

CATCHING A DROP OF WATER, OR THE PROBLEM OF LITERARY WORK IN THE SOCIOLOGY OF LITERATURE

Summary

The sociology of literature is often criticized for insufficient attention to literary works, for ignoring aesthetic aspects and literary characteristics of texts, for reducing artistic phenomena to the level of documentary sources or illustrations of sociological theses, and for limited ideological reading. The paper deals with the problem of the status of literary work in the sociology of literature. It mentions empirical studies of the literary field (subjects like writers' groups, publishing houses, book market, audience, cultural institutions); it briefly looks over the history of theoretical effort to construct models of the relationship between the text and its social context (mimetic reflections, structural homologies, removal of boundaries); it focuses on the ideas of the last decades (integration of "literary production", development of sociocriticism, social determination of aesthetic criteria) and discusses two cases of Lithuanian sociology of literature. It has been concluded in the article that during the 20th century the sociology of literature was moving from the tight linear link between text and context to more flexible models with more parameters. Though the content analysis is still the most popular way of reading literary texts, more formal elements such as genre, style, and grammar are also involved.