

**Yuri V. Rozhdestvensky on Semiotics of Literature
and Modern Literary Process**
by Olga E. Khazanova, Moscow, Russia

**A Presentation at the Conference: 'Russian Evolution:
Russian Reflections'** on the work of Professor Yuri
Rozhdestvensky: his Contribution to Linguistics, Rhetoric,
Communication Theory, Semiotics, Poetics and Narratology
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Yuri V. Rozhdestvensky (1926-1999)

- A prominent Russian philologist, sinologist, philosopher of culture and educationist
- Ph.D. in Linguistics (sinology)
- Honorable Professor of Moscow State Lomonosov University
- Head of the Department of General and Comparative Linguistics for 25 years
- Full member of the Academy of Pedagogic Science, USSR, RF.
- Lomonosov Award for developing language theory for post-industrial, information-technology society (Moscow, 1995); Grimm Award for the contribution to German philology (Berlin, 1985)
- Published about 120 works including 12 monographies.
- Directed about 150 Ph.D. theses of his students

Rozhdestvensky's monographies in which literary texts are investigated:

'General Philology', 1979, 1996 (full version)

'Introduction to Culture Studies', 1996

'Theory of Rhetoric', 1997

'Principles of Modern Rhetoric', 1999

Aspects of literature analyzed in the monographies:

- Literary texts as being juxtaposed with texts of other genres (folklore, scientific, legal, documents, etc.): their inner structure and rules of circulation in society;
- ‘Writer-reader’ relations and ‘the image of the author’ as their core;
- Semiotics of literature as being conditioned by national literary canons, poetics and literary theories;
- Literary texts at different historic stages of language development – the oral stage, written, printed and mass communication: in terms of those changes that new speech technologies bring to literary discourse;
- Literary criticism depending on a historic stage of language development.

Semiotic systems (from "Introduction to Culture Studies")

1. LANGUAGE

Applied arts

design

costume

architecture

Arts

painting

dance

music

Management

measures

orientation

commands

Prognostics

fortune-telling

omens

superstitions

3.
RITES

4.
GAMES

2. MEANS OF COUNTING

Aesthetic function of language as being manifested in different semiotic systems (based on “Introduction to Culture Studies”)

Mathematics: aesthetic function correlates with rationality, precision, a special type of imagination

Games: aesthetic function correlates with the emotion of excitement

Rites: aesthetic function correlates with >< magic

Prognostics: aesthetic function correlates with rhythm & metre

Literary criticism: aesthetic function correlates with aesthetics of the analyzed text

Literary texts in contrast to scientific, documents, managing and other genres:

- Freely selected by readers
- Have no direct influence on practical activities
- Contain the author's *ego*: his/her philosophy & aesthetics
- Reflects dialectical and eristic aspects of 'writer-reader' relationship (*illustrated on slides 8-10*)
- Its semiotic nature: fiction, imaginative world

Literary Encyclopedias of 1929-1939 and 1962-1978 on poet Osip Mandelstam, a comparative study

- Written by anonym, 1932 // *by A. Morozov, 1967*
- 'Poet' (1932) // *'Russian Soviet poet' (1967)*
- 'One of the main figures of acmeism – a bourgeois and counter-revolutionary movement' (1932) // *'In 1912 he comes to acmeism, but preserves the independent status which makes it difficult to understand him.'* (1967)

Poet Osip Mandelstam: political views

‘Adheres to the position of absolute social indifference – a specific form of bourgeois hostility to the socialist revolution’ (1932) //

*‘The October revolution evoked a warm response in M.’
(1967)*

Poet Osip Mandelstam: works

'M. expressed ... fear of his class before any social changes, proclaiming stagnation of existence'. 'M's works is encoded ideological immortalization of capitalism and its culture...'
(1932)

'From 1912, acceptance of the external reality of the world and plenty of material details characterize his poems. From 1916, starting with an anti-militarist poem 'Zverinets', M's responds more and more vividly to the today's reality'. 'M's poems of 1930s say about great sincerity of M's poetic path. The poet is seeking for the ways to poems which our people need'. (1967)

Rozhdestvensky on semiotics of literary texts as being based on the following layers of conventions:

- Literary canons: depend on a cultural region
- Normative poetics: follow different philosophical patterns
- Literary theory: shaped by literary criticism

Literary canons as the highest layer of conventions of literary texts' semiotics (based on "General Philology", Ch.3)

Mediterranean canons



- Old Greek
- Latin

Oriental canons



- Chinese, 13 books
- Buddhist (Indian & Chinese)
- Indian Veda



(Egyptian & Hebrew literature)

Genres regarded as 'literary' are different from canon to canon

Normative poetics as a semiotic convention

(from “General Philology”, Ch.4)

- “Aristotle builds his theory of poetic speech, theory of mimesis, on the satisfaction experienced by a man as a result of cognition. And the one who cognizes is in the first place a listener or spectator. On this grounds Aristotle gives a number of technical recommendations to enable poets, with regard to previous experience, to create their works satisfying their audience’s interest with aesthetic means of poetry.”
- “Chinese literature is oriented to the analysis of the process of the text creation, while the text receivers are a kind of ‘bracketed off’. The author deals with the history of literature rather than with a reader. His audience is his ancestors and descendants within the infinite period of literature existence.”

Literary theory as a semiotic convention shaped by literary critics

/based on 'Introduction to Culture Studies'/

CULTURAL STAGES	GENRE SYSTEMS	REQUIREMENTS OF LITERARY CRITICISM TO LITERARARY TEXTS
ORAL-WRITTEN	MYTHS, EPOS, HISTORY // DRAMA, LYRICS	SHOULD POSSESS ENTERTAINING QUALITIES
WRITTEN	... + HOMILETIC GENRES	SHOULD SERVE AS ILLUSTRATIONS TO THE BIBLE, HOLY HISTORY & ETHICS
PRINTED	... + SCIENTIFIC, JOURNALISTIC, LITERARY TEXTS	SHOULD DEMOSTRATE NOVELTY , PERSONAL VIEW, BE AHEAD OF RELIGIOUS VALUES
MASS COMMUNICATION	... + MASS MEDIA GENRES	SHOULD REFLECT THE 'SYMBOLIC UMBRELLA', POSSESS DOCUMENTAL PRECISION

