

tem kroniki historycznej; w *Brzegu* gatunek „obcy” to tradycyjna powieść filozoficzna.

Zamykający książkę rozdział „Historyczne systemy gatunków” sumuje podobieństwa i różnice między prozą lat 60-tych a 70-tych. Różnice świadczą o przełomie w rozwoju świadomości artystycznej, podobieństwa (kolejność aktywizacji poszczególnych gatunków: od opowiadania do epickiej, powieściowej syntezy) — o systemowym charakterze diachronii gatunków w granicach okresu historycznoliterackiego. Dalsze rozumowanie Leidermana przebiega następująco: jeżeli gatunki w określonej epoce tworzą system, można już mówić o istnieniu kierunku literackiego. Znaczącym momentem tworzenia się nowego kierunku jest wyeksponowanie gatunku głównego, który nabiera charakteru zasady metagatunkowej. Taką zasadą dla form z kręgu realizmu stanowi powieściowość. Realizm socjalistyczny, zrodzony na początku wieku jako tendencja ideowo-artystyczna, z chwilą wytworzenia systemu gatunków upowieściowionych stał się kierunkiem literackim.

W kierunku tym wyróżnia autor trzy zakorzenione w tradycji nurty: realistyczny, romantyczny i dydaktyczny (uczucielnij), zwany też oświeceniowo-racjonalistycznym. Przypomina ich genezę i rozwój do lat 70-tych włącznie; wskazuje na stopniowe wzajemne przenikanie tych nurtów w indywidualnych strukturach gatunkowych, aż do współwystępowania w prozie lat 70-tych. W tym okresie nastąpiła „pora dojrzałości realizmu socjalistycznego w literaturze radzieckiej”, bowiem „żaden z kierunków literackich poprzednich epok nie był w stanie wchłonąć w siebie tylu i w sposób tak organiczny tradycji swoich poprzedników” (s. 247).

Zaletą recenzowanej pracy jest udowodnienie skuteczności nauki o literaturze — w tym przypadku zwłaszcza idei genologicznych Bachtina — przy analizie współczesnego procesu literackiego. Poszczególne gatunki prozy radzieckiej uzyskały kontekst „łańcucha genetycznego”, ich wyznaczniki strukturalne omawiane są w rozwoju i we współdziałaniu, w sposób drobiazgowy.

Książka Leidermana rozczarowuje tam, gdzie spodziewalibyśmy się — zgodnie z sugestiami tytułu i wstępu do kolejnych rozdziałów — odpowiedzi na pytania ogólne z zakresu teorii rodzajów czy teorii procesu historyczno-

literackiego. Odpowiedzi te z konieczności muszą być jednostronne, bowiem powstają w efekcie badawczego oglądu jednej tylko literatury narodowej. Leidermanowi nie zawsze też udaje się uniknąć błędów, które wskazał kilkanaście lat temu Aleksiej Buszmin (*Metodologiczne zagadnienia literaturoznawstwa*, 1966), charakteryzując literaturoznawstwo radzieckie. Przeświadczenia na temat badanego przedmiotu tworzone są niekiedy apriorycznie, w następnej dopiero kolejności autor rekonstruuje sam przedmiot (tak już we wstępie na s. 4, w wyjaśnieniu, dlaczego w pracy dotyczącej współczesnego procesu literackiego będzie brana pod uwagę tylko proza; tak w uwagach o opowieści liryczno-psychologicznej (s. 80), gdzie aprioryzm prowadzi do kryptowartościowania jednego z wyznaczników gatunku — dominanty lirycznej). Ponadto u podstaw najwyższej autorskiej oceny ostatniego dziesięciolecia realizmu socjalistycznego tkwi nakładanie dwu pojęć: etapu historycznego i poziomu rozwoju artystycznego. Jak pisał A. Buszmin, wyższość pierwszego z nich niekoniecznie musi iść w parze z doskonałością, dojrzałością drugiego. Jeśli weźmiemy to pod uwagę, wnioski końcowe książki dają materiał do dyskusji.

Grażyna Szymczyk-Kluszczyńska, Łódź

John Sutherland, *BESTSELLERS, POPULAR FICTION OF THE 1970'S*. Routledge and Kegan Paul. London—Boston—Henley 1981, 268 pp. including the CHECKLIST OF FICTION, BIBLIOGRAPHY OF NON-FICTION and INDEX.

John Sutherland (also the author of *Fiction and Fiction Industry*, 1978, and works on British novelists and publishers—all published by the Athlone Press) works as Reader in English at University College, London. In his recent book on the popular fiction of the past decade he promises to present us with a 'series of critical readings' of the most spectacularly bestselling novels, readings informed by the consciousness of their inextricability from their host culture and productive machinery.

A defence of the bestseller, which appears in the Introduction, elucidates the background

of the instinctive shrinking from any serious literary criticism of that sphere of literature in the latest publications on modern novel. A customary briefing on the state of bestseller studies follows, with explanations on the use of the term 'bestseller' by authors like A. P. Hackett, F. L. Mott and R. Escarpit. Mr Sutherland also stresses the neutrality and lack of pejorative undertones in his own understanding of the word.

The bestseller is, according to the author, better comprehensible by an examination of the phenomena inalienably accompanying its appearance (e.g. bestsellers' lists, the media, the large scale publishing industry, marketing etc.). Hence it follows that the bestseller cannot escape commercial rationalization, that it is more a novel commodity to be marketed in bulk through crushing the resistance of the consumers than an intellectual service to be passively offered by booksellers. The success theorist Michael Korda seems to endorse the idea when suggesting that 'the book that sells best is best' (p. 21). Brutally materialistic as the statement sounds, it is shown to be the reflection of the publishing ethos of today.

Chapter I offers a comprehensive insight into the characteristics of 'bestsellerism', with keywords like paperback, book awards and bestseller lists, self-service racks, blockbusters, marketing à la mode Americaine et al. expounded here. The subsequent discussion of the gradual invasion of modern book-industry methods on the British and continental publishing business, with their ideals of 'disinterested and unenumerative patronage' and 'mystique of distinct house personality', is both interesting and amusing. We are offered a panoramic view of British publishing world, beginning with Victor Gollanz and ending with remarks on the unavoidable Americanization of such institutions as Penguin and W. H. Smith. The "New York Times" Book Review list of the Decade's Top Ten closes the chapter.

The next and last theoretical part of the book presents a closer discussion of the bestseller as a genre. That it is in paperback, commonly tied to the film industry or TV, often precategorized and hyped, supranational, marketed and sold by millions is nothing new. But there are two more features stressed as essential: the bestseller's all-or-nothing natu-

re (a book which everyone is reading now or no one any more) and the lack of any generic sense of sustained progress in the life of the genre or the career of the author (note the contrast between 'the latest Harold Robbins' and 'Lawrence's latest novels'). Yet, Mr Sutherland's decisive criterion for including particular books into his study is the economic one. As a result what follows in his work is a medley of comments on individual titles, dressed with the rich gravy of backstage (or rather backpress) detail and ruminations over areas of cultural life related to bestsellerdom. In the author's opinion general categorization of such varied texts is not possible, and indeed is not attempted. Still, works discussed are often grouped thematically and the author's mind follows the route established in Chapter III on Mario Puzo's *Godfather*.

The novelist's background, experience, attitude to work having been considered, the reader is allowed to rummage among such secrets of his workshop as the schedule and methods of work, literary traditions employed, plots commonly used, gratifications they allow etc. Remarks on the habitual readership and the 'social issue' the works dwell on lead on to fascinating information on the market situation and marketing activities. All lavishly seasoned with summaries and blurbs. According to this pattern we are shown Mario Puzo confessing how he has realized 'it was time to grow up and sell out' in order to be able to write the books he really wanted to write. This attitude, so typical among popular novelists, is immediately repeated in the person of Francis Coppola, the author of the film version of *Godfather* (allegedly surpassing its literary progenitor, which is a common enough phenomenon in the mutual relations of printing and the film industry). Puzo's social issue is the relation between crime and power, while the method employed for reviving it in fictional form is that of 'privileged insight' (the reader is allowed flattering access to a hermetic world) and 'researched historicity' (scores of factual detail to enhance plausibility). The novel's drawing on and refreshing of the gangster cliché is largely responsible for its overwhelming success.

The dramatic persona of chapter IV is Arthur Hailey. An epitome of the bestselling novelist, he possesses an immense sense of



the international book market, is closely related to television and writes according to a clearly defined formula, in its 'privileged insight' and 'researched fact' aspects reminiscent of Puzo. Hailey's special flavour comes through the strong 'human interest' and melodrama element, as well as the truly meticulous research which precedes the writing of his novels (*Wheels, Hotel, Airport, The Moneychangers*). What Hailey is said to give the reader is universal experience of big social issues, spiced with decent sex—a book for everybody. His books flatteringly allure with a sense of providing unique knowledge. He 'put a whole world into your hands', the world of the American dream come true—progressive, positive, appealing to an average mind.

There are only three more names to deserve, in the eyes of Mr Sutherland, separate treatment—Alistair MacLean, James Clavell (Chapter IX) and Harold Robbins (Chapter XI). MacLean's fiction is aimed at visualizing the dreams of middle-class and middle-aged masculine readers. Chaste plots, decent language and lack of exuberant violence will offend no consumers' standards. The narrative formula consists in creating a closed situation which provokes conflicts of will and where the tension is heightened by the presence of a traitor. The manly code of action is explored to the utmost. J. Clavell's books, as Mr Sutherland argues, run parallel to Hailey's but 'on a higher plane', this last point being never clarified or justified.

Harold Robbins is shown to be the practitioner of the main form of the modern bestseller—the roman à clef. The familiar tactics of revealing secret worlds acquires a special piquancy here, where the heroes are recognizable superstars of life, and their iron will, amorality, sexual prowess and machismo are unveiled by one of their set ('Robbins, many times millionaire himself, flits around in such a world', p. 127).

The next chapter abounds in preposterous summaries of more books of the same kind. Historical and social reasons of the demand for those 'presidential delinquency' novels, with fornicating Kennedys and lying Nixons superstarring in them, are also given. Besides *The Greek* (by P. Rey, it are the only Europe-born internationally recognized bestseller), with its magnified sex, the base values of the

gossip column and all kinds of taboo-intensified fantasies, we find a discussion of J. Ehrlichmann's *The Company* (known in its televised version as *Washington: Behind Closed Doors*) and a few more synopses of other plots of the sub-genre, often disarmingly absurd.

Two other chapters of J. Sutherland's book deal with individual titles treated as separate phenomena in the book industry—*Star Wars* (Chpt. VIII) and *Jaws* (Chpt. X). The former is presented in a motley of details about this 'film/book multi-media smash hit circus' (p.89). It is shown to be a commodity, a 'broad spectrum family entertainment' to be produced according to demand. The same concerns *Jaws* and the other 'ecology novels', full of swarms of bees, herds of wild dogs or rats, clouds of bats or regiments of spiders. In the same way as *Star Wars* satisfies people's need for escapist, infantile, happy-ending fun, stripped of logic or realism, so the animal narratives are supposed to gratify the doomwatching syndrome and appease the thirst for sinister horror. *Jaws* represents the trend of disaster-chillers (Chapter XXIII), comparatively well represented in film versions in this country. Through giving the audience the sense that 'they are all in it', works of this group are said to perform an important social therapeutic function. There is constant demand for the nemesis and catharsis combination they offer.

One of the most interesting lines in popular fiction Mr Sutherland touches upon is women's fiction. The first of the two chapters devoted to it (VI and VII) dissects 'the efficient, broad-appeal product' of Colleen McCullough—*The Thorn Birds*. After a valuable introduction on the place of women writers and readers in the modern popular fiction world, one finds a list of factors which made for the novel's success among the female public. Could, the author argues, the novel which combines the formulae of the national epic, family saga, high-life novel and "forbidden love" romance, enriched with a female emancipation plot, remain unnoticed by the realistic and unheroic woman of today? In Chapter VIII J. Sutherland points out the bipolarity existing in the body of women's fiction. The split into the 'liberation' and 'female masochism' novels is documented historically and explained sociologically, on

the basis of the works of such authors as Lois Gould, Marge Piercy, Erica Yong on the one hand and Barbara Cartland, Rosemary Rodgers, Kathleen Woodiwiss on the other.

The remaining bulk of popular fiction in the 1970's appears to the author's mind as a number of thematic streams, diversified but also overlapping. The "romance of vigilantism" (Chapter XIV; both B. Garfield's *Death Wish* and A. Burgess' and S. Kurbik's *Clockwork Orange* are classified here) seems to approach the 'new western' (e.g. J. Mac Laglen's *Herne the Hunter*) and the 'alternative universe' novels. The documentary and super-documentary fiction (Chpt. XXII) is reminiscent of Hailey as well as the roman à clef. The nightmare and medicare horror stories border on the 'demonic frighteners'. There remain 'secret histories', 'nightmare today' and 'fashionable crime' novels—and the thematic map of the bestselling fiction of the past decade will, according to Mr Sutherland, be complete.

The survey of topics appearing in the popular fiction turns out to cover all the well-known areas of sensation, gossip, crime, the supernatural, war stories, melodrama and so on. Yet these hackneyed literary traditions, human interests and narrative clichés are, as the author notices, always made look novel and up-dated. The eternally human and the immediately involving coexist to account for the eerie spell and thus massive success of the books that embody them.

The information most precious for Polish readers concerns the working of the book industry and the figures of the bestselling authors themselves. Research assistants, royalties, the institutions of the novelist, promotional media blitzes constitute the essence of modern publishing, and everybody connected with bibliography and publishing will find the information indispensable for comprehending the modern publishing world. The book is also entertaining thanks to the medley of hilarious synopses and blurbs it contains. Yet these often make one forget about the critical purpose of the work (even the author's critical attitude is often blurred or lost as he wonders in the jungle of anecdote, quoted texts and own assertions, not always documented). It is sometimes difficult to find logic in the arrangement of the huge factual material, the

structuring of the work seeming to be not always convincingly consistent. Also it is surprising to find the author carried away by his personal impressions about one of the novelists, manifest in the incisively satirical tone in the chapter devoted to him, in an academic work like this. The main objection one may raise against the book, though, is that it does not enquire into the essence of the bestseller as literature and art, and that the enigma of the difference between 'popular fiction' and 'literature' is somehow overlooked. What the book does is that it provides precious hints towards the answer to the problem (especially in the part devoted to the nature of a popular fiction author's work, his attitude to and idea of what he is doing, and the relation between the reading public and the author) as well as factual basis to work on. The critical effort is thus left to the reader, most of all the reader specifically involved in bibliological and literary studies, for whom the book will be a spring-board for further discussion and a mine of information on the latest trends in the world of modern publishing. Thanks to its loose style the work may also be enjoyed by 'laymen' interested in the problems of contemporary culture and the direction it is taking. Both groups of readers will find the bibliography of non-fiction a guide to the state of popular fiction and popular culture studies, sparse as they are, and the index (comprizing bestselling titles, names of bestselling authors, actors, publishers, singers, phenomena important in popular culture) a great help in the use of the book. The length of the checklist of fictional titles alluded to in Mr Sutherland's book will amaze everybody and once more certify the ephemerality of the bestseller. It will also confirm the necessity of current and up-to-date documentation and criticism of the genre, possibly of the kind represented by J. Sutherland's *Bestsellers*.

Urszula Tempka, Wrocław

Danuše Kšicova, RUSKÁ POEZIE V INTERPRETACI FRANTIŠKA TÁBORSKÉHO. Univerzita J. E. Purkyně, Brno 1979 (druk 1980), ss. 190+8 s. ilustrací.

Książka Danuše Kšicovej *Poezja rosyjska w interpretacji Františka Táborského* jest