

J. M. Keynes littéraire ?

Vers une analyse stylistique de la *Théorie Générale*

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The nineteenth century in the economic thought.

- The canons of political economy:
 - **Adam Smith** (1723-1790), *The Wealth of Nations* (1776).
 - **Thomas Malthus** (1766-1834), *An Essay on the Principle of Population* (1798).
 - **David Ricardo** (1772-1823), *The Principles of Political Economy and Taxation* (1817).
 - **John Stuart Mill** (1806-1873), *Principles of Political Economy* (1848).
- Efforts to re-work the major writers in terms of later economic and mathematical insight.
- Literary approach to economics backed by Deirdre McCloskey and Vanessa Brown. (Henderson 1995: 1)

19th century 'literary economics' (1)

- "They, and the economic circumstances that they were engaged in analysing, gave rise to further works, including novels with socio-economic themes [...] and to the imaginatively rather than scientifically constructed ideas of the Romantic poets ". (WH p. 3)
 - **Maria Edgeworth** (1768-1849): economic stories for children.
 - **Jane Marcet** (1769-1858): *Conversations on Political Economy* (1816).
 - **Harriet Martineau** (1802-1876) merged fiction and economy in *Illustrations of Political Economy* (1834).
 - **John Ruskin** (1819-1900) as an economics commentator.
 - **Thomas De Quincey** (1785-1859): *Confessions of an English Opium Eater* (1822), *The logic of the Political Economy* (1844).

19th century 'literary economics' (2)

- **Francis Ysidro Edgeworth** (1845-1926): *Mathematical Psychics: An Essay on the Application of Mathematics to the Moral Sciences*, published (1881).
 - indifference curve, Edgeworth box diagram.
- Edgeworth "blended the literary tradition with the scientific tradition and passed on to his contemporaries, including John Maynard Keynes, some of the cultural tradition of literary economics ". (WH p. 13)
 - The level of reader awareness.
 - The literary quality of the more rhetorical passages.
 - The subtle references to a wider literary culture. (WH p. 4)

John Maynard Keynes (1883-1946) et *La Théorie Générale*

- « Keynes eut la chance d'être, au-delà d'un savant des statistiques, un esprit universel, doté d'une immense culture, capable d'avoir embrassé autant l'histoire, que la philosophie, la logique, les mathématiques, et bien entendu l'économie de son temps. L'un des derniers penseurs universels. [...] Il n'était pas un 'spécialiste'. Il le savait. Comme il savait que la rhétorique, la force de conviction, est au cœur de l'économie. » (Maris 2007 : 6).
- « En juin 1935, il fait parvenir à quatre de ses plus proches collègues un jeu d'épreuves pour recueillir leurs commentaires. Il s'agit de Harrod, Hawtrey, Kahn et Joan Robinson. La *Théorie Générale* paraît au début de 1936. » (Gazier 2009 : 59)
- « L'ouvrage alterne les passages difficiles et techniques et les passages grand public. [...] Il décalque la structure des *Principles of Economics* de Marshall. » (*id.* : 60-61)
- « [...] la *Théorie Générale* est bien un ouvrage de théorie pure – malgré tous ses allers-retours, ses théories dans la théorie, ses incises et ses emphases bien littéraires, et son humour très cambridgien [...] ». (Maris 2007 : 7)

Style and persuasion in *The General Theory*

- A stylistic analysis of *The General Theory* " in order to establish ways in which linguistic detail supports and sustains macro-aspects of textual organisation and patterning ".
 - "The focus is on linguistic practice at the level of the sentence and of the paragraph".
- The aim is "to reveal micro-strategies of persuasion ".
- "In examining style, the interest remains in understanding how the text is constructed in order to persuade ".
- "[...] Keynes is very anxious to develop a direct relationship with target readers, widely defined whilst manipulating classical rhetorical strategies, a 'natural' conversational tone, adapting a colloquial phrase or by introducing a witticism ". (WH pp. 154-155)
- "Keynes telling a story and hence, a useful fiction" (WH p. 166)

Stylistic devices

- Authorial and reader presence in the text : personal pronouns and possessives.
- The long and complex clause.
- Complex nominal groups. (WH p. 158)
- Double or coordinated phrases: nouns, adjectives, adverbs (WH p. 173). [Triplets].
- Contrastive language and rhetoric (Cicero's *De Oratore*) : to contrast Keynes's arguments and conclusions with those of the classical theory.
 - Definite and indefinite articles.
 - Vagueness: "writers in the classical tradition", "a classical economist".
 - Verbs. Present tense and emphatic verb form in the present tense for Keynes/ present perfect passive or active tense for the classical economists.
 - Sentence-initial 'but' and paragraph-initial 'but'. For.
 - 'actual', 'fact', 'experience' and 'facts of experience' highlighting contrasts with the Classical School (WH p. 170).
- Rhetorical flourishes, 'textual decorations', figures of speech, archaic phrases, anaphora

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