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REMARKS ON THE RECEPTION OF THEATRICAL SPACE

A theater spectator coproduces the show by his frequent physical activity as well as by certain mental operations, in particular the decoding of signs and the sign-creating activity towards the reality¹. Such position necessitates a change of orientation in the theatrological reflection. Both the theatrologist and the sociologist have come to focus their attention on the theatrical praxis. They have come to analyse the shapes of the spectators' concretizations². Most of the hitherto undertaken research on reception attempted to describe the quantitative aspect of the process with no regard paid to qualitative characteristics. It now becomes more and more necessary to organize the research in such a way as to reveal the performative role of the spectator. The study must be oriented at the "position of addressee" rather than at the "position of addresser"³.

Addressee-oriented cultures stress the significance of common-sense images of the world or the life-experience of the addressee. The choice of this perspective requires of a sociologist to create such research procedures which will allow him to reveal with relative accuracy the complex position of the spectator. The traditio-

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¹S. Świentek, Znak, tekst i odbiorca w teatrze, [in:] T. Cieślakowska, J. Sławiński (eds.), Pogranicza i korespondencje sztuk, Ossolineum, Wrocław-Warszawa-Kraków 1980, p. 123-128.

²Roman Ingarden and Contemporary Polish Aesthetics, PWN, Warszawa 1975.

³B. A. Uspieński, Problemy lingwisticheskoi tipologii v aspekcie razlichenia govoriashchego (adriesanta) i slushajushchego (adriesata), [in:] To Honor R. Jakobson, Essays on the Occasion of His Seventieth Birthday, vol. III, Mouton The Hague 1967, p. 2087-2108.

nal sociological questionnaire does not suffice. The student of reception must try to make use of the specific situation existing between the work of art and its audience. Every genre of art has its specific situations of reception. The reading of a poem or a book is accomplished in silence. It is a nontransferable right of the reader. The situation of a movieviewer is different; within certain limits he may afford a public manifestation of his reactions. Similarly, a dramatic theater spectator may openly manifest his point of view, and he is sometimes even required to behave publicly in an active way. Between the reader's silence and the "loud" public behavior in the theater there spreads a vast area of possible reactions of the spectator.

The sociological research is most often deferred until after the moment of contact with a work of art. We ought to accommodate to the thought that in most cases we have to do with the sociologist interfering in the act of reception. Often the spectator does not even begin to mentally work out his contact with the work of art before he starts his contacts with the sociologist.

The spectators' accounts are a testimony of the theatrical text, an actual document of semantic-creation activities of the audience. What exists is what has been verbalized; the whole act of reception is done in words. The research is a call for a translation of this process into words. We come close to the conception of conversation as dialogue and in this we are inspired by the works of M. Bakhtin⁴.

A suggestion by R. Demarcy⁵ offers a good introduction to the analysis of reception. The author breaks with the traditional scheme of sociological research by analyzing various theatrical performances and by attempting to ascribe to their spectators a certain set of expectations which project, in a way, their actual receptive behavior. Operettas and musical comedies meet, above all, the need of entertainment. Performances functioning within the second model are significant for prestige.

⁴M. B a k h t i n, *Problems of Dostojevskij's Poetics*, University Press, Ann Arbor 1973.

⁵R. D e m a r c y, *Elements d'une sociologie du spectacle*, Inédit, Paris 1973.

The researcher tries to discover what meanings lie behind the elements of the play. He analyses thematic plots present in performances. Finally he distinguishes between two "readings": horizontal (lecture horizontale) and transversal (lecture transversale). A reading directed at the completion or solution of the plot is called by Demarcy the horizontal reading. The reader's attention is focused on fabular courses which ought not be disturbed. The spectator unwillingly concedes to any violation of the narrative order. On the other hand the transversal reading requires of the spectator a substantial change of attitude since it is no longer an "emotional" submission to the course of events or an expectation of a solution. An "intellectualization" is now demanded of him, a "cool", analytic observation of events. In the act of transversal perception the spectator must be continuously oriented at the semantic value of all elements of the performance. Such perception does not permit "gaps" or "deformations".

A research has been carried out of a musical comedy with several thematic plots isolated by Demarcy. An analysis of 40 conversations revealed that spectators attached most importance to the happy end. It is possible that "ludic" texts presuppose the form of horizontal reading postulated by R. Demarcy. Having once "chosen" this form of reading, the spectators naturally had to come in conflict with the requirements of transversal reception. This is the only form of reading which allows for extraction of all meanings from a theatrical text, for decoding its ideological message, and for outlining the model of the world which underlies the text of an operetta performance. In the conversations which were subjected to the analysis the knowledge of the operetta convention was revealed in a fragmentary way only, through the expectation of the happy end. This, however is not a sufficient condition for the existence of transversal reading.

Our remarks concerning transversal reading are based on 40 conversations about a comedy by Molière "The Mock Doctor". In order to grasp its characteristic features attention was paid to the reception of theatrical space. "Stage space in its communicative function covers this section of theatrical space which is filled up with the characteristically theatrical signs resulting from a tran-

slation of the dramaturgical text into the language of the stage"⁶. The theatrical signs are conveyed through time as well as through space.

Space is not the main element in the structure of a comedy. According to D. Ratajczak "This author-oriented genre «silenced» the space all the way down to a whisper, exposing above all a range of clearly delineated roles based on concrete temperaments and situated in constant volts of action which determined the stage-ness of a play"⁷. And yet, the same author analyses space in Molière's comedy, shows the role and place of the chair in his plays and states that the most important scenes in Molière take place in the square in front of the house.

The collected accounts contain no fragments which might resemble the content of a theater historian's commentary. There are scarcely any "traces" showing that spectators attach importance to the spacial relations and their distortions within the show. Only 5 of the respondents pointed to the role of the chair in the creation of space in the 2nd act.

Our remarks refer first of all to the "spontaneous" side of the spectators' accounts. In the course of the research we arranged personal conversations concerning space and particularly the formulation of space as "open" or "closed"⁸.

In spite of special steps taken by interviewers no information was obtained on this subject in 22 cases. The rest of spectators (18) qualified space along the lines described above. According to their opinions closed space is characteristic of the 2nd act which takes place in Geront's room. Here the closure of space is connected with its location. It constitutes a fragment of what is restricted by nature, what takes on a definite dimension and what has an "inside". Such is the case with the house. In the respondents' views the 1st and 3rd acts are situated in the open space: in the

⁶H. M. K a r a s i ń s k a, Przestrzeń w dramacie - przestrzeń teatralna, "Teksty" 1977, no. 4, p. 126.

⁷D. R a t a j c z a k, Przestrzeń domu w dramacie i teatrze, "Pamiętnik Literacki" 1978, no. 2, p. 90.

⁸Cf. J. Ł o t m a n, Problemy przestrzeni artystycznej, "Pamiętnik Literacki" 1976, no. 1, p. 213-226.

1st act - with regard to the forest and the clearing, in the 3rd act - with regard to the street.

Here is a fragment of an account in which the "openness" of space is stressed. It concerns practically the entire play: "Well, it's because... it's for, in fact..., it's perhaps due to the costumes and due to this set up, those paintings on the stage, that I had a feeling that it was very spacious there. Besides, even in the other acts I did not feel that I was in... When I think of it now it seems to me that spotlights had a lot to do with it, this kind of warm, yellow light, and this gave the impression of that freedom and spaciousness" (Conversation, no. 24).

Below is an example of an account of "closed space": "Well, it depends. It was closed for there were the wings, of course. It was not like those occasional settings in which a blue sky forms the background. It's just that... he then disappears somewhere, doesn't he?... He hides somewhere and disappears, and yet everything was confined there... on one occasion by those steps, some other time by the walls of the room, on a third occasion by those buildings around the square" (Conversation, no. 15). Sometimes the opposition: closed space/open space was translated into the use of space with perspective and the use of space devoid of perspective.

The space in the 3rd act was also perceived as open. Here is a fragment of a spectator's account: "The third, act, the third act takes place on some sort of a market-place, somewhere. Anyway, it is not a closed room" (Conversation, no. 10).

The semantics of off-stage space is also worth mentioning. This kind of space is subject to lesser "concretization" in the course of the performance. It certainly increases the spectator's freedom since the degree of undefiniteness of space is different here. The very existence of "off-stage" space is suggested to spectators by various elements ranging from pictorial signs to the utilization of sound. On certain occasions this space may be considerably expanded. The relations and connections between these two kinds of space are stressed by the acting of performers.

Spectators discussed the "off-stage" space mainly on the example of the first act (the singing of Sganarelle, the chopping of wood). On several occasions spectators maintained that their attention was concentrated mainly on what they called the "framed" scene.

It should be admitted that a few spectators combined the definition of space with the change of the place of action, e.g. the passage from the forest to Geront's house. Here space becomes equivalent to some travelled distance or a covered way and it is "topographically" perceived. Contrary to possible expectations spectators are not oriented at the semantic evaluation of space which is situated outside their former interpretative experiences. They ascribe a specific status to the visible "area" of the stage which, in most cases, makes the elements of "off-stage" space lose their importance. Events which take place outside the stage area of the visible "here and now" have little chance of taking shape in the mind of the spectator.

In order to better understand the character of transversal and horizontal reading we may draw inspiration from an idea by M. Głowinski who adopted the sociolinguistic categories of B. Bernstein to his study of the codes of reception⁹. It seems that in the situation of commonsense horizontal reading we may speak of a high degree of expectability of the relations between elements. It is thus a manifestation of the restricted code. On the other extreme, the elaborated code constitutes a favorable condition for all sorts of innovation.

Materials collected in the form of conversations on a musical comedy seem to confirm the value of the position which identifies the elaborated code with transversal reading. Nevertheless, we should be cautious in drawing conclusions. Here, we suggest only that the more clearly the reading of a work of art takes on the features of expert reception, the more often one can trace in it elements which are manifestations of the elaborated code. In this way, the common-sense reception of a work of art becomes a realization of the restricted code, while the critical reception is "saturated" with elements characteristic of the elaborated code.

⁹Cf. M. G ł o w i ń s k i, Les témoignages et les styles de réception, [in:] *Études Littéraires en Pologne*, vol. 9, 1983, p. 45-64; B. B e r n s t e i n, A sociolinguistic approach to socialization; with some reference to educability, [in:] B. B e r n s t e i n, *Class, Codes and Control. Theoretical studies towards a sociology of language*, Routledge and Kegan Paul, London 1971, p. 143-169.

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UWAGI O POSTRZEGANIU PRZESTRZENI TEATRALNEJ

Autor zwraca uwagę na sposób postrzegania konstytutywnego elementu interakcji, jakim jest włączona w nią przestrzeń. Uwagi jego oparte są na badaniach nad recepcją widowiska teatralnego.

A few concepts presented in the paper deal with the most general principles used by the analyzed readers in reception of a original story. The respondents' answers gathered in free interviews show different points of reference against which the read content was situated. These different points focusing reception marked their characteristic forms of text materialization, making it understandable and acceptable. The paper concerns the frequency of specific resources in spatial reception of the original story. The author conducted 50 free interviews with socially differentiated readers (mainly with regard to their educational background) of two novels representing this kind of literature - a Polish novel written by J. Krzyżak and an American novel written by S. Chandler.

Two principles seemed to play a particularly essential role here. A part of the readers related the read text to reality, another part gave it the meaning and assessed mainly through relation to genre patterns. The former received and evaluated the literary fiction in the categories of "truthfulness", "reality", "credibility". The events and characters were interpreted in similar categories. The readers expected a "true-to-life story", which "feels" in which the events and characters would be represented realistically. In the world of fiction they looked for the real world and found it. If they failed in their efforts their evaluation of the novel decreased rapidly. This kinetic style of reception was dominant in the group of the readers with the lowest level of education.

A majority of the readers with secondary education also represented this attitude. The use of realistic material in fiction