

# Book and article reviews

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## BOOK AND ARTICLE REVIEWS

Arturo Tosi: *Language and society in a changing Italy*. Clevedon UK [etc.]: Multilingual Matters 2001.

Arturo Tosi è Professore di Italiano presso il Royal Holloway dell'Università di Londra e Visiting Professor di Sociolinguistica presso l'Università degli Studi di Siena.

Nato e cresciuto in Italia, ha insegnato in più Università Inglesi; le sue ricerche e pubblicazioni toccano vari campi: sociolinguistica, traduzione, multilinguismo, educazione linguistica e politiche linguistiche nell'Unione Europea.

Il libro, scritto in Inglese, prende in esame le interrelazioni tra lingua e società nell'Italia degli ultimi 50 anni, arco di tempo caratterizzato da forti cambiamenti linguistici (oltre che sociali ed economici). In esso, Tosi isola due momenti che fungono da veri punti di svolta (e non solo per la lingua): la rivolta studentesca del 1968 e il passaggio dalla Prima alla Seconda Repubblica.

Lo stile adottato permette una lettura scorrevole e coinvolgente, grazie soprattutto all'alta frequenza di esempi relativi alle problematiche discusse.

La struttura è ben articolata e aiuta la consultazione anche del lettore che desideri concentrarsi solo su certi aspetti dei tanti temi affrontati, tralasciandone altri. Il testo è diviso in tre parti, a loro volta strutturate in capitoli, corrispondenti a tre dimensioni di analisi sociolinguistica: la lingua quotidiana

(capp. 1-5, pp. 1-90), i linguaggi speciali (capp. 6-10, pp. 91-204) e i vari tipi di contatto linguistico (capp. 11-13, pp. 205-262).

Ciascuna parte tratta il tema in questione da vari punti di vista e include: una valutazione delle recenti ricerche sul tema, una descrizione storica delle variazioni linguistiche specifiche e un'analisi di testi significativi a riguardo.

Nelle conclusioni (pp. 263-268), l'autore prevede che gli studenti Italiani possano essere incuriositi e attratti dalla metodologia di ricerca da lui adottata, in quanto non diffusa in Italia, dove gli studi sui contatti linguistici e la loro relazione con l'educazione linguistica ricoprono un ruolo secondario rispetto a quello che hanno nei paesi anglofoni. Tosi (pp. 267-268) nota che ciò è dovuto alla forza della tradizione dialettologica Italiana, più incline alla descrizione teorica della lingua che all'indagine della sua dimensione sociale. Il testo mira ad essere pioniere nel tentativo di colmare questo vuoto, in vista di una maggiore collaborazione tra linguisti teorici e *policy makers*, operazione importante in questo momento di crescente globalizzazione economica, sociale e linguistica.

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Michele Prandi e Paolo Ramat (a cura di), *Semiotica e linguistica. Per ricordare Maria Elisabeth Conte*, Franco Angeli, Milano, 2001.

Il libro raccoglie gli atti del convegno, svoltosi nel marzo del 1999, organizzato dal Dipartimento di Linguistica dell'Università di Pavia. In tale occasione sono state ripercorse le ricerche di Maria Elisabeth Conte che, nell'ambito dell'insegnamento di Semiotica, ha introdotto i postulati della linguistica testuale in Italia, dando un grossissimo contributo e impulso a quest'ambito di ricerca. Sono stati invitati a parlare alcuni tra i suoi interlocutori più significativi e gli interventi si ricollegano direttamente ai temi a lei cari proprio allo scopo di mantenere un dialogo aperto con questa linguista "non prototipica".

Tra i principali obiettivi della linguistica testuale si possono annoverare la ricerca delle modalità d'espressione e delle strategie di manifestazione del testo, l'individuazione dei possibili percorsi interpretativi, generati da una sua lettura semantica profonda, e l'attenzione verso la sua efficacia comunicativa. Gli studi di M. E. Conte mettono in luce proprio le strutture portanti del testo col ricorso ai concetti di coerenza e ai fenomeni dell'anafora e della deissi. Ma la loro originalità riposa nella capacità di spaziare in campi di indagine volti all'individuazione dei fondamenti semiotici e degli aspetti pragmatici del linguaggio allo scopo di svelare la struttura interna delle lingue naturali e il loro uso in contesti particolari.

Il pregio principale di tale raccolta di atti è quello di mostrare come la linguistica testuale sia un campo esteso e complesso, ed anche quello di offrire degli input d'indagine corredati da

un'ampia bibliografia. Le metodologie utilizzate nei vari interventi ed il riferimento a ricercatori che si sono dedicati e si dedicano a questi studi, seppur da punti di vista diversi, danno un'idea della versatilità e dell'originalità degli approcci al testo. Si spazia da ricerche che pongono l'accento sulla forma e sulla coerenza interna del testo, a ricerche volte a scoprire quali elementi contestuali e quali pratiche inferenziali siano all'opera nell'interpretazione del messaggio. Sullo sfondo della dicotomia tra coerenza *a parte obiecti* e *a parte subiecti*, si passano in rassegna la modalizzazione verbale, il funzionamento degli strumenti coesivi, l'influenza esercitata dal titolo e il problema dell'interpretazione e della traducibilità del testo, il cui fine ultimo va rintracciato proprio nella funzione comunicativa, che, travalicando la sua linearità, conferisce ad esso sostanza e significazione.

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Cobley, Paul. *Narrative*. London/New York: Routledge, 2001.

Part of Routledge's series entitled *The New Critical Idiom*, the present volume is an introductory textbook which seeks "... to extend the lexicon of literary terms, in order to address the radical changes which have taken place in the study of literature during the last decades of the twentieth century" (p. ix). This series, and Cobley's (henceforth C.) contribution to it, seek to pro-

vide the reader with both a historical and an evolutionary perspective of the literary concept of narrative. In this book, narrative refers to the Western tradition of narrative structure.

The author, a reader in communications at London Guildhall University, has written *The American Thriller* (2000) and co-authored with Litza Jansz the illustrated volume *Introducing Semiotics* (1997). In the present monograph, C. provides the reader with an excellent overview of narrative structure and technique in creative fiction as well as in film, radio, television and cyberspace. From C.'s perspective a narrative is a verbal, sequenced account of events, and the narration *re*-presents these events through a *re*-presentation of time and space (pp. 4-21, 236-237).

In the first chapter, the author notes that two proposals for the possible origins of the narrative exist (pp. 21-30). The first, the ontogenetic imperative, seeks the answer in a psychological or biological propensity to tell stories. The second, or the phylogenetic perspective, refers to a natural or universal cultural inclination toward storytelling. Both responses to the origination of human narrative are unlikely to achieve a definitive resolution. It is clear that humans seek to provide meaning in their existence, and one of the ways in which they accomplish this, is through narratives.

C. cites Bruner (1990: 77) who specifies the following criteria for a narrative: "(a) a means of emphasizing human agency or action; (b) a sequence of some sort; (c) a sense of what is canonical, traditional or permitted and what is non-canonical; and (e) a narrator's perspective" (pp. 27-28, 153). Throughout this book, C. examines all of these elements though his special

focus is on narrative perspective or voice as a means of illustrating significant changes in narrative. Finally, C. carefully illustrates these transformations through the judicious selection and citation of important literary works in English or in English translation.

In the remaining seven chapters, C. examines the history of the narrative. In its earliest manifestation, the narrative was an oral cultural product passed on intergenerationally, and subsequently embellished and *re*-created in the minds of inventive folk artists. Because narrative records not only fictional events but also real ones, it is difficult to discern the difference between the two in the distant past. Moreover, the distinction of fictional and factual narrative is further compounded because historians use this format to recreate the past. Hayden White (1987: 122; see p. 31) has pointed out the problems inherent in the historian's efforts to separate fact from fiction. Early oral narrative, nevertheless, functioned to preserve cultural myth. In this regard, the Greek epic poet may be considered the originator of European narrative. The epic poem *The Odyssey* may be considered to be a foundational narrative for the Western tradition because it is concerned with character, identity and consciousness, not to mention it concern for signs, appearance and reality (p. 55).

Because of its reliance on repetition and formula, oral narrative had certain restrictions. Written and printed narrative, however, facilitated expressive freedom. In the Greek literary tradition, several important developments occurred in the narrative. Thus, Plato's discussion of mimesis, or the act of depiction, and Aristotle's formulation of this notion as an artistic issue (p. 61) contribute to our historical understand-

ing of narrative. Factors such as imitation, quotation, and identity further advanced narrative structure. By the Middle Ages, the poet's voice (Chaucer and Boccaccio) became manifest. Next, the development of the "romance" (*Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*, Malory's *La morte d'Arthur*) and the nascent novel (Cervantes' *Don Quijote*) further advanced the Western narrative.

Nineteenth century literary realism with saw the imposition of the narrator's voice in its detailed description of daily life and the insights into the characters' psyches. The omniscient narrator so prevalent in this narrative bestows unlimited knowledge of character and circumstance upon the author. Characteristic of the omniscient voice is George Eliot's (Mary Ann Evans) *Middlemarch* with its decidedly didactic tone.

After literary realism, there was to be another consequential narrative whose structure would be influential, namely, Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*. The significance of this narrative is its presentation of what has been called "a story of identity, of a voyage of the self" (p. 122). In this work, the character Marlow journeys to Africa to seek Kurtz. On various levels, the novel is about the encounter of civilization with barbarism and about European imperialism. This early modernist narrative reveals several levels of narration, namely, those of the narrator, Marlow, and Kurtz (p. 120). What Conrad has achieved in his novel is the development of novel narrative strategies that resonate in the early twentieth century.

In his antepenultimate chapter, C. addresses the rise of modernism and the cinema. James Joyce's *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* (1916) introduces yet another narrative innovation with

its elimination of an omniscient narrator. Hence, its recognition that human consciousness derives from a wide variety of forces is prototypically modernist. In this chapter, C. addresses film, the essentially twentieth century technological innovation that yielded yet another form of narrative whose story-telling structure remained fixed until the 1960s. Film subsequently explored novel "modernist" perspectives through its manipulation of time via the flash-forward as well as the flashback. C. illustrates his points with discussions of the films *The Last Temptation of Christ* and *Un chien andalou*.

The penultimate chapter examines postmodernism, a term whose elusive definition (pp. 179, 239) in this text refers to the rupturing effect of postmodern narratives. For C., the postmodern narrative alludes to a "meta" level, i.e., narrative levels outside of the primary discourse. Metanarrative thus challenges the conventional narrative voice by imposing other consciousnesses (p. 174). In the rest of this chapter, C. discusses the decline of the "grand narrative", a hallmark of postmodernism. Finally, C. reviews the new technologies of narrative, i.e., radio and television. According to C., the impact of television and its supporting technologies had three important effects on narrative: (1) a proliferation of narratives; (2) narrative non-fictions become ubiquitous; and (3) scheduling requirements favor open-ended serial narrative (pp. 198-19).

In his final chapter, C. addresses three effects of the computer on narrative: (1) facility in accessing narrative; (2) its compact size and its access to massive amounts of data require an entirely new conceptualization of space, i.e., cyberspace; and (3) the internet and the form

of writing known as “hypertext” implies alternate endings to narratives. Cybernarrative allows the reader control of reading as never before. The unique control of narrative that the author had in the conventional print medium is gone. In fact, this power is being ceded more and more to the consumer of narrative by providing that person with alternative endings. Prior to the mass release of major films, for example, Hollywood now develops multiple conclusions to films, which are then tested on audiences to determine which one is the most satisfying. In the same fashion, television programs develop alternative outcomes in an effort to outwit viewers who want to know what happens to protagonists in a season or series finale.

To achieve symmetry, while at the same time, pointing out the direction of the narrative in the Western tradition, C. has titled his first chapter “In the beginning: the end”, and his last chapter “In the end: the beginning”. By his clever titling, C. wishes to note that the mechanisms of cybertext are not novel since the interpretation of sacred texts such as the Talmud incorporate these same principles (p. 204).

Indeed, Coblely ably achieves his goal of tracing the historical development of the narrative in the Western European tradition by utilizing exemplary novels and by reference to the major literary critics to illustrate the ever-evolving structures of the narrative. Difficult as this task is, C. has managed to do so, and quite capably. This is essential reading for anyone who wishes to have an informed and up-to-date perspective on the narrative. Moreover, C.’s discussion of technological manifestations of narrative, especially film, radio, television and cybertext provides an extraor-

dinarly insightful and up-to-date view of narrative. C. would indeed be intrigued by the Swiss writer Mattia Cavadini whose remarkable novel *Inganno turrito* presents the reader with a noteworthy portrayal of a chaotic multilingual metalanguage. Contrary to C.’s use of heteroglossia (p. 233), i.e., the representation of different narrative voices, Cavadini’s polyglot novel is a true heteroglossic montage of distinct narrative perspectives.

A glossary of terminology (pp. 229-245), a bibliography (pp. 246-260) and an index (pp. 261-267) complement this excellent volume.

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Thea M. van der Geest, *Web Site Design is Communication Design*, Benjamins, Amsterdam, 2001

*"Designing is deciding". Deciding between trade-offs, between alternative solutions to a problem, between constraints and creative possibilities.*

(adapted from the book)

This book is about the decision-making process the web designers carry out in order to shape a complex communication artifact, which a web application is. Why should such an issue be relevant both for the theoretical and practical arena?

The author takes for granted that modern web applications – both from the user's and the designer's perspective - are evolving progressively, evolving along two dimensions:

- *The delivery channel.* Initially delivered only via traditional Web browsers, many web sites today are progressively becoming available not only on PCs, but also on a variety of different (internet connected) devices, ranging from static equipment such as the Web TV, to mobile equipment such as PDAs to WAP phones.

- *The kind of functionality offered to the user.* First-generation web sites were essentially read-only hypermedia (i.e., navigable) applications. Web applications today support not only navigation and browsing, but also, via web, a complex workflow of activities, services and business transactions, involving data processing and intensive data modifications.

These novelties make modern web application design a complex task that cannot be delegated only to technical people. A reflection about the goals of

the application in term of its communication purposes and the kind of user experience they would like to shape is needed.

According to this global mission, the aim of the book is twofold: on one hand it tries to provide web communication designers (i.e., people committed to conceive and shape web sites who do not necessarily have a strong technical background) with the necessary conceptual tools and techniques to consider all the relevant issues and to take wise decisions in web-site design. On the other hand, the author wishes to offer researchers in communication and new-media design a wide spectrum of problems to face when analyzing, comparing, modeling and evaluating web sites and the communication paradigm they establish with their audience.

At a first sight, this book does not seem to be very different from hundreds of published books concerning the theme of web-site design, web-site usability, information architecture and web navigation. Many of these new books shine on the shelves of the electronic malls with fascinating titles full of those keywords that attract both the practitioners with long-standing experience (who want to keep the competitive pace with the latest trend in web site design) and the non-expert designers (who naively thinks they can find a new idea behind each new word they read). Unfortunately, although the table of contents of such books could differ by topic order or title size, they all tell the same best-practice web-site process guideline that could be summarized as follows: define your audience and your goals, design the content and the information architecture, decide the look&feel, produce prototypes, implement the final product, and evaluate the effects.

Given these topics, a lot of books strive to assess the relevance of each activity with respect to the other in a different way, using a different word style to describe in detail each activity and how the design process works in practice. At the end, they tell designers *what to do* during design, offering very little guidance as *how to do it*.

Two distinctive and valuable features of this book distinguish it from the large set of “weak” competitors.

First of all, it provides clear answers to a crucial question that is often overlooked in current research: “Why use the Web?” Why do people conceive, build and strive to maintain web applications? What are the high-level goals that guide the design? What are the real reasons behind design decisions? The priority of such questions cannot be neglected by anyone who wishes to know web applications. The author proposes a taxonomy of the most common (and fairly general) goals behind the communication via a Web site: *distributing a large amount of information, updating information that changes rapidly, reducing costs and effort, improving customer relations, updating existing information systems, creating a forum or community, showcasing technology, joining the crowd: ‘me too’*. It could be argued that such a set of reasons to be on the Web is incomplete or too generic but, as a matter of fact, it is the result of an empirical study that the author carried out by interviewing designers of dozens of web sites in Europe and U.S.<sup>1</sup>. From this survey, the author elicited also the detailed and specific business and communication goals that

each organization or institution tries to fulfill by using the web. Although the number of surveyed web-sites is not representative of all the applications existing on the Internet, the study helps to gain an accurate insight on principles guiding the decision to be on the Internet.

The second factor that contributes to make this work emerge from the ocean of similar approaches in the literature is contained in the last twenty pages. Here the author proposes a set of recurrent questions (with possible alternatives answers) that the designers should consider before taking a strategic decision. The designers are not only faced with an issue to consider (e.g.: “think of a visual metaphor for your site”) but – according to the project constraints – they are also guided through an operational procedure (e.g.: if the organizational brand suggests a particular look&feel, then do that; if the content suggests a particular visual style, then do that; if there is no visual guidelines already available then do that, and so on). The question-answer form of presentation helps to reshape the dynamic dialogue between a consultant and a designer, or between an expert designer and a less-experienced one. It is very useful to access these concrete suggestions, which are the crystallization of the designers’ experience. This large set of heuristics expressed in the form of question-answers checklists cover the whole spectrum of the development process and can actually help the designers do their job effectively.

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<sup>1</sup> The web-sites surveyed are presented and analyzed in depth in Chapter 2 (page 13-32).



C. Cecchetto, G. Chierchia, M.T.AA.VV., *Semantic Interfaces [Reference, Anaphora and Aspect]*. Guasti ed., Stanford: CSLI 2001, 361 pp.

The intriguing title of this collection of essays, composed to celebrate Andrea Bonomi's 60<sup>th</sup> birthday, clearly manifests the halfway nature (between linguistics and philosophy of language) of the contents it introduces the reader to.

It has been largely acknowledged that the specific nature of the philosophy of language discipline is the investigation of the semantic issue in language, whilst linguistics would rather concentrate on the structural side of the problem, on the "signifiant", to use the well-known Saussurian category. The syntagm "semantic interfaces" therefore provocatively combines two different research fields, inviting attention to both sides of the semiotic relation: the sign vehicle and the referent.

The problem of reference has always been crucial for the philosophy of language; it raises big questions, such as: "what link is there between discourse and reality? Between words and things?" The answers – given or future – depend on the general philosophical frame in which every philosopher locates himself; in any case, what remains is the approach to language conceived and analysed as a "vehicle" to something which is "further" than it.

As regards the linguistic phenomenon of the anaphora, of which the classical grammarians were already well aware (in fact, the word comes from the Greek verb *ana-pherō*, which means "to raise", "to recall", "to bring back"), it raises both structural problems (What kind of linguistic element can serve as

antecedent to each type of anaphoric element?) and semantic issues (Are the anaphoric expression and its antecedent co-referent or not? What kind of inference does the antecedent trigger when it is semantically different from the anaphoric term?). As regards the former, one of the most influential approaches is the so-called "Binding theory" by Chomsky (Chomsky, *Lectures on Government and Binding*, Foris, Dordrecht 1981); as regards the latter, many scholars could be mentioned: for an introduction and some basic insights, the reader can refer to J. Lyons, *Semantics*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 1994 (1977 $\diamond$ ), v. II, pp. 636-718.

What is anaphora? The anaphoric "scenario" consists of an element or construction which depends, for its correct interpretation, on being associated with another element in the cotext, more precisely, in the preceding cotext (when an element refers to the text "forward" we should speak of "cataphora" rather than of anaphora; see. K. Bühler, *Sprachtheorie, Die Darstellungsfunktion der Sprache*, Gustav Fischer Verlag, Jena 1934). There are many different kinds of anaphora and many possible taxonomies. From a semantic point of view, we can distinguish two basic anaphoric phenomena: those cases in which the anaphoric element is said to be co-referential with its antecedent ("Thanks for the book! I will start reading *it* as soon as possible), and those cases (called "associative" anaphora), in which the antecedent is semantically different from the anaphoric expression, and it works as a "trigger" by conjuring up a set of semantic associations that help find the intended referent ("Yesterday I went to *a wedding*; *the bride* was very beautiful"; see J.

Hawkins, *Definiteness and Indefiniteness*, Croom Helm, London 1978).

The eight papers contained in this book address specific insights into the problem of how meaning and form are related; basically, they can be divided into two groups: some deals with the theme of reference and anaphora, others with that of tense and aspect, in which again the notion of anaphora can be found. To the first group belong the contributions of: Robert May (*Frege on Identity Statements*, dealing with what is known as “Frege’s puzzle”: if the identity symbol is a sign of objectual identity, how can it carry non-trivial information?), Gennaro Chierchia (*A puzzle about indefinites*, in which the author analyses the referential value of indefinites), Carlo Cecchetto (*Syntactic or semantic reconstruction? Evidence from Pseudoclefts and Clitic left Dislocation*; a discussion on anaphora and the theory of reconstruction), Luigi Rizzi (*Reconstruction, Weak Island Sensitivity, and Agreement*, again dealing with the reconstruction theory). To the second group belong the contributions of: Pier Marco Bertinetto (*On a Frequent Misunderstanding in the Temporal-Aspectual Domain: The ‘Perfective-Telic Confusion*, where the notions of Actionality and Aspect are discussed as independent categories), Alessandra Giorgi and Fabio Pianesi (*Ways of terminating*, whose topic again is that of telicity / atelicity of predicates), Arnim Von Stechow (*Temporally Opaque Arguments in Verbs of Creation*, in which the author argues that verbs of creation share referential “opacity” with verbs like “seek” or “owe”, in that their relevant object doesn’t actually exist), Sandro Zucchi (*Tense in Fiction*, on the “floatation” of the temporal point of origin in fictional texts). As it is impos-

sible to enter into the details of all the above mentioned papers, given the richness and complexity of their respective contents, I shall now focus attention on two of them, one taken from the first group, the other from the second.

Robert May’s contribution, entitled *Frege on Identity Statements*, deals with one of the most puzzling questions raised by the great philosopher and mathematician: under what conditions can identity statements be informative? The problem is to combine their logical and semantic aspects: if, on the one hand, as he states in his *Begriffsschrift*, one could object to the introduction of a symbol for identity in a formal language that, if A and B have the same content, there is no reason for such a symbol, on the other we must recognize that there’s a difference “between there being identity of content and *expressing* identity of content in the conceptual notation”. In other words, “the matter pertains *both* to expressions *and* to thought”; for a given content, having different names is not merely a matter of form, but, “if they are associated with different modes of determination, they concern the very heart of the matter” (p. 12). Contents may be “given” in more than one way. In *Über Sinn und Bedeutung*, Frege clarifies that the additional value contained in  $a=b$  (with respect to  $a=a$ , given the truth of both equations), is a cognitive value. The truth of  $a=a$  is known, as Kant would say, *a priori*; the truth of  $a=b$  can be stated only after ascertaining that, though having a different sense (“Sinn”), they share the same referent (“Bedeutung”); “because of this, « $a=b$ » has greater cognitive value than « $a=a$ » and must express a different thought” (p. 32). In Frege’s view, as we find it expressed at the end of the already men-

tioned *Über Sinn und Bedeutung*, the sense of an identity statement, that is, the thought it expresses, appears to be no less relevant than its reference.

In his paper Pier Marco Bertinetto concentrates on how Actionality and Aspect relate to each other, an issue on which a general consensus among the scholars is lacking. Actionality has to do with the nature of the event type referred to by the verbal predicate; an event can be:  $\pm$ durative,  $\pm$ homogeneous,  $\pm$ dynamic. We therefore have four classes of verbs (according to Vendler's taxonomy; p. 178):

1. stat(iv)es (durative, non dynamic, homogeneous; for e.g., "to be good-natured")
2. activities (durative, dynamic, homogeneous; for e.g., "to walk")
3. achievements (non durative, dynamic, non homogeneous; for e.g., "to reach the top")
4. accomplishments (durative, dynamic, non homogeneous; for e.g., "to build a house")

Of course, "the assignment of a given predicate to an actional class is subject to at least two conditions. First, the predicate should be understood as an argumental frame, i.e. a predicate with its arguments [...] *draw* is always an activity, *draw a circle* is an accomplishment." Second, we must look at the nature of the determiner phrase: while "draw a circle" or "draw three circles" are accomplishments, "draw circles" is again an activity. Aspect has to do with the perspective adopted in reporting the relevant event; perfective events correspond to closed intervals (in which the event is viewed in its entirety; "John wrote a letter"), while imperfective events correspond to open intervals

(their conclusion lies outside the horizon of the language user; "John was writing a letter"; p. 184). According to Bertinetto, Actionality and Aspect are to be considered two independent categories: "Note that Aspect is directly conveyed by the various tenses available within any given language. It is thus a completely independent category with respect to Actionality, considering that the latter is ultimately attached to the lexical meaning of the various predicates. In other words, while Aspect is vehicled by morphosyntactic devices, Actionality is a property of the lexicon" (p. 184). Bertinetto argues that the open / closed interval interpretation, induced by aspectual operators, is potentially available for every event type, against the widespread opinion that a verb in the perfective can only express telic eventualities and vice versa: "the categories of (im)perfectivity and (a)telicity do not co-vary" (p. 197). For example, if we consider the sentence "the book was on the table", we see that it may have two interpretations: (a) the book was on the table for a definite period of time; (b) at some specific reference time, the book was there for an indefinite period of time. In both cases the event is a state: though interpretation (a) is perfective, whilst interpretation (b) is imperfective, "no difference whatsoever is introduced in the stative nature of the event by the two readings" (p. 194). Bertinetto shows that the independency of these two categories, though particularly evident in languages with a rich morphology (where they often have different ways of manifesting themselves), can also be traced in languages with a poor morphology, giving evidence from the Slavonic and ancient Germanic.

Both linguists and philosophers of

language will find the papers contained in this book challenging and provocative. Putting forth some of the most debated issues in both fields they open the way to a very fruitful cooperation for which, no doubt, times are ripe.

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Dieter Prokop. *Der Kampf um die Medien. Das Geschichtsbuch der neuen kritischen Medienforschung*. Hamburg: VSA-Verlag, 2001.

In der Medienwirkungsforschung gibt es einen allbekannten Alptraum, in dem die auf den Kommunikationsprozess immer zahlreicher werdenden Einflüsse zu einem absolut undurchschaubaren Interdependenzgeflecht ausarten. Nüchtern wird von der Komplexität des Forschungsgegenstandes gesprochen. Dieter Prokop umgeht diese Gefahr und lässt «die Mediengeschichte nicht in der Pedanterie von Ansätzen und Modellen enden» sondern beschreibt «Problemkonflikte, welche die Massen und das Massenbeliebte betreffen».

Was im Titel dieses soziologischen Medienforschungsbeitrages sofort auffällt, ist der streitlustige Grundton, der sich sozusagen zweidimensional wahrnehmen lässt: auf der inhaltlichen Ebene heißt es «Kampf um die Medien», zum Ausdruck kommt das Hauptmerkmal dieser Geschichtsschreibung und zwar die Darstellung der Interessenkonflikte *um* die Medien; auf der forschungskritischen Ebene wird der mutmaßlich *veralteten* kriti-

schen Medienforschung die «neue kritische Medienforschung» entgegengesetzt.

In der Einleitung bemüht sich der Autor, neben den üblichen Objekt- und Standortbestimmungen den Titel zu rechtfertigen und entwirft folgendes Programm: Massenmedien haben schon immer im Dienste der Interessen der Mächtigen gestanden, also ist es sinnvoll die «subtilen Mittel der Manipulation» in Bezug auf ihre Funktion von den Anfängen bis zur Gegenwart zu verfolgen, ohne aber, und hier setzt die *neue* kritische Medienforschung ein, auf die alten Beschwerden über «Standardisierung, Verflachung [...] und über das unpolitische, ichschwache, [...] dumme Publikum» zurückzugreifen; stattdessen untersucht Prokop «wo und wie sich in der Mediengeschichte identitätsstärkende, solidarische, rational diskursive Kommunikations- und Entscheidungsformen entwickelten, durch welche Macht- und Wirtschaftsstrukturen und welche Theorien sie verhindert wurden und in welchen strukturellen Konstellationen sie sich trotz aller Macht- und Wirtschaftsinteressen durchsetzten». Demnach unterrichtet man in dieser 495-Seiten dicken Abhandlung nicht über Kommunikationsprozesse mit einseitiger Intention, Transmission und Rezeption, sondern über massenmedial vermittelte Kommunikationsvorgänge, welche dem Prinzip der impliziten Reziprozität folgen mit einem besonderen Augenmerk auf die Medien-Interessekämpfe und Medien-Problemkonflikte.

Hier setzt aber ein tiefgründiges Problem an: die irgendwann im Laufe der Geschichte niedergeschriebenen Informationen sind für den gegenwärtigen

gen Geschichtsschreiber einfache Daten, die, um wieder in nachvollziehbaren Informationen umgewandelt zu werden, einen Transformationsprozess erfahren müssen, der zu umfangreich ist, wenn er vollständige Objektivität beansprucht. „What do we mean when we say that something really happened?“ (P. Ricoeur, 1984). Ein Geschichtsbuch ist entweder eine Fülle sinnvoll aufgliederter Fakten und Einzeldaten, was durchaus nützlich und legitim ist (Das auf Deutsch zuletzt erschienene ist jenes von Jürgen Wilke, 2000), oder ein Versuch des *re-enactments*, bei dem die historiographische imaginative Interpretation der „documents and documentary proofs“ der ausschlaggebende Prozess ist. Beim Lesen dieses „Geschichtsbuchs“ darf also die Tatsache, dass es sich um *einen* auch wenn so einfallreichen und anschaulichen Verarbeitungsprozess handelt, nicht aus den Augen verloren werden.

Prokops herausfordernder Bewältigungsversuch gelingt, weil er jeden signifikanten Zeitabschnitt durch anschauliche historische Überblicke einführen lässt, die den Leser in die Lage versetzen, die geopolitischen und soziologischen Koordinaten zu erkennen und somit die im Interessenkampf um die Medien beteiligten Kräfte sofort ausfindig zu machen.

In seiner Darstellung bezieht sich Prokops Medienbegriff nicht nur auf die konventionellen Medien, sondern auch auf solche Medien, die in den üblichen Mediengeschichten nicht berücksichtigt werden, wie das Theater u. Ä.; der Grund für diese nicht zu hart umrahmte Massenmedienbestimmung ist vor allem darin zu suchen, dass der Autor dem Unterhaltungsbereich einen großen massenmedialen Wert beimisst. Demzufolge setzt die Chronologie

nicht, wie gewöhnlich, bei Gutenberg an, sondern viel früher, als die ersten populären Theater der Antike entstanden, d.h. im 5.-3. Jahrhundert v.Chr.; immerhin wird dieser Zeitabschnitt als «Vorspiel» des dreiteiligen Buches genannt. Prokop sieht in Platons Bildfeindlichkeit einerseits, und der kathartischen Wirkung der Unterhaltung bei Aristoteles andererseits, die ersten aber noch heute andauernden Problemkonflikte in der Auseinandersetzung mit Medientheorien: «Falscher Schein; angebliche Gefährlichkeit von Bildern; angebliche Notwendigkeit von Zensur im Interesse des Idealen; befreiende Wirkung von Rührung, Schrecken und Lachen. Wie wir sehen werden, unterscheidet sich das nicht sehr von den heutigen Debatten [...]».

Es folgen drei Teile, die bei wichtigen Zäsuren anbrechen (40 v.Chr., 1400 n.Chr., 1880) und ungefähr den drei von Pross vorgeschlagenen Medientypen entsprechen (Überlappungen aber kommen durchaus vor): Im ersten Teil geht es vorwiegend um primäre Medien (Theater, Festspiele, u. Ä., obwohl auch Bilder bereits eine wichtige Rolle spielen), im zweiten um sekundäre (frühe Zeitungen, Populäre Bücher usw., aber auch öffentliche Veranstaltungen) und im dritten um tertiäre (Fernsehen, Radio, Internet, usw.). Alle drei Teile sind wiederum in drei bis fünf Kapitel untergliedert.

Der erste Teil, der kürzeste der drei (ca. 50 Seiten), deckt den Zeitraum von 40 v.Chr. bis 1400 n.Chr.; Die Überschrift lautet «Öffentliche Bilder, öffentliche Spiele zwischen Repräsentanz von Macht, dionysischem Fest und Identitätsbildung» und die Unterkapitel behandeln folgende Zeitabschnitte: Das Römische

Kaiserreich (40 v.Chr. – 400 n.Chr.), in dem die «Repräsentanz zentralistischer Macht» thematisiert und u.a. die Funktion der ersten öffentlichen Propagandabilder sowie die Wirkung der öffentlichen Veranstaltungen wie Circus, Theater usw. erörtert wird; den Feudalismus (400 n.Chr. – 1000) mit der «Repräsentanz der Idee des Göttlichen», die gelegentlich in Widerspruch mit der weltlichen Ausrichtung der „Massen“ gerät; schließlich das Spätmittelalter (1000–1400) mit dem frühen „Medien-Kapitalismus“, der im Ablasshandel durch monetisierte gefühlvolle Bilder in Schwung kommt aber gleichzeitig die Individualität des Rezipienten stärkt.

In der exkursiv behandelten Entstehung der Kirche, über die man sich in diesem Buch eher abfällig äußert, sieht der Autor die Voraussetzung für das Verständnis der «populären Medien der Spätantike und des Mittelalters». Kirchenbilder gelten im 5. Jahrhundert als neue Massenmedien, obwohl sie in den ersten dreihundert Jahren verboten waren. Was offenbar in der anfänglich von Verfolgungen geplagten Kirche galt, wäre in der nachkonstantinischen Zeit ein Verstoßen gegen die eigenen Interessen gewesen; darunter nicht zuletzt die Absicht, die niedere Volksschicht zu erreichen, die massiv dem Aberglauben ausgesetzt war.

Der zweite Teil (von 1400 bis 1880, ca. 150 Seiten umfassend) trägt den Titel: «Öffentliche Bilder, frühe Zeitungen, populäre Bücher, Zirkus, Penny-Presse, Music Hall zwischen Propaganda, Sensationen und standardisierten Gefühlen». Die Entwicklung des Medienkapitalismus wird in vier Unterkapiteln weiterverfolgt und, um einen partiellen Einblick in den Ablauf zu geben, seien hier die Themen des

ersten gerafft zusammengefasst: die erste technische und kulturelle Revolution der Medien, das erste multi-nationale Konzern Deutschlands (Fugger), die Reformation und Gegenreformation und deren Streitschriften, Propaganda und deren „Medienstar Luther“, die erste kommerzielle Presse der Kleinverleger, die ersten Wochenzeitungen, die Zensur und die verschiedenen Interessen der europäischen absolutistischen Machtinhaber. Zum Zug kommt auch die «erste Medientheorie der Neuzeit: Diffamierung des populären Theaters als „Flucht vor Selbstbesinnung“» und als letztes wird Englands Unternehmer-Revolution behandelt, die den «Weg [...] für die Auflösung der absolutistischen, dirigistischen Wirtschaftspolitik» eröffnet.

Im dritten Teil («1880 bis Anfang 21. Jahrhundert. Sensationspresse, Film, Radio, Fernsehen, Internet zwischen irrationalistischer Marktsegmentierung und denkendem Publikum» mit ca. 200 Seiten) wird die jüngste Vergangenheit («1990 bis Anfang 21. Jahrhundert») als fünftes und letztes Unterkapitel durchgenommen. Hier liest man über das Fernseh-Oligopol in Deutschland und die supranationalen Konzerne, Banken und Welt-Computernetze, welche durch die Globalisierung die Welt verändern; über die «dritte Revolution des Rundfunks: Multimedia, Internet, E-Commerce»; über den Medien-Oligopol-Kapitalismus mit seinem Machtkampf der Kapitalkräftigsten; über die Qualitätsminderung des Populären und über «mediologische Klagen über das Visuelle», also über die Wiederkehr «der gegenreformatorischen Gespenster» und der antiken gegensätzlichen Weltanschauungen. Abschließend wird auf die

Widersprüchlichkeit und Dynamik des Massenmediaphänomens hingewiesen: einerseits führt es zur «Entmachtung» des verhexten Publikums, dem alles weggenommen wird, «was nicht Empathie und Einkaufsinteressen impliziert», andererseits, mit aufklärerischem Optimismus, erhofft sich der Autor durch das «weltweite [Medien]Spiel von Rührung und Schrecken» eine «befreite "globale Stadt" ichstarker, Rollen-bewusster, mündiger Welt-Bürger».

Didaktische Vorzüge besitzt diese Studie in der anschaulichen Strukturierung des Stoffes; am Anfang enthält es ein kurzgefasstes Inhaltverzeichnis, dem am Schluss ein detailliertes hinzugefügt wird. Das Literatur- und das anschließende zwanzigseitige Stichwortverzeichnis («Index») vervollständigen das umfangreiche Werk. Eine weitere vorzügliche Beschaffenheit Prokops Untersuchung ist die Hervorhebung durch Kursivschrift besonders prägnanter Behauptungen oder zusammenfassender Formulierungen, welche das Verständnis und das Überlesen stark vereinfachen. Der größte Vorzug dieses irgendwie spannend wirkenden Geschichtsbuches aber liegt darin, dass klar formulierte Grunderkenntnisse bzw. Interessenkonstellationen sachkundig zum Vorschein gebracht werden und durch den ganzen Mediengeschichtsablauf in ihrer Entwicklung verfolgbar sind: Altes im Neuen und Neues im Alten. Und dies zu bekunden, ist das nicht eine der wichtigsten Aufgaben der Geschichtsbücher?

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