

INTRODUCTION
THE COMMON ROOTS OF THE STUDIES
OF LITERATURE AND DISCOURSE

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1. Historical perspective

Although the studies collected in this book are inspired by the structural analysis of literature and discourse that has become a prevalent paradigm in the last two decades, it is well-known that these modern approaches have a long and respectable tradition. In Antiquity, the Middle-Ages and until at least the 18th century, the arts of poetics and rhetoric were close sister disciplines. The normative precepts of rhetoric, originally formulated for public discourse (in court or parliament), were soon extended to esthetic forms of language use, such as narrative, poetry or drama. And conversely, the works of art of well-known authors were used as *exempla* in the later recommendations for the *ars bene scribendi* that rhetoric also aimed to be. Modern stylistics, now being also concerned with personally or socially based variations of language use, in our century remained close to the study of the 'specific' uses of language in literary discourse. But its history is also shaped by the rhetorical study of artful, effective or persuasive 'figures of speech' that were defined in the *elocutio* component of rhetoric.

Similar roots can be discerned for the contemporary study of narrative, e.g. in Aristotle's theory of drama in *the Poetics*, introducing some of the overan organizational categories, as well as some psychological principles of reception, that would dominate both theory and practice for centuries. And the same may be observed for the various genres that are treated in the respective chapters of this book. Whether narrative, poetry, graffiti, myth or song, they are all as old as our cultural tradition itself.

2. *Contemporary developments*

Despite this long tradition, and despite the sophistication of classical rhetoric, our century also brought significant new developments in the study of literature and discourse. One decisive influence was the modern offspring of the third classical sister discipline *ofgrammatica*, viz. linguistics. The many forms of structural analysis that have developed in the past fifty years, can hardly be fully understood without the theoretical and methodological example of modern grammar. This modern history at the cross-roads of linguistics, anthropology, poetics, semiotics and stylistics, is well-known and needs no detailed examination or assessment here. Some highlights will be sufficient for the non-specialist.

There can be little doubt, that it was the movement known under the name 'Russian Formalism' that provided a decisive point of departure for later work in the structural analysis of literature, discourse, art or other semiotic practices. Linguists like Jakobson, literary scholars like gklovskij, Tynjanov, Eikhenbaum, Tomaáevski and Vinogradov, cinematographers like Eisenstein and, last but not least, anthropologists like Propp, provided the new ideas about the study of literature, discourse, language, film, folktales and the arts. Although there are of course important differences between the work of these scholars, they all seem highly preoccupied with the scientific study of the *forros* of language, literature, discourse or other semiotic artifacts. They formulate formal categories or units of analysis and the first rules for their 'composition', whether of the sounds or word forms of natural language, or for novels or film (Erlich, 1965). Propp wrote a first 'morphology of the folktale' in which the stereotypical themes of Russian folktales were abstractly defined in terms of narrative lunctions', that is as invariants of different actual tales (Propp, 1928).

For several reasons, such as the language barrier, as well as later political problems, this work only had its full impact decades later, e.g. after the 'rediscovery' of Propp's work by Lévi-Straus in the fifties, and after Todorov's (1966) translation of the literary formalists. In the meantime, though, Czech linguistics and poetics had already taken its inspiration from this earlier work, under the label of 'Czech structuralism', for instance in the semiotic studies of Mukarovsky (1948).

These, then, were the backgrounds for what is now commonly called 'French structuralism', a paradigm of research that comprised Lévi-Strauss in anthropology, Greimas in semiotic linguistics and semantics, Todorov, Bremond, Kristeva in the study of literature and narrative, Metz in the

analysis of film, and Barthes across most of these disciplinary boundaries, among many others (cf. Culler, 1975, for introduction and surveys).

Interesting for our discussion is, that in this rich tradition, which originated around 1965, the classical boundaries between literary and non-literary genres of discourse were hardly respected, despite the ongoing differentiation and one-sidedness of the usual 'language and literature' departments in that respect. And the same holds for the distinction between linguistics, semiotics, anthropology or other disciplines in the humanities and part of the social sciences. With the prominent example of structural grammars (Jakobson, Hjelmslev, Tesnière, and others) in Europe, the classical Saussurean tradition of structural linguistics was carried over also to the systematic analysis of discourse, narrative, myth, film or advertising. The overall, interdisciplinary label for these various approaches soon became that of 'semiotics' (or rather, in French, 'sémiologie'). For various artifacts, the well-known analysis of 'signs' into expression (signifiant) and content (signifié) were made, as well as the combinatorial principles for more complex units of form and interpretation.

Although the different methods, units of analysis or small paradigm changes (as well as the significant controversies among the various 'structuralists' of different orientations), cannot be gone into here, it is worth noting some general tendencies that are interesting as background for the chapters in this book. First, the earlier analysis of folktales by Propp, and of myth by Lévi-Strauss, had stimulated the interest for several 'popular' discourse forms, sometimes at the expense of the 'higher' literary types of the text. One reason for that interest was also the theoretical interest of 'simple forms', e.g. in the account of narrative structures. One example of this trend for instance, is the application by Eco on James Bond stories in an early collective issue of *Communications* (1966) about the structural analysis of narrative. As a modern form of popular tale, such spy or crime stories could fit very well into the functional analysis proposed by Propp. And the same holds for the analysis of short stories, such as the analysis of the 'nouvelles' of Boccaccio by Todorov, in which further linguistic methods were also brought to the structural analysis. In this volume, these orientations are documented, for instance, in the chapters by Maranda and Pavel (who also give bibliographical details).

Secondly, increasing attention was being paid to the more 'mundane' forms of language and discourse, such as those of the mass media. Especially the *narre* of Barthes was closely tied to such approaches, such as his work

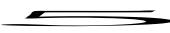
about advertising or the structure of the *lait divers*' in the press. It is at this point that the boundaries with the social sciences, already prefigured by the anthropological interest for myths and folktales, were crossed. The study of mass communication and sociology would only later pick up this thread in their analysis of media messages and everyday discourse forms. In this book, the chapters by Hodge, Blume and Violi, about song, graffiti and letters, respectively, are illustrations of this kind of extension to the more mundane forms of discourse.

Thirdly, language and discourse themselves were increasingly considered to be only one dimension in the wide spectrum of semiotic practices. Photographs, comics, film, dance or other forms of visual or kinetic articulation and their interpretation were subjected to the same kind of close analysis. Semiotics has become the proper discipline for such studies, which earlier were not attended to at all, or which had no *lame*' but were scattered in various disciplines, mostly in the social sciences.

In other words, from Russian Formalism to French and soon international Structuralism, we witness an increasing tendency towards the integration of poetics, linguistics, discourse analysis and other disciplines within an overall study of semiotic practices, in which especially a distinction between literature and other discourse types hardly made any sense, at least from a theoretical, structural, point of view.

Similar extensions and interdisciplinary cross-fertilization occurred elsewhere however. In the USA structural grammar not only led to the little heard plea by Harris for an analysis of discourse (Harris, 1952). We also witness many concrete forms of discourse analysis in the framework of so-called *'tagmemics'*, originated by Pike (1967), and continued, also in this volume, by the work of Longacre and his associates (Longacre, 1977), about discourse (mainly narrative and paragraph) structures in many non-western languages. This work was soon related to the developments in Europe (mainly in the two Germanies) in the field of text grammar (Petofi, 1971; van Dijk, 1972, Schmidt, 1973, and many others). This textlinguistic work sought to combine insights from European structural grammars with the increasingly prevailing paradigm of generative-transformational grammars as developed by Chomsky, but would also integrate notions about e.g. narrative structures from French work. It is this *'generative'* background that we also find in Zholkovsky's approach to the thematic structure of poetry, represented in this book. Going back to ideas from e.g. Eisenstein, such an approach does not take an *'analytical'* road of description, but rather a *'constructive'* orien-

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tation: a poem is 'generated' from its basic thematic or esthetic principles via a number of specific devices that ultimately yield the concrete textual forms. Such an approach is reminiscent of the current simulation procedures of computer programs for the description of discourse (and its understanding) in Artificial Intelligence.

Finally, in the footsteps of another branch of structural or functional grammars, viz. of Halliday's 'systemic grammar', research in England, also beginning in the mid-sixties, focussed upon the relations between linguistics, stylistics and poetics. More than the work of French structuralists, these researchers were interested in the analysis of the precise forms of language use, and were therefore close to linguistic grammar and linguistic stylistics. The work of Leech in England, and that of Enkvist in Finland, both represented in this volume, are important examples of this orientation, despite their different backgrounds. For Leech and others, this meant that they would as easily perform analysis of poetry as of advertising (Leech, 1966, 1969; Fowler, 1966, Crystal & Davie, 1969, and later also Fowler et al., 1979). Along another line of development, this English tradition also led to the current work on discourse, such as classroom dialogues, by scholars like Sinclair, Coulthard, Brazil and their associates (Sinclair & Coulthard, 1975; Coulthard, 1977).

The various contemporaneous sources of current work on language use, style, discourse, literature, or other semiotic practices, as they are briefly mentioned in this section, are of course varied and rooted in several disciplines. We have observed though, that there are also a number of common principles and aims, as well as similarities of method. Modern linguistics has continually played an inspiring role: phonology, morphology, syntax, and semantics have provided many suggestions for the formal analysis of narrative or other discourse forms, as well as for an account of content and interpretation. Yet, in several respects linguistics in the narrow sense was also superseded by its sister disciplines, e.g. due to its long time reluctance to also take into account structures beyond the sentence boundary, speech acts, or the sociocultural contexts of actual language use. This picture has changed in the last decade of course, in favor of interdisciplines such as pragmatics, sociolinguistics, discourse and conversational analysis, and semiotics, among others, leaving hard-core abstract and formal sentence grammars more and more isolated from the other approaches to language use. After the earlier interest for *structures* of *text*, we thus find increasing attention for the *processes* or strategies of their cognitive and social *context* (for history, introduction

and survey, see e.g. de Beaugrande, 1980; de Beaugrande & Dressler, 1981; and van Dijk, 1985).

3. *New approaches and further prospects*

The chapters in this book primarily focus on the structural properties of discourse. In that respect, they can be considered as small-scale, genre-specific theories of text, of which most roots go back to the developments in the sixties we have sketched above. Yet, the seventies have also brought many suggestions for renewal of the analysis of literature and discourse. Some of these were just suggested: pragmatics, sociolinguistics, or other cross-disciplinary approaches that link language and discourse with the social sciences.

In literary studies we have witnessed increasing attention for the study of 'reception', mostly from an intuitive socio-historical point of view. It seems obvious that this kind of problem is important for the interdisciplinary development of a theory of discourse and literature, provided that indeed the results from current thinking in these other disciplines is taken into account. Thus, the actual *uses* of literature or discourse in their socio-cultural contexts need to be made explicit in terms of precise models of textual communication, of social situations, and the interactional strategies of participants in such situations. For this understanding of the context of language and discourse, close ethnographic descriptions will be needed, in different cultures, as has been proposed by anthropologists in the so-called 'ethnography of speaking' tradition (Gumperz & Hymes, 1972; Bauman & Sherzer, 1974). Similarly, notions such as 'horizon of expectations' proposed by Schutz, and also used in the phenomenological or hermeneutic studies of literature, has found its way in various branches of microsociology, such as ethnomethodology (Garfinkel, 1967; Sudnow, 1972; Turner, 1974; Cicourel, 1973; see Schwartz & Jacobs, 1979, for introduction). One aim of this research is to make explicit the implicit or 'naive' common knowledge social members have about social situations and about the underlying rules of mundane, everyday interaction. Such aims are also relevant for the study of literature and discourse, as has been shown for the study of everyday conversation, institutional documents and codes, or classroom interaction among other spontaneous genres of discourse and language use. It is obvious that an explication of the underlying institutional and common-sense rules and reasoning involved in the uses of literature, is also an important aim of

pragmatics of literature (van Dijk, 1975; Pratt, 1977), or about the dialogical analysis of discourse and drama (Burton, 1980).

The 'reception' of literature and discourse, however, also has a cognitive dimension. The famous notion of 'interpretation', cherished in literary studies for a long time, should be reformulated in terms that go beyond the intuitions of the literary scholar. At least, such intuitions, as well as those of the readers, need systematic explication and reconstruction. Current work in psychology and Artificial Intelligence on memory processes, representation and strategies of interpretation (e.g. van Dijk & Kintsch, 1983), can and should be extended to cope also with the specific processes involved in understanding literature or semiliterary discourse genres (Verdaasdonk, 1982). Schmidt and his associates have demonstrated in much recent research that such an approach also requires an experimental dimension (Schmidt, 1982, 1983). Similar remarks hold of course for the reconstruction of the processes of production. Also in these various approaches to the cognitive and socio-cultural contexts of literature and discourse, distinctions between literary and non-literary texts do not seem very relevant. Similar principles and processes are at work, and the specific 'status' of literature will be, so to speak, an automatic by-product of a full-scale analysis of the socio-cultural and institutional analyses of various discourse types in our society (and other societies). We have at present many suggestions from psychology, sociology or interdisciplinary approaches to discourse analysis, about how such a contextualization of the study of literature may take place.

Yet, in each case, this necessary contextual extension of the theories of literature and discourse will need increasingly explicit and systematic description of textual structures. The chapters in this volume are intended to provide precisely this firm basis for work in the future.

BIO-BIBLIOGRAPHICAL NOTE

Teun A. van Dijk (1943) took degrees at both Universities of Amsterdam, and is currently professor of Discourse Studies at the University of Amsterdam. His earlier research was in the fields of literary scholarship, text grammar, and the psychology of text processing. He is now primarily engaged in the social psychology of discourse, with special applications in the study of news and ethnic prejudice. His book publications include: *Some Aspects of Text Grammars* (1972), *Text and Context* (1977), *Macrostructures* (1980), *Issues in the Pragmatics of Discourse* (1981), *Strategies of Discourse Comprehension* (with Walter Kintsch) (1983), *Prejudice in Discourse* (1984), and *News as Discourse* (in press). He edited the *Handbook of Discourse Analysis*, 4 vols. (1985), and is editor of the journal *Text*.

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