

Call for Proposals:

Voice, Tone, and Affect in US Literature and (Popular) Culture

Special Issue in the *European Journal of American Studies*

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While literary studies has traditionally analyzed its objects in terms of specific genres, forms, or modes, this special issue wants to tap into more recent impulses to center sensory and affective experience in literature by scholars such as Erica Fretwell, Hsuan L. Hsu, Sianne Ngai, Sunny Xiang, and Michael Dango. Often, such approaches work with more ambiguous, fuzzy, and mobile categories, including moods, vibes, or specific ‘aesthetics,’ all of which hinge on the emotional or affective regimes produced by literary texts. Simultaneously, such a focus on the sensory and the emotional has also fueled recent scholarship on film, TV, video games, podcasts, and other forms of popular culture (e.g. by Beth Carroll, Hunter Hargaves, Aubrey Anable, and Alyn Euritt). In order to expand on and bring together these debates, this special issue proposes to focus on voice and tone as, arguably, the primary ways in which literary and cultural artifacts create and regulate sensory and affective environments. To probe such dynamics, we suggest understanding narrative or poetic voice and tone not only as narratological or formal concepts but as expressions of sound and affect: as imagining and creating distinct atmospheres and moods and in turn inflecting how a text sounds and ‘feels.’

While voice and tone shape the poetics and politics of literary and cultural artifacts in myriad ways, we are especially interested in submissions that bring together voice and tone with questions of sense perception and/or affect in a variety of different media. Potential contributions are thus encouraged to probe how voice and tone are tied to the senses through the affective regimes that they form: how they negotiate intimacy and distance, how they orient readers or audiences toward a text, or how they encourage or resist specific feelings and emotions. Submissions may focus on historical or contemporary examples of how voice, tone, and affect converge in US literature and wider (popular) culture. We welcome case studies analyzing individual works or more theoretically driven articles, which could tackle questions including but not limited to:

- The relation between certain text types/genres/media and a specific (literary, poetic, musical, auditory, etc.) tone, voice, or mood; the (affective, tonal, etc.) affordances of these different forms of literary or cultural artifacts
- Specific modes or genres (e.g. sentimentalism, melodrama) and their sensory and affective regimes as reflected through voice and tone
- How voice or tone are used to ‘move’ audiences/readers within US culture, possibly to propel them towards political action (e.g. in social media or wider digital culture)
- Involved vs. distanced (or even silenced) voices; collective voices (e.g. in first-person plural fiction or communal storytelling)
- Impersonal voices vs. historically situated concepts of voice and tone in terms of gendered, racialized, or disabled bodies or in specifically politicized environments (e.g. in times of war, late capitalism, or the climate crisis)
- Dissonances, e.g. via multiple voices vying for narrative authority or in terms of how the tone of a text might (not) fit its presumed affective appeal (e.g., outrage expressed via anger vs. lamentation vs. resignation etc.)
- Oral literary cultures and oral performances of literature (prose, drama, poetry)
- Voice, tone, and affect in media like film, TV, games, podcasts, and other forms of popular culture that produce voice(s) on multiple acoustic levels

- The acousmatic voice as a transmedial phenomenon in books, films, audio recordings, video games, etc.
- Listening to tone and voice as methodological impulses for approaching cultural and literary artifacts

Please send proposals of up to 300 words, along with brief biographical information, to annika.schadewaldt@uni-leipzig.de by December 1, 2024. We will confirm accepted proposals by December 15; full articles (of about 8,000 words) will be due by June 30, 2025. All articles will then undergo a double-blind peer review process. Publication of the special issue in the *European Journal of American Studies* is scheduled for early 2027.

For any questions or inquiries, feel free to contact us at the above email.