

Some of the most interesting sections of the book will occasion debate. How accurate, for instance, are Ottoman (or any Near Eastern) statistics? Can census figures be checked, somehow? Can one assume that, in 1895, 90 percent of all school-age boys in the empire actually were attending elementary school? The area of demographic research opened up here will certainly be further developed by scholars. In a book so crammed with factual detail there are also, inevitably, slips sprinkled here and there, sometimes simply of proper name or date. The next edition can correct these.

The work ends with seventy-eight pages of valuable bibliography and an index. The bibliography furnishes extensive references to Turkish and Western works, both old and new. The thorough index is at the same time a glossary and a biographical register. They are a fitting conclusion to a massive volume, packed with information, that every scholar concerned with the area will want.

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THE POETICS OF PROSE. By *Tzvetan Todorov*. Translated from the French by *Richard Howard*. Foreword by *Jonathan Culler*. Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1977 [Paris: Editions du Seuil, 1971]. 272 pp. \$4.95, paper.

Tzvetan Todorov first translated the Russian Formalists into French in 1965, and has since developed and extended several strands of Formalist thought into French Structuralism. The present collection contains fifteen essays written between 1966 and 1969, with an appendix on the heritage of Russian Formalism, dated 1964. According to Jonathan Culler, the book aims "to understand literature as a human institution, a mode of signification," instead of interpreting individual works. Actually, Todorov's ideas represent what he calls a "reading"—a blend of general literary theory and structurally oriented analytical criticism.

Underlying much of Todorov's poetics is the proposition that the dynamics of narrative structures are analogous to those of natural language. Therefore, one may operate with grammatical concepts to construct a grammar of narrative which could itself contribute to the formulation of a universal grammar of all semiotic systems. Todorov develops his theoretical designs primarily by means of binary distinctions. Thus, the speech act divides into the levels of discourse (purporting a change) and of story (mere description) which can be related to Boris Tomashevskii's dynamic and static motifs, leading in turn to the establishment of a predicative typology based on static/dynamic and adjective/verb characteristics (p. 200). Applied to a literary text, this typology can be elaborated to produce the analytical category of narrative transformation which Todorov develops through extended analogies with grammatical relationships between predicates and verbs. He calls it an "intermediary" category between generalized narrative structures (such as Propp's classifications) and "the diversity of particular narratives" (p. 219).

A number of essays focus on specific texts: *The Odyssey*, *Arabian Nights*, *The Quest of the Holy Grail*, the stories of Henry James; and others relate theory to literary practice in a similar binary mode of argument. These are illuminating, highly imaginative readings, instinctively more complex and subtle than theory alone would expect, so that it is really unfair to say that structuralists (or semioticians) can be made by teaching a parrot to divide by two. It may happen, however, that through exclusive concern with linguistic textures some critics will deny the literary text any but self-contained purpose and thus find themselves in a cage of language, as Frederic Jameson once thought.

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