributions by the scholar's colleagues, students, friends, etc. An example would be Stefan J Schierholz et al., *Die deutsche Sprache in der Gegenwart: Festschrift für Dieter Cherubim zum 60. Geburtstag* (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 2001).

[11] For example Joseph Salmons, *A History of German: What the Past Reveals about Today's Language* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018); Ruth H. Sanders, *German: Biography of a Language* (New York; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012); Neal Karlen, *The Story of Yiddish* (New York: Harper Collins, 2014), http://rbdigital.oneclickdigital.com; Christopher Young and Thomas Gloning, *A History of the German Language through Texts* (London: Routledge, 2004), https://www.worldcat.org/title/history-of-the-german-language-through-texts/oclc/931149543&referer=brief_results.

[12] For example Östen Dahl, *Grammaticalization in the North: Noun Phrase Morphosyntax in Scandinavian Vernaculars*, Studies in Diversity Linguistics 6 (Berlin: Language Science Press, 2015); Anne Breitbarth, *The History of Low German Negation* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014); Christopher D. Sapp, *The Verbal Complex in Subordinate Clauses from Medieval to Modern German*, Linguistik Aktuell 173 (Amsterdam; Philadelphia: John Benjamins Pub. Co., 2011).

[13] Valentine A. Pakis, *Perspectives on the Old Saxon Heliand: Introductory and Critical Essays, with an Edition of the Leipzig Fragment* (West Virginia University Press, 2010).

[14] Michael T. Putnam and B. Richard Page, eds., *The Cambridge Handbook of Germanic Linguistics*, Cambridge Handbooks in Literature and Linguistics (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 2020); Claire Louise Bowern and Bethwyn Evans, eds., *The Routledge Handbook of Historical Linguistics*, Routledge Handbooks in Linguistics (London and New York: Routledge, 2019).

PAGES MISSING

FROM THIS FREE SAMPLE

Index

A

Abeles, Simon, 99, 100, 102
agender. *See* gender
alliteration, 8
Altertumswissenschaften, 178, 180, 181, 193, 200
Altphilologie, 181
Amish. *See* heritage varieties
analogy, xxix, 15, 17, 31, 36, 37, 39, 40, 81, 82, 189
androcentric, 113, 115
animate-to-animate transfer. *See* metaphor
anthropology, xxvii, xxxi, xxxv, 19, 182, 183
anti-Jewish. *See* anti-Semitism
antiphrasis, 51
antiquarianism, xxxii, 183
anti-Semitism, xxx, 92, 94, 98, 100, 105, 106, 107
antonomasia. *See* metonymy
Aristotle, 31, 36, 76, 101, 103, 104
art history, 183
Ashkenazi, 93, 96, 97
assimilation, 11, 105
authorial intent, 44, 52

B

Begriffsgeschichte, 18
Beowulf, xxviii, 12, 37, 40, 42, 49, 51, 52
Bildung, xxxii, 184, 186, 187, 193, 195
biological gender. *See* gender
blood libel, 106
Boeckh, August, 182, 184, 185, 193

C

calamo currente. *See* scribal error
Carolingian script, 66, 69, 71
case syncretism, xxxi, 138, 140, 144, 149, 163
Christian Yiddishist movement, 92, 96, 107
Christianization, 6, 98
cisgender. *See* gender
Codex Ambrosianus, 10
Codex Argenteus, 10
conversion, 6, 10, 104, 105, 107
  forced, 100, 102, 105
courtly love, 81, 86, 87, 88
courtly poetry, xxx, 88
Crimean Gothic, xxvi, 9, 10, 24
critical theory, xix, xxi, xxxii

D

dawnsong, 77, 78, 79
De l'Allemagne, 180
de Staël, Germaine, 180, 185, 192
digital philology, 56, 57, 61
digraphs. *See* scribal error
dittography, 69

E

emotive language, 103, 106
Encyclopaedia Brittanica, 14, 22
equity, xxx
etymology, xxi, xxxii, 49
eugenics, xx
euphemism, 44, 51

Exeter Book, xxviii, 60
extralinguistic criteria. *See* extralinguistic factors
extralinguistic factors, xxvii, xxxiii, xxxiv, 3, 5, 9, 13, 15

F

feminine. *See* gender
Fettmilch uprising, 94, 98
Fornaldarsögur, 12

G

gender, xxx, 141
  agender, 114, 116, 118, 129
  biological gender, 113, 114, 115
  cisgender, 114, 118, 125, 129
  feminine, xvii, 76, 81, 113, 114, 115, 130, 146, 155, 159, 160, 164, 169
  gender assignment, 114, 115
  gender bias, 113
  gender equality, 116, 133, 134
  gender gap, 116
  gender identity, 113, 114, 125, 128
  gendered language, xxvi, xxx, 112, 114, 129, 131
  gender-exclusive, 112, 114, 120, 123, 126, 128
  gender-fair, 112, 114, 118, 123, 126, 128, 130, 131, 132
  gender-inclusive, xxx, 112, 114, 117, 118, 120, 123, 124, 126, 128, 129, 130, 131, 132, 133
  gendering, 132
  gender-neutral, 112, 116, 117, 118, 123, 124, 126, 128, 129, 130, 131, 132, 133
  grammatical gender, 113, 114, 115, 152, 155
  intersex, 113, 114, 116, 118, 129
  linguistic gender equality, 116, 134
  male-female binary, xxx, 114, 116
  masculine, xxx, 112, 113, 114, 115, 117, 118, 123, 124, 126, 127, 128, 129, 131, 132, 133, 134
  neuter, xvii, 113, 114, 130, 155, 156, 157, 164, 169
  non-binary, xxx, 113, 114, 116, 117, 118, 129
  non-gender-specific, 115
  transgender, 113, 114, 116
Gendersternchen, 116, 136
German Romanticism, xv, 197

H

Hebraeisch-Teutsche, 95
Hêliand, xxviii, 6, 7, 8, 38, 39, 43, 44, 47, 48, 49, 52, 61
Herder, Johann Gottfried, xx, xxiii, xxiv, xxxii, 179, 181, 186, 187, 188, 189, 190, 191, 192, 193, 194, 195, 197, 198
heritage, 144
heritage varieties, xxx, xxxi, 138, 139, 140, 142, 144, 146, 148, 149, 152, 155
  Amish, xxx
  Kansas Volga German, 138, 145
  Pennsylvania German, 138, 142, 144, 145
  Texas German, xxx, 138, 144
Heyne, Christian Gottlob, xxxii, 180, 181, 182
Hildebrandslied, xxviii, xxix, 56, 57, 58, 59, 60, 61, 62, 64, 66, 71, 72
  transmission history, 72

historical linguistics, xix, xxi, 2, 3, 14, 15, 18
history of philology, xxxiv, 179, 197, 198
Hugo von Montfort, xxix, 75, 76, 77, 88, 89
humanist studies, 183, 184
Humboldt, Wilhelm von, 178, 184, 193
hyperbaton, 34
hyperbole, 51
hypernymy, 48, 51
hyponymy, 48, 51

I

inanimate-to-inanimate transfer. *See* metaphor
Indiana German
  project, xxvi, 148
  variety, xxxi, 139, 144, 146, 148, 150
Indiana German Dialect Project. *See* Indiana German Project
insertions. *See* scribal error
Institutum Judaicum et Muhammedicum, 107
insular script, 56, 60, 68
intersex. *See* gender
intertextuality, xxvii
Íslendingasögur, 12

J

Jefferson, Thomas, 185
Jewish oath, 99
Juedisch-Teutsche, 95

K

Kabbalistic writings, 96
Kansas Volga German. *See* heritage varieties
kenning, xxvii, xxviii, 28, 29, 30, 32, 33, 34, 36, 37, 38, 39, 42, 43, 44, 48, 49, 50, 52
Koiné, 9
koinéization, 5, 158, 161, 165
Kurtzhandl, Löbl, 93, 99, 100, 101, 102, 103, 105, 106

L

Lakoff and Johnson, xxviii, 38, 48
language death, xxxi, 142, 161
language history, xxvi, 2, 3, 8, 11, 15, 19
liberal arts education, 184
liberal learning, xxxi, 179, 195, 196, 198
ligatures. *See* scribal error
linguistic relativism, 113
literary analysis, xxxii
literary history, 3, 11, 13, 14, 17, 20
litotes, 51

M

male-female binary. *See* gender
marginalia, 61
marginalized languages, xx
marginalized people, xxxiv
Marsh, James, xxxii, 179, 186, 187, 190, 191, 192, 194, 195, 196, 197, 198
masculine. *See* gender
Medienverschiebung, 82
metaphor, xxvii, xxviii, 28, 30, 31, 32, 33, 34, 35, 36, 38, 39, 40, 41, 43, 44, 45, 48, 50, 52
  analogical metaphor, 35, 36, 38, 39, 40, 41, 47, 48
  animate transfer, 35, 39, 41, 43

conceptual metaphor, 16
inanimate transfer, 35, 38, 44
objectification, 35, 36, 38, 39, 42
personification, 35, 36, 37, 38, 42, 43
qualitative metaphor, 35, 36, 39, 41, 43
spatial metaphor, 41
metonymy, xxvii, 28, 30, 31, 32, 33, 34, 35, 39, 44, 45, 48, 50, 51, 52
abstract-conceptual association, 45, 46
antonomasia, 45, 49, 50
metonymic association, 45
pars pro toto, 45, 48, 49
physical-spatial association, 45, 46
synecdoche, 31, 33, 38, 45, 48, 49
totum pro parte, 48, 49
minnesang, xxix, 77
minority groups, xxxiv, 93, 107, 108
minority status, of a language, xxix, 107
misogyny, xxxv
Montfort. *See* Hugo von Montfort

N

Napoleonic Wars, 180
neogrammarians, 5
neologisms, xxi, xxx, 117
neuter. *See* gender
Nietzsche, Friedrich, xix, xxi, 184
non-gender-specific. *See* gender
noun periphrasis, xxvii, 28, 29, 30, 31, 32, 34, 35, 37, 41, 42, 43, 45, 46, 48, 49, 50, 51, 52, 53

O

objectification. *See* metaphor
onomastics, 9

P

paleography, xxi, xxv, xxviii, 56, 57, 58, 60, 72
pars pro toto. *See* metonymy
Passover, 94, 106
patronym, 50, 51
penknife erasure. *See* scribal error
Pennsylvania German. *See* heritage varieties
periodization, xxvi, xxvii, xxxiii, 2, 3, 4, 5, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 20, 21, 22
personification. *See* metaphor
philosophy, xxvi, 3, 21, 107
photography, 57, 61
prescriptivism, 130, 131, 133
Processus Inquisitorius, 100, 101, 102, 103, 104, 105, 106
Prolegomena ad Homerum, 181
psycholinguistics, 114

R

racism, xxi, xxiv, xxxv
religious criticism, 183
religious intolerance, xxix
rhetorical analysis, xxvii, xxviii
rhetorical modality, 34
rhetorical trope, 34, 50
Ripley, George, xxxii, 179, 186, 187, 188, 189, 190, 191, 192, 193, 194, 197, 198
Romantic idealism, 187

S

Schlegel, Friedrich, 182, 193
Schleiermacher, Friedrich, 185, 193

scribal error, xxviii, 56, 60, 61
calamo currente, 61, 62, 64, 67, 69, 70, 72
digraphs, 61, 65, 66, 71
insertions, 61, 62
ligatures, 61, 65, 66
penknife erasure, 61, 62, 64, 70
stains, 61
scribal practices, 56, 70, 71, 72
Second Sound Shift, 59
semantic transfer, xxvii, 28, 32, 33, 34, 35, 36, 39, 40, 43, 44, 48, 53
skaldic writing, xxvii, 30, 44, 52
Social Darwinism, xx
social equality, 124
social history, xxvi, xxvii, 3, 8, 17, 18, 21
sociolinguistics, xxi, xxv, xxx, xxxi, 112, 119, 132, 133, 139, 140, 146, 148, 151, 153, 154
sociology, xxxv
Sonderegger, Stefan, 4
Stabreim. *See* alliteration
stains. *See* scribal error
substantivization of adjectives, 117
substantivization of participles, 117
substantivization of verbs, 117
Synecdoche. *See* metonymy

T

Talmud, 96, 102
Texas German, 144, 148, *See* heritage varieties
totem pro parte, 45, *See* metonymy
trans. *See* gender
transcendentalism, 179, 186, 187, 188, 197, 200
transculturalism, xxiv, xxv, 182
tropes, 28, 30, 31, 32, 34, 50
two-case system, 144, 145, 146

V

Vayber-taytsh, 95
Viduvilt, 94, 97
Vom Geist der Ebräischen Poesie, 186, 193
Vossian antonomasia. *See* metonomy

W

white supremacy, xxi
Wolf, Friedrich August, xxxii, 181, 182, 184, 185, 193
Wolkenstein, Oswald von, 88
Wulfila, 9, 10

Y

Yiddish, xxii, xxvi, xxix, xxx, 20, 91, 92, 93, 94, 95, 96, 97, 98, 99, 100, 101, 102, 103, 104, 105, 106, 107