



KEYNOTE LECTURE

HAUN SAUSSY

Air, Freedom, and Finitude: Some Paths of Association

A proverb has it that fish are unaware of water. (Has anyone ever asked a fish?) Nowadays we become increasingly conscious of the air we breathe, as it becomes increasingly hot and ever more charged with carbon dioxide. There is a history to our consciousness of the air, which can be traced through lexicography, rhetoric, and philosophical-political imagination. The air, the atmosphere, the ambiance, are too pervasive to become objects of awareness, so much a necessary medium of our existence, so indifferent an externality, that they fail to be accounted for—until a narrative lack makes itself felt. Literary history shows this happening repeatedly, and, it is argued, not by chance.