

JAN TRZYNADLOWSKI

Wrocław

INFORMATION THEORY AND LITERARY GENRES

Studies on the linguistic aspect of literary works have their history in scholarly literature both in Poland and abroad. On the one hand, they are linguistic in nature and as such treat a literary work as an object of study from the point of view of the history of language, dialectology, lexicology, etc.; on the other, they are concerned chiefly with style, and also with semantics, composition, literary theory, and even philosophy. Without entering the intricate labyrinth of research assumptions and methods of the various trends in that field of research and scientific statements, it ought to be said that those researches were meant to describe "stylistic" phenomena in order to establish what and by what means is stated (expressed, presented, denoted, etc.) by the author. Endeavours were made to determine the adequacy of linguistic (stylistic) means with respect to the content of the given work, to the world it presents, to its literary genre, to its constitutive assumptions, to the philosophical attitude of the author, to the literary trend or school to which the given work belongs, to general linguistic system, to literary tradition. A system of descriptive and normative concepts was constructed, stylistic techniques were codified, the various styles were defined, with the intention to bring them down to a possibly small number of categories.

The boundary between description and interpretation continues to be the most difficult and the most controversial issue. True, it often happens that a good, precise description can replace, or even amount to, an interpretation. A pertinent description is a sum of statements, and these in turn explain not only the object described, but also its provenience and function. But it is to be doubted whether this fully applies to artistic phenomena, and to literary ones in particular. Reality is governed by laws that are independent of human will (although man, by acquiring knowledge of those laws can at least partly make use of them), but art is governed by laws which man can influence. Hence description in art can rarely be an interpretation.

But description proper, as a result of cognition, is an indispensable

condition of interpretation, and the latter is the goal to be reached through cognition and description. It seems that, generally speaking, the methods of stylistic research as used so far rarely penetrated the sphere of interpretation, and if so, then by heterogeneous, extra-stylistic means, on the strength of philosophical or sociological assumptions adopted previously. This is not a generalizing objection; it is just stated that most often a more or less precise description exhausts the problems of stylistic research, and interpretation is left to the analysis of the work "as such", without satisfactory prospects concerning the objective phenomena which condition a given work.

But it is probably not to be doubted that precisely that field of facts and relationships should be investigated in the study of the various works. Thus it is worth while to re-examine the issue and to make accordingly a number of suggestions.

Certain more general assumptions must be adopted at the outset, although the degree and scope of their applicability in literary research must be checked.

The first, most general, assumption, which will be fundamental for further analysis, is based on the statement that both the cognition of the world and the cognition of a literary work follow analogous principles. By "cognition of a literary work" is meant both the perception of its formal and linguistic properties and of its semantic content.

The second assumption, which is not just an arbitrary assumption but a statement based on the observation of the history of literary works, is that the author in shaping his work in the last analysis performs two operations: he presents certain facts and thus supplies definite data; and provides them with a "key", suitable for the given "type" of the work, a key which makes it possible to decipher the various semantic aspects of the work. These aspects are: objective meanings, allusive meanings, emotional, intellectual, ideological, etc., meanings. It is obvious that that "key" can have varying degrees of readability, and sometimes itself requires an additional, auxiliary, key. This will be discussed later on in greater detail; for the time being, let the existence of the phenomenon itself be stated.

The third assumption is that through the cognition of a literary work the reader comes to know something more: he acquires some knowledge of the world, knowledge more concentrated and wider than that he could acquire himself. True, that knowledge may vary according to the rank of the work and extend from details to peaks of perfection, from the testimony of human degradation to heroism, from trifles to great philosophy. This complies with the actual picture of art, which has its own depressions and peaks. This does not refer just only to the practi-

cal "applicability" of literary art as a document of its epoch, as a historical source *sui generis* (although we would be fully authorized to speak about such a function as well). What is meant here is something much more: the possibility of acquiring a much more detailed and much more many-sided knowledge of the world through the intermediary of literary art, such a knowledge being intellectual, emotional, ideological, aesthetic, etc., in nature. Consequently, this means a better knowledge of ourselves, of man and his possibilities. If it be so, then literary research is not something "in itself" or "for itself", but becomes an instrument of cognition with a fairly universal validity and occupies a prominent place in contemporary humanities. The present suggestion is meant to direct attention to that significance and validity of literary research.

To revert to the main course of analysis, the cognition of the world by man takes place — if we deliberately simplify that intricate complex of phenomena — so to say on two basic planes: the first consists in registering objective facts, in collecting observations ("experiences"), the second, in discovering causal relationships between those facts and in taking advantage of such discoveries. Cognition in the proper sense of the word is the interpretation of the world as a whole, a systemic perception of facts and phenomena and their combination into a sequence of causes and effects. The development of science has shown that the path of human cognition leads from the statement of indirect causes to the detection of direct causes: blow (indirect cause) — pain (effect); stimulation of nerves (direct cause) — pain ("subjective" effect).

Orientation in the world thus requires two elements: a set of concrete data and a "principle" of their existence, a "method" of their operation, a "key" to understanding relationships between them. The so-called "pure facts", indispensable as they are, are in themselves insufficient for grasping the situation. That it is so can be proved by situations in which we find ourselves for the first time: their elements may be known to us, but our ignorance of the functioning of the whole makes us helpless. By analogy, a comparison could be made to a computer with input data but without operations instructions.

Thus, in view of the perceptive apparatus of human consciousness, the proper cognition of the world consists in receiving and combining into a whole two kinds of stimuli: objective data and functional data. If we adopt the terminology of information theory, now an independent discipline, we may the former terms replace by new ones: the cognition of the world consists in receiving information and instructions of specific kinds and types.

The meaning of these two terms, essential for further analysis, must now be clearly explained.

Information is a news or a signal conveyed through the intermediary of adequate informants (sense organs), specialized for the reception of appropriate stimuli due to phenomena occurring in the presence of such sense organs. Instruction is that set of data which tells us about the nature, significance, functions and causal relationships both between objects of information and between them and the recipient of such information. Instruction is a directional, active orientation of the recipient of information.

In receiving information and instructions particular role is played by such "brain" faculties of man as memory and the tendency to associate ideas. These faculties enrich both the amount of information and the store of instructions. Most often it happens that the consecutive incoming items of information are associated with items received earlier and already remembered, which produces appropriate directional data, i.e., instructions. For instance, when we read a book which contains a number of terms that are unknown to us, our possibility to comprehend them is very limited; the data which are conveyed to us either do not reach the information level (they are just incomprehensible) or become items of information with difficulty and in part, and then the scope of instruction is very limited too. But when we read a book that is full of terms which are known to us, current items of information evoke from memory and association centres those items of information and those instructions which are already recorded there, so that the text being read acquires full meaning, in conformity with the assumptions and intentions of its author.

In view of its subjective value, information may vary in nature. It may be:

a) indifferent information — when the set of news items supplied will not in fact be made use of, in spite of an existing set of adequate instructions (e. g., information about the number of passengers, at a specified time, in a not overcrowded tram, in a given district of a given town);

b) potential information — when a set of objective data is not utilizable for the time being, but may be used in different conditions (e. g., information about an excessively overcrowded tram for a man who goes on foot or drives comfortably in a car: the same information for the same man when he takes part in a discussion on the municipal transport, writes a reportage, etc.);

c) potentially useful information — when information is sought and selected according to an adopted key (when a person learns a cer-

tain subject, craft, etc., to utilize information thus acquired in the future, in a most suitable way);

d) useful information — when the information received is immediately applicable (information about topography, climate, weather, etc., acquired during an excursion, especially under unfavourable conditions: in winter, in the mountains, in a little-known territory).

It is obvious that the qualities of information as specified above are not its objective properties, but are classed in human consciousness. Further, information can, and sometimes must, be re-classified, for instance, indifferent information, when evoked from the memory centre, may acquire practical importance, which proves that when acquired it was not indifferent, but potential or potentially useful. Potential information may finally prove indifferent, while many a pupil is most deeply convinced that potentially useful information conveyed to him at school is just "useless". Moreover, the history of science provides many examples of how information offered by outstanding personalities was flatly refused the status of information (attitude towards statements by Copernicus, Galileo, Koch). Something like that often occurs between rival methodological trends within a given discipline, not to speak of the evaluation of a given science by representatives of another discipline (compare the evaluation of information supplied by the humanities in the eyes of representatives of the exact sciences).

Thus, the classification of information is a subjective process, whereas information itself is an objective phenomenon. The objects of information are objective phenomena if information pertains to physical or psychic processes. "External phenomena" are objective since they can be objects of information; the same refers to reactions of nervous centres. Thus all phenomena which actually occur can be objects of information (not in the artistic sense!). Consequently it is to be stated that a message becomes information when it conveys to its conscious recipient true data.

All this will hang in the air if we do not resort here to the only criterion of truth, as formulated by Karl Marx in *Theses on Feuerbach*: the issue whether objective truth is an attribute of human thinking is not a theoretical but a practical issue; man must prove the truth, i. e., reality, and the force, non-transcendence (German: *Diesseitigkeit*) of his thinking. The controversy about the reality or irreality of thinking that isolates itself from practice is a pure scholastic issue.

Thus, data which do not satisfy the criterion of practice can be objects of a message, but such a message does not acquire the rank of

information. This group of data will include, to speak generally, fictitious contents. A reservation must be made here that generalizations, systems of concepts, etc., are not considered to be fictitious contents. Although their reality is specific in nature, yet it is verifiable, confirmed and verified by the various disciplines, e. g., such as mathematics or logic.

And how can we characterize instructions? For the purpose of this paper it may be assumed that instructions are specific items of information, specialized directionally and functionally. Their essence consists in that whereas information "in itself" is passive, instructions are active. Further, while items of information pertain to phenomena, states, appearances and processes, instructions refer to functions, relations and connections. Finally, information pertains to all that what has "substantial" properties in the broad sense of the word, and instructions are reflections of laws of Nature, laws of social development, principles of thinking, all kinds of agreements and univocal (this is a reservation of essential importance!) human conventions. Information is a system of ciphers, and instructions are keys resulting from and adapted to such ciphers. This parallel is well justified: the key is determined by the cipher in a definite way, they come to being simultaneously, so that the cipher makes the existence of the key possible, and the key makes it possible to understand the cipher if a person becomes conscious of the cipher first, and of the key next (of course in the process of reading the key is given but "waits" for application, then there is „first“ the cipher which in turn is subject to the operation of the key which has already been in a person's possession, but has not yet been used in a concrete case).

As a result of such relationships between information and instruction, instruction is a code adapted to information. In view of its nature such a code can either be discovered in the sphere of objective phenomena (in the sense explained above), or can be agreed upon according to the convention which is most suitable for a given type of information.

Let us now recall the statement made at the beginning of the present analysis: cognition of the world and cognition of a literary work take place according to analogous principles. What about the cognition of a literary work from the point of view of the phenomena and processes discussed above?

A literary work is a reflection of reality; it reflects reality at different levels, and the reality reflected by it may be either objective or subjective. We have accordingly to do with an epic and a lyric world (the object of epic and the object of lyric, respectively). Thus,

every literary work includes in its content a certain picture of reality, formed from messages, put together in a consistent (or inconsistent) manner by the author; according to that author's assumptions, those messages most effectively present data about the described fragment of the world. Thus, a literary work informs about reality, about events, appearances, states, relationships, and laws which in the author's opinion exist in the world he is showing.

Consequently, it may be said that a literary work, is with respect to the consciousness of its interpretant, a complex or a system of information about those events and states in which the author is actually interested. That information is considered to be the answer to the question, which state of affairs out of the many possible ones has in fact occurred. Since such information, and thereby the answer to the said question, is provided by the author, therefore he, through the intermediary of his work, expresses certain statements and endeavours to develop certain inclinations, attitudes and convictions in the interpretant.

If it be accepted that a literary work is a system of information, it must be said that system is a very intricate one. Its complexity and intricacy is due to several basic factors (regardless of the various possible combinations of those factors), namely:

- a) an enormous variety of types of information,
- b) mutations of information ("identical" items of information may vary in nature according to their localization in the work),
- c) synthetizing information (sets of items of information form a picture which in turn is a new, fuller item of information, e. g., an event, a background, a personality shown with the wealth of details of his physical and psychic life),
- d) apparent information (specific stylization e. g. for satirical purposes),
- e) implying or explaining the complex network of instructions that are indispensable for the proper exploitation of information applied.

Indifferent information is one of the most acute shortcomings of messages conveyed by the author, and also of the composition of the work. Excess of episodes that mean little or nothing, details in narration or descriptions, all kinds of data not integrally connected with the main course of events presented in the work — all that informs the interpretant about very many states and events, but that information serves no purpose at all. Such items of information are certainly answered to definite question about what is taking place or what has happened, but since the questions serve no purpose, the answers are useless.

The adequate method of providing information requires a ruthless selection of information. If the answers are to be properly directed and useful, the questions must be not only precise but to the point. Otherwise a mass of items of information that are of nil or very questionably utility is heaped upon the interpretant (cf. the novels of Jaraczewska; Kraszewski also is not beyond reproach). From the point of view of composition this is a drawback, since the work loses its inner harmony, and many of its elements find no justification.

It does not follow that all "objective indifferent" information supplied in a literary work is actually indifferent in a given context. Rzędzian (a secondary character in Sienkiewicz's *Trilogy*) who irritates his impatient listeners with long and incoherent stories about trifling disputes concerning the boundary between two landed estates certainly provides information that is indifferent to the plot of the novel. Yet that information is not indifferent to the characteristic of the phlegmatic talker and, on a broader scale, to the characteristic of his class, namely that of petty gentry. And these issues are not at all indifferent, and *a fortiori* alien, to the novel as a whole.

In such cases the proper classification of information depends on the function of the information and its justification from the point of view of the whole of the work. In the case described above we have to do with apparently indifferent information.

A particular role is played in a literary work by potential and potentially useful information. The former supply information about the background and the *milieu* of the main plot, and the latter information directly referring to the main plot, the basic situations and events presented in the work.

The distinction may seem artificial, since in the last analysis all information contained in a literary work contributes to a picture that forms a certain whole, and consequently — at least in the author's intention is meant to be useful. In the last analysis, every well composed literary work is a set (system) of useful information. Mutation of information will be discussed later; for the time being we are concerned with the role of the various items of information in the work as a whole, with the history of the various items of information in the work, with the sequence, weight and meaning of such items which follow and complete one another. Before reaching the basic conclusion as regards the plot and his artistic and philosophical opinions, the author composes his picture from formal elements and from items of information according to a preconceived order. It is in that order that he supplies the appropriate items of information, which vary in their informative value and the degree of connection with the main content

of the work. Consequently, these items of information have their varying rank in a given part of the work, they appeal to the interpretant in a varying manner, and in a varying degree provide information about unrealized, little realized or suspected connection with the developing whole. Thus the items of information, successively stratified in the emerging picture, are potential or potentially useful, according to their function and location in the work. And they are accordingly to be interpreted as such.

The background, the *milieu*, the atmosphere — all that is some sort of comment to the main body of what is being described. In many cases, the amassed items of information reveal their connection with the main plot in some broader sense. They are really potential when they appear as rather incidental, and only from time to time round off the main plot. Autonomous at first, they gradually develop limited organic importance. This can be observed above all in psychological works. Such items of information, potential at first, become useful not from the very outset and not once and for all; they do so when subjective content is confronted with the objective one.

It may be otherwise if the author's assumptions are different. All information pertaining to the background of the plot may be potential information that becomes useful when the background and the *milieu* come to the forefront and in a way become the hero of the work. This can be seen in such novels as *The Pharaoh* by Bolesław Prus and *The Citizens* by Kazimierz Brandys. Many other examples could, of course, be quoted. In principle such a situation occurs whenever "the background" and "the milieu" are essential elements of the main plot.

Potentially useful information is a system of items of information which are successively conveyed to the interpretant with reference to the main plot of the work (due consideration being given to the background and the *milieu*, as explained above). The authors orders and "doses" his information so as the development of the plot requires. The full usefulness of such information is not evident at the very outset, or else — both with reference to the characters involved and to the events shown — items of information are distributed so that not everything becomes known at once.

We mean here, of course, some ideal cases of perfect composition. But anyhow the point is that the author by an adequate dosage of items of information whose usefulness is not quite evident introduces us into the world presented in his work, makes us to become acquainted step by step with its structure and elements. Such information is not conveyed chaotically, as a rule we are not offered information which will be of no use at all in the further course. The way these items of

information accumulate and their growing purposefulness indicate that they will certainly prove very useful. The degree in which the value of information is clear varies considerably. Some items of information are or seem quite obvious and comprehensible, in the case of others the interpretant in general guesses or suspects their importance. As readers we have confidence in the author: we believe him that the general trend of the information conveyed by him is a correct one, although we are not sure in detail to what his information will lead us.

It is so when the events are shown chronologically or in a reversed order. It is in this way that information accumulates around the characters and events in *Hard Times*, *Our Mutual Friend* and *Great Expectations* by Dickens, in Sienkiewicz's *Trilogy*, in the novels of Walter Scott and the plays by G. B. Shaw. But it is also so if the plot is shown in the reverse order. Although in such cases the end of the plot opens the work, so that the solution is presented at the very outset, yet the accumulation of potentially useful information takes a similar course. From the composition's point of view, the solution of the plot, the "objective point" of the work, ceases to be important, and all the emphasis is shifted on the path leading to that solution, the "natural history" of human fate. The function of the content is changed, but the formation of the system of messages contained in the various items of information remains basically unchanged. This can be seen, though in varying degrees, in Ibsen's *Ghosts* and *Rosmersholm* or in Hemingway's *The Snows of Kilimanjaro*.

Useful information can be analysed in two aspects: usefulness for the course of the plot, as conditioned by the composition of the work, and direct connection with the "real" solution of the plot in accordance with the natural sequences of causes and effects. In a novel of adventure the whole set of information is useful information for two reasons: first, the sequence of items of information results from the compositional principles of that literary genre, principles which require a complicated combination of events; secondly, regardless of the tortuous course of the plot, that sequence leads in fact to a solution which is in conformity with the "natural course of events".

As has been stated above, the sense of truth is inseparably connected with the classical concept of information, since otherwise we would have to do not with information, but with disinformation. The interpretation of truth has been given above. The so-called classical concept of truth may also be introduced here: everything is true what conforms with reality. What then, in the light of these explanations, will be considered "fictitious content"? What will be our attitude towards such phenomena as data about real facts which, however,

when confronted with reality prove to be not true; then such data which are introduced into the literary work on the principle of probability; and finally events which are characteristic of such literary genres as utopia, fable, legend, and science fiction? In the first case, we have to do with data that have been deliberately distorted or else presented *bona fide* but not true; in the second, with facts and events from the sphere of classical artistic fiction (characters and events are "invented" but typical and therefore probable); the third case requires no explanations.

The concept of truth will be discussed later in great detail in connection with the verification of the information data according to literary genres.

Attention must now be drawn to mutations within the information conveyed, which process is characteristic of literary works. As mentioned above, the various items of information taken into account either from the point of view of the sequence of events as presented in the work, or from the point of view of the knowledge of the world presented in the work, can become indifferent, potential, potentially useful or useful information.

Every literary work is governed by specific purposefulness. The interpretant may legitimately assume that every element of the literary work in question serves some definite purpose. Every sentence, and consequently every semantic element, even if at first indifferent or rather obscure, should play a definite role against the background of the work as a whole or in combination with some other element, introduced at a later stage. Otherwise such an element, being superfluous, would only be a useless ballast, something which interferes with a proper interpretation of the work and would lower its artistic value.

Since thinking is systematic and expression is analytic, before a complete thought is formulated or a complete picture is presented, the initial part of a given sequence of sentences must be stated. If a given mental whole must be broken into sentences, these sentences can in turn be formulated one after another, in the order which the author thinks best. To quote n sentences one must successively quote the sentences a, b, \dots, x, \dots, n . The same applies to larger semantic complexes (the various events in the plot, the formation and resolution of the conflict, complex mental processes, a lyrical picture and a lyrical *pointe*, etc.), and also to small complexes within a single sentence and even within a word (the order is: syllables, words, sentences).

Thus, before the interpretant is adequately informed about the basic issues that form the subject matter of the work, he successively

receives partial information. Their semantic scope is rather limited, and their information value very small when compared with the information value of a given part of the work or, *a fortiori*, the work as a whole. Moreover, each consecutive item of information, limited as it is in its scope, becomes synthetized with the preceding item, complements it so that the two form a new item of information, richer in semantic value than either of the two elements. All this takes place throughout the process of interpretation of a given work. Items of information, supplied separately, combine into larger wholes, with considerable information value. If a single sentence (understood as a grammatical structure and a semantic complex) be symbolized s , then the synthetizing accumulation of information can be shown as the following sequence of symbols (where a , x , n stand for the various complexes of sentences): $(s+s) = S$; $(S+s) = Sa$; $(Sa+s) = Sx$; $(Sx+s) = Sn$.

Every s has its own information value. The gradual accumulation of s 's is, from the syntactic point of view, a simple transition from words to sentences, from sentences to paragraphs, from paragraphs to chapters or parts of the work, and finally to the work as a whole. That somewhat mechanical accumulation is accompanied by semantic accumulation, i. e., accumulation of information. That accumulation of information is not mechanical in the same way as is the formation of sequences of grammatical units. As the sequence of sentences develops, information becomes synthetized. And while the sequence of sentences resembles an arithmetical progression, the sequence of complexes of information resembles a geometrical progression:

$$[(i_1+i_2)<i_3]+i_x<i_z \rightarrow +x(i,i,i)<Jn$$

That synthetization of information is characterized by several phenomena:

1) Items of information, when combined into larger complexes, pass to higher levels: from indifferent they change into potential, and from potential into useful.

2) That process is not automatic throughout the whole work: according to the structure of the work individual complexes are formed (scenes, episodes, collateral plots, motifs, fairly independent images, etc.).

3) The work as a whole forms, from the point of view of what it presents and of its guiding idea, a *sui generis* one large item of information.

These phenomena, because of their function in shaping the semantic content of the work, are called mutations of information.

Further, the facts described under 1-3 above occur within items

of information and pertain to information, so that they may be called internal mutations. But that is not all. It can easily be seen that items of information undergo mutations not only within the same class, i. e., it is not only so that information changes as to its type. It also happens that indifferent information, changing into potential and then into useful information, not only becomes information of a higher order, but also becomes an instruction. Items of information may become instructions or function as such.

That phenomenon in principle occurs in two cases. First, when within a semantic complex one of its elements is not only its semantic complement, but, and above all, its explanation. Secondly, it often occurs in certain literary genres, namely those in which semantic elements have by convention a multi-stratum structure, i. e., when apart from literal meaning they include a set of additional meanings that are typical of a given genre. That phenomenon is encountered in all kinds of utopias, literary fantasias, in Romantic, allegorical and symbolic conventions, that is over the vast field stretching from symbolism to science fiction. In such cases the information in question both completes further items of information and instructs how those items of information are to be interpreted. In such situations we also observe mutation, which in distinction of the former will be called external mutation or transmutation. It may be symbolized thus: (f = instruction)

$$[(i_1+i_2)>i_3]+i_x<J=f\rightarrow[(i_x+i_z)>J_n]$$

Transmutation, i. e. building of information that performs the function of instruction, serves as a foundation of sensational novel, thriller, crime fiction, and also — though in a somewhat different interpretation — of satire, fable and legend.

Now comes a very essential issue, namely that of the function of the literary genre from the point of view of the interpretation of a literary work as a complex of information.

It has been stated above that the complex of information and instructions is not a goal in itself, but must be provided with a directional impulse. In other words, a complex of data provided with a key for their proper deciphering must have an appropriate programme. For instance: Part Two of *The Adventures of Mikołaj Doświadczyński*. The complex of information: data about the social life of the Nipuans; instructon(s): the set of suggestions concerning an "ideal social organization"; programme: the complex of desiderata concerning the need and possibility of putting certain social ideals into effect in contemporary society. Literary genre: utopia (based on transmutation within

a system of information and instructions) which entails a univocal directional programming of both information and instructions. From the composition's point of view it is characteristic that Part One of that utopia, as a result of its being contrasted as to content with Part Two, also is a significant transmutation. Part I is a synthetic information but, in view of the existence of Part II, it is a complex of negative instructions for Part II. Similarly, Part II, while being a complex of information, is a positive instruction for Part I. In symbols:

$$[J(I) = f] \rightarrow (-) J(II)$$

$$[J(II) = f] \rightarrow (+) J(I)$$

Or, combining both formulae into one:

$$[J(I) = f](+) \leftrightarrow (-)[J(II) = f]$$

To study the lay-out of information, instructions and programme let us examine the composition of the fable of the classical type. First of all, it is bi-elemental: it consists of a "picture" and thesis ("sub-text"), i. e., an illustration and a "text". The picture, which represents the plot of the fable, is certainly a complex of items of information. The opening or concluding thesis also is an item of information, but in conformity with the principle of transmutation it changes into instruction and becomes pure instruction for a proper deciphering of the meaning implied by the "picture". But a closer semantic analysis easily reveals the looseness of composition: the two semantic elements, the general (thesis) and the particular (illustration, example) have no connecting link between them. In fact there is no element which would show for sure that the said two semantic elements are connected internally, and not only externally. Yet we have no doubts that such an organic unity in fact exists; in other words, we have no doubts that apart from information and instructions there is a programme as well. That programme is included in the directives that result from the genre of the fable which is built on the functional principle of example.

Here we come to the heart of the matter: transmutations between information and instructions follow the structural lines of elements of the literary work, but the essential theses of the programme belong to the criteria which establish literary genres. Historical and social novel, comedy of manners, animal fable, satire, pamphlet, tragedy (of the ancient type), fantastic novel, bourgeois drama, utopia, gnome — these genres are on purpose enumerated without any systematic order — are various types of programmes which correspond to

genres of determined literary forms. In such cases, the programme is goal-directed. Whereas individual and synthesized instructions within a literary work are a literal code for the information contained in the work, the programme, outlined by the directives and criteria of the given literary genre, is the central directional information with considerable interpretive values. The literary genre, understood as a programme, is for a given literary work a more universal law of a higher order, which informs the interpretant as to the artistic and ideological sphere of operation of a given literary work.

Such an interpretation of the literary work as a complex of information guided by instructions and based on an explicit programme, gives more precision to the position from which the author formulates his statements and creates complexes of images, and at the same time brings out the cognitive values of the work. What is of particular importance here, this bears out the role of the literary genre not as a mechanical resultant of "formal elements", but as a complex of directives which determine the proper interpretation of the assumption adopted in the individual literary work. Sets of instructions provide data for internal interpretation, based on a proper understanding of the content presented in the work, and the genre, conceived as a programme, enables us an external interpretation which explains the basic attitudes adopted in the work and in the author's vision of the world. It is the programme which shapes properly both information and instructions. Information theory, interpreted in this way and adapted for the needs of literary theory from the point of view of uniform and univocal terminology, is to make cognitive and interpretative processes more concrete with reference to literary works.

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TEORIA INFORMACJI A GATUNEK LITERACKI

STRESZCZENIE

Podejmując pracę na temat zastosowania pewnych ogólnych dyrektyw teorii informacji (w swej istocie dyscypliny matematycznej) do badań literackich — autor rozprawy przyjął kilka wstępnych założeń podstawowych:

Pierwsze, że poznawanie świata i poznawanie dzieła literackiego odbywa się wedle zasad analogicznych.

Drugie, że autor dzieła kształtując swój utwór dokonuje dwu zabiegów konstrukcyjnych: przedstawia pewne fakty, dostarcza określonych danych oraz wypowiada je w stosowny dla danego typu utworu klucz, pozwalający na rozszyfrowanie różnorodnych sfer znaczeniowych utworu.

Trzecie, że poprzez poznanie dzieła odbiorca dochodzi do poznania czegoś więcej: do wiedzy o świecie, skoncentrowanej w kształcie zwartym i oszczędnym, lecz w swej istocie rozleglejszej od tej, którą sam mógłby zdobyć.

Z uwagi na percepcyjny charakter ludzkiej świadomości poznanie świata — i poznanie dzieła literackiego! — opiera się na otrzymywaniu i wiązaniu w całość dwu rodzajów bodźców: danych przedmiotowych oraz danych funkcyjnych. Biorąc odpowiednią terminologię z dziedziny teorii informacji, uprzednie nazwy można zastąpić innymi — dane przedmiotowe to informacje, dane funkcyjne to instrukcje.

Ze względu na informatywną rolę podmiotową informacje mogą przybierać poczwórną postać:

1. Informacji obojętnych — gdy zespół dostarczonych wiadomości pomimo istnienia zespołu instrukcji nie będzie wykorzystany.

2. Informacji potencjalnych — gdy zespół danych przedmiotowych aktualnie nie ma zastosowania, lecz może je uzyskać w innych warunkach.

3. Informacji potencjalnie użytecznych — gdy dobiera się i poszukuje informacji wedle przyjętego klucza.

4. Informacji użytecznych — gdy otrzymany zespół wiadomości posiada aktualną zastosowalność, gdy się bezpośrednio uaktywnia.

Z kolei instrukcje można określić jako swoistego rodzaju informacje funkcyjne, kierunkowo wyspecjalizowane. Informacje mają charakter bierny, instrukcje zaś są dynamiczne i czynne; informacje dotyczą zjawisk, stanów, wyglądów i przebiegów, instrukcje zaś odnoszą się do funkcji stosunków i związków. Informacje ujmują to wszystko, co posiada cechy „substancjalne“, natomiast instrukcje są relacją o prawach przyrody, prawach rozwoju społecznego, zasadach myślenia, wszelkiego rodzaju umowach i jednoznacznych porozumieniach międzyludzkich. Informacje to zespół szyfrów, instrukcje zaś są odpowiednimi kluczami z tych szyfrów wynikającymi i do tych szyfrów dostosowanymi. Instrukcja jest kodem dostosowanym do informacji.

Odnosząc te relacje do dzieła literackiego upoważnieni jesteśmy do takiego przedstawienia sprawy: utwór literacki jest w stosunku do świadomości odbiorcy zespołem, systemem informacji o tych zdarzeniach i stanach, które są przedmiotem aktualnego zainteresowania autora.

System ten jest bardzo skomplikowany. Złożoność ta polega na kilku podstawowych aspektach, a mianowicie na pełnym współistnieniu

a) wszelkich typów informacji,

b) mutacji w zakresie informacji (zmian charakteru informacji w zależności od aktualnej lokalizacji w różnych partiach utworu),

c) informacji syntetyzujących (połączonych w większe zespoły, kiedy to zbiór poszczególnych informacji tworzy obraz całościowy, będący z kolei nową, pełniej-

szą informacją — na przykład wydarzenie, tło, postać działająca pokazana w całym bogactwie życia fizycznego i psychicznego),

d) informacji pozornych (gdy autor na przykład dla celów satyrycznych przeprowadza swoiste stylizacje),

e) implikowania lub eksplikowania (złożonej sieci instrukcji niezbędnych do właściwego wyeksploatowania podanych informacji).

Jest rzeczą zrozumiałą, że z klasycznym pojęciem informacji wiąże się nierozłącznie poczucie prawdziwości. W przeciwnym wypadku mielibyśmy do czynienia nie z informacją, lecz z dezinformacją. Co przeto uznamy za „zespoły treści fikcyjnych”? Jakie stanowisko zajmiemy wobec takich np. zjawisk, jak z jednej strony dane o faktach realnych, ale w konfrontacji z rzeczywistością zdemaskowanych jako nieprawdziwe, dalej takich, które są wprowadzone do dzieła literackiego na uogólniającej zasadzie prawdopodobieństwa, a wreszcie wobec zespołów zdarzeń z kręgu gatunkowego utopii, bajki, baśni, świata fantastycznego, a wreszcie *science fiction*? — W pierwszym przypadku mamy do czynienia z danymi tendencyjnie zafałszowanymi lub podanymi w dobrej wierze, ale *de facto* nieprawdziwymi, w drugim zaś z zespołami faktów i wydarzeń z dziedziny klasycznej fikcji artystycznej (postaci i wydarzenia „wymyślone”, ale prawdopodobne jako typowe). Wypadek trzeci nie wymaga objaśnień.

W procesie podawania informacji szczególne znaczenie posiada ich syntetyzowanie. Śledząc ten proces zaobserwujemy kilka typowych zjawisk:

1. Informacje łącząc się w większe zespoły przechodzą z jednego szczebla kwalifikującego na inny, wyższy. Z obojętnych zmieniają się w potencjalne, z potencjalnych zaś w użyteczne.

2. Proces ten nie przebiega automatycznie przez ciąg całego utworu, w zależności od struktury treści tworzą się pojedyncze wewnętrzne zespoły (sceny, epizody, wątki oboczne, motywy, obrazy o walorach samoważności).

3. Utwór z punktu widzenia swej całościowej obrazowości oraz „naczelnej idei” stanowi *sui generis* wielką informację.

Co więcej — ten złożony aparat funkcji i związków pokazuje, że informacje zszytyzowane, w wyższym stopniu użyteczne, tworzą z jednej strony informacje wyższego rzędu, z drugiej zaś — nabierają charakteru instrukcji. Informacje mogą się stawać instrukcjami lub też spełniać funkcje instrukcji.

Zjawiska wymienione uprzednio w punktach 1—3 nazywamy mutacjami w obrębie informacji lub mutacjami wewnętrznymi. Przechodzenie od informacji do instrukcji nosi nazwę mutacji zewnętrznej lub transmutacji. Na modelu transmutacji, czyli formowaniu informacji posiadających funkcje instrukcji, zbudowana jest powieść sensacyjna, powieść grozy, powieść kryminalna, a dalej, choć w nieco innym ujęciu — satyra, baśń i bajka.

Jaka z kolei jest funkcja gatunku literackiego w aspekcie ujmowania utworu literackiego jako zespołu informacji?

Tu należy stwierdzić, że kompleks informacji i instrukcji nie może być celem samym w sobie, musi być natomiast wyposażony w określony impuls kierunkowy. Inaczej — zespół konkretnych danych zaopatrzony w klucz do należytego jego rozszyfrowania musi być w odpowiedni sposób sprogramowany.

W rezultacie dochodzimy do następującego wniosku: zjawiska transmutacyjne w wymianach między informacjami i instrukcjami przebiegają po linii strukturalnych elementów utworu literackiego, natomiast zasadnicze tezy sprogramowania (tzn. programu) mieszczą się w sferze kryteriów konstytuujących gatunek literacki. Pojęcie programu odznacza się celowym nacechowaniem. O ile poszczególne instrukcje pojedyncze i zszytyzowane w obrębie utworu są dosłownym kodem

dla zawartych w utworze informacji, o tyle program określony dyrektywami i kryteriami gatunku literackiego jest centralną informacją kierunkową o poważnych walorach interpretacyjnych i interpretujących. Gatunek literacki-program jest dla konkretnego utworu literackiego bardziej uniwersalnym, wyższego rzędu kodem orientującym odbiorcę w artystycznym i ideowym zakresie działania i nastawienia danego dzieła.

Tak rozumiana zasada ujmowania dzieła literackiego jako zespołu informacji kierowanych instrukcjami oraz opartych na wyraźnym programie dokładniej stawia sprawę pozycji, z jakich autor formułuje swe twierdzenia oraz kreuje zestroje obrazów, przy tym zaś eksploatuje walory poznawcze dzieła. W dalszej konsekwencji dobitniej uwydatnia się rola gatunku literackiego jako zestroju dyrektyw wyznaczających należyłą interpretację szczegółowych założeń przyjętych w utworze. Zespoły instrukcji dostarczają danych do interpretacji wewnętrznej, opartej na właściwym rozumieniu treści przedstawionych, gatunek-program zaś interpretację zewnętrzną, wyjaśnienie zasadniczych postaw przyjętych w utworze i kierunku autorskiego widzenia. Właśnie z programu wynikają właściwe, odpowiednie kontury informacji i instrukcji. Tak rozumiana i do celów wiedzy o literaturze zaadaptowana teoria informacji od strony jednolitej i jednoznacznej terminologii ma ukonkretnić procesy poznawcze i interpretacyjne w odniesieniu do dzieła literackiego.

Jan Trzynadłowski