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LATE-MEDIEVAL LITERARY THEORY IN THE LIGHT
OF SOME MODERN LITERARY CONCEPTS

Medieval literature is usually approached either from the viewpoint of historical criticism or that of modern linguistics or reception theory.[1] When it comes to the interpretation of specific literary works, vaguely eclectic approaches are still most frequently to be found. One of the basic methodological issues among medievalists focuses on the choice between the historical and one of the modern approaches. The main proponent of historical criticism, D. W. Robertson, Jr., defines it as "that kind of literary analysis which seeks to reconstruct the intellectual attitudes and the cultural ideals of a period in order to reach a fuller understanding of its literature".[2] More radically, representatives of the historical approach insist on reading medieval poems solely in terms of the critical categories which existed at the time of their composition. Representatives of various modern approaches, on the other hand, sometimes tend to ignore the work's cultural milieu and freely apply modern categories in its interpretation, regardless of the degree of their universality.

Historical criticism usually disregards the difference between literary theory understood as a universal science of literature and the poetics of a given period. Seeking to reconstruct the aesthetic categories of a past epoch, the historical critic identifies himself so unreservedly with his medieval colleague that he tends to forget about his position of an alien observer. Full identification, however, is both illusory and unnecessary. Whereas one must never neglect placing literary phenomena in their proper cultural context, which is always historical, one should not at the same time abandon the position

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[1] The purely linguistic approach is most natably represented by P. Zumthor (cf., above all, Essai de Poétique Médiévale, 1972), the reception theory —by H. R. Jauss (his views, as well as a variety of modern approaches to medieval literature, can be found in "New Literary History", 1979, vol. X).

[2] D. W. Robertson, Jr., *Historical Criticism* (first published in 1950), [in:] *Essays in Medical Culture*, Princeton, 1980, p. 3.

of an external observer in relation to the phenomena under considerationy. Historical criticism in Robertson's sense and such modern literary theory as in sufficiently objective and universal are by no means mutually exclusive. What seems inappropriate is the application of modern cultural categories to the products of another, entirely distinct culture. [3]

In the case of many late-medieval vernacular writers it is extremely difficult or even impossible to establish any specific poetics which may have informed their works. This is often so because the only material at our diaposal is the work itself, or because so little is known about a given period that no clear links between critical opinion and literary production can be set up with certainty. Conclusions concerning a poet's literary awareness can then be made solely on the basis of internal evidence, and literary theory applied to his works must, of necessity, remain at the level of generality.

Nevertheless, some attempts have been made recently to explore late--medieval poetics as it was articulated outside of medieval literary works themselves. This research is all the more valuable as until not long ago the notion of late-medieval poetics had been rather vague. *Princeton Encyclopedia of Poetry and Poetics*, for example, remains silent on the subject of late--medieval literary theory and is not able to say much about medieval poetics as a whole. [4] Two scholars have recently challenged the accepted opinion that the age of scholasticism did not produce any literary theory as such: Judson B. Allen has reconstructed on the basis of medieval commentary on secular authors what he calls "the ethical poetic of the later Middle Ages", [5] and A. J. Minnis, working on a corpus of Biblical commentary, has formulated his "medieval theory of authorship". [6] To these two important studies that of Glending Olson may be added as a counterbalance since it focuses upon the entertaining aspect of late-medieval literature, as opposed to the moral and instructive one. [7]

These three studies, and especially the first two, and the medieval commentary printed in them are going to be our chief source for medieval poetics.

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[3] For example, one of the features of the twentieh-century literature is the development of metafiction and deconstruction. Some critics try to apply these fashionable approaches to medieval literature and to language (cf. e. g. Robert M. Jordan, *Lost in the Funhouse of Fame: Chaucer and Postmodernism:* "The Chaucer Review", 1983, Vol. XVIII, pp. 100—115; or S. Manning, *"Troilus", Book V; Intention and the Poem as Process* "The Chaucer Review", 1981, Vol. XVIII, 4, pp. 288—303. This problem has been discussed by Judson B. Allen in his *Contemporary Literary Theory and Chaucer*, "The Chaucer Newslatter"; 1981, Vol. III, 2, pp. 1—3.

[4] A. Preminger, ed. (London 1975), pp. 636, 479 (the headings: "Poetics, conceptions of" and "Medieval poetics").

[5] Judson B. Allen, *The Ethical Poetic of the Latter Middle Ages: A Decorum of Convenient Distinction*, Toronto 1982.

[6] A. J. Minnis, *Medieval Theory of Authorship: Scholastic Literary Attitudes in the Later Middle Ages*, London, 1984.

[7] G. Olson, *Literature as Recreation in the Later Middle Ages*, Ithaca 1982.

Our task is to collate here such modern accounts of late-medieval poetics as are known to us in order to obtain a picture of the main trends in literary thought which may have influenced the formation of vernacular writers in late-medieval England. Furthermore, we wish to compare certain medieval literary notions with what may be considered to be their modern equivalents. [8] Finally, on the basis of that comparison we shall put forward a hypothetical theoretical model which may serve as a conceptual framework for the analysis of late-medieval poems.

THE LATE-MEDIEVAL CONCEPT OF LITERATURE

One of the basic distinctions of modern literary theory is that between "literature and literary study". [9] This distinction is an example of the more general dichotomy between art and science which are nowadays perceived as entirely different domains of human activity. Differences between them are stated not so much in terms of their respective subject-matters or methods as in terms of their distinct uses of language. [10] Science uses language as an instrument which is supposed to be as precise, neutral and transparent as to enable the scientist to express unambiguously some content which exists apart from language. Literature, on the other hand, makes language its object and has no other content apart from its linguistic form. No matter how the differences between literature and science may be described by philosophers, it is obvious that on the level of common awareness these two spheres of human activity are now separated by an increasing gap. It is, therefore, a striking characteristic of medieval culture that such distinctions did not exist in it. Not only was literary study not isolated as a separate branch of intellectual activity, having as its object literature, but literature itself was treated as a science and attempts were persistently made to fit it into the general system of sciences.

It may be interesting to consider certain implications of the fact that poetry in the Middle Ages was classified among sciences. First of all, being a science implies the distinction between the content or subject-matter on the one hand, and an instrument in which this content is expressed on the other; content, or thought, exists prior to its expression and the instrument of expression

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[8] Sometimes the essential similarity of concepts is disguised under a completely different terminology. This point is developed and illustrated by Wesley Trimpi in *The Ancient Hypothesis of Fiction: An Essay on the Origins of Literary Theory*, "Traditio", 1971, Vol. XXVII, pp. 1—78, esp. 1—2.

[9] Cf. e. g. Chapter One under this title in R. Wellek and A. Warren *Theory of Literature*, London 1982, pp. 15—19.

[10] Cf. e. g. R. Barthes, *Science versus Literature*. TLS, 1967, 28 Sept., pp. 897—898; R. McKeon, *Semantics, Science, and Poetry*, "Modern Philology", 1952, Vol. XLIX, pp. 145——148.

is subordinate to it. The division into expression and content is visible in the ancient and medieval systems of sciences—the separation of Aristotle's *Organon* as a group of instrumental disciplines, and the medieval "contentless" *trivium* comprising grammar, rhetoric, and logic. Secondly, the treatment of poetry as a science leads, of necessity, towards attempts at fitting it into the existent systems of sciences with their established divisions and categories. Thirdly, from the association of science with knowledge it follows that poetry also had to be viewed in terms of the kind of knowledge it provided, and therefore in terms of the categories of "truth" and "falsity" rather than simply that of "fiction". Both specific medieval poems and critical statements about poetry should be seen, at least to some extent, in the light of these implications.

For instance, Judson B. Allen observes, on the basis of some contemporary commentaries, that no distinct category of literature existed in the later Middle Ages and that poems were most frequently classified under ethics. On the basis of this classification, he proposes two interchangeable categories of "ethical poetic" and "poetic ethics" to which he attributes the status of a universal literary theory. "To define poetry is to define ethics", he claims, "and to define ethics in medieval terms is to define poetry". [11] It must be emphasized, however, that the assignment of poetry to ethics, along with other possible classifications which both preceded and succeded those made by late-medieval commentators, was a consequence of the existent system of sciences. In that system sciences were traditionally divided into those which had their specific subject-matter (practical and theoretical philosophy with their respective branches) and those which, not having their own content, served to express all kinds of subjects (grammar, rhetoric and logic). Poetry was classified under one of these two main branches—there was no other choice since systems like this had a long and respectable history and were not particularly susceptible to change. Hence, various attempts were made to incorporate poetry into the existent system.

In the earlier Middle Ages, up to the thirteenth century, poetry was most often regarded as a part of grammar. In the later Middle Ages, however, perhaps as a reaction against the reduction of poems to merely metrical compositions, visible in such treatises on *ars poetica* as Geoffrey of Vinsauf's *Poetria Nova*, poetry came to be commonly classified under ethics. [12] These two tendencies in classifying poetry, one based solely on form, the other on content, illustrate the essential paradox of literary theory which has accom-

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[11] J. B. Allen, *op. cit.*, p. 12.

[12] The shift may have been also connected with revolutionary changes within grammar itself which abandoned its literary preoccupations (that is, the study of the *auctores*) and moved closely towards logic and metaphysics in order to become a universal and philosophical discipline (cf. e. g. G. L. Bursill-Hall, *The Middle Ages*. [in:] *Current Trends in Linguistics*, 1975, Vol. XIII, pp. 179—230.

panied it since its origins to the present day. As Wesley Trimpi has demonstrated, it is in the very origins of literary discourse, which developed around the border between philosophical discourse and rhetorical discourse, that the two opposing attitudes towards literature either as form or as expression take their roots. [13] Trimpi points out that it has always been the function of literary criticism to resist each of these reductive tendencies. [14]

The existence of this paradox, and even some attempts to overcome it, are noticeable also in medieval culture. For instance, the common assignment of poetry to grammar during the twelfth century was accompanied by an independent tendency towards relating grammar to ethics. [15] The fact that ethics was being associated by various thinkers with grammar and rhetoric, which included the study of the *auctores*, may be interpreted as an endeavour to transcend the traditional systemic division between the intrumental and definite disciplines. The same paradox appears clearly in Averroes' commentary on Aristotle's *Poetics*. which was translated into Latin from Arabic in 1256 by Hermannus Alemmanus and which appears to have been the most influential version of the *Poetics* through the late Middle Ages and early Renaissance. Averroes, in accordance with the prevailing medieval fashion, places the *Poetics* among the instrumental sciences of the *Organon*, expressing thereby the view that poetry is a method or a "faculty" of mind without "content". [16] At the same time he persistently assigns the ethical function to poetry arguing that it should always impel the reader either towards the love of virtue or the hatred of vice. Averroes does not realize the incompatibility of these two approaches in terms of the Aristotelian scheme of sciences, and he makes no attempt to resolve the paradox. Such an attempt was made by Thomas Aquinas who in his commentary on the *Posterior Analytics* combined the theory of poetry as logic with its didactic function. St. Thomas argued that poetry, whose purpose is "representation" through "resemblance" (*similitudo*), creates the illusion of beauty or ugliness (this is essentially the same view as that represented by Gundissalinus who in his classification of logic assigned to poetry the purpose of imaginative representation achieved by means of "imaginative" syllogism). [17] The poetic illusion of beauty or

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[13] W. Trimpi, *op. cit.*, pp. 7—8.

[14] W. Trimpi, *The Quality of Fiction: The Rhetorical Transmision of Literary Theory*, "Traditio". 1974, Vol. XXX, p. 2.

[15] This tendency has been thoroughly discussed by P. Delhaye in l'*Enseignement de la Philosophie Morale au XIIe Siècle*, "Mediaeval Studies", 1949, Vol. XI, pp. 77—99, and in "*Grammatica*" *et* "*Ethica*" *au XIIe Siècle*, "Recherches de Théologie Ancienne et Mèdievale", 1958, Vol. XXV, pp. 59—110.

[16] Cf. O. B. Hardison, Jr., "Introduction" to Averroes in: *Clasical and Medieval Literary Criticism: Translations and Interpretations*, ed. by A. Preminger, O. B. Hardison, Jr., and K. Kerrane, New York 1974, pp. 342—343.

[17] Cf. O. B. Hardison, Jr., *The Enduring Monument: A Study of the Idea of Praise in Renaissance Literary Theory and Practice*, Chapel Hill 1962, pp. 13—14.

ugliness produces in the reader the reaction of either desire or repulsion
which, in turn, induces him to virtue or warns him from vice. Thus, St.
Thomas manages to reconcile the theory of poetry as logic with the other
prevalent medieval assertion that it belonged to ethics.

From the viewpoint of literary theory it seems that one of the pitfalls
of the medieval system of sciences inherited from Aristotle is that it made
a sharp division between content and expression encouraging thereby one
of the two extreme views of poetry as grammar, rhetoric or logic on the one
hand, or as a subcategory of moral philosophy on the other. Needless to say,
none of these extreme tendencies should be uncritically followed in our
dealing with medieval poems. That is why we cannot agree with Allen's
opinion that late medieval poetry *was* ethics and ought to be analysed as
such. It is true that the standard question with which any medieval or Re-
naissance discussion of poetry began—"Cui parti phylosophie supponatur?"—
—tended to be frequently answered in the late Middle Ages: "supponitur
arti poetice que supponitur phylosophie morali", [18] but along with this
classification other alternative assignments occasionally appeared. In fact,
this diversity of classifications of poetry persisted through to the Renaissance,
during the fifteenth and into the sixteenth century. [19] Yet even given that
in the later Middle Ages poetry was most often associated with ethics, Al-
len's statement that poetry and ethics were actually completely the same
seems too far-fetched. A separate category of poetry was gradually evolving—
for example, the commentator quoted above first assigns his text to *ars
poetica* which he in turn classifies under ethics. According to the principles
of medieval logic the subject-matter of species can and should be identified
in terms of the subject-matter of its genus but not vice versa. It follows
that whereas it is possible to define the content of poetry in terms of ethics,
a complete identification of the two is a logical error.

To assert that poetry was ethics leads to a paradox of which Allen seems
to be aware when he writes:

Poems, of course, [...] remained the same—all their decorum, virtuosity, textual richness, emo-
tional power, remain. But under the definitions of the medieval critics, they enjoy a different status,
they benefit from a different ideology. They are not literature, but ethics. [20]

This becomes the basic assumption of his ethical poetic. Instead of inter-
preting medieval poetry in ethical categories, and in order to avoid reducing
literature to either its expression or its content, we propose to solve the pa-
radox by adopting the distinction between text and function. [21] The diffe-

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[18] Both the question and the answer are given here as cited by J. B. Allen, *op. cit.*, p. 9.

[19] Cf. B. Weinberg, *A. History of Literary Criticism in the Italian Renaissance*, Vol. I Chi-
cago 1961, pp. 1—37.

[20] J. B. Allen, *op. cit.*, p. XIII.

[21] The distinction has been proposed by Łotman and Piatigorsky for the treatment of all
cultural phenomena. They suggest that a given culture should be investigated from the point

rentiation helps one to see how medieval poems, while retaining their literary character on the level of texts, could be a part of ethics on the level of their function (likewise, we may imagine a situation in which a scientific text fulfills a religious function). Instead of equating literature with ethics, it may therefore be more appropriate to assume that late-medieval poetry had predominantly an ethical function.

Yet it was not its only function, as Glending Olson in his study suggests. His discussion of the recreational function of certain late-medieval literary works counterbalances the frequent emphases on the moral, serious, and didactic aspects of the poetry of that period, yet ultimately testifies to the predominance of ethical concerns in medieval culture. On the one hand, the formula *utilitas est delectatio* [22] reveals the conviction that what is profitable is also delightful, and, according to Dante's comment in *Convivio*, this is the kind of delight which is superior to that coming from mere external beauty [23]. On the other hand, by reversing the above formula and claiming that delight is useful, Olson elaborates the ways in which people in the Middle Ages justified pleasure—he discusses the hygienic and recreational justifications. All this proves that although late medieval literature was not devoid of entertainment, it was still far from acknowledging pleasure as its sole and supreme end. The value of pleasure was in fact inextricably connected with some ethical or medical justification.

This strong moral bent may have been one of the consequences of the medieval treatment of poetry as a science, and hence as a "serious" preoccupation. The diverse and never completely satisfying attempts to classify poetry under some particular categories of the medieval system of sciences point to that system's incapability of incorporating literature. That is why the material for understanding the medieval concept of literature lies scattered among the various branches of knowledge: grammar, rhetoric, logic, ethics, theology, history, and even, we think, music and mathematics. It is by a comprehensive study of the medieval sciences as a whole rather than by following any particular theory that our knowledge of the medieval concept of literature may be significantly increased.

BASIC CONCEPTS OF LITERARY ANALYSIS

Although literary study had not yet developed in the Middle Ages in the form in which it exists today, that is as a separate discipline, many medieval scholars did in fact engage themselves in what may be properly called

of view, of three kjnds of relationships: "subtext (general linguistic) meanings", "text meanings" (i. e. meanings especially valued by a given culture), and "the functions of texts in the given system of culture" Y. M. Łotman and A. M. Piatigorsky, *Text and Function*, "New Literary History", 1978, Vol. IX, 2, pp. 233—244.

[22] G. Olson, *op. cit.*, p. 35.

[23] As cited by G. Olson, ibid., p. 34.

critical literary activity when they wrote their commentaries on the Bible or on the works of secular authors. As it has recently been demonstrated by Allen and Minnis, those commentators employed in their discussion a fairly consistent body of critical idiom. It is our purpose to examine whether there can be found in this critical idiom a conceptual framework sophisticated enough to serve as the basis for the literary analysis of medieval poems. Our point of view in evaluating medieval literary concepts will naturally be determined by the developments of modern literary theory. We can see particular affinity between some late medieval literary concepts and the modern theory of structuralism and semiotics as developed by the Russian scholar Yury M. Łotman and his colleagues from the Moscow-Tartu semiotics school, especially Boris A. Uspensky and A. M. Piatigorsky. [24] Any similarity between medieval and modern literary theory is a matter of general tendencies rather than of precise parallels. The defenders of the historical approach to medieval literature usually object to modern theories on the grounds of their profound aestheticism which is so foreign to medieval culture. Łotman's theory seems to be particularly close to certain medieval notions precisely because of its turn against aestheticism. His definition of a literary work as an information-bearing system which is a materially real thing related to other cultural systems existing outside of it, his concept of art as being inseparably connected with the search for truth, and his treatment of the unique in art as the function of certain repetitions—all these and other more detailed notions reflect something of the spirit of the intense medieval preoccupation with truth and meaning, and of the love of creating systems. We hope that our analysis of specific literary concepts will shed more light on these similarities.

Such study of medieval literary theory as has been done so far concentrates mainly on the problems of meaning (the concepts of *sensus, sententia, allegoria,* etc.) or on narrative structure (the concept of *conjointura*). [25] The recent studies by J. B. Allen and A. J. Minnis stand out in that they strive to reconstruct a more comprehensive medieval literary theory covering all the aspects of the literary work's existence. Of these two studies it is the second which provides a model of the literary work adaptable for nearly all the purposes of literary analysis. The model is based on the four causes, as expounded by Aristotle, which constituted the structure of the so-called "Aristotelian prologue".

The system of the four causes began to be applied, as Minnis demonstra-

[24] For a general presentation of Lotman's views see: R. A. Champagne, *A Grammar of the Languages of Culture : Literary Theory and Y. M. Lotman's Semiotics,* "New Literary History", 1978, Vol. IX, 2, pp. 205—210. For a detailed discussion of Lotman's theory see: A. Shukman, *Literature and Semiotics. A Study of the Writings of Y. M. Lotman,* Amsterdam 1977. Lotman's own most extensive presentation of his views is in his textbook *Analysis of the Poetic Text,* Ann Arbor 1976.

[25] Cf. e. g. D. W. Robertson, Jr., *Some Medieval Literary Terminology, with Special Re-*

tes, in the thirteenth century when it became widely popular and appeared in commentaries on all kinds of works, but especially in Biblical commentaries. The four causes were: *causa efficiens* (the efficient cause), that is, "the author, the person who brought the literary work into being"; [26] *causa materialis* (the material cause), that is, "the literary materials which were the writer's sources"; [27] *causa formalis* (the formal cause), that is, "the pattern imposed by the *auctor* on his materials"; [28] and *causa finalis* (the final cause), that is, "the end or objective (*finis*) aimed at by the writer". [29] It can be easily noticed that the four causes constitute a logically coherent system encompassing all the essential aspects of the existence of a literary work: its creation and the agent of creation (the efficient cause), its internal structure (the formal cause), and its impact upon its audience (the final cause). In addition, the literary work is not seen as a closed structure isolated from its cultural context but it is seen in relation to its literary, and implicitly cultural, background (the material cause). The system provides a logical link between the work's internal structure (its form) and the materials out of which it has been created by defining the former as a characteristic restructuring of the latter. The material cause may be compared to Lotman's notions of "extra-text" through which he stresses the importance of going beyond the linguistic text of a literary work. [30] The notion of extra-text is especially relevant to medieval literature which, according to Lotman, is based on the "aesthetics of identity", that is, its literary works are compared by their readers to certain logical models which are given in advance. The very fact that literature was discussed by medieval commentators in terms of the Aristotelian causes proves that its works were conceived as material realities. This attitude is similar to Lotman's materialist mode of thinking according to which literature is a real and objective phenomenon. [31]

The system of the four causes appears still more sophisticated when its further divisions and interrelationships are considered. First of all, the efficient cause was usually further specified and sometimes as many as three or four agents of a given work were identified by commentators, as well as different kinds of motivation, ranging from personal to divine. Generally speaking, however, all the different types of the efficient cause can be divided into two groups: the external (the personal author, but also, in the case of Biblical books, the Holy Spirit and His divine grace) and the internal. This double division of the efficient cause corresponds to similar divisions of other causes: the formal cause was habitually divided into the *forma trac-*

ference to *Chrétien de Troyes*, [in:] *Essays in Medieval Culture*, pp. 51—72.

[26] A. J. Minis, *op. cit.*, p. 28.

[27] *Ibid.*

[28] *Ibid.*, p. 29.

[29] *Ibid.*

[30] Cf. e. g. Y. M. Lotman, *Le Hors-Texte*, "Change" (Paris), 1970, 6.

[31] Cf. A. Shukman, *op. cit.*, p. 177.

tandi, i.e., "the author's method of treatment or procedure", [32] and the *forma tractatus*,, i.e. "the arrangement or organization of the work, the way in which the *auctor* had stuctured it"; [33] the final cause, in turn, was divided into the external final cause (which was subdivided into the immediate and the remote) and the internal final cause. It can be observed that the general tendency was towards dividing the whole system into its external and internal aspects. Furthermore, there exists commentary evidence that the internal aspects of each of the causes were perceived as very closely related to one another. An anonymous commentator on the *Praedicamenta* states that

the internal efficient cause, is the same as the internal final cause and formal cause, according to what Aristotle says in the *Physics*, that three causes coincide in one. [34]

A master 'Elyas' expresses the same view:

The final cause is double, internal and external. The internal is the same as the form [...]. [35]

Clearly, the efficient and final internal causes are identified by these commentators with the (internal) formal cause; they simply become the function and part of the work's form. The material cause is omitted from this equation and it was not divided into its external and internal aspects. It is not difficult to guess why: the material cause, by definition, lies outside the literary work as such; once within it, it becomes inseparable from the work's form by which it is structured and therefore changed.

The separation of the external and internal aspects of the four causes is convenient from the point of view of literary analysis. First of all, it allows the researcher to delimit the object of his study—the literary work—as opposed to the historical, social, biographical, etc. context in which it was produced and received. Needless to say, such a separation should be regarded only as a heuristic construct for the researcher's sake and it should not lead him to the total abstraction of a literary work from its cultural and personal milieu. The study of the latter, i.e. the study of personal authorship and reception, and of the ways of interaction between historical authors and their audiences, can be subsumed under the external components of the Aristotelian causes; whereas the study of the work's structure belongs to the internal components of the system. None of the two important aspects of a literary work is left out. They are both incorporated into a coherent whole in such a way that they do not have to interfere with, but can illuminate, each other.

The Aristotelian system of the four causes, as a theoretical construct, is sophisticated enough to meet the demands of a complex literary analysis.

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[32] A. J. Minnis, *op. cit.*, p. 29.

[33] *Ibid.*

[34] As cited by A. J. Minnis, *ibid.*, p. 77.

[35] From a commentary on Aristotle's *Topica*, as quoted *ibid.*

Its categories of the internal efficient cause and internal final cause are comparable to the modern categories of the implied author and the implied reader respectively. By equating both of them with the work's formal cause the medieval commentators shed intersting light on the writerly and readerly aspects of the work's single internal structure. [36]

THE NOTION OF FORM

The late-medieval notion of literary form is connected primarily with the *causa formalis* of the so-called 'Aristotelian prologue'. The most obvious difference between this medieval concept of form and the broadly understood modern notion of it is the double character of the medieval formal cause manifest in the distinction between the *forma tractandi* and the *forma tractatus*. Let us consider the meaning of these two notions respectively.

No straightforward medieval definition of the *forma tractandi* exists but the term was a commonplace among commentators, which suggests that its meaning must have been taken for granted. Our procedure will be to infer the meaning from its actual medieval uses. The *forma tractandi* was usually specified in terms of several *modi* and the two designations, i. e. the *forma* and *modi*, could be used interchangeably. They replaced an earlier, twelfth-century designation of literary form, which was *modus agendi*. The *modus agendi* of a given work was commonly described in terms of metre and its types, or of its absence in the case of prose works. When the 'Aristotelian prologue' became popular, the *forma tractandi* with its different *modi* replaced the traditional *modus agendi* and the change seems to have been not just a terminological one.

In their respective discussions of the *forma tractandi* Allen and Minnis employ a variety of terms in order to bring its conceptual content closer to modern literary categories. Thus, the *forma tractandi* is alternately referred to as "literary style or didactic technique" [37] or "the art-that procedure, validated by the nature of things, by which individual things [...] achieve their nature". [38] or as literary genre; the *modi tractandi* are translated as "modes of writing", "diverse literary styles or forms of writing", [39] or as ways of

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[36] Modern literary criticism went through a stage of great interest in interpreting literary works from the point of view of the implied author (which was a reaction against the nineteenth-century biographism). That stage has more recently been followed by a wave of interest in the category of the implied reader, which gave rise to all kinds of reader-oriented approaches. The medieval commentator's identification of the tree internal causes points out that implied author and reader are, in a sense, two sides of the same coin.

[37] A. J. Minnis, *Literary Theory in Discussions of "Formae Tractandi" by Medieval Theologians*, "New Literary History", 1979, Vol. XI, p. 139.

[38] J. B. Allen, *op. cit.*, pp. 79—80.

[39] A. J. Minnis, *op. cit.*, p. 133.

thinking, forms of thought and "those verbal and mental procedures by which a text is made". [40] The very scope of these expressions suggests that it is not at all easy to define the *forma tractandi*—it obviously runs across our modern literary distinctions. For this reason substituting for it such notions as style and genre may cause additional confusion by implying that there is direct equivalence. Let us assume instead that the *forma tractandi* simply means what it says, i. e. the "form of treatment", and that there exist various "manners of treatment".

The word "treatment" is of course very general; it appears even more general if we compare it with other medieval words used in conjunction with the terms *modus* and *forma*: e. g. in the field of grammar there were *modi significandi* ("modes of signifying"), *modi intelligendi* ("modes of understanding") and *modi essendi* ("modes of being"); [41] one could speak of *modus loquendi* ("mode of speaking" or *modus praedicandi* ("mode of preaching"). [42] The term *forma tractandi* is the most general among them (it is more general than its predecessor, the *modus agendi*). This is confirmed by examination of its actual uses.

Dante's description of the *forma tractandi* of the *Divine Comedy* contains at once what may be called mental or intellectual procedures on the one hand and literary procedures on the other:

The form or mode of treatment is poetic, fictional, descriptive, digressive, and metaphoric; and with this it defines, divides, proves, refutes, and gives examples. [43]

The first two specifications seem to define the nature of poetry in general—if translated into modern literary categories, they transcend not only the notion of genre, but also that of literary mode or kind, as well as that of style; they refer to what is now considered to be the *differentia specifica* of literary discourse. The next two categories refer to what is now regarded as parts of narrative—description and digression, and the fifth specification may be understood as a literary trope in the narrow sense and as a quality of poetry in the broad sense. No matter how we interpret each of Dante's "literary" specifications of the *forma tractandi*, we shall not succeed in reducing them to a single modern literary category. The case becomes still more complicated when Dante's second series is taken into account. The only sensible conclusion is that this mixture of diverse literary and logical categories is what could justifiably be brought together under the medieval notion of *forma tractandi*.

The many varying kinds of the *modi tractandi* which are specified in the

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[40] J. B. Allen, *op. cit.*, p. 72.

[41] Cf. e. g. R. H. Robins, *Theory-Orientation versus Data-Orientation*, "Historiographia Linguistica", 1974, Vol. I, pp. 11—26, esp. 16.

[42] Cf. A. J. Minnis, *Medieval Theory of Authorship*, op. cit., pp. 119—145.

[43] From Dante's letter to Cangrande, as cited and translated by J. B. Allen, *op. cit.*, p. 73.

commentary discussions of Biblical books and of secular works may be grouped, we suggest, as follows:

(1) The modes distinctly characteristic of poetry (Dante's *modus poeticus* and *fictivus*; or *modus poeticus* as used by St. Albert the Great in his discussion of the mode of Scripture [44]).

(2) The modes used by human science as ways of attaining to knowledge (*modus definitivus, divisivus, collectivus*—which was sometimes replaced by *modus probativus* and *improbativus*—and also, but not essentially, *modus exemplorum suppositivus*). [45]

(3) The modes used by divine science (especially Scripture) as means of the inculcation of faith, hope, and charity (*modus praeceptivus, exemplificativus, exhortativus, revelativus,* and *orativus*). [46]

(4) Modes which refer to verbal acts

a. alone (e. g. in the two commentaries on the *Thebaid* of Statius quoted by Allen: "exclamat", "declarat", "apostrophat", "describit"; [47] or in hymn-commentaries—"monologi", "invocationis", "supplicativus" [48]);

b. to verbal acts expressing mental or logical procedures (e. g. "comparat", "concludit", "specificat", etc., [49] or the disputative mode used, according to St. Thomas Aquinas, by the Apostle Paul and in the Book of Job [50]);

c. to verbal acts aiming at a rhetorical effect (e. g. "laudat", "vituperat", "invehit reprehendo", "modus tradendi per exempla et typicus (sic) sermones"; [51] or Nicholas's of Lyre account of the *forma tractandi* in the Sapiential Books—"*Proverbs* proceeds mainly by admonishing, *Ecclesiastes* mainly by threatening and the *Song of Songs* mainly by promising" [52] etc.);

(5) Modes which closely resemble the modern notion of literary genre (e. g. the "lamentative mode", [53] the *modus parabolicus* [54]) the "prophetic mode", [55] the *modus praedicandi*, [56] *exemplum*, the modes of sacred poetry described as *carmina, elegia,* and *dramatica,* [57] etc.);

(6) Modes distinguished on the basis of what now falls under the category of literary kind (e. g. St. Bonaventure discusses the modes of certain

[44] As quoted by A. J. Minnis, *op. cit.*, p. 139.

[45] Cf. *ibid.*, pp. 122—124.

[46] *Ibid.*

[47] J. B. Allen, *op. cit.*, pp. 77—78.

[48] *Ibid.*, p. 78.

[49] *Ibid.*

[50] A. J. Minnis, *op. cit.*, p. 128.

[51] From one of the commentaries on the *Thebaid* as cited by J. B. Allen, *op. cit.*, p. 77.

[52] A. J. Minnis, *op. cit.*, p. 132.

[53] Specified by John Pecham in his commentary on *Lamentations*, cf. *ibid.*, p. 130.

[54] Cf. *ibid.*, p. 131.

[55] *Ibid.*, pp. 132, 136.

[56] *Ibid.*, p. 136.

[57] *Ibid.*, p. 135.

Biblical books in terms of the stance of the speaking subject and his addressee,[58] or a *modus affectivus, desiderativus et contemplativus* as specified by Giles of Rome in his commentary on the *Song of Songs,* [59] etc.);

(7) Modes specified on the basis of metre (e. g. *metricus, metrum heroicum, prosaicus* [60]); sometimes the musical character of a metrical composition was particularly stressed (e. g. John Pecham describes the *Book of Lamentations* as adorned "with musical and rhetorical eloquence" [61]).

The above classification of the *modi tractandi* is not by any means exhaustive or fully systematic. It serves to illuminate the variety of notions which the word *tractandi* could cover. It seems that the commentators could understand the author's "treatment" in his work both in terms of certain logical operations and actual linguistic utterances, in terms of his style, literary genre and mode, and metre as well as in terms of the didactic impact he intended to make on his reader. No systematic distinction between the author's thought and its linguistic expression was made. The *forma tractandi* encompassed everything that pertained to the poet's action towards his audience. This active character of the *forma tractandi* is emphasized by the fact that very often the *modi* are stated in the form of verbs; they indicate what the poet *does* in his work and in what ways his *acts* are intended to affect his reader.

Any kind of the poet's action towards the audience was of course mediated through language though the medieval commentators did not always realize or testify to that in their specifications of the *modi*. Their peculiar combination of logical, linguistic and literary categories may have resulted from the ultimate subordination of all of them to the kind of impact (*finis*) the given work was supposed to achieve. That *finis* seems to have been the unifying factor. Some of the modes of treatment, as Minnis points out, could be directly traced to the principles of rhetoric; [62] some of them were similar to logical procedures; still others were purely literary or poetic in nature. All of them constituted the author's action towards his audience in view of attaining to a specific task. Modern literary theory recognizes the fact that all such action is performed through language and it refers to it as "speech acts" [63]. The *modi* of the medieval *forma tractandi* may be compared to the notion of "speech acts" since they also indicate the things which the poet can do with words.

My understanding of the *forma tractandi* differs at certain points from that held by Allen. He regards the term *modus* as equivalent to the modern concept of "structure". [64] The commentary specifications of the actual *modi*

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[58] Cf. *ibid.*, p. 132.

[59] Cf. *ibid.*, p. 129.

[60] Cf. J. B. Allen, *op. cit.*, p. 74.

[61] Cf. A. J. Minnis, *op. cit.*, p. 130.

[62] Cf. *ibid.*, pp. 125—126.

[63] Cf. e. g. J. Austin, *How to Do Things with Words*, Harvard 1965; J. Searle, *Speach Acts: An Essay in the Philosophy of Language*, Cambridge 1969.

[64] J. B. Allen, *op. cit.*, p. 68.

tractandi make such an identification unwarranted. In their light *modus* appears as something much less closed or finite than "structure"; we think that it is best translated very simply as a "manner of procedure". Allen also suggests that the *modi tractandi* existed prior to the actual literary work, that they were forms of thought rather than of language, and that they were not individual and particular (they were "not to be subsumed under the operation of any particular mind" [65]) but rather they were "actions and procedures intrinsic to knowledge itself, or to the world within and about which knowledge exists and of which the operations of any given mind are a resultant". [66] The process of artistic creation was not a matter of individual thinking but of the poet's submitting his mind to these general mental processes: "if one wishes to make a poem, he must think his thoughts into and along the decorous tracks already determined by the nature of his art". [67] Among these general patterns of thought Allen stresses above all the *modi tractandi* of human science: definition, division, proof and disproof, and exemplification. It is they that constitute the basis of his system of medieval genres which results from the combination of one of these modes with some kind of content. Thus, he specifies the following genres:

praise by definition, allegorical exemplification, proof by convincing description, definition by means of examples, and many more. [68]

The definition of the *forma tractandi* as part of general pre-textual knowledge means placing it outside the sphere of literary work. The *forma tractandi* becomes, as it were, the form of knowledge or thought in general and as such it should be part of the material cause rather than of the formal one, which was always understood as the individual restructuring of the existent material in a particular work. [69] This uderstanding of the *forma tractandi* is incompatible with the evidence of the commentaries themselves which, although they often make use of the existent repertory of modes, tend nonetheless to employ them in an individual way in accordance with the form of the work under consideration. An extreme example is the commentary of Raoul de Longchamp, quoted by Allen, which is a summary of the action of the book:

The mode and order of the doing is thus: after the proposition and the invocation Nature is introduced lamenting with her sisters and suffering over the imperfection of all her works and proposing that only one plan and one consolation remains—that a work should be made endued with every possible gift. [70]

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[65] *Ibid.*, p. 86.

[66] *Ibid.*

[67] *Ibid.*

[68] *Ibid.*, p. 88.

[69] Even in other fields, such as for example grammar, the formal cause retains this meaning. In grammar it was defined as "the actual combination of constructibles" (cf. G. L. Bursill-Hall, *The Middle Ages, op. cit.*, p. 398).

[70] J. B. Allen, *op. cit.*, p. 77.

Many commentators on Biblical books, as Minnis pointed out, did not hesitate to introduce new, hitherto unknown, modes, e. g. the "prophetic mode". [71] We propose to solve this problem by stressing a distinction which some of the medieval commentators made themselves; e. g. Giles of Rome in his commentary on the *Song of Songs* states:

The mode of procedure in other sciences is by positive proof and refutation: however, in sacred Scripture and most importantly in the *Canon*, it is seen to be through inspiration, that is, by revelation [...] Indeed, the mode of proceeding in this book in particular is seen to be affective, desiderative and contemplative; [72]

and in a late fourteenth-century commentary on the hymns it is said that "the form of the treatment differs in books according to the practice of different authors". [73] These and other statements of medieval commentators imply a distinction between the modes of a given science in general and those actually realized in a book. All the modes pertaining to a science did not have to be utilized in every work—a writer could make his own selection and combination of modes according to the *finis* of his work; he could also invent new modes. The distinction between the modes characteristic of a science in general and those of a particular book corresponds in our opinion to the larger distinction between the extrinsic prologue (an introduction to the science to which a book belongs) and the intrinsic prologue (an introduction to the book itself), as discussed by Minnis. [74] The *forma tractandi* of a book does not consist of its author's pretextual thoughts but rather is realized through the text itself, though not being restricted to the text's linguistic dimension only; it is the external aspect of the work's formal cause when the literary work is understood, as Allen puts it, as a verbal event which includes both reference and rhetorical effect, and not merely as a verbal construct. [75] The *modi tractandi* of a given science represent in fact the structure of thought or knowledge in general and as such they fall outside the scope of a single work; they should be regarded as part of the material cause.

Allen puts special emphasis on the logical modes, and this is illustrated by his comments on medieval genres. However, it seems that if a poet indeed had to think his thoughts into the decorous tracks of his art in order to compose a poem, this art consisted of the rules and conventions of his own "craft" rather than of general logical patterns of thinking. One wonders if it is really very helpful to introduce entirely new genre categories in order to account for the nature of medieval poetry. Although the influence of logical modes of thinking cannot be entirely discarded, it should not be emphasized at the cost of losing sight of the ultimately literary character of poetic procedure.

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[71] Cf. A. J. Minnis, *Literary Theory in Discussions of "Formae Tractandi"*, p. 137.

[72] As cited by A. J. Minnis, *Medieval Theory of Authorship*, p. 129.

[73] J. B. Allen, *op. cit.*, p. 75.

[74] Cf. A. J. Minnis, *op. cit.*, pp. 63—72.

[75] Cf. J. B. Allen, *op. cit.*, p. 87.

Therefore, the *forma tractandi* and the *forma tractatus* should be analysed separately even though it may turn out that in some poems they are nearly identical. Poetry need not be altogether subsumed under logic, as Allen suggests when he assumes *a priori* that the parts of a work on the level of the *forma tractatus*

will be discursive and sentential—that is, that they will be the kind of parts which can correspond to and fulfil the outline of an essay or a treatise, rather than the outline of a lyric, a drama, or a narrative [...] these parts which can define, prove, refute, praise, blame, and all the rest. [76]

The distinction between the *forma tractandi* and the *forma tractatus* practically disappears. One must not, however, ignore the fact that medieval poems possess also parts of a different kind—lines, stanzas, groups of stanzas, fitts, etc. These should be analysed independently and, so to speak, on their own terms. These terms belong above all to the sphere of the text itself and its internal relationships. They constitute the domain of the *forma tractatus*.

Whereas the *forma tractandi* refers to what the author *does* with his words— i. e. to what effects he achieves through his poem—the *forma tractatus* represents the result of his activities; it is both the means and the product of authorial procedures enshrined in the text. Minnis relates the *forma tractatus* to "structure". But he seems to understand "structure" in a narrow sense— as the composition of a work manifesting itself in its possible or actual outline. As such structure appears as something superficial and limited only to larger textual units—books, chapters, or sections. And on the whole that is the way in which many medieval commentators understand it and use it: the "form of the treatise" (the *forma tractatus*, or, alternatively, *ordinatio partium* or *divisio textus*) seems to have stood for the division of a book into smaller units, usually chapters and sections, and the ordering of these units with respect to one another and to the whole. [77] Although, generally speaking, the discussions of the *forma tractatus* were limited to stating larger divisions of works under consideration into parts, books, or chapters, there exist a few statements which testify to a deeper understanding of the term. For example, Giovanni del Virgilio, while commenting upon the *Metamorphoses*, describes its form of the treatise as

the composition and organization of the fifteen books in this volume, and of the chapters in those books, and of the parts in those chapters, descending even to the minute parts which as such have some meaning. [78]

And Walter Burley thus explains his critical procedure in dealing with Aristotle's *Ethics*:

In expounding a whole text I should divide every book into tractates, and the tractates into chapters, and the chapters into parts, and the parts into bits, by making these divisions in terms of the

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[76] *Ibid.*, p. 130.

[77] Cf. A. J. Minnis, *op. cit.*, pp. 145—159.

[78] As cited by J. B. Allen, *op. cit.*, p. 118.

separate meanings involved, and not in terms of the quantity of text after the manner many divide. [79]

Both of these commentators in analysing their texts go beyond the standard superficial and sometimes purely mechanical divisions into books and chapters; they recognize the existence of smaller meaningful units; they allegedly accept the semantic criterion as the only basis of their analytic procedure.

The division of a literary work into its semantic components, ranging from the smallest elements on the phonetic and syllabic levels, through the lexical and syntactic levels, the metrical units, up to the larger narrative ones, seems to have constituted, at least potentially, a proper preoccupation of a critic wishing to expound the *forma tractatus* of his text. His second major preoccupation, as prompted by the alternative name of the *forma tractatus—ordinatio partium*—was connected with establishing relationships between various textual elements. In many instances the internal form of a work was defined in terms of its ordering: for example, St. Bonaventure described the form of St. Luke's Gospel as "the ordering of the parts and the chapters", and Giles of Rome defined the form of the treatise of the *Song of Songs* as "the ordering of the chapters in relation to each other". [80] Medieval commentaries on the whole seem to reflect the awareness of the fact that no single part of a work can be known and fully understood unless it be perceived in the context of other parts by which it is surrounded. This awareness was very well expressed by Robert Kilwardby in his discussion of Aristotle's *Praedicamenta*:

And the adequacy and the rationale of the order appears in this, that any given thing is known sufficiently when its antecedents are known, together with its parts or species and the dispositions which are concequent upon it. This is the proper mode of understanding a thing". [81]

Kilwardby has here in mind logical relationships, but in literature such relationships are created by literary means. Therefore, it is more useful to understand his comment in terms of its general emphasis on the importance of relationships in understanding a work and its parts, rather than in terms of its stress on specifically logical relationships.

Allen recognizes and very aptly describes

the medieval strategy whereby one detail is explained by the next—whereby the parts of medieval texts constitute to each other mutually interlocking and mutually explicating glosses. [82]

Yet he unnecessarily restricts the scope of possible internal relationships in medieval works to "logical, analogical, and allegorical" [83] ones. His aim is

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[79] *Ibid.*, p. 119.

[80] Both examples are taken from A. J. Minnis, *op. cit.*, p. 148.

[81] *Ibid.*, p. 149.

[82] J. B. Allen, *op. cit.*, p. 120.

[83] *Ibid.*

to distinguish thereby sharply between medieval and modern literature: while for the latter the crucial question to ask is "Why does this part come next?" (the question resulting from the cause-and-effect conception of plot), for the former it is "Why do this part and the next one go together?". [84] Neither is it necessary for modern literature to limit the kind of narrative relationships to the cause-and-effect ones, nor for medieval literature to limit them to the logical, analogical, and allegorical ones. In both types of literature one can find works utilizing relationships which fall out of these schemes, and a theoretical model should be flexible enough to account for such cases. Likewise, it is unnecessary to restrict the kinds of internal literary relationships to the narrative level only and to parts adjacent to each other. The medieval critics quoted above make it clear that they are interested in all kinds of *semantic* relationships, even those between the smallest parts of a work. Such semantic relationships may be established between diversely located parts of a text, as is illustrated by a beautiful comparison which Nicholas Trevet drew between the ordering of the *Psalms* and a musician playing a psaltery:

Just as in making melody on the strings of a psaltery, the strings are not touched according to their natural order but diversely and in interspersed fashion, now here and now there, so likewise psalms to God's praise are not placed in the Psalter according to the continuous order of history but diversely, by interspersing what deals with later events, or alternatively according to what the devotion of the psalmist will rise to in the praise of God. [85]

This analogy shows a poetic creation as a network of complexly arranged elements, aiming at the governing artistic purpose; related elements appear in various parts of such an array in different configurations, yet without losing their mutual semantic relatedness.

It is significant that the order of a literary work was seen by medieval commentators not only in terms of mutual relationships among particular elements but also with respect to the whole. As A.J. Minnis points out, "the parts of a text are mutually ordered to each other, but this order of the parts among themselves exists because of the order of the whole text to the *finis* intended by its *auctor*". [86] In other words, each element of text is related both to other elements and to the whole. At the same time the whole consists of, as it were, smaller wholes subordinate to it—"a text can be thought of as a hierarchy of superior and 'subordinate' parts". [87] These parts should not be restricted, as Minnis suggests, to "the parts of doctrine", "chapters" and "books" but should be extended to all the meaningful components of a literary work, even to the smallest linguistic elements. Medieval critics were interested in those levels of meaning: Averroes in his commentary on

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[84] *Ibid.*

[85] As quoted by A. J. Minnis, *op. cit.*, p. 152.

[86] *Ibid.*, p. 148.

[87] *Ibid.*

Aristotle's *Poetics* goes into a relatively detailed discussion of parts of speech and the ways in which they may be used in poems;[88] Dante in *De Vulgari Eloquentia* generally attaches great importance to language in poetry and in his explanation of the form of the *canzone* he discusses in detail the issues of metre, of types of syntactic constructions, of vocabulary.[89]

Dante clearly conceived of a literary work as a complex structure composed of elements of diverse orders—phonetic, metrical, syntactic, lexical, etc.— combined together. Having discussed them in *De Vulgari Eloquentia* he stated: "Having prepared the sticks and cords of our faggot (the *canzone*), the time is now come to bind it up".[90] The notion of poetic composition as "binding up" various elements into a coherent, meaningful and internally ordered structure was typical of medieval literary thought; it existed also under the designation of the *forma tractatus*. Understood in this way, the *forma tractatus* may be compared to the modern concepts of "structure" and "hierarchy of structures". Structuralist literary theory uses these concepts as heuristic models for the explanation of literary phenomena. A work is seen as a structure (i. e. as a closed whole consisting of meaningful elements and relationships among them) and as a hierarchy of structures (e. g. a stanza may be viewed simultaneously as a structure and a part of a larger structure— a group of stanzas or a poem; the poem itself may be seen as an element of other systems such as the author's output, the literature of a given period, etc.).[91] Perhaps medieval literary works, which like the vast universe surrounding them were thought of in terms of structural hierarchies, will particularly lend themselves to this approach.

Another medieval literary term whose meaning we regard as closely related to that of the *forma tractatus* was *conjointura*. The term is well-known in its French version "conjointure" from its use by Chrétien de Troyes in the prologue to his romance *Erec et Enide*. Chrétien expresses there his intention of deriving from "un conte d'aventure"—"une molt bele cojointure".[92] In other words, he wishes to present well-known material of adventure romances in a newly arranged and harmoniously composed whole. D. W. Robertson, Jr. associates Chrétien's "conjointure" with the use of the terms "conjointura" and "pictura" by Alanus de Insulis.[93] Robertson argues that the *pictura*, which he defines as an artificial combination of elements which are not combined in nature, results in a *conjointura* which, presumably, stands for the operation of combining diverse elements into a harmonious and me-

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[88] Cf. *Classical and Medieval Literary Criticism, op. cit.*, pp. 372—378.

[89] *De Vulgari Eloquentia, ibid.*, esp. pp. 434—446.

[90] *Ibid.*, p. 439.

[91] Cf. e. g. R. Scholes, *Structuralism in Literature*, New Haven 1978, p. 10.

[92] *Les Romans de Chrétien de Troyes: Erec et Enide*, ed. M. Roques Paris 1952, p. 1, 11, 13——14.

[93] D. W. Robertson, Jr., *Some Medieval Literary Terminology, op. cit.*, p. 64.

aningful whole. The poet uses various materials and sources but puts them in a different order of his own and establishes new relationships between their parts; he takes up an old story, "un conte d'aventure"—and transforms it into a hitherto unknown structure. Robertson emphasizes the following three features of *conjointura*: that it is fictional, that it is beautiful, and that it hides under its pleasant surface a nucleus of truth. [94] He sees *conjointura* as the construction of the cortex of a poem, to which he attaches a somewhat pejorative meaning of the poem's literal, surface sense (as opposed to its nucleus). If one takes away the pejorative aspect of the term, one can see *conjointura* simply as the poem's internal structure which arises from the poet's original use of his material.

There is a tendency among critics, resulting from Chrétien's use of the term, towards limiting the range of the application of *conjointura* to the construction of narrative only. Douglas Kelly, however, has pointed out that the meaning of this concept can quite justifiably be extended over other dimensions of a literary work. [95] He suggests a connection between Chrétien's *conjointure* and Alanus' *conjointura* on the one hand, and Horace's use of *iunctura* in the *Ars Poetica* (ll. 47—48 and 242—243) as well as Philippe Mousket's use of *conjointure* in *Chronique rimée* (ll. 9703—9705) on the other hand. The first two uses refer to narrative structure, whereas the second two refer to the structure of a sentence. Kelly relates these two kinds of uses; he analyses the narrative structure of romance in terms of the composition of the artful and elegant Latin sentence. He observes that the structure of such a sentence is based not so much on grammatical rules of correct word order as on the desire to achieve an aesthetic and rhetorical effect. He interprets this elegant word order in terms of interlacing (*entrelacement*) and suggests that the same principle of *entrelacement* operates on the level of narrative composition. Consequently, he defines *conjointure* as

the result of the interlacing of different elements derived from the source or sources (or, for that matter, from the author's imagination) [96]

and concludes that arrangement and linking of elements play an important role in poetic composition.

The significance of Kelly's argument lies, basically, in relating Horace's *iunctura* and Chrétien's *conjointure* and in pointing thereby to the possibility that the rules which govern the syntactic and narrative levels of poetic composition are similar, if not the same. Of course Kelly is interested primarily in describing the narrative structure of romance and his syntactic argument is subordinated to this purpose. Nevertheless it suggests interesting parallels, though at two points it seems to be too limited. Firstly, he interprets Ho-

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[94] *Ibid.*, p. 65.

[95] Cf. D. Kelly, *The Source and Meaning of «conjointure» in Chrétien's "Erec"*, 14, "Viator", 1970, Vol. I, pp. 179—200.

[96] *Ibid.*, p. 200.

race's *callida iunctura* chiefly in terms of aesthetic elegance, whereas Horace
is clearly concerned with meaning, that is, with discovering a new and fresh
semantic potential of a word by means of placing it in an unconventional
verbal and syntactic context. Secondly, Kelly identifies *iunctura* and *conjoin-
ture* with *entrelacement*, thereby restricting their meaning to a special kind
of arrangement. This would imply that interlacing is the only type of ordering
which is possible and valuable in a literary work. Like Allen's emphasis
on logical relationships, this is an unjustifiable restriction. Similar objec-
tions to Douglas Kelly's argument have been raised by T. Hunt. [97] While
we are convinced about the value of bringing the two concepts of Horace's
iunctura and Chrétien's *conjointure* together in such a way that they illuminate
each other, we believe that they can be applied to both the syntactic and
narrative levels of a literary work and that they should be understood broadly
as a work's semantic organization. Such a new semantic organization of old ma-
terial is the source of aesthetic effects as well since in medieval aesthetics
the notions of meaning and beauty are inextricably connected with each
other.

Thus, the concept of *conjointure* can be seen as similar to that of the
forma tractatus. Both of them refer to the internal structure of a literary work
as distinguished from its external form, indicated by the term *forma tractandi*.
The discussion of the *forma tractatus* completes our account of the double
notion of form in medieval poetry.

THE MATERIAL CAUSE AND THE NOTION OF DISTINCTIO

If one understands the *forma tractandi* as

the complex and multifold manner of thinking which precedes and determines the actual textua-
lity, or *forma tractatus*, of a medieval poem, [98]

then the *distinctio* becomes a feature of the *forma tractandi*. I have argued,
however, that the *forma tractandi*, rather than being a pretextual way of thin-
king, constitutes an external and active aspect of the poem's form. This
allows us to treat the concept of the *distinctio* independently of that of the
forma tractandi. Indeed, the *distinctio* seems to be primarily connected with
the material rather than the formal cause of a literary work. The form of
a work is, in our view, inseparable from the work itself and cannot be therefore
regarded as preceding it in time. What is separable from a given literary work
and what exists prior to it is its material which, far from being an amorphous
mass, like the materials of other arts, is characterized by its own form. I pro-

[97] Cf. T. Hunt, *Tradition and Originality in the Prologues of Chrétien de Troyes*, "Forum
for Modern Language Studies", 1972, Vol. VIII, pp. 320—344, esp. 322—339.
[98] J. B. Allen, *op. cit.*, p. 142.

pose to look at the medieval *distinctio* as one of the ways in which the material of literature was structured.

It is generally accepted that the material of literature is language, or more precisely the language in which it is written. Let us, therefore, first examine briefly the way in which language is structured. Among the main preoccupations of the late-medieval grammarians called the *Modistae* was establishing word-classes (*partes orationis*) and the study of syntax. [99] Translating this into modern linguistic terminology we may say that they were concerned with the paradigmatic and syntagmatic dimensions of language. A word-class is a paradigm, that is a set of words which belong to the same linguistic category, for example a class of nouns; within the most general classes many sub--classes can be distinguished, for example, within the class of nouns there is a sub-class of animate nouns which in turn contains a sub-class of personal nouns within which a set of nouns designating "man" can be separated. Language on the paradigmatic level consists of hierarchies of word-classes. [100] On the syntagmatic level elements of various classes are combined together so as to form a congruous utterance. Thus, language possesses its own structure and the medieval *Modistae* believed that the structure of language was consonant with the structure of reality—the *modi significandi* were thought to be determined by the *modi intelligendi* (modes of understanding) and the *modi essendi* (modes of being). [101]

Yet, language is not the only way in which the material of literature is structured. In every culture there exist numerous systems, such as ritual, myth, folk beliefs, religion, ideology, which determine people's thinking and enable them to communicate, and by means of which the basic model of the world is shaped. Besides, there are other works of literature each of which constitutes a system in itself. Łotman calls all of these systems "secondary modelling systems" because they are based on language (a "primary modelling system") but they impose on reality their own organization which is not just linguistic. [102] I propose to view the medieval *distinctio* as a secondary modelling system.

In medieval culture there was a vast sphere of meaning which is nowadays lost to people's general awareness: words not only referred to objects directly accessible to human experience, but both words and things signified something else—they pointed to a reality which we now name as the invisible. Language had to be, as it were, reorganized in order to fulfil the task of reference to the world beyond; another kind of a dictionary was needed which would name and systematize parts of that reality. Such dictionaries were

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[99] Cf. G. L. Bursill-Hall, *The Middle Ages, op. cit.*, pp. 211—212.

[100] I am deliberately restricting myself to the lexicon because the study of phonology did not exist in the Middle Ages.

[101] Cf. e. g. R. H. Robins, *Theory-Orientation versus Data-Orientation.* pp. 16—17.

[102] Cf. A. Shukman, *op. cit.*, p. 24.

indeed produced and because they systematized spiritual meaning it is proper to call them "spiritual dictionaries".[103] The *distinctio* is the most sophisticated form of a spiritual dictionary; to be precise, it is a dictionary entry specifying the meanings of a given word from the Bible. Collections of *distinctiones*, i. e. dictionaries in which various Biblical words were expounded schematically in terms of their spiritual senses, can thus be viewed as a special semantic system superimposed on the primary system of language. By studying *distinctiones* one can observe how medieval culture transformed ordinary linguistic meanings in accordance with its supreme concern with the spiritual and invisible. The *distinctio* was the invention and the tool of the theologian, and theology provided the Middle Ages with its central ideology. Thus the *distinctio* constitutes an important key to our understanding of the products of medieval culture.

Several major tendencies can be observed in the development of the *distinctio*.[104] P. S. More defines it as that which provides or "distinguishes" the four levels of meaning in spiritual exegesis.[105] A *distinctio*, however, does not have to be restricted to the four senses, but in fact may specify any number of them. Besides, the meanings specified do not necessarily come from Scripture, but they may be metaphorical and rhetorical and can be derived from other sources such as the bestiary or a treatise on natural history. In the greatest collections of *distinctiones* produced by the three Paris masters of the twelfth century—Peter the Chanter, Peter of Poitiers and Prepositinus of Cremona—there was a gradual shift towards putting less emphasis on the authority and towards drawing upon a common tradition for symbolic meanings. The masters used a variety of sources, not infrequently providing their own personal interpretations. *Distinctio* collections gradually became preachers' tools for the composition of sermons. Individual entries tended to increase in length and in the course of time an ever greater emphasis was attached to the theme of virtues and vices. Specific topics were sometimes developed in the form of something like an outline of a sermon, or they could be illustrated by an appropriate *exemplum*, or summaries of several possible sermons on a given subject were enlisted. The systematizing character of the *distinctio* was reflected in the form of its presentation which was often diagrammatic and further demarcated by the employment of rhyme.

A certain text-generating movement can be observed in the development of the *distinctio*. At first, it is an exegetical procedure, or an act of interpretation, which consists of looking up the meanings of a word in Scripture.

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[103] Cf. B. Smalley, *The Study of the Bible in the Middle Ages*, Oxford 1952, p. 246.

[104] My discussion in this paragraph is based chiefly on the article by Richard H. and Mary A. Rouse, *Biblical Distinctions in the Thirteenth Century*, "Archives d'historie doctrinale et littéraire du moyen âge", 1974, Vol. XIII, pp. 27—37.

[105] P. S. Moore, *The Works of Peter of Poitiers*, 1936, pp. 78 ff.

At this stage the *distinctio* depends heavily on its source text—the Bible. This is reflected in the obligatory habit of supplying a proper quotation on which any given meaning is based. Behind it there lies an implicit assumption that the Bible constitutes a unified and complete system and that it is the simultaneous coherence and complexity of that system which both calls for and justifies the existence of the *distinctio*. Next, the *distinctio* gradually becomes a system in itself. Its items, semantically different, tend to be assimilated to one another in external form—they are usually given the same grammatical and rhetorical expression, [106] and they are organized spatially by means of neat diagrams. The culmination of this process is reached with the introduction of rhyme. Once the *distinctio* has become a system, it gains the power of incorporating other, previously extrasystemic, elements which do not occur in its base source. Here is room for legend, nonscriptural tradition, as well as the author's own ingenuity. The *distinctio* has detached itself from its source in order to live its own, more independent existence; it has become a text, a secondary modelling system. At the same time, its relative semantic simplicity, or unidimensionality, strongly invites fictional elaboration. Thus the *distinctio*, this quasiliterary text, is likely to become a generator of other texts. It is a semantic skeleton on which the flesh of fiction will be quick to grow.

Perhaps the word "fiction" is not very fortunate in the present context. One should rather say "literature", in the sense of an infinitely complex semantic structure, as opposed to the semantically finite and unidimensional structure of the *distinctio*. Let us consider the way in which the latter may become the material of a literary work. Allen differentiates between two meanings of the *distinctio* in relation to medieval poems: in one sense it is equivalent to the *modus divisivus* of the *forma tractandi*, [107] in the other, to the outline of a literary work, that is, its *forma tractatus*. [108] The first meaning presupposes an ideal and normative character of the parts named, the second relates to the literal parts of a given poem; the first is the structure of thought preceding the text, the second, the structure of the text itself. In Allen's view these two *distinctiones* exist in close parallel to each other and they are treated as two different expressions of the same meaning. Therefore, he claims,

the most promising way to deal with a medieval text is to [...] determine its parts and their names, and the name of the whole of which they are the arrayed parts. [109]

A medieval poem is thus seen as a realization of a pretextual *distinctio*; it

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[106] Cf. the discussion of the *distinctio* by J. B. Allen in *The Friar as Critic. Literary Attitudes in the Later Middle Ages*, Nashville 1971, esp. pp. 105—109.

[107] J. B. Allen, *Late Medieval Ethical Poetic*, p. 105.

[108] Cf. *ibid.*, p. 142.

[109] *Ibid.*

is supposed to be a definition of some single truth and to be divisible according
to some single *distinctio*.

The requirement for a poem to reproduce in its internal semantic struc-
ture a pretextual *distinctio* seems to me untenable in the light of what consti-
tutes the best achievement of medieval literature. Neither the works of Chau-
cer nor those of the *Gawain*-poet can be successfully explained in terms of
a single pretextual *distinctio*. They clearly make use of many literary and
cultural codes, often without resolving into any one of them. In fact, this
irreducibility into a single semantic system seems to be a feature of literature
in general; it is what accounts for the difference between a literary work and
a quasiliterary one such as a *distinctio*. That is why *distinctiones* should be
seen as a part of the material cause rather than as the organizing principle
of the structure of a poem. I propose to view them, along with other cultural
and literary texts, conventions, systems, etc. as semantic paradigms upon
which the poet constructs his own meaning. No poet is obliged to follow sla-
vishly another text or a convention although it is impossible for him to work
without them. The ingenuity of a medieval poet lies in creative interpre-
tation of his materials which is achieved by combining them into a new "con-
jointure". He usually makes use of several *distinctiones* and if his work finally
constitutes a *distinctio*, it is a new one, albeit firmly grounded in the tradition.
It is a semantic paradigm resulting from an intersection of the already exis-
ting semantic paradigms. They are brought together by combination which
is governed by the principle of similarity and difference.

THE PRINCIPLE OF ASSIMILATIO

In many medieval descriptions of poetry the activity of making a poem
is referred to as binding together of letters or narrative materials. We can
find this concept in Geoffrey of Vinsauf, Chrétien de Troyes, Averroes,
Dantes and the *Gawain*-poet, who closes the opening stanza of *Sir Gawain
and the Green Knight* with the promise of a "stori stif and stronge, / With lel
letteres loken" (ll. 34—35). [110] His use of the word "loken" (meaning "fa-
stened, linked, bound") evokes the familiar notion of a poem as a "conjoin-
ture". The poet's activity consisted in joining diverse elements into a har-
monious whole. This was an old concept; it appeared, for instance, in the
Hebrew tradition where a single word *naggar* signified both a "carpenter"
and a "literary man", that is the one who joint together words, phrases,
sentences, scraps of tradition. The question arises as to the way in which a poet
binds his materials so that a new, more complex meaning is achieved. I sug-
gest that the key principle is that of *assimilatio*.

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[110] *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*, ed. J. R. R. Tolkien, E. V. G. and N. Davis, Oxford
1967, p. 2.

The concept of *assimilatio* is central to Averroes' commentary on the *Poetics*, as well as to Allen's account of medieval literary theory. In the present section I would like to touch only upon that aspect of its meaning which is connected with the sphere of internal poetic relationships. It is the aspect which is not emphasized by Allen, but it is present in Averroes' thinking. I would like to approach it in a slightly roundabout way.

Allen convincingly demonstrates that the medieval critic's chief procedure in dealing with his text was that of *divisio*: "The crucial act of medieval criticism [...] is division". [111] Yet he considers division to be an instrument both of interpretation and of composition, without recognizing the difference between the respective acts of the critic and the poet. While the critic always confronts a finished structure which he divides into levels and parts in order to identify and study their mutual relationships to one another and to the whole, the poet proceeds in an opposite direction—he creates the structure by combination of semantic elements, by placing them in a certain meaningful order. The critical procedure is thus the reverse of the poetic procedure; division is the analytic undoing of the result of artistic combination. We may therefore assume that a critical act of division ought to be based on the actual relationships in the text, brought about in the act of combination. In other words, the two acts should be based on the same principles. Now, there exists a very interesting medieval statement on the subject of division and its various kinds—Raoul de Longchamp in his commentary on the *Anticlaudianus* specifies, among other things, what he considers to be the main principle of division:

[...] two things are required for a division, unity and diversity. For it is appropriate that things be united in a division which are shown to be divided by dividing. Thus therefore division cannot be made among things unless they are both similar and different. [112]

Clearly, the only justifiable division is the one based on similarity and difference. The principle of similarity and difference constitutes, by implication, also the basis of combination. We propose to understand the term *assimilatio* precisely as this relationship of unity and diversity which exists between elements of a literary work.

Assimilatio in this sense becomes identical with the modern notion of "equivalence", that is similarity and difference. Lotman accounts for the increase of information-bearing potential in a literary text as opposed to a nonliterary one by suggesting that in the case of the former the principle of equivalence is applied in the process of combination, thus producing extra meaning. While in the formation of ordinary discourse the primary concern is with following the rules of contiguity (such as, for example, the rules of word order, number agreement, etc.), in literary discourse diverse elements

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[111] Cf. J. B. Allen, *op. cit.*, p. 126.
[112] As cited and translated by J. B. Allen, *ibid.*, p. 128.

may be brought together by the relationship of equivalence. Patterns of
opposition thus created become a source of poetic meaning. Unlike an ordi-
nary utterance, which is based solely on syntagmatic relationships, a literary
work establishes additionally its own semantic paradigms—it constitutes
both a system and the realization of the system. [113]

There is of course nothing like this sophisticated and consistent literary
theory to be found in medieval criticism. Medieval critics are generally aware
of the importance of the ordering of parts and of the relationships among
parts but they are far from developing their convictions into an integral theory
of literature. They tend to treat literary figures as examples of poetic orna-
mentation and not as means of creating meaning. Yet actual literary practice
testifies to a more profound view of the nature of literature. For this reason
it is possible to follow medieval critics only up to a certain point beyond which
their opinions must be completed with modern insights.

For instance, Averroes' relatively detailed discussion of poetic speech
focusses on the concept of resemblance which may be compared with the
modern notion of equivalence. [114] To begin with, Averroes distinguishes
seven elements of speech: syllable, copula or conjunction, disjunction, noun,
verb, case, and speech. This classification, far from being adequate from
the point of view of our present knowledge of language, betrays nonetheless
the author's concern with all the levels of discourse—from the level of sounds
to that of the text. Next, Averroes emphasizes that poetic speech is distinct
from syllogism on the one hand and from a rhetorical oration on the other.
He makes it clear that he does not consider metre to be the only or the most
important characteristic of poetry. He discusses the nature of poetry in terms
of resemblance. There are generally three kinds of resemblance, he claims:
phonetic resemblance between words, semantic resemblance, and the resem-
blance with respect to stress. He devotes special attention to phonetic resem-
blance (or resemblance in quantity) which is his definition of rhyme. He
recognizes many varieties of rhyme:

either the resemblance is complete. Or it is in a part of the word and a part of the meaning. Or
it is in part of the word and in all of the meaning. Or it is in all of the word. Or it is in
part of the word only. Or it is all of the meaning or it is part of the meaning only. [115]

It is noteworthy that for Averroes rhyme is as much a phonetic phenomenon
as a semantic one; there may be a purely semantic rhyme (when meanings
are the same, as in parallelism) and a purely phonetic one, as well as some
intermediate varieties. This is the main feature of poetry: words rhyming
together and meanings that clash or vice versa, meanings rhyming together
and words that clash. True, Averroes still discusses this in terms of "orna-

[113] Cf. A. Shukman, op. cit., pp. 72—82 and 134—138.

[114] My discussion of Averroes' Poetics is based on the English translation by O. B. Hardison,
Jr. in Classical and Medieval Literary Criticism, esp. pp. 375—378.

[115] Ibid. p. 376.

ment" but his way of treatment of the subject does not suit this designation. His discussion evidently turns on the notion of similarity and difference. Averroes' mode of thinking may be called binary, which is most clearly visible in his specification of the figure of "doubling". "Doubling" is a concept which may apparently encompass several kinds of poetic figures, its main feature being the establishment of a relationship between two elements in some way associated with each other (for example, "sun and moon", "night and day", "bow and arrow", "king and god"). Again, "doubling" is obviously based on similarity and difference. It may be compared to Lotman's notion of binary opposition. Averroes' discussion of poetic speech in terms of internal *assimilatio* or equivalence must be attributed solely to him (or to Hermannus Allemanus, his Latin translator) as it is not found in the original version of Aristotle's *Poetics*.
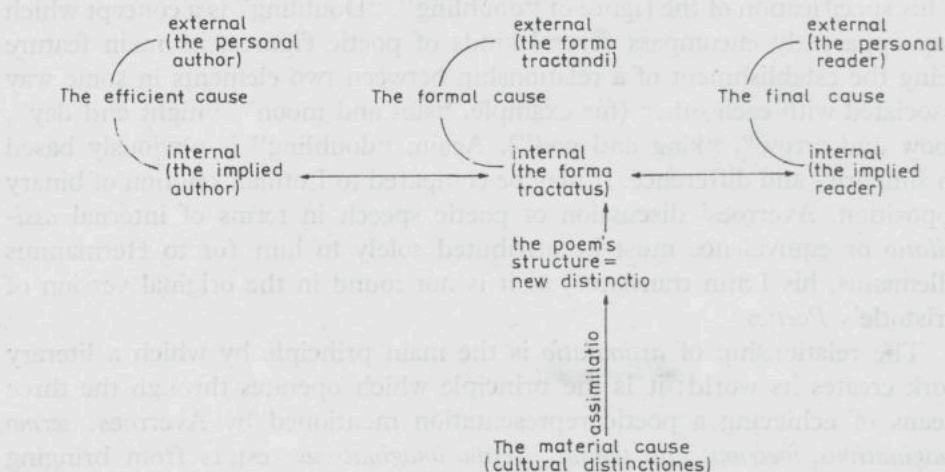
The relationship of *assimilatio* is the main principle by which a literary work creates its world; it is the principle which operates through the three means of achieving a poetic representation mentioned by Averroes: *sermo imaginativus*, *metrum*, and *thonus*. *Sermo imaginativus* results from bringing together words which are different and remote from each other in ordinary discourse. This is achieved by means of literary tropes such as metaphor. Metaphorical expressions have no reference to any real objects in the world outside of a poem, and in this sense they are part of *sermo imaginativus*— they refer to a world of imagination and of poetic creation. *Metrum* and *thonus* are also means of establishing similarity in difference through patterns of metrical repetition such as rhyme, a line, a stanza, etc. and through rhythm. All the three methods of the creation of a poetic world are based on the principle of similarity and difference. But the created world itself may also be considered in terms of likening or resemblance. This is the second and perhaps more prominent usage of *assimilatio* by Averroes.

Assimilatio in this second sense is supposed to be a translation of the term "imitation" used by Aristotle. It has been pointed out that Averroes' term, unlike the Aristotelian one, contains the notion of a poem as a reproduction of reality. [116] Yet this should not lead us to the assumption that in medieval literature there exists continuity between poetry and the real world, as Allen suggests. *Assimilatio* in this context ought to be understood again as a relationship of similarity and difference. The model of the world created by a literary work resembles the real world but at the same time differs from it. Lotman observes that if there were no difference between them, art would not be possible at all.

Furthermore, it is important to realize that when Averroes speaks about likening, he does not refer to faithful copying of empirical experience. He

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[116] On the meaning of "imitation" see the "Introduction" on Aristotle, *ibid.*, pp. 97—101; and R. McKeon, *Literary Criticism and the Concept of Imitation in Antiquity*, [in:] *Critics and Criticism*, ed. R. S. Crane, 1952, pp. 117—145.

The Aristotelian system of the four causes of the literary
work with modern equivalents

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   external                    external                     external
 (the personal               (the forma                   (the personal
   author)                    tractandi)                     reader)
The efficient cause        The formal cause            The final cause

   internal                    internal                     internal
 (the implied               (the forma                   (the implied
   author)                    tractatus)                    reader)

                            the poem's
                            structure =
                            new distinctio

                              assimilatio

                            The material cause
                            (cultural distinctiones)
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specifies three things that are likened: *consuetudines* (customs), *credulitates* (beliefs) and *consideratio* (or, alternatively, *significationes*—meaningfulness). These are general and abstract notions. Averroes emphasizes the universal and ideal character of the things which are likened:

For tragedy is not an art which describes men as perceivable individuals, but which describes their honest customs and praiseworthy actions and sanctifying beliefs. [117]

It follows that poetic art is not based on empirical perception, as the notion of likening would probably suggest to the modern reader, but on imagination: the poet represents these things "that he has perceived in his mind". [118] Likening is in fact inextricably linked with imaginative creation which calls into being a world of ideal virtue. In medieval sensibility it is such a world only that is considered to be meaningful and consequently real.

On the whole, there are several spheres of application of the principle of *assimilatio* understood as similarity and difference. Firstly, it is the principle governing the process of combination within a literary work: elements chosen from many linguistic and cultural paradigms are brought together in such a way as to produce new paradigms or sets of equivalencies; out of this, new poetic "*distinctiones*" result. Secondly, the created world of a poem is both similar and different from the real world. And finally, the poem itself is both similar and different from other poetic representations.

The fact that literature could be discussed by medieval commentators

[117] As cited and translated by J. B. Allen, *op. cit.*, p. 24.
[118] As cited and translated by O. B. Hardison, Jr., *op. cit.*, p. 352.

in terms of the Aristotelian causes reveals that it was treated as an objective phenomenon demanding a scientific account. This belief in the objectivity of literature justifies an attempt to search for its truth and for the truth about it. The diagram (p. 100) summarizes the comprehensive theoretical model of the literary work derived from medieval commentators and presents possible modern equivalents of some of the medieval concepts.

TEORIA LITERATURY PÓŹNEGO ŚREDNIOWIECZA W ŚWIETLE WSPÓŁCZESNYCH KONCEPCJI BADAWCZYCH

STRESZCZENIE

Pojawiło się w ostatnich latach kilka prac oświetlających nieznany dotąd rejon teorii literatury późnego średniowiecza. Do niedawna uważano, że epoka ta nie stworzyła własnej metody analiz dzieła literackiego. Jednakże studia Judsona B. Allena (*The Ethical Poetic of the Later Middle Ages*), Alistaira J. Minnisa (*Medieval Theory of Authorship*) czy Glendinga Olsona (*Literature and Recreation in the Later Middle Ages*) prezentują materiał podważający ów pogląd. Wśród badaczy estetyki i poetyki średniowiecznej (np. Umberto Eco, Eugene Vance) wzrasta ponadto przekonanie, że myśl teoretyczna tego okresu ma wiele punktów stycznych ze współczesną refleksją teoretyczną o sztuce i literaturze.

W niniejszym opracowaniu staramy się dokonać syntezy fragmentów myśli średniowiecznej, przedstawionych głównie przez Allena i Minnisa, oraz wskazać na możliwe analogie w myśli współczesnej. Proponujemy również pewien model analityczny wyłaniający się z tego porównania.

W Średniowieczu nie czyniono rozróżnienia między literaturą a nauką o literaturze. Tę pierwszą traktowano jako naukę i próbowano ją umieścić w istniejącym podziale nauk, którego główną oś stanowiło rozróżnienie między dyscyplinami czysto formalnymi (gramatyka, retoryka, logika) a dyscyplinami zawierającymi jakąś treść (filozofia teoretyczna i praktyczna wraz z odpowiednimi odgałęzieniami). Tak więc w samym podziale nauk, odziedziczonym przez Średniowiecze po Antyku, tkwiła sprzeczność między formą a treścią, sprzeczność obca istocie literatury. Być może, iż stąd właśnie wynikały trudności z umieszczeniem literatury w istniejącym systemie nauk.

Allen sugeruje, iż w późnym Średniowieczu utożsamiano literaturę z etyką. Słuszniej jednak byłoby mówić tutaj nie o pełnej identyczności, lecz raczej o etycznej funkcji literatury, coraz bardziej zresztą równoważonej przez jej funkcję rekreacyjną, jak dowodzi Olson.

Naukowe traktowanie dzieła literackiego w Średniowieczu wiązało się z obiektywizmem i swoistym materializmem: utwór to konkretny, namacalny byt, który można obiektywnie opisać. Dlatego nie jest niczym dziwnym, iż w opisie tym stosowano kategorie, którymi badano przede wszystkim rzeczywistość otaczającego świata, a mianowicie kategorie czterech przyczyn przejęte przez scholastykę od Arystotelesa. Były to: przyczyna sprawcza, materialna, formalna i celowa.

Istotnym walorem teorii czterech przyczyn w odniesieniu do utworu literackiego jest stworzenie platformy łączności dzieła z jego kontekstem literackim i kulturowym (przyczyna materialna), a także oddzielenie zewnętrznej problematyki dzieła (przyczyny zewnętrzne) od jego problematyki wewnętrznej (przyczyny wewnętrzne). Omawiając kolejne elementy teorii przyczynowej porównujemy je z niektórymi pojęciami współczesnymi: zewnętrzna przyczyna sprawcza to autor osobowy, natomiast ta sama przyczyna wewnętrzna kojarzy się z pojęciem autora implikowanego; przyczyna materialna, którą ujmujemy tu w świetle średniowiecznego *distinctio*, może być porównana z Łotmanowskim pojęciem „extratekstu"; wewnętrzna przyczyna formalna, tzw. *forma tractatus*, którą łączymy również ze średniowiecznym pojęciem *conjointure*, odpowiada współczes-

nemu pojęciu struktury, natomiast zewnętrzna przyczyna formalna, tzw. *forma tractandi*, przywodzi na myśl czynności mowy Searle'a; wreszcie przyczyny celowe, zewnętrzna i wewnętrzna, mogą być odpowiednio zinterpretowane jako kategorie czytelnika i czytelnika implikowanego. Jeden z komentatorów średniowiecznych postuluje identyczność trzech przyczyn wewnętrznych: sprawczej, formalnej i celowej. Jest to ciekawe ujęcie wzajemnych zależności autora implikowanego, odbiorcy implikowanego i struktury dzieła.