

**Claudia Hillebrandt, Sonja Klimek, Ralph Müller, William Waters,  
Rüdiger Zymner**

**Theories of Lyric  
(Abstract)**

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The general theory of lyric is a developing field of study. Approaches to lyric are, however, reputedly stuck in »the impasse of an impressionistic and narrowly formalistic critical debate on the genre« (Müller-Zetzelmann/Rubik 2005, 8). Such claims may be paired with a call for raising the theory of lyric to higher levels (cf. Culler 2015, 2sq.; Zymner 2009, 8sq.; Gibson 2015, 1sq.), including the proposal of formulating, in analogy to the well-established field of narratology, a formal ›lyricology‹ (›lyricologie« or ›Lyrikologie«, as it is called in French and German respectively; cf. Zymner 2009, 7–9; Rodriguez 2009; von Ammon 2015). More particularly, it has been suggested that parts of lyric theory should be reconceptualized with the help of narrative theories (cf. Müller-Zetzelmann 2000, Müller-Zetzelmann/Rubik 2005).

However, the influx of concepts from different theories into the analysis of lyric entails some problems. It appears that the practices of analyzing lyric have become heavily influenced by generic models and approaches drawn from the theories of drama and narrative (for critique, cf. Culler 2015, 108–112; Hempfer 2014, 16–21). There are various issues here; for instance, one may ask whether the lyric concepts of voice or persona can be grasped in terms of fictional characters or narrators, or whether lyric typically develops structures that are similar to narrative *discours* and story. More importantly, narratological approaches tend to see lyric as a defective or residual form of the narrative mode (cf. Hempfer 2014, 19–21; Hillebrandt 2015).

Various theoretical issues in the theory of lyric have been taken up with renewed vigor in the last years, including several proposals with respect to the definition of the genre (for proposals, cf. Zymner 2009; Hempfer 2014; Prinz/Mandelbaum 2015), its function (cf. Rodriguez 2003; Zymner 2013; Lamarque 2015), and the modelling of the voice (cf. Rabaté 2013) and address (cf. Waters 2003; Culler 2015); other work has questioned the status of lyric altogether (cf. Jackson/Prins 2014).

Recent theoretical proposals do not focus on the catalogue of descriptive terminology (verse, metre etc.), but put particular emphasis on the most basic features and constituents of lyric. This growing scholarly engagement with lyric on a theoretical level raises the issue of defining the macro-genre and its ways of constructing text worlds with respect to the poem's speaker and addressee. In this volume established and upcoming theorists of lyric have been asked to outline their theoretical positions with respect to the following questions: What is the relationship between signs, words and world(s) in lyric or poetry? Does a poem's way of signifying constitute a particular way of creating textual worlds, and how can we describe these worlds? How do authors and readers deal with these worlds? These questions have been addressed by various critics in different traditions of scholarship; however, most studies seem to concentrate on the discourses in their own languages, only occasionally taking note of what has been done in other traditions of literary criticism. This is the main impetus of gathering scholars from different traditions (›national« traditions, for want of a better word) of scholarly engagement with the theory of the lyric. As a consequence, these statements are not entirely new contributions, but present rather an argumentative overview of work that has been done in the

past, by outlining possibly divergent opinions about unsolved issues that continue to influence the debate. In the remainder of this introduction, we will address only four issues that are of immediate relevance to this special volume.

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