

osiągnięcia wobec nich dystansu i opanowania w dziele literackim. Ale, przyznać trzeba, że korzystanie z tej szansy może przybrać formę ucieczki od zaangażowania w sprawy świata współczesnego.

Z wielu przyczyn, dla których rozprawa Jana Papióra okazuje się pozycją cenną, wymienić należy i tę, iż wypełnia ona lukę w wiedzy o świadomości estetycznej naszego wieku. W tej roli odpowiada ona na pytanie postawione we wstępie do niniejszego omówienia, pytania o powody popularności ironii we współczesnej literaturze. Miejmy nadzieję, że zjawiska groteski i absurdu, równie mocno zakorzenione w sztuce XX wieku, znajdują także swych monografistów.

Bogactwo skojarzeń, precyzja i zwięzłość w formułowaniu tez, głębia analiz to te zalety książki Jana Papióra, które — obok wymienionych już wartości merytorycznych — składają do stwierdzenia, że powinna się ona jak najszybciej ukazać w języku polskim.

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Antoni Smuszkiewicz, STEREOTYP FABULARNY FANTASTYKI NAUKOWEJ, Ossolineum, Wrocław 1980, ss. 168.

Science fiction is still often considered to be a branch of literature unworthy of the literary scholar's attention. This prejudice is more and more frequently challenged in Polish SF studies by the appearance of the increasing number of books devoted to science fiction. A. Smuszkiewicz's *Stereotyp fabularny fantastyki naukowej* is the third book dealing with science fiction issued in 1980 (besides A. Zgorzelski's *Fantastyka. Utopia. Science fiction* and A. Wójcik and M. Engländer's *Budowniczość gwiazd 1*). Smuszkiewicz's book, however, seems to testify to a surprising vitality of critical prejudices.

The author sets out to reach four aims which he outlines in the *Introduction*: a) the construction of plot stereotype of science fiction, b) the discovery of regularities of plot patterns in various genres of popular fiction, c) the contribution to the study of plot patterns initiated by K. Bartoszyński, and d) the insight into Polish SF which provides the material for the study.

After the clarification of terms and explana-

tion of the accepted method of research in the *Introduction*, the author proceeds to describe the "functions" appearing in science fiction, which constitutes the contents of the first chapter: *The Structure of the Basic Functional Model*. This chapter starts with the definition of "function" as the activity (or abstaining from the activity) of the actant. The author lists 17 "functions" and examines them in relation to the traditionally recognized stages of action. Thus, the exposition is usually connected with such "functions" as accident and riddle; the inciting moment with counteraction, departure, journey and arrival; the development of action with search, examination, hypothesis and experiment; the denouement with attainment, failure, explanation and return. Obviously, not all the "functions" must necessarily appear in the stages of action "prescribed" for them, some are even mutually exclusive as, for instance, attainment and failure. However, the distinguishing of some of the "functions" is not entirely convincing. Accident and riddle, for example, seem to be lacking an actant. The riddle in particular appears to be devoid of the status of an activity.

Chapter two: *Structural Variants of the Basic Model*, is devoted to the description of the five most common "functional" models of a story: a) about a wonderful invention, b) about a rescue expedition, c) about a conflict, d) about a research expedition, and e) about time travel.

Chapter three: *The Structure of the Actant Model*, brings a list of seven actants of science fiction: performer, object, opponent, helper, arbiter, interlocutor, and inspirer. The author considers interlocutor only as an actant, i.e., a device for transmitting necessary information to the reader, while it may also function as a narrative device with the obvious consequence of a story-within-a-story construction. The role of this device seems to be characteristic of the early stages in the evolution of Polish SF. This aspect, however, is left unconsidered in the book. The major part of the chapter is devoted to the discussion of "functions" usually associated with the enumerated actants. Next, the author examines the role of actants in four basic SF plots (wonderful invention, rescue party, conflict, and research expedition — the fifth "functional" model about time

travel being only a constructional variant of the four plots). The last few pages are devoted to the most interesting phenomenon: Smuszkiewicz observes that within one story the characters may appear in the positions of different actants. The changes of the actant position of the characters are convincingly presented on the basis of three SF short stories. However, the author does not try to elucidate the causes and results of such changes.

In chapter four: *The Plot Lexicon and Chronography*, Smuszkiewicz examines the objects (in the syntactic sense) which fill up the basic structure of the "functional" model. The plot lexicon is divided into four classes: the lexicon of personages, of objects, of space, and of time. Each of the classes is further subdivided. In the case of the lexicon of personages the divisions are as follows:

A) the Earth personages:

- 1) humans
 - a) men,
 - b) cyborgs,
- 2) androids:
 - a) one-aim robots,
 - b) robots — products of dangerous experiments;

B) the „space personages“:

- 1) antropomorphic,
- 2) non-antropomorphic.

The excess of classification, exemplified above, seems to be one of the drawbacks of the book.

The chapters are followed by *Conclusions* containing short summary of the observations. The book also includes an index of names and a list of abbreviations. The latter is particularly useful since the main text of the book offers three-letter shortenings — not always easy to decipher — for the author and the title of the considered text.

A. Smuszkiewicz certainly convinces the reader about the recurrence of some typical motifs and plot configurations. He accurately describes the set of typical personages and events. He diligently collects examples and groups them according to various criteria. The order of description is logical, the presentation of each problem — lucid. The book, however, seems to be deficient in one aspect: in justifying its aim.

Necessarily, the aim of building a plot stereotype must remain obscure if the author

does not precisely define the status of stereotype among other literary phenomena. In the *Introduction*, the pattern of actants and "functions" seems surprisingly identified with genological invariant of science fiction, which suggests a misguided, static, and ahistorical understanding of the genre. The plot stereotype is presented in the book as a self-sufficient entity independent of textual elements other than those which constitute the stereotype itself. It also appears independent of cultural and literary synchrony and diachrony. The simplified view of literary phenomena (whether it is a single text or a literary genre) is most evidently seen in the analogy between literature and a sentence consisting of a subject, verb, and object (p. 19).

It is evident that a theoretical model is valuable only if it is clear what it is intended to explain. The lack of clarity at this point seems to be responsible for the author overlooking the fact that in some cases the devices he describes as one type, belong to widely different stages of genre development (for instance, various ways of presenting the setting — p. 26, 29, 74). The mutual relationships between the novel of adventure, detective story and science fiction also seem to escape the author's attention. The consideration of relationships between plot patterns of various genres are limited to the observation of common configurations of events, which are said to be the result of simple borrowing. Similarly, some interesting remarks concerning the changes in the description of characters and in the space and time setting are not followed by an explanation of the causes and effects of such a development.

The elusiveness of the purpose for which the book was written seems to result, paradoxically enough, from the author's avoidance of the truly functional view of the phenomena he considers. The observations on the plot do not yield here any conclusions either of its role in particular texts or of its changing importance in the literary historical perspectives. Although Smuszkiewicz states, in both the *Introduction* and the *Conclusions*, that plot stereotype is important in literary communication, the assertion does not find any further analytical support in the book.

Hence, building an abstract model—the stereotype—and illustrating its presence in the

texts of science fiction seems to be the sole purpose of the book. The work is focused not on explaining but on classifying the phenomena described. The classifications are in some cases the more pointless since they are based on criteria unconnected with and external to the object considered. For instance, the arrangement of the information about the characters in SF is not determined by the observation of the textual phenomena but by the order of the personal file questions: name, nationality, job, sex, and age (p. 124–128). The excess of classification seems to be symptomatic of a certain concept of a scientific activity in which classifying and labelling become the main purpose and the end of research procedures.

The book is disappointing also as a source of information about Polish science fiction. In spite of the interest in it announced in the *Introduction*, the reader is offered no insights into particular texts which are treated as a source of details extracted only in order to illustrate the created model of stereotype. The book never suggests that a literary text (at least one belonging to the "popular" literature) is worth of interest for its own sake. As it has been already indicated, the application of the abstract model to the study of an individual text, which could have verified the descriptive and explanatory value of generalizations, is unfortunately lacking in A. Smuszkiewicz's book.

The convention of strict, scholarly treatment of the material is breached at the end of the book by the normative tenor of the *Conclusions*. The author condemns the considered texts for their conventionality and lack of originality. The perplexity of the reader is the more profound since in the *Introduction* it was explained that the book would be focused on the "popular" science fiction. The word "popular" was taken to imply works of lesser quality, conventional and unoriginal. Thus, the SF texts considered in the book appear to be condemned because of the same reasons exactly for which they were selected. Moreover, the evaluation would be perhaps more appropriate in a critical essay than in a scientific study. The evaluative approach seems to be a reflection of a strongly rooted critical prejudice against all "popular" genres which are often treated as either unworthy of a literary scholar's attention or, if discussed at all, then only to

compare unfavourably with the „mainstream” texts.

The book is addressed to literary scholars interested in science fiction and in problems of literary stereotypes. It does not seem to satisfy the reader's expectations in either of these respects.

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Janina Ławińska-Tyszkowska, BUKOLIKA GRECKA (ANCIENT GREEK BUCOLIC). Prace Wrocławskiego Towarzystwa Naukowego, Seria A, Nr 227, Wrocław 1981, ss. 185.

Although the creator of literary bucolic, Theocritus of Syracuse, is rather popular among classical scholars, no comprehensive book on the genre he initiated has been written for many decades. One should mention in this connection that not all the bucolics, even those of Theocritus, were of interest to philologists, to say nothing of his later imitators whose works have not drawn enough attention of the Greek scholars. In such a situation a newly edited book by J. Ławińska-Tyszkowska, constituting a critical synthesis of the most recent interpretations dispersed in various and not always easily available articles, is an extremely useful undertaking. Her work contributes also to philological investigations by interpreting some neglected poems (especially those of Theocritus' imitators).

The book pertains rather to the history than to the theory of literature. It is partly due to objective reasons, since—as J. Ławińska-Tyszkowska emphasizes in the *Introduction*—any attempts to define the genre precisely are rendered difficult by the fact that the so called bucolics greatly differ in their features and may be reckoned among different genres. From the genological point of view Chapter III: *The name of the genre* (pp. 24–25) and Chapter V: *Bucolic as a literary genre* (pp. 34–42) are of special informative value. Chapter III is concerned with the relation between the terms idyll and bucolic. Bucolic is a literary form (*subspecies*) delimited from within the category of *eidyllion* (idyll) which means simply "a short poem". The name derives from the Greek word for "herdsman" (*boukólos*) and in fact the pastoral elements are typical of