
Abstracts

Amy Mandelker, Semiotizing the Sphere: Organicist Theory in Lotman, Bakhtin, and Vernadsky 385

Semiotic theory during the 1980s and early 1990s in the former Soviet Union departs significantly from earlier, structuralist models. Central to this new declination is Yury Lotman's theory of the semiosphere, a metaphor that, in its spatialization of meaning, draws on Vernadsky's concept of the biosphere and Bakhtin's idea of the logosphere. This article evaluates the semiosphere from historical, comparative, and feminist critical perspectives. The historical perspective situates Lotman's theory within the Russian organicist philosophical tradition (including Vernadsky and Bakhtin), and the comparative considers Russian theory as a counterpart to Western models of signification. The feminist critique is motivated by the fact that, in relying on metaphors borrowed from reproductive biology, organicist theory participates in a theoretical discourse that has perpetuated stereotyped categories based on gender differences. (AM)

Gordon Teskey, Irony, Allegory, and Metaphysical Decay 397

In classical rhetoric, irony is included in allegory ("other speaking") as one of its species: contradiction, or antiphrasis. Because contradiction is incompatible with the classical definition of allegory as "continued metaphor" and with the synecdochal and associative mode of thinking (polysemy) typical of complex allegorical works, irony was excluded from allegory in postclassical literary theory. Nevertheless, the conditions for allegorical expression are grounded in the systematic confrontation of antiphrasis and polysemy, as in a grid. For allegory to emerge from this scene of confrontation, polysemy must predominate, transforming the grid into a perspectival regress to an origin that remains out of sight. This transformation is accomplished by means of interpretation, to which irony, being confined to the realm of the subject, is inimical. Antiphrasis remains present throughout. But it is interpreted as the resonance of the origin that remains out of sight. (GT)

Neil Fraistat, Illegitimate Shelley: Radical Piracy and the Textual Edition as Cultural Performance 409

A textual edition can be read as a cultural performance if one considers its interlaced linguistic and bibliographical codes as monumentalizing rhetoric, opening the textual space of the edition into the social space of its production, distribution, and reception. Mary Shelley's 1824 edition of Percy Bysshe Shelley's *Posthumous Poems* and the pirated volume published by the radical William Benbow in 1826 each produce what might be called a "rhetoric of Shelley," a product of — and participant in — a larger set of social discourses and mechanisms of cultural reproduction. Whereas Mary Shelley's edition was successful, however, Benbow's "illegitimate" edition was not. Derwent Coleridge's discussion of Benbow's piracy reveals how the failure to appropriate Shelley for radical discourse could be claimed not merely as a justification of the "purity" of Shelley's poetry but also as what Pierre Bourdieu calls a "sociodicy," the justification of an entire social hierarchy. (NF)

John Ernest, Economies of Identity: Harriet E. Wilson's *Our Nig* 424

In *Our Nig* (1859), Harriet E. Wilson offered the story of her life for sale to save her son's life. In her appeal for patronage, however, Wilson looked not for charity but rather for an economic exchange by which the cultural value of her critique of the

mid-nineteenth-century northern states could be acknowledged. The narrative defines this exchange as an entrance into a moral economy — a new system of social relations based not on an ideal of cooperation but on the recognition that conflict and distrust among and within culturally defined social groups are inevitable. In this way, *Our Nig* responds to proslavery forces that found ready arguments in the injustices of capitalism and calls attention to the ethical motivations behind economic relations. (JE)