

II. RECENZJE

CONCEPTS OF LITERATURE, gen. ed. W. Righter. Volumes already published: G. Hough, *STYLE AND STYLISTICS*, London 1969, Routledge & Kegan Paul; H. Gifford, *COMPARATIVE LITERATURE*, 1969; S. Wells, *LITERATURE AND DRAMA WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO SHAKESPEARE AND HIS CONTEMPORARIES*, 1970.

In his introduction to the earliest volume, *Style and Stylistics*, W. Righter specifies the purpose of the series inaugurated. He says that the traditional way of dealing with literature has proved insufficient and that there is a growing tendency towards a more analytical approach. This demand goes in two directions, firstly, towards a better understanding of the terms used in literary discussion and secondly, defining the relationship of literature to other intellectual disciplines.

W. Righter's first contributor, G. Hough, approaches style and stylistics from the point of view of a literary critic. In his preface, which follows that of Righter's, Hough asserts that since the study of language and literature overlap, they make stylistics their common ground. The necessity to explore it is undeniable, the only question is which method should be employed.

The word "style", which Hough prefers to the meaningless "stylistics" is very old. Its origins are to be found rhetoric and Aristotle's works. Hough presents a concise review of the evolution of the term „style" leading to the

enumeration of its three basic meanings. These are, one, the distinction between matter and manner; two, the fact that each utterance has not necessarily different meaning; and three the acceptance of style as a part of meaning. Hough proceeds, explaining that style is a secondary choice between lexical and syntactic means in a given language.

The impulse to study style came from two sources: historical linguistics and literary criticism. Both these sources have an aim in view, i.e., probing into "the living texture of literature" (p. 12). This brought about a shift in the general interest, from an overall historical consideration to the interpretation of individual works. Yet however beneficial the change may have been, it resulted in two types of studies, "scholarly" and "critical". Critical studies revealed a growing tendency towards employing only the intuition and ignoring all historical data, which results in complete subjectivism.

Hough believes that no matter what difficulties may arise, no critic can refrain from taking style as part of his critical activity. His field of interest must lie between linguistics proper and subjective criticism. Hough rejects the excessive use of statistical methods by a literary critic and suggests they be employed both with caution and common sense. All criticism should spring from a close study of the language pattern. It should be based upon the examination of the period style. This field is covered

mainly by European critics and for some reasons was never popular with the British. Hough also admits that all attempts at defining and classifying various literary phenomena appeared futile to an English mind, giving rise to the continental belief in the insurmountable English empiricism.

The author's attitude towards contemporary style study can be guessed from the comments he passes on the leading stylists, such as L. Spitzer, E. Auerbach, D. Alonso, I. A. Richards, W. Empson, D. Davie, and others. He favours Spitzer's method, especially his new interpretation of the idea of intuition and Auerbach's research. Yet when introducing I. Richards, he turns against continental critics. Hough gives voice to the current view that they are too well tuned with the literary tradition of the past to be popular with the English. Moreover he can see all the virtues in the English approach. First of all it makes for freshness and ingenuity and appeals to a less sophisticated audience. Yet we must say, in favour of Hough's impartiality, that he admits all the faults which followed Richard's ahistoric method. The author is also very enthusiastic about Empson's use of intuitive criticism. He claims that Empson's method is that of a close verbal analysis eventually resulting in a well balanced literary interpretation. According to the author Empson escapes the fate of many a European work where there is a gap between the linguistic observation and the literary conclusions.

Concluding Hough says that literary studies conducted through the language may be very fruitful. Yet many modern linguists, who try this method, lose touch with literary objectives. Much harm has been done to style study by introducing the apparatus of the linguistic approach. Even continental linguists are often guilty of this. Therefore we should aim at establishing relations between linguistics and other disciplines, such as an-

thropology (Lévi-Strauss, Jakobson). This will finally result in finding suitable methods which can be adapted to these disciplines with regard to their varying natures. The author seems deeply convinced that literary criticism and linguistics can work together for the study of literature, once their differences are recognized.

The author of the next book in the series sets out to accomplish an equally difficult task. Not only does he aim at explaining the idea of what comparative literature is, he also presents the benefit of its extensive study.

H. Gifford feels that English literature will become "provincial" unless studied in alliance with other literatures, both ancient and modern. This awareness was first voiced by M. Arnold to whom the author refers quite often.

Comparative Literature falls into two parts. One is devoted to the presentation of its background and its main goals, the other, purely practical, shows the way it should be taught as a university subject.

Perhaps it is coincidental that both G. Hough and H. Gifford deal with comparatively recent notions in literary theory. H. Gifford cannot go back farther than M. Arnold, T. S. Eliot, E. Pound, as those Anglo-Americans who were the first to widen the scope of their literary criticism. They realized that European culture had the overwhelming unity of spirit, especially in the Antiquity and the Middle Ages. While the British preserved their insularity, the Americans incorporated the mixed heritage of their nation into the creation of national literature.

There are quite a few reasons why comparative studies have failed so far to engage the attention of scholars. The dangers which are present in the study of national literature are far more pronounced in comparative studies. The author describes, first of all, the so-called "outer tradition" by which he

identifies a writer with some recognized literary period. This task is easier to accomplish than its companion step of delineating such notions as "national accent", "culture", "tradition", which require a thorough knowledge of the literary background. In case of a foreign literature such difficulties are bound to discourage a translator and a reader.

H. Gifford believes that foreign literature has to be translated into English though it will be only an imperfect reminiscence of the original. He quotes the example of many western readers who were able to respond to Tolstoy and Dostoyevski, though they could not read Russian. Good translations are not so rare either, i.e., André Gide completed an outstanding translation of Shakespeare though his job seemed superhuman. Literature is not the language exclusively. It is also a unique quality of ideas which the reader should be led to grasp. A successful translation is the one which shows the affinity with the original and even a personal bond of the translator with the work of art. In case of poetry it often depends on the feeling of sympathy between two poets. Thus Gifford rejects the idea of a "translator-general" as not worth pursuing in our time. He also mentions the need of translating Greek and Latin masters as a necessary step to bring European and English cultures closer.

Next the author examines American literature at some length. He believes that the Americans made good use of their mixed heritage by sponsoring comparative studies in their country. It is only recently that American writers stopped being conscious of their links with England and Europe and they created highly original works, too. Strangely enough even American literature is not widely known in England.

After sketching the picture of foreign studies in England the author moves on to his next concern, which is the study of comparative literature at the univer-

sity. He repeats his appeal for widening the scope of literary study mainly in two ways, by a combined undergraduate course and a one year postgraduate seminar. In the appendix to his work he gives and outline of the latter.

Both volumes discussed so far share a few common features. They spring from a common concern about the future of English studies, both critically and historically orientated. The authors are aware of the gravity of the situation yet they offer no ready made solutions. H. Gifford's approach is more practical since he tries to put forward a course in comparative studies. The tone of discussion is still general. This remark does not refer to the most recent volume in this series. S. Wells's essay is overflowing with exemplary analyses to back his arguments.

His main assumption is that drama usually makes a good reading, yet the reading of a play provides one with a very incomplete experience. Indispensable as the text is, it is only a blueprint for the performance, since each producer tends to underline different ideas. Another factor is the audience and the actor, neither of them being passive instruments. To prove his point Wells discusses actors and producers who are considered milestones in the theatre (Irving, Olivier, Stanislavski, Peggy Ashcroft).

This leads him to the conclusion that the dramatist never has an absolute control over what his work communicates, since the ultimate result is a joint effort of many people. The first factor the author takes up is the printing of the plays. He explains how they used to be printed out of sheer neglect on the stage (Whetstone) or relative indifference (Shakespeare) up till Ben Jonson who seemed to have a real concern to make popular drama respectable through printing it. He was also the first to introduce editorship into printing.

Under the title *The Intent and the*

Event a fascinating subject emerges. Wells analyzes Ben Jonson's famous masque *Pleasure Reconciled to Virtue*, famous for its discrepancy between the staged and the printed versions. Jonson was reluctant to let other people give the final shape to his play. Since with the masque, and Inigo Jones, it was inevitable he would rather reshape it himself, inserting cutting comments on his designer out of fear that he might have outshone his creation and added most idiosyncratic comments in prose to support his ideas on the printed page. The discrepancy between the two versions forms a background for Wells's major concern, the problem of academic (non-theatrical) criticism.

Wells thinks that the untheatrical reading of the play can contribute to its neglect in the professional theatre. He enlists most striking critical failures. Besides G. Wickham he condemns J. Kott's reading of *A Midsummer's Night's Dream*. Kott is said to have used the play as a stimulus to release his own imagination, which Wells calls highly sadistic and erotic. Another distortion is the case of A. C. Bradley in his very serious attempts to read the texts of Shakespeare's tragedies. Another fallacious approach is that of W. Knight's poetic reading of the plays. In G. E. Bentley's *Shakespeare and his Theatre* it culminated in the false juxtaposing of Shakespeare the poet to Shakespeare the dramatist.

Though Wells seems pretty convinced of the failure of Shakespeare's criticism offered to the theatre he still recognizes the necessity for the study of the text and the background. The critics should also take up such problems which the audience is unaware of, i.e., animal imagery in *Othello*.

Wells suggests that academic critics should learn something from the theatre. They should see the plays so that they would be able to eventually recognize their "theatricality" without actually

seeing them. Wells is pretty sure that whenever the critics claim to "clearly define" the meaning of the play he is misguided. He can, however, point to some objectively verifiable patterns in the structure of imagery and write creatively about the impression the play has made on him. Wells feels that the subjective criticism is justified here.

The general argument of the book is the plea for the openness of interpretation in the theatre and the study. Yet in the course of reading an enormous gap opens between literary interpretation and theatrical presentation which seems unbridgable.

The *Concepts of Literature* series is a record of various changes going on in English studies, heading towards greater critical awareness. There are some attempts to sort out traditional standpoints as well as the new ideas. The important thing is that the new concept of literature emerging is open ended. It also transgresses the purely national interests and tries to bring together various cultures. The novelty of such an approach is unquestionable.

Marta Wiszniowska, Łódź

OTÁZKY DIVADLA A FILMU. THEATRÁLIA ET CINEMATOGRAFICA. Redigoval Artur Závodský. Universita J. E. Purkyně, Brno. T. 1, 1970, t. 2, 1971.

W latach 1945—1950 czasopismo „Otázky divadla a filmu” wydawał czołowy czeski reżyser i teoretyk teatru, Jindřich Honzl (1894—1953). W czasopiśmie tym ukazywały się prace teoretyczne z dziedziny teatru i filmu wychodzące spod piór bliskich marksizmowi krytyków i naukowców, grupujących się głównie wokół prof. Jana Mukařovskiego.

Artur Závodský, profesor uniwersytetu w Brnie, taki właśnie tytuł wybierając dla zbioru prac członków i współpracowników Katedry Literatur Słowiańskich, Nauki o Teatrze i Filmie, wska-