

STEFANIA SKWARCZYŃSKA'S SCHOLARLY WORK

It is a difficult and highly responsible task to present adequately the meaning and rank of research achievements of such an outstanding scholar as was late Professor Stefania Skwarczyńska. Just evaluations of the works of renowned, world-famous scholars always require detailed reports. That is why brief summaries turn up but far-going reductions in the realm of problems raised in their works, which necessarily involves unavoidable simplifications.

Stefania Skwarczyńska's achievements in the theory of literature are especially important for genology, a discipline concerned with literary genres and forms; for literary studies methodologies (especially their histories); and for comparative studies (theoretical in particular). The present shape of the theory of literature as an independent discipline is largely indebted to Skwarczyńska's work.

Skwarczyńska's another important contribution lies in the theory of theatre.

A survey of Skwarczyńska's work should also include the fact that as a scholar she would often take the lead of not only domestic but also foreign researches. Therefore it seems indispensable to give justice to her pioneering conceptions that have exerted a permanent influence on the development and perspectives of the disciplines belonging to the theory of literature and the theory of theatre. With the flow of time her ideas, hypotheses, concepts and solutions still hold valid in all areas she dealt with.

It was already in the '30s that Stefania Skwarczyńska defined the autonomy of the theory of literature: she did this in her fundamental publications of the period, e.g. in *Przedmiot, metoda i zadania teorii literatury* (*Subject, method and objectives of the theory of literature*), 1938. She also gave her work an organizational shape, when in 1939 she became chairperson of the Department of Literary History (which in fact was also the department of literary theory) of the Łódź Branch of the Free Polish University (Wolna Wszechnica Polska). This became an act of foundation of the theory of literature as an independent, autonomous discipline. The importance of that fact was also discerned by Jan Kazimierz

University in Lwów, where Skwarczyńska was offered lecturing just in the theory of literature.

Working on novel theoretical problems Skwarczyńska would, as a rule, give them organizational or editorial sanctions—as was the case of genology: in 1958 she established “Zagadnienia Rodzajów Literackich” (Problems of Literary Genres), where a separate section was reserved for the materials meant for a future dictionary of literary genres. Skwarczyńska broadened the problem of literary genres and forms through establishing connections between literature and other arts, and forming thus what could be called as comparative studies in the theory of literature, but also as semiliterary comparative studies in arts—all this presented in her *Wstęp do nauki o literaturze (Introduction to the theory of literature)*, 1965.

THEORY OF LITERATURE. GENOLOGY

The knowledge of literary genres and forms is a discipline that for centuries—and not less so in the last hundred years—has produced volumes of research materials and a variety of theoretical standpoints. S. Skwarczyńska's interest in genology was motivated (among other reasons) by anarchy and inconsistencies in terminological systems which became evident at the Congress in Lyon, not to mention general, pragmatic applications. Thus, it can be said quite safely that the value of Skwarczyńska's theory was unprecedented. An important promise of her later achievements in this field were her dissertations of the '30s, with *O pojęciu literatury stosowanej (On the term of applied literature)*, 1931, among them: Skwarczyńska's theory presented in that paper was antecedent to Abercrombie's *Principles of Literary Criticism*, 1932. As a student of the most famous professors of literature—W. Bruchnalski, E. Kucharski, J. Kleiner—Skwarczyńska drew original conclusions from their works to soon present her own, definitely novel idea of genology. She brought forth a thesis according to which improvisation, conversation or letter—i.e. forms of practical use, unrecognized so far by poetics—are the forms of what was earlier termed as applied literature. Later, Skwarczyńska negated the then existent division into the so called pure literature and applied literature, this because of indeterminacy of that divisions' criteria. Or topical significance in that trend of research was her monograph *Teoria listu (Theory of letter)*, 1937. Skwarczyńska's further research in that field—problems of high and applied literature being in the centre—conditioned basically her understanding of literature as related with other written or oral productions. Skwarczyńska's genological theory, developed through decades of her scholarly activities, reached precision in the 3rd volume of the afore-mentioned *Introduction*. That genological summa offered definitions of such genological notions as gen-

re, subgenre, variation, subject, genological term and name as well as the determinants of the genre structure. The determinants were, in a word, synonymous of such categories as sender, recipient, subject, material, intent, function, situation, and style—all those being closely interrelated. Also, the work offered a new systematics of literary genres: didactic-moralizing, epic, lyric, and ludicautotelic. The Author emphasized the view that the ontic base of genological subjects (genres) lies in concrete linguistic structures, in concrete works.

The then novelty and today's validity (after over two decades) of Skwarczyńska's theoretical findings, have been confirmed by what she said about the constituents of a literary work: about language, fabric, rationality of the utterance, its intentionality towards the recipient whom it is meant to affect with its properly encoded function. The utterance is always conditioned by situation and by time understood as a moment in history. The idea of the literary work as a linguistic construction was presented at length—and in accordance with the theories of European linguistics—in the second volume of *Introduction*.

In S. Skwarczyńska's genological theory the notions of genre and subgenre comprise not only literature, journalism, various types of literary and oral creations, but also other—not necessarily linguistic—cultural productions, "every message worked out in a given material". (*Introduction*, v. III, p. 115). Such a wide understanding of genology provided the Author with a ground on which to institutionally establish the ties between multi-material arts and literature—this being effectuated through research and teaching carried out in the Institute of the Theory of Literature, Theatre and Film (sections of the theory of literature, drama, theatre, film, radio, TV).

The afore-mentioned undertakings do not comprise the totality of Skwarczyńska's achievements in the field of genology. At the very beginnings of her scholarly career she worked out wide-scale projects inspired by the idea to compile A Dictionary of Literary Genres with 300 entries. Later, in 1958, she founded and edited successively an international, seven-language semiannual "Problems of Literary Genres", which periodical—circulating throughout the world—has earned for itself a high reputation among the top specialists in the field. (This is proved, among others, by the opinions cited in No 25, vol. 3, 50, p. 8—10.) The periodical served as a model for the American "Genre", and the influence of "Problems" in Europe led, among others, to the formation of centres of literary theory concentrating on genological questions, as in Bratislava and Zagreb.

METHODOLOGY OF LITERARY THEORY

Undoubtedly, another significant contribution to the theory of literature are Skwarczyńska's articles, commentaries, historical anthologies

of theoretical tendencies—all this completed with *Systematyka głównych kierunków w badaniach literackich* (Systematics of the main trends in literary theory), 1948; *Teoria badań literackich za granicą* (Theory of literary studies abroad), V. I. Part I 1965, Part II 1966, V. II, Part I 1974, Part II 1981, Part III 1986, Part IV 1986; *Kierunki w badaniach literackich* (Tendencies in literary research), 1984; and by her dissertation *Wokół relacji: przedmiot badań literackich a ich metodologia* (On the relation: the subject of literary theories—their methodology), 1975. All of those attest not only the Author's wide and deep knowledge of literary theories (including the whole multitude of concepts together with their historical, factual background; the whole context of interrelations rooted genetically in different disciplines such as philosophy, linguistics or semiotics)—they are also a synthetical presentation showing the development of research conceptions. It is also in this area, then—*Systematics* being a telling example—that Skwarczyńska had secured for herself a forerunner's position, as other Polish publications on the subject appeared afterwards. A completion to the above works is *On the relation...* dealing, among others, with the crisis of concepts of adequacy of the inductive method, and with the prospects of research based on model construction.

The year 1985 saw the publication of *W orbicie literatury, teatru, kultury naukowej* (In the circle of literature, theatre, culture of science), in which the dissertation *Genologia na tle współczesnej sytuacji w badaniach literackich* (Genology against the background of the current state of literary research) constitutes not only a survey of the newest methodological concepts (including both methodological suggestions and multiple bibliographic items concerning methodology that the 3rd volume of *Introduction* still lacked) but is a further systematization of the tendencies (methods), forming up a totality of the Author's theoretical system. Her methodological systematics and genological conceptions give basis for comparative studies in the theory of literature. What is important in this respect is not the very idea of such studies but also their concrete shape. A conspicuous evidence of that was Skwarczyńska's way of organizing and developing the Institute of the Theory of Literature, Theatre and Film with its specialized departments meant for materializing her theoretical conceptions. The assumption was that the theory of literature cannot engulf the theories of theatre, film, etc., but is the primary constituent of what in theatre, film and other arts is linguistically determined.

COMPARATIVE LITERARY STUDIES

It seems important to mention that Skwarczyńska's conceptions arose from her philological and genological dissertations based on thorough explorations in literature: in her studies the Author would always empha-

size historical context and factual documentation. That is perhaps why the totality of her work is indeed impressive (monographs, studies, compendia, dissertations, articles and reviews count more than 500 items). Impressive, too, is their both thematic and stylistic variety: they refer to Polish, French, German and other national literatures. Driving, as a rule, towards theoretical generalizations Skwarczyńska discusses various Polish and foreign writers of different epochs as, for instance, Renaissance (Kochanowski—Ronsard); Romanticism (Słowacki, Krasiński, Norwid, yet first of all Mickiewicz, Schiller, Goethe and other German authors of the period; in this, too, she includes a wide range of French literature related to Mickiewicz and Lamennais); Modernism (S. Wyspiański, S. Przybyszewski, J. Weysenhoff, K. H. Rostworowski, B. Leśmian); finally, the Inter-War Period (J. Liebert, J. Andrzejewski, T. Hollender, J. Zawieyski, A. Kuśniewicz). Similarly wide is in Skwarczyńska's research the picture of French literature, covered with dissertations on B. Pascal, D. Diderot, J. J. Rousseau, Bernardin de Saint-Pierre, V. Hugo, S. Mallarmé, P. Claudel, M. Pagnol, R. M. du Gard, B. Vian, A. Robbe-Grillet.

THEATROLOGY

Consequent on S. Skwarczyńska's scholarly interest are numerous suggestions for the theories of drama and theatre, her other domains. The first symptom of that was her dissertation *Systematyka zjawisk twórczego słowa* (*Systematics of the creative word phenomena*), 1946, treating on a new approach to drama, which (as a result) was not included in the later systematics of literary genres as presented in the 3rd volume of *Introduction*. In the said dissertation Skwarczyńska adopted some conclusions derived from J. Kleiner's publications such as *Istota utworu dramatycznego* (*The essence of the dramatic work*). Soon afterwards, however, Skwarczyńska put forth a thesis—presented in her *Zagadnienia dramatu* (*Problems of drama*), 1949—according to which a play is a heteronomic object. Acknowledging the play's literary (text) version Skwarczyńska defined it as a work to be put on stage to achieve a fulfillment-theatrical phenomenon resulting from the interaction of diverse (apart from language) materials: actor with his/her mimicry and gestures; scenic movement; space; time; lighting; decorations; mis-en-scène. A considerable share in that theory had (except Kleiner's) the views of English (Craig) and Russian theoreticians and stage directors, though the Polish influence—W. Horzyca's, J. Osterwa's, L. Schiller's—seem to be predominant. Dramatic interpretation's far-going independence of the author's idea of the play was postulated by Skwarczyńska in *der Leona Schillera trzy interpretacje "Nie-Boskiej Komedii"* (*Leon Schiller's three mis-en-scènes of "Nie-Boska Komedii"*).

Skwarczyńska's later studies in drama were a continuation of her standpoint in that matter (dramatic work as a theatrical piece), since they discussed the consequences of the above assumption. The studies in question, such as *O typologię dzieł sztuki teatralnej ze względu na stopień ich odchylenia od dramatycznych tekstów* (For a typology of theatrical works in respect of their deviations from literary text); *Znaki teatralne i fraza w komunikacji teatralnym o fabule dramatycznej* (The atrical signs and phrase in a theatrical message of plot types); *Swoisty status recenzji teatralnej* (A peculiar quality theatrical review), were all included in the afore-mentioned *In the circle of literature, theatre and culture of science*.

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Of this profusion of Stefania Skwarczyńska's publications 50 appeared in foreign languages: French, German, Russian, English, Slovak, Hungarian, Italian. Within her oeuvre are 24 books, each of around 500 pages, all testifying to her thorough and insightful erudition. Among them, Skwarczyńska's three-volume *Introduction to the Theory of Literature* (1954—1965) is—in the view of top authorities—of unprecedented value in comparison with other works on the subject (W. Kayser's *Das sprachliche Kunstwerk* or R. Wellek and R. Warren's *Theory of Literature* for that matter). Opinions as the above are based both on the thematic range and the whole design of "Introduction".

Stefania Skwarczyńska's concepts of literature and theatre bred controversies in the past and continue to do so nowadays, which is a telling evidence of their value and influence. What was defying to the many in the past has in numerous points been accepted today as an obvious reality. Consequently, the impact of Skwarczyńska's findings and postulates is unquestionable: apart from her students (many of them being professors in various university centres such as Wrocław, Lublin, Katowice, Łódź) they have influenced a good deal of literary theoreticians, some of them being continuators of her research problems. The significance of Skwarczyńska's creativity in the field of literary theory places her work among such renowned representatives of the discipline as J. Kleiner, R. Ingarden, R. Jakobson and others of that rank.

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