Research in Text Theory
Untersuchungen zur Texttheorie

Volume 13

Comprehension of Literary Discourse

Results and Problems of Interdisciplinary Approaches

Edited by
Dietrich Meutsch and Reinhold Viehoff

SIEGFRIED J. SCHMIDT AND NORBERT GROEBEN

How to do thoughts with words: on understanding literature

A. Approaches to empirical studies of literature

"Understanding" still seems to be the very heart of literary criticism. What else should a literary scholar do but to understand literary texts and to improve his understanding step by step? How else could he legitimate the ever-increasing number of interpretations of literary masterpieces? For the mainstream of literary scholarship interpreting substantially equals an unfolding of text-meaning(s) whereby the text (= the literary work of art) plays the paramount role.

Even in those schools of literary criticism which try to respect the reader, the "hermeneutic process" is modelled in terms of an *interaction* between text and reader in which the text keeps the dominant position. In case of discrepancies in displaying the text-meaning(s) it is of course the reader who is blamed for shortcomings. As a consequence, it is not at all surprising that all hermeneutic variants of literary criticism stick to the model of understanding as unfolding text-meanings and either disregard or even despise what readers actually do in reading.

<div align="center">*</div>

In the last 10 or 15 years, however, a rival paradigm of literary criticism has emerged in the form of empirical studies of literature. Scholars working in this new paradigm recommend quite a different conception of text, meaning, and understanding. This change in interest is by no means arbitrary, because it directly results from the way the research domain of literary criticism is modelled as well as from the philosophical orientation of this empirical approach.

In what follows we shall first cast a short glance at the special features of empirical studies of literature (abbreviated as ESL) before we give a condensed report on how ESL might come to terms with the problem of understanding.

<div align="center">*</div>

Empirical approaches to literary problems have their roots in a philosophical soil that may be labelled as analytical philosophy, rational criticism, and (radical) constructivism. We do not claim that the change in paradigm that arose together with the development of ESL is necessarily attached to one philosophy. The authors of this article themselves come from different philosophical families. Accordingly, their approaches to ESL originate in quite different conceptual contexts. Schmidt (1980, 1982) has tried to develop an encompassing empirical theory of literature on the epistemological basis of radical constructivism (in the sense of E. von Glasersfeld 1986). Groeben (1977/1980, 1983), in his approach to ESL, has relied on the basis of an empirically oriented sociological philosophy of social science in order to introduce first of all empirical methods into the domain of literary studies. As a result, these (to our knowledge) two principal conceptions of ESL coincide in the conviction that (purely) hermeneutical studies of literature have to be overcome. At the same time the authors hold divergent positions with regard to the constitution of reasonable, necessary, and productive questions and research perspectives of an ESL.

When the editors of this volume asked for a common contribution we saw two possible procedures. We could either reduce our ideas to the most general common denominator; or we could try to illustrate the productive divergencies of our approaches against the background of basic convictions shared by both of us. As we both favour transparent and rational argumentation we opted for the second possibility because we do not only intend to clarify the general thrust of ESL (as compared to classical hermeneutical studies of literature) but we also strive to furnish evidence for the flexibility of ESL as to metatheoretical, object-theoretical and practical aspects of research.

In our paper we shall proceed as follows: Schmidt (as first author of this paper) leads off the general chapters (B, C etc.) by displaying and arguing his position. His presentation is then critically commented on by Groeben who tries to illustrate common as well as divergent aspects. (Schmidt's paragraphs will be labelled S1, S2 etc., Groeben's G1, G2 etc., resp.) At the end of our contribution we shall sum up our ideas concerning the problem of understanding.

B. ESL: A shift of attention

S1: The most remarkable change in literary scholars' orientation brought about by ESL was a *shift of attention* from texts to text-focussing activities, from structures to functions and processes, and from objects to systems. With regard to the constructivist root of ESL (as advocated by me), the cybernetic models of self-reference and self-organization together with the biological models of autopoiesis have exercised a decisive influence on the reorganisation of literary studies: text-oriented actions, chains of actions (processes), and nettings of processes (systems) got to the top position on the list of research subjects. The basic notion of 'literature' resulting from this shift of attention can roughly be characterized as follows[1]:

Literary actions are subsumed under four basic acting roles, viz. the production, mediation or distribution, reception, and post-processing of phenomena

---

[1] For details see Schmidt 1980, 1982, or Hauptmeier & Schmidt 1985.

which the actors deem literary. Sequences of literary actions are conceptualized as *literary processes*. A *literary system* emerges from nettings of literary processes in social groups. Among other social systems like politics, economy, education, religion etc., a literary system forms part of a society which is theoretically modelled as a network composed of social systems. I suppose that the demarcation line between literary systems and all other social systems (at least in differentiated and complex modern societies) is drawn by special *macro-conventions* which govern the ways literary phenomena are produced, mediated, received, and post-processed in literary systems.[2]

[2] We shall now try to give a short survey of these conventions.

(a) *aesthetic convention*

It is common knowledge in our society that all actors in literary systems must be willing and able

- to extend their action potential (or the action potential of other participants in the literary system) beyond the usual criteria of true/false or useful/useless, and to orient themselves towards expectations, norms, and criteria which are deemed aesthetically relevant in the respective literary system;
- to designate communicative actions intended as literary by appropriate signals during production, and to follow such signals during reception;
- to select as a frame of reference for expressions in literary texts not just the socially established world model he/she is accustomed to in his/her respective social group but virtually all constructible frames of reference;
- to de-emphasize the fact convention.
  (*Fact convention:* It is common knowledge in our society that communicative objects, especially texts, should permit reference to the world model accepted in that society, such that people can decide if the assertions conveyed by the text are true and what their practical relevance is.)

(b) *polyvalence convention*

It is common knowledge among all actors in literary systems in our society that

- text producers are not bound by the monovalence convention;
  (*monovalence convention:* It is common knowledge in our society that
  - text producers are expected to shape their texts in such a way that different people at different times can assign them a constant KOMMUNIKAT;
  - text receivers are expected to strive for the assignment of a single KOMMUNIKAT to the texts.)
- text receivers have the freedom to produce different KOMMUNIKATE from the same text in different times and situations (= weak version of the polyvalence convention hypothesis) or in the same reading process (= strong version of the polyvalence convention hypothesis), and they expect others to do likewise;
- text receivers rate the realization of different cognitive, emotive, and moral reading results on different levels of reception as optimal corresponding to their needs, abilities, intentions, and motivations, though the reasons for such rating may differ among participants and situations;
- text-mediators and text-processors should not counteract these realizations.

The relation between the two conventions might be described as follows: The aesthetic convention seems to be logically prior to the polyvalence convention. By suspending the true-false and useful-useless frames it enables an orientation towards poetic norms, expectations, and criteria; it fosters the multi-readability of literary texts, and enables a subjective optimizing of the process of KOMMUNIKAT-construction: It thus comprises the polyvalence convention.

Up to now empirical research has provided some evidence for the actual efficiency of these two (macro-)conventions. (See Hintzenberg et al., 1980, and Meutsch & Schmidt, 1985)

Quite evidently, socially accepted activities in the four acting roles have to be learned. Accordingly, modern societies have developed a special type of socialization, viz. literary socialization, in order to prepare actors for their future participation in literary systems. Normally a thorough literary socialization is restricted to a rather small group of members of a society because it is attached to higher-level education which in turn presupposes higher intellectual competences, leisure time, money etc. Though the literary system (at least partially caused by the two macro-conventions) is autonomous to a certain degree, it is interacting and coevolving with all other systems in the network "society". The social dynamics in literary systems can perhaps best be modelled in terms of a complementary of input-output processes (i.e. reactions to environmental stimuli) and processes of self-referentiality.

*

Another important consequence following from the action-orientation of ESL concerns the concepts of *'text'* and *'communication'*. From Piaget's developmental psychology we know that children construe their environment, their "world", through sensorimotor actions, action-control, and the schematisation of action in the cognitive domain (Piaget 1950). Maturana & Varela (1979) and G. Roth (1985, 1985a) e.g., in the course of their empirical research in biology and neurophysiology, have provided evidence for the hypothesis that living systems construe their world(s) and other living systems they interact with according to the biological organization of their brains and according to the social influences operating on the systems. Living systems are consequently modelled as autopoietic (i.e. self-producing, self-organizing, and self-maintaining) systems which are structurally determined. They are permanently interacting with other systems and with their niche by structural coupling (sensu Maturana 1982). Accordingly, communication is neither conceived of as instruction nor as an exchange of already preexisting bits and pieces of information; instead, communication is viewed as a parallel construction of information in the cognitive domains of interacting individuals (who have already developed a consensual domain of interaction in advance) on the occasion of the perception of a text.

If these general hypotheses are accepted we have to replace the traditional concept of 'text' by a distinction between text as a physical object (materialized in a certain medium) and the processes oriented towards these objects (plus their results) in the cognitive domains of individuals.[3] In order to cover this distinction terminologically I have proposed to call the physical item TEXT and the cognitive processes including their results KOMMUNIKAT* (Schmidt 1980).

* In order to avoid ambiguities I keep up the German spelling.

[3] As will be demonstrated below, 'cognition' cannot simply be equated with 'intellect' or 'rational domain'; instead it comprises both 'intellect' and 'emotion'.

The general hypothesis concerning *"reception"* that can be based on these assumptions as well as on psychological theories (far away from constructivist convictions) as e.g. advocated by Herrmann (1985) then reads as follows: "Reception" should be conceived of as a complex innersystemic process occasioned by the perception or recognition of a TEXT. This process cannot be regarded as an exclusively linguistic process or as a process of language- or information-processing (in the psychological and AI-sense of the term). It is stimulated by a linguistic activation but it cannot completely and strictly be confined to it because potentially the whole cognitive "machinery" including "intellectual" as well as "affective" components, is activated, and not only its language-processing components. In other words: we cannot claim a (linear) *causal* relation between a TEXT and the resulting cognitive operations it triggers. Our psyche is quite evidently not adequately describable in terms of an input-output-mode; instead, its basic modus operandi is selfreferentiality. Consequently, the text loses its paramount role in the process of "reception": It triggers and specifies the construction of KOMMUNIKATE, but it does not fully determine this process[4] which has its own dynamics. This dynamics depends on the receiver's affects and knowledge, his interests, goals, capacities, on his (internal) self-representation and the representation of respective communicators, on constraints of the reception-situation, etc.

G1: Schmidt's hypotheses clarify in a very condensed way the common point of departure of empirical approaches to literature which concentrate on understanding as a central research topic. As any empirical research into the production, reception, and post-processing of literary texts is compelled to consider this shift in the general assumptions, I shall outline our common conviction in my own words:

- ESL overcomes the ontological or essentialist concept of 'text' maintained by hermeneutically oriented scholars, and it does so especially in respect to the essentialist concept of text-*meaning.*
- (Text-)meaning is no longer regarded as an intrinsic property of the physical text (= sign) (which can only be adequately recognized through scientific understanding); instead ESL holds the view that (text-)meaning is actively

---

[4] Schnotz (1985), in his "holistic" approach to reception, holds a quite similar view. He rejects Kintsch's and van Dijk's assumption that the mental representation recipients assign to texts consists of propositions because he calls in question that there be a one-to-one-relation between text-components and the components of its mental representation. Following Johnson-Laird's ideas on "mental models" (1980, 1983), Schnotz advocates the hypothesis that a recipient construes a rather vague holistic mental representation of the whole text in advance which, in the course of reception, is worked over and modified, emotionally interpreted and evaluated. The component processes integrating into the construction of the mental model resemble those in use while composing complex knowledge-structures, viz. accreation, tuning and restructuring (cf. Rumelhart & Norman, 1978).

created in processes of reception and post-processing. Accordingly research into respective activities, processes etc. is indispensable.
- This approach positively implies a so-called functional conception of 'text'; in other words, ESL is interested in 'texts-in-function', in theoretical models of such texts, and in contexts of practical research. Consequently, in ESL 'understanding' of (literary) texts is not topical as a method (as is the case in hermeneutical approaches) but as a research object. (In order to avoid confusion I call this research topic 'text-reception' and not 'understanding'.)
- In accordance with our previous theoretical assumptions as well as with existing empirical research results text-reception is characterized by cognitive constructivity. That is to say that meanings (text-meanings and others) are not passively accepted (or only *de*coded) by recipients but are actively (co-) produced (or partially *en*coded, too) in reception-processes.

I fully agree with Schmidt's inclination towards cognitive or mental constructivism though I do not share his radical constructivist foundation. In my opinion cognitive constructivism as developed e.g. by Neisser (1974, 1979) with regard to processes of perception can do a better job and avoids restrictions which, I think, are necessarily connected with adopting the radical constructivist framework.

There is now a lot of empirical evidence backing the assumption that even the perception of very simple patterns (as e.g. letters) cannot be theoretically modelled as mere copying but has to be conceived of as a constructive interlocking of information provided by perception with information supplied by memory resulting in a process of 'analysis-by-synthesis' (1974: 133 ff.). Accordingly, perceptions too are cognitive constructions. This idea leads Neisser to assume that there is no difference in principle between decisions concerning perceptions and those concerning activities (an idea which should be of special interest for Schmidt's action-theoretical model of an ESL): "despite this difference, however, perceptual and behavioral choices have the same existential status. No choice is ever free of the information on which it is based. Nevertheless, that information is selected by the chooser himself." (Neisser 1976: 182)

Two decades of psycholinguistic research provide additional support of the assumption of cognitive constructivity. (See e.g. the consideration of world knowledge in language-understanding by Bransford et al. 1972; cf. Groeben's résumé in 1982: 27 ff. or Hörmann 1976, 1980). Hörmann has condensed these results into the theoretical construct of 'sense constancy' (1976: 187 ff.). Sense constancy terms an "intentional drive" of human beings towards the general expectation that linguistic phenomena encountered in communication situations are (or can be made) meaningful. This expectation reveals the dynamics of our constructive cognitive "understanding" of linguistic phenomena: "The acceptable state has been found as soon as the heard utterance can be related to a world in such a way that it is meaningful in that world. It is our subjective world-view (and not a linguistic competence) which determines the acceptabil-

ity of an utterance." (Hörmann 1976: 209) And Hörmann adds: "We do not only *comprehend* information in the process of understanding, we also *create* information, namely that information we need in order to place an utterance into a meaningful context." (1980: 27) –

Last but not least the pragmatic turn in linguistics brought about by speech-act theory (see e.g. Maas & Wunderlich 1972) plays an important role in our context because it upsets the traditional semiotic hierarchy of levels (see Peirce's or Morris' writings, or Walther 1974): Whereas semiotics treats syntactics to be the basis of semantics and pragmatics, speech-act theory implies a predominance of pragmatics which yields reasonable concepts of semantical and syntactic aspects (see Groeben & Scheele 1984, and Groeben 1984 for a discussion of the relation between speech-act theory and an empirical psychology of language).

These theoretical models and empirical results of various disciplines in empirical social science (which might easily be augmented by results of media research etc.) make the idea of cognitive constructivism one of the best-founded theories in the present discussion – even without any recourse to (neuro-)biological models of cognition (sensu Maturana or Eccles). I myself am convinced that such a recourse will (or might), on the contrary, turn out to be rather implausible for research in ESL; and I even foresee incompatibilities of Maturana's organismic model and Schmidt's action-theoretical model of an empirical theory of literature. – I shall come back to this point later on (cf. G3).

C. Solving problems in the ESL: the case of cognition and emotion

S2: In the light of these hypotheses it seems reasonable to assume that the *whole* cognitive apparatus of an individual is activated in processes of literary reception, i.e. not only the 'intellectual' but also the 'affective' "components". This assumption may be supported by an (empirically worked out) hypothesis concerning the relation between 'affect' and 'intelligence' that is advocated – among others – by the Swiss psychiatrist L. Ciompi (1986).

The following report on Ciompi's model exclusively serves the need to call the reader's attention to an extensive neglect of emotive aspects in recent cognitive research (see the report on the state of the art in Alfes 1986). Though I am in favour with Ciompi's *general* approach I disagree with his way of speaking which implies a sort of reification of "affect" and "intelligence" instead of modelling them as different aspects of the integral process of cognizing, and which accordingly tends to develop an interactional model of the relation between both aspects. These remarks apply also to the later references concerning the treatment of emotive aspects in recent cognitive psychology.

Ciompi's hypotheses regarding the "interaction" between thinking and feeling can be summarized as follows: From an evolutionary point of view, feeling precedes thinking. Both thinking and feeling have to be regarded as *cognitive*

processes. They locate "reality" like intersections in the taking of bearings. The "feeling system", "closer" to the body, working clumsier and blunter but much more comprehensively than the "thinking system", adds depth and unity to the operationally emerging picture of reality. The phylogenetically younger "thinking system", on the other hand, which is remote from the body, more abstract and precise but also much more punctual in its mode of operation, contributes to the sharpness of this picture (Ciompi, l.c.: 17). The depth of focus, resulting from this cooperation in cognition, serves the needs and purposes of the autopoiesis of a living system.[5]

Piaget has shown that the mental evolution of a child involves the repetition of activities that condensate into schemata which become internalized and serve as acting programs for certain types of activities. In the course of time, and together with the cognitive vehicles natural languages provide, those initially sensorimotor schemata acquire a status which we are used to call 'conscious' or 'intellectual'. Schemata, i.e. internalized cognitive programs which result from an equilibration of psychic structures, are interconnected in hierarchically ordered cognitive systems. They connect themselves with pertinent affects which provide all cognitive structures with a specific emotional "tuning".

Gradually, the affective components themselves develop into stable internalized systems of motivations and values, which make use of vitally relevant liking-disliking-experiences (Lust-Unlust-Erfahrungen). Through the repetition of activities, through assimilation and accomodation (in Piaget's sense), cognitive schematization transforms diachronical experiences into synchronical patterns which Ciompi names "affective-cognitive relation systems" (in short: A-C-systems). Presumably, these systems are homeostatically regulated and can be regarded as rather stable "holistic" givens.

What we call 'will' can be conceptualized in Ciompi's model as "condensed emotion" which serves as an input for feeling and acting. It proceeds from a higher-ranking A-C-system and dominates or regulates A-C-systems of lower ranks. According to Ciompi, the human psyche can theoretically be modelled as a complex, hierarchically organized texture consisting of such A-C-systems.[6] In an early stage of evolution, psyche and brain seem to have been only rudimentally installed pathways which gradually developed into A-C-systems through repeated actions and interactions.

A-C-systems can also be regarded as our *memory* proper: Affects determine what we observe in our cognitive domain and store in our memory and what can later be retrieved from the memory. Affects also play an important role in the recognition of cognitive consistency, of abstraction and equilibration. On the other hand, cognitive recognition of superior relations must be recognized as a necessary prerequisite for the development of "higher" emotions.

---

[5] See Maturana & Varela (1979), and the remarkable further development of their position by G. Roth (1985a).

[6] A plausible parallel in neurophysiological research can be found in P.D. McLean's "triune concept of the brain and behaviour" (the so-called Papez-McLean-theory of emotion).

Comparable to an inner compass, emotions lead our thinking to correspondences, i.e. to equilibria. Conversely, the „logic" of affects (and thereby of experiencing our body) consists in a sensible reaction of our feelings to cognitive inconsistencies.

In other words: affects and intellect equilibrate one another, therein documenting a fascination self-organization of the human psyche. Its task – like that of the whole organism – consists in balancing disturbances and inconsistencies, a balancing which in turn is regulated by the liking-disliking-principle (Lust-Unlust-Prinzip).

*

A remarkable shift towards "holistic" models in cognitive psychologists' thinking on emotion yields proposals quite comparable to the constructivist ones.[7] E.D. Lantermann (1983) e.g., in his action-theoretical approach, postulates a cognitive as well as an emotive "control-system" for actions. Action-control operates on the basis of a permanent comparison between a stock of knowledge (as represented in memory) and actual informations about the respective status quo of actor-environment-transactions. The stock of knowledge consists in declarative, procedural, and emotional components; it is organized in terms of transaction-schemata, which integrate knowledge and emotions. Relying on recent empirical research by P.J. Lang (1979), H. Leventhal (1980), or G.H. Bower & P.R. Cohen (1981), Lantermann assumes that emotions, too, are stored in memory in terms of schemata which generalize emotional experiences.

As a result of this research work, schema- and script-theories which up to now lacked an emotional component, are remarkably completed. In addition, cognitive psychologists realize more and more that 'intelligence' and 'emotion' must clearly be seen as *analytical* categories (i.e. observer categories), and not as two discrete and independent entities in the psyche.

An attachable position, based on the epistemology of the Soviet psychology of activity (Leont'ev, Rubinstein etc.), is held by R. Oerter (1983). In his theory of action, emotion plays a paramount role in the process of world-construction (in Piaget's sense) in that emotions create the subject's fundamental self-consciousness of his existence in the world as well as the existence of the world. (Oerter, l.c.: 312)

These hypotheses are supported by results of psycho-pathological research, according to which emotions confirm or disconfirm our view of reality by immediate affective acceptance or refusal of "objects" (in the broadest sense of the term). This process works much quicker than cognitive operations; there-

fore Oerter and R.B. Zajonc (1980) claim a primacy of emotive over cognitive processes (see also Ciompi, above).

A final remark concerns the relation between language and emotion. As far as I can see, it is widely accepted today that language must be regarded as an indispensable instrument for the development of emotions[8]. Language which enables the "structural coupling" (in Maturana's sense) of individuals, allows for a social manifestation (or materialization) of emotions as well as for their social control. By providing the individual with a finite set of interindividual emotion-expressions, verbal socialization reduces the complexity of subjective feelings to a narrow set of named and semantically stereotyped emotions. In this process an intersubjective rhetoric of emotion becomes available in the subject's cognitive domain which, I suppose, creates a quasi-natural expectation for feelings and their expressions. What feelings *really* are, apart from their descriptions, seems to me an odd question. What a living system experiences *as* feeling or emotion results from self-descriptions in a *cognitive* domain. These descriptions rely on an extremely complex interaction of sensorimotor activities, cognitive and emotive action control-mechanisms, the activation of memory, the inferences from several types of knowledge, the activation of values, the confirmation or disconfirmation of experiences in individual-environment-transactions, etc.

Following Maturana's distinction between system and observer, the only thing we can say is that we shall never know what "really" happens in a living system. All we can achieve are descriptions, i.e. constructions in our *cognitive domain*. In other words: what comes to our minds, be it labelled as "affect" or as "cognition", results from self-descriptions of our brains' activities. Accordingly, what we experience as "emotions" is bound to our activities as internal observers, which are deeply influenced (or "shaped") by our socialization and our current social interactions.

As internal observers we are completely sure about what we feel. I suppose that this sureness as well as our "feelings" are, in some way or other, "influenced" by our socialization, including its verbal components. We can try to communicate our feelings via (intersubjective) linguistic instruments, intending (or pretending) to relate our "feelings" to "emotion-expressions".

As external observers we have no direct access whatsoever to the feeling of other subjects. We can only observe their verbal and non-verbal behaviour focussing our interest on those parts of it which are conventionally or experimentially related to emotions and their expression(s). But this relation is

---

[7] N. Luhmann (1984) advocates the hypothesis that emotions cannot be seen as representations relating to environments; instead they are *internal* adaptations of the psyche to internal problems.
Functionally seen, emotions can be compared to immune-systems which guarantee the maintainance of autopoiesis. As Luhmann supposes, all emotions belong to the same kind of procedure, because our psyche cannot afford a special emotion for every disturbance of autopoieses.

[8] The well-known variety of emotions is, according to N. Luhmann (1984: 372), secondary in nature, i.e. it depends on cognitive and verbal interpretation; it is socially influenced like all other processes of increasing complexity in psychic systems. According to Luhmann, the social transformation of emotions serves the purpose of their social control; on the other hand, social transformation causes problems of authenticity: "Who is able to express what he is suffering finds himself immediatly estranged from the situation he wants to express." (l.c.: 372, my translation)

materialized exclusively in *our* own cognitive domain. Accordingly, as Wittgenstein already explained decades ago, the semantics of 'emotion' does not depend on the existence of emotions in the speaker.

<p style="text-align:center">*</p>

Let me summarize: I have argued that "reception" should theoretically be modelled as a subject-dependent constructive process. In the course of this process a subject creates a mental construct following of the recognition of the TEXT by an integrated activation of those components of the cognitive domain which are (analytically) labelled as 'affect' and 'intellect'.

As concerns the "reception" of literary texts, cognitive psychology has offered some interesting proposals in recent years. These proposals happen to fit into comparable models developed by ESL. As a result, for the first time in history psychology and literary scholarship share a common problem-situation with regard to *empirical* research on text-"reception" (or "understanding"), which both demands and allows a cooperation in research. (The present paper results from such a cooperation.)

As I mentioned above (see S1), literary "reception" has to be learned during a special process of socialization (viz. literary socialization) in order to acquire special knowledge (declarative as well as procedural) and to become familiar with a special value-system (viz. aesthetic values). Secondly, literary "reception" is governed by (at least) two macro-conventions (viz. the esthetic and the polyvalence conventions). In addition, literary "reception" is characterized by a specific goal which Hunt & Vipond (1984, 1985) term "point-driven". Point-driven reception is specified by text-independent elaborations which enable the realization of reader-specific goals in text-reception. Meutsch (1986) has demonstrated experimentally that literary "reception" makes use of three types of elaboration which cannot be found in non-literary reception.

G2: My position in this section resembles the view I have expressed in the previous one. I fully agree with Schmidt that empirical research into literary activities is possible and will yield a complete modelling of aesthetic conditions, processes, and effects in the post-processing of literary texts. The integration of emotion and cognition surely has to be seen as one of the paradigmatic aspects of this approach because this integration does not only empirically characterize aesthetic processes of reception and post-processing, but is also postulated theoretically as one of the substantial goals aesthetic processes should aim at (for details see Schmidt 1980: 120 ff.; Groeben 1979).

As concerns the theoretical foundation and modelling of the integration of emotion and cognition I again disagree with Schmidt because I regard (at least the reductionist *use* of) (neuro-)biological models to be blind alleys – in theoretical as well as in empirical respects. These models did not work in the history of psychological research into emotion (see e.g. the James-Lange-theory in the beginning of our century; cf. Cofer 1975: 88; Ulich 1982: 104 ff.). Since

Cannon's critique of the James-Lange-theory a lot of arguments against an (exclusively) physiological (or biological) explanation of emotions has been advanced. Though (of course) these arguments have been called into question by their opponents, one thing seems to be incontestable: Physiological reactions are clearly less specific than the emotions experienced at the same time. The relatively unspecific physiological arousal which is above all characterized by quantitative grading, is qualitatively specified in the course of psychic experiencing of emotions. This qualitative specification has been increasingly thematized by recent cognitive theories (cf. Schachter & Singer 1962; Lazarus et al. 1980). This approach can be further developed into a model (cf. Groeben & Scheele 1983) which regards emotions as represented by qualifying language contents (and language usages). The respective meaning postulate (for the term 'emotion') reads as follows: "State of the evaluation of world-self-relations regarding standards (of a value) relevant to needs." (Groeben & Scheele, 1983: 4).

This theoretical explication relies upon two different theoretical traditions: The so-called 'emotivist' analysis of prescriptions (performed with the help of instruments of linguistic philosophy) claims that all value-judgments imply a relation between speaker and respective object which basically expresses an emotional relation (cf. Zedler 1976: 91 f.). Secondly cognitive theories of emotion were able to demonstrate the relevance of those evaluations (in terms of estimating the situation as well as the self) (see Schwarzer 1981: 76 and McCoy 1977). The meaning postulates for distinct emotions which can be developed on the basis of the above-cited general meaning postulate show that thereby an integration of cognition and emotion is postulated and implemented (cf. Groeben & Scheele 1983: 10 f.). Let us regard some examples:

"Joy: Diagnosis or prognosis of events which fit into those action, interaction and moral needs and evaluations of a subject which are central to his personality. *Surprise:* A statement of those non-prognosticated events which a subject tunes in a neutral or positive way. *Anxiety:* Anticipation of unavoidable events which are able to destroy (at least partially) a subject's organism or self-concept. *Contempt:* Diagnosing that other persons hurt relevant moral norms so intensively that a subject becomes motivated to solve the respective conflict by avoiding any contact with these persons."

From my point of view the basic difference between my approach and Schmidt's theoretical framework (of radical constructivism) reads as follows: My approach, too, offers an explanation which integrates emotion and cognition without claiming that such a "holistic" proposal cancels out any relation to an outer world or reality (whatever kind of relation this may be). On the contrary: An explanation of the concept 'anxiety' e.g. implies that the unavoidability of an anticipated event in the real world may be and has to be evaluated. When e.g. in our latitudes, somebody is in terrific fear of spiders, the feared events (like being

stung, getting ill with the spider's poison etc.) may be and have to be unequivoc-ally evaluated as non-inevitable (because poisonous spiders do not exist in our latitudes). A respective anxiety – it doesn't matter how many subjects share it – has to be regarded as irrational (as phobic) with regard to the "objective" reality. The clinical therapeutic praxis of psychology – which represents to a large extent its social relevance – is mostly based on this possibility of relating behavior to "reality" (at least approximatively). This relation to "reality" belongs to the fundamental competences of subjects as well as of objects of research. Phobia as an example clarifies the fact that even objects of (physiological) research (qua 'objects' of science) may have this insight (viz. that spiders "are not dangerous") – though in the case of phobia it does not lead to an adequate behavior. In any case we have to postulate (and to respect in making up our theories) that scientists are able to realize this relation to reality (maybe via intersubjectivity with other scholars). As will be shown below, this postulate leads to unsur-mountable differences as regards the relevance and the consideration of the "text-factor".

<p style="text-align:center">*</p>

S2*: The preceding discussion calls for a short comment. Many critics of radical constructivism hold the view that the constructivist epistemology denies the existence of reality. There may be many reasons (on both sides) why this impression could raise. Apart from all apologetic intentions I want to character-ise my stance towards this problem as follows: The difference made between system (= autopoietic system) and observer (= cognitive system forming part of the autopoietic system) in constructivist epistemology implies a difference between the real world (in which the autopoietic system exists) and cognitive reality. Cognitive reality is the model of reality a subject constructs via sen-sorimotor and communicative activities in a social group. For the (internal) observer this cognitive reality is "real" and all his activities relate to this cogni-tive reality. What constructivists claim is that this model is completely subject-dependent (including of course social setting as the absolutely necessary context in which a subject may cognize) and that cognitive reality and real world are domains which have no intersection. Although we have to postulate the exist-ence of a real world for logical reasons, we can't say anything about it; we can only talk about the cognitive reality, i.e. our experiential world. Or to put it in von Glasersfeld's and Richards' words: "We are constantly striving to achieve a homogeneous, consistent, noncontradictory construction of our experiential world. We are constantly looking for invariances and assimilating experiences by disregarding individual differences. Hence we should not be surprised when we perceive things to be similar, recurrent, and invariant. But, as we have tried to show, similarity, recurrence, and invariance pertain to the way in which we organize our experience, and nothing in our experience could warrent the assumption that they are characteristic of an ontological reality. That such a reality exists, that it contains permanent objects and other people may be our

profound intuitive belief, but if we restrict 'knowledge' to what we can ration-ally demonstrate, we have no way of knowing such a reality." (1979: 56). – (Quite recently N. Luhmann has elaborated a highly sophisticated constructiv-ist epistemology; see Luhmann 1988.)

D. ESL at the cross roads?

S3: Recent research in (non-literary) text-"reception" has yielded a lot of aspects to be taken into account when conceptualizing processes of "understanding"[9]. Although these efforts have remarkably improved the complexity of models of understanding, there are some shortcomings which still confuse respective research attempts.

The most important problem in this context relates to the *dualistic format* of the majority of "reception"-models: "reception" (or "understanding") is con-ceptualized as the "interrelation" between text and reader (in reception aesthe-tics), as an interaction of reception and receptibility (Groeben 1982), or as an intersection of top-down and bottom-up processes (see the report in Meutsch 1986).

From a constructivist point of view dualistic models raise two crucial prob-lems that can be formulated as follows: If understanding is conceptualized in terms of constructive subject-dependent processes, how can we talk about constant and subject-independent text-properties, text-meanings, or textual effects which – according to the cognitive approach – are exclusively construed inside the cognitive domain? Another problem is closely connected with the first one: If we fully realize the cognitivist turn in reception-research (including its "holistic" and "constructivist" orientation) which conceptualizes "under-standing" as an innersystemic process (cf. Herrmann 1985): How can we investigate these internal processes empirically?

In a recent article, Meutsch (1986) has plausibly discussed two possible ways to overcome these two problems: the (radical) constructivist and the cognitive (pragmatical) way. Whereas the latter one tries to develop the status quo further without epistemological reflections (Johnson-Laird 1983, Mandl & Schnotz 1985, Herrmann 1985, Schnotz 1985), the constructivist approach (von Glasers-feld 1986, Maturana 1982, Rusch 1987, Schmidt 1983, 1986) starts with a fundamental discussion of concepts like 'information' and 'communication' in order to answer the question how text and recipients interrelate. This answer can be eveluated as follows:

The basis of a constructivist theory of language is provided by biological models of living systems and their brains. As these models have been com-prehensively portrayed elsewhere (see e.g. Rusch 1987) I shall confine myself to

---

[9] See e.g. the surveys in Groeben (1982), Schnotz (1985), Meutsch (1986), Meutsch & Schmidt (1985), Schmidt (1986, 1987) or Viehoff & Schmidt (1985).

some essentials: Living systems are conceptualized as autopoietic, i.e. self-producing and self-maintaining systems. Human living systems contain brains as one of their components. As opposed to open reflex-systems, human brains are operationally closed and work self-referentially. Their function consists in an effective coordination of sensory and effectory activities of the living system. That is to say they recursively operate on changes in their neuronal state effected either by sensory signals or by internal activities. Accordingly, 'information' is conceptualized as a certain state of the neuronal system.

Living systems are in constant interaction with other living systems and with their environments. Through structural coupling with other systems they develop a domain of consensual interactions which forms the basis for communication. As has already been mentioned above, communication is not regarded as an exchange of prefabricated information, but as the parallel construction of information in the cognitive domains of interacting systems. Linguistic behavior equals orientational behavior; that is to say: System A tries to orientate system B towards certain operations in B's cognitive domain. How B performs the orientation is exclusively left to him. Though these processes are strictly subject-dependent, a cognitive parallelisation of communicating individuals is possible due to their equivalent biological equipment, to a comparable process of socialization, to a comparable assessment of the communication situation, etc.

According to these assumptions a text in a natural language does not interact with readers/listeners by virtue of its own activities and does neither contain nor transport information. Instead communicating individuals construe KOMMUNIKATE from TEXTS they perceive and treat as "TEXT T_i in a natural language L_i" in their cognitive domain by applying the linguistic norms and conventions they have internalized in the process of socialization in their respective social groups. A relation between linguistic expressions on the one hand and non-verbal entities on the other is exclusively installed by the interactive cooperation of cognitive systems (cf. Rusch 1986).

It follows from these assumptions that the socialized individual has to be regarded as the empirical instance of meaning production. The individual communicates linguistically by following rules, applying conventions, and making use of stereotypes that are shared by other individuals with whom he/she has built up a consensual domain.

*

Let us regard some of the consequences that can be drawn from these assumptions:

– According to the distinction between 'TEXT' and 'KOMMUNIKAT' meanings are not regarded as subject-independent *objective* givens but as items in the cognitive domains of individuals. Consequently, no objective proof of meaning descriptions is possible by recourse to text-objects (cf. Heringer

1984). Nevertheless it is usual that different subjects, according to the conventional routines they internalize during their socialization, normally attribute the same or comparable features (e.g. syntactic or stylistical one) to a certain TEXT (cf. Herrmann 1985).

– Texts in a natural language trigger constructive processes in the cognitive domains of individuals. The results of these processes are comparable because human beings are biologically similar and have (in the process of socialization) acquired comparable routines of KOMMUNIKAT-production and -elaboration.
    Therefore I advocate the view that theories of "understanding" built upon models of an interaction or even a dialogue between text and reader (i.e. dualistic models) are implausible.

– A natural language has no referential function in terms of ontological designation but only in terms of specific cognitive operation classes. (The domain of language is closed.)

Coming back to the first question raised in this section, the constructivist answer reads as follows: The intersubjectivity of meaning-construction, and the comparability of properties assigned to TEXTS can be explained by biological similarities and comparable socializations of individuals which parallel the construction and application of linguistic inputs via intersubjectively shared schemata of perception. The application of socially learned and stabilized conventions, routines and stereotypes by individuals in processes of KOMMUNIKAT-construction explains the intersubjectivity of subjective KOMMUNIKATE of the same TEXT without abandoning the epistemological tenet (including a methodological individualism) that all "meaning"-operations exclusively happen inside the individuals' cognitive domains. Accordingly, all approaches to "reception" have to conceptualize it as an inner-systemic process (whereas „post-processing" has to be located on the level of communication). And ideas of objectivity have to be replaced by ideas of intersubjectivity of subject-bound activities.

*

In order to demonstrate how the second question raised above (viz. the empirical accessibility of "reception"-processes) might be answered in a constructivist framework, I introduce systematically the distinction between *system* and *observer*.

As has already been mentioned, living systems ranking on the complexity-level of human beings, have phylogenetically developed an extremely complex neuronal system. This system is self-referential, but not autopoietic (cf. Roth 1985a). The neuronal system is able to interact with its own internal states. This interaction can be described as a form of self-description. Via self-description self-consciousness is developed; in other terms: the system is able to act as its own (internal) observer. Observer-function or consciousness are procedural

properties of the nervous system which have to be clearly distinguished from the "material" basis of the neurons or the brain (cf. Rusch 1986). Whatever comes to our minds (i.e. becomes conscious) is a sort of "description" which contributes to the building-up of our world of experience.

The distinction between 'autopoietic system' and 'observer' (as a procedural property or function of the system) refers to the distinction between 'brain' and 'mind', (material) 'reality' and (cognitive) 'world'. The only domain in which we live and which is real to us is the cognitive world created by our self-referential (and partially self-organizing) mind. The material reality, i.e. the medium where our autopoietic system exists, is as inaccessible to our cognition as is the material brain. Nevertheless both have to be postulated or presupposed for epistemological reasons. From these hypotheses I draw the following consequences: 'receiving' or 'understanding' are observer-categories. Our brain does neither 'receive' nor 'understand'. But it is not even reasonable to conceive of 'understanding' as a category of the internal observer; instead we have to attribute it to the external observer for the following reasons: As has been explained above, linguistic behavior can be described as orientational behavior. When A tries to orient B towards a certain goal, not any reaction of B will signal A that his orienting behavior has been successful. Instead, only then will A deem B's reaction appropriate when B behaves according to A's expectations. Exclusively with regard to such expectations A can *mean* something by performing a certain orienting behavior. As soon as B's reaction fits into these expectations, A will say that B has *understood* him. 'Understanding', according to the above-quoted argument of Rusch's (1986: 59), does not properly label the psychic process of comprehension; instead it labels the fact (which is positively marked in orientational interaction) that the oriented person behaves according to the orientator's expectations. This is the reason why non-linguistic components play such an important role in face-to-face-communication. A and B use them as cues for deciding whether or not the other has "understood".

Following this line of argumentation, 'understanding' terms an interactive process on the observer-level. Strictly speaking, it would therefore be nonsensical to ask whether or not a recipient who silently reads a book, "understands" it. ("I understand" is a meaningless phrase.) Nevertheless we all know that we do ask ourselves "Do I understand the book?" According to Rusch, this case has to be modelled as a transposition of an *interactive* process onto an internal level, i.e. as a sort of simulation. The simulation works because the action-schemata of/for "understanding"-actions (in Piaget's sense) which have been internalized can be applied to inner-systemic processes too: The internal observer is therefore able to attribute to him-/herself "understanding" and to analyse and evaluate it according to those criteria which belong to the subject's very own schemata of/for understanding which have been developed in the course of interactions. Accordingly, the self-attributing of understanding can only be as sure and as reliable as are the subject's criteria for "understanding". A proof of these criteria cannot be afforded in terms of the truth of the subjective "under-

standing"-schemata, but only in terms of their intersubjectivity. In this theoretical framework, 'reading a text' cannot be defined as a communicative act; the touchstone for "the correctness" of a reading is therefore not to be found in an objective meaning of the text but in the degree of plausible intersubjectivity the reader can achieve in subsequent communicative interactions. These in turn are processed in terms of operational interaction together with the observation of understanding indicators. If we accept this model (at least for the moment) it implies the recommendation to avoid terms like 'understanding' or 'reception' in cognitive psychology as well as in literary scholarship. Instead we might speak of KOMMUNIKAT-construction-processes, i.e. inner-systemic processes that are regulated in terms of self-organization of the whole psyche and not in terms of an input-output-model (which is always insinuated by the term 'reception').

*

Whereas the constructivist approach offers a (general) theoretical solution for the two crucial problems of "reception"-research but still lacks empirical application, the cognitive-pragmatical approach needs an improvement of its theoretical basis as developed by Johnson-Laird (1983). Though understanding here is modelled as the constitution of mental models due to verbal triggers, I still find an ontological concept of information as well as a dualistic text-reader-model.

As far as I can see, Herrmann (1985) is the first cognitive psychologist who offers a way out of this dilemma. According to his ideas, language causes "deformations" in the cognitive system of a speaker/hearer. These deformations are balanced in the cognitive domain, and these processes correspond to what statements on understanding processes are assumed to contain. The description of systemic processes in connection with text-production and -reception explicates what is called "text-understanding". Herrmann's psychological proposal avoids a mixture of linguistic and psychological levels of description and terminologies. Consequently he neither speaks of 'meaning' nor of 'understanding' but tries to describe and to explain how a cognitive status is modified *in connection* with linguistic events.

*

It goes without saying that the constructivist as well as Herrmann's cognitivist stance towards "understanding" raise a lot of methodological problems. First of all it seems to be evident that an on-line-analysis of inner-systemic processes is impossible. Mental processes are inaccessible, i.e. they cannot be observed directly. If we try to get access to the process I call KOMMUNIKAT-construction-process we have two possibilities: either we construe computer models which simulate KOMMUNIKAT-construction-processes (following the artificial intelligence research); or we deliberately construe models of mental processes by using *reports* on those processes or reactions to them as indicators (as e.g.

in stimulated recall experiments). In this case we have to respect the fundamental difference between cognitive experiences of an individual (system-level) and his report on these experiences (internal observer-level) as well as descriptions or explanations of KOMMUNIKAT-constructing-processes by an external observer e.g. a psychologist (external observer-level).

Every answer to the question *what* we "really" investigate in empirical "reception"-research has to face the following situation: For sure we cannot observe the transition of neuronal into cognitive processes because the cognitive domain – due to its self-referentiality – is regarded to be closed. (This assumption is one of the reasons why the constructivist approach is not biologist!) But even when we try to get access to the experience of cognitive processes through the reports of (internal) observers, an observer cannot tell us what happened in his mind but can only *say* what he *thinks* has happened. In addition he has to transform his self-observations into a socially acceptable and accepted language which in turn has to be "interpreted" by an external observer. As a result, KOMMUNIKAT-construction-processes are not directly accessible. Any attempt at detecting *indirect* accesses has to fight the well-known problems of operationalizing and deciding on what is "really" operationalized and measured in an experiment. In other words: the gap between cognition (= psychic systems) and communication (= social system) is unbridgeable because both systems are selfreferential and closed (cf Luhmann 1988).

The insight into this epistemological and methodological situation should not be interpreted as a plea for finishing with empirical research. Instead we should emphasize that in cognitive research we do not go into processes of KOMMUNIKAT-construction on the level of the system's experiences but exclusively on the level of the external observer who tries to refer the reports or reactions of internal observers to his theoretical model of KOMMUNIKAT-construction-processes. In other words, he makes use of those reports or reactions as data in order to model (theoretically) the influence of language on inner-systemic processes (cf. Meutsch 1987, Schnotz 1985).

G3: In this section it becomes obvious that the divergent theoretical explications and foundations of "cognitivist constructivism" lead to essential differences not only in respect to answer-dimensions of an ESL but also with regard to the decision which problems and which questions are deemed meaningful and necessary in an ESL. I think that Schmidt's reliance on a radical constructivism results in a destructive combination of solipsism with a retreat from, or even a negation of, evaluations. In order to simplify the discussion here, I shall scan a problem Schmidt has mentioned above: He claims that most theories of reception (including my own, cf. Groeben 1982) advocate or imply a dualistic approach (= interaction of text and reader, understanding and understandability etc.) which engenders two central problems: How can we speak of constant text-features, text-meanings or text-effects in a (cognitive etc.) constructivist framework? And how can internal processes of reception be empirically investigated?

Schmidt's answers to these questions are, in my opinion, characterized by what I previously labelled as solipsism and abstinence of evaluation. Let me discuss an example to illustrate my reproach.

As an example I choose Orwell's *1984* and its classification by literary critics. Although critics do not always make the difference between 'negative utopia' and 'anti-utopia' (cf. Biesterfeld 1982; Gnüg 1983), this distinction can and should be made: A 'negative utopia' is given if structural features of the given world which I experience as negative, threatening or the like, are projected ahead in their negative development in order to provide a literary representation of these negative world-features for deterrence's sake. An 'anti-utopia' instead is the (literary) critique of an utopia, in which (contrary to its proponents) opponents detect threatening features which again are projected ahead and represented literarily. (Cf. Neusüss 1972; Krysmanski 1963; Pehlke & Lingfeld 1970) These explications, I think, demonstrate the divergent as well as the overlapping features of the two concepts.

As can be proved historically, Orwell himself intended and wrote his novel as an anti-utopia oriented against the real or planned socialism of Russian communism (cf. Pehlke & Lingfeld 1970: 128 ff.). On the other hand, there are recipients who "understand" *1984* as a negative utopia with regard to power structures of Western developed capitalism. In case I would like to know whether it is more 'plausible', 'reasonable', 'useful' etc. to "understand" *1984* as an anti-utopia or as a negative utopia, and in case I consult the publications of the empirically working literary scholar S.J. Schmidt in order to get as rational an answer as possible, my information on the basis of Schmidt's position looks as follows: The debated alternative cannot be settled "in" the text, because, I quote Schmidt, "no objective proof of meaning descriptions is possible by recourse to text-objects" (see above p. 30). In other words, I am unable to decide by recourse to objective text-features whether or not a reader 1 (deeming *1984* an anti-utopia) or a reader 2 (deeming it a negative utopia) understood the text better, because – according to the radical constructivist position – understanding is possible only as a relation-concept concerning persons: if A's post-processing activities fit into B's expectations, B says that A did understand (and vice versa). As far as I can see, this relation also holds true for the recipient (A as object of an ESL) and the external observer (B as cognizing subject of an ESL, see above 32). The most important consequences from these assumptions read as follows: "the touchstone for the 'correctness' of a reading is therefore not to be found in the meaning of the text but in the degree of intersubjectivity the reader can achieve in subsequent communicative interactions." (p. 33) If the above-mentioned reader does not find someone who realizes intersubjectivity with him in subsequent communicative interactions, then his text-reception is false!! I think this is a solipsistic "solution" which rather completely takes over the evaluations of its research-objects, thereby legitimating completely unnecessarily the popular reservation of hermeneutical scholars with regard to an empirical approach to literature. The radical constructivist "solution" is solipsistic in that

it exclusively accepts arbitrarily construed meanings. I hasten to add some explanations: arbitrariness does not exist with regard to interaction and communication partners (who are expected to constitute intersubjectivity!); but arbitrariness dominates the relation of speakers/hearers to the text-object! If I find enough communication partners who "understand" the pen-pushings of "radical constructivists" as effective literary satires on the nonsense of scientific language use in the humanities (– I mean intersubjectively –), then these *are* satires, that's it! Accordingly, amusement and laughter are the adequate aesthetic reactions to satires of this kind, nothing else. Do radical constructivists really appreciate this consequence of their positions?

By means of this very simple (and perhaps a bit provocative) example I try to apply the radical constructivist theses onto itself (= tu-quoque-argument) in order to clarify the unreasonable consequences of this position. I consider it honourable of hermeneutic scholars of literature that they reject these consequences and oppose the radical constructivist solipsistic decision to make the "correctness" of text-reception a pure matter of voting (cf. Bollenbeck & Knobloch 1983). For me it is hard to endure that thereby a hermeneutic prejudice towards empirical studies is nourished in a completely unjustified way due to the constructivists' solipsism. The fact is: If I do not assume text-descriptions which are independent of recipients, then – as an empirically working scholar – I can only describe received meanings, and consequently sheer quantity counts as the very value! This idea is unbearable! It cannot be the task and goal of scientific scholars to describe the error of the majority (or of all people) without criticizing it! Here the constructivist solipsism unites with the evaluating-allergy of empirical sciences: the construction of meaning is described, but one refuses to evaluate its correctness recurring to recipient-independent text-features.

Contrary to its long-lasting tradition (since M. Weber at the latest) the postulate of "Werturteilsfreiheit" (abstinence from evaluation) is useless (cf. Groeben 1978). Our present discussion can serve as a good example: if I only describe evaluations of the object-domain (e.g. that Orwell's *1984* is read as anti-utopia), and if I cannot judge it according to its correctness, I de facto take over the reader's evaluation of the object into my scientific approach. That is to say: I reduce scientific rationality to everyday rationality. This cannot be the function of science! Its task consists in criticizing everyday rationality in order to reach a "higher" rationality. In my example this can only be achieved if we cling to the necessity of criticizing construed text-meanings by help of reception-independent descriptions.

Let me sum up my critical remarks: The radical constructivism in Schmidt's conception implies two important contradictions: (1) Why should we empiricize literary studies if we only accept solipsistic decisions via consensus concerning text-readings? This task could be more easily performed by hermeneutic procedures. (2) How can we achieve social effectiveness in empirical studies of literature, which Schmidt and his collaborators are so eager to emphasize (cf. Schmidt 1980: 5 ff.; Hauptmeier & Schmidt 1985: 9 ff.), if we only describe and (implicitly) take over evaluations of the object-domain? I think the idea of social (especially of anti-ideological) effectiveness of an ESL necessarily requires evaluations of "KOMMUNIKATE" which are independent of recipients. Even if all readers would agree in evaluating *1984* as an anti-utopia (= as a critique of the communist system in the Eastern Bloc), a socially effective ESL indispensably has to demonstrate that a reception as negative utopia criticizing dangers of a capitalist supervising state in the Western hemisphere is reasonable as well.

The (academic) classification of a book as anti-utopia or as negative utopia thereby turns out to be much more than an academic matter in dispute: instead it bears immediate social relevance. Therefore an ESL-scholar's answer to this question cannot only depend upon the consensus of recipients, as long as we do not want to strip science of its anti-ideological power! (I myself have demonstrated several times how this question could and should be answered in an ESL; cf. Groeben 1980, 1981).

I come back to Schmidt's second question: Internal reception-processes can be investigated – on the basis of an adequately modelled cognitive constructivism – by recourse to the human competence to report on his/her internal states. I admit that self-comments or self-reports of the reflexive subject 'man' cannot be validated by external observation (see Scheele 1981 on this topic). But this is no reason at all to revert to resignative (and above all an absolute) relativism (as happens with radical constructivism, in my view). Instead I assume that the "truth" of self-information (concerning internal reception-processes) depends on the possibility of eliminating negative distorting dynamics. The counterfactual idea of an 'ideal speech-situation' (Habermas) can be used as an appropriate tool to achieve this elimination – at least in an approximative way. Accordingly, Apel's and Habermas' dialogue-consensus-theoretical truth-criterion has to be introduced to measure the adequacy of a description of internal reception-processes. Scheele & Groeben (1984) have shown how this criterion can be realized practically; their SLT-technique (= Heidelberger Struktur-Lege-Technik) is based on dialogical consensus.

But even if communicated text-meanings of recipients (= Schmidt's KOMMUNIKATE) are investigated, an ESL is not at all restricted to solely describe them but it is also able to evaluate them having recourse to text-features! For that purpose the text has to be described intersubjectively on a lower level of complexity (e.g. on the syntactic level). Intersubjectivity has to be regarded as consensus between the (scientific) research subjects, viz. the scholars as 'external observers'. This assumption does not contradict the general hypothesis concerning the cognitive constructivity of text-reception because, in my opinion, it is possible to describe features which are deemed (at least approximately) universal by the observers (e.g. syntactic or even semantic classifications).

Schmidt's question how cognitive constructivists are able to speak of constant

text-features, -meanings etc. can be very easily answered: by having recourse to features which own a universal meaning-dimension. (This dimension is normally aimed at by linguistic descriptions – though it is not always realized.) Universally describable text-features allow for an evaluation of text-KOMMUNIKATE; although they cannot positively demonstrate the correspondence of a certain reading with "objective" text-features, they can negatively exclude contradictions between a reading and universally described text-features. (For further details of this "falsification strategy" see Groeben 1981.) A linguistic description (in a broader sense of the term) of *1984* does by no means exclude a reading as negative utopia in our Western society. Accordingly I shall – especially in an ESL – fight for the right to read it that way – whatever kind of intersubjectivity other recipients may produce! The ayes won't have it!

*

S4: In his replies to my hypotheses Groeben has expressed his rejection of the constructivist basis of my approach to an ESL. The reason why I add a short reply to his general disapproval lies in the fact that Groeben unfortunately repeats the most common and the most trivial misunderstandings of, and prejudices against, radical constructivism. I speak of 'trivial prejudices' because a closer reading of Maturana's, Varela's, von Foerster's, von Glasersfeld's, Roth's, Rusch's etc. writings should at least yield a lot of evidence for the argument that radical constructivism is neither solipsistic, nor (biologically) reductionist, nor hostile to, or shirking from, evaluations in terms of a dull positivism which swallows the given as the truth.

As I have presented the pros and cons of this debate at some length elsewhere (Schmidt 1987) I just pick up one argument: Since his early influential writings Maturana has always advocated the view that every living system (Ego) needs others (Alter) in order to achieve successful perception, action-control etc., let alone communication. He even made this epistemological assumption the basis of his constructivist ethics (1982: 271 et passim). It is a blatant misunderstanding to interpret subject-dependency as epistemological solipsism (the history of philosophy tells quite another story.) This basic misunderstanding, I think, seduces Groeben to draw a number of false consequences; e.g.: He claims that radical constructivists claim that recipients quite arbitrarily construe KOMMUNIKATE. It was St. Fish (1980), to quote a witness beyond suspicion, who has convincingly argued that our socialisation and our interlocking with our respective social groups basically prevent (at least absolute or far-reaching) arbitrariness in KOMMUNIKAT-construction.

That is the reason why we normally "perceive the same text" – not because of an universality of feature-dimensions but due to the degree of internalized conformity of our normal perception and description of phonetic, syntactic or semantic features.

The fact that readers do vary in classifying Orwell's *1984* is not a matter of misinterpreting objectively detectable universal syntactic or even semantic features. Instead, it is a matter of how readers define notions (or concepts) like 'utopia', 'anti-utopia', 'negative utopia' etc. and which real-life experience, interpreted by necessity in the light of the world-model of their respective social groups, *causes* them to combine the meanings they conventionally and – as I suppose – indisputably assign to the TEXT with an interpretative frame of referential elaboration! This is not a question of correctness or intercorrectness, as Groeben claims, it is a matter of the recipients' life.

What are literary scholars' recipient-independent objective features good for? Who is interested in them apart from the scholars themselves? I tend to turn Groeben's argument upside down: ESL is socially efficient only when empirically working scholars really take seriously what happens in the literary system. Groeben's neglecting real readers' matters is, in my mind, a retreat to hermeneutics' desire for correct readings. The hermeneutic vexation still seems to exercise influence on his mind! The intersubjectivity Groeben equals with pure voting is an intersubjectivity of reasonable argumentation and interaction of scholars in a community of researchers. Their discourse, and its specific rationality, decide upon which reading is accepted – whether they pretend to have access to objective text-features independent from recipients or not. What else is a literary scholar than an (expert) recipient? How does he manage to get behind his own back? I fully agree with Groeben that scientific discourses should possess a higher degree of rationality. But the criteria of rationality are, historically and sociologically, contingent, and rationality should not be mixed up with objectivity. 'Empirical', in the radical constructivist discourse, has accordingly been defined as "making experiences with ontological knowledge" (Rusch 1987) and not as "knowledge mapping reality". (For a detailed discussion see Luhmann 1988.)

Groeben, in his argumentation, has shown an interesting development: from his initial claim to state objective text-features he retreats to a falsificationist position and ends up with a claim for the right (or legitimation) to read *1984* as a negative utopia notwithstanding consensual readings. I suppose Groeben will be in dire need to find intersubjective approval for his reading – not because, as he wrongly states, his reading will be *wrong*, but because nobody will care for it.

So in the end Groeben's destiny is a nice proof for the plausibility of radical constructivism.

*

G4: I think the concept 'misunderstanding' is highly interesting with regard to radical constructivism. That is why I would like to return the reproach of misunderstanding to Schmidt himself and to combine it with several questions in order to finish our discussion (at least provisionally).

My principal objection to radical constructivism (on the highest level of abstraction) is expressed by the tu-quoque-argument (see above *G3*). In the history of philosophy all radical variants of scepticism or relativism have fallen a prey to this argument. For example: When I claim "There is no objective truth

or knowledge", this sentence is false if it is true (because it falsifies itself). Aporetic results (or paradoxes) of this kind cannot be avoided if "radical constructivism" contains comparable relativistic implications. In my opinion this is actually the case with regard to an objective receptibility of texts. (The same holds true for the assumption that constructing a text-meaning can't cross the borderlines of social and aesthetic conventions etc. of construing recipients; cf. Schmidt's argumentation above and my quotations from these arguments.) Insofar as radical constructivism contains relativistic arguments of this kind it is reduced to absurdity by the tu-quoque-argument.

I shall try to clarify my objection once more, taking as an example Schmidt's concept of mis-understanding: I wonder how a radical constructivist can blame somebody else of misunderstanding – and even for a "most common" (i.e. obviously a highly intersubjective) misunderstanding? What can serve as a criterion for evaluating a certain understanding of a text as a mis-understanding? Such a criterion can't be the author's intention! Because we can imagine the case where an author cannot or did not adequately express his ideas; and this case must remain open to scientific description and explanation. In addition, one of the shared and necessary convictions of ESL lies in its opposition to the hermeneutical tendency towards reducing text-meanings to author-intentions. As a matter of fact, we have to look for "objective" text-criteria, which again bring into play the tu-quoque-argument! The radical constructivist has only two possibilities in this situation: If he rejects the existence of "objective text-criteria" he cannot blame me for having misunderstood his position (especially when not only I but many others seem to have misunderstood it). If he claims that "it is written" objectively different in his text, he has abandoned the (relativistic) core of his position by his effort to defend it. (By the way, what does 'closer reading' mean, for example?) I think it is evident that the concept of misunderstanding entangles the radical constructivist in aporetic contradictions.

My own reconstruction of an (approximately) objective describability of texts does not lead into such aporetic situations; that's why I am in the comfortable position to name such items which have been objectively misunderstood by Schmidt. Of course, I did not claim in my first reply to his position that subject-dependency as such amounts to solipsism, but I claimed that absolute subject-dependency which rejects the text-factor completely, has to have this result. I did not assert that the radical constructivist postulates the arbitrariness of KOMMUNIKAT-construction in general; my approach aimed at arbitrariness only with regard to the text-factor, and not with regard to the social factor (aesthetic conventions, groups of recipients etc.). To cut a long story short, I leave it to the readers whether or not Schmidt correctly understood my ideas on readers' activities if he characterizes them by "neglecting real readers' matters". Let me touch one question at the end of my answer: Schmidt talks about 'literary scholars' as 'expert recipients': What is the criterion for expertness? In my opinion it has to be a special qualification regarding the text-factor and its

intersubjective analysis. His rationality must be qualified as adequacy to reality – however this might be conceptualized. Otherwise empirical research loses its reason.

To finish, let me draw a substantial consequence from my previous reflections: I agree with S.J. Schmid that it is important (and constructive) to look what recipients do with texts (doing thinking with words). But in my view an ESL must *also* be able to answer the question what recipients are *not* allowed to do – because it can be scientifically criticized and rejected as a mis-understanding of a text (including literary ones).

*

S4*: Groeben's acumen in perusing my argumentation offers me a good opportunity to add some final remarks to the to and fro of our debate. Groeben is right in stating that the tu-quoque-argument serves as a variant of Ockham's razor as to radical scepticisms and relativisms. But there is a hitch with his direct application of this argument to radical constructivism: The tu-quoque-argument solely holds true regarding absolute positions, i.e. positions which claim to provide objective truth. That's exactly what radical constructivists do not claim. By replacing the notion of objectivity by that of intersubjectivity (of experience) and usefulness of models they abstain from (emphatic) concepts of truth. "As we have said, it is essential that the model be viewed as a model and not as the description of an ontologically real arrangement. Hence it must on no account be presented as 'true', but merely as one possible way of arriving at an internally consistent representation of organismic systems that experience and behave. It fits the sceptical tradition in that it illustrates an organism's inherent incapability of drawing ontological conclusions from its experience. It also fits the constructivist extension of the sceptic's doubt that holds: Not only is there no good reason to believe that our senses can show us things as they are, but there is also no good reason to believe that ontological reality has anything that we would call 'structure'." (Richards & von Glasersfeld, 1979: 57).

A comparable argumentation can be put forth regarding text-meanings. I do not *deny* the existence of texts. Instead I want to draw the attention to the fact that texts have to be recognized and perceived *as* texts through cognitive activities. Consequently, even the attribution of phonetical or syntactic "structures" or "features" depends on cognitive activities and the whole set of conditions influencing these activities. This argument may be trivial in cases of phonetic or syntactic structuring because assigning these types of structures is a highly conventionalized activity. It is surely no longer trivial with regard to semantic and pragmatic operations and with relating semantic "readings" to cultural or scientific frames of reference in the subjects' minds. From these assumptions it follows – at least in my mind – that text-features are intersubjectively (= consensually as to conventional criteria) attributed to texts and are no objective (= ontological) ingredients of text-objects.

As concerns the problem of *misunderstanding* Groeben is right in blaming me for a rash way of speaking. I therefore try to reformulate my position as follows: Although the meaning of a text cannot be reduced to or identified with the author's intention this is no reason at all to neglect or deny author-intentions. As I tried to say in S3, 'understanding' might best be conceptualized as an observer category. As such it labels a situation where B's reactions fit into A's expectations which in turn are bound to his intentions when uttering a text. Accordingly, as an author (or speaker) I can say to B "you misunderstood me/ my utterance" without claiming that meaning equals intention. 'Misunderstanding' here means: the reactions I intended to get from B did not arise. It is completely open in this situation who is to blame for this shortcoming.

I should better have formulated in S4 that Groeben unfortunately reiterates communication processes which I (as a speaker or writer) deem "misunderstandings" compared to my own intentions.

But there is another aspect in this debate which Groeben should have noted: Whereas I am constantly surprised that people experience a lot of communicative interactions as "successful" (that means as happening in a mood of "understanding"), and "misunderstandings" are regarded as the normal case, Groeben should have difficulties in explaining the case of misunderstanding: If texts possess objective features which even allow a scientific analysis of their admissible readings (or at least an exclusion of wrong ones), how can misunderstanding be explained? Are people stupid or nasty when misunderstanding?

Groeben asks what 'closer reading' and 'expert recipient' mean in a constructivist framework. By closer reading I mean a 'more extensive reading'. The authors I quoted in S4 have very explicitly argued the solipsism-reproach (and similar topics) pro and con. I think it would have been more productive to take note of that perusal of counterarguments in order to find better ones instead of just repeating them as most opponents are used to doing. (Maybe the notion of 'close reading' in the New Criticism has determined Groeben's reading of my use of the expression.)

By 'expert recipient' I simply refer to a well-trained or professional reader who commands a rich experience with various types, strategies, extensions etc. of KOMMUNIKAT-production triggered by literary and non-literary texts.

Groeben's discussion of cases of "objective misunderstanding" clarifies that one of the pivots of constructivist discourse is a stilistic one. Our languages (everyday language as well as scientific jargons) are not suited for dealing with system-oriented, holistic, heterarchical or selforganizing processes – as cognitive processes are modelled in the constructivist frame. And the latter phrase reveals another problem of constructivist discourse: For abreviation's sake constructivists very often forget to constantly repeat "X is the case in my model M"; instead they use "is/are" though they do not intend to aver the existence of X.

Let me summarize: I think it is useless to blame one another for misunderstandings. We should try to come to terms in an atmosphere of mutual sym-

pathy and rational acceptance. In my eyes this debate with Groeben was such an attempt – that's why I liked it.

E. Understanding understanding

Perhaps our debate as documented above has emphasized controversial aspects of our approaches to an ESL at the cost of shared positions. Nevertheless, we easily agreed to finish this debate with a common outlook on future research. ESL combines – in our views – promising recent developments of hermeneutical as well as empirical research in the domain of literary studies. The hermeneutic transformation of production- and text-aesthetics into a reception-aesthetics is consequently performed in ESL because only empirical research in reception will cover the whole range of possible activities recipients actually perform with literary texts. This research interest integrates all recent empirical research activities which provide a lot of evidence for the assumption of the constructivity of reading processes. The research so far has mostly dealt with non-literary texts. Thematizing literary texts promises insights into more intensive and more dynamic types of constructivity (cf. Meutsch 1987, Meutsch & Schmidt 1985) – that's why we are in favour of this line of research.

Successful research in this field presupposes a combined research into methodical and methodological problems (see above the problem of an appropriate integration of emotion and cognition, or the problem of the direct or mediated accessibility of KOMMUNIKAT-constructions etc.). In the long run we need comprehensive theories which allow to conceptualize the interdependent relations between producer, product, and recipient. In such a framework we hope to be able to clarify what can be done with texts and what – for whatever reason – should not be done with the texts in our literary system. Our strategy should be to avoid the hermeneutic restrictions (i.e. right-false-judgments) put upon readers' possible text-realizations as well as a positivistic reduction of scientific standards of analysis and evaluations of texts and text-processings (e.g. interpretations), i.e. reducing literary scholarship to a description of the status quo.

An empirical approach to literary systems which strives for applicability (as a metatheoretical value) has to incorporate evaluations, decisions, and commitments as well – be its basis constructivist or non-constructivist. Both of us are convinced that our respective approaches endeavour to find out a reasonable solution of these questions – even if we sometimes still have problems to recognize and accept each other's position.

---

[10] Misunderstandings have their reasons, of course. And I do not deny that Maturana's (and other constructivists' writings, too) are sometimes not clear enough, ambiguous etc. On the other hand, I have experienced in my own reading that a somewhat extensive and intensive reading definitely cleans out such interpretations as solipsism or reductionism. Undoubtedly a number of other questions remain unsettled – whose theories are better?

References (for G1–G4)

Biesterfeld, W., 1982. *Die literarische Utopie.* Stuttgart: Metzler

Bollenbeck, G. & C. Knobloch, 1983. Faktengewinn als Geschichtsverlust. *SPIEL* 2 (1983), H. 2, 375–388.

Bransford, J.D. et al., 1972. Sentence memory: A constructive versus interpretative approach. *Cognitive Psychology* 3, 193–203.

Cofer, C.N., 1975. *Motivation and Emotion.* München: Juventa.

Groeben, N., 1977/1980. *Rezeptionsforschung als empirische Literaturwissenschaft.* 1. Aufl. Kronberg: Athenäum; 2. Aufl. Tübingen: Narr.

–, 1978. Normkritik und Normbegründung als Aufgabe der Pädagogischen Psychologie, in: J. Brandstädter et al. (eds.), *Pädagogische Psychologie: Probleme und Perspektiven.* Stuttgart, 51–77.

–, 1979. Literaturrezeption zwischen Genuß und Erkenntnis, in: H. Mainusch (ed.), *Literatur im Unterricht.* München, 116–129.

–, 1981a. The empirical study of literature and literary evaluation, *Poetics* 10, 381–394.

– (ed.), 1981b. *Rezeption und Interpretation.* Tübingen: Narr.

–, 1982. *Leserpsychologie. Textverständnis – Textverständlichkeit.* Münster: Aschendorff.

–, 1983. Empirische Literaturwissenschaft, in: D. Harth & P. Gebhardt (eds.), *Erkenntnis der Literatur.* Stuttgart, 266–297.

–, 1984. Rezeption als Konstruktion. Das Prinzip der 'Sinnkonstanz' am Beispiel von Ironie, in: J. Engelkamp (ed.), *Psychologische Aspekte des Verstehens.* Heidelberg, 185–201.

Groeben, N. & B. Scheele, 1983. Emotionen in einer Psychologie über Subjektive Theorien. Heidelberg, unpubl. Manuskript.

–, 1984. *Produktion und Rezeption von Ironie,* Bd. I. Tübingen: Narr.

Gnüg, H., 1983. *Der utopische Roman.* München/Zürich: Artemis.

Hauptmeier, H. & S.J. Schmidt, 1985. *Einführung in die Empirische Literaturwissenschaft.* Braunschweig-Wiesbaden: Vieweg.

Hörmann, H., 1976. *Meinen und Verstehen.* Frankfurt: Suhrkamp.

–, 1980. Der Vorgang des Verstehens, in: W. Kühlwein & A. Raasch (eds.), *Sprache und Verstehen* Bd. 1, Tübingen, 17–29.

Krysmanski, H. J., 1963. *Die utopische Methode.* Köln/Opladen: Westdeutscher Verlag.

Lazarus, R.S. et al., 1980. Emotions. A cognitive-phenomenological analysis, in: R. Plutchik & W. Kellermann (eds.), *Theories of emotion.* New York, 189–217.

Maas, U. & D. Wunderlich, 1972. *Pragmatik und sprachliches Handeln.* Frankfurt: Athenäum.

McCoy, M.M., 1977. A reconstruction of emotion, in: O. Bannister (ed.), *New perspectives in personal construct theory.* London 93–124.

Neisser, U., 1974. *Kognitive Psychologie.* Stuttgart: Klett.

–, 1976/1979. *Cognition and Reality.* San Francisco: Freeman; dt. Übersetzung: *Kognition und Wirklichkeit.* Stuttgart: Klett-Cotta.

Neusüss, A. (ed.), 1972. *Utopie.* Neuwied/Berlin: Luchterhand.

Pehlke, M. & N. Lingfeld, 1970. *Roboter und Gartenlaube. Ideologie und Unterhaltung in der Science-Fiction-Literatur.* München: Hanser.

Schachter, S. & J.E. Singer, 1962. Cognitive, social, and physiological determinants of emotional states. *Psychological Review* 69, 379–399.

Scheele, B., 1981. *Selbstkontrolle als kognitive Interventionsstrategie.* Weinheim: edition psychologie

Scheele, B. & N. Groeben, 1984. *Die Heidelberger Struktur-Lege-Technik (SLT).* Weinheim: Beltz.

Schmidt, S.J., 1980. *Grundriß der empirischen Literaturwissenschaft, Teilband 1: Der gesellschaftliche Handlungsbereich Literatur.* Braunschweig-Wiesbaden: Vieweg.

Schmidt, S.J., 1982. *Grundriß der empirischen Literaturwissenschaft, Teilband 2: Zur Rekonstruktion literaturwissenschaftlicher Fragestellungen in einer Empirischen Theorie der Literatur.* Braunschweig-Wiesbaden: Vieweg.

Schwarzer, R., 1981. *Streß, Angst, Hilflosigkeit.* Stuttgart: Kohlhammer.

Ulich, D., 1982. *Das Gefühl.* München: Urban & Schwarzenberg.

Walther, E., 1974. *Allgemeine Zeichentheorie.* Stuttgart: Dt. Verlags-Anstalt.

Zedler, H.-P., 1976. *Zur Logik von Legitimationsproblemen.* München: Juventa.

References (for S1–S4)

Alfes, H., 1986. Zum Thema Kognition/Emotion. Modelle. Ansätze, Ideen (1979–1985). (Arbeitspapier im WiMi-Projekt "Konventionsgesteuertes Verstehen", Universität Siegen).

Bower, C.H. & P.R. Cohen, 1981. Emotional influences in memory and thinking: Data and theory. Paper presented at the 17th Annual Carnegie Symposium on Cognition, May 29–31.

Ciompi, L., 1986. Zur Integration von Fühlen und Denken im Licht der 'Affektlogik'. Die Psyche als Teil eines autopoietischen Systems. In: K. P. Kisker et al (Hrsg.), *Psychiatrie der Gegenwart,* Bd. I, 3. Auflg., Berlin u.a.: Springer 373–410.

Fish, St., 1980. *Is there a text in this class?* Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Glasersfeld, E. von, 1987. *Wissen, Sprache und Wirklichkeit.* Braunschweig-Wiesbaden: Vieweg. (Wissenschaftstheroi. Wissenschaft und Philosophie Bd. 24, autorisierte deutsche Fassung von W. K. Köck).

Heringer, H.J., 1984. Textverständlichkeit. Leitsätze und Leitfragen. In: W. Klein, Hrsg., *Textverständlichkeit – Textverstehen.* LiLi, H. 55, 57–70.

Herrmann, Th., 1985. *Allgemeine Sprachpsychologie. Grundlagen und Probleme.* München-Wien-Baltimore: Urban & Schwarzenberg.

Hintzenberg, D., S.J. Schmidt & R. Zobel, 1980. *Zum Literaturbegriff in der Bundesrepublik Deutschland.* Braunschweig-Wiesbaden: Vieweg (Konzeption Empirische Literaturwissenschaft Bd. III/IV).

Hunt, R.A. & D. Vipond, 1985. Crash-testing. A transactional model of literary reading. Paper presented at the Colloquium "The new rhetoric and new literary theory, Dept. of English at Carnegie-Mellon University, Pittsburgh, 18–20 April 1985.

Johnson-Laird, P.N., 1983. *Mental models. Towards a cognitive science of language, inference and consciousness.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Lang, P.J., 1979. A bio-informational theory of emotional imagery. *Psychophysiology* 16, 1979: 495–512.

Lantermann, E.B., 1983. Kognitive und emotionale Prozesse beim Handeln. In: H. Mand. & G.L. Huber (Hrsg.), *Emotion und Kognition.* München usw.: Urban & Schwarzenberg: 248–281.

Leventhal, H., 1980. Toward a comprehensive theory of emotion. In: L. Berkowitz (ed.), *Advances in experimental social psychology.* vol. 13, New York: Academic Press: 140–207.

Luhmann, N., 1985. *Theorie sozialer Systeme.* Frankfurt/Main: Suhrkamp.

Luhmann. N., 1988. Wissenschaft. Frankfurt/M.: Suhrkamp (im Druck).

Mandl, H. & W. Schnotz, 1985. New directions in text processing. Forschungsbericht 36 des Deutschen Instituts für Fernstudien an der Universität Tübingen. Tübingen: DIFF.

Maturana, H.R., 1982. *Erkennen: Die Organisation und Verkörperung von Wirklichkeit. Ausgewählte Arbeiten zur biologischen Epistemologie.* Braunschweig-Wiesbaden: Vieweg (Wissenschaftstheorie. Wissenschaft und Philosophie Bd. 19, autorisierte deutsche Fassung von W.K. Köck).

Maturana, H.R. & F.J. Varela, 1979. *Autopoiesis and Cognition. Boston studies in the philosophy of science,* Boston: Reidel.

Meutsch, D., 1987. *Literatur verstehen. Eine empirische Studie.* Braunschweig-Wiesbaden: Vieweg (Konzeption Empirische Literaturwissenschaft, Bd. VIII).

Meutsch, D., 1986. "Überlegungen zu einem holistischen psychologischen Modell literarischer Verstehensprozesse: Forschungsergebnisse, Beschreibungsebenen und die Entwicklung mentaler Modelle." (Arbeitspapier im WiMi-Projekt "Konventionsgesteuertes Verstehen").

Meutsch, D. & S.J. Schmidt, 1985. On the role of conventions in understanding literary texts. *Poetics* 14 (6), 551–574.

Oerter, R., 1983. Emotion als Komponente des Gegenstandsbezugs. In: H. Mandl & G.L. Huber (Hrsg.) *Emotion und Kognition.* München usw.: 282–315.

Piaget, J., 1950. *Konstruktion der Wirklichkeit beim Kinde.* Stuttgart: Klett. (Übersetzung von J.U. Sandberger u.a.).

Richards, J. & E. von Glasersfeld, 1979. The Control of Perception and the construction of reality. *Dialectica,* vol. 33, no. 1, 37–58.

Roth, G., 1985. Erkenntnis und Realität. Das reale Gehirn und seine Wirklichkeit. In: G. Pasternack (Hrsg.). *Erklären. Verstehen. Begründen.* Bremen: Zentrum philosophische Grundlagen der Wissenschaften: 87–109.

–, 1985a. Die Selbstreferentialität des Gehirns und die Prinzipien der Gestaltwahrnehmung. *Gestalt Theory 7* (1985), 228–244.

Rusch, G., 1985. Erkenntnis Wissenschaft Geschichte. *Von einem konstruktivistischen Standpunkt. Frankfurt/M.: Suhrkamp.*

–, 1986. Verstehen verstehen – Ein Versuch aus konstruktivistischer Sicht. N. Luhmann & K.E. Schorr (Hrsg.). *Zwischen Intransparenz und Verstehen.* Frankfurt/Main: Suhrkamp: 40–71.

Rumelhart, D.E. & D.A. Norman, 1983. *Representation in Memory.* University of California, San Diego.

Schnotz, W., 1985. Elementaristische und holistische Ansätze des Textverstehens. Forschungsbericht Nr. 35 des Deutschen Instituts für Fernstudien an der Universität Tübingen.

Schmidt, S.J., 1980–1982. *Grundriß der empirischen Literaturwissenschaft,* 2. Bde. Braunschweig-Wiesbaden: Vieweg (Konzeption Empirische Literaturwissenschaft Bd. I, 1 u. 2).

Schmidt, S.J., 1982. *Foundations for the empirical study of literature.* Hamburg: Buske.

Schmidt, S.J., 1983. Text, Subjekt und Gesellschaft. Aspekte einer konstruktivistischen Semantik. In: M. Faust et al. (Hrsg.), *Allgemeine Sprachwissenschaft. Sprachtypologie und Textlinguistik.* Fs. für P. Hartmann. Tübingen: Narr, 55–72.

Schmidt, S.J., 1986. Texte verstehen – Texte interpretieren. In: A. Eschbach (Hrsg.), *Perspektiven des Verstehens.* Bochum: Brockmeyer, 75–103.

Schmidt, S.J., 1987. *Der Radikale Konstruktivismus: Ein neues Paradigma im interdisziplinären Diskurs.* In: S.J. Schmidt (Hrsg.), *Der Diskurs des Radikalen Konstruktivismus.* Frankfurt/M: Suhrkamp, 11–88.

Viehoff, R. & S.J. Schmidt, 1985. Kommunikatbildungsprozeß. Antrag auf Forschungsförderung an die Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft, Oktober 1985.

Vipond, D. & R. A. Hunt, 1984. Point driven understanding: Pragmatic and cognitive dimensions of literary reading. *POETICS* 13, 1984. 3. 261–277.

Zajonc, R.B., 1980. Feeling and thinking. Preferences need no inferences. *American Psychologist* 1980. vol. 35: 151–175.

PETER BÜRGER

Interpretation after Duchamp

In 1923 T.S. Eliot already suspected that interpretation might be a somewhat dubious affair. He wrote: "For every success in this type of writing there are thousands of impostures. Instead of insight you get a fiction" (Eliot 1980, 32). During the 1960's Susan Sontag and Michel Foucault renewed the attack on interpretation. Nevertheless the number of interpretations still increases, a fact that can easily be confirmed by a quick glance into one of the journals of literary studies. And there is as well no lack of suggestions to improve upon the techniques of interpretation (some examples are to be found in this book). In such a somehow paradoxical situation the attempt to reflect again upon what we do when interpreting a text might well be justified. Here it will be my concern neither to evaluate the efficiency of certain techniques of interpretation nor to open up a literary science in the traditions of critical theory to hermeneutical insights (cf. Bürger 1979, 147–172), but to analyze the more or less unreflected preconceptions our practices of interpretation are governed by. By preconceptions I do not mean the "Standortgebundenheit" of all interpretations developed by Gadamer (cf. Gadamer 1965, 269) but rather the presuppositions we make when interpreting an artifact as a work of art. A work of art is not given to us as a simple object but as a normatively determinate formation. Thus works of art cannot be detached from the discourse which defines what they are for us. Only this can explain, why, despite of the well-founded doubts concerning the usefulness of interpretations, their number is still increasing. The question to be pursued runs as follows: What are the principles which are governing the institutionalized discourse that defines a work of art as a work of art?

Now there are, especially in the Anglo-Saxon world, tendencies to approach the problem of interpretation on such a general level that the specific question of aesthetic meaning-production is excluded from the start. By the distinction between 'the author's original meaning' and the historically variable attitudes of an interpreter towards this meaning (significance), E.D. Hirsch hopes to come to grips with the problem of the historical transformation of interpretations. "*Meaning* is that which is represented by a text; it is what the author meant by his use of a particular sign sequence; it is what the signs represent. *Significance,* on the other hand, names a relationship between that meaning and a person, or a conception, or a situation" (Hirsch 1967, 8). From a hermeneutical viewpoint, Manfred Frank argued that such a conception cannot make plausible "what