

II. RECENZJE

Luk de Vos and Marc Moens: WETENSCHAPSTHEORIE, SEMIOTIEK LITERATUURWETENSCHAP ("Restant" IX, 4; Witner 1981). Antwerp (Belgium), EXA Editions 1982, 230 pp.

The winter 1981—1982 issue of "Restant" (IX,4) on theory of science, semiotics and theory of literature can be considered as a fairly representative textbook, a reader indicating current developments and inner contradictions in dealing with texts today. Taking into account that theory pure or theory for theory's sake (if such were ever possible) is very controversial in the Netherlands right now, it is, for one, to be appreciated that a periodical should promote a purely scientific or abstract approach to literature. In recent years indeed, the prevailing climate is one of sympathizing with subjectivist criticism and finding fault with the theory of literature for the unreadability of the texts (i.e. meta-texts) it produces. As it was pointed out in a radio-interview (BRT 3, Word, 21.4. 1982) by Luk De Vos, one of the editors of the "Restant"-issue, the decision to deal with literature in a purely theoretical, abstract way is an ideological one: it is concerned with strategies hidden in the texts, looking for the effects of the text and its functioning in a context. This theoretical attitude then, confirms the responsibilities of research, which is to reveal that every text is a means to manipulate the other and bears on relative power. So theoretical reflection involves taking a critical stand.

The texts of this reader are mainly concerned with questions on the theory of science and on the theory of literature (or of texts), concentrating in the very first place on the notion of science (in combination with the study of literature) itself. The diversity of these "scientific" papers is, as such, indicative

of the impossibility to solve the problem or to reach a consensus, which is due to the fact that the notion of science itself has a different meaning to different people: its content is dependent on the (unquestioned) presuppositions of the individual or of groups of individuals. In their introduction to the volume the editors Luk De Vos and Marc Moens state it this way: opinions prove to be diverging not only with regard to the respective considerations on the status of literature (and on what should actually be the object of the study of literature), but also with regard to the epistemological foundations and theoretical frame of the essays. The remarkable result is a collection of diverse approaches, raising questions that are turned down as irrelevant elsewhere or proposing answers for problems that have already been solved—an inconsistency that is rather maliciously confirmed by the arbitrary sequence of the contributions in this volume.

The reader contains twelve texts of different levels of difficulty. Very accessible is the opening paper by Clem Neutjens on the use of geometrical models in the analysis of narrative texts. Neutjens draws attention to the fact that some geometrical models have structural analogies with narrative texts and can thus be added to or applied explicatively in the analysis. The use of these models is, of course, restricted to the detection or explanation of structures. The models considered to be useful here are the evident ones: the (straight) line, the vertical and horizontal axes (known from linguistics to distinguish between paradigmatic and syntagmatic relations), the square, the hexagon and finally the spiral. The application of this very spiral, however, is contested in the same volume of essays by Mark Adriaens in a very densely written article on "Homoiostasis, narrativity and the making of the subject", stating that

the spiral model is a deceiving one if applied to narrative structure. The development of a story is, according to Adriaens, a self-regulating, homeostatic system.

Very clear and instructive is the contribution by Peter V. Zima on *Semiotics, dialectics and critical theory*. Though presented as "some introductory remarks" this paper is a valuable step in the discussion between marxist and structuralist theories, which came to a stand in the sixties. As a result of the (belated) introduction of the works by Lotman, Bakhtin, Medvedev, Voloshinov and Mukařovský in Western Europe some recently developed theories tend to concentrate on the elimination of the opposition between structure and genesis (i. e. an opposition of the linguistic and marxist perspective in literature and philosophy). This opposition is now considered to be superfluous and to be replaced by a fruitful dialogue between semiotics and dialectics—going for an amalgamating approach as practised by Zima himself in his writings. Here Zima comments on three models, the (partial) relevance of which is pointed out with a view to the new socio-semiotic context he wishes to establish, sc. genetic structuralism as developed by L. Goldmann, Althusser's criticism of ideology (which postulates the irreconcilability of ideology and science) and the "critical theory" of Horkheimer and Adorno which, in contrast with French contemporary philosophy (Althusser, Foucault, Derrida) refuses to give up the central position and autonomy of the thinking subject.

In the whole of this theoretical volume the contributions of Swami Deva Krishna and R. Pinxten have (literally) a central position; they also represent an advanced level in modern discussion on semiotics. Both articles are clearly written (which is a considerable advantage to the reader) and add, by their criticism of "traditional" semiotics, in a very lucid way to the development of this branch of research. Krishna provides a brief survey of semiotics of non-verbal communication, introducing a. o. kinesics, prometics, zoosemiotics and, quite extensively, semiotics of theatre. The latter subject has a longer tradition in Czechoslovakia and Poland than in the western countries and needs developing. As to Pinxten, who writes on "semiotics, theory of science and Navajo arts" here the

interesting point is made that semiotics in its present form is "much too narrow to allow for reasonable and interesting analysis of a refined body of information, such as the Navajo art of constructing sandpaintings". According to Pinxten semiotics ought to be enlarged, i.e. adapted to the standards of contemporary philosophy of science. Semiotics as practised now studies materials in a fixed state, and hence results in rather aprioristic analyses. It is also marked by a clear preference for the syntactical aspects of the signs, presenting semantic aspects as depending on syntactical ones, whereas pragmatical ones "are scarcely considered". The same objections have recently been made against French (structuralist) narratology (Todorov, Bremond, Greimas), the models of which are considered to be too static. Pinxten illustrates his point by analysing the sandpaintings by Navajo Indians, from which close study he concludes that "semiotics is most profitably conceived in a modern philosophy of science view and with emphasis on a praxiological rather than a purely representational theory of knowledge". This conclusion, of course, pertains to a medium of expression that is non-verbal and non-static in its very essence and aim. But the same would hold true for modern narratology, if it were enriched e.g. with ideas acquired from Lotman and Bakhtin.

Exceptional for a different reason is the paper by H. Verdaasdonk: in this context of enthusiastic involvement in a (kind of) scientific approach to literature, it is the only one radically denying that the predicate "scientific" can be applied to the study of literature. The refuting and critical attitude revealed by this paper will not, however, surprise the reader already familiar with Verdaasdonk's other writings, as he is renowned for his utter scepticism with regard to the scientific status of the theory of literature. In this study on *Reflection on literature and argumentation* (*Literatuurbeschouwing en argumentatie* 1981), preceded by some articles written in collaboration with C.J. van Rees, Verdaasdonk rather convincingly focussed attention to the fact that *every* theory is biased by the (sometimes unavowed) background information and attitudes of the theoretician. The same undermining work is "done in the present article, published before in English

under the title "On the possible roles of institutionalized beliefs in the theory of literature: interpretation as the context-dependent grouping of word material" (in "Poetics" 10, 1981, p. 457—482). All theories extant should be considered as normsystems, and theorists of literature are unable to propose precise and falsifiable hypotheses on the characteristic qualities of literary texts or on the reactions of the readers of such texts. The refusal to acknowledge the scientific validity of literary theory is here demonstrated by criticizing the well-known (and widely accepted) notion of isotopia, central in Greimas' theory of structural semantics.

The rest of the articles contained in this textbook follow very closely upon advanced research in France and Germany. Frank Joosten (*Forms and aspects of textuality*) expands on the advantages of Derrida's enlarged concept of the text, implicitly illustrating the very disadvantages of the great French philosopher's thought: its discourse cherishes confusion. Roland Duhamel (*Semiotics and aesthetics*) takes yet another stand: he claims an ontological starting point, implying that the artefact is not equal to the materials perceived (the painted canvas, the sound waves, the imprinted paper), but is realized only in the process of consciousness. The conception as such is conform to a long tradition in aesthetics of course; the particularity of Duhamel's paper, however, is that he believes in the fact that this process of consciousness, being a process of signs, can (adequately) be described by means of the mathematical theory of information (relying on Max Bense). And yet another new direction is indicated by the semantic theory of Ch. Grivel, developed by the Groningue group of research on the novel. The programme of this group, aiming at a pragmatic (or universal) semantics, did not yet come to the fore up to now; it is here introduced by Jean-Louis Cornille (*Ode on a new semantics?*).

And then, of course, there is the necessary counter-balance, presented in the first place in a wisely thoughtful paper by Andre Lef  vere ("Neo-philology?"), pleading for a theory to be situated in a tradition that links up with Russian Formalism (in its late phase of development), with Prague School structuralism and with the works of Anton Popovic, Janusz

Slawiński and Itamaz Even Zohar. Modern literary theory should, according to Lef  vere, be able to draw up an inventory of all means of production particular to literature (i.e. genre, typical situations and stock figures, motives and themes, the "natural" language in which literature is written) and on the other hand it has the task to analyze the ways in which these means of production are realized in particular works, and the ways in which these means have particular effects on the reader. Lef  vere himself goes into further details with one part of the inventory, giving directions to describe genre.

Two more articles add to the utmost variety of the picture. C.W. Rietdijk, whose ideas have been discussed before in this periodical ("Restant" VIII,4) ensures the contrast in a side-slip polemical exposition pleading for ideological freedom and optimism and against relativism and negativism. It should not be the task of literary theory to explain texts, is but one remarkable statement made by Rietdijk; art is just a means to move people. Rietdijk goes on to criticize modern literature (along with its representatives Pinter, Beckett, Handke), blaming it for lack of clarity and perspective, for poly-interpretability. This blame on modern literature, characterized as opposed to positive sciences and "Enlightenment" is reminding very much of Lukacs' rather short-sighted opposition to "modern" absurd literature. The problem is, of course, that one may well pity this, but no one will ever be able to prevent literature from being just what it is and always has been: a representation of life and thus representative of a prevailing ideology (even if it is regretted by some people that this ideology should be anti-rationalistic). It is the particular merit of Rietdijk's positive and constructive way of thinking, however, that he makes people aware of their mental condition: awareness indeed is the first and necessary step on the way of improvement. The same choice was implicitly made in the shorter article by Manuel Aguirre (*A matter of choice*). Where contemporary human sciences prove to favour the game-model and human thought is imbued with ludic elements, Aguirre calls for a science of language that helps us to understand the full potential of this instrument (i.e. language) for improving the reality we possess.

So far it seems highly improbable that a common line of thinking could be attained in literary theory in a near future. This textbook, at any rate, is the convincing proof to the contrary. But then the question remains whether conformity—if possible—is really necessary.

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Naum L. Leiderman, ДВИЖЕНИЕ
ВРЕМЕНИ И ЗАКОНЫ ЖАНРА. ЖАН-
РОВЫЕ ЗАКОНОМЕРНОСТИ РАЗВИ-
ТИЯ СОВЕТСКОЙ ПРОЗЫ В 60- 70-Е
ГОДЫ. Swierdłowski 1982, ss. 254.

Tytuły kolejnych rozdziałów książki Nauma L. Leidermana obiecują wiele badaczowi współczesnej literatury, w szczególności temu, który zechciałby na nią spojrzeć przez pryzmat genologii: 1. O zasadach badania bieżącego procesu literackiego, 2. Gatunek i koncepcja, 3. Potencjał gatunku, 4. Dynamika gatunku, 5. Historyczne systemy gatunków. W podrozdziałach będzie mowa również o istocie, modelu współczynnikach gatunku, o integracji struktur gatunkowych, o systemie gatunkowym kierunku literackiego — i to w oparciu o materiał empiryczny.

Zainteresowania genologiczne Leidermana zostały odnotowane już wcześniej przez „ZRL” (choćby rozprawa o ideach gatunkowych Bachtina, drukowana w t. XXIV, z 1 (46)). Nie jest też obcy autorowi dorobek i polskiej, i zachodniej refleksji o rodzajach i gatunkach literackich.

Leidermanowskie interpretacje genologicznych poglądów Bachtina są jednak w przypadku recenzowanej książki sprawą najważniejszą; one właśnie służą za metodologiczny punkt wyjścia, uzasadniają przyjętą w pracy koncepcję gatunku.

Autor traktuje gatunek jako kategorię semantyczną, poznawczą. Morfologia gatunku staje się nośnikiem znaczenia, on sam — „formą czasu”. Oznacza to, że badanie tych form w prozie radzieckiej lat 60-tych i 70-tych da możliwość ukazania związków literatury z „duchowymi poszukiwaniami własnej epoki”. Przy okazji naukowych analiz współczesnego procesu literackiego zostanie też „sprawdzona” skuteczność nauki o literaturze.

W rozważaniach na temat strukturalnych

podstaw procesu historycznoliterackiego znajdujemy trójdzielny schemat działalności artystycznej. Metoda, styl i gatunek to trzy podstawy, „mechanizmy kierujące” rozwoju literatury. Relacje pomiędzy nimi wyznaczają strukturę dzieła. Relacje te są jeszcze słabo zbadane, toteż Leiderman uznaje za sensowną analizę rozwoju literatury przez pryzmat tylko jednej z jego podstaw strukturalnych. W ślad za Bachtinem kreuje na głównego bohatera procesu historycznoliterackiego — kategorię gatunku.

Refleksję genologiczną we współczesnym literaturoznawstwie radzieckim uważa autor za „złożoną”, ale też za „niewystarczającą”. Jego zdaniem, strukturę gatunkową utworu należy określić tak, jak robił to Bachtin już w latach dwudziestych: wychodząc od funkcji pełnionej przez gatunek w utworze. Funkcja ta, wiązana przez Bachtina z pojęciem artystycznej całości, kompletności (zawieszoności) dzieła, oznacza ujęcie gatunku jako systemu środków i sposobów rozumiejącego opanowanie rzeczywistości. Taki jest sens naukowy bachtinowskiej formuły „artystyczny model świata”, taka istota gatunku.

Z kolei Leiderman opisuje model gatunku, tj. sposoby realizacji jego podstawowej funkcji w tekście. Te elementy formy gatunkowej, które pełnią w utworze konstruktywną, „światotwórczą” rolę, nazywa nośnikami gatunku. Porządkuje je wedle stopnia aktywności w tworzeniu obrazu świata. Są to: 1) podmiotowa organizacja świata artystycznego (pozycja narratora), 2) jego organizacja czasowo-przestrzenna, 3) tło skojarzeniowe utworu (system sygnałów, pozwalający na uchwycenie związków ukrytych między obrazami w głębi tekstu oraz między tekstem a rzeczywistością pozatekstową), 4) organizacja intonacyjno-językowa (w funkcji stylistycznej, ale też dla „wzmocnienia” świata artystycznego, gdy kanwa zdarzeń jest lapidarna, fragmentaryczna).

Leiderman wskazuje dalej na „współczynniki gatunku” (faktory žanra), tj. te zewnętrzne i wewnętrzne siły, pod których wpływem odbywa się rozwój, życie gatunku. Na pierwszym miejscu w hierarchii tych sił stawia koncepcję jednostki. Rozwój metody twórczej, nowe formy artystyczne, „wszystkie wewnętrzne procesy zachodzące w literaturze, można zrozumieć i objaśnić tylko w świetle estetycznej koncepcji jednostki” (s. 29). Istotą analiz z rozdziału „Gatunek i koncepcja”, a także