

VIERA ŽEMBEROVÁ  
Prešov

## POETIC OF PROSAIC TEXT

In the person of Stanislav Rakús (1940) two distinct creative activities have come together. He started his active participation in the Slovak cultural life as a fiction writer and later he extended the sphere of his interest in the literary art by a theoretical research.

His published fictions include short stories and novellas: *Beggars* (*Žobráci*, 1976), *The Song on Spring Water* (*Pieseň o studničnej vode*, 1979), *The Cat Land* (*Mačacia krajina*, 1986), and *Temporal Notes* (*Temporálne poznámky*, 1993).

Stanislav Rakús perceives the theoretical concern with fiction as a dialogue with an author about his ways, his methods of creating. This fact determines that his examinations of the 20<sup>th</sup> century literary history focus on the works of those fiction writers whose poetics and worldview are close to his own or those who correlate with both his authorial type and strategy of literary text. In the literary historical research of the Slovak fiction, S. Rakús concentrates on "his own" research of fiction, with special emphasis on the authors of the period between the two world wars (Milo Urban) and after WWII (Rudolf Jašík, Alfonz Bednár). Here, the uniqueness of Rakús' method of work with a literary text was deliberately stressed by the expression "his own". He himself, by this exclusion from the conventions of literary research, underlines the fact that he is neither concerned with, nor limited by the traditional, elaborate, and generally applied approach to a text and to a specific literary text. And even less probable is a limitation stemming from the environment of a particular text which may become its "mask" in the history of literature, that is when the issue in question is a myth, a legend, a convention of an author and his/her literary work in the existing and so far broadly unquestioned literary research. From this follows that the

central concern dwells especially in the history of literature and in historical poetics. Apart from this focus of Rakús' research, there are also semantics of a text and noetics, known from the history of literature, as well as the applied methods of interpretative operations with a text.

The scope of S. Rakús' literary research covers exclusively the field of the theory of literature, within which the greatest attention is being paid to the theory of fictional (epic) text. The research contact of S. Rakús with the history of literature, however, exists in the process of solving the question which the author of fiction asks another author, whose fiction is being read by the former as by a literary scholar. Though the question is plain, the answer - when the theorist and aesthete of art arrives at it - is not only final but also absolute. The question of the literary scholar asks about one thing only: how can be acceptably explained that one and the same author creates a literary text of a high artistic value and, simultaneously, he may write a text which does not possess such value?

S. Rakús uses the method of detailed analysis. He splits a literary prosaic text into miniature sequences and identifying the values of the text he searches for an answer to his question about the exceptionality of a specific authorial creative approach. The value of a literary text is conceived as a synthesis of its poetological and aesthetic strategies. Rakús is concerned with poeta doctus. That, too, is a reason why he rejects the possibility of occurrence of a coincidence in a literary text which would not be in advance incorporated in the strategy of an author of a literary text.

An authorial creative approach of a fiction writer constitutes a closed and clean-cut whole. It may, and as a rule it also does, differentiate internally over the period of the author's active writing career. An authorial creative approach, on its horizontal axis, opens up to the influences of fashionable elements which usually suggest a theme or a problem. A more essential differentiation, though, takes place on the vertical axis of both an authorial creative approach and the subject of an author. This has impact on the noetics, aesthetics, and poetics of his/her writing. Such attitudinal and aesthetic deepening and sharpening of an author's reasoning about a text (about being) as about a cognitive entity, reasoning about the sense of his/her own creation, which is to obtain an adequate artistic expression, will in the first place be reflected in the poetics and genology of an author's work.

S. Rakús studied detailed segments of more fiction writers, especially in the composition of their epic texts. The research of the



analysis of both semantic and aesthetic details from the structure of a particular verbal whole took several years and its results were published in the books *Fiction and Reality* (*Próza a skutočnosť*, 1982), *Epic Attitudes* (*Epick postoje*, 1988), and *Between Ambiguity and Precision* (*Medzi mnohoznačnosťou a presnosťou*, 1993).

Through the method of analysis of a specific literary unit into details, S. Rakús manifested the reasons which lead to logical origination of his explanation of a literary text as an elaborate, cautiously constructed, fixed, and organized whole in the book *Poetics of Prosaic Text. Material, theme, problem, shape* (1995).

Rakús' book *Poetics of Prosaic Text*, without stressing its subtitle, is a literary-theoretical interpretation of the theory of literary text which by the fiction writer Stanislav Rakús is organized - paradoxically but consciously, as a "story" about the creation of fiction. These are not such narratives about creative writing as are known from the spontaneous confessions of some other authors when they almost childishly try to answer the question: why do I write? In his explanation of the poetics of prosaic text, Stanislav Rakús adopts a purely rational and economic attitude. Actually, he only says about the poetics of prosaic text what he can immediately document by extracts from the fictions of Milo Urban, František Švantner, Alfonz Bednár, Franz Kafka, Tadeusz Nowak, Bohumil Hrabal, and Vachtang Anaňan. The genres, on which S. Rakús focuses his attention within the bulks of writing of the afore-mentioned authors, are open towards their type. The involved texts range from short story (Milo Urban, Guy de Maupassant, Vachtang Anaňan), through novella (Bohumil Hrabal, František Švantner), to novel (Tadeusz Nowak, Alfonz Bednár, Franz Kafka, František Švantner, Milo Urban).

Publishing his book *Poetics of Prosaic Text. Material, theme, problem, shape*. S. Rakús announced the academic public and scholarly public that he delivered "his own" theory of prosaic text into the context of literary studies. That the theory is his own is to be convincingly proved by the "terminological system" which is being introduced in the process of work with a literary text as an object of research. The attention focuses exclusively on the text itself which is suggested by the fact that an author of a particular literary text in Rakús' theory acquires only the position determined for him/her in advance. Thus, the author, too, becomes just an object of literary research, though the text - when being analyzed - no longer depends on his/her authorial will and intention.



The "terminological system" by which S. Rakús supports originality of his theory was probably created under a partial influence of the inventive scholarly thinking of Peter Zajac (*Creativity of Literature*, Tvorivos' literatúry, 1990; *Pulsing of Literature*, Pulzovanie literatúry, 1993) as a result of interdisciplinary communicative and cognitive space for sciences and arts. In this way, a literary text has become an object for symbiotic expression of openness and communicativeness, as well as impulsiveness of modern art (e.g. in Post-modernism).

In *Poetics of Prosaic Text* S. Rakús utilized the contacts with the "terminological system" of psychology (the concept of penetrance); with the system of theories and concepts which were in the 20<sup>th</sup> century introduced into social sciences by various ways of sciences and arts by e.g. Erich Fromm, Mikhail M. Bakhtin, František Miko, and others. Rakús applied their concepts and ideas in such a way that they best suit his, Rakús' theory of functioning of literary material, theme, problem, and shape in his (Rakús') conception of organization of a prosaic utterance and morphology of an epic text.

The crucial notions with which S. Rakús operates in his "terminological system" may also be perceived as a dialogue of equal components "before" a text, "in" a text, and "after" a text.

Exterior of a text in Rakús' theory involves "communication" between the author and a reader. Stanislav Rakús claims that: "The author constructs a unique reality in order to enable a reader to see, to feel, to experience what in the known and possible world without the aesthetic, artistic intervention they did not notice and did not see clearly enough". The fact that S. Rakús refers to a reader, to his/her aesthetic entrance into the world of a literary text, humanizes his *Poetics of Prosaic Text* not only in relation to the author of a text but equally so in regard to the time and space where the text "penetrates", "renews", and "actualizes" its functioning in the literary life of any national culture in various social times and contexts.

S. Rakús in his *Poetics of Prosaic Text* intends to secure the sui generis autonomy of a text and also an author's ad rem by what he names a theory of literary material, theme, problem, and shape. S. Rakús wants to "try to contribute to the study of the issue of a literary work origination, to the questions of production and authorial method, as well as to the interpretation of both the nature of literary text and its intentionality". However, he does not link the intentionality of a text with its specific functions. He rather focuses on the intention of an author to communicate with a reader, be this imitated or illustrated or

supposed "dialogue" between an author and a reader of any quality but inevitably on both sides.

A prosaic work (literary work) was created according to certain structural and compositional, and also poetological, aesthetic, and philosophical principles. The principles of origination of a literary text are contained in Rakús' "terminological system" in dialogues: theme and literary material, problem and problematics, appropriateness and inappropriateness.

The genesis of these dialogues is anchored in the notion of literature itself because for S. Rakús "a literary work ontologically is itself". A literary work originates as a consequence of "reality". The "external" reality has its expression in both authentic life and artistic "materials". The "internal" reality of a prosaic text is reflected through its theme and plot. The literary material and theme in a literary text may coincide only on condition that the text is a verbatim thematic citation of the "material prototext": what is meant here are quotations from a book of a different author in another book of another author, then there are documents of sci-tech, non-art literature in a literary text, plagiarist loans - thus the approaches of postmodern exploitation of the morphology of literature in the semantics of a "new" literature.

According to S. Rakús, between literary material and theme "a complex process of shaping" takes place, nevertheless, in the poetics of a prosaic text the notion of problem and derived from it notions of appropriateness and problematics are of fundamental significance. S. Rakús claims that he considers problem and problematics to be "elastic terms which are consistently literarily interlinked and have their own textual parameters". These may cause that "antinomy" will arise between appropriateness and inappropriateness of the involvement of problem in a literary text. Such possibility is directly connected with the exterior of literary text for: "literature is a more problematic phenomenon than life".

*Poetics of Prosaic Text* actualizes some other notions from the "terminological system", too. Out of the dominant ones, apart from literary material, theme, problem, and shape, we should again highlight shaping, and the external and internal realities (these have already been dealt with). The reason is that S. Rakús applies other, "supporting" notions as well which include: aesthetic naturalness, literary space, authorial type, genre antinomy, genus of a literary work, poetological and interpretational approaches to a literary text, method, the high and the low, empirical modelling of fantasy elements, the semantic and the



communicational in a text, and other notions of the traditional theory of prosaic text.

*Poetics of Prosaic Text* is an authorial theory of prosaic text worked out by Stanislav Rakús. Its author is the one who wants to absorb simultaneously two roles into his subject and intellect, and who wants to do so in a balanced way. One of the ambitions of the author is to be accepted on both sides of the equation: literary studies – literary art. On the one side there stands Stanislav Rakús in the role of a literary scholar, who focuses on details of literary text in order to support Stanislav Rakús, the fiction writer, who is an author of short genres of fiction (short story, novella) where “everything” concentrates into a moral dramatic code, into the knowledge of the mystical in a human being. It can be concluded that detail united the scholar and the fiction writer Stanislav Rakús in the project of his authorial theory of fiction.

## POETYKA TEKSTU PROZA

### Streszczenie

W szkicu przywołano pomysły teoretyczne Stanisława Rakusa aplikowane w praktyce literackiej. Owe pomysły dotyczą realacji między twórcy, tematem, problemem i konstrukcją jako podstawowymi kategoriami struktury tekstu prozaicznego.