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Literature and Propaganda: The Structure of Conversion in Schenzinger's *Hitlerjunge Quex*

John Daniel Stahl 129

Abstract. Propaganda literature as a genre can profitably be analyzed by means of a structuralist approach, as Susan R. Suleiman has shown in her study of the French ideological novel. Extending her discussion of the "structure of confrontation" and the "structure of apprenticeship," this study postulates the "structure of conversion" as a fundamental form of propaganda literature. Through loss of self to a greater entity, the central character in fiction exemplifying this form finds a new identity in self-submergence. A once-popular novel by the German pro-fascist author Karl Aloys Schenzinger, *Hitlerjunge Quex* (1932), serves as a model for investigation into the structure of conversion. Religious and psychological dimensions of the central character's experience merge in a representation of conversion that is all the more powerfully ideological for disguising its political and racial assumptions. Eros and Thanatos meet in the mythic heightening of self-sacrifice, culminating in martyrdom. A consideration often ignored by structuralist critics, the use of stylistic means to reinforce implied messages, is shown to be a significant element in *Hitlerjunge Quex*. The value of a structuralist approach to propaganda lies in its elucidation of hidden assumptions, exposing them to critical judgment. (JDS)

Oulipian Messages

Sydney Lévy. 149

Abstract. The result of Oulipo's manipulations seem devoid of any message. Upon performing, however, what could be called an Oulipo-critique, the folding of an Oulipo product into a body of knowledge quite removed from it, in this case biology and information theory, we find that Oulipo's message is not in the text but in the work one is likely to perform on that text. That work has all the characteristics of a highly redundant and organized interference and consists in establishing contextual and/or intertextual relationships according to preset formal

constraints where chance plays almost no role. Oulipo in effect confuses message and information and its message is programmatic, an invitation to write using those formal constraints. (SL)

Anamnesis: Paul Celan's Translations of Poetry

Leonard Olschner 163

Abstract. Paul Celan's significance as a poet has long been undisputed, and increasingly outside German-speaking countries, but his translations of poetry have remained at the periphery of critical attention and are only gradually becoming recognized as an integral and indeed major part of his poetry and poetics. The present essay attempts to elucidate specific aspects of the biographical, linguistic, literary and historical background at work in Celan's translating and offers analytic interpretations of texts by Mandel'stam, Apollinaire and Shakespeare in Celan's translation. (LO)

The Maze of Taste: On Bataille, Derrida, and Kant

Arkady Plotnitsky 199

Abstract. The case of Kant's *Critique of Judgment* offers a powerful example of the radical disruption of the metaphysical text, enacted by Bataille's major concepts. The analysis of the metaphor of economy in Kant, Bataille and Derrida suggests the crucial importance of Bataille's general economy—as the economy of loss—for deconstructing the Kantian conception of genius and the whole scheme of taste—as an economy of consumption—and inscribing a complex interplay forces that the general economy is designed to account for. Once however taste, art and the economy of genius can no longer be inscribed through the restricted economy of the metaphysical text, the question of genre and style of a different inscription—a general economy—acquires a crucial significance. Bataille's own discursive practice can be seen as an exemplification of such a different—plural—style. (AP)

Tournier's Theoretical Pretext Works Like a Charm

Lawrence Schehr 221

Abstract. By playing on the expectations that a reader would have for a *Bildungsroman*, Tournier puts generic parameters and received ideas into question. In *La Goutte d'or*, he writes a text in which thematic considerations become so over-determined that they give way to a set of theoretical considerations about how the novel is constructed and perceived.

Tournier does engage the reader in two “orthodox” theoretical perspectives on the nature of the text. The first involves the generation of meaning through the determination of a signified; the second involves the play of the signifier. But the largest portion of the theoretical perspectives of the novel is given over to the development of a phenomenological position of perception within the text. Tournier generates a structure of intentionality, signification, and meaning that he “develops” by means of the novel’s *fil conducteur*, the photographic image.

Tournier eventually refuses the status of image-making for the text and closes with a theoretical perspective that depends on the double valorization of writing: as the aesthetic dance of signifiers and as the seduction of the well-told tale. (LS)

Nabokov’s “Torpid Smoke”

Leona Toker 239

Abstract. Nabokov’s short stories are polished self-contained works of art. However, like his novels and poems, they can be profitably read in the light of their place in his general canon. This place is determined by the time when each story was written and by the way in which other works enrich and elucidate the significance of its images.

The short fiction of Nabokov’s Berlin period has been regarded largely as akin to studies that a painter makes in preparation for a big picture. In some cases, however, the stories seem to serve as safety valves for the urgent material that had to be kept out of the novels in order not to interfere with their design. A case in point is the 1935 story “Torpid Smoke,” written at the juncture of *Invitation to a Beheading* and *The Gift*. The plight of the protagonist of “Torpid Smoke” is a hybrid of the tendencies manifest in Cincinnatus of *Invitation* and Fyodor Godunov Cherdyntsev of *The Gift*: however, unlike Fyodor, this young poet gets no encouragement in his wish to devote himself to literature; unlike Cincinnatus, he cannot reject his environment with a clear conscience. His father, the major obstacle to his literary pursuits, is essentially decent, well-meaning, and pathetically human—a far cry from the obnoxious “parodies” that surround Cincinnatus. The young poet is trapped between the exquisite happiness that accompanies poetic experience and the price that he cannot achieve artistic self-isolation. In a sense, the story dramatizes the conflict between morality and “aesthetic bliss.”

The imagery of the story ostensibly serves to increase the density of a plausible setting. Actually, the imagery is also functional: it forms a network of parallels and nuances that point both to the genuineness of the young man’s talent and to the possible reason for the “puerile” quality of his “perishable”

production, viz., to the presences of unprocessed issues whose pressure prevents him from successfully capturing his poetic experience in the flesh of language.

The necessity of facing poignant complexities is a thematic undercurrent of the story. The story itself, moreover, seems to be Nabokov's way of confronting an issue of crucial relevance to *Invitation* and *The Gift*, viz., the morality of daily choices when the demands of personal relationships drain creative energies, yet cannot be rejected as cavalierly as in *Invitation to a Beheading*. In the design of *The Gift* there was no place for this theme; therefore Nabokov placed it in "Torpido Smoke," his safety valve. He was then free to show the balance between communication and isolation maintained by the protagonist of *The Gift*. (LT)