

Theory/Teoria. Perspectives on Literary Criticism and Comparative Literature

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After the so-called “end of the great narratives” – according to someone synonymous with the sunset of modernity – the theoretical frameworks founded on the concept of totality have given way to a multitude of theoretical perspectives, often characterized by a certain degree of autonomy and isolation. This fragmentation has given birth to, since the end of the Seventies, new fields of study and encouraged a tendency towards a methodological relativism, without, however, creating a real debate over proposals and outcomes, at least in the field of *Literary Theory*. There was no lack of attempts to declare the very necessity of “theory” useless and inconclusive, particularly when the term assumed multipurpose and (perhaps) dispersive meanings.

Consequently, our goal, grounded in the necessity to historicize the most recent theoretical perspectives, is wondering whether and how literary theory – to be understood also as a dialectical moment within the broader critical theory – live (or survive) in the works of contemporary intellectuals. Is literary theory still necessary as a monitoring tool of literary criticism? Is it still a genre *per se* or persists only in hybrid forms, converging with larger cultural discourses? Is it in some way part of a resistance against the erasing of philosophical perspectives on literature?

On one hand we are looking for articles that will tackle these questions, by reflecting on texts, debates, and theoretical frameworks seen as particularly innovative and significant (also in order to bring them to the attention of Italian academics). On the other hand, we are looking for articles that aim to reflect on the status of literary theory, on its importance and its destiny.

Sections

- **Critical Theory.** We are interested in theoretical approaches and/or in historical-conceptual surveys aimed at verifying the persistence and the potential actuality of a critical reflection on literature, on its status and condition. In particular, we welcome articles on the following topics: materialist and neo-/post-Marxist critical theory; French-derived literary theory; the latest post-structuralist and deconstructionist outcomes; new psychoanalytic interpretations of literature; neo-hermeneutics and the new frontiers of reception theory.

- **Cultural Studies.** We welcome articles, principally those with a theoretical component, devoted to the macro-galaxy of cultural studies, as seen as tightly connected with a critical approach to literature. We will take into

consideration articles concerning Gender Studies, Postcolonial Studies, Disability Studies, Food Studies, Animal Studies, Environmental Studies, etc., as well as articles aimed at analyzing, with a laudatory or critical intention, the ideological status of the *Studies* and its effect on literary criticism.

- ***Sociology of Literature, Media Studies & Material Studies.*** For a long time, Theory questioned the mediations that preside over the relations between literature and society. Sociology of Literature interrogated both the social representations given by literary texts as well as the impact of the publishing and literary system on historical-social contexts. We are interested in theoretical analysis devoted to the impact of traditional (press, radio, television) and digital media on the “system of literature”, and on the impact of technology on the literary imaginary.

- ***Translation Studies & Transnational Studies.*** The theoretical debate of the last few decades, on the one hand, has highlighted the crucial role of translation and of translated literature (traditionally considered to be less than the so-called “original” one), and on the other hand has underlined the importance of literature’s transnational circulation, opposing, among other things, the idea of a literary history on a “national” base. We welcome theoretical articles (or articles devoted to the role of theory) in the following fields: Translation Studies and, more in general, the reflection on traductology developed – in different ways – in European and extra-European countries; transnational approaches to literature in a comparative or sociological (ex. sociology of translation) framework; relations between literature and linguistics with regard to the study of literary texts in different languages; the role of digital medias in the theories concerning Translation and Transnational Studies.

- ***Narrative Theory.*** In the last few decades classic narratology, often reconsidered in a cognitivist and transmedial perspective, has experienced a significant comeback. The theoretical debate, also in the light of reception theory, focused on the redefinition of some key concepts, from the functions of the narrator to the different methods of focalization. The *narrative turn* showed in fact the relevance of the narrative discourse as an epistemological tool that is transversal to literary genres and research fields (psychology, pedagogy, law, medicine). We welcome articles that investigate the persistence of narratology’s traditional tools, as well as in connection with the main tendencies of contemporary narrative (ex. *autofiction, biofiction, non-fiction novel*); articles that investigate the redefinition of narrative techniques from a transmedial perspective (cinema, tv shows, video games, social networks); articles that trace the most recent developments of neuro-narratology as a transdisciplinary instrument for analyzing narrative.

- *New Lyric Studies*. At the beginning of the new century, we witnessed a *lyric turn* in the study of poetry: performativity, narratology, trans-historicism, philosophy of literature, and neo-historicism are some of the main lines of study that are characterizing this theoretical *Renaissance*. Nevertheless, (lyric) poetry remains an elusive category: can stylistic and formalist criticism give a solid definition of lyric poetry? Can contemporary neo-narratology offer new tools to investigate the narrative forms of poetry? Can a neo-romantic paradigm still be crucial to investigating the “lyric subject”? Finally, can textual linguistics have a hermeneutical impact on poetry studies? We welcome articles that investigate, on a theoretical level, morphological and hermeneutical issues in exemplary texts of Western lyric poetry. These articles can investigate the performative dimension of lyric poetry, its historical-theoretical genesis, and its contamination by other literary genres.

Proposals of about **500 words**, in **Italian or English**, may be submitted through teoria.statusquaestionis@gmail.com by **March 15, 2022**, together with a bio-bibliographical profile. Proposals will be read and evaluated by April 15, 2022. The articles will be submitted by April 2023. They will be evaluated through a peer-review process, and then they will be published in a monographic number of the journal [Status Quaestionis](#) (Sapienza University of Rome) in June 2024.