

International Graduate Conference
28th-30th October 2019
Università degli Studi di Macerata

The Turning Point

Permanence, resurfacing and dialectics of cultural levels in the text

The text is a cultural system in which the author's self, the refraction of current or ancient history, archetypes and folkloric heritage are active all at once. As a living organism, it draws its nourishment and develops in a necessarily ideological, cultural and economic milieu. Nonetheless, the text is a unique and original creation; an individual – hence subjective – work, which often detaches itself from objectivity through turns and leaps. Those leaps, in Lukács view, entail a qualitative and structural change of the being, in that they develop through discontinuity (Lukács, *Ontology of Social Being*, 1978).

The text is therefore necessarily inscribed in a field in which the possibilities determined by the entanglement of cultures are actualized; such possibilities, in their turn, stem from the dialectics of cultural relationships identifiable in the text. These parallel tensions and dynamics, which can be analyzed at different levels and in various ways in the text, are sometimes repropounded in usual forms, thus establishing a continuity with the preexisting tradition. Alternatively, the reception and rewriting of traditional elements appear in original, creative forms in what Nicolò Pasero defines as «testi-snodo» (“turning point texts”), so that they represent «turning points from the point of view of cultural history, thanks to which the dynamics generated by different levels of culture can regain momentum, thus confirming the vitality of all the elements involved» (Pasero, “Unicità e pluralità della cultura folklorica medievale”, in Italian in the text).

The aim of the Second Interdisciplinary Symposium *The Turning Point* is to reflect upon the permanence, the emergence and the reactivation of themes from both folkloric and “high” culture, in specific historical moments and in the text; the latter being interpreted in its broad formulation of “cultural text”, as the outcome of a wide range of artistic performances.

The title refers to the ‘turning point’ in a Heideggerian sense, relating to the inclusive concept that highlights the mutual belonging of different elements and cultural levels in the works analyzed, without neglecting its conflictual and/or disjunctive implications. The turning point as

such would thus investigate either the suppression, the conservation or the alteration of crucial structural elements (Heidegger, *Being and Time*).

We encourage the submission of papers especially focusing on literary texts that, while being in continuity with a specific cultural imagery and discursive formation (Foucault, *The Archaeology of Knowledge*, 1969), nonetheless generate a deviation, a shift in paradigm and structure. Such texts are turning points in a shape-shifting, unorganized, protean cultural flow: they channel their elicitations, both at a thematic and morphological level, and reinterpret them so as to reformulate and even reverse their configurations. These texts often make historical and cultural elements resurface, thus actualizing their latent potential in new directions, or conversely plunge these elements, making them invisible.

We will accept papers from the literary, linguistic, philosophical, philological, anthropological and archaeological fields. Although we do invite prospective participants to explore the conference theme in a broad and interdisciplinary way, we propose the following possible thematic developments and hermeneutical approaches.

Classical Philology

The Turning Point is a pivotal theme within the field of Classical Philology: by 'turning point' we mean the change brought about by a text which disrupts and transforms the entire historical tradition that has produced it. Due to specific directions in academic programs, some texts inscribed in the literary canon were preferred to others; new ideologies were adopted, literary tastes varied, and Christianity declared many works of the pagan antiquity obsolete. Indeed, decisive selection criteria for literary works were the switch from papyrus to parchment, and the switch from the scroll to the codex – that result in a substantial change in the book form and in the writing system, which went from capital letters to cursive.

In Greek literature, namely in tragedy, the 'turning point' inspires the representation of the heroes, for instance Atreus, his twin brother Thyestes and Oedipus, who helplessly witness their fate degenerate into death and abyss.

In Latin literature, turning points are the first book of *Pharsalia* by Lucan, denouncing Nero's incoherent policy; the entire satirical production; the ancient Latin grammarians, e.g. Pompeius, Cosentius, and Euthyches, who opposed the prevailing model of *Artes Donati*.

Romance Studies

With regard to the Middle Ages, we invite papers which, following Nicolo Pasero's theoretical proposal and terminology, analyze texts or characters epitomizing 'turning points'; a comparison between the actualization of folkloric 'themes' and the economic and social context that generates them; ideological outcomes in literary texts, in the wake of Erich Köhler's work on courtly ideology; finally, a reappraisal of the literary genres in the Romance Middle Ages (see Cesare Segre's thought on hagiography and the *chanson de geste*).

Modern and Contemporary Literature

We invite contributions from the following fields: Italian Studies, English and Postcolonial Literature, American Studies, French Literature. We also encourage the submission of papers exploring the conference topic in a comparative perspective; however, proposals exploring the conference theme in scholarly fields which are not mentioned here will be considered as well.

We welcome contributions which address issues such as:

- 'Shifting' re-emergences of folkloric material, and intertextual re-elaborations of specific themes/episodes, innovating a pre-existing traditional configuration;
- Turning points originated by the contamination of different styles, narrative *media*, languages, codes;
- Potential/Impossible emergences or changes determined by the narrator: which role do ethnic belonging, gender, class play in this dynamic? How does the text assimilate or reject the power discourse?;
- Gaps or turns in the poetics of a specific author; turning points or changes in different versions of the same work;
- The impact of history on the text and on the poetics: how do literary works reflect or respond to crucial historical, cultural and political changes? Conversely, how do literary works react to historical standstills?

Linguistics

In *parole* – meant both as individual use of the language and extralinguistic or extra-systemic factors – turning points are essential, in that they can modify the system diachronically, by innovating it, or they can be reoriented, assimilated, and rejected by it. This configuration defines the language as a living organism, which is dynamic even in synchrony, and in relationship to strictly formalist paradigms. The concepts which relate to the 'turning point' in Linguistics include:

- Missed theoretical and methodological turns in language history, with particular focus on the background promoting either a continuity or a clean break with tradition;
- Missed turns in languages, meant as dynamic systems composed of language contact, neologisms, apparent diachrony, extralinguistic, pragmalinguistic or cognitive factors;
- The role of the system in determining the linguistic change at all levels of analysis; its relationship with extra-systemic factors, with *parole* and with *performance*.

Abstract Submission

The Turning Point Interdisciplinary Symposium will take place at Macerata University, from **28th to 30th October 2019**.

We encourage Post-Graduate Students, PhD Candidates, and Researchers to send their proposals, consisting of a 250-300 word abstract in both .DOC and .PDF formats at the address snodosvolta_2019@studenti.unimc.it . All submissions should include a separate document containing the author's name, institutional affiliation, contact information, a 100 word biographical note, max. 5 keywords, bibliography (max. 5 titles). Presenters should plan to deliver their papers in a 20-minute oral presentation. Proposals and presentations may be in Italian, English or French. The deadline for the submission of paper and panel proposals will be **7th July 2019**. The Organizing Committee will respond to potential presenters by **16th August**. The participation in the Symposium is free of charge.

The Organizing Committee