- Call for Articles

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Special Issue »Literary Theory and the Network Turn«

Within the past few decades, key developments in literary theory have been shaped by different cultural turns (e. g. the spatial turn, the visual turn, the translational turn, cf. Bachmann-Medick 2016). The implications of the most recent one – the network turn –, heralded by Ruth Ahnert et al. in their recent book The Network Turn: Changing Perspectives in the Humanities, however, still need to be discussed. Taking the observation that »we live in a networked world« as starting point, Ahnert et al. aim to promote new modes of network analysis, which they define as »a set of practices and discourses that sit at the interface of the natural sciences, humanities, social sciences, computer science, and design« (Ahnert 2020, 4). Moving beyond this approach, which is geared towards »bringing together computational tools for quantitative network analysis, together with theories, discourses, and applied techniques from the social sciences, the humanities, visual design, and art practice« (ibid.), JLT invites contributions that discuss potential implications of ›the network turn‹ on methods and theories in literary studies. While we welcome contributions which connect to current approaches that combine micro- and macroanalyses (cf. Jockers 2013), the thematic spectrum envisaged for this issue is not restricted to the impact of DH-driven methods on literary theory, nor is it limited to discussions of the fruitfulness of actor-network theory for literary studies. Instead, the aim is to explore the potential of a ›network turn‹ at a broader scope and discuss various networked approaches that might aid the advancement of (current approaches in) literary theory. Or, to adopt Rita Felski's questions that she poses when discussing the ›value‹ of Latourian thought for literary studies, »What duels, rivalries, appropriations, or love affairs will ensue?« (2015, 737)

It seems commonplace that the complexity of literary theory requires a networked approach. This is confirmed by new areas of research prompted by bridging disciplinary boundaries, such as cognitive literary studies, literary animal studies or ecocriticism. If innovation in literary theory requires collaboration and exchange of knowledge and practices across a broad range of different disciplines – an approach that connects, but is not restricted, to the notion of ›travelling concepts‹ (Bal 2002) –, what is gained by a new emphasis on ›networks‹ and ›network theory‹ (in opposition to, or in connection with, approaching literature and literary theory as ›discourse‹, ›field‹, or ›system‹)?

Contributions might address (but are not limited to) the following questions:

- To what extent can new modes of network analysis advance literary theory?
- How does ›network theory‹ connect to and exceed more established transdisciplinary approaches or frameworks based, for instance, on ›intersectionality‹ or ›travelling concepts‹?

- What are the new geographies of scholarship and novel »trading zones« that emerge from networked approaches which draw on »interactional expertise« (Ahnert 2020, 91)?
- What are (conceptual) nodes and edges that define connections within networks that can be used to explain (historical) trends and developments in literatures and how can these be theorized?
- What is the specific gain of approaching literature and literary texts as networks?
- What are the methodological tools required for a networked approach in literary studies; what challenges and obstacles arise; and how can they be solved, overcome, or, if causing necessary and productive frictions, sustained?

We welcome contributions from literary studies and neighbouring disciplines that address these (and further) questions related to ›the network turn‹ and its implications for literary theory.

Contributions should not exceed 50,000 characters (including blanks) in length and have to be submitted by 15 January 2023. Please submit your contribution electronically via our website www.jltonline.de under »Articles«.

Articles are chosen for publication by an international advisory board in a double-blind review process.

For further information about JLT and to view the submission guidelines, please visit www.jltonline.de/index.php/articles (»About JLT« and »For Authors«) or contact the editorial office at jlt@phil.uni-goettingen.de.

SUBMISSIONS THAT DO NOT FOCUS ON ONE OF OUR SPECIAL TOPICS CAN BE SUBMITTED CONTINUOUSLY VIA OUR WEBSITE.

JLT aims to publish work on fundamental issues in methodology and the construction of theories and concepts, as well as articles on particular literary theories. Case studies, i.e. studies on specific authors, works, or problems of literary history, are accepted only if they adopt a predominantly systematic perspective, contribute to the reconstruction of the history of literary theory, or pursue innovative methods. Moreover, the Journal of Literary Theory contains work reviewing and outlining trends of theoretical debates in literary theory and related disciplines.

Please contact the editorial office if you have further questions.

References

Ahnert, Ruth, et al., The Network Turn. Changing Perspectives in the Humanities, Cambridge et al. 2020.
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