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The »Track Round the Sphere«.
Clemens Lugowski's Semantic Realignment
from the »Mythic Analogue« to »German Reality«

Clemens Lugowski (1904–1942) is seen as an objectionable yet classic writer on the study of literature. It is his resolute commitment to National Socialist views that is considered objectionable today, even though his dissertation, *Form, Individuality and the Novel*, published in 1932, is also seen as one of the few classics in its field. In

it, Lugowski develops a set of topics and concepts for formal analysis (formal myth, process- and result-orientated suspense, retroactive motivation, and passivity) that have not only proved compatible with narrative analysis from the 1970s to the present day but have also established their creator as one of the founders of the study of alterity in literary history.

The present article, however, is not concerned with discussing the potential relevance of Lugowski's ideas to contemporary literary theory; its aim is instead to explore one way in which the main publications of this ambiguous scholarly figure can be approached in terms of the history of literary studies.

First (1.), the particular approach that is explored by adopting this frame of reference is outlined. The two current standard narratives in the history of literary studies about theory and criticism under National Socialism are introduced: they emphasize either the politically grounded heteronomy or the scholarly autonomy of the discipline in the period. The present study adopts a perspective intended to steer clear of these grand narratives: guided by the concepts of obstinacy and resonance, and drawing on Bourdieu's ideas about the specificity of the scientific field, it brings the idioms and semantic realignments of the scholarly protagonists to the fore in order to obtain a more nuanced picture of the complex relationship between the obstinacy of a discipline, (self-imposed) conformity, and political coercion.

Next (2.), a brief impression of the diversity that defines the idioms of literary studies between 1933 and 1945 is provided so that Lugowski's position in the field of literary studies in the 1930s and 1940s can be determined more accurately. The discourse of the study of modern German literature was not compressed into a standardized complex of forcibly coordinated idioms between 1933 and 1945. The centrifugal forces resulting from competition in the field alone were enough to prevent this; they manifested themselves in the continuing disputes between individual figures over symbolic capital. Communication processes were subject to the lasting influence of modes and figures of argumentation that, if we leave aside for the present the theoretical, methodological, or contextual positions and value judgements associated with them, generally formed clusters around four crucial concepts: that of life (*Leben*), that of the people (*Volk*), that of race (*Rasse*), and that of literature (*Dichtung*).

Then (3.), the analysis proper focuses on Lugowski's two main works: his doctoral dissertation, *Form, Individuality and the Novel*, and his *Habilitationschrift*, entitled *Wirklichkeit und Dichtung: Untersuchungen zur Wirklichkeitsauffassung Heinrich von Kleists* (Reality and Literature: Studies of Heinrich von Kleist's Concept of Reality), which was published in 1936. The semantic realignment that characterizes the development of Lugowski's concept of literature and its study after 1933 certainly seems to be striking, and it has been noted and discussed repeatedly, albeit with markedly different conclusions. There is disagreement regarding the extent to which his dissertation on formal analysis, which has since acquired

canonical status, already bears the seeds of his later *Habilitationsschrift* and its *Volks-tum*-based ideology. The analysis begins by identifying the ambiguity, or multiple intended audiences, that typify Lugowski's work: the modernity of an academic ethos that makes a point of its own dispassion and the modernity of the successful young scholar's interests and methods contrast with the reactionary force of the findings that he partly states and partly no more than hints at. These findings place him in the orthodox mainstream of a science of essences (*Wesenswissenschaft*) and of values whose point of orientation is the *Volk* – a mainstream that he sometimes, in his late works at least, seeks to outdo against the background of race. Lugowski's narrative of a primeval mythic connection between literature and *Volk*, of literature as embodying the essence of the German *Volk*, is not simply reproduced but is also elaborately reconstructed with the help of a modernized, newly objective scholarly approach to literature. This produces a sense of fragmentation that is specific to this discipline and far more striking in Lugowski's work than it is in the case of other representatives of the *Volk*-oriented study of literature such as Heinz Kindermann or Hermann Pongs.

The aim is to show that this characteristic ambiguity was already present in Lugowski's dissertation, even though it was published before the political caesura. The intellectual stature of the work can be left intact if Lugowski's own conceptual apparatus is employed; its robustness is demonstrated by the fact that it can be applied to his own texts. In doing so, it can be shown that Lugowski's move to »German reality« as a topic of interest did not represent a real break in his thought, and that the »longing for origins« mentioned in his *Habilitationsschrift* had already been born in his dissertation. Certainly, Lugowski's *Form, Individuality and the Novel* is dominated by a laboriously foregrounded ethos of dispassionate analysis and scientific distance, but the results of his formal analyses are, in contrast to his own principle of avoiding misplaced value judgements, placed in a narrative frame and motivated by a teleology that draws on the semantic resources of an attitude, stemming from scepticism about modernity, that is critical of individualism. The individual, as one who has become self-aware, as the current final stage in an all-embracing story of decline, is always inherently a »product of disintegration« for Lugowski. History from the post-mythic age to modernity (and the present) thus presents itself as a continued process of »collapse« in which humans experience the awakening of the self, the birth of the subject, in conjunction with an increasing estrangement from that life with which they previously were one. In Lugowski's view, it is only in art and in war that there is still a place for the remnants of this primeval mythic and authentic way of life, left as it were by the wayside of human history.

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