Summary of Hermeneusis of a literary structure: Dostoevskij's gambler

The starting-point for this study was an investigation into the relation between literature and philosophy. This resulted in a distinction of four trends: literature is the representation of a "world", literature is a "means of knowledge", literature is "concrete or implicit philosophy", literature is "experience". All these conceptions fix important aspects of the relationship between literature and philosophy. However, it was impossible to create a practical method of analysis based upon a philosophical theory concerning the analysis of literary texts, which purpose I had in mind when starting my investigation.

Discontent with this lack of applicability together with my enthusiasm about the very concrete structuralistic way of analysing texts led me to the philosopher who has thought out structuralism philosophically, Paul Ricoeur. In his philosophy he reconciles structuralism with the hermeneutical way of interpretation by showing how the two are penetrating each other. In my dissertation this philosophy has become a concrete model for the analysis and interpretation of Dostoevskij's Gambler.

Of this hermeneusis of a literary structure the aim is therefore twofold: it aims at the complete possible interpretation of Dostoevskij's Gambler (which remains open to the future) and at the same time it pleads for the method I chose, for a method of analysing literature in which structural analysis and the hermeneutical approach to texts are shown and also put into practice in their mutual interaction and presupposition.

It is the intention of this book to use the description of the structure of The Gambler as a starting-point for the hermeneutical investigation into that structure. That is possible by an inquiry into the function of the narrative processes described for the development of the different themes and by an inquiry into the effect of these processes on the reader. The answers to these questions form the starting-point for the hermeneusis, for the reconstruction of the world of the novel. Finally that world will be confronted with the interpreter's own world in a dialogue with the novel in which also the preceding investigators of The Gambler will be involved.
The structural analysis is based upon two models: that of Eberhard Lämmert as described in "Bauformen des Erzählens" and that of Genette in "Figures III". I chose Lämmert and Genette on account of the precision and the extent of their models of analysis and because both authors illustrate the construction of the novel in such a multiplicity of aspects that up to now they have supplied the most complete and most comprehensive model. Moreover, by emphasising the time-structure of a novel they chose a rather exact and verifiable literary datum. The two theories have been applied consistently in the same way: always the closest possible imitation both with regard to the terminology and the order. The processes as described by Lämmert and Genette have been applied to The Gambler with the greatest possible precision and when that was impossible I have defined the characteristics of The Gambler using a variation on the terminology of the applied theory. In the appendix the two models are compared together with the model of W. Schmid. The verification of the models of analysis consists in their application. Their great applicability proves their worth and justifies the choice I have made.

A short general historical introduction on hermeneutics precedes the hermeneutical part (Chapter III). Then follows an exposition of Paul Ricoeur's philosophy in which the reconciliation of structuralism with hermeneutics takes place. The criteria of the interpretation as they emerge from Ricoeur's work are also mentioned in this chapter.

The model for the hermeneutics of literary texts by means of the hermeneutics of the literary structure is the result of the attempt to recreate Ricoeur's theoretical expositions in a practical model. The first phase of this model consists in the application of a structural model of analysis, i.e. the application of Lämmert and Genette. The complete model is quadripartite: first a structural analysis of The Gambler, then a hermeneutics of the found structure by inquiring into the function and effect of the narrative processes, next a reconstruction of the world of The Gambler based upon all the preceding and finally a dialogue with the world of The Gambler in which the previous interpreters participate.

As far as I know it is the first time that the theories of Lämmert and Genette have been applied in their totality and besides it is Ricoeur's theory that has been tested by application. The reconstruction of the sum of the worlds of The Gambler, of the character of babuška, of the French rich old lady collides with an accessible watering-place. The only one able to copy this portrait of the French and emotional world of Polina and Blanche represents the Russian bourgeoisie. Polina from all sides who appears regularly and constantly. In the confrontation with roulette Polina's passion for being Polina's passionate addict for whom living and dying in a fatal way.

Confronting this complex of my own world as an interpretation of addiction enter into a double production of it. In my description of the characters as a kind of addiction.
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character of babuška the world of a genuine Russian, rich old lady collides with a Western-european fashion-
able watering-place. The General is a Russian who has only been able to copy the façade, but not the mental and emotional world of the Kurort surrounding him. Blanche represents the materialistic 19th century Parisian bourgeoisie. Polina is a young Russian waylaid from all sides who appears to be able to love unselfishly and constantly. In the end, by means of a violent confrontation with roulette, the narrator himself, from being Polina's passionate adorer becomes a gambling-addict for whom living and gambling are interchangeable in a fatal way.
Confronting this complex world of The Gambler with my own world as an interpreter I made my pre-concept of addiction enter into a dialogue with Dostoevskij's reproduction of it. In my dialogue with The Gambler I consider the characters as forming a catalogue of various kinds of addiction.