

CORRIGENDUM

Corrigendum to: Alberto Castelli, “Words fail us: The crisis of language,”
Verbum – Analecta Neolatina 27(1) (2026), 7–32.
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In the published article, several passages require additional source attribution. In addition, one passage reproduces a source almost verbatim without a reference, and several quotations or source details were taken from primary sources via Shane Weller’s *Language and Negativity in European Modernism* without identifying Weller as the intermediary source. The following corrections supply the omitted attributions and correct the relevant source details. Page numbers refer to the pagination of the published article.

Corrections

1. Page 7 (Abstract)

The final sentence of the Abstract should be replaced by the following:

Following George Steiner’s account, as discussed by Weller (2018: 15), modernity is marked by the breaking of the “contract between language and reality”; at the same time, “the only hope of making contact with reality” lies in a vigilant distrust of language.

The two quoted formulations from Steiner are cited here through Weller (2018: 15).

2. Page 8, note 1

The note should be replaced by the following:

A must-read text for those interested in the topic is Shane Weller (2018). As can also be read in the introduction to Weller’s book, the text maps the development of a distinctive strand of European literary modernism that arose from a radical reconsideration of late nineteenth-century skepticism toward language. Beginning with an examination of the literary and philosophical roots of this skeptical tradition, it goes on to trace the diverse expressions of linguistic

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negativism found in the works of interwar and postwar European classic writers such as Franz Kafka and Samuel Beckett. Language is incapable of articulating what, in Beckett's words, is a "humanity in ruins".

3. Page 8

The Mallarmé quotation was taken through Weller (2018: 16), and the published citation "(1982: 51)" is not the source of that quotation. The citation should therefore read:

(Mallarmé 2007: 205, as cited in Weller 2018: 16)

The immediately following discussion linking Mallarmé's formulation to Saussure's arbitrariness of the linguistic sign and to discourse that fails to express objects also follows Weller (2018: 16) and should carry the same attribution.

4. Pages 8–9

The passage beginning "The general sense of skepticism and the particular one toward language ..." and ending "... the socio-political conditions from which it emerged" closely follows Weller's formulation and argumentative sequence. The passage should be attributed to Weller (2018: 2). A citation "(cf. Weller 2018: 2)" should be added at the end of the passage.

5. Page 13

The sentence "Language is then inadequate to map out reality because language suppresses differences, it ignores singularities" combines formulations from Weller's discussion of Hofmannsthal on two consecutive pages. The sentence should be followed by "(cf. Weller 2018: 21–22)."

6. Pages 15–16

The chronology and the intermediary source should be corrected. The passage containing "My body puts me on guard against each word" is from a letter of December 1910, not from June 1921. It was taken through Weller's discussion on p. 62. The citation should read "(Kafka 1970: 70, as cited in Weller 2018: 62)."

The immediately following passage on the "three/four impossibilities" of writing is from a separate letter of June 1921 and was taken through Weller's discussion on p. 66. Its citation should read "(Kafka 1958: 337–338, as cited in Weller

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2018: 66).” The two letters should not be presented as a single chronological sequence.

7. Page 16

The quotation from Beckett’s letter, the biographical framing that it was written “shortly after his return from a six-month trip to Nazi Germany,” and the interpretation of language as an obstruction or veil were taken through Weller (2018: 1). The Beckett quotation should be cited as “(Beckett 2009: 518–520, as cited in Weller 2018: 1),” and Weller (2018: 1) should also be cited for the surrounding biographical and interpretive framing.

8. Page 20

The two sentences beginning “Michel Foucault is sometimes thought of as the philosopher of the French Structuralist movement ...” reproduce Hayden White’s wording. The passage should have been presented as a direct quotation from White. It should read:

“Michel Foucault is sometimes thought of as the philosopher of the French Structuralist movement, the philosophical counterpart of Claude Lévi-Strauss in ethnology and Jacques Lacan in psychology. Foucault shares with Lévi-Strauss and Lacan an interest in the deep structures of human consciousness, a conviction that study of such deep structures must begin with an analysis of language” (White 1978: 230).

White (1978) should be added to the References as indicated below.

9. Pages 20–21

The association of Mallarmé, Kafka, and Beckett with Hassan’s “anti-literature,” together with the quotation “the negative echo of language, autodestructive, demonic, nihilist” and the page reference to Hassan (1971: 248), was taken through Weller (2018: 12). The citation should therefore read “(Hassan 1971: 248, as cited in Weller 2018: 12),” and Weller (2018: 12) should be acknowledged as the intermediary source for the framing of this passage.

10. Page 28 (Conclusion)

The sentence beginning “Rooted in the atrocities of the twentieth century ...” and ending “... amid dark and troubled times” paraphrases the concluding for-

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mulation of Weller's Introduction. A citation "(cf. Weller 2018: 13)" should be added at the end of this sentence.

References cited in this Corrigendum

- Beckett, S. (2009): Letter to Axel Kaun, July 9, 1937. In: M. Fehsenfeld & L. Overbeck (eds.) *The Letters of Samuel Beckett, Volume I: 1929–1940*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. 518–520.
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- Weller, S. (2018): *Language and Negativity in European Modernism*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. <https://doi.org/10.1017/9781108566001>