

Laermans, Rudi Communication on Art, or the Work of Art as Communication? Bourdieu's Field Analysis Compared with Luhmann's Systems Theory	103-113
Ibsch, Elrud Systems Theory and the Concept of "Communication" in Literary Studies	115-118
Schmidt, Siegfried J. A Systems-Oriented Approach to Literary Studies	119-136
Vlasselaers, Joris Discourse: A Challenge for Systems Theory in Cultural Studies?	137-139
De Berg, Henk Communication as Challenge to Systems Theory	141-151
Prangel, Matthias Systems Theory: What It Is and What It Is Not. On Some Current Misunderstandings in the Reception of a Systems-Theoretical Concept of Meaning	153-160
De Geest, Dirk Systems Theory and Discursivity	161-175
Fokkema, Douwe The Systems-Theoretical Perspective in Literary Studies: Arguments for a Problem-Oriented Approach	177-185
Selected and Basic Bibliography of Works in the Systemic and Field Approaches to Literature	187-189
Jonathan Hart Afterword System and Anti-System: Shaking up the Paradigms	190-192
Addresses of Contributors / Les adresses des collaborateurs	193-194
Call for Papers: <i>The VIth Biannual Conference of the International Society for the Empirical Study of Literature</i> , Utrecht University (August 26-30, 1998)	195
Announcements of Books and Learned Journals	196-204

Introduction: The Study of Literature and Culture — Systems and Fields

This special issue of the *Canadian Review of Comparative Literature / Revue Canadienne de Littérature Comparée* contains the papers of an international conference on "Systems and Fields," held at the Katholieke Universiteit Leuven, 19-20 April 1996. The topic of the conference will no doubt call to mind specific theories and names that seem to dominate recent discussions and polemics in literary and cultural studies, i.e., the systems theories of Itamar Even-Zohar (Tel Aviv), Siegfried J. Schmidt (Siegen), and Niklas Luhmann (Bielefeld), and the field theory of Pierre Bourdieu (Paris). It was the organizers' intention and ambition to discuss these related yet different theories on their merits for literary and cultural studies and to test their compatibility and their complementarity. A further but equally important objective of the organizers was the hope that the conference's results will provide literary theoreticians and scholars with hypotheses which can eventually be made operational in their research and teaching. That is the reason why the title "Systems and Fields" was thought of as an appropriate title for the conference. Its subtitle, "Functional Approaches to Literatures and Cultures," hints at the assumption that systems establish a functional rather than ontological borderline between their inner and outer dimensions and that they, in a manner of speaking, "extract" themselves from an undifferentiated *Umwelt*.

The key questions of the above mentioned theories, which all concern the fuzzy/soft borderlines between self-reference and interrelationships, between identity and differentiation, between participation and observation, between first- and second-order observation, are far from new in the domain of literary studies. We could refer, for instance, as Even-Zohar does, to some "systemic" statements *avant la lettre* as for example by Jurij Tynjanov in his remarkable essays, published in the 1920s, on the literary fact and on literary evolution. Or we could mention the "systemic" approach of scholars such as Jurij Lotman, in his semiotic studies on secondary modeling systems, Claudio Guillén in his publications on genre systems, or Robert Estivals's *Les Sciences de l'écrit*. But only since the 1970s, together with the so-called "institutional turn" such as Jacques Dubois's work, did these questions become central issues in the

methodological debates amongst sociologists and literary scholars. Now they seem to touch upon the disputed notions of literature and culture as such, as well as on epistemological principles.

It is no coincidence at all — if the word "coincidence" may be used in the very context of the conference — that a conference on this subject took place in Leuven. A main reason for the conference was that Niklas Luhmann received a doctorate honoris causa by the Department of Sociology in recognition of the impact of his work on literary and sociological research and teaching at Leuven as well as on the international landscape of scholarship. At the same time, the study of Pierre Bourdieu's field theory has been present in literary studies and sociology for several years. Siegfried J. Schmidt was Visiting Professor in our Department of Literature during the spring semester of 1991, and last but not least Itamar Even-Zohar has visited our University and conducted research here many times over the years. In April 1976, precisely twenty years before our conference, Itamar Even-Zohar was one of the distinguished speakers at the first international conference on "Literature and Translation," organized by our colleague José Lambert. On that occasion Even-Zohar presented a paper on "The Position of Translated Literature within the Literary Polysystem," in which he gave an embryonic history of the polysystem theory. He emphasized that his tentatively "polysystemic" approach may be a more convenient and advantageous way to study literature and culture than the traditional aesthetic and hermeneutic approach. The participants of that conference will surely remember his critical remarks directed against static approaches of text-processing activities which do not sufficiently take into account the historical and functional aspects of literary and cultural phenomena.

That happened in 1976. Since that time functionalism in literary studies has become stronger, and, combined with the already mentioned institutional turn, it has contributed considerably to what nowadays is called "systems theories." In Leuven, such systemic approaches have been studied and implemented especially in translation studies and gave rise to the "CE(T)RA Summer School for Literary and Cultural Communication," organized by José Lambert. In recent years, several of our younger scholars have done much research in order to implement functional-systemic concepts in their publications on literary historiography, socio-criticism, and genre studies. On the other side of the Atlantic, we observe a similar amount of interest in systems approaches. However, apart from home-grown American and Canadian systems research in literature, important and fruitful scholarly interaction occurred through Itamar Even-Zohar, José Lambert, Gideon Toury, Douwe Fokkema, and Siegfried J. Schmidt who have all been Distinguished Visiting Professors at the University of Alberta in Edmonton at various times in the last twenty years, and Alain Viala was invited for a guest lecture in the 1980s. And we may recall that Ludwig von Bertalanffy, whose work in thermodynamics influenced systems research in most substantial ways, was first appointed professor at the University

of Alberta before he moved to the United States. In more recent times, the International Society for the Empirical Study of Literature (Internationale Gesellschaft für Empirische Literaturwissenschaft, IGEL) — founded by Siegfried J. Schmidt in 1987 at Siegen — was housed also at the University of Alberta through its president for 1994-96, Steven Tötösy de Zepetnek, and he organized and the University hosted the Society's Vth biannual conference in August 1996. Consequently, it is not surprising that work on systems theories and literature is manifestly present in the publications of the Alberta Research Institute for Comparative Literature, whose director is Milan V. Dimić and its associate director Steven Tötösy, in addition to their own work and publications as "systems" scholars.

Our group at Leuven is, therefore, very appreciative of the fact that Milan V. Dimić and Steven Tötösy offered us the possibility to publish the papers of our conference in the *Canadian Review of Comparative Literature / Revue Canadienne de Littérature Comparée*.

A few words about the contents of this volume. As for the order of the contributions, we have respected the program sequence of the conference. This means that the reader will successively find statements and discussions on the polysystem hypothesis of Itamar Even-Zohar, the field theory of Pierre Bourdieu, and the systems theories of Niklas Luhmann and Siegfried J. Schmidt. These three sections are each preceded by an introduction in which the respective system- or field- theories of these leading scholars are confronted with comments or additions and reactions by other participants. Thus, it allows us to keep the present introduction brief as the reader will find more specific data in the contributions by José Lambert, Hugo Verdaasdonk, and Elrud Ibsch.

As far as the Polysystem theory is concerned, the reader will find in this issue a thoroughly revised version by Itamar Even-Zohar under the title "Polysystem Theory and Culture Research." Rakefet Sheffy builds a bridge between the Polysystem theory and Bourdieu's concepts of "habitus" and "field." The section on the Polysystem theory chapter is concluded by opening up some larger perspectives on and hints for further research in Patrick Cattrysse's commentary who stresses the impact of Even-Zohar's approach on cultural studies.

Pierre Bourdieu himself was unfortunately not able to attend the conference and present his views on "systems and fields." However it seems fair to say that he was "present" in and through the statements of one of his "disciples," Alain Viala, who, nevertheless, does not hesitate to criticize Bourdieu's structural homology between the literary field and society. His contribution, "Logiques du champ littéraire," is followed by Koenraad Geldof's scrupulous examination of the epistemological problematics of Bourdieu's field theory. Kees van Rees leaves the path of pure theory and pleads for more empirical research in field studies. Finally the section is concluded on a sociological note by Rudi

Laermans who compares Bourdieu's *Les Règles de l'Art* (1992) with Niklas Luhmann's *Die Kunst der Gesellschaft* (1995). Laermans clearly takes sides with Luhmann's constructivist approach against Bourdieu who, in his view, still advocates a mono-contextual sociology which, as such, makes strong ontological claims about art and society.

Laermans's contribution marks the theoretical relationship of Luhmann's work with Siegfried J. Schmidt's constructivism, which is clearly tributary, but at the same time critical of Luhmann's systems theory. Whereas the latter has ultimately based his theory on the category of communication, Schmidt, as a literary scholar, tries to stress the functional autonomy of the literary system by an actor-oriented and empirical approach. In his view, the literary system is defined by a number of system-specific activities (production, reception, distribution, and postprocessing) and actors (writers, readers, publishers, critics) which have to be "detected" and described "in the field." Joris Vlasselaers, then, goes into Schmidt's constructivist approach and attempts to link it with a socio-critical discourse analysis. Another direction is taken by the "Leiden School," present in the contributions of Henk de Berg and Mathias Prangel, who follow Luhmann in his communication approach. They attempt to develop a model which may be called hermeneutic — since it tries to take into account the various interpretations of literary texts throughout history — using the concepts worked out in Luhmann's framework.

Some "discursive" remarks — in the sense of Foucault — to this survey are offered by Dirk de Geest. In his contribution, the key-concepts of any systems theory, i.e., functionalism, systemic, and discursivity, are analyzed with respect to the positions defined by Even-Zohar, Luhmann, and Schmidt. In his view, literary systems and subsystems are conceived of as specific types of discourse which articulate what is "sayable" as "literature" (about literature and within literature) in a particular situation and what remains, on the contrary, "unsayable," under which circumstances, where, and for whom. He applies this "discursive turn" to a case study, i.e., literature in Flanders during the Second World War.

Finally, Douwe Fokkema attempts to formulate some general conclusions and prospects for a systems-theoretical approach in literary studies. After having compared and commented on the different positions taken up by Even-Zohar, Bourdieu, Schmidt, and Luhmann, he pleads for a problem-oriented approach. In his view, this tends to be overlooked by systems-theoreticians who are "so much enamored with the idea of building a system or with the technique of how to conceive of a system that they forget what the purpose of these efforts is."

It has already been stressed that the central topic or problem of systems theories has to do with the demarcation between system and environment. In this context it became evident from the discussions during our conference that the approaches in question seem to have come nearer to each other, although diffe-

rences remain. In Even-Zohar's approach, for instance, the institutional component has become stronger and thus a comparison with Bourdieu's views on field and habitus has become obvious. Although the parenthood of Russian Formalism and semiotics is not renounced, the use of socio-economic models (market) and references (see the contribution of Sheffy) is significant in this respect. Again, it is regrettable that Pierre Bourdieu himself was not able to attend the conference and discuss his views on the relation and possible *rapprochements* between systems and fields with Itamar Even-Zohar and Siegfried J. Schmidt. His field concept, as a *champ de force*, contains a dynamic dimension in which (dis)positions leave sufficient room for heterogeneity and contingency. Schmidt's position, who started from a radical constructivist point of view, seems to have left any apodictic or overly generalizing approach (e.g., his macro conventions) and to have opted for more empirical research. Next to epistemological questions, socio-cultural aspects, especially modern media, played a role in the increasingly relativistic way he deals with system problems. As he put it himself in his contribution to this issue, "our interest shifts from objects to processes, from identity to differences, from truth to contingency, from knowing-what to knowing-how."

To sum up, the participants and observers of the conference had the impression that underneath the different positions a deeper field of intersubjective dispositions manifested itself which will undoubtedly open up new perspectives for literary and cultural studies. We hope that the readers of these innovative and incisive papers will share that impression.

I would like to thank all contributors who made possible this publication. I would also like to thank the editors of the *CRCL/RCLC*, Milan V. Dimić and Steven Törösy, who were so kind as to invite us for this guest issue. Further, I wish to thank the Dutch *Onderzoekschool Literatuurwetenschap* and the Flemish interuniversity postgraduate program *GGSLiteratuurwetenschap*, as well as the Leuven Department of Literature for their financial support to the organization of the conference. I am particularly grateful to my friend and colleague José Lambert for his unremitting commitment to a (poly)systemic approach to the study of literature, communication, and culture and to two of our younger colleagues, Koenraad Geldof and Dirk de Geest, who have supported the initiative from the very beginning. Last but not least, this publication would not have been possible without the constant care and efforts of Anneleen Masschelein, who devoted herself to this project. I wish to thank her personally for all she has done for the conference as well as for the publication of the papers.

Katholieke Universiteit Leuven