

# DIALOGUES BETWEEN “THINKING” AND “POETRY” AND THEORETICAL-LITERARY HYBRIDS

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*“Literature” and “theory” are historically determined and interdependent cultural entities. They were already linked in early romanticism, and became even more so in modernism and postmodernism/post-structuralism. The characteristic form of their interaction is theoretical-literary hybrids. In the context of the postmodern delegitimization and redistribution of knowledge, and the dispersion of textuality, the processes of the literarization of theory and the theorization of literature are evident in these hybrids. However, the dialogues between “thinking” and “poetry” have, since antiquity, developed many other forms and genres. Although “thinking” and “poetry” have common attributes, they still remain irreducibly different.*

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## **Dialogue, Friction, Difference**

In general, writers and philosophers have inspired each other since early times and exchanged ideas, structures, exempla, and images. Literary language has managed to absorb even the discourse of science, although this was regarded as its antipode. Strniša, for example, formed his poetic “universe” according to the models of the modern physics of Einstein and Heisenberg and developed its own particular fractal poetic (*Vesolje*). In his *Cosmicomics*, Calvino translated cosmological and evolutionary theories into stories much like fables but imbued with a contemporary sensibility and irony. There are even more examples of dialogue between literature and philosophy, two supposedly more closely related discourses: Homer – Plato, Spinoza – Goethe, Schelling – Coleridge, Schopenhauer – Borges, Nietzsche – Dostoevsky, Dostoevsky – Bakhtin, Artaud – Foucault or Celan – Derrida;<sup>1</sup> in the Slovene sphere: Pirjevec – Smole, Anaximander – Dekleva,

Cankar – Hribar, and others. A telling example of the reciprocal inspiration between thought and literary art is Heidegger's friendship with Char: first Heidegger developed his thinking through reading Hölderlin's poetry, then Heidegger himself influenced Char, and with his own poetic idiolect Char finally marked an entire cycle of Heidegger's late poems (cf. Worton).

For a long time, creators of literature and those who write critically or theoretically about their work have also cooperated, or at least cohabitated, as one cannot exist without the other in the literary and media system. Literary critics, historians, and theoreticians have forged terms (or designations) for artistic movements or generations and often promoted them. The French *nouveau roman* would not exist without the theory of Tel Quel; the artistic avant-garde needed theoretical support in manifestos, in various accompanying texts (e.g., the group OHO in the 1960s and 1970s, and NSK in the 1980s and 1990s; cf. Šuvaković). The theoretical concept appeared there as a supplement, taking the place of that which unconventional artistic productions apparently lacked – sense, relevance, context, or reference.

However, in spite of the cooperation between art and philosophy, occasionally throughout history (“ever since Plato”) a certain mistrust has reappeared between them. This testifies to the fact that the notion of dialogue also contains irreconcilable differences and an insurmountable clash of positions.

It seems to me that in the last few decades the level of tension in the dialogue between theory and literature has, in fact, been somewhat higher in Slovenia than elsewhere. The friction between the literary viewpoints of collaborators in the journals *Perspektive* or *Nova revija* (the “Heideggerians”) on the one side and, on the other side, the positions about (Slovene) literature held by semiotic theoreticians (“Marxist-Lacanian”) from the circle of the journal *Problemi* contributed to a cultural-political division in the 1970s and 1980s even within the very generation that had introduced modernist and postmodernist streams of thought in the time of communist rule.<sup>2</sup> On the “Heideggerian” side, writers maintained an alliance with philosophers and theoreticians (most notably with Pirjevec, Kermauner, and Hribar). They were largely convinced that Being, which was otherwise inaccessible to metaphysical, technical and theoretical thought, spoke through literary art; notwithstanding their criticisms of the sediments of romantic cultural nationalism, they understood literature as a pillar of national identity, a path to personal emancipation, and a means for political liberation and social criticism.<sup>3</sup> The “Marxist-Lacanian” side – Žižek, Rotar, Močnik, and other theorists who distanced themselves even from the experimental writing of their coevals of *Problemi* – criticized domestic literature as an anachronistic national institution, to which the cultural intelligentsia was connected as a branch of reactionary nationalism or bourgeois elitism, and understood writers as pathological prisoners of the imaginary.<sup>4</sup>

Irrespective of the local specificities, the rivalry described above is actually a manifestation of the antagonism between two traditional European schemata of the knotting together of art and philosophy (cf. Badiou, *Handbook of Inaesthetics* 1–15). It seems to me that the theoreticians of

*Problemi* have, in spite of their modern radicalism, been stranded in a Platonist "didactic schema," which still echoed in Marxism. It denied art an independent recognition and expression of the truth, claiming that it seduces the audience with mere "imitation of the effect of truth," with "the charm of a semblance of truth" (Badiou, *Handbook* 2). Genuine recognition, of course, pertains to philosophy and its heir, theory. The Slovene "Heideggerians," however, are descendants of the later "romantic schema," according to which since the early 19th century it has been held that truth is accessible only to literary art, not to metaphysics and the forms of instrumental, technical, methodological, and rational understanding derived from it, among which each and every theory is counted (3).<sup>5</sup>

Badiou attempts to surpass didacticism, romanticism, and classicism. All of the three traditional "schemata of the link between art and philosophy" (5) were based on art's relation to the truth; they understood truth as one only, independent of the artwork (8–10). Badiou's proposition places itself among postmodern conceptions that, in the footsteps of Wittgenstein's "language games," implement pluralism, temporariness, assent, relativity, autonomy, and the (discursive) production of truths (cf. Lyotard 9–11, 37–41). It is also close to those conceptions that seek the reasons for the competitiveness of literature and theory in the common basis of art and philosophy: both employ language in a non-utilitarian way, for interpreting the world as an open-ended whole that reveals (uncovers) itself to human existence (cf. Rickman 28–31, Horn et al. 12). For Badiou, art and the poem are "thinking," in which their immanent singular truths are established again and again; these are "irreducible to other truths," whether scientific or philosophical (*Handbook* 9). "Art *itself* is a truth procedure" (9); as "an art-truth" it unfolds in the historical change of systems of representation. Badiou describes this following the example of Kuhn's idea of scientific paradigms. For him, the transitional truth of art is "an artistic configuration initiated by an event," "a generic multiple," or "an identifiable sequence . . . , comprising a virtually infinite complex of works" (12–13); the individual artwork "is a situated inquiry about the truth that it locally actualizes or of which it is a finite fragment" (12). Examples of such relational truths that are dependent on the virtual potential of historical systems of signification are ancient tragedy, the novel from Cervantes to Joyce, or abstract painting from Kandinsky onwards. Badiou's considerations about the autonomous and irreducible truth of art partly overlap theories of possible worlds, i.e., worlds established by convention and according to their own intrinsic laws. Possible-world theories have as well undermined the binary structure of judging the truthfulness of assertions and the role of truth in art (cf. Juvan, *Literarna veda v rekonstrukciji* 218–230).

I believe that Badiou puts forward good reasons against philosophy (theory) and art (literature) continuing to compete as to which better recognizes and presents truth; they think and express mutually *different* truths. Thus in theoretical-literary hybrids different regimes of truths cross and produce new modalities of understanding that are different from the sum of theory and literature.

## Postmodernity: Hybridity, Identities, the Mixing of Fields

The topic of hybridity is virtually omnipresent in the discourse of current humanities and social sciences; its wide circulation indicates problematics that we perceive as relevant and distinguishing of our time. In actual fact, Hassan declared “hybridity” to be a distinguishing feature of postmodernism and postmodernity (“From Postmodern to Postmodernity”). Hybridity is one of those characteristically postmodern concepts with which it is possible, in contrast to binary logic and metaphysical essentialism, to conceive of the cohabitation of various entities in the one, *relationally* mobile, changeable conceptual unit.

With the appropriation of the biological and linguistic expression “hybrid” (meaning ‘a word compounded from two linguistically different morphemes’) in the mid 1930s, Bakhtin defined “hybridization” as “an artistic device” or, in the general perspective, “one of the most important modes in the historical life and evolution of all languages” by which, within the limits of a single utterance, two sociolects, two language consciousnesses, and two speaking subjects mix (“Discourse in the Novel” 358–360). He also characterized a “hybrid construction” as “an utterance that belongs, by its grammatical (syntactic) and compositional markers, to a single speaker, but that actually contains mixed within it two utterances, two speech manners, two styles ... and belief systems” (“Discourse in the Novel” 304–305). Thanks to Bakhtin’s seminal influence on the post-structuralist theory of the text<sup>6</sup> and culture, the notion of hybridity – within the scope of the post-modern ecstasy of communication and the disbandment of traditional cultural coherence – overstepped the original domains of linguistics, stylistics, and poetics. It became almost unavoidable in discussions about identity, one of the key problems with which social sciences and the humanities have been occupied over the last decades.

With “hybridity,” postcolonial theory captured the subjective positions of the in-between (interstice), border lives (liminality), and split, displaced, or migrated affiliations. In academic circles it thus weakened the dominance of the purist conception of ethnic identity: “subjectivity is deemed to be composed from variable sources, different materials, many locations”; this is why “hybrid identities are never total and complete in themselves ..., instead, they remain perpetually in motion” (cf. McLeod 216–221). Feminist and queer theories, which undermined the biological determination of sexual identity, were honed by Donna Haraway, who employed the category of hybridity in her writings – incidentally, brilliant examples of theoretical-literary hybrids. In her ironic “A Cyborg Manifesto,” with its blasphemous apology for the cyborg (“a hybrid of machine and organism”), she exposed the liberating and enslaving potentials of the posthuman world of postmodernism for the identity of women. She stressed that in such a world global codes, cybernetics, and biotechnology invalidate the boundaries between nature and society, between the body and the machine (Haraway 149–155, 163–173).

The question of identity concerns “theoretical-literary hybrids” primarily at the level of the textual inscription of genre or media codes, forms of

knowledge, and the writing subjects. Crossbreeds of thinking and poetry fall within the broader area of genre hybrids (cf. Fowler 183 ff.). The mixing of heterogeneous textual kinds is quite old (for example, Menippean satire), but its reputation has only grown since the decline of the classical genre system, perhaps first in romantic theories of the novel, the fragment, the arabesque, and progressive universal poetry. Today everywhere we look we come across genre hybrids; for instance, in the popular mixtures of fact and fiction (new journalism, reality shows, etc.). In the postmodern era, the hybridization of genres was also accelerated by changes in the media system. Electronic media severed the text from material bearers, real references, and placement, and through the Internet sent them to the virtual rhizome of cyberspace, where they lost beginnings and endings, while the multiple intertextual links erased their boundaries and genre affiliations. In digital texts other traditional demarcations that had traditionally arranged the universe of discourse also disappeared (for example, real vs. imaginary).

Not least, the rise of crossbreeds between theory and literature was stimulated by the postmodern displacement or erasure of delimitations between discursive fields. In the postindustrial society after 1950, the progress of science and technology, the supranational flow of capital, and the crisis of metaphysical philosophy and academic institutions seriously shook the faith in the speculative and emancipative "grand Narratives," which had legitimated different forms of knowledge, including science, literature, and art since the enlightenment (Lyotard xxiii–xxv, 3–6, 31–47). In place of the narrative claiming that the accumulation of knowledge serves the advancement and liberation of man (the nation, the Spirit, mankind), and instead of the speculative philosophy distributing, according to an "encyclopedic net" (39), each science within the totality of knowledge, at the end of the 19th century it became ever clearer that knowledge is fragmentary and contingent: sciences, theories, and arts proved to be but "kinds of discourse" or autonomous "language games" of diverse origins, each based on its own rules and arbitrary regimes of validity (Lyotard 3, 10–11, 39–40). After the postmodern "breaking up of the grand Narratives" had shaken the general metaphysical grounds of knowledge and ruined its encyclopedic system, it was power that installed itself as the only external measure that could legitimate knowledge: whether through political advantage and dominance enabled by the control of information, or through the accumulation of capital on the knowledge market (46–47, 51). The exteriorization and "merchandization of knowledge" (5) not only demolished the old humanistic ideal about education, but also violently unsettled traditional scientific and artistic institutions, annulling the immanent logics and coherence of the disciplines in which knowledge had been organized:

The classical dividing lines between the various fields of science are thus called into question – disciplines disappear, overlappings occur at the borders between sciences, and from these new territories are born. The speculative hierarchy of learning gives way to an immanent and, as it were, "flat" network of areas of inquiry, the respective frontiers of which are in constant flux. (39)

The humanities and philology thus imploded into polymorphic, eclectic domains, such as transdisciplinary “theory” and cultural studies. Along with humanistic institutions, the autonomy of art and literature also lost their solid ground; art began to be produced and understood in ever less transparent interlacements with other signifying practices, as well as with media and public discourse (cf. Juvan, *Literarna veda* 11–19, 29–47). Consequently, in literary texts we often come across theoretical discourse (not just in the “professorial” novels of Lodge, Schwanitz, and Eco, but even in Brown’s popular fiction), whereas theoretical works express themselves with word games, figures, autobiographical anecdotes, and collages of citations, in such a way as to give an impression of literary fiction and the capricious “anything goes.” How then are we to understand and assess the production of texts that, especially in the academic world, have flooded our time? Should we follow the methodological chiasmus of deconstruction and read philosophy (theory) as literature, and literature as theory (cf. Horn et al. 1, 10–11)?

## Thinking/Poetry

Notwithstanding the currency of these dilemmas, the interaction between the literary and the theoretical is nothing new; it is simply a modern articulation of the relation between two types of discourse that have coexisted alongside or inside each other since antiquity. Nietzsche postulated the unity of poetry and philosophy at the dawn of the Greek age, and was followed by many who interpreted their ancient development since Plato and Aristotle as a gradual differentiation and specialization (cf. Courtois and Séité 3). Heidegger attributed the same origin and mission to both “thinking” and “poetry.” Their original capacity was to hearken to Being, which bespeaks *Dasein* (i.e., human existence) through language:

Language is the house of Being. In its home man dwells. Those who think and those who create with words are guardians of this home. Their guardianship accomplishes the manifestation of Being insofar as they bring the manifestation to language and maintain it in language through their speech. (“Letter on Humanism,” *Basic Writings* 217)

Listening to the voice of Being is, for Heidegger, the earliest and most authentic source of both “the thinker’s saying” (*das Sagen des Denkers*) and “the poet’s naming” (*das Nennen des Dichters*); poetry and thinking are initially equal in their care for the Word of Being (*Was ist Metaphysik* 50–51).<sup>7</sup> Poetry has retained its authentic bond with Being, whereas primordial thinking (*das anfängliche Denken*), transformed into metaphysics by Plato and Aristotle, underwent a fatal “‘technical’ interpretation,” also characterized by the expression *theōria* (“Letter on Humanism,” *BW* 218). In methodically seeking the essence of things, metaphysics forgot about their being and lost the miraculous truth of Being from its sight.<sup>8</sup> According to Heidegger, the truth of Being can not be attained by technical or theo-

retical reasoning, but discloses itself (as *aletheia* 'unconcealment') primarily through the work of art. "The work as work sets up a world" of our existence; it is the place where "the truth of beings has set itself to work" ("The Origin of the Work of Art," *BW* 161–182, esp. 162, 170). Inspired by Hölderlin and other artists, Heidegger turned (*die Kehre*) his existential and phenomenological philosophy into more poetic "thought of Being" (*das Denken des Seins*), which he believed was able to surpass metaphysics<sup>9</sup> and regain the primordial contact with "poetry."

Heidegger's philosophical writings that developed the thought of Being are themselves examples of the hybridization of philosophy and literature. Above all they conceptually extended the horizon within which the post-modern permeation of literature and theory could then actually flourish. Trying to demonstrate here how the contemporary dialogue of the poet and the thinker is embedded in a long European tradition, I use the expressions "poetry" and "thinking" somewhat differently than Heidegger. By "thinking" I also mean all of the variants of metaphysical, technical, theoretical reflection from antiquity onwards, and by "poetry" I refer to all of the genres and forms that we understand today under the notion of literature as verbal art.

After Heidegger, a common nucleus was often found in "thinking" and "poetry," but paradoxically "poetry" was explained as "thinking" – albeit thinking *sui generis*. In comparison to the discursive, notional, logico-argumentative, and rational formation of philosophy and theory, in artworks – according to Badiou – "thought that cannot be discerned or separated as a thought ... a thought that is not even thinkable" is at work (*Handbook* 19). The poetic thought cannot be exhausted by conceptual thinking (i.e., theory) because "it is inseparable from the sensible" (*ibid.*) and it attempts "to capture in discourse the singularity of presence of the sensible" ("La poésie" 72).<sup>10</sup> Likewise, Andrea Kern maintains that "art is ... philosophy in the medium of experience which philosophy in the medium of the concept cannot achieve;" philosophy considers "normal experience" with the aid of conceptual analysis, whereas art does so "in the medium of experience itself" (58, 75–76) by mimetically simulating its existential concreteness. This is why poetry is able to enact "the immediacy of individualized vision" (Rickman 31). According to Badiou, poetry explores its own singular truth through poems, which are themselves unique facts, whereas philosophy strives for consistency and the construction of connected systems or doctrines (*Handbook* 24, Badiou and Ramond 72–74). The particular, unique use of language gives poetry the power to forbid "discursive thought, *dianoia*;" that is, "the thought that traverses, the thought that links and deduces." Contrary to the discursiveness of philosophy, mathematics, and theories that link arguments obeying logical and other rules, the poem itself "is affirmation and delectation, ... a lawless proposition" (Badiou, *Handbook* 17).<sup>11</sup> The difference between conceptual discursiveness, the rational coherence of thinking, and the sensually saturated fragmentariness, the transgressive non-systematism of poetry is also dependent on the disciplined dissection of knowledge – something that was already understood by Plato.

In Plato's dialogue *Ion*, the philosopher Socrates speaks with the rhapsodist Ion, performer and explicator of Homer's poetry. At first, Ion is convinced that he is capable of providing the best explanation of everything about which Homer has written, but under the weight of Socrates' dialogic argumentation he has to admit that he has not mastered any of the knowledge that the great epic weaves into its poetic account (he does not know enough about the skills of medicine or seamanship). Plato demonstrates that poetry deals with many matters and skills ("arts") that neither the poet nor the rhapsodist know about, but are rather the objects of various specialist fields. These competences as a rule belong to individual domains of reference, but poetry appropriates them for itself and weaves them together at its own will. In his account, the poet circumvents the usual division of specialized competences. Poetic ability is evident from the very moment of the poet's complete personal inability, from the *non-mastery* of himself and each and every area of knowledge; the lack of personal, intellectual command is compensated for with the opening to the outside force of inspired discourse. Plato's Socrates explains this as "divine inspiration," irrational obsession, and ecstasy: "When falling under the power of music and rhythm they [poets] are inspired and possessed ... they are under the influence of Dionysus." Performers and explicators of their works also partake in this inspiration: "The gift which you [Socrates speaking to Ion] possess of speaking excellently about Homer is not an art, but ... an inspiration; there is a divinity moving you, like that contained in the stone which Euripides calls a magnet ..." (Plato, "Ion" 533d–534d)

Thus it is the philosopher who first realizes the division of thinking into skills, into various specialized competences. The poet blinds himself to these competences in the moment when he is carried away from the rationality of knowing by the sensual – today we would say *esthetic* – "rhythm" of creative ecstasy and – to redirect Plato's allegory – is conveyed by the linguistic "magnetism" of discourse to an ungovernable vision of the truth, which in the poet's work draws together diverse fields of knowledge and merges them in a mimetic presentation of human existence.<sup>12</sup>

To summarize, the differences between the discourse of poetry and that of thinking could, in a theoretical abstraction, be somehow defined as follows. Poetry draws from the individual's existence and experiential presence in the world. Its medium is the body, both in comprehending reality and in the linguistic presentation of the world, by which corporeality with its movements is transcribed in rhythm, with its perceptions in the narrative perspectives, with its drives and sensuality in connotation, synesthesia, and semantic indeterminacy. Poetry speaks through individual perspectives and through a unique, "inquiring" textual presentation, which is enabled by a historical system of artistic representation (Badiou's "art-truth"). In poetry the strings of linguistic signs are also generated from other (previous, parallel, or backing) language sequences, from the Platonic "magnetism" of their meaning and rhythm. Thus the logic of poetry is autopoetic, and therefore the significance of the poetic work is not rigidly locked into the referential fields of individual disciplines ("arts"), but rather with the



transgressive interweaving of diverse domains of knowledge it can build its own, unconnected, fragmentary, and imaginary image of the experiential world. Thinking, on the other hand, is the reflexive distancing from personal experience. It demands that the subject speak from the position of an observer that clings to rational conceptuality. Thinking expresses its cognitive orientation to the world with the abstraction of concreteness (meaning 'sensually perceived fullness' and 'what is grown together') in the divided fields of knowledge, within which experience removes the bodily traces and transforms itself into general models. Thinking strives towards the establishment of systems for the accumulation and verification of knowledge that exceed the singularity of the individual formulation. Thus the coherence of thinking is dependent on repeatable methods of inference, whereas the structure and the significance of texts rely on the competencies of individual disciplines, in which thinking inscribes itself.

## Typology

Between thinking and poetry, defined in this way, from antiquity to today, many forms of dialogue, friction, and cooperation have developed. In some of these, the two modes of discourse have become completely entwined and their borders erased. The forms of interaction are presented in the following provisional classification:

1. *Thinking after poetry* (descriptive poetics, philology, hermeneutics, criticism, esthetics, literary history and literary theory, etc.), in its descriptive metatexts translates the singularity of poetic works into general models and explains them conceptually, also connecting them with broader problematics and contexts that pertain to the disciplinary competences of the fields mentioned above;

2. *Thinking before poetry* (normative poetics, the literary program, the artistic manifesto, the literary plan, etc.) in its prescriptive, utopian, programmatic texts rationally and performatively delineates the possibilities and borders of the system of representation according to which poetic works should behave;

3. *Thinking behind poetry* (e.g., in avant-garde conceptualism, in concrete and visual poetry) in its accompanying texts demonstrates the artistic concept; that is, a fragment of theory that acts as a framework of the textual significance of the poet's work; without such thinking the artistic product would seem meaningless, unimportant, or trivial;

4. *Thinking in poetry* is the first type of interaction between the two modes of discourse within one text, and has many forms: the trope, the allegory, the symbol (all of which figuratively illustrate and indicate the thought), exemplification (common truths and ideas are tested through individual stories or characters), meta-literariness (poetry thinks itself with its own means), reflexive inserts (philosophizing in the speech of certain literary characters or a narrator, in individual citations, in epigraphs), and finally *hybridity I*, or thinking on the basis of poetry (the development of

conceptual discourse in poetry and according to the logic of poetry: e.g., the philosophical lyric, the essayist novel, and metafiction);

5. *Poetry in thinking* is the second type of interweaving of the two modes of discourse in individual texts, in this case primarily thinking discourse: thinking appropriates poetic means; for example, the dialogue (for the perspectivization of knowledge, cognitive styles, and existential positions), metaphor, allegory, etymological figure, and word game (all supplanting discursive reasoning or semantically bridging the gaps of the unintelligible and the rationally unsayable), autobiography, personal experience, narrativity, genre modality (all for the intensification of the textual and speaker's persuasiveness, dependent more on ethical than on logical and gnoseological criteria). Among the types of this kind of interaction is *hybridity 2*, or poetry on the basis of thinking – this is the development of poetic discourse in thinking and through intentionality particular to thinking: for example, the Platonic dialogue, the essay, the romantic fragment, Nietzsche's "gay science," and feminist post-theory.

Hybridity of the first and second types according to this classification are only two of many possible forms of dialogue between thinking and poetry. It concerns texts that clearly cross genre-specific elements/structures derived from heterogeneous discourses – from literary creation and various disciplines of reflection. This kind of crossbreed becomes perceptible in texts only with the gradual realization of the difference between the two modes of discourse and their varieties. This occurred in antiquity with the process of departure from a mystical consciousness and with the formation of discrete skills, or arts (Greek *tékhnē*); the process is illustrated by the nine Greco-Roman Muses, who share a common genealogy but whose dominions are ever more clearly divided and specialized.<sup>13</sup> Since the Ancients, there have been a great many manifestations and types of hybridization of thinking with poetry; to name just a few: gnomes, maxims, fragments, philosophical dialogues, Menippean satire, poetics in verse, narrative allegory, philosophical parable or fable, reflexive poetry and narrative prose, the essay, the encyclopedic and essayist novel, metapoetry, metadrama, and metafiction.

## **The Romantic and Modern Matrix of Crossbreeds of Literature and Theory**

Theoretical-literary hybrids in *the narrow sense* began to surface from the 18th century onwards, when both literature and theory gradually established themselves as autonomous but interdependent discourses. Namely, the "literary field" (Bourdieu) was cognitively organized into a relatively autonomous whole of communicative phenomena, also thanks to the metalanguage referring to literary texts; literary theory grew from the traditions of this post-processing. On the other hand, at least until the last third of the 20th century, literary texts remained the referential basis without which metalanguage would have been unable to codify meaning and verify assertions.

The expressions "theory" and "literature" are used as early as in ancient Greek and Latin; in some European languages, for example English, the word "theory" was already evident in the late 16th century, in the sense of 'spiritual, conceptual observation, contemplation', 'conception or thought scheme, principles by which an activity behaves', and especially 'systems of ideas and assertions that explain a group of facts or phenomena.'<sup>14</sup> Today's notions of (literary) theory and literature, however, are specific cultural units, which developed only in the post-Enlightenment process of accelerated social modernization and functional differentiation. The basis of their interaction was the ideology of esthetics, which tried to ensure independent islands of art within the capitalist environment, the market, and other societal determinants: literati intentionally created texts of beauty, transcendence, and imagination, and theoreticians with their "intellectual point of view" as "the categorical imperative of any theory" (Schlegel, *Philosophical* 170; AF 76) explained how literature achieved this, and what the sense of this endeavor was.

Lacoue-Labarthe and Nancy demonstrate that the bond of literature and (literary) theory was formed at the beginning of the 19th century, in Jena romanticism. The early works of the Schlegel brothers, Schelling, Novalis, Tieck, Schleiermacher, and others were labeled "theoretical romanticism," "the introduction of the theoretical project to literature" (9). Theoretical romanticism conceptually established literature as an absolute genre and an autonomous field of discourse – it created an awareness of literature as an art that was realized in words according to its own principles (Lacoue-Labarthe and Nancy 11, 21): Friedrich Schlegel characteristically defined "poetry" as "a speech which is its own law and end unto itself" (Schlegel, *Philosophical* 150; KF 65). On the one hand, the Jena romantics shaped an identity for literature, this nascent cultural entity, with the help of criticism and "theory" (they were fond of this word),<sup>15</sup> whereas on the other hand, literature, with its self-reflection, was to "produce its own theory" within itself (Lacoue-Labarthe and Nancy 22, 27). Thus literature, as verbal art, and its philosophical, esthetic theory, established themselves in interaction and mutual entanglement at the beginning of German romanticism. Writers expected philosophy to realize and complete itself as poetry (Lacoue-Labarthe and Nancy 51), seeing in modern poetry "a running commentary on the following brief philosophical text" (Schlegel, *Philosophical* 157; KF 115). In his short fragments – which were structurally amongst the first prominent theoretical-literary hybrids to appear – Friedrich Schlegel specifically called for the interaction or joining of the two types of discourse:

... all art should become science and all science art; poetry and philosophy should be made one (KF 115; *Philosophical* 157). Romantic poetry is a progressive, universal poetry. Its aim isn't merely to reunite all the separate species of poetry and put poetry in touch with philosophy and rhetoric ... (AF 116; 175). The more poetry becomes science, the more it also becomes art. If poetry is to become art, if the artist is to have a thorough understanding and knowledge of his ends and means, his difficulties and his subjects, then the poet will have to philosophize about his art ... (AF 255; 199).<sup>16</sup>

For Schlegel, therefore, poetry's drawing near the essence of art is paradoxical, in that at the same time it approached the ideal of science, and thus discourse, which was at that very time establishing itself as the contrary of art and the free play of the imagination. By reaching for its opposite ("other"), poetry necessarily directed itself towards theory while forming its own identity. With theory, the writing subject becomes aware of his expressive means and the ends of writing. One of the possible ways for the writer to philosophize about his own art is also offered by self-reflection, grafted in a hybrid way within poetry itself – that is to say, by the self-reference of metapoetry. The latter unites "preliminaries of a theory of poetic creativity ... with artistic reflection and beautiful self-mirroring;" its task is to be "simultaneously poetry and the poetry of poetry" (Schlegel, *Philosophical* 195; AF 238).<sup>17</sup> It may be concluded that, on the threshold of romanticism, the artistic "essence" of poetry established itself precisely through its theory (within or next to poetry).

According to Weber's sociological research, such theorization is an example of the rationality that, during the process of modernization and functional differentiation of the capitalist social system, was also present in other fields, from everyday life, through economics and technology, to state administration, politics, and science. Rationalization is a type of legitimization that shook off the traditional dominance of various transcendental (religious, magical, metaphysical) justifications (cf. Weber xxxviii–xxxix, 30, 86, 95).<sup>18</sup> It became the guiding light of the "disenchanted world," which in the political, economic, and industrial revolutions of the 19th century was torn from a traditionalism in which everything had always seemed self-evident and given in advance (cf. Adam 210–214). In such a world, literature – until the 18th century placed in the lap of ceremony, conventions, sociability, and the *esprit de corps* of separated social states – had to invent languages and seek allied discourses on which it could base the sense of its autonomous existence in the capitalist marketplace and sharpen the feeling of its particularity in the eye of the general, anonymous public.

It is in romanticism that Badiou places the beginning of the "era of the poets," in which poetry started to lay claim to the role of philosophy, while the theory of art forced its way to the interior of art itself (Badiou and Ramond 67–71). The era of the poets, which lasts at least to Heidegger, is understood by Badiou as the synonym of modernity; the modern poem, for example a poem by Mallarmé, "identifies itself as a form of thought" (Badiou, *Handbook* 20). Because we still belong to an age that is unconsciously romantic (Lacoue-Labarthe and Nancy 26), it is understandable that the principles of literary self-reflection, self-referentiality, and the hybrid joining of poetry and theory, as postulated by Schlegel in his fragments, were still intensively implemented in the modernism of the 20th century. The subject's artistic self-reflection, such as in Pound's cycle of poems *Hugh Selwyn Mauberly* and Joyce's novel *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*, is one of the primary characteristics of modernism. Modernist poetry and the modernist novel also took up the role of philosophical thinking (for example, Rilke's *Duino Elegies*, Eliot's *Four Quartets*, or Broch's

*The Sleepwalkers*). Following the example of romanticism, other ties between literature and theory were also strengthened in modernism. This is witnessed by the connections between Russian formalism and futurism, New Criticism and imagism, or structuralism and the *nouveau roman*; theoreticians joined with writers and together collaborated in devising the poetics of individual movements, or they appeared themselves as writers and poets (and *vice versa*).

Because literary theory took its final shape in Russian formalism and only institutionalized itself in the mid 20th century – at least a century and a half after the introduction of the concept of artistic literature – it is of no surprise that works in which writers or theoreticians hybridized literature and (literary) theory began to accumulate from the mid 1960s. However, in many places, literary theory soon began to distance itself from its original subject and gradually transform into interdisciplinary, self-reflexive, and critical theory of the text, language, the subject, culture, history, and society – usually called simply “Theory.” Towards the end of the 20th century, Theory engaged with a broad range of subject areas and strove for the critical treatment of the fundamental issues of the human world. In so doing it usurped the territory of philosophy. Traces of the former ties of Theory to the treatment of literature are still evident in its exposure of language; Theory takes language and signs for the *clavis universalis*, the media that should determine all of the structures of the world, from the psychic to the social and political. With its departure from literature as a field of study, a noticeable part of such Theory became literary in a different way – because of characteristics of its own textual structures and manner of comprehension (cf. Culler). Following Nietzsche’s example, it imitated literary modes of discourse, its tropes and figures, its narrative, anecdotalism, fragmentariness, individual genre models, and perspectiveness, but above all its modal and non-discursive presentation of the truth and the precedence of rhetoric over logic (cf. Juvan, *Literarna veda* 29–44).

## **The Postmodern Literarization of Theory and Theorization of Literature**

Parallel to this “literarization of theory” there was a corresponding “theorization of literature.” It is necessary to view both processes in the light of the postmodern condition. Postmodernity is an umbrella term that also covers post-structuralism in philosophy/theory and postmodernism in art (Hassan 1–5). Post-structuralism influenced the literarization of theory in the field of thinking, whereas postmodernism influenced the theorization of literature in the field of art.

Theoretical-literary hybrids on a theoretical basis, whose authors were normally theoreticians, came to the fore in the postmodern for the many reasons I have already discussed in the introduction (relativism, the hybridity of identity, the breaking up of the grand Narratives, the transferal of knowledge across the borders of traditional disciplines, the modification

of textuality in digital media, etc.). The dissolution of the grand Narratives of rationality and science is most likely the main reason for the fact that Theory – already eclectically picking up concepts, methods, and expressions from disciplines of diverse origin – also began to copy *literary* discourse with considerable enthusiasm. The fall of the post-enlightenment belief that it is possible to express the understanding about individual fields of study in laws or empirically verifiable universal models, independent of the perspective of the individual researcher but able to be placed in the encyclopedic scheme of progressive knowledge, is easy to follow in the example of the passage of the structuralist theory of the (literary) text to the post-structural. This transition is best illustrated by Barthes' essays from the end of the 1960s to the mid 1970s, especially his encyclopedic contribution about the theory of the text (Barthes, "Theory of the Text", cf. Juvan, *Intertekstualnost* 95–100, 133–138).

Neither traditional humanities nor structuralism – the latter with its scientism tried to equate the humanities with strict science – questioned the scholarly and epistemic authority of their own language as they treated verbal artworks as objects. The post-structuralist theory of the text introduced by Barthes was, however, self-reflexive, and also critical towards the discourse of science. In line with Lacan's assertion that in psychoanalytical interpretation there is no metalanguage, Barthes claimed that the theory of the text cannot appropriate the status of a scientific language observing the primary language from a metaposition. Theory, just like its object (literature) is only a "textual praxis." Both modes of discourse are, along with their subjects, embroiled in the work of language and on language. Because each text, literary or theoretical, is, according to Barthes, "a fragment of language, itself placed in a perspective of languages," the epistemological distance between the object and the method is annulled. Thus, on the wavelength of Derrida's deconstruction of metaphysics, Barthes undermined the dominance of theoretical metalanguage over the truth of the text. Following Barthes, the theory of the text thus withdraws from the framework of ideographic and nomothetic sciences: it is not hindered by particular phenomena, as history is, nor by the formulation of common laws, as structural linguistics is, but follows the infinite "flow of becoming" of the historical world, as already circumscribed by Nietzsche (Barthes, "Theory" 45). From this it is possible to infer that the post-structuralism in Barthes' perspective changed the relation between literature and theory from hierarchic metatextuality to anarchic intertextuality. For this reason theory was able and justified to adopt literary techniques (Barthes, "Theory" 35, 43–44).

The idea of the impossibility of metalanguage thus shows the resignation over the grand narrative of modern rationality. This narrative was replaced by an insight that each and every form of knowledge is contingent, connected to the bodily, social, political, or other perspective of the acting individual ("agency"), to his/her placement in the socio-historical concreteness. Theoretical-literary hybrids with a theoretical basis enable theorists to self-reflect their discursive position and to contextualize the cognitive value of their assertions in their own living experience.

Theoretical-literary hybrids that came about in postmodernism on a *literary* basis, mainly under the pens of writers, continue and develop many symptoms of the modernist crossbreeding between thinking and poetry: self-reflexivity and self-reference, philosophical and scholarly essayism, abstract intellectualism, the montage of rough material concreteness with pure thought and concept, and also the mathematical principles of text structuration (seriality, combinations, and variations). However, the "theorization of literature," such as witnessed since the end of the 1960s, would not have come about without its contemporary theory. With the theory of text as open, intertextual, and hybrid structures, Barthes emphasized the open-endedness of meaning production, the transgressive circulation of writing over textual, generic, and disciplinary borders. He thus also rationalized and encouraged this kind of writing in theoretical and literary practice. It is well known that Barthes influenced Barth, a representative of American metafiction, and, along with the other French post-structuralists, supplied his postmodernist citatology with the conceptual basis of intertextuality (i.e., understanding the text as a mosaic of citations, transposed from heterogeneous sources);<sup>19</sup> Barthes' theorem about the equating of text and metatext cannot have been any less fertile for Barth, as it is realized in Barth's metafictional mingling of writing with the observation of this writing.

Before shedding light on postmodern theoretical-literary hybrids with the examples of Barthes and Barth, I must draw attention to one other decisive factor with which contemporary literary theory (and Theory) moderated the theorization of literature. Sociological research shows that in postmodern culture both the profession of writing and more demanding non-trivial contemporary literature are dependent on the university environment.<sup>20</sup> However, the university is also the seat of theoretical culture, and surely to a greater degree than of contemporary literature. For more than a decade we have heard the complaints that the university study of theory already almost supersedes the former occupation with literature, and that familiarity with the canon of theoreticians is more important than knowledge of ancient and modern literary classics. Theory has no doubt become the prominent discourse. Literature could ignore theory but, inasmuch as it feels connected to university culture, literature is actually forced to respond to theory.

Literary or theoretical hybrids, which have come about in the dialogues of modernist and postmodernist literature with modern and postmodern philosophy/theory since the 1960s, as sketched above, include works such as *Roland Barthes by Roland Barthes* (a self-reflexive dictionary of Barthes' ideas and viewpoints), *The Laugh of the Medusa* by Hélène Cixous (a treatment, advocacy, and at the same time staging of politically challenging polymorphic women's writing), Calvino's novel *If on a Winter's Night a Traveler* (the theory of reading and narrative genres grafted onto the meta-physical narrative), Quignard's *The Secret Life* (fragments of the theory of erotic discourse inhabiting an almost evaporated narrative structure of the love novel), and, in Slovenia, *Mesec dni z Ivanom Cankarjem, Martinom Kačurjem in Tarasom Kermaunerjem* (A Month with Ivan Cankar, Martin

Kačur, and Taras Kermauner – Kermauner’s essayist weave of confession, autobiography, structural interpretations of Cankar and critical theories about national ideas), Grafenauer’s *Štukature* (Stuccowork – metapoetic sonnets that draw from the dictionary of structural poetics, phenomenology, and Heidegger), and in recent times especially the poetry of Dekleva and Taja Kramberger, laced with references to the artistic and theoretical topics of postmodernism.

## Barthes/Barth

Finally, I examine the structure of postmodern theoretical-literary hybrids with a literary or theoretical dominant in two prototypical writings, in the pair Barthes/Barth. In Barthes’ *A Lover’s Discourse: Fragments* – the title evokes the tradition of a romantic hybrid; that is, the fragment – theoretical discourse and literary discourse restlessly cross each other throughout. That which one can find theoretical in this literary charming, intelligent, and moving text is above all the analytical modeling of eroticism, containing an incessant classification of love psychology and a typification of enamored behavior and discourse. Barthes’ hybrid shows love partly through the structuralist-semiotic code: the writer behaves as kind of structuralist poetologist or rhetorician who presents the dictionary of the characteristic “figures” of love “discourse” and illustrates them in rational, almost scientific metalanguage, with interpretative commentary and citations from Goethe’s *Werther*, an extremely emotionally charged novel. The theoretical subject of the text speaks from the point of view of an observer, reduced to pure rationality, his utterances grounded in the disciplines of psychoanalysis, semiotics, narratology, and so on. However, literary discourse is interwoven with theory in *Fragments*: the author’s personal perspective, sensitivity, and sensually-bodily experience shines through the autobiographical first-person or third-person narrative (anecdotes of memories) and interferes in formulations of general models. As well as this, Barthes allows the argumentation, with a range of word games and figurative associations, to be structured along the (auto)poetic logic. The experiential I of the literary discourse is sublimated in a hybrid manner to the figure of the theoretician, whereas both positions are also observed from the point of view that oscillates in their fissure.

John Barth based his own *postmodernist* metafiction on Barthes’ *post-structuralist* theory of the text. His short story *Title* is an open-ended fragment and prototype of the hybrid structure with a literary dominant. Barth’s metafiction is an heir to the rich tradition of metaliterature, whereas its theoretical layer renovates principles of romantic irony in the manner of self-observation of the process of writing, which is described with some help of basic theoretical terminology (“plot and theme,” “climax,” “predicate adjective,” “suspense,” “literary genres,” “dialogue,” “monologue,” “the novel,” “the narrator,” etc.). Barthes’ hybrid, whose structural intention is theoretical, is oriented towards knowledge in the end, concerning itself with understanding – albeit unattainable, fantasmic – the truth of hu-



man relationships. The author is not just intellectually, but also bodily and experientially, caught up in the reality of these relationships. In contrast, the dominant of Barth's hybrid is literary. Here theoretical self-reflection serves the creation of tension, the building of intrigue and unfolding of a good story, thus serving the formation of interest that is directed to the imaginary, to the possible world of fiction.

In the play of the self-referentiality of words and sentences, and in the self-observing process of writing described with theoretical discourse, the traces of psychodynamics and sensually charged dialogue of the bickering lovers mix throughout. We could say that the "fragment of a lover's discourse," in the case of Barth's *Title*, is an emotional story that develops through the dramatic dialogues of a literary cultivated couple and unceasingly fiercely interferes in the narration through which this very story is being presented and, simultaneously, coolly self-described.

From these two mirroring examples it would be possible to infer that theoretical-literary hybrids are rather different from each other depending on whether they are written by a writer or a theoretician. Are theoreticians, in spite of their efforts at literarization, unable to hide their rationality, their knowledge-oriented interest? And are writers – although still theorizing – unable to depart from the ecstasy of "poetry"? Is it therefore necessary all the same to confirm Heidegger when he says of the writer and the thinker that "they dwell close on most distant mountains" (*nahe wohnen auf getrenntesten Bergen; Was ist Metaphysik* 51)?

Translated by Neville Hall

## NOTES

<sup>1</sup> About this, cf. also Rickman 16, 23–25, 114–153; Courtois and Séité 9; Ancelet 19.

<sup>2</sup> The otherwise clear and exact literary-historical survey »Literarne revije in programi« (Štuhec) for the period 1945–2000 does not describe this conflict.

<sup>3</sup> In the 1960s and 1970s, such viewpoints were largely introduced and supported by Pirjevec, especially in the essays collected in the books *Vprašanje o poeziji. Vprašanje naroda* and *Filozofija in umetnost in drugi spisi*.

<sup>4</sup> A characteristic and early example of this position is the unsigned manifesto essay "Umetnost, družba/tekst" from 1975.

<sup>5</sup> To these two schemata Badiou adds a third, intermediate one – the "classical schema" (with its beginnings in Aristotle): art mediates only a mimetic view of the truth, but its purpose is not a presentation of the truth but the ethical effect called "catharsis." In the 20th century, "Marxism is didactic, psychoanalysis classical, and Heideggerian hermeneutics romantic" (*Handbook* 5).

<sup>6</sup> On the connection between the post-structuralist text theory and theoretical-literary hybrids, see more below.

<sup>7</sup> »Aus der langbehüteten Sprachlosigkeit und aus der sorgfältigen Klärung des in ihr gelichteten Bereiches kommt das Sagen des Denkers. Von gleicher Herkunft ist das Nennen des Dichters ... das Dichten und das Denken aber am reinsten sich gleichen in der Sorgsamkeit des Wortes ...« (Heidegger, *Was ist Metaphysik* 50–51).

<sup>8</sup> »Inzwischen bleibt der Metaphysik während ihrer Geschichte von Anaximander bis zu Nietzsche die Wahrheit des Seins verborgen.« – »Einzig der Mensch unter allem Seienden erfährt, angerufen von der Stimme des Seins, das Wunder aller Wunder: *Daß Seiendes ist.*« (*Was ist Metaphysik* 11, 46–47)

<sup>9</sup> »Die Metaphysik ist im Denken an die Wahrheit des Seins überwunden.« (*Was ist Metaphysik* 9)

<sup>10</sup> The esthetic tradition, from the classics of Kant and Hegel to the contemporary concerns of Kristeva, also stresses the amalgamation of the emotional-bodily and the rational-spiritual in the esthetic event. To wit, in the socially determined language codes of the “symbolic,” which are actualized in the literary text, Kristeva discovers traces of the primordial, pre-linguistic signification open to the body; that is, “the semiotic;” the semiotic could be felt especially in rhythm (“Revolution in Poetic Language” 90–98). Similar statements can be found throughout: Ancet, for instance, thinks that “poetic writing” is imbued with “almost corporeal energy” or “a bodily charge;” for him, poetry is “the movement of the body in speech” (21–24); Likewise, Meschonnic holds that “the poem is an indicator of the passage between the body and speech” (Meschonnic and Courtois 78). More about the differences between literary and theoretical thinking below.

<sup>11</sup> Ancet and Bordes agree with this view. The former sees bodily energy in poetic writing, “which crosses all genres,” whereas in “poetic thought” a force that – in contrast to the connecting logic of philosophy – strives to discontinuity and fragmentariness (Ancet 21, 23). Also for Bordes, the poet’s word is fragmentary and chaotic, like ruins (36).

<sup>12</sup> Plato, at the beginnings of metaphysics, due to the capability of this awareness, assigned philosophers exclusive dominion over comprehending the truth; Badiou – as a post-metaphysical thinker – judged philosophical thought about the diversification of knowledge into disciplinary competences to have a more modest position: “Philosophy, or rather *a* philosophy, is always the elaboration of a category of truth. Philosophy does not itself produce any effective truth. It seizes truths, shows them, exposes them, announces that they exist” (*Handbook* 14).

<sup>13</sup> In Hesiod, who was probably the first to name them, their roles are not defined (*The Theogony* v. 1–103).

<sup>14</sup> The meaning and history of the word *theory* is taken from the online *Oxford English Dictionary* ([www.oed.com](http://www.oed.com)).

<sup>15</sup> In the 9th chapter of third part of her book of 1813, *De l’Allemagne* (II, 159–164), Mme de Staël commented on the fact that German literature and art were exceptionally attracted to philosophical ideas; in so doing she also used the expressions “theory,” “theory of literature,” and “literary theory” (*théorie littéraire*).

<sup>16</sup> »Alle Kunst soll Wissenschaft, und alle Wissenschaft soll Kunst werden; Poesie und Philosophie sollen vereinigt sein« (KF 115; *Kritische Schriften* 1, 249). »Die romantische Poesie ist eine progressive Universalpoesie. Ihre Bestimmung ist nicht bloß, alle getrennte Gattungen der Poesie wieder zu vereinigen, und die Poesie mit der Philosophie und Rhetorik in Berührung zu setzen ...« (AF116; *KS* 2, 114). »Je mehr die Poesie Wissenschaft wird, je mehr wird sie auch Kunst. Soll die Poesie Kunst werden, soll der Künstler von seinen Mitteln und seinen Zwecken, (ihren Hindernissen und ihren Gegenständen gründliche Einsicht und Wissenschaft haben,) so muß der Dichter über seine Kunst philosophieren ...« (AF 255; *KS* 2, 129)

<sup>17</sup> I have written extensively elsewhere about self-referential metapoetry in romanticism, for example that of Pushkin and Prešeren (Juvan, »Prešernova in Puškinova poezija o poeziji«).

<sup>18</sup> We understand rationalization both in the general meaning ‘the subsequent grounding and justifying of some event or fact’ whose sense is not given *a priori*, and

in Weber's specific explanation – as a belief that the subject can independently determine goals, decide how to achieve these goals, and calculate the profits and costs.

<sup>19</sup> About this report, among others, Aleš Debeljak and Manfred Pfister (see Juvan, *Intertekstualnost* 104–106).

<sup>20</sup> Writers are employed as professors of literature, or other humanistic or sociological subjects, or teach creative writing at universities; students and teachers read non-trivial contemporary literature predominantly for the needs of university lectures and seminars; if someone also follows such literature in their free time and outside the school and university system, he/she must be well-educated in order to understand its structures and multifarious references.

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