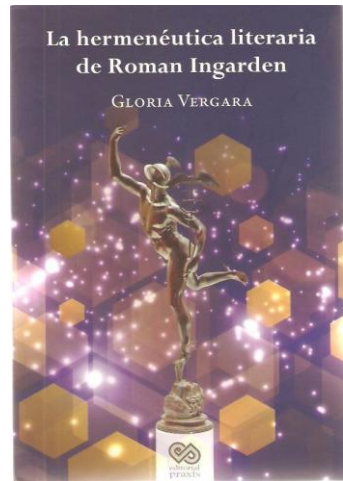


**In-between
phenomenology
and
hermeneutics
applied to literature**

Carmen Cozma*



Gloria Vergara, *La Hermenéutica literaria de Roman Ingarden / The Literary Hermeneutics of Roman Ingarden*. Cuernavaca, Morelos : Editorial Praxis, 2018. Pp. 242.

An insightful approach of Roman Ingarden’s hermeneutical vision upon literature within a harmonious architecture of discourse is given by Gloria Vergara, who is a reputable writer, scientific researcher and Professor at the Faculty of Letters and Communication, University of Colima, Mexico.

Grounded on a vast and profound literary and philosophical culture, at the same time mastering an impressive experience as essayist and poet, the author succeeded to elaborate a precious book that synthesizes the conception of one of the most important worldwide phenomenologists and interprets of arts, by priority of literature.

We must note that, somehow the text/ure challenged by the work of Roman Ingarden is developed in a kind of dialogue with “maestro

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Gerald Nyenhuis”, the outstanding translator, since the 1980s, in Mexican language of the Polish philosopher, to whom Gloria Vergara pays homage as herself mentions from the first to the final pages. At the same time, the author tries to highlight the major role of the “school of hermeneutics” that has been developed in one of the most prestigious universities of the world: Universidad Iberoamericana de la Ciudad de México, largely due to the committed activity of two distinguished personalities and Professors, Gloria Prado and Gerald Nyenhuis; and no less, the influence of the close ties cultivated with the World Phenomenology Institute and, particularly, with the phenomenologist of life Anna-Teresa Tymieniecka.

La Hermenéutica literaria de Roman Ingarden is the result of an extensive work over the last ten years, unfolded by Professor Vergara in Mexico and Brasil, through many courses and seminars with students upon hermeneutics and literary theory (p. 11), deciphering new paths of reflection, comprehension and interpretation of the literary work of art, and not only.

The book is structured in three chapters that are gradually conducting, in a logical and methodical order, offering a clear image of the intention announced by the title.

The starting point is made by an exposure of “a general theory of hermeneutics” (pp. 15-39). The reader is led from the origins descending into antiquity, even though the term was not known in its current meaning as a discipline and method of interpretation able of application to all human texts and modes of communication (as Friedrich Schleiermacher has acknowledged it); throughout a passage from the modern to the contemporary theory of interpretation; up to the insertion of Roman Ingarden’s contribution “in the context of the twenty century”. Hence, Gloria Vergara opens an interesting discussion about the mutual influences occurred in works of philosophers and literary researchers that are strongly illustrating the past century together with Ingarden; among them, she mentions Alfonso Reyes, Hans-Georg Gadamer, Paul Ricoeur, Wolfgang Iser, and Gerald Nyenhuis.

The second part of the book (pp. 41-80) is focused on the problem of intentionality that is mainly explored with reference to various thinkers, such as Franz Brentano, Edmund Husserl and, certainly, Roman Ingarden. Not at all an easy scrutiny, seeing the plurality of implied dimensions (philosophical, psychological, theological, logical, epistemological, phenomenological, ontological, aesthetical, etc.), the

endeavor of the author enlightens the comprehension of Ingarden's vision on intentionality "on the edge of interpretation", based on the Polish phenomenologist's theory about "the multiple stratification of the literary work of art". The reader finds significant observations caused by Roman Ingarden's writings; principally, *Das literarische Kunstwerk. Eine Untersuchung aus dem Grenzgebiet der Ontologie, Logik und Literaturwissenschaft* (published in 1931) / *The Literary Work of Art* and *O poznawaniu dzieła literackiego* (1937) / *The Cognition of the Literary Work of Art*, explaining issues of the intersubjectivity activated in relation with literature, of reading process, of implied sensitivity and reconstructing, of objectifying and revealing, of "concretization as a psychic act, anchored in the linguistic foundation of text" (p. 72).

An apart attention is paid to the question of "time and intentionality" according to the phenomenological and hermeneutical conception developed by Ingarden in *The Literary Work of Art*, translated in Mexican by Gerald Nyenhuis, and published in 2005 as *La comprensión de la obra de arte literaria* (pp. 77-80).

The most substantial section of Professor Vergara's book is devoted to "Ingardenian pillars for a literary hermeneutics", in the third chapter (pp. 81-236).

There is an in-depth and detailed exegesis that brings to the fore categories, ideas and thematizations from the philosophy of art elaborated by Roman Ingarden in his effort to applying it to literature.

The discourse unveils aspects regarding: the scientific text and the literary text, in the distinction operated by Ingarden, "based on concepts of opalescence, artistic and aesthetic values, and quasi-judgments, when in discussion is the theme of literary truth" (p. 82); the literary work of art as an intentional object, the aesthetic experience and the aesthetic object in terms of the phenomenological ontology; the strata and the schematic structure of the literary work.

Actually, the author dedicates the broadest space in her book (pp. 88-160) to this last mentioned topic; and she operates a systematic analysis, using a lot of literary examples in support of the Ingardenian view.

Being herself a poet, Gloria Vergara proves a unique power of shedding light on literary hermeneutics coming from within the literary creativity; at the same time she does it as well as possible from the status of a university psychopedagogue eager to share knowledge and understanding with the students. It is obvious her easiness and grace in

moving through the works of remarkable writers and poets of the world – many belonging to the fascinating South America culture -, who have developed themselves original theories: Machado de Assis, Alfonso Reyes, Miguel de Unamuno, Vicente Huidobro, Xavier Villaurrutia, Jorge Luis Borges, Jorge Ibarguengoitia, Juan Rulfo, Octavio Paz, Jaime Sabines, Haruki Murakami et al.

The investigation is completed by issues such as “metaphysical qualities” that always challenge the reflection on narrate writings; “the concretization” – a term for which Roman Ingarden has got a special preference – that engages ‘reconstruction’ and ‘actualization’; the literary truth and quasi-judgments, stressing on the facts that “literature is not a copy of the reality” and “the fiction contains a truth”. According to the exeget, “the truth and the congruence are qualities that bear the quasi-judgments in the work of literature” (p. 188); the “opalescence”; the artistic and aesthetic values; the aesthetic experience, underlying three concepts used by Ingarden as being “claimed by the process of comprehending the literary work, namely an aesthetic attitude, a pre-aesthetic knowledge and an apprehension of the aesthetic object” (p. 219).

The question of “the aesthetic object” with its structure and formation is explained by featuring the importance of the value qualities and the experience of the reader, which constitute a condition for a viable intersubjectivity that emerges from the encounter-dialogue of the perceiving subject with the literary work of art and, indirectly, with its creator.

There are many elements of great interest in *La Hermenéutica literaria de Roman Ingarden*, signed by Gloria Vergara, any reader who want to learn and understand something essential about the complex process of interpreting a literary artistic work can disclose and really enjoy the book. It’s worth reiterating that we face a fine analysis realized by a theorist and artist alike, with an inspiring work and experience in both literary creation and exegetical research under the auspices of hermeneutics and phenomenology.