

FIND ONE DIFFERENCE:

- Positivism
- Russian Formalism
- Prague Structuralism
- New Criticism
- ...
- Reader-Response Criticism

“TOWARDS THE READER”: READER-
RESPONSE CRITICISM OF THE
CONSTANCE SCHOOL

Jan Budňák (ÚGNN FF)

CONSTANCE SCHOOL: WHEN, WHO, WHY?

- 1961 "Poetik und Hermeneutik" (until 1994/1998, 17 volumes)
 - Hans Robert Jauss / Clemens Heselerhaus / Hans Blumenberg / Wolfgang Iser / Jurij Striedter ... THE ARCHONTS
 - Against both Marxist (Lukács) and immanent (Staiger) readings of literature
- 1966 University of Constance, "Fachbereich Literaturwissenschaft"
 - Jauss / Iser / Striedter ...
 - Against fragmentation in disciplines
- 1967 Jauss: Literary History as a Challenge to Literary Theory
 - ...

MAJOR INFLUENCE

- Hans-Georg Gadamer: *Wahrheit und Methode* (1960)
 - Hermeneutics
 - Understanding within its historical range – no objective understanding possible
 - Focus on "Wirkungsgeschichte" (history of impact), "Applikation"
 - "Horizontverschmelzung" (fusion, entanglement)

H.-R. JAUSS: LITERARY HISTORY AS A CHALLENGE TO LITERARY THEORY 1967

- Jauss 1921-1997, Romance Studies
- inaugural lecture in Constance on 13 April 1967
- Questions:
 1. Role of reader in Marxist and Formalist criticism?
 2. What kind of "continuity" (p. 190) has HRJ in mind? Why must it be "tied back together"?
 3. to 8.: Restate Jauss's theses 1 to 7 in your own words, in an easy-to-remember way.

JAUSS AND ISER AND OTHER RECEPTION THEORISTS, OR WHO IS WHO AND WHICH IS WHICH

- Reader-response criticism
- Constance School
- Rezeptionsästhetik
- Rezeptionsgeschichte
- Reception theory
- ...

WOLFGANG ISER: INDETERMINACY AND THE READER'S RESPONSE 1971

- 1926-2007, from 1966 to 1991 in Constance, English Studies, Princeton, Jerusalem, Irvine (CA)
- Questions:
 1. Basic qualities of a literary text?
 2. Wrong and right ways of dealing with the indeterminacy?
 3. Explain: reading is "seeking to pin down the oscillating structure of the text to some specific meaning" (p. 197)
 4. What are "schematized views" and what happens to them in the course of reading? (p. 197)
 5. What are the "gaps", what do they do with readers and vice versa?
 6. In what way is Jauss's model of literary history compatible with Iser's model of the individual reading process?

THE IMPLIED READER (1972/1974), OR THE APPLIED ISER

- Introduction to Chapter 8 "Patterns of Communication in Joyce's Ulysses", p. 196 - 200
- Questions
 1. Try to identify all aspects of Ulysses mentioned by Iser which go against the possibility to derive coherent meaning from the novel.
 2. What makes Ulysses different from realist novels of the 19th c. in spite of the fact that both incorporate many everyday-life components?
 3. According to Elliot: What happens to the underlying mythical pattern in Joyce's novel?
 4. According to Pound: What happens to the underlying mythical pattern in Joyce's novel?

OBJECTIONS TO ISER (PARS PRO TOTO)

- "This book [*The Act of Reading*, 1976] would have been twice the length if I had responded to all the arguments stimulated by my essay ["Appellstruktur der Texte", 1970]."
- Reply to critics in "Im Lichte der Kritik", in: Warning, Rainer: *Rezeptionsästhetik. Theorie und Praxis* (1975), p. 325-342.
- Terry Eagleton: *Literary Theory* (1983), chapter "Phenomenology, Hermeneutics, Reception Theory,"
 1. What is Eagleton's major objection to Iser's theory of the reading process?
 2. Can you identify the ideological conflict between Iser and Eagleton?

THE DECLINE AND FALL OF RECEPTION THEORY

- Late Iser
- Hillis Miller
- Fisch
- Lachmann

ACTIVITY: THE APPLIED ISER, VOL. 2

- Think of a story or a novel you have recently read.
- Try to recall the horizon of expectation you had when you began reading, and the gaps/blanks you had to bridge as you were reading.
- Try to specify what kind of implied reader, what pattern of communication between text and reader was involved?
- (Finally, try to decide whether your reading experience confirms Eagleton's objections to Iser? Have you only got back what you put in before?)

ACHIEVEMENTS OF THE CONSTANCE SCHOOL

1. Challenging
 1. Marxist/materialist interpretation
 2. Text immanent/"empathizing" interpretation
 3. Pre-conditions of interpretation in general
 4. Division of Literature Studies in disciplines
2. Introducing the reader as
 1. an alternative perspective on literary history (Jauss)
 2. a fundamental actor in the reading process (Iser)
 3. an alternative perspective on interpreting works of fiction
3. + major influence on the methodology of reading comprehension
4. + forerunning 'international' post-structuralist approaches since the 70's (deconstruction, constructivist gender studies, postcolonialism etc.)

SOURCES:

- Miloš Sedmidubský aj. (eds.): Čtenář jako výzva. Výbor z prací kostnické školy recepční estetiky. Brno: Host 2001.
- Wolfgang Iser
 - The Implied Reader. Patterns of Communication in Prose Fiction from Bunyan to Beckett. Baltimore: John Hopkins UP, 1978.
 - The Act of Reading. A Theory of Aesthetic Response. Baltimore: John Hopkins UP, 1980.
 - Prospecting. From Reader Response to Literary Anthropology. Baltimore: John Hopkins UP, 1993.
 - The Fictive and the Imaginary. Charting Literary Anthropology. Baltimore: John Hopking UP, 1993. (In Czech 2017)
 - The Range of Interpretation. NY: Columbia UP, 2000.
 - How to Do Theory. Malden: Blackwell, 2006.