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Theory of the Lyric: a Prototypical Approach (Abstract)

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Proceeding from a distinction between ›poetry‹ and ›lyric‹, the present article outlines a prototype theory of the lyric as transhistorical mode. As such the lyric prototype cannot be defined by means of empirical tests, but is a theoretical construct that presupposes the knowledge of highly diverse discursive systems and traditions and the recourse to interpretative-hermeneutic methods for its validity. The model of the prototypical lyric the article proposes is based on four interdependent components: (1) a speech situation characterised by an I-here-now deixis; (2) a represented situation which comes into being in and through the simultaneous speech act based on an identical deixis; (3) a fiction of performativity whose performative character results from the simultaneity and coincidence of speech situation and represented situation, and whose fictionality is based on the fact that the relation of simultaneity is text-internal, thus ›staged‹, and does not conform to the communicative situation between producer and recipient; and finally (4) a lack of, or an asymmetry in, the relationship between speaker and addressee, in as far as the speaker has the ›licence‹ to either perform a locutionary act directly and without any explicit motivation or addressee, or to explicitly address recipients. Unlike in normal *face-to-face* communication, however, these recipients cannot turn into speakers themselves. At best, they can function as *quoted* speakers, who are introduced by the ›speaker proper‹, and whose utterances assume the form of mere reported speech.

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