

## Questions and Tentative Answers: A Short Dialogical Autologue

1. Do Jean Bessière's books constitute a renewal of literary theory or, rather, do they introduce something radically new which relatives both literary theory and the way of dealing theoretically with literature?

Jean Bessière deals with so many problems and examines so many literary, meta-literary and paraliterary objects that one has to acknowledge the, obvious fact that his contribution to interpreting and understanding literature is of a paramount importance. His critical approach to literature presupposes that the **work - opera** remains within the space of enigmaticity. In his *Petite Terminologie* (see below) he underlines the following dimension of literary work seen in terms of enigmaticity: "The enigmatic characterizes itself by the fact that the response does not obliterate the question and the response remains the question."

2. To what extent such notions as "to say the literary," "enigmaticity of literature," "rhetoric of literature," and "status of literature" allow for a new view of literature?

All these notions reflect an interplay, strongly evident in Jean Bessière's texts, between the macro-categories and micro-categories. For instance "to say the literary" and "enigmaticity of literature" encompass an interchange between literature and critical language based on a series of notions of lesser dimension such as "facts of time," "thought of communication," "questioning" or "desubjectivation" and "problematological game." If literature has to be understood then it must be said polycontextually. If work-opera has to be identified as a macro-and-microcategorical reality it has to show how the macro-categories determine the specificity of contexts.

A new view of literature means a vision of complexity rethought in terms of macro- and micro-dialectical interplay.

Jean Bessière's vision of literature is based on the multi-layered understanding which takes into account and integrates the language and metalanguage of literary criticism, plus various models of literary text which show both their historical validity and a relative inadequacy.

3. "The close and the closest reading." From comparison to critical function.

Can we acknowledge the fact that literature as seen by Jean Bessière may have a specific impact on comparative literature?

Undoubtedly so. For Jean Bessière, comparative literature has to exercise a critical function. It should be less comparing than criticizing. Here is the critic's central idea and strongly expressed postulate published in this special issue of *Canadian Review of Comparative Literature / Revue Canadienne de Littérature Comparée*:

In expressing a critical function of comparative literature, I am obviously expressing a critical function of literary studies in general. This critical function is obtained when we reject the ideology of the absolute power of Literature and when we define the use of uncertainty within the literary disciplines.