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## "Pozytywizm", Henryk Markiewicz, Warszawa 1978 : [recenzja]

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Henryk Markiewicz, **Pozytywizm (Positivism)**, PWN, Warszawa 1978, pp. 626. Series: *Historia Literatury Polskiej* (The History of Polish Literature).

*Pozytywizm* by Henryk Markiewicz is a comprehensive critical study of the development of Polish literature in the years 1864–1890. In some chapters the author goes beyond the second date: he follows up till about 1910 the literary careers of the writers of the oldest generation who made their literary debut soon after 1864 (Asnyk, Orzeszkowa, Świętochowski, Prus, Sienkiewicz, Tarnowski, Chmielowski), and the careers of the second generation who began writing around 1880 (Konopnicka, Dygasiński, Sygietyński, Witkiewicz, Zapolska) are followed up till 1905. He also presents the early works of the writers of the Young Poland movement, which date from the years 1889–1894.

The main category used by Markiewicz to classify literary texts is that of genres. However, the above list of names and dates is enough to show that the author was not aiming at reconstructing the strictly immanent evolution of “The novel and the short story,” of “Drama” and “Poetry” (these are the titles of the main parts of the book). He in fact presents three sets of co-ordinates which intersect one another: the immanent evolution of literature is shown against a background of collective biographies of whole generations of writers, and these form a part of the rich, heterogeneous and ever-changing political and social life in partitioned Poland. This is why Markiewicz’s book, which contains separate, well-documented chapters on journalism, popular literature (for peasants and young people), factual accounts (memoirs and travels), literary and art criticism and history, as well as arts in general, is so different from the narrowness of the traditional approach. The choice of literary material is a result of understanding culture as a complex whole in which, according to Markiewicz, literature plays an active part. How then can it be considered on its own, irrespective of the other domains of culture, since they are all intricately related?

Markiewicz refers to the principal categories of historical materialism and supplements them with detailed historical, sociological and literary criteria. Historical facts which belong to different categories are never mixed. In his reasoning and in the lay-out of his

work Markiewicz distinguishes remarks concerning changes in the social and economic system from the description of the conditions and the norms of the ideological life of the society, and he sets the latter apart from an analysis of the inner history of ideas and from reconstructions in the field of historical poetics. A strict but undogmatic delimitation of diverse domains of culture makes way for a new and inventive way of looking at the problems which are particular to each of them. Henryk Markiewicz concentrates on matters of poetics and ideology (together with its social roots and repercussions), and this distinguishes *Pozytywizm* from the traditional post-war studies on this period in literature. Furthermore, his way of looking at culture makes it possible for him to establish a historically and methodologically plausible hierarchy of domains and to show their interdependence as well as the areas of intersection and penetration. As a result of this, the literary work is not directly confronted with class interests and social needs. It is neither their inert vehicle nor their socio-technical tool. And the carefully reconstructed role of literary tradition does not stifle its ideological message.

The clear picture of the development of literature found in *Pozytywizm* is helped along by the fact that the author does not evade awkward questions, which would appear to be a threat to this clarity. Thus the book is interwoven with the problems of the relatively immanent self-destruction of Positivism, which in fact results from the collision of the inner contradictions of the trend with the socio-cultural norms and processes which have accompanied its development, and it follows an overall change in literature, when the existing trend is replaced with a new one. The antinomies of the Positivist literary programme, whose artistry served the aims of social mobilization, and on the other hand the processes of conflict but also of the mutual penetration of realistic and modernistic poetics – these two sets of problems are discussed here for the first time in such a consistent and well-documented way.

The next feature of the author's critical method may be discerned in the way he deals with historical detail. Even though he is careful to create a clear picture of the evolution of literature—and this makes *Pozytywizm* a book of great educational value—the author never allows hypostases to take over. At no point in the book does the reader have any doubt as to the fact that it is not processes,

tendencies, trends, poetics or ideas, which shape the history and the literature of a nation, but socially involved *individuals*.

The same can be said about the author's attitude towards literary texts. Instead of describing abstract models of literary works, as is often the case nowadays, Markiewicz adroitly analyzes each of them separately; however, he always puts them into general categories. By presenting an individual case he unveils the general norms which structuralize the literary process. But even here Markiewicz is careful to find the right proportions between the writer's initiative and the literary and social norms which he must follow. By making the category of genre the basis for his considerations, he rejects the traditional model of a monographical study, which was in fact nothing more than a bio- and bibliographic dictionary camouflaged as a critical study.

Students and anyone interested in the literature of the Positivist period (and in realistic literature in general) will welcome this standard book on the subject. *Pozytywizm* by Henryk Markiewicz will be a guide for future studies on Polish literature of the 30-year period between 1864 and 1894.

Sum. by *Marian Plachecki*

Transl. by *Agnieszka Kukulska*

Edward Pieścikowski: „**Emancypantki**” **Bolesława Prusa** (**Les « Emancipées » de Bolesław Prus**), Państwowy Instytut Wydawniczy, Warszawa 1970; **Bolesław Prus**, Państwowe Wydawnictwo Naukowe, Warszawa 1977, 210 pp.

La mise en regard de deux études de la même plume mais de genres différents: une monographie d'un roman et un portrait littéraire de l'écrivain – une analyse des *Emancypantki* (*Les Emancipées*) et une synthèse de l'acquis de Bolesław Prus – illustre bien les intérêts d'Edward Pieścikowski, historien de la littérature, spécialiste du positivisme, notamment de l'oeuvre de Bolesław Prus.

Avant de pénétrer dans l'univers des confrontations factologiques et descriptives auxquelles se livre le chercheur, il convient de citer la phrase de Jan Parandowski avec laquelle Pieścikowski termine l'étude en question: « C'est une vérité bien connue que le