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LAJOS NYÍRŐ

THE RUSSIAN FORMALIST SCHOOL

HISTORICAL SURVEY

Before the 1917 Revolution, during the years of World War I, the young men in Prof. Vengerov's Pushkin seminar at Petersburg University became enthused about studying poetic language, rhythm, rhyme and composition. At that time there was in Moscow another linguistic circle,¹ whose members made vehement attacks on Fortunatov's Neogrammarian principles. The members of these two circles formed *Opojaz*.² The activity of *Opojaz* first passed unnoticed but in the twenties got into the cross-fire of spirited debates. Among the debaters were such well-known persons as Lunacharsky, Trotsky, Bukharin, Sakulin, Kogan and Pereverzev. Opinions about the School, which was later also called "formalist", were unequivocally condemnatory, especially after it was "closed down" in the early thirties. And from the latter half of the thirties onward its activity was hidden by a veil of silence, except for the occasional derogatory remark or biased political interpretation.

All the same, the literary theories of the Russian formalists exercised a tremendous influence on modern literary scholarship. Their works were soon translated into Czech, Slovak and Polish, and their achievements survived in the teachings of the Prague

¹ The Moscow Linguistic Circle was formed in 1915 by some university students: F. I. Buslaev, Petr Bogatyrev, Roman Jakobson and G. O. Vinokur.

² *Opojaz* (*Obschestvo izuchenija poeticheskogo jazyka*) (Society for the Study of Poetic Language) was born in 1919. The founding members were, among others, Viktor Shklovsky, L. P. Jakubinsky, Osip Brik, B. M. Eichenbaum and Roman Jakobson. They were joined by Jury Tynyanov and B. M. Tomashesvsky. 'Fellow-travellers' of *Opojaz* were V. M. Zhirmunsky and V. V. Vinogradov.

School and in the Polish Integral School.³ Their influence is to some extent felt in Ingarden's conception of the artistic work; Wellek and Warren in their *Theory of Literature* often make mention of the theoretical achievements of the Russian formalists. A decade or so ago their activity was still more frequently talked about. In America, Victor Erlich wrote a monograph discussing the history of the school and its basic principles.⁴ In France, a collection of their essays was published, and on that occasion Pierre Daix in his article published in *Les Lettres Françaises* gave a favourable evaluation of their literary views.⁵ Mouton publishers issued in photoprint the works of three Russian formalists: Zhirmunsky, Tynyanov and Eichenbaum.⁶

The attitude towards the Formalist School has also changed in the socialist countries. Works by Shklovsky, Tomashevsky and Tynyanov have recently appeared in the Soviet Union. These reprints have become subjects of heated debates. Timofeyev, Elsberg and Palievsky reject very emphatically all the theoretical precepts of the formalists. Others, however, mainly those who approach art through semantics or information theory, and those who introduce structuralist methods to the examination of the work of art, hold them in high esteem. It should be noted that even the theoretical opponents of the formalists cannot do without certain of their results. In essays on poetic language we always meet the names of Shklovsky, Tomashevsky, Tynyanov, Jakubinsky and Zhirmunsky. Especially Czech scholars are interested in the formalist teachings. Zdenek Mathauser in his

³ We mention only a few major works here: Viktor Shklovsky, *Teorie prózy* (Praha, 1933); *Teoria literatúry*, ed. Mikuláš Bakoš (Trnava, 1941). Publications in Polish: V. M. Zhirmunsky, *Wstęp do poetiki* (Warszawa, 1934); B. M. Tomashevsky, *Teoria literatury* (Poznan, 1935); *Ruska form alna szkola* (Warszawa, 1937).

⁴ Victor Erlich, *Russian Formalism: History — Doctrine* (The Hague, 1955); in German: *Russischer Formalismus* (München, 1964).

⁵ *Théorie de la littérature*, ed. Tzvetan Todorov (Paris, 1965). — Pierre Daix, 'Les Formalistes russes (1915—1930) et la théorie de la littérature'. *Les Lettres Françaises*, March 3—9, 1966.

⁶ V. M. Zhirmunsky, *Voprosy teorii literatury* (The Hague, 1962). — B. M. Eichenbaum, *Skvoz' literaturu* (The Hague, 1962); *Russkaja proza* (The Hague, 1963). — Tynyanov, *Problema stikhotvornogo jazyka* (The Hague, 1963); *Arkhaisty i novatory* (München, 1967).

monograph on Mayakovsky interprets both the artistic principles and the poetic activity of the Soviet poets in terms of the *Opojaz* theory of literature; Grebeničkova and Ladislav Štoll, analysing the “formal method”, wrote lengthy essays on the subject.⁷

THE RISE OF THE RUSSIAN FORMALIST SCHOOL

The history of the Russian Formalist School is linked to the history of the Russian society of the early years of the century, to the events in its ideological and artistic life. From the turn of the century, Russian society was in a state of ferment and became the scene of radical changes which led to the October Revolution and to the formation of the first proletarian state. Reflecting this historic development, sharp differences and fierce battles characterized the situation of the most diverse branches of art in the pre-revolutionary period as well as in the years following 1917. Opposed to each other, just as on the social and political battlefield, were the old and the new, the revolutionary and the conservative. New initiatives were made in almost all spheres of art. A good deal of them proved to be pioneering enterprises of twentieth-century modern art. Masters of Russian painting, such as Kandinsky, Malevic, Chagall, Larionov, Lissitzky, and Gabo Pevsner exercised great influence on the future of modern art. The new trend in sculpture was set by artists such as Arkhipenko, Zadkin and Tatlin. In music we can refer to Skryabin and Stravinsky. Also literature, particularly poetry, underwent radical changes. The mushrooming poetic schools opposed all that was obsolete and traditional and rudely battled with one another at the same time. Conspicuous was the vigour and wide the spectrum of initiatives and experimentation in the literary development unfolding in the current of the working-class movement. Publishing houses and

⁷ Zdenek Mathauser, *Umění poezie: Vladimir Majakovskij a jeho doba* (Praha, 1964). — R. Grebeničkova, 'Sternianství v ruské proze', *Československá rusistika*, Oct. 1, 1965. — Ladislav Štoll, 'Z krize estetiky a ruská formální škola', in *O tvar a strukturu v slovesném umění* (Praha, 1966). — M. Grygar, 'Formální metoda po čtyřiceti letech', *Česka literatura*, 1966.

periodicals were established, and some considerable debates took place with contributors such as Lenin, Plekhanov, Lunacharsky, Voronsky, Bogdanov and Gorky. The new literary crop was also extremely rich. Poems, dramas and novels by Gorky, Serafimovich, Demyan Bedny, Veresaev, Nechaev, Gastev, Novikov-Priboy, Gladkov and Lyashko mark the establishment of a new revolutionary literature. Out of all these efforts sprang the theory of socialist art.

After the October Revolution artistic life became the scene of even fiercer and sharper clashes. It was amid bold experiments and impassioned debates that the nascent, prospective art of the socialist society gained in strength, soon to come to be the focus of universal interest. The trail-blazing results in all the arts — literature, music, painting, film, sculpture and architecture — propagated the universal significance of socialist art.

We have to characterize, at least in their outlines, those schools and trends of literary scholarship which the Russian formalists followed or repudiated. Representatives of the traditional, academic study of literature were puzzled by these new phenomena in the evolution of art, since their obsolete scientific method was unfit for the innovative endeavours of poetry, the new achievements of rhythmic prose. That is why already in the first few decades of the twentieth century, symptoms of a deep crisis appeared in Russian literary scholarship. According to A. N. Veselovsky literary scholarship found itself in a state of *res nullius*. Roman Jakobson criticized the absurd state of affairs in which, under the pretence of literary studies, it was really psychology and the history of philosophy that was being done, the literary relics being regarded as “faulty, secondary documents”; specifically literary studies were out of the question. Tynyanov described the state of literary scholarship as being in a “colonial status”, as it had completely lost its independence and had become an appendage of extraneous studies.

This biting criticism was addressed chiefly to the “cultural-historical” school which had developed into an influential trend in the second half of the nineteenth century, and which was still widely respected in the early decades of the twentieth. The Russian representatives of this cultural-historical school, Pypin, Tikhonravov, Vengerov, among others, took as the starting point of their

works the social function of literature, but their investigation was restricted to the content: it ignored the significance of artistic form. As a consequence, they one-sidedly reduced the complex literary phenomena to problems of content and explained them as part of a general social, philosophical and ideological process. It is characteristic, for example, that in Pypin's very popular 2,000-page monograph, *Istoriya russkoj literatury* ('The History of Russian Literature'), there is not one single page dedicated to aesthetic analysis. As Piksarov put it, Pypin "interpreted literature as a part of general culture and saw its function in its being illustrative of cultural history".⁸

Around the turn of the century, the attempt to revitalize Russian literary scholarship was indicated by a new approach, whose practitioners already dealt with the "formal" question of literature with greater sensitivity. First of all we have to mention the psychological-linguistic school. Its initiator and most prominent representative was A. A. Potebnya, whose activity considerably promoted poetic thinking. The theoretical foundations of his poetics was in line with Humboldt's, Herder's and Hamann's thoughts. Every single word in itself is an accomplished work of art. In any word, he distinguished the outward form, namely the articulate sound, the physico-acoustic element of the word, and an inward form, the image, as well as meaning and content. Potebnya derived the essence of poetry from the image. He arrived at the conclusion that art is thinking in images. His theory was applied by Russian symbolism.

The Russian symbolists were not only excellent poets but also verse theorists of fine intuition. While "academic" literary scholarship did not touch upon the acute problems of poetry, the symbolists themselves undertook the scholarly formulation of the novelties of their poems. The speculative essays of Blok, Bryusov, Chukovsky, but in particular Andrey Bely's volume entitled *Simvolizm* ('Symbolism', 1910), found favourable response first of all among young people. "Philosophical aesthetics", whose principal advocates were Merezhkovsky, Shestov and Balmont, likewise endorsed and developed the symbolist principles of art.

⁸ N. K. Piksarov, *Novyj put' literaturovedeniya*.

We have to mention one more considerable endeavour in literary studies. In the Russia of the latter half of the nineteenth century a noteworthy ethnographic-folklore school emerged, represented by A. N. Veselovsky on a high scientific level. His books on the history of subject matter, on historical poetics, also opened a new chapter in the study of literature. By collating literature with folklore, he introduced the comparative historical method; his work, thus, marks the establishment of this method in Russia.

THE RISE OF *OPOJAZ*

Upon entering the scene, the Russian formalists engaged in a passionate debate with all the above-mentioned trends: the cultural-history school, Potebnyaism, the ethnographic-folklore school and the symbolists.

The theory of literature of the formalists developed gradually, overcoming contradictions, and expanding its sphere of investigation. One of its founding theorists was Viktor Shklovsky who, by his polemically pointed, apposite writings, determined the *Opojaz* tendency of literary theory. At the outset Jakubinsky, Brik and Polivanov belonged to the Formalist School; this nucleus was later joined by Eichenbaum, Jakobson, then Tynyanov and Tomashevsky. In the evolution of the poetics of formalism Zhirmunsky and V. V. Vinogradov played an important role, although their views differed in several essential points from those of *Opojaz*. Inseparably associated with the history of formalism are Arvatov, Voznesensky and Zeitlin who, as proponents of the formal sociological theory, highly appreciated the principles of formalism and relied on them in their works. The name of Propp — who in his *Morphology of the Folktale*⁹ used the formal method — is also inseparable from the history of formalism as are those of many others who contributed in some way to the development of the formalist theory of literature — Balukhaty, Vinokur, Bernshtein and Engel'gardt, among others.

The principles of literary theory did not appear in theoretical or speculative works. Their theoretic conclusions and principles

⁹ V. J. Propp, *Morfologija skazki* (Leningrad, 1928).

were presented in works on the “history of literature” and in “critiques”. Their outstanding activity in exploring literary history could be the subject of a special essay. They have the credit for studies in the field of Old Russian and nineteenth-century Russian literature. They took interest in the artistry of Pushkin, Lermontov, Küchelbecker, Nekrasov, Fet, Gogol, Tolstoy and Dostoevsky. This interest prompted the writing of several important monographs. They propounded their “theoretical” theses in conjunction with very valuable art analyses. Even in cases when they approached literature by the deductive method, their training in literary history definitely, though latently, came into play. They also had excellent knowledge of world literature. Of greater significance is the fact that their activity was closely connected with the kind of artistic practice that was considered modern at the time, with the current – revolutionary – aspirations of art, first of all with the fate of futurism. The critics and chroniclers of formalism often saw it as only a theoretical reflection of futurism. And not without reason. Shklovsky, Jakobson and Osip Brik were on intimate terms with Mayakovsky, Khlebnikov and other futurists. In *Lef* (the abbreviation stands for *Levy Front*, ‘Left Arts Front’), the periodical of the futurists, Brik and Arvatov, as representatives of the formal-socialological theory, commended the formalists for their activity. Mayakovsky, too, spoke of them with appreciation. On the other hand, the formalists wrote essays on Mayakovsky and Khlebnikov, quoting from them widely, and proclaiming several theories on lyricism which agreed with the *ars poetica* of these poets. For example, notions such as “self-valuable word” (*samovitoe slovo*) and “transrational word” (*zaumnoe slovo*) are to be found in the vocabulary of futurists and formalists alike. In the course of their initial works the futurists made it their slogan that it was absolutely necessary to restore the real value of words. The formalists entertained similar views. As appears from Eichenbaum’s memoirs, the first formalist group considered it a fundamental task to “free the poetic word from the shackles of philosophical and religious tendencies” (which mainly the symbolist poets liked to build upon). One of the earliest writings of Shklovsky is entitled ‘Emancipation of the World’ (1914). It is therefore no accident that a considerable number of their works were published in *Lef* together with the works of the futurists.

In this first stage of their activity they concentrated on the clarification of the peculiarities, the very existence, and functions of poetic language. Their efforts found expression in a collection of essays on the theory of poetic language, *Sborniki po teorii poeticheskogo jazyka* (An Anthology of Theories of Poetic Language) published in 1916–1917. As early as 1919, *Opojaz* published the first collection of the series of papers entitled *Poetika* ('Poetics') which gave a true picture of the scope of interest of the formalists and the outlines of their poetic outlook.¹⁰ The authors endeavoured to determine the role of language in the work of art as a phenomenon presupposing the existence of the literary work and as a specific element of the work.

Findings in modern linguistics – thus, first of all, Baudouin de Courtenay's and Scherba's principles of phonetics – had a very great share in the evolution of the literary theory of the Russian formalists. Two members of the Petrograd section of *Opojaz*, Jakubinsky and Polivanov, disciples of Baudouin de Courtenay, made considerable use in works on poetics of their master's achievements in phonetics. The young literary men of the Moscow Linguistic Circle in turn learned much from the excellent works of Scherba. This circle soon got acquainted with Saussure's theory as well.¹¹ Prominent members of the Moscow Circle were Jakobson, Bogatyrev and Tomashevsky.

In the first volume of *Poetics* (1919), the first important publication of *Opojaz*, Jakubinsky made an attempt to distinguish the language of poetry from everyday language, and Osip Brik, with his essay on the repetition of sounds, laid the foundations for the Russian formalist theory of poetic language. The most instructive writings in this collection were by Shklovsky and Eichenbaum.

¹⁰ Essays in this collection: Viktor Shklovsky, 'Potebnya'; 'O poezii i zaumnom jazyke'; 'Iskusstvo kak priem'; 'Svjaz priemov sjužetosloženiya s obščimi priemami stilja'; L. P. Jakubinsky, 'O zvukax poeticheskogo jazyka'; Osip Brik, 'Zvukovye povtory'; B. M. Eichenbaum, 'Kak sdelana 'Shinel' Gogolya'.

¹¹ It was known especially in the Moscow Linguistic Circle. Already in his first works Jakobson made mention of Saussure's theory. In connection with his synchronic and diachronic approach to language, the first occurrence in print of his conception of language as *langue* and *parole* is, to the best of our knowledge, in Vinokur's essay ('Poetics, Linguistics, Sociology', *Lef*, 923/3, p. 106).

In his essay *O poezii zaumnom jazyke* ('On Poetics and Transrational Language') Shklovsky, in agreement with Khlebnikov and Kamensky's theory of the *zaum*, explains that language in poetry may convey not only logical but also illogical, transrational (*zaum*), meanings. In this connection Shklovsky underlines the suggestive functions of poetic language. In another paper *Iskusstvo kak priem* ('Art as a Device'), which can be regarded as a programmatic study, he defines the substance of art as the device.¹² To Shklovsky the device means the arrangement of the elements of the work of art, or the ruling principle underlying it. In his interpretation, content has no separate existence in the work; he conceives of content, too, as the building material of the work of art. Shklovsky deals with the problem of automation in art. He sees the significance and the function of art in its capability of saving man from the impact of automation. He calls this special function of art *ostranenie*. With this word, which is a Russian neologism, he denotes the creative process that annihilates automatism. Some derive the term from the word *stranny* ('strange').¹³

Already in this initial period, the formalists, besides discussing the criteria of poetic language, were intensely interested in other questions, too, including the interpretation of the structural phenomena of the artistic work — subject matter, fable, hero, rhythm. Shklovsky and Eichenbaum wrote remarkable essays analysing the devices of prose construction. In several of his writings, Shklovsky revealed the most diverse devices of the composition of prose works.¹⁴

Early in the twenties, the group of formalists was joined by a few more literary historians. Among them were Tynyanov and Tomashevsky, who adopted the *Opojaz* theory without reservation; others, however, for example Zhirmunsky and Vinogradov, who

¹² The notion of *priem* was rendered as 'device' in English, *procédé* in French, *chwyt* in Polish, *Kunstgriff* and *Kunstmittel* in German, *postup* in Czech and Slovak.

¹³ The notion of *ostranenie* has been translated into German as *Verfremdung*, into Slovak as *obzvláštnenie*, into French as *singularisation*, and into English as 'making it strange' or 'estrangement'.

¹⁴ Viktor Shklovsky discusses this matter in the following essays: 'Svjaz priemov sjuzhetoslozheniya s obschimi priemami stilya'; 'Psichologicheskaya rampa'; 'Iskusstvo kak priem'; 'Razvertyvanie sjuzheta'; 'Tristram Shandy Sterna i teorija romana'.

agreed with the formalists on numerous questions, did not endorse the principle of *Opojaz* orthodoxy. In 1919, Zhirmunsky wrote an approving review of the formalists' collection entitled *Poetics*, and in 1921, in his essay *Zadachi poetiki* ('The Tasks of Poetics') gave a positive analysis of the principal theses of the *Opojaz*,¹⁵ but he had already dissociated himself to some extent from the *Opojaz* views of art, especially from the conception of the immanent nature of the work of art.

It can be stated that from the early twenties on, both in their method and choice of subject a substantial change took place in the activity of the formalists. While earlier they had expounded their views mainly in publicistic works of a declarative character, in the second stage of their activity they concentrated upon circumspect scientific investigations.¹⁶ They judged the constituent elements of the poem by their internal functions and explored the structural principles which made it a verse. They thought of the artistic work as an organized and dynamic unity (for a clear explanation of this, see the afore-mentioned book by Tynyanov), and reached a new stage in the development of the conception of immanent literature. To conceive of the work of art as a system was a considerable step in the theory of formalism. Defining the work as an organized and closed formation, Tynyanov carried his work-centred conceptions of literary theory to completion. This realization was at the same time a firm starting-point for regarding the whole sphere of literature as a single system.

DEBATES AROUND THE *OPOJAZ*

When the theoretical positions of the formalists became consolidated, the opposition to them grew stronger. The debate began with Zhirmunsky's foreword written to the 1923 Russian edition of Oskar Walzel's *Gehalt und Gestalt im Kunstwerk des Dichters*.

¹⁵ Published in the periodical *Nov'* No. 1 of 1921, and included in the volume *Teoriya literatury*.

¹⁶ B. M. Eichenbaum, *Melodika russkogo liricheskogo stikha* (Petrograd, 1922); J. Tynyanov, *Problema stikhotvornogo jazyka* (Leningrad, 1924); V. M. Zhirmunsky, *Rifma: ee istoriya i teoriya* (Petrograd, 1923); B. M. Tomashevsky, *Russkoe stikhoslozhenie: Metrika* (Petrograd, 1923).

Zhirmunsky there rejected several essential points of the formalist conception of literary theory. Eichenbaum therefore called him a "traitor". A hard fight ensued also between representatives of the Formalist School and those of the sociological view of literature. After the victory of the Revolution, in the early twenties, the position of sociologically orientated literature became stronger. The representatives of the sociological method looked at the literary work and the evolution of literature as directly and mechanically connected with the economic structure of society, social production and class struggle. It is self-evident that their views clashed with the immanency principle of the Formalist School, which raised, as it were, a barrier to the investigations of a sociological character. We must not reduce the struggle of these two schools to a simple quarrel between the bourgeois and Marxist views of literature. True, some representatives of the sociological school, getting ever closer to Marxism and working under favourable conditions, became in fact practitioners of Marxist literary scholarship. But this does not mean that it was so from the beginning. Discussing the one-time role of the sociological school, Lifshic states that "vulgar sociology had no connection at all with Marxism except for a few terminological coincidences", and goes on to say that "the logic of political struggle gradually revealed the internal correlation of the vulgar Marxist currents with the Trotskyist and right-wing cliques".¹⁷ It is also a fact that in the early twenties some "Marxists" who were close to the sociological school also criticized Mayakovsky very sharply, presenting him as a proponent of petty-bourgeois ideas, as a formalist artist, and an anarchist. It was no mere coincidence that Lunacharsky, who at that time represented the real Marxist standpoint in aesthetics and literary theory, though using a different terminology and even sharply criticizing formalism, nevertheless professed some views similar to those of the formalists. For instance, his views on the characteristics of modern art coincided with theirs in a number of respects.¹⁸ For an understanding of the debate, we need to consider also the political attitude of the formalists. Some of them were members

¹⁷ Mihail Lifsic, *Marx és az esztétika* (Budapest, 1966), pp. 26, 27.

¹⁸ It suffices to mention Lunacharsky's writings in defence of Meyerhold's art, and his analyses of the modern trends of Soviet and Western literature.

of the Bolshevik Party and held important leading posts in the field of socialist culture. Their views of art, which broke with tradition and favoured the new at all costs, were not diametrically opposed to the newly founded culture.

Their views on art comprised at the same time inconsistencies and contradictions. Their theory of the autonomy and independence of art, for all their other merits, may well have caused dissatisfaction in a period when the revolution demanded that artists be committed in politics. More and more often they were accused of bourgeois aestheticism. The analysis of their theory is complicated by the formalist's misconception that the vulgar sociological literary theory and the Marxist view of art were identical; thus, in several respects, they were waging war upon a presumed Marxism. Eichenbaum argued as early as 1922 that the monism of Marxism, its views on reality, failed to take into account the specificity of art. "The Russian intelligentsia and science with it", he wrote, "were poisoned with the views of monism. Marx as a genuine German reduced the whole of life to 'economics' . . . They found the basic factor, and began to construct schemata. Art could not be squeezed into the scheme, so they threw it out. Let it exist only as a 'reflection'. Sometimes it is useful from the point of view of information."¹⁹ Shklovsky made an even fiercer attack on the sociological method — meaning Marxism by it. In his short writing *Khod konya* ('The Knight's Move') he listed his counterarguments "refuting" Marxism in five points.²⁰ The gist of these was that, in his opinion, the environment, relations of production, class struggle and ethnographical surroundings do not determine and do not influence the substance and evolution of art.

It was Shklovsky's writing that provoked Trotsky's criticism of formalism. Trotsky's intervention in the debate about the Formalist School brought on a new turn. In his book 'Literature and Revolution' (1924) he devoted a special chapter to the artistic and political views of the formalists. He described the school as outright idealist, openly opposed to the materialist interpretation of art. He branded their activity as hostile, declaring that the only ideology openly hostile to Marxism in the land of the Soviets was

¹⁹ B. M. Eichenbaum, *Knizhny ugol*, 1922/8, pp. 5—100.

²⁰ Viktor Shklovsky, *Khod konya* (Moskva—Berlin, 1923).

formalist poetics. His criticism of Shklovsky was especially biting. He stated that Shklovsky readily reconciled his views on the objectivity of literary scholarship with the most subjective aesthetic value judgements and adopted a negative attitude towards the historical materialist conception of art. He styled the entire school an “impertinent bastard”, blaming it for regarding form as the substance of art and objecting that its analytic method was basically “descriptive” and “semi-statistical”, and that it analysed the etymology and syntax of artistic compositions by “counting” the recurring vowels and consonants and epithets. At the same time, he recognized that it was to Shklovsky’s credit and a result of his exertions that “the theory of art has risen from alchemy to the rank of chemistry”. He admitted that this formal study of literature “is doubtless necessary and useful, provided that its partial, subsidiary and preparatory character is understood”. An opinion similar to that of Trotsky was set forth by Bukharin, who in his writing ‘The Formalist Method in Art’ qualified the activity of the formalists as the preparatory stage of an anticipated synthesis.²¹

The intervention of Trotsky and Bukharin reanimated and gave the debates around the Formalist School a very definite direction. In this respect we have to note that Victor Erlich wished to present Trotsky’s position as liberal and Lunacharsky’s as inflexible but condemnatory. The truth is that it was precisely Trotsky’s vehement criticism which marked the start of “administrative” harassment.

SOCIOLOGICAL METHOD AND FORMALISM

For one thing, the representatives of the sociological method redoubled their criticism of the formalists. The periodical *Pechat’ i revolyuciya* (‘Press and Revolution’) started a debate in 1924 with the purpose of confronting the opposing views on the “formal method”. An article by Eichenbaum opened the debate; contributors were Sakulin, Bobrov, Lunacharsky, Kogan and Polyansky.²²

²¹ *Krasnaya nov’*, 1925/3.

²² B. M. Eichenbaum ‘Vokrug voprosa o formalistakh’; N. Sakulin, ‘Iz pervoistochnika’; S. Bobrov, ‘Method i apologet’; A. Lunacharsky ‘Formalizm v nauke ob iskusstve’; P. Kogan, ‘O formal’nom metode’; V. Polyansky, ‘Po povodu B. Eichenbauma’.

Eichenbaum remarked upon the attacks directed against the formal method, including Trotsky's condemnatory criticism. He stated that the formalist theory cannot be regarded as antithetical to Marxism, for Marxism discusses and analyses the phenomena of reality on the plane of philosophy, while formalism, being only a literary theory, was nothing but a partial science. The reason he offered for opposing the Formalist School to the sociological method was that the promoters of the latter took a mechanical view of the social genesis of the specific phenomena of literature, and, consequently, stood on the grounds of a mechanical determinism. To Trotsky's remark that the formalists ought to deal more with the artist's world view, he replied: this was precisely what "idealist scholarship has dealt with, and against which Trotsky is protesting, but so are we, too". And Eichenbaum asked: "Can we approach the artist's world view only intuitively? Is that what we have to follow? Is that what Trotsky wants?" The Formalist School is "a revolutionary movement, inasmuch as it delivers literary scholarship from its old and outworn traditions", and therefore Trotsky who was opposed to it, Eichenbaum thought, acted as a defender of the old, conservative science.

Arguing with Eichenbaum, some critics, such as Sakulin and Kogan, while advocating the sociological method, also conceded a certain measure of justification to the formal method. Lunacharsky assailed the Formalist School all the more vehemently. He held the view that "art for art's sake" and a theory in defence and in support of it were bourgeois needs, and the Formalist School provided for them. He declared that "Marxism still has few results to boast of in the field of literary scholarship; nevertheless, if one weighs the claptrap of the formalists, in which one might even be able to discover a few possibly useful seeds, against Perverzev's book on Gogol' in the other side of the scale, then one finds that the Marxists need not worry."²³ As appears from Lunacharsky's contribution, he gave something of a time of grace to the formalists, trusting that Marxist literary scholarship would grow strong in the meantime. Polyansky took the strongest stand against the formalists. He stated that Eichenbaum's polemic against Trotsky was inadmissible. He contended that with his fallacious methodological specu-

²³ A. V. Lunacharsky, 'Formalizm y nauke ob iskusstve', p. 31.

lations Eichenbaum disguised his own anti-Marxist views. In his conception the formal method was reactionary and utterly hostile to Marxism, and sprang from the same social moods which had given birth to futurism, imagism, and the Serapion brothers' art and theory.

The discussion in 'Press and Revolution' clearly shows that the difference between the followers of the sociological and the formal methods became extremely sharp. The formalists were tireless in their creativity and worked hard to clarify the theoretical problems that arose during the debates. From that time onward in their essays they discussed the relationship between literature and reality, the principle of literary evolution, the artist's personality and the function of literature. Attempts were also made to reconcile formalism with the sociological method, or rather, with Marxism.

This latter idea was given expression already in the early twenties, particularly in the periodical, *Lef*. In his study advocating the formal method, Osip Brik insisted that *Opojaz* was a veritable gravedigger of idealist poetics, and so Marxism had no reason to fight against it. Not much later Zeitlin wrote that the next task of the Marxist theory of literature was to adopt the formal method; this was the only way for the Marxist method to become scientific. In *Novy Mir* ('New World') A. N. Voznesensky wrote in a similar vein.²⁴ And Arvatov went even further: he analysed literary works by a formal-sociological method making among others an outstanding analysis of Mayakovsky's poem *Voyna i mir* ('War and the World'). And in a programme study, he specially took up the question of combining the sociological and formal methods, of their complementary role.²⁵ He called the formal method revolutionary, because he believed it would develop the study of literature into an exact science, and because it managed to overcome the tradition of "content" aesthetics. He gave the Formalist School credit for laying stress on the element of building, i. e. of production, in the artist's creative process. That is, according to his theory, art is creation, a peculiar form of social production. Moreover, he believed that the *Opojaz* theory of literature, by

²⁴ 'Poiski ob'ekta', *Novy Mir*, 1926/6, p. 120.

²⁵ 'O formal'no-sociologicheskome metode', *Pechat' i revolyuciya*, 1927/3. Published also in B. Arvatov, *Sociologicheskaya poetika* (Moskva, 1928).

overcoming content aesthetics, got further than the Marxists who adhered to the sociological milieu theory and to the erroneous theory widely accepted by the French and German neo-Kantians that the content determined the form. On the other hand, he found it regrettable that the formalists so categorically rejected Marxism and consequently renounced clarifying the regularity of the historical process of literature and confined their scientific programme to the chronological registration of literary facts and to their structural-morphological description.

Under the impact of such criticism, the formalists more and more frequently undertook to examine the relationship between literature and other social phenomena, to elaborate a phylogenetic theory of literature. Theoretical questions of the evolution of literature they dealt with in earlier works; Shklovsky, in his book on Rozanov; Jakobson, in his book on Khlebnikov, and Eichenbaum, in studies on Tolstoy and Nekrasov. They regarded the development of literature as autonomous, too, and explained it only by internal laws.

Tynyanov agreed with this conception but further developed it. In his book *Problema stikhotvornogo jazyka* ('The Problem of Poetic Language') he described a closed and structured pattern of the artistic work, which he viewed in its unique and individual reality. In his essay *O literaturnom fakte* ('On the Literary Fact') he demonstrated how a fact became a literary one through its function in the work of art. Functions are not given forever either, since with the evolution of literature even the most essential functions change and become obsolete, being replaced by new ones. He went even further in his treatise *O literaturnoy evolyucii* ('On the Evolution of Literature').²⁶ He stated that not only the work of art but also the literary process as whole had to be regarded as a system.

Tynyanov went yet further in a more precise formulation of this problem in an article written jointly with Jakobson.²⁷ They stated that literary phenomena could not be understood without accepting the idea of immanence; yet the immanency principle in itself was an illusion.

²⁶ J. Tynyanov, *Problema stikhotvornogo jazyka* (Leningrad, 1924; new edition: Moscow, 1965). — Both essays were included in the volume *Arkhaisty i novatory* (Leningrad, 1929).

²⁷ 'Voprosy izucheniya literatury i jazyka', *Novy Lef*, 1928/12, pp. 26—37.

In the late twenties, the critical pressure weighing upon the Formalist School became stronger and stronger. In spite of this, in the second half of the decade, individual collections of formalist essays were published. Among the works that appeared at the time were Shklovsky's *O teorii prozy* ('The Theory of Prose', 1925, 1929), Eichenbaum's *Skvoz' literaturu* ('Through Literature', 1924), *Literatura* ('Literature', 1927), and Tomashevsky's *Teoriya literatury* ('Theory of Literature', 1925–1931) which ran into six editions. Zhirmunsky's work *Voprosy teorii literatury* ('Questions of the Theory of Literature', 1928) and Tynyanov's collection of essays entitled *Arkhaisty i novatory* ('Archaists and Innovators', 1929) were published at that time, and there appeared also books by them on Tolstoy, Lermontov, etc. From 1919 to 1928 there came out altogether five volumes of the series of essays *Poetika* ('Poetics'), this "organ" of the formalists.

Later, some formalists had their essays printed in *Lef* and in *Novy Lef*. The volume of essays, 'The Literature of Fact'²⁸ by regular contributors to *Lef*, contained among others writings by Shklovsky, Osip Brik, Sergey Tretyakov and Chuzhak. Most of these essays favoured the literature of fact and were against the literature which, under the pretence of "synthesizing" and "typifying", forgot about the facts of reality. This volume contained also extremist writings, which sharply criticized Gladkov, Gorky's *Klim Samgin* and Fadeyev.

The formal method was gradually extended to nearly all phenomena of literature. Balukhaty based a fine book of drama analysis upon Chekhov's works (1927). Equally remarkable was the phenomenologist G. Shpet's work on a similar subject; his treatise is entitled 'Theatre as a Genre' (1922). Several authors employed the formal method in folklore research. Most noteworthy among them was Propp, with his *Morfologiya skazki* ('The Morphology of the Folktale').

The Russian formalists, first of all Shklovsky, Eichenbaum and Tynyanov, turned with fine intuition to the questions of films; film aesthetics was enriched by many valuable observations and theoretical conclusions. They were close to Eisenstein's conception of the cinema and wrote appreciatively about Béla Balázs's

²⁸ *Literatura fakta* (Moskva, 1929).

books on film aesthetics.²⁹ Some formalists even engaged in the writing of film scenarios. Among others, the script of the film *Ivan the Terrible* was written by Osip Brik.

The Formalist School had been active for only a decade when voluminous essays and bulky monography already dealt with its history and explained its theory. Engelhardt in his monograph wished to systematize the views of the formalists, but with little success. And Medvedev devoted his book published in 1928 to the criticism of formalism, as was indicated by the subtitle of the volume 'Introduction to Sociological Poetics'. Medvedev and Efimov (the latter wrote a long treatise upon the formalists) already felt the crisis of formalism.³⁰

THE CRUSHING OF THE FORMALIST SCHOOL

A new turn in the history of the Formalist School came in 1930, when literature and literary scholarship were more and more strongly influenced by the enforcement of the principle of "reconstruction", the tendency to rally various literary associations and groups in a united organization. The liquidation of the Formalist School as a school also began. In its issue of January 27, 1930, *Literaturnaya gazeta* ('Literary Gazette') carried a self-critical article by Shklovsky entitled *Pamyatnik nauchnoj oshibke* ('Monument to a Scholarly Mistake'). Shklovsky, founder and leader of the Formalist School, condemned the *Opojaz* theory as a mistake and declared in public that he did not wish to become a monument to his own vagaries. In the future, he would wish to deal with literary history and would accept the Marxist method.

The editorial published by 'Press and Revolution' in No. 1 of 1930 raised one of the most important actual militant slogans: fight for the destruction of formalism. The heading of the intro-

²⁹ Viktor Shklovsky, *Literatura i kinematograf* (Berlin, 1923); Shklovsky, Eichenbaum, Tynyanov et al., *Poetika Kino* (Moskva—Leningrad, 1927).

³⁰ B. Engelhardt, *Formal'ny metod v istorii literatury* (Leningrad, 1927); P. Medvedev, *Formal'ny metod v literaturovedenii* (Leningrad, 1928; 1934); N. I. Efimov 'Formalizm v russkom literaturovedenii', *Nauchnye izvestiya Smolenskogo gosudarstvennogo universiteta*, V (1929).

ductory chapter of the editorial ('Realignment of Ranks in Literary Scholarship') also demonstrated that the liquidation of the different schools and deviations had been placed on the agenda. (We should note here that the same issue carried an article which condemned the activity of Perverzev, Friche, Piksarov and other literary scholars.) Shklovsky's "repentant" article in *Literary Gazette* was also mentioned. The progress of Shklovsky – who at that time was already called an "open enemy" – and others towards Marxism is described there as a rapprochement which would have the consequence that "as the formalist doctrine had earlier weeded out carefully all social and ideal content from literature, now it would perform this operation on Marxism". "It should be pointed out that rapprochement between the Formalist School as a school and Marxism is impossible." The next issue again dealt with Shklovsky's writing. An author, Gel'fand, asked Shklovsky: "What is formalism then: militant reaction or er . . . , er . . . scientific fallacy?" In his opinion, it was first of all a philosophical school with an idealist world view; to put it more rudely: "The Formalist School, already at the very outset, in the second stage of the Russian Revolution, was organized into a singular ideological detachment of the bourgeois counterrevolution."³¹

This comprehensive indictment was repeated time and again in the chronicles and occasional articles written from that time onward. In 1934 Medvedev rewrote his earlier monograph on the formalists and declared that the downfall of formalism was brought about not by "evolution" but by "revolution". And he rendered a harsh judgement: formalism was an idealist and reactionary trend of the era of imperialism in Europe. Formalism was condemned just as severely by I. Vinogradov, who wrote thus: "Formalism is a product of the imperialist stage of capitalism. Formalism is the clearest expression of the collapse of bourgeois art and the bourgeois theory of art."³²

After such indictments, the Formalist School could not survive. Its activity remained veiled in silence until recent years when its revision has necessarily been undertaken again.

³¹ M. Gel'fand, 'Deklaraciya tsarya Midasa ili chto sluchilos s Viktorom Shklovskim', *Pechat' i revolyuciya*, 1930/11, p. 11, 13, 15.

³² P. Medvedev, *Formalizm i formalisty* (Moskva, 1934) pp. 170, 38; I. Vinogradov, *Voprosy marksistskoy poetiki* (Moskva, 1936), p. 153.

THE RUSSIAN FORMALISTS' VIEWS ON LITERARY THEORY

The Russian formalists' literary theory had consistently developed in a determined direction. The results did not produce rigid dogmas; when it was necessary, they could "consistently" repudiate theoretical theses which were scientifically discredited by new discoveries. They did not fetishize their scientific methods either. When replying to his critics who talked about a unified formal method, Eichenbaum categorically declared that there was no such thing as a single correct method: the extension of investigations to new literary phenomena necessitated the introduction of new methods.

The main lines of the formalists' conception of literary theory can be best traced through the problems of language, the work of art as a unified system, and the literary process.

LITERARY LANGUAGE, RHYTHM AND MELODY

Search for the characteristics of the language of poetry

Already the theorists of romanticism had been fascinated by the peculiarities of literary language. From the close of the nineteenth century, but especially from the early years of the twentieth onward, the phenomena of language increasingly engaged the attention of psychology (Fechner, Wundt), ethnology (Buslaev, Veselovsky) and philosophy (Husserl, Carnap, Wittgenstein, Russell). Around the turn of the century, an advance of decisive importance was perceptible also within linguistics itself. First of all, we have to refer to Saussure, whose work determined the development of modern linguistics. (The Russian formalists had got acquainted with his writings very early.³³) Besides the great Swiss linguist, we have to mention Bally, Grammont, Meillet, Sievers and Saran, upon whose, mainly phonetic, researches the Russian formalists could likewise rely. They made use of the results of Russian linguistics, first of all of the linguistic and phonetic conclusions of Baudouin de Courtenay and Scherba.

³³ Vinokur, 'Poetics, Linguistics, Sociology'.

At the beginning of their activity in the field of literary theory, they considered it their primary task to investigate and describe the actual laws and peculiarities of literature. According to Jakobson, the subject of literary scholarship was not literature in its totality but literariness (*literaturnost*), i.e. that which made a given work a work of literature. They sought these distinguishing features in the functions of poetic language, too. According to Shklovsky, one of the most important functions of poetic language was to prevent the automatism of perception. And Jakobson stated that "poetry is the aesthetic function of language".³⁴ Tynyanov took the same view when he defined language as the social function of literature. And Zhirmunsky held that, although literature touched upon various moments of man's inner world, literary analysis was nevertheless not aimed at emotions, etc., but at the word: "Poetry is verbal artistry; the history of poetry is the history of verbal art" (*slovenost*). About the anatomy of literary scholarship, he wrote: "The material of poetry is the word; the systematic construction of poetics should be based upon the classification of linguistic facts taken over from the science of language. All these facts turn into poetic procedures depending on the artistic task. In this way every single chapter in the chapter in the science of language has its equivalent in some separate chapter of theoretic poetics."³⁵ Shklovsky drew an analogy between the composition of the work, and the structure of the units of its linguistic style. What is more, he derived certain literary motifs and even the subject matter of his stories from the elaboration of an oxymoron or metaphor.

In their first essays, the Russian formalists apparently discussed only questions of detail — questions of the interrelationship among rhyme, repetition of sounds and verbal acoustics, between rhythm and syntax — but these writings already contained rudiments of their entire conception of literary history. Even though they had not yet determined on it conceptually, in fact they were already studying the objective facts in virtue of which the work of art is, in fact, a work of art.

³⁴ Roman Jakobson, *Novejshaja russkaya poeziya: Nabrosok pervy: Viktor Khlebnikov* (Praha, 1921).

³⁵ V. M. Zhirmunsky, *Voprosy teorii literatury* (Leningrad, 1928), pp. 28, 29.

Rejecting the theory of the symbolists and Potebnya, the symbolic and metaphorical nature of poetic language, the formalists set themselves the task of exploring all components of the word. They regarded the word itself as material, and identified it with stone, paint, motion (Eichenbaum). The task of art was to exploit the word's own values. Vinokur regarded the word not only as a sign but as a "thing", as a building material, which existed by its own laws.³⁶ But the word does not get integrated into the work of art in the way a brick becomes part of a building. A word cannot be broken up into many "word-elements" (Tynyanov). Elements which in everyday communicative language are mechanical and bear no function may in poetic language become activated: here the hidden layers of the word begin to move and acquire aesthetic meanings. The formalists took into consideration both the psychological factors and acoustic conditions of the pronunciation of poetic language. Their view was in harmony with their principle according to which poetic language differed from practical language in arousing emotions. When analysing Gogol's short story *Shinel* (*The Overcoat*), Eichenbaum came to the conclusion that in this work by Gogol the phonetic shell of the word was separated from its logical meaning and became of sovereign value. Articulation and acoustic effect became means of expression.³⁷ According to the formalists, therefore, words were not indifferent channels, impassive conveyors of artistic thought. Shklovsky said: "In poetry, the words are not the means of expressing thought; they express themselves and determine by their essence the issue of the work of art."³⁸

The exploration of the constituent elements and conditions of poetic language proved fruitful, especially since former scholars had approached poetic language exclusively from the aspect of communication. The formalists arrived at the conclusion that the function of poetic language was not exhausted in communication. The linguistic phenomena of the poem were transformed in accordance with the laws of the work of art, and this transformation

³⁶ Vinokur, 'Poetics, Linguistics, Sociology', p. 109.

³⁷ B. M. Eichenbaum, *Kak sdelana 'Shinel' Gogolya. Skvoz' literaturu* (Leningrad, 1924).

³⁸ See Note 29.

brought into relief characteristics that had a secondary or inferior role in everyday language and scientific prose. In the initial period, when they had just begun formulating their views, the formalists believed that the function of poetic language — as opposed to that of scientific language — was to awaken emotions. Jakubinsky claimed that all elements of language might assume an independent role in aesthetic expression. In the everyday use of language, the acoustic aspect of the word is mostly a channel of communicating thought; in the constructed and complex unity of poetic language, on the other hand, the phonetic relations of the word are also a part of the aesthetic fact. This may explain why “in the poetic thought realized in linguistic form, the sounds get into the field of illuminated consciousness”.³⁹ Sounds thus take up an independent function in the context of the artistic work, and, as Tynyanov claimed, the repetition of sounds in rhythm, alliteration, assonance, etc. can play a dominant role in the structure of the work of art and can subordinate other elements (semantic and syntactic formations) to its own laws.

Shklovsky took issue with Potebnya for not separating poetic language from everyday language. Potebnya divided the word into three principal components — outward form, inward form and meaning. The outward form of the word is made up of acoustic phenomena; its inward form is the image that connects content with form. It was to the image that he ascribed symbolic significance. In his theory, the image has the principal role in the work of art. In this conception, the significance of the outward form of the word has faded; it has simply become a shell or attendant of “aesthetic thought”. The formalists, however, were of the opinion that the phonetic components of the word not only “attended” the “aesthetic content” but were determining factors of the poem.

Andrey Belyi in his essays on the problems of poetry meditated much upon the role of the word in the literary work. He made useful observations regarding the function of the word's sound in the poem. In his remarkable studies, however, he was unable to cover the manifold meanings of sound; because he started from the assumption that sound had to express something, he attributed

³⁹ L. P. Jakubinsky, ‘O zvukakh poeticheskogo jazyka’, in *Sborniki po teorii poeticheskogo jazyka* (Petrograd, 1916).

to it no sovereign value but only a modulating function. In Belyi's view, each sound was linked to some definite emotional content. Thus, for example, he claimed that in a poem of Blok the repetition of the consonants *r*, *d*, *t* were the formal expressions of the poem's tragic mood.⁴⁰ He stated that form was subordinate to content – the poem's phonetic components were only the outward realization of aesthetic content. Belyi openly proclaimed that outward form “only ‘attended’ the content”. Eichenbaum contested this view: the formalists regarded content as a component part of form, as the “material” of the work of art; consequently form was not the exterior decoration of “aesthetic content”, of Potebnya's “artistic thought”, but had an active role in the creation of the aesthetic object. Brik, in his criticism of the symbolist theory of orchestration, remarked: “We may indeed seek the connection between image and sound; however, one thing is certain, namely that sounds, harmony, are not only euphonic accessories but the result of the poet's independent disposition.” Zhirmunsky held a similar view: “The sounds of language are not indifferent to the poet. They are not empty spots in the work of art, nor confused noises which attend the procession of poetic images, but essential means of artistic expression.”⁴¹

The formalists conceived of poetic language itself as something construed, organized. The elements that got into the construed, complex linguistic unity come into contact with other elements and with the constructional principle itself. Tynyanov attributes several functions to the word. The word is a chameleon, for it changes to suit every new context. Built in the poem, the linguistic element does not lose its former value; on the contrary, it develops new peculiarities. This may apply, as we have already seen, to the phonetic form, semantics and morphology of the word, and even to syntax.

According to Shklovsky's original and important findings, the complexity of poetic language is interrelated with the principle of *ostranenie*, the device of “making it strange”. Standard language aims at quick and easy comprehension; the use of language is

⁴⁰ Quoted by B. M. Eichenbaum, ‘O zvukax v stikhe’ (1921); *Idem.*, *Kak sdelana ‘Shinel’ Gogolya. Skvoz’ literaturu*, pp. 204–205.

⁴¹ V. M. Zhirmunsky, *Voprosy teorii literatury*, p. 41.

mechanical, its purpose, the reception of information. Perception in art, on the other hand, is autonomous and autotelic, so that the process of perception needs to be complicated and retarded. This aim is served by complex language which promotes and intensifies the activity of perception. The determining peculiarities of poetic language are not affected by the Spencerian notion of the economizing of mental energy. This economy, Shklovsky remarks, is foreign to poetic language, which does not strive for the mechanization of perception. Zhirmunsky calls attention to the fact that the language of science tries to replace words with abstract mathematical symbols. He accepts as scientifically sound Leibniz's suggestion that science should use the language of mathematical symbols. "The language of science is amorphous", Zhirmunsky says, "it has no particular law for the construction of speech-sounds; one does not feel the particularity of individual words and word associations."⁴²

Tynyanov investigates the various phenomena of poetic language according to their functions. He seeks in language the structural principles which determine the aspects of the word — meaning, sound and morphology. He discovers the dynamism of form in the complicated connection of the components of the work of art. Shklovsky claimed that the word, whenever it gets into a new context, assumes a new form and a new meaning: the image "makes strange" the habitual by transferring it into an unexpected context. This transference is the "semantic shift".

In a new linguistic environment, the word re-creates itself and receives a new meaning. Semantic shift is a fundamental function of poetic language. The semantics of the word are dealt with similarly by Tynyanov. He claims that the tension of the verse leads to "the dynamization of the linguistic material". In the unity and tension of the verse the subordinate components of language do not grow indifferent. In the poem "the characteristic thing is not that the semantic element becomes obscure and unimportant, but that it is subordinated to rhythm — that is, it becomes deformed."⁴³

⁴² Vinokur, 'Poetics, Linguistics, Sociology'.

⁴³ J. Tynyanov, *Problema stikhotvornogo jazyka: Stat'i* (Moskva, 1965), p. 50.

Questions concerning the connection between the sound and the meaning of the word arose in the poetic practice of the futurists and in the futuristic conception of transrational words.⁴⁴ The futurists used the notion of transrational language to denote those speculatively created words and sounds of poetry which do not express or denote any logical or informative content but, entering the system of the verse, acquire an aesthetic meaning through their mere phonetic existence. The notion of transrational supported the formalist theory according to which sound is the dominating structural principle in poetic language. Eichenbaum regarded names in works of art as such *zaum* words. He unfolded this thesis in his essay upon the acoustic requisites of the choice of the name Akaky Akakievich.

In judging the role of transrational words, Tynyanov proceeded from the structural principle of the verse. These words become meaningful in the unity and tension of the poem. He explained that "in the system of interaction created by verse and language there may be semantic hiatuses which can be filled in by semantically indifferent words as required by the dynamics of rhythm. Instrumental in this, of course, is also the selection of words: sometimes the word crops up with a meaning taken from a verse. Even a quite empty word acquires a semblance of meaning, it becomes 'semanticized'. It is needless to say that the meaning of the word here is by nature different from its meaning in prose, where the density of the verse line does not exist."⁴⁵ At the same time Tynyanov warns against the misuse of transrational words.

Rhythm in a new interpretation

In Russian poetics it was the symbolists who first dealt thoroughly with the question of rhythm. Andrej Belyi separated it from metre, and even opposed it to metre when he described rhythm as a

⁴⁴ The notion of *zaum* was born among the futurists. V. Khlebnikov, D. Burljuk, V. Kamensky, Kruchenykh and others wrote poems by playfully shifting the melody of the word. Part of the experiments contributed to the development of poetics. In the twenties *zaum* was resorted to by Mayakovsky, S. Kirsanov, N. Asaev and others.

⁴⁵ Tynyanov, *Problema stikhotvornogo jazyka. Stat'i*, p. 122.

triumph over metre. But actually he only raised the problems of rhythm. Such a conception suited the purposes of symbolism – to destroy the norms of classical poetry. It failed to solve, however, the basic problems of rhythm.

Much had been written about the theoretical questions of rhythm by the formalists, first of all by Osip Brik, Tomashevsky, Zhirmunsky and Jakubinsky. They believed rhythm to be one of the most important factors of poetry. Tynyanov declared outright that rhythm was the plus that made verse. That is, where there is no rhythm, there is no verse. The formalists viewed rhythm as a constructive factor which held a dominant place over other factors of the poem. Just as they regarded the phonetic components of poetic language as of sovereign value, they definitively also separated rhythm from the phenomena of language, from the word and the sentence. With this separation they made rhythm a kind of constructive factor which subjected to its own laws the sound relations and deformed the semantics and even the syntax of words.

In his essay *Ritm i sintaksis* ('Rhythm and Syntax')⁴⁶ Osip Brik started from the general characteristics of rhythm. He found that rhythm was a peculiar form of movement. Such formed, organized movements can also be observed in poetry. Rhythm in poetry is a conventional phenomenon that does not derive from reality, but, as he wrote, "the existence of rhythm precedes verse itself". He declared that it was not the line of verse that made rhythm comprehensible; "on the contrary, we understand the verse through the rhythmic movement."

In traditional poetics much energy was wasted on counting metrical feet. According to Brik, the foot or syllable cannot in reality exist independently in the poem. It acquires real existence through a specific rhythmic movement. In support of his thesis he quotes verses in which the curve of rhythm cannot be dissected into separate syllables, because it embraces whole word complexes. Such verse form can be found in Russian folk poetry and in futurist poems. Brik believes that "the revolutionary significance of futurist verse, and mainly of Mayakovsky's verse, consists in its delivering the rhythmic curve from its syllabic substratum".

⁴⁶ O. Brik, 'Ritm i sintaksis', *Lef*, 1927.

Brik thought of the correlations between rhythm and linguistic phenomena as a very complicated relationship. Of course, we have to add that the separation of rhythm from linguistic phenomena cannot be rigorous, for rhythm is influenced by facts of language, by semantics and syntax. In the history of literature there are periods when the linguistic meaning is the prime requisite of poetry: "The demand for meaning grows stronger usually at a time when life introduces new themes, and when the old forms of verse, which are inseparably linked with meanings by then devoid of sense, are no longer capable of mastering the new set of themes." According to the formalists this cannot mean that the poets seek new forms for the new themes, because this would be tantamount to returning to the dualist conception of content and form. It was in this connection that Tynyanov said: "In verse there is no material to be made rhythmical, but there exists an already rhythmical, deformed material".

Rhythm acts upon syntax as well. That is why Brik says that "the language of verse has its own laws for connecting the words, and they are the laws of rhythm. These laws make the syntactic properties of verse complex." Eichenbaum advances a similar view: "The syntax of verse is built on its unbreakable link with rhythm (verse line and stanza) . . . The sentence in verse is generally not a syntactic but a rhythmico-syntactic phenomenon."⁴⁷

Tynyanov deepened the notion of rhythm by considering it a unified and tense line, the determining structural factor of verse. He stressed the significance of the *Ohrenphilologie* of Sievers and his school, because he severed rhythm from its links with the sentence accent and transferred it into the general sphere of acoustics. Thereby rhythm acquired a broader sense but, Tynyanov added, rhythm could not be explained by its acoustic conditions alone. In fact, rhythm not only discharges acoustic functions but is a means of the dynamic arrangement of the material. If rhythm sticks too closely to the linguistic elements and becomes their appendage, then an indispensable factor of verse ceases to exist. Tension and rhythm become automatized, the structural factor disappears, and there can be no verse any more.

⁴⁷ B. M. Eichenbaum, *Melodika stikha* (Petrograd, 1922). We quote it from Mikulaš Bakoš, *Teoria literaturi*, (Trnava, 1941) p. 301.

Certain scholars thought that rhythm — by its function — obscures the semantics of verse. It does not obscure it, Tynyanov remarks, but deforms it, organizes it, as a result of which semantics also gains strength.

Formalist investigations were directed at those components of the artistic work to whose analysis an “objective” method could be applied. The formalists kept away from all “psychologism” and condemned subjective arbitrariness. Their efforts at objectivity — rooted partly in neo-positivism, but mainly in phenomenology — also influenced the scope of their scholarly activity. They avoided general concepts, those which open the way to arbitrary judgment. For example, they did not deal with the problem of trends in style. They linked the problems of style closely to the particular work of art and discussed stylistic elements as inherent in the artistic devices, in the constructive principles. An exception was Zhirmunsky, who found it necessary to extend poetic studies to style as a category summarizing the teleological meaning of the unity of devices, and tried to complement by this broad concept of style the *Opojaz* theory of devices, structure, estrangement, etc.⁴⁸ He regarded style in this broad sense as a unity which acts as a law determining artistic composition. He thought he had discovered the efficiency factor of style in its teleology. He viewed the history of art as a history of stylistic types. He defined two fundamental types of style: the romantic and the classical. This typology of styles, however, found no positive response among the followers of *Opojaz*.

To the credit of the formalists, they linked the analysis of the literary work with the investigation of linguistic phenomena. The formalists thought, especially at the beginning of their activity, that the major criterion of poetic language was its emotive nature (Jakobson, Jakubinsky, Osip Brik). Vygotsky and Medvedev criticized this emotional orientation of poetic language for its hedonism. The formalists went beyond this hedonistic approach to the language of poetry, for this conception was still based on reminiscences of a sort of psychological approach, which the formalists had dropped in the course of building their “objective science”.

⁴⁸ V. M. Zhirmunsky, *Voprosy teorii literatury*, p. 23.

The underestimation of the communicative function of poetic language was provoked by the views of the symbolists and Potebnians and by other views on the theory of literature which regarded the linguistic facts of poetic composition as an indifferent or ornate shell of the aesthetic or ideological utterance. This conception served to support the view of the autonomous existence of the work of art. This made it possible to eliminate the dualistic view of content and form. At the same time this principle largely contradicted the most fundamental function of language, communication. Not even poetic language is an exception in this, though we have to accept that the communicative nature of poetic language is different from the communicative functions of the standard language and of scientific prose. However, we cannot reject the communicative nature of poetic language as the formalists did; our task consists of determining the aesthetic functions of the linguistic communication in literature.

Further development was stimulated by that principle of the formalists which states that poetic language does not strive for economy or, as it was put by Jakobson, "economy of words is alien to poetry unless it is made necessary by some special artistic task."⁴⁹ Poetic language is constructed and involved, Shklovsky and other formalists claimed. The significance of this very important statement has only grown in the light of information theory. The fact is that the redundancy of poetic language — for this is the case in point — basically differs from that of everyday language. The formalists were harping on this question, not without success, when they pointed to different peculiarities of poetic, everyday and scientific language. Relying on information theory, we can now take another step towards clarifying this important question.

⁴⁹ R. Jakobson, *Novejšaya russkaya poeziya. Nabrosok pervy: Viktor Khlebnikov*, p. 30.

THE WORK OF ART AS SYSTEM

An end to the separation of content and form

A significant initiative in the literary theory of the Russian formalists (and also an important fact in the historical study of literature) is that they aimed at investigating the innermost spheres of literature. They sought to discover the main principles of literature in the autonomy of the work of art and in the immanent nature of its laws. This induced them to separate the artistic work from all phenomena that would eclipse its independent reality and coherent unity. The way they achieved this was that, as a working hypothesis, they tore the artistic work out of its social correlations, separated it from its author and reader. This operation squared with the holistic view, namely with a conception which regarded the work of art as a system, as an organized whole. Moreover, this conception drew attention to the dialectical correlation of the constructive elements of the work. The study of the relationship between the whole and the parts as the constituent elements of the work brought the problems of the functions of literary facts to the forefront of investigation.

Comprehension of the autonomous existence of the work of art, according to the observation of the formalists, is hindered by the theory based on the distinction between content and form. The interpretation of the relationship between content and form in the work of art is one of the most complicated and most controversial problems of literary history. The Russian formalists rejected the dichotomy which divided the artistic work into content and form; the "Western formalists", on the other hand, while stressing the active function of form, did not yet give up the principle of the harmonious unity of content and form. For this reason, too, they could not regard the work of art as an autonomous and coherent unity.

The Russian formalists rejected the content-form theory because it had stimulated scholars to analyse extraliterary phenomena, and not the actual peculiarities of literature. Therefore, they attempted to explain all "content" and "formal" components of the work by the conception of the unified and coherent artistic composition. They regarded all elements of the work of art as formed, constructed.

In a polemic Eichenbaum, among others, mentioned the question of content and form. "We use this word (form) in a particular sense; we do not mean by it something that is contrasted to the notion of 'content' (it is time to say that the conception of such a relationship between content and form is false, because the notion of 'content' applies, properly speaking, to 'volume' and not at all to 'form', but we denote by it something that is fundamental from the point of view of the phenomena of art, and that is the organizing principle. What matters to us is not the notion of 'form' but only a certain sense of it. We are not 'formalists', but rather, if you will, *specifiers (specifikatory)*."⁵⁰ The formalist notion of form thus corresponds to the structural principle of the work of art.

In one of his earliest writings Shklovsky eliminated the rigid opposition of content and form by conceiving of art as a *device*. He emphasized the active nature of form, and used the notion of "device" instead of "form", while the name "content" was replaced by the term "material".⁵¹ Zhirmunsky, who saw one of the main merits of *Opojaz* in its elimination of the dualistic concept of content and form, noted that "facts like those denoted by 'content' have no autonomous existence within the sphere of art, they cannot exist independently of the general laws of artistic composition, . . . these (e.g., the phenomena of 'content') are also only parts in the unity of the poetical work . . . in art every fact of 'content' becomes a phenomenon of form."⁵² The idea that all phenomena in the artistic work are component parts of an organized unity in which form has a determining role was made a fundamental principle of Russian formalism. Shklovsky stated that "the soul of the work of art is nothing else but its structure, its form". Tynyanov, too, shared this view, asserting that "the notion of material does not overstep the bounds of form, it is formal, too".⁵³ In this conception the "material" (hence the facts of the content) is formed and constructed. This means that

⁵⁰ B. Eichenbaum, 'Vokrug voprosa o formalistakh', *Pechat' i revolyucya*, No. 5, p. 3.

⁵¹ Viktor Shklovsky, *O teorii prozy* (Moskva 1925; 1929). Our quotations are taken from the 2nd edition.

⁵² V. M. Zhirmunsky, *Voprosy teorii literatury*, pp. 21–22.

⁵³ J. Tynyanov, *Problema stikhotvornogo jazyka: Stat'i*, p. 22.

the material is also built into the work in accordance with the structural laws of the work of art. Of course, the material is not passive in character, for it has reactive qualities which influence and shape the laws of the work of art. "Material is not passive, it has its own laws, its own existence, its own truth, which the artist has to uncover in order to *control* them."⁵⁴

The dualistic view of content and form was still more violently shaken by the conception of the artistic work as system. In many respects this principle leads direct to modern structural theory. According to the formalists, the content does not determine the form, and form is not a shell of the content. The harmony between content and form does not determine the aesthetic quality. The work of art does not passively reflect reality, but it is an act, a fact, that alters reality. The phenomena of content do not motivate the formal means, but they are themselves building materials of the unified principle of the artistic work, the device, the construction, the structure. The motivation is realized in the interior of the work of art. The phenomena taking place within the work of art are integrated in the work by "making it strange", by "parallel", "gradual", "framing", devices or structural principles. The formalists, proceeding step by step, built up their conception of the work of art as system.

Criticism of the theory of the image (o b r a z)

The quest for the specifics of literature led to the building of the conception of the artistic work as a unified whole. In the meantime the formalists ran into conflict with Potebnya's theory of art, the essence of which is that "all art is thinking in images". Potebnya identified the image with the inward form of the word and defined its essence as its cognitive and communicative function. He described as the main feature of image the metaphorical, symbolic nature of the figure of speech. Potebnya extended the figurativeness of the word to apply to the whole artistic work, and even made it a general criterion of art. The

⁵⁴ B. M. Eichenbaum, *Kak sdelana "Shinel" Gogolya. Skvoz' literaturu*, p. 9.

followers of Potebnya applied the image theory to all branches of art without restriction and distinction, to painting, architecture and music. The contradictions of the theory soon appeared, and Ovsyannikov-Kulikovsky, Potebnya's excellent disciple, made a great many corrections in his master's theory, excluding lyric poetry and music: these arts have a direct effect on emotions. He divided art into "figurative" and "non-figurative" branches.

Shklovsky denied that the substance of art, including poetry, should be pictorial thinking, and that the poet's task should be to create images. The false starting point of Potebnya's theory, Shklovsky explains, came from the fact that he was unable to separate poetic language from standard language. This is also the reason why he made no distinction between the two types of the image: "the image as a practical instrument of thought, an instrument of assembling things in groups, and the figure of speech as an instrument to strengthen the impression".⁵⁵ Tynyanov, too, points to the defects of the image theory: "The crisis of the theory arises from the fact that the image is not separated, that its peculiar features are not determined. Since the term "image" equally denotes a figure of everyday speech and a whole chapter in *Onegin*, the question arises: in what is the latter (the literary image) specific?"⁵⁶

The image as a stylistic notion is an important element in poetry but, as Shklovsky claims, is not a universal law of artistic creation, only a possible means of stylistic expression. The function of the image does not differ from the function of other stylistic elements of poetic language such as simile, repetition, symmetry, hyperbole, etc. He states furthermore that the writer's task is not so much to create images but rather to construct and arrange them to the purpose; the poets do not make the images, but find them ready-made; structuring them is the creative process. He notes further that "poetry is rather a recollection of images than thinking in images."⁵⁷

By rejecting the image theory the formalists eliminated a thesis which diverted literary investigation from the unity of the work

⁵⁵ V. V. Shklovsky, 'Iskusstvo kak priem', in: *Poetika* (Petrograd, 1919), p. 103.

⁵⁶ J. Tynyanov, *Problema stikhotvornogo jazyka: Stat'i*, p. 22.

⁵⁷ V. Shklovsky, 'Iskusstvo kak priem', p. 102.

of art, from its inner sphere. Reducing the significance of the image to the level of the other artistic means of poetic language, they made the work more closed and homogeneous, brought its autonomous character into relief.

The device of o s t r a n e n i e

The principle of “making it strange” also served to determine the inner sphere of the artistic work. This is a cardinal precept of the formalist theory of art. Shklovsky, who introduced the category of “making it strange”, explained that the most characteristic function of art is to prevent mechanic perception. Shklovsky admitted that the mechanization of perception played an important role in practical thinking. He cites Spencer’s principle of the economy of mental energy which is, in fact, nothing else but the “economy of attention”. Veselovsky extended this principle to style: “The value of style is based on communicating the most ideas possible with the fewest words possible.”⁵⁸ According to Shklovsky, as we have already pointed out, economy of attention is not characteristic of poetic language; on the contrary, perception becomes autonomous. The redundancy of the language of poetry is different from that of logical linguistic expression.

The principle of “making it strange” is the negation of automatism. As Shklovsky says, mechanization can be found in all essential manifestations of human life. Depicting the harmful effects of mechanicalness, Shklovsky makes the point that “automation devours things, clothes, furniture, wife, and fear of war.” Art has the task, and is even fit, to stop the process of mechanization, dehumanization, to neutralize or counteract it. By examining accustomed things from a new angle we can bring them to life again. “What we call art exists for us in order to recover the perception of life, the feeling of things.” And how can art fulfill its mission? “The artistic device is equal to the device making it strange and the devices of complex language, which multiply the difficulty and duration of perception, because the process of perception in art is an end in itself and even has to

⁵⁸ Quoted by Viktor Shklovsky, *O teorii prozy*, p. 11.

be prolonged; art is a means for experiencing the making of things; accomplished things have no part to play in art.”⁵⁹ Shklovsky supports his estrangement principle by examples taken from works of Tolstoy and Gogol and from folk tales. Through estrangement, art eliminates automatism: it tears the thing out of its accustomed environment, puts it in a new relationship, and thereby makes it perceptible. The automated phenomenon is no longer a source of aesthetic information; but art can again turn the accustomed things into sources of information. The technique of estrangement is employed in Tolstoy’s short novel *Kholstomer*, a first-person narrative, where the narrator is a horse, and thus reality is perceived from a new angle. The horse, for example, has difficulties in understanding the meaning of the word *mine*. As a result of this “side view”, the writer refreshes the meaning of the accustomed word *mine*, makes it perceptible and turns it into something new. In literary descriptions of erotic scenes, writers often resort to the device of estrangement. — “Barrel-scraping”, “lark-snaring”, “satan and hell”, are all motifs which in the *Decameron* serve to describe the sexual act. These motifs grew into subject matters of narratives. Making it strange basically means therefore that the facts of reality are transposed into the literary work, where they are “deformed” under the laws of art.

Shklovsky’s estrangement theory is compared by many with Brecht’s conception of alienation, and not without foundation. The Brechtian type of artistic alienation also means essentially embedding the facts of reality in a new environment. In the Shklovskyan type of estrangement, just as in Brecht’s *Verfremdung*, greater stress is laid on the intellectual requirements of artistic production than on the conscious constructional principles.

The principle of the device (p r i e m)

It is no mere chance that the term “device” (*priem*) appears with Shklovsky’s estrangement principle. Tynyanov further developed the notion of device into a structural system. We can guess from what has been said before that the notion of device was of great

⁵⁹ Shklovsky, ‘Iskusstvo kak priem’, p. 105.

import from the point of view of establishing the immanent laws of literature, of recognizing the work of art as a closed system. The device principle created a basis for the identification and analysis of the functions of the elements which make up the artistic work.

By device Shklovsky understood first of all those structural formations in the work of art which presupposed the construction of major independent elements of the work. Shklovsky distinguished, among others, parallel and gradual devices. The parallel device found in short stories and in novels, besides stressing the differences, also throws light upon similarities. The aim of parallelism, Shklovsky says, is "the transfer of a thing into a new process of perception; that is, a peculiar semantic change".⁶⁰ To demonstrate the parallel device, the author refers to Chekhov's story *Tolsty i tonky* ('The Fat Man and the Thin Man'). There, the Thin Man has a jovial chat with his old schoolmate, the Fat Man. When he suddenly realizes that his one-time schoolmate and chum has risen very high on the social ladder, he completely changes his tone and his entire manner.

The writer is free to use the device of parallelism for the opposition of two individual characters or two groups of characters. That is what Tolstoy does in *Anna Karenina* with the confrontation of two married couples. Shklovsky holds that the "garland" composition is very wide-spread. The hero of the work may also act as a structural element in it. The hero, as an instrument of the structure, connects the motifs by performing various tasks. Such a structural role is played by Odysseus, Lucius and Don Quixote. Shklovsky maintains that in *The Golden Ass* by Apuleius the wreathing device is the nosey Lucius, who is always peeping and eavesdropping.⁶¹ In this novel the device of wreathing is coupled with the construction of the framework. "The episode of the fight with wine-skins, the yarn of the metamorphoses, the robbers adventure, the anecdote about the ass in the loft, etc., were included by means of wreathing; just like the story of the sorceress, the famous story of Amor and Psyche, and several short stories by the method of framing."

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 112.

⁶¹ Viktor Shklovsky, 'Stroenie rasskaza i romana', in *O teorii prozy*, pp. 87--88.

In his essay 'How *Don Quixote* was Made' Shklovsky developed the idea that it had not been the author's original intention to create the type, the romantic hero. "This type", he writes, "is a result of the construction of the novel"⁶² With this conception of the hero, Shklovsky yielded to the immanent laws of the work of art, since a substantive discussion of the hero's inner world, for example, would lead the student out of the closed system of the artistic composition and push him towards non-literary analyses. Tomashevsky's views were in many respects analogous to Shklovsky's theory: "The hero is by no means an indispensable element of the fable . . . The hero is a result of the material's being formed into subject matter, and, while being the instrument of wreathing the motifs, he would at the same time also be the pattern, the embodied and impersonated motivation for the connection of motifs."⁶³ This conception also points to the autonomous world of the artistic work and brings the structure of the work into focus.

In support of his views on composition, Shklovsky refers to a novel (*Tristram Shandy* by Sterne) in which the hero himself represents the process of composition. He states: "Sterne was an extreme revolutionary of form . . . *Tristram Shandy* is the most typical novel in universal literature." He values this novel so highly because in it the artistic device becomes evident as a device: "Artistic form as such presents itself without any motivation. The difference between the novel by Sterne and a standard novel amounts to the difference between an orchestrated poem and a futurist poem written in transrational language." With reference to those who claim that *Tristram Shandy* is not a novel, he declares that to such people "only an opera can be music, a symphony is confusion". There is no reason to be shocked by the extravagant way of constructing the novel, because, "when we take a better look at the construction of the book, we can see first of all that this confusion is intentional and has a peculiar poetic quality. It is as normal as a painting by Picasso."⁶⁴ With his analysis Shklovsky illuminated the peculiarities of the modern novel.

⁶² Viktor Shklovsky, 'Kak sdelan *Don Kikhot*', in *O teorii prozy*, pp. 100–101.

⁶³ B. M. Tomashevsky, *Teoriya Literatury* (Moskva—Leningrad, 1925).

⁶⁴ Viktor Shklovsky, 'Parodijny roman', in *O teorii prozy*, p. 178.

The majority of the formalists favoured the principle of the device, only Zhirmunsky opposed it. In his writing 'The Tasks of Poetics' he still sympathized with the conception of art as a device, but already at that time he held it to be too narrow a view. He proposed its enlargement: "it needs to be developed and deepened further, and complemented by the teleological notion of style as the unity of *devices*".⁶⁵ Two years later, in 1923, he broke with *Opojaz* on several essential points. Among other things, he criticized the theory of art as a device. He objected to the excessive one-sidedness of that view: "We may add to it also formulas such as: art as a social fact and as a social factor; art as an ethical, religious, epistemological fact, etc."⁶⁶ Art cannot be thought of exclusively as a device. Zhirmunsky considers it another defect to the *Opojaz* theory that the principle of art as the sum total of devices vindicates and supports the conception of "pure art". Art has grown out of syncretism, he states, adding that art has never been wholly divorced from philosophy, ethics and morals. In certain respects Zhirmunsky is right, although in his attitude we can discover reminiscences of the German history of ideas school.

The formalists were in general agreement that the components of the closed unity of the work of art were interrelated. Tynyanov proved the artistic work as a whole to be a "dynamic unity". He rejected the views according to which the artistic production is a static phenomenon and merely "a symmetry of structural factors". He summed up his views as follows: "The unity of the work of art is not a closed symmetric whole, but a developing dynamic unity; what stands between its elements is never the static sign of equality and connection, but always the dynamic sign of interrelation and integration."⁶⁷ Which also means that the relationship between the facts of the literary production is characterized not by an equilibrium but by a strength-conveying tension. The condition of dynamism, the relationship between the component parts of the work of art, comes to expression in the concept of the structural principle, and still more in the process, or change,

⁶⁵ V. M. Zhirmunsky, *Voprosy teorii literatury*, p. 23.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 158.

⁶⁷ J. Tynyanov, *Problema stikhotvornogo jazyka: Stat'i*, p. 28.

which follows from the interrelationship between the subordinating structural factor and the subordinated factor. "It is this interaction", Tynyanov writes, "this struggle, to which art takes recourse. If we do not feel that all factors are subordinated to the factor that fills a constructional role and are deformed by it, then there is no literary fact either. The accord of the factors is a specific negation of the constructive principle (Shklovsky). If the reciprocal effect of the factors (which necessarily presumes the presence of two moments, the subordinative and the subordinated) breaks down, the fact of art disappears, art becomes automated." As we can see, the notions of automation and deformation come up again. The concept of the artistic work as a dynamic unity and the concept of system replace the definition of the work as a totality of devices. This is not simply a change of conception, but an effort to give a more precise definition of art. To approach the work of art as a dynamic whole is already close to the modern concept of structure.

Tynyanov maintains that the dynamic unity as system is historically determined, since in reality there are several concrete systems, and between them we observe tension as well as subordination and deformation. That is why "we cannot examine rhythm in prose and in verse by the same method, no matter how close these systems may be". The rapprochement between prose and verse (for example, in free verse) cannot essentially be considered a rapprochement: "It is the introduction of an unusual material into a specific, closed construction."⁶⁸ These quotations show an outline of the theoretical thesis that the work of art as a closed construction has a definite structural principle and is at the same time an open unity. Nonetheless, open unity is no negation of its being an autonomous whole. This conception leads to the question of the function of literary facts. The fact that he conceived the work of art as a closed and dynamic system helped Tynyanov to formulate his thesis on the problem of function. (We should note that cybernetics undertakes to analyse dynamic systems; since the time of Aristotle, according to Wiener, the sciences have laid increasing stress on classification but the scientists have forgotten about the functions of the

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 72–73.

elements.) With his concept of function Tynyanov freed the poetics of formalism from its simple synchronic outlook, and introduced the principle of unity between the synchronic and diachronic approaches. Tynyanov and Jakobson jointly explained this view at the conceptual level in one of their essays.⁶⁹

Tynyanov's concept of function, which he elaborated in two studies, is essential in two respects. It made the dynamism of the literary work more conspicuous and revealed those elements which play a determining role in the dynamic whole of the work. At the same time, it uncovered the connection between literature and other 'series' (*rjad*), as well as the laws of evolution in this relationship. Tynyanov stated that not only the elements of things but also their functions change. To the question "What is the function of the literary element?" he replied: "The function of every literary element is its interaction with the other elements and with the constructional principle of the whole."⁷⁰ This definition of function which implies the interrelationship between the whole and the parts is a very remarkable theoretical result. In the interpretation of function, as combined with the question of literary facts, he also relied on Shklovsky's theory of estrangement and automation: "What is 'automation'? — It means a change of functions. As a result of the development of language, the *mots pleins* become *mots vides*. The latter fulfil a constructive syntactic function. In literature the 'automated' elements do not disappear, they change function and become elements of the cohesion (Shklovsky)." Two years prior to these statements, in an essay dedicated to Shklovsky, Tynyanov made it clear how various elements gain or how they cease to have a literary character. Consistently accepting the principle of the autonomy of literary laws, Tynyanov described how the relationship between literary and non-literary phenomena changes in the evolution of literature. What is a literary fact today may not be one tomorrow, and vice versa. Neither "insignificant" facts, nor facts making up the essence of the aesthetic quality are exceptions to this rule: "What is a literary fact today becomes a simple fact of

⁶⁹ 'Voprosy izucheniia literatury iazyka'. *Novy Lef* 1928, 12, pp. 26 — 37.

⁷⁰ *Russkaya proza*, ed. B. M. Eichenbaum and J. Tynyanov (Leningrad, 1926), pp. 9, 10.

life tomorrow and disappears from literature . . . And not only the frontiers of literature, its peripheral borderland areas, are changing – the change effects its very ‘centre’.”⁷¹ And the question as to which facts are literary is also determined by their relations, their functions: “The existence of a literary fact depends on its differentiated quality, on its interrelation (either with the literary or with the non-literary series), in other words, on its function.”⁷²

The theory of the work of art as a unified dynamic whole makes it possible to interpret a number of phenomena which seemed inexplicable before, for example, the nature of “minor” works. Major genres become automated, resulting in the creation of minor genres, namely the poem, the anecdote, the arabesque, etc. On the other hand, the minor genre may also become automated. The result is a “collection” (which can be conceived of as a composition), that is a major form. It is characteristic, for example, that August Schlegel holds that Petrarch’s sonnets constitute an unconnected lyric novel, or that Heine’s *Buch der Lieder* and other cycles of minor poems are “lyric novels in which each versicle plays the part of a chapter”.⁷³ This view induces us to see such cycles as live units, and in them, too, we can discover artistic laws which we would otherwise ignore.

The conception of the work of art as system, as it was outlined by the formalists, was an achievement of modern literary scholarship.

The apprehension of phenomena in such a structured system, as a structured whole, was timely not only in literary scholarship; the same problem arose also in other disciplines. In philosophy the question was posed by phenomenology, in psychology by *Gestalttheorie*, in biology by holism; in linguistics Saussure spoke of the system; the Moscow Linguistic School uncovered the phenomenon of function; Trubetskoy in the Prague Linguistic Circle and Hjelmslev in the Copenhagen School already used the concept of structure, and today the expression *structural linguistics* is already established. Thinking in structures appeared also in the nineteenth century; Marx and Engels were able to construct the theory of scientific socialism because this view of

⁷¹ J. Tynyanov, ‘Literaturny fakt’, in *Arkhaisty i novatory* (Leningrad, 1929), p. 9.

⁷² J. Tynyanov, ‘O literaturnoy evolyucii’, in *Arkhaisty i novatory*, p. 35.

⁷³ *Ibid.*, p. 18.

society made it possible to discover the dialectics between basis and superstructure, and so they came to the fundamental law of the evolution of class society, to the recognition of class struggle.

Kolmogorov, Lotman, Zarecky, Saparov and others who approach the artistic work from the side of cybernetics, of information theory, value and use the formalists' models of artistic work patterns. The formulations of the formalists are often extreme and one-sided. With their conception of the artistic work, however, they opened up a new era in the study of literature.

LITERATURE, NON-LITERATURE, PROCESS

The Russian formalists rejected not only the Potebnyan image theory, their attitude was directed against any theory of art based on the reflection of reality. Their opposition to the reflection principle is, if not excused, at least explained by the fact that over a long time in the evolution of the historical study of art and literature this principle found expression in a simplified variant of the Aristotelian mimesis theory. (It should be noted that the reflection theory here is not identical with the Marxist theory of reflection.)

An increasingly overwhelming tendency in the evolution of Russian formalism was to criticize the image theory and the reflection principle at the same time. In their initial works, however, the formalists were still unable to dispense with the idea of mimesis. Shklovsky, for example, in his study 'Art as a Device' draws the conclusion that what is characteristic of art is not the process of acquiring knowledge but "vision". This concept of vision originates from the period of romanticism, above all from Hamann. As is known, this principle was utilized by different irrational, intuitionist theories of art as well as by the symbolists and the idealist art historian Wölfflin. And in Hungary it was utilized by Milán Füst, who developed it into an aesthetic doctrine. With the category of vision Shklovsky wished, conceptually, to fix his view that art was an intimation of reality. With the term **vision**, however, he inevitably deferred also to the image principle. This thesis lost credit with the formalists. Their views agreed on a single point, namely that literature is not communication of knowledge, not cognition, not thinking.

Art is “not the shadow of the thing but the thing itself, the object”, Shklovsky says.⁷⁴ Zhirmunsky also speaks of an “aesthetic object”. In his writing ‘The Tasks of Poetics’ he states that the division of works into content and form essentially breaks up the literary composition into “aesthetic and non-aesthetic” phenomena. As a consequence we have content analysis on the one hand and aestheticism on the other. Eichenbaum said that “art is not ‘aestheticism’, nor is it a ‘reflection’. Form is not a shell and not an instrument.”⁷⁵ That art is not a reflection was suggested already by the concepts “device”, “de-automation”, “making it strange”. Emphasis was shifted to the creative part, to creation. In a study on Gogol’s *The Overcoat* Eichenbaum wrote that “not a single sentence of the work of art can be, in itself, a simple ‘reflection’ of the author’s personal feelings” and explained that “the work of art is always something made, formed, invented . . . , and so there is, and there can be, no room for the reflection of psychic experience.”⁷⁶ In one of his earlier writings he qualified as mendacious the belief that art could be understood from schemata of the psychic atmosphere of the period. In his opinion, such an assumption followed from the erroneous view that composition was a ‘passive’ reflection and not active creation (making).⁷⁷ In another article, arguing with the Marxists who employed the sociological method, Eichenbaum reproached them for having thrown out art since it did not adapt itself to their preconceived schemata. However, he remarked: “Let it [art] exist as a reflection. Sometimes it is useful from the point of view of information.”⁷⁸ The proponents of “for-soc” who blended the formal and the sociological method welcomed with enthusiasm the theoretical views of the formalists relating to art as a device, formation, active creation. Arvatov saw the difference between the formal and the formal-sociological method in the fact that advocates of the latter compared the aesthetic device with analogous devices of non-artistic literature, and

⁷⁴ Viktor Shklovsky, ‘Ornamental’naya proza’, in *O teorii prozy*, p. 206.

⁷⁵ B. M. Eichenbaum, *Kak sdelana “Shinel” Gogolya. Skvoz’ literaturu*, p. 66.

⁷⁶ B. M. Eichenbaum, *Literatura* (Leningrad, 1927), p. 161.

⁷⁷ B. M. Eichenbaum ‘Karamzin’, in *Kak sdelana “Shinel” Gogolya., Skvoz’ literaturu*, p. 4.

⁷⁸ Quoted by Medvedev, *Formalizm i formalisty*, p. 140.

the facts of subject matter with the facts of life, "but not through a specific rearrangement of the facts of life into subject matters".⁷⁹ How did he imagine this "specific rearrangement"? The tasks, Arvatov contended, consisted in studying "the mechanism of processing the material into a literary form as a social and professional mechanism which is determined by the general laws of historical evolution". He said furthermore that "the formal-sociological method conceives of literature as a professional-practical system of the literary work, as a system which has its own technique, economy and 'superstructure', and which functions as a part of the whole of the social system".⁷⁹ Of course, the formalists could not agree with this conception, and it is not by chance that Eichenbaum branded these attempts as eclectic. The sociologically motivated but differently oriented Marxist theoreticians of literature, on the other hand, castigated Arvatov for the concessions he made to formalism.

In search of the internal laws of literature

Rejecting the theory of reflection in literature, the formalists judged the questions of the evolutionary process strictly from the internal laws of literature, and evaluated the work of art by the analysis of its component parts. In devising their theory they made use also of Wölfflin's view on the evolution of literature, "the history of literature without names", that is, the conception according to which history should not be based upon the "generals" of art. In the assumption that the writer's personality is indifferent from the point of view of the historical interpretation of the work, Shklovsky agreed with Brunetière, who regarded "the effect of one work upon the other"⁸⁰ as decisive in the evolution of literature. A similar principle was also proposed by Veselovsky, who formulates the relationship of old and new literature as follows: "I wonder whether every period of poetry does not work with images inherited from before, necessarily moving within their limits, affording only new combinations and filling them with a new

⁷⁹ B. Arvatov, *Sociologicheskaya poëtika*, pp. 31–32.

⁸⁰ 'Svyaz' priemov syuzhetoslozheniya s obschimi priemami stilya', in *O teorii prozy*.

conception of life which is what represents progress as against the old.”⁸¹ The formalists thought of literary history as an evolution within the sphere of the works of art. Shklovsky even stated that “the form of the work of art can be judged from its comparison with other artistic works and the forms that existed prior to it”. With this conception he eventually based the progress of literature upon the principle of immanence. Shklovsky also declared that “the new form appears not in order to express the new content but to replace the old form which has already lost its artistic quality”.⁸²

The formalists saw the factors promoting the progress of literature in automation, or rather in canonization. As soon as a work becomes customary and gets automatic, the need arises at once for new devices and constructional elements. For example, the form of Sterne’s novel, too, is, properly speaking, “an act of moving forward and a violation of the accustomed forms”.⁸³ “Every new literary school is a revolution reminiscent of the rise of a new class of society”, Shklovsky writes. “But, of course, this is only analogy. The defeated ‘series’ does not perish, does not cease to exist.”⁸⁴ The progress of literature as negation is directed against the immediate predecessor. For this very reason the evolution of literature does not follow a straight but a curved line. The new literary trend gets round its predecessor and returns to the poetic achievements previous to it. The heritage of literary schools and tendencies passes “not from father to son, but from grandfather to grandson”. In other words, the process is characterized by the “canonization of the younger line”.⁸⁴ Eichenbaum illustrates this process by Tolstoy’s development: “Tolstoy started as a liquidator of romantic poetics, as a destroyer of existing canons . . . Ignoring the fathers, he came back to the grandfathers, to the eighteenth century . . . Tolstoy wished to write differently from his

⁸¹ Quoted by I. Vinogradov, *Voprosy marksistskoj poetiki* (Moskva, 1936), pp. 143–144.

⁸² V. Shklovsky, *O teorii prozy*.

⁸³ *Ibid.*, p. 188.

⁸⁴ Viktor Shklovsky, ‘Literatura vne syuzheta’, in *O teorii prozy*, pp. 272–278.

⁸⁵ Viktor Shklovsky, *Rozanov* (Petrograd, 1921). Quoted by Medvedev, *Formalizm i formalisty*, pp. 148, 149.

fathers.”⁸⁶ The negation of canonized literary genres prompted, for example, Nekrasov to turn to folklore. According to Eichenbaum folklore is “a constant source of the renewal of artistic forms at the time of great breaks in art. Thus, in our days, Mayakovsky makes use of the *chastushka*.”⁸⁷ This progress, through breaks, of the literary devices and literary forms also determined the conception of tradition and style in the history of literature. Shklovsky writes: “I imagine the literary tradition not as some sort of general store of literary norms which, like an inventor’s estate, comprises the totality of the technical facilities of his age.”⁸⁸ By this attitude Shklovsky and the other formalists discredited the view that the evolution of literature is according to some teleological law of stylistic phenomena drifting out of the past. According to the formalists, the progress of literature is based on creation, the breaking up of norms, on de-automation, the cancellation of canons, and its development is the result of struggles. Tynyanov applies this principle also to literary schools: “We can speak of inheritance only in the case of schools, of epigonism, but not in connection with the phenomena of literary evolution, whose underlying principle is struggle and change.”⁸⁹

Zhirmunsky sympathized with Veselovsky’s historical poetics and at the same time proclaimed the principle of the syncretic evolution of art. Zhirmunsky explained the evolution of literature by the teleological nature of style. Changes in the style of a period are determined by the spirit of the period, which describes and regulates the tasks of art. Accordingly, the course of literary development is the following: the change of the spirit of the period gives rise to a new taste, a new style of the period, on which “the artist’s task” depends. Zhirmunsky reproaches Jakobson for consistently taking the mystic sentiment in romantic lyrics to be a “motivation” of the devices of literary creation. Rather, says Zhirmunsky, the poetic device will undergo change if first the “artistic-psychological task” also changes. Under the impact of this change the poet’s language is transformed, too, as a system of the procedures or “devices” of artistic expression. As we can see,

⁸⁶ B. M. Eichenbaum, *Skvoz’ literaturu*, p. 67.

⁸⁷ B. M. Eichenbaum, *Literatura*, p. 106.

⁸⁸ V. Shklovsky, *O teorii prozy*, p. 82.

⁸⁹ J. Tynyanov, *Arkhaisty i novatory*, pp. 10–11.

Zhirmunsky does not subscribe to the principle of the independent, autonomous evolution of art; according to him, in the last analysis, literary changes get an impulse from the "spirit of the age". The change of device is not a result of inner necessity either. In order to subject Nekrasov's poems to scholarly investigation, it is by no means superfluous and irregular if we start from the effects of Belinsky's ideas; what is more, this kind of approach is much more expedient than the analysis aimed at demonstrating the outworn, obsolete character of Pushkin's poetics. Zhirmunsky states that the presentation of literature as an immanent series and the search for its internal laws certainly constitute a pertinent and even tempting task. But one must not forget, he writes, that "to take the autonomous aesthetic line out of the context of historical evolution, although it may be a pertinent methodological device, is in fact to build on conditionality; and it cannot escape our notice that the evolutionary impulses within an isolated area (i.e. literature, the author) not infrequently intrude into this area from outside."⁹⁰

Hereby Zhirmunsky pointed out one of the main weaknesses of the *Opojaz* theory. Yet he could not show a way out of the contradictions of the formalists' literary theory, because he was unable to explain sufficiently how the moral, religious, and ethical phenomena entered the work of art. After all, he gave up interpreting the aesthetic functions of elements coming from external series. As a matter of fact, he wished to complement, or rather change, the theoretical platform of *Opojaz* by an improved version of the style conception of the *Geistesgeschichte*. But Eichenbaum, Jakobson and others flatly refused this attempt at an eclectic solution. They rejected the style theory. Eichenbaum wrote as early as 1916 that the idea of the "period" is misleading. And in another writing he explained that art does not strive to create types but takes interest in the existence of individual minor details. That is why meditations on types are contradictory, and therefore "any debate and meditation on realism and romanticism is unproductive".⁹¹ In one of his later essays, criticizing the

⁹⁰ V. M. Zhirmunsky, *Voprosy teorii literatury*, p. 162.

⁹¹ B. M. Eichenbaum, *Kak sdelana "Shinel"* Gogolya. *Skvoz' literaturu*, p. 9.

conception of history of the cultural-historical school, he calls the style conception “primitive historicism”. In the works of the school “the leading part was played by general and vague notions, such as ‘realism’ or ‘romanticism’ (moreover, realism was held to be better than romanticism), evolution being interpreted as gradual perfection (progressing from romanticism to realism)”.⁹² Jakobson in his book on Khlebnikov avoids defining futurism because, as he says, in doing so he would produce a misleading inductive concept instead of a dependable analysis of a most complicated phenomenon. “Any *a priori* definition is guilty of dogmatism, it forcefully and prematurely sets up classes such as genuine futurism, pseudo-futurism and the like. We do not wish to repeat the methodological mistakes of the contemporaries of romanticism, some of whom, in the words of Pushkin, described as romantic all compositions which bore the mark of despair and daydreaming, while others regarded neologisms and grammatical errors as romanticism.”⁹³ Therefore the formalists, when discussing the theoretical questions of the literary process, omitted using the concept of stylistic trend and resorted rather to the concept of literary school.

Sociology versus immanence

The questions of the process of literature were raised with more emphasis in the second stage of activity of the formalists, especially in their polemics with certain Marxist sociologists. The Marxist sociologists took a categorical position against the formal method. They were harping mainly on the problems of the relationship between literature and reality and of the development of literature. Shklovsky responded to the attacks in a short writing ‘The Knight’s Move’. He set forth that art had always been independent of life and had practically never reflected the colours of the flag fluttering over the citadel. Environment and production never influences art, the themes are homeless, why else should there be disputes over whether *Arabian Nights* originated in Egypt,

⁹² B. M. Eichenbaum, *Literatura*, p. 161.

⁹³ R. Jakobson, *Novejsaya russkaya poeziya: Nabrosok pervy: Viktor Khlebnikov*.

India or Persia? Art could not mirror the peculiarities of castes and classes, for then how could we explain the uniformity of the Great Russian tales about the lord and the pope? If art reflected ethnic characteristics, these tales could not spread from nation to nation, and themes would not survive. It is not difficult to see that Shklovsky's determined stand was only partially directed against the genuine Marxist view of literature. Except for the first-raised point (which is said to be utterly false by the author in the new edition (1961) of his 'The Theory of Artistic Prose') the decried theoretical theses can rather be attributed to the positivist view of art (more precisely, to its most vulgar representatives). Trotsky, as is known, was lashing out at this writing when he criticized the Formalist School. Eichenbaum explained that the scientific objectives of Marxism and formalism were divergent, but the roads they took to accepting evolution converged. Even on this question there was a difference of opinion. Namely, in Eichenbaum's view, Marxists generally confuse the concepts of genesis and evolution. The formalist separates literature from other series and conceives of the history of literature as the evolution of literary forms and traditions. The phenomena coming from non-literature, "the question of the genesis of literary phenomena (the question of their connections with social existence and the economy, with the author's individual psychology or physiology, etc.), he deliberately brushes aside not as entirely unessential points but as something that clarifies nothing within the confines of a series. To detect the genesis of phenomena means to determine the connections between them but not to postulate their cause". When "Marxists" speak of genesis instead of evolution, they irretrievably suppress also the specific characteristics of literature. As a consequence, "literature turns either into 'illustration' or an aesthetic annex (hence the peculiar 'aestheticism' of many Marxists). Formalism is not 'opposed' to Marxism, it only rejects the mechanical transference of socio-economic questions into the field of art analysis. The material resists this, because it has its own specific sociology. And, if it is strained, the result will be *genesis* instead of *evolution*, remote 'connections' instead of concrete causality."⁹⁴ Eichenbaum pleads

⁹⁴ B. Eichenbaum, *Pechat i revolucija*, p. 10.

for the autonomous existence of literature, its immanent specifics and the autonomy of its evolution. He locates causality, as a motive force of evolution, in the specific series of literature and, consequently, defines the evolution of literature as self-motion. What he means by the specific sociological questions of literature he explains only in his essay 'Literature and Literary Life'.⁹⁵

The unceasing attacks by advocates of the sociological method compelled the Formalist School to expound its views on the writer, the writer's world view, his social background, and other related topics. However, in their early studies, the formalists proclaimed the principle that problems pertaining to the writer are irrelevant to the objective interpretation of the work of art.

Mayakovsky depicted vividly and scornfully how the historical study of literature presents the writer as a paragon of ethicalness or a champion of truth: "Every writer has been declared a propagator of truth, a signaller of virtue and justice... [The literary historian] shapes writers into clerks and historians of knowledge, into guardians of public morals."⁹⁶ The formalists violently opposed this wide-spread concentration on the writer's personality. Shklovsky notes that "it is needless to show interest in the writer's biography; he writes and then seeks the motivation. And still less is it necessary to deal with psychoanalysis. Psychoanalysis examines the psychological traumata of one man, but one man does not write: it is time that writes, and so does the collective body of the school."⁹⁷ Eichenbaum subjects the writer's personality to the laws of art even in the case of Tolstoy. He states that "art was to Tolstoy not a craft and not a pleasure but an organic matter. Tolstoy came to be a 'moralist' only because he was an artist. It was not he who lived in crisis but art itself."⁹⁸ In other words, Tolstoy did not create art, but art created the artist, art made him a moralist. Shklovsky also formulates this idea by saying that "the philosophical world view is to the writer a working hypothesis. More precisely, it is the literary form that determines the writer's consciousness. The writer's crises coincide with the crises of

⁹⁵ B. M. Eichenbaum, 'Literatura i literaturny byt', *Na literaturnom postu*, 1927/9, pp. 47—52.

⁹⁶ *Literaturnoe nasledstvo*, 1932/11, p. 126.

⁹⁷ V. Shklovsky, *O teorii prozy*, p. 211.

⁹⁸ B. M. Eichenbaum, 'O L'Ve Tolstom', in *Skvoz' literaturu*, p. 66.

genres.”⁹⁹ This total objectivization of art, its separation from all psychic phenomena, was in harmony with the formalists’ view of the autonomy of literature and was a precondition of their conception of the work of art as a unified whole and of the elaboration of their model of literature. It is not difficult to discover in this view affinities with the antipsychologist philosophy of phenomenology. And the above conclusion of Shklovsky’s (“it is the literary form that determines the writer’s consciousness”) is consonant with Heidegger’s existentialist view, according to which – as it is put by Wehrli – “it is not so much the writer that makes the work as rather the work that makes the artist.”¹⁰⁰ The artist’s view of the world, the formalists claimed, is a building material of the work, and its function is expressed in the motivation of the device. Shklovsky writes that the poet’s world view grows into a literary fact only if, undergoing the proper deformation, it is converted into a material fit to construct poems.

Eichenbaum does not regard the concept of social class as a “literary” category: “in the history of literature ‘class’ has no independent meaning” unlike, for example, in political economy. Class character can be spoken of only in case it assumes a literary function through art.

The formalists’ speculations proceeding from the world inside the work of art naturally led to a gross misunderstanding of some phenomena, and to mistakes in judging the artist’s personality, as well as in determining the content problems of the artistic composition. We cannot accept as convincing their statements on the problem of the writer’s ideology and on the motive forces of society. The formalists resorted to such extreme abstractions only to separate the artistic work from all phenomena that would undermine the autonomy and immanence of the work of art.

While the synchronic approach rejecting the idea of genesis and evolution prevailed in the first phase of their activity, later they attempted to combine the synchronic and diachronic methods. The theoretical researches of Eichenbaum, Tynyanov, Jakobson and Tomashevsky covered phenomena occurring inside the literary

⁹⁹ V. Shklovsky, *O teorii prozy*, p. 205.

¹⁰⁰ Max Wehrli, *Allgemeine Literaturwissenschaft* (Bern, 1951.) «... es ist nicht ein vom Dichter Gemachtes, vielmehr ein erst den Dichter machendes.» (p. 59.)

system but outside the sphere of the individual work of art. They began to talk about a close and dialectic relationship of the system of literature with other systems or series of reality. In 1927 Eichenbaum discussed such phenomena in two essays entitled 'Literature and the Writer' and 'Literary Life'.¹⁰¹ In the second study he declares that the reputation of the historical study of literature must be saved. The formalists turned with increasing interest to the process of literature and the internal dialectics of styles and genres. The theoretical examination of the evolution of literature threw new light upon the problem of genesis, and this suddenly posed "questions on how the historical facts of literature are related to literary life". Eichenbaum found that literature was a specific series, it did not stem from other series, and therefore it could not be traced back to them. His position was not inflexible: he discussed phenomena which, with the existence of "reciprocal correspondence", namely isomorphism, could become literary facts and, through the new context, could play an active role in the literary process. If, however, they are passive and ineffective, the genetic series remains extraliterary and as such it is located among the general factors of cultural history.¹⁰²

*Tynyanov's attempt to reconcile the synchronic
with the diachronic approach*

In writing 'The Problem of Poetic Language', Tynyanov concentrated on the internal dynamism of the pattern of artistic composition. His method was still based on the synchronic approach. In his study entitled 'The Literary Fact' he left the closed sphere of the literary work and engaged in a broader analysis concentrating on the question of genre. He approached the characteristics of the literary genre from the theoretical aspect of development, of change. In interpreting the historical process of literature he started from the following premise: "It is not planned evolution but a leap, not development but shift."¹⁰³

¹⁰¹ B. M. Eichenbaum's two essays 'Literatura i pisatel' and 'Literaturny byt' were also published in one volume.

¹⁰² Mikulaš Bakoš, *Teoria literatúry* (Trnava, 1941), p. 141.

¹⁰³ J. Tynyanov, *Arkhaisty i novatory*, p. 6.

Certain genres play a dominant role in certain periods, under different circumstances they lose their "literariness" and are driven to the periphery of literature. Other genres, in the course of the evolution of literature, change some important facts of social life into literary facts.

While earlier Tynyanov considered only the work of art to be a system, in a treatise dated 1927 he also conceived of literature in the same way: "The literary work and literature are both systems." With this aphoristic formulation he included in the theoretical investigation of literature the phenomena once excluded from the literary principles of *Opojaz*, and he searched for the modes which connected the literary system with other systems. Tynyanov even laid down that the conception of literature as a system did not exclude the study of other series.¹⁰⁴

In the literary system an important part is played by function which Tynyanov examined throughout its historical changes and with proper differentiation. He distinguished three basic types of function. The first plays a part in the internal system of the work of art and is expressed in the structure principle. The second is the function of the system of literature, to be found in separate and autonomous systems, inside and outside the artistic composition. The third is the one which he calls the linguistic function. Tynyanov saw the third function as the expression of the role that literature plays in social life. Literary study, too, should progress in the above order of the three functions, that is from the simple towards the complex.

Tynyanov's important conclusion is that all individual phenomena of the artistic work as a system have *autonomous* and syntactic functions at the same time. One and the same individual phenomenon performs a function within its own system (auto-function) and has also a syntactic function insofar as it is a factor in other series, too. Such, for example, is the lexical word which has a part to play both in the work of art and in the standard language. Another important conclusion is that "the autonomous function does not determine the syntactic function, it is only a possibility, a condition of the latter". He points to two extreme ways, both implying misconception, of approaching

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 33.

the individual phenomenon. At one extreme one tears single elements out of their system and resets them in relations external to it, which means that notwithstanding the specifics they acquired in the internal system of the work of art, they are confronted with functions they fulfilled in other systems. Nor does the other extreme bring any scientific result, because the so-called "immanent" examination of the artistic work as a system is impossible if it is not connected with its literary system. "This isolated examination of the work is exactly such an abstraction as the abstraction of the single elements of the work."¹⁰⁵ To understand literature it is indispensable to reveal and interpret the social factors completely although it is wrong to transfer them mechanically into the literary sphere.

Thus Tynyanov went beyond the *Opojaz* theory, but it would be a mistake to jump to the conclusion that he abandoned the results the formalists had achieved by that time. Some chroniclers and impassionate critics of the Formalist School contended that Tynyanov turned his back on the principles of *Opojaz*. This contention does not square with the facts. By conceiving of the work's system and the literary system as dynamic patterns, Tynyanov did not deny the previous achievements of the formalists but built on them consistently. He suppressed neither the principles of the *device* and *construction* nor the principles concerning *de-auto-mation*, *deformation*, *material* and *tradition*, but raised them to a higher and broader logical sphere. Nevertheless, the exclusion of the rigid and scholastic concept of immanence does not deny the immanent nature of the systems, although it sees them as in dialectical correlation with other immanent phenomena and systems. In their jointly written essay, Tynyanov and Jakobson point out that "it is methodologically dangerous to investigate the interrelationship of systems without due consideration of the immanent laws of each system".¹⁰⁶ The system of literature cannot be understood outside the problem of function. For this very reason, "the system of the literary series is above all a *system of the functions of the literary series, which are in constant interrelation with other series*".¹⁰⁷ Now, therefore, function is described by

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁶ See Note 27.

¹⁰⁷ J. Tynyanov, *Arkhaisty i novatory*, pp. 35, 40.

Tynyanov not only as the function of the internal elements of the work of art, but also of those of the "literary system", which latter also included the opposing series of literature and non-literature. These relations, these series are not inflexible. In the course of history they undergo changes and transformations, the composition of the series changes, but the differentiation of human activity remains. The durability of the functions of literary elements is variable, some have a shorter, others a longer span of life. For example, "the development of the constructional function is a faster process. The development of the literary function varies from age to age, and the development of the functions of the whole literary series in relation to the neighbouring series may take centuries." For Tynyanov, function is not an immeasurably abstract and undifferentiated phenomenon, but an historically determined one. In short, "function is variable".

Tynyanov and Jakobson, in their study, elaborated the static and the evolutionary principle in a clearer form, in the terms of the Saussurean synchrony and diachrony used in the Prague Circle and "imported" by Jakobson. Here they basically gave a new formulation to Tynyanov's conception of literature. The synchronic approach replaced "the mechanical conception of an agglomerate of phenomena included in the work of art" with the concept of *system*, of *structure*. This view, however, had to be completed by a diachronic approach, given that "the history of systems is likewise a system". The system of the work of art is "spatial" and is based upon "simultaneity" in time, upon simultaneous existence, but the diachronic approach involves a "temporal" system, or "structure" built upon historicity. The two authors had every reason to state that "pure synchrony has proved to be an illusion: every synchronic system has its past and future as its inseparable elements". With this attitude they went beyond the rigid and scholastic immanency principle and evolved a new, more complex outlook. They laid down that "the immanent laws of literary (or linguistic) development form an indeterminate equation which implies a definite multitude of solutions but does not pick one as the only one possible. The problem of the concrete choice of solution can be resolved only by analysing the connections of literature with other historical series. This interconnection (the system of systems) has its own structural

laws which may be subjected to examination.¹⁰⁸ These conclusions have produced important modifications in comparison with the basic principles adopted by the formalists at the early stage of their activity. In order to devise a model of literature and its evolution, it proved necessary to tear the literary work of art out of the organic process of literature. We have thus ascertained that the immanent conception of the work of art had been a prerequisite to the formation of a complex view of literature and the literary process. The illumination of the interior of the work of art was thus preliminary to a more accurate description of the literary process. Of course, the internal motivation of the literary process cannot be at variance with the fundamental social functions of literature; moreover, it is the latter which determine the course of literary evolution. By superseding the absurdly overstrained immanency principle of the artistic work and the literary process, we can grasp the social functions of art and analyse them. In this respect there is no contrast between the initial and later periods of the activity of the Formalist School because they do not rule out, but organically complement and presuppose, each other. The above-described synchronic and diachronic methods of literary studies already laid the groundwork for an evaluative principle of literary facts and created the possibility of raising the problem of literary axiology. This very promising initiative fell through. Unfortunately, these prospectively rich possibilities of modern literary scholarship have remained in an embryonic stage.

The Tynyanov–Jakobson essay can be regarded as a bridge between the literary theory of the Russian formalists and the structural aesthetics of the Prague Circle.

SUMMARY

The Russian Formalist School blazed a trail for the modern study of literature. From today's historical perspective we see that Russian formalism at that time, with the problems it proposed and its effective results, was on the level of the general scientific

¹⁰⁸ See Note 27.

thinking of the time. In the solution of its tasks in the field of literary scholarship it kept pace with the new propositions of the natural and the social sciences by reviving the methodological devices of literary studies. The formalists rejected the practice built upon subjectivist and spiritualist judgments ingrained in the study of literature, and cherished the scientific ideal that the intricate complex of the phenomena of literature can be unravelled, analysed and interpreted by exact scientific methods. They were inventive in examining the structure of poetic language and poetic works, while their artistic sense also proved very refined. They created a scientific "model" of the work of art, and thus a new channel for the evolution of modern literary scholarship.

This stated, we should not, however, overestimate the theoretical contributions of the Russian Formalist School. We must not forget that, as regards its philosophical foundations, the School represented, in the last analysis, an idealist trend. The idealist and agnostic aspects of their outlook are apparent especially where they delimited the existence of the work of art from non-literary phenomena. At the same time, we also have to admit that the delimitation of the artistic work from historical conditions, from social life, the formulation of the immanency principle, proved to be an historically necessary and important hypothetical method. Only thus could they conceive of the artistic work as a model. The uprooting of the literary work from the social basis, the one-sided negation of the social genesis of the work of art, however, entailed consequences such as the carrying to absurd lengths of the immanency principle of literature (Tynyanov's experiment remained in an embryonic stage and came too late to resolve this rigid delimitative principle) which necessarily drew the formalists into conflict with the cultural revolution of the twenties. This fact may convince us that the inner necessity of the evolution of literary scholarship, its immanent outcome, may sometimes run into conflict with the objective demands and requirements of societal motion. This is what the history of the Formalist School seems to prove. Although, in the last analysis, the theoretical studies of the formalists resulted in an upswing of literary scholarship and, indirectly, of Soviet literature, too, when looking back from today's perspective, we can easily convince ourselves that their negative attitude to the questions of content and ideas had a disorienting effect.

While we disapprove of their disparagement of certain endeavours in contemporary Soviet prose, we may not gloss over that part of their activity which was aimed at the theoretical and critical support of Mayakovsky and, in general, of the modern poetic endeavours growing out of futurism. In laying the theoretical foundations of the evolution of literature, they always placed stress upon what was new, experimental, modern, and thereby supported objectively the revolutionary drive of Soviet literature. They castigated the petty-bourgeois ideal of harmony which disintegrates the life of art, and they assailed the automated and conventionalized aesthetic principles, and, in general, the view of art suggesting conformism. Their principle of immanence fostered, in the last analysis, not art for art's sake, but the idea of the constant renewal of literature, its self-generation. Their theory which proclaimed the independence of literature was, in fact, built upon a negative attitude and suggested ignoring its connections with other forms of consciousness, and so this principle was unfit to provide a positive programme for the practice of living art. Their recurrent ill-advised and dare-devil utterances irritated their debating partners and increased their separation. But their principal weakness, we repeat, was rooted in their philosophical inexperience. That is why they could not see that those of their opponents who posed as Marxists but relied on a vulgar-sociological basis were not Marxists, nor could they recognize the way in which they could have developed their views on the basis of the original works of Marxist classics, on the basis of the theory and philosophy of Marxism. The crisis of the Formalist School was in part attributable to their theoretical and methodological contradictions, to their philosophical inaptitude. In their philosophical outlook we can discern neo-positivistic scepticism and some traits of phenomenological philosophy. But the development of the Formalist School broke off not only because of these methodological weaknesses but also under the pressure of intolerant administrative measures. We mention incidentally that the liquidation of the Russian Formalist School coincided with the suppression of certain trends of the socialist avant-garde.

Marxist literary scholarship can derive much from the theoretical activity of the Russian Formalists, given proper and due critical

consideration. We can value especially those works in which they examine the language of poetry, conceive of the work of art as a system, as in Tynyanov's exemplary theoretical works in the first place. Recently in the Soviet Union there has been a book published by the French scholar Abraham Moles, *Theory of Information and Aesthetic Perception*, whose postscript written by Soviet authors states the following: "The study of language as some formal structure, which was practically applied for the first time in works prepared through mechanical translation, began long before the appearance of modern computer technology. The evolution of this linguistic theory in Soviet science during the first few years following the Revolution was inseparably connected with works aimed at the formal study of poetic language and written by scholars like V. B. Tomashevsky, J. N. Tynyanov, V. B. Shklovsky, B. M. Eichenbaum, V. J. Propp and others. These works by Soviet scholars which have lately been widely recognized, and which have found followers in a number of other countries, prepared the ground directly for the precise description of the work of art and for us to gradually change the historical study of art and literature into an exact science."¹⁰⁹

Acquaintance with the Russian formalist literary theory in Hungary may have even greater significance. The ideological bases of Hungarian bourgeois literary scholarship, derived from Positivism and the *Geistesgeschichte*, were inconsistent with the need to approach artistic compositions by exact methods. This accounts also for the fact that Hungarian literary scholarship has no tradition comparable to the Russian Formalist School, the Czech Structuralist School and the New Criticism. Hungarian Marxist literary scholarship, which in many respects has in fact adopted the "sociological method", and was for a time unable to break with the *Geistesgeschichte* and with Positivism, was ill at ease in the face of the efforts at exactitude. Today Marxist literary scholarship strives to revive its methods. The theoretical attainments of the Russian Formalists may help us to a short cut in our search.

¹⁰⁹ Abraham Moles, *Théorie de l'information et perception esthétique* (in Russian: Moskva, 1966), p. 342.

LÁSZLÓ SZIKLAY
THE PRAGUE SCHOOL

ITS BIRTH AND PLACE IN CZECH CULTURAL HISTORY

The Prague School is one of the most influential trends in twentieth-century linguistics and literary aesthetics, which completely broke with the traditional ways of interpreting literature and art in general. Its adherents flatly repudiated any approach that worked with means alien and extraneous to literature; they objected to the analysis of poetry which one-sidedly started from social history, history of ideas, political history, or psychology. This position of the School is, we must stress, common to all twentieth-century "formalist" theories and is important also from the point of the general development of our discipline.

The initiative of the Praguians indicates a great change in the study of Czech literature, too; they were the first in Czech cultural history to approach literature not from the outside, from its general national aspect, and to turn against the preceding generation whose outlook was, however, justified by the colonial, semi-colonial status of the Czech people before the foundation of Czechoslovakia in 1918. Among all small peoples of Eastern Europe, including the Czechs, the historical study of literature was born in the second half of the eighteenth century. In the course of the nineteenth, together with many other fields of culture, it strengthened national consciousness and revived the struggle against foreign oppressors. It fitted in with the general European development insofar as it took over the up-to-date methods of the discipline and put them at the service of its "nation-saving" or "nation-building" efforts: to liberate the Czech nation from the Hapsburg rule. From this point of view, not even a new epoch (the close of the nineteenth century) in the romantic view of the past and the positivistic conception of literature brought

any essential change. Jan Gebauer's exposure of Václav Hanka's forgery of medieval manuscripts dealt the illusionism of the romantics a fatal blow and blazed a trail for a rational, factual investigation, but it did not discredit the role of literary studies in national edification; on the contrary, it strengthened this conception. But after World War I, after the Czechoslovak Republic had been established, this outlook soon became outmoded; and the Czech bourgeois intelligentsia, which until then had led the struggle against the Hapsburg dynasty, became an obstacle to further development not only in the field of economy and politics but also in intellectual life. Historicism, too, became obsolete when — in history, philology and literary studies alike — it emphasized the richness of the national past. This historicism of the preceding generation relied upon the practice of positivism, which saw only the causal relations between the stages of historical development and practically conceived of the actual situation as the sum total of those interrelations. Extreme positivism, the isolation of facts, the neglect of interrelations, was bound to produce a reaction just as the new generation, desirous of liquidating the consequences of the pre-war colonial status, attacked the fathers' "educational" attitude. The youths of the twenties opposed the outlook of Tomáš Garrigue Masaryk, one of the greatest Czech bourgeois philosophers; *drobná práce* ("meticulous tasks") no longer satisfied them: they refused to analyse the role of a work of art in national history. National freedom called for an outlook that was more complete, more complex and, for this very reason, more autochthonous in every sphere of cultural life.

We cannot, however, view this opposition of the "fathers" and "sons" of the twenties as a simple conflict between "bourgeois science" and "progressive science". Yet, it is beyond question that those who defended the outlook of the past belonged to the bourgeoisie that came into power in Czechoslovakia in 1918, and it is also beyond question that the youths who battled against them disagreed with the ruling ideology. However, both in their idealistic world view and their scientific methods, they failed to break completely with the bourgeois world. Their novel way of looking at things was only a consequence of the fact that the issue of national self-

defence was no longer a consuming one; it ceased to function as a starting-point for scientific work, too.¹

In the field of linguistics all this prompted the researchers of the twenties and thirties first of all to turn against Gebauer's Czech Neogrammarian School: against the historical view of language and the method of diachrony.² The first in Czech linguistics to point out the untenability of the Neogrammarian approach was the young Anglicist, Vilém Mathesius, who proposed the "horizontal" examination of language. The Prague Linguistic Circle was formed on October 6, 1926 against the narrow conception of the Neogrammarian School and for the elaboration of the new approach.³

THE CONNECTION OF LITERARY STUDIES AND CONTEMPORARY POETRY

At about the same time as the young scholars of philology unleashed this attack against "educational positivism", an interesting parallel movement appeared also among the poets of the same generation. It was about then that young poets and artists in Prague founded the society called *Devětsil*,⁴ which, headed by Vítězslav Nezval, stood up in the field of the arts against the realism of the "fathers", against their Parnassian attitude, in part against symbolism, and even against the "educational" tradition of Czech bourgeois poetry.⁵ The consciously avowed aim of Nezval and his associates was to free the language of poetry from the shackles of tradition and to ensure the poet's sovereign use of imagery.

¹ Cf. Vilmos Voigt, 'Az epikus néphagyomány strukturális-tipologikus elemzésének lehetőségei', *Ethnographia*, 1964/1, pp. 36–37.

² T. Bulygina, *Pražská lingvistická škola* (Moskva, 1964), pp. 47–48.

³ Victor Erlich, *Russischer Formalismus* (München, 1964). — Mathesius was the oldest participant at the meeting. Others present were Roman Jakobson, Bohuslav Havránek, Ján Rypka and B. Trnka. Later they were joined by Petr Bogatyryev, Dimitrij Čičevskij, Jan Mukařovský, N. S. Trubetskoy, René Wellek, and then by Boris Tomashevsky.

⁴ The literal translation is "nine forces". At the same time it means in Czech a certain big-leaved plant (*Petasites officinalis*).

⁵ Cf. László Sziklay, 'Modernizmus és haladás a cseh lírában a két háború között', *Világirodalmi Figyelő*, 1961/1, pp. 44–65. — "It was no

This view of literature relates *Devětsil* to the Russian formalists on the one hand and to the Prague School on the other. It cannot be mere chance that Nezval, so representative of Czech modernism, of poeticism and surrealism, writes thus in his autobiography: "In Roman Jakobson I found then, for a long time to come, a friend with whom I could well agree on matters of poetry."⁶ Neither was it mere chance that Mayakovsky, when on a visit to Prague in 1927, thought he saw the experiments of his young days in the aspirations of the young people in revolt against the canon of bourgeois poetry.

THE PRAGUIANS AND THE RUSSIAN FORMALISTS

Mathesius stresses that the Russian formalists had a decisive influence on the Prague Linguistic Circle, but at the same time he talks about a reciprocal effect and adds: the formation of Czech structuralism has nothing to do with mechanical copying.⁷

The embodiment of this contact was Roman Jakobson: he moved to Prague in 1920, and from that time on he contributed significantly to the development of Czech linguistics and literary scholarship. In this respect, his essay on Czech poetry, published in Berlin in 1923, deserves attention. Applying the methods of the Russian Formalist Schools, as a Slavist he noticed that in consequence of the regularities of word stress, the Czech and the Russian languages, despite their relatedness, had developed different prosodies. Starting from this observation, Jakobson launched a crusade against the old usage in Czech prosody — the distinction between "qualitative" (accentual) and "quantitative" (metrical) versification. In opposition to Josef Král, a representative of classical Czech poetics, he emphasized that quantity should be allowed a far greater role in Czech verse. The prosodic elements, which form the basis of rhythm in a language, are as a rule "phonemic relevants"; that is, they also contribute

accident that, just as elsewhere, in the search for a new view of poetry the theorists of the new trend met the poetic avant-garde . . ." — Mikuláš Bakoš, 'O tzv. formálnej metóde v literárnej vede', in *Problémy literárnej vedy včera a dnes* (Bratislava, 1964), p. 118.

⁶ Vítězslav Nezval, *Z mého života* (Praha, 1959), p. 138.

⁷ See Victor Erlich, *Russischer Formalismus*, pp. 172—173.

to the semantic differentiation of words. In Russian, where quantitative differences are unimportant and where accent is free, the latter is of phonemic value. In Czech, on the other hand, where the accent always falls on the first syllable of the word, it is quantity rather than accent that matters in semantic differentiation.

How is it possible then, Jakobson asks, that the accentual system had, through some periods, dominated in Czech lyric poetry? His answer is that versification cannot be deduced mechanically from the tonal or stress system prevailing in the standard language: the question cannot be settled by referring to the "spirit" of a given language, to the "natural" basis of prosody; poetry is always conditional upon artistry, upon a whole range of established aesthetic traditions.

This discourse of Jakobson's spurred a revolution not only amid scholars of Czech poetry. The outlook of the Russian formalists aroused sympathy primarily among the students of Czech linguistics: the Prague Linguistic Circle, as indicated also by its name, made it its principal duty to formulate an up-to-date linguistic method, and only after taking up some fundamental linguistic problems did it get down to questions of aesthetics, of literary theory and the history of literature. The joint examination of questions of literature and language, as is known, was characteristic of the Russian formalists, too; but the hierarchy seemed, at least in the beginning, to have disappeared.

While Jakobson joined the Circle, and took part in its work, Trubetskoy, at that time professor in Vienna, only occasionally attended the meetings, although he kept in constant and close touch with them.⁸

THE FUNCTIONS OF LANGUAGE

The results of the modern linguistic theory were also well-known in the Prague of the 1920s.

Vilém Mathesius, in his essay on the sources of his theory and method, refers to Jean Baudouin de Courtenay and Ferdinand de

⁸ N. S. Trubetskoy, *Principes de phonologie* (Paris, 1949. Klingsieck) *Notes autobiographiques* XXVI—XXVII.

Saussure as his predecessors. In the wake of Baudouin de Courtenay he emphasized the phonemic nature of sound. The phoneme, according to the Praguians, belongs to the fundamentals of modern linguistics. They referred first of all to Saussure in distinguishing between the diachronic (dynamic) and synchronic (static) approach in linguistics. While Baudouin de Courtenay had been confused by the excessive psychologism of his age and had attached far too great significance to the constantly changing character of language, Mathesius tried, as early as 1911 (!), to solve the conflict between the demands of synchronic and diachronic analysis by emphasizing the potential character of linguistic phenomena, thereby creating in a way a pattern for the subsequent structural theory of language of the Praguians. In this respect Mathesius was supported by Saussure's thesis: the elements of language that exist in a given period are in close interaction, form a closed system.

Rudiments of this thought can already be discovered in the arguments of the Russian formalists. But it was the Prague Linguistic Circle that developed these into an organized system. The collective theses prepared jointly by the members of the School were presented to the First International Congress of Slavists held in Prague in the summer of 1929. According to the Prague conception, language is a functional system, a system of means of expression which serves such and such a purpose.⁹ The essence of language is comprised in its structure; this structure — although the result of a historical development — is a system only by form and not by content; in itself it is pure synchrony. Every language has an independent structure which is connected only indirectly with objective reality. In the field of semantics, for example, it is André Haudricourt who has lately demonstrated that the number of the names of colours, parts of the body, domestic animals in a language is dependent not on the number of the colours, parts of the body, domestic animals actually existing in objective reality but on the structure of the language concerned.¹⁰ Let us note here that according to the Marxist standpoint the connection between

⁹ See T. Bulygyna, *Pražská lingvističeská škola*, p. 56.

¹⁰ André Haudricourt, 'Récents travaux de sémantique structurale', *La Pensée*, 130 (1966), pp. 34—35.

linguistic signs, or their structure, and reality must by no means be left out of consideration.¹¹

Bohuslav Havránek defines standard literary language on the basis of its social function. Literary language itself is stylistically differentiated according to its various functions — thus: economic, legal, industrial styles, jargons, etc. Their common feature is the communicative function, the striving for a precise reflection of reality. This communicative language differs substantially from poetic language, whose function is not communicative but aesthetic.

The theory of the aesthetic function (“poetic function” in the parlance of other Prague scholars) of language was first worked out by Jan Mukařovský, the founder of structuralism in Czech literary scholarship. Mukařovský places the structure of the linguistic signs in the focus of attention rather than the reality expressed. The essential difference between communicative language and aesthetic (poetic) language, he writes, is that while the former has first of all a presentative function, the latter’s primary function is aesthetic.

Communicative (standard literary) language has the conservative function of preserving norms, whereas poetic language — while it may also have its peculiar yet changing norms — continually arouses the attention of the reader by organized and systematic violation of linguistic norms. Mukařovský assumed this standpoint mainly in the early years of his career and started on his life’s work by strictly separating the two functions of language. In the given milieu of the time he turned against the naive poetic realism of the preceding generation which regarded the literary composition as a truthful, documentary image of a segment of reality.¹²

The examination of the aesthetic function of poetic language requires a special method. The more so as — according to Mukařovský, who at the time adopted the most extreme standpoint — aesthetic (poetic) language is autonomous, it cannot be considered to be a special variety of common literary language.

¹¹ See András Martinkó’s contribution to the debate on structural linguistics at the Hungarian Academy of Sciences. MTA I. OK XVIII (1961).

¹² Květoslav Chvatík, ‘Estetika Jana Mukařovského’, in Jan Mukařovský, *Studie z estetiky* (Praha, 1966), pp. 358—359.

According to the principle of aesthetic function elements in a work of art have no independent status: they exist only in relation to an organic whole — the structure.

THE GERMAN PRECEDENTS

Much has been written on the influence of Baudouin de Courtenay, Saussure and the Russian formalists on the Prague School. Prague was — as has also been pointed out¹³ — not the only place where “Praguian” views — especially on language — had been formulated. It has only recently been stressed that the Circle also knew well the scientific results of neighbouring Germany.

For example, T. Bulygina points out that — much as the structuralists objected to psychology both in the science of language and of literature — the Havránek group’s theory on the functions of language is in part an expansion of the theses of the psychologist Karl Bühler.

On the other hand, Oleg Sus’s very instructive discourse tries to discover in German philosophy and aesthetics the roots of the structuralists’ theory of the “aesthetic sign”. In the last analysis he goes back to Hegel who in some ways, both methodologically and ideologically, anticipated the later discipline of semiotics. He objected to connecting the category of signs directly with that of noetics, thus with the content, functions, limits and values of the process of either theoretical or artistic cognition. According to Sus this was an essential step in the history of philosophy and aesthetics. In his lectures on aesthetics Hegel pointed out that the sign is something that is perceptible also in itself and is immanent and objective by reason of its existence. Sus also points to Dilthey as another predecessor of the structuralists: his were the first steps towards structural and semantic aesthetics (1887) which at the time was still based on “practical philosophy” (*Lebensphilosophie*) and had “personal experience” (*Erlebnis*) as its central idea.¹⁴

¹³ András Martinkó in his contribution referred to Danish structuralism and one of its representatives, Brøndal. See p. 162.

¹⁴ Oleg Sus, ‘K předpokladům vzniku české strukturalistické sémantiky a semiologie (Linie ‘duchovědné’), *Estetika*, 1964/2, pp. 152–169.

Robert Kalivoda has recently argued — following the work of Josef Zúmr¹⁵ — that the philosophical roots of Czech structuralism may be found also in Herbart's empirical, concrete thinking: the so-called "content" line, which leads from the Enlightenment, from mechanical materialism through Schelling, Hegel and the revolutionary democrats as far as Marxist aesthetics orientated "in the Hegelian direction"; and the "formal" line, which originated from Kant and Schiller and culminated in Herbart, leading through Russian formalism and the Czech Otakar Hostinský (who restored Herbart's "concrete formalism" against the "abstract formalism" of Herbart's immediate followers) to Czech structural aesthetics.

In his interpretation of Herbart's aesthetics, Zúmr enables us to discover the significance of formal aesthetics from the point of view of aesthetic quality as a *sui generis* phenomenon. It is not an accessory and collateral phenomenon but has its own particularity and justification as a phenomenon that originates in the relation of the various factors and that changes as a result of any change in this relation. Herbart's basic "factual" principle has been revived and further developed by the Czech Otakar Hostinský who stated that all sense of beauty is composed of a greater or smaller number of notions; what determines the beauty or non-beauty of a thing, our aesthetic pleasure or displeasure, is only the composition, the form, and not the character of the particular notions themselves, their material. This explication by Hostinský, according to Kalivoda, is an important link in the chain which leads to structural aesthetics. The essential difference between the Herbartian and the structuralist conception of the structure of artistic elements lies in their character: Herbart's is a mechanical and Mukařovský's a dialectic structure. Hostinský is an interesting connecting link between the two; his theory already holds some elements of the superior conception but, on the whole, it remains on the mechanical level.¹⁶

¹⁵ Josef Zúmr, 'Teoretické základy Hostinského estetiky', *Filosofický časopis*, 2 (1958), p. 301; *Některé otázky českého herbartismu: Filosofie v dějinách českého národa* (Praha, 1958), p. 166.

¹⁶ Robert Kalivoda, 'Dialektika strukturalismu a dialektika estetiky', in *Struktura a smysl literárního díla*, ed. Milan Jankovič Zdeněk Pešat and Felix Vodička (Praha, 1966), pp. 20—22.

Thus the legacy of Hegelian dialectics fits into the tradition of Herbartian empiricism so important in Czech evolution. The parallelism between the two apparently contradictory trends is illustrated by Kalivoda in the following incisive comment: "Structuralism in its empirical concreteness brings about a peculiar negation of Hegel by Hegel. Herbart's empirical concreteness will provide the grounds for dialectical analysis".¹⁷

As to the connections between Praguian structuralism, primarily Mukařovský, and Husserl's phenomenology, we confine ourselves to a few remarks. (There might also have been direct connections between them, since Husserl even read a paper on the phenomenology of language in the Prague Linguistic Circle.) Antipsychologism was a characteristic momentum in Husserl's phenomenology¹⁸ just as in the structuralism of the Praguians; for him, just as for the structuralists, meaning is never a mere psychological notion but an *entitas sui generis* which has an ideal existence outside time and space. Mukařovský and his group also base their experiment with "objective" aesthetics upon a few arguments of the semantics of phenomenology. Like Husserl, they conceive of a work of art as a complex semantic structure, whose content develops into meaning and which exists objectively. The essential difference between Husserl's conception and the position of the Praguians lay in only two points. On the one hand, in their approach to the semantic structure of the artistic work, the Praguians set out from the function of aesthetic (poetic) language. On the other hand, Mukařovský and his followers refused to accept Husserl's ontological conclusions and placed the "aesthetic object" not in "pure consciousness" but in the more empirical "collective consciousness" (a term they borrowed from neo-positivistic sociology). Some of their theses, including their views on the different functions of language, however, are related to Heidegger's teachings. When, for example, Heidegger contends that whereas "the language of science is a language detached from existence, a language turned tool; in the case of the poet and the philosopher,

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 16.

¹⁸ P. P. Gajdenko, *Az egzisztencializmus és a kultúra* (Budapest, 1966), pp. 99–100.

language appears as itself the aim", he gives expression to nearly the same idea as the Praguians express about the different functions of language.

Victor Erlich mechanically regarded the Prague structuralists and similar experimenters in Poland (Ingarden), as continuing the work of the Russian formalist school.¹⁹ However, Květoslav Chvátik reminds us that the teachings of the Prague structuralists, and first of all precisely that of Mukařovský, cannot be conceived of as the passive summation of such and such philosophical influences. Mukařovský's views are no mere applications of foreign ideologies; his theses have not been eclectically composed of Russian formalism, of Husserl's phenomenology, of Saussure, etc.²⁰ The Praguians based their empirical criticism on the literary material itself, thus their method was essentially different from speculative, philosophical aesthetics.

THE MOST IMPORTANT THESES OF THE PRAGUE SCHOOL

The Praguians were primarily linguists; it was during their linguistic researches that they arrived at the questions of literature, of poetics. We shall deal with the activity of Mathesius, Jakobson, Trubetskoy, Havránek, Chizhevski and others insofar as they touched upon questions of the theory of literature (especially prosody and poetics) in their linguistic papers. Only Mukařovský dealt specifically with literary problems, thus we are going to evaluate the theoretical achievements of the School chiefly through his works. We shall not deal with the "second generation" of structuralists, with scholars whose activity took place outside the Prague Linguistic Circle. We know that, for example, René Wellek was present at the birth of the theory, but we do not wish to discuss how later in the United States, he based his own theory of literature on what he had learned in

¹⁹ Victor Erlich, *Russischer Formalismus*, pp. 170–186.

²⁰ Felix Vodička, 'Tvůrčí proces v díle Mukařovského', in *Studie z estetiky*, p. 11.

Prague. For this reason we shall not speak at length about Mikuláš Bakoš either, who managed to find ties between the study of literature and the avant-garde in a cultural atmosphere somewhat different from that under Czech conditions i. e. in Slovak literature, and whose influence on the development of Slovak prosody is still considerable. We shall mention only in passing the Czech Felix Vodička who summarized the theory of structuralism.

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Unlike most of their Czech predecessors, Prague aestheticians assert that literature has an internal dynamism; the whole development of literature is conceived of as comparatively independent of the ideas and society around it. The aesthetic value of a work of art contributes to literary development insofar as it manages to modify or change the aesthetic norm of a literary period.

The literary work — as an aesthetic sign — is built of materials which, in interaction and dialectical tension with one another, form the autonomous structure of the work. The structure of the work — like that of the linguistic signs in language — is manifest as a system in which the enumerated (presented) factors are arranged;²¹ every literary work has an independent structure which is created by its peculiar semantic gesture.

As mentioned above, it took years of work for Mukařovský to develop these ideas into a unified theory and years again to modify his theses. Thus, in our analysis, we must not lose sight of the viewpoint of philogeny. Further, we shall try to demonstrate how the basic principles of structuralism were applied in the historical study of literature. In this way the reader will also see how more than one thesis of the Praguians, often similar to those of the Russian formalists, would later form an autonomous approach which went beyond the views of Eichenbaum, Shklovsky, Tynyanov, and even of Jakobson who played the most active part among the Praguians.

²¹ Cf. Ivan Poldauf, 'Strukturalismus a americký deskriptivismus', in *Problémy marxistické jazykovědy* (Praha, 1962), p. 79.

THE LINGUISTIC AND PROSODIC APPROACH TO THE WORK OF ART

Jan Mukařovský wrote his first essay,²² *Some Reflections on the Aesthetics of Czech Verse*, in 1923 – at a time when the Prague Linguistic Circle was not yet in existence, and he had no knowledge of the methods and results of the Russian formalists. The gist of that essay is that aesthetic (poetic) language, as the material of the work of art, determines the work itself.

STRUCTURE AND SEMANTIC GESTURE

Already in his next book a whole theoretical program is expounded.²³ He demonstrates on Karel Hynek Mácha's lyric-epic poem *Máj* all that we have said in the foregoing about the Prague Linguistic Circle's view on the function of aesthetic (poetic) language. Also worthy of our attention is Mukařovský's choice of subject-matter. Mácha, the great poet of Czech romanticism, was an ideal not only for Mukařovský but for his own contemporaries. Nezval also took the poet for his model when he turned against the impressionistic, symbolistic style of the bourgeoisie, which was cold and shallow in the eyes of that generation.

Mácha must really have been a good model of the opposition to the positivistic-naturalistic-impressionistic view of art; in his romantic poetic practice he achieved a transformation of standard language which the structuralists considered the peculiarity of aesthetic (poetic) language and which the lyric poet demanded from his own works.

The essay reflects the full impact of the Russian formalists: the conventional (positivistic) distinction of form and content is untenable: the dualism in which the elements of the poem coexist is a different one. The work is composed of *materials* and *form*. Materials – images, ideas, feelings and language – are aesthetically indifferent. They acquire aesthetic effectiveness through form – the

²² *Příspěvek k estetice českého verše* (Praha, 1923), p. 64.

²³ Jan Mukařovský, *Máchův Máj: Estetická studie* (Praha, 1928), p. 163.

organization of these materials, a process which is of two main types: deformation and organization.

The poet bestows an aesthetic (poetic) function on language by making it a part of a certain structure. In this structure the material of the poem becomes an organized whole; through the structure the materials become objects of aesthetic perception. The same is true of the treatment of a sequence of events: by nature (chronologically) it has no aesthetic value, but if the poet deforms it so as to adapt it to the structure of his work, it will produce an aesthetic effect.

The actual object of Mukařovský's essay is to trace the changes Mácha imposed on the original materials when he shaped the structure of the poem *Máj*. Mukařovský discusses three issues: the order of sounds (the use of sounds) in the poem, the problem of meaning, and the question of theme. The final conclusion is that *Máj* is the first work in Czech literature in which the poet attempted a Byronic solution: the subjectivization of epic poetry.²⁴ In this respect the poem is compared with two other remarkable Czech works: Vítězslav Hálek's *Alfred* and Jaroslav Vrchlický's *Satanella*. Although the theme is similar in the three poems, the peculiar structure of *Máj* determines its subjectivity.

Characteristically, at this stage of his formative period, Mukařovský had not yet correlated synchronic and diachronic analysis. He disregarded the point that the three works were written at different times (*Máj* in 1836, *Alfred* in 1857, and *Satanella* in 1876); that is, they are products of different periods. At this stage Mukařovský disregarded the evolutionary principle of literature, too. In this respect the Russian formalists were ahead of him.

He devoted all his attention to the structure of the work of art.

The structure of a work of art is equal to the organized whole of its components: these mutually influence and complement one another. The structure is more than and qualitatively different from the mere sum total of the components. It is both energetic and dynamic in character. The structure is energetic as within the

²⁴ Cf. László Sziklay, 'A cseh strukturalizmus', *Kritika*, 1963/3, pp. 50–54.

totality every component has its own function; it is dynamic as certain functions, owing to their energetic character, are exposed to constant changes. The structure as a whole is in constant tension, thus it differs from the mere sum total of the components.²⁵ The same structure in the same form cannot occur again, despite the similarity of the theme, because if the rest of the components, or their interrelation changes, the structure will be different.

What holds together in a structure the energetically and dynamically interrelated components of the work of art? — The semantic gesture is the organizing principle; it coordinates as an aesthetic meaning (function) all the components, from the smallest to the largest. The semantic gesture cannot be identified with the author's noetic attitude to reality, yet it is by dint of this connection, indirectly, that the poet composes his work representing the semantic unity, the aesthetic system of symbols.²⁶ Consequently the concept of semantic gesture implies a return to psychology: the "gesture" is performed by the poet. Though the Prague scholars refuted vulgar psychologizing, in formulating their views of aesthetics they could not disregard the part of the poet as a person in the framing of the structure.

From this point of view, however, it is as if the Prague Linguistic Circle had gone farther than the Russian formalists. The totality of the work (its structure) is no mere form, but meaning as well; it is the task of all art analysis to interpret this meaning. The structure of the work of art has a meaning fundamentally different from other structures; the difference is about the same as that between communicative and aesthetic (poetic) language: the meaning of the artistic structure is primarily aesthetic meaning. The work of art is a mediative sign between poet and society. It differs from the communicative sign due to its aesthetic function, and its interpretation is conditioned by the reader's aesthetic disposition. The structuralists thus examine the polarity between work and poet, between work and society, but they always stress that the essence is given by the aesthetic character of the work.

²⁵ Jan Mukařovský, 'Strukturalismus v estetice a ve vědě o literatuře', in *Kapitoly z české poetiky* (Praha, 1948), I.

²⁶ Milan Jankovič, 'K pojetí sémantického gesta', *Česká literatura*, 1965/2, p. 319.

Mukařovský and his associates placed this on a much broader basis than their Polish contemporaries did; while Ingarden interpreted the work of art only statically, the Praguians — as already indicated — highlighted its dynamic aspect. With this in mind they discussed later the evolution of literature, explaining that in the course of its evolution the interrelations of the particular components are constantly rearranged, and the tension among the components in one system is the dynamic factor of the change into a new system.²⁷

In spite of the fact that the Prague structuralists spoke of the *materials* of the work of art, and in principle they kept in view also the problems of theme, action, heroes, etc., their speculations nevertheless centred on the language and artistic form of the poem. As we have seen, the aesthetic (poetic) language as the material of the artistic work determines the work itself.

THE MODERNITY OF POETRY

Mukařovský began to abandon his rigid synchronic approach in the 1930s; slowly and gradually he came to the problem of literary evolution. We should note the similarity between the development of the Praguian views and the views of Shklovsky and his associates. In the course of time the Russians, too, arrived at historical poetics.²⁸

At about the same time as Mukařovský, Jakobson began to stress the evolution of poetry and its relative modernity. In his essay entitled *Co je poesie*²⁹ he regards the linguistic elements as determining the poetic work, but further regards these linguistic elements as determined by the particular time, or period. In the opinion of Jakobson, the erotic character of Mácha's

²⁷ Cf. Felix Vodička, 'Literární historie, její problémy a úkoly', in Bohuslav Havránek and Jan Mukařovský, *Čtení o jazyce a poesii* (Praha, 1942), pp. 336—337.

²⁸ Felix Vodička, 'Celistvost literárního procesu', in *Struktura a smysl literárního díla*.

²⁹ Roman Jakobson, 'Čo je poézia', in Mikuláš Bakoš, *Teória literatúry. Výbor z 'formálnej metódy'*, (Trnava, 1941), pp. 170—181. The essay was written in 1933—34.

diary, quite different from the amorous idyllic scene in *Máj*, does not mean that we have to see the two in terms of the opposing duality of *Dichtung* and *Wahrheit*: the poet wrote these two poetic works in two different ways. In its time the poetical *Máj* had been more popular, while the personal diary became appreciated only in the twentieth century. Although the materials of the two works may have been similar, their different social functions demanded two different structures. Thus, when diachrony, the principle of evolution, is also taken into consideration beside the rigid synchronic approach prevailing till then, the work of art becomes related to social reality.

We attain a similar result if we examine Mukařovský's own works written in that period. An early instance of his emphasis on the place or role of the work of art in evolution is his criticism of a poem entitled *Vznešenost přírody* (*The Sublimity of Nature*, 1818) by Milota Zdirad Polák, a Czech classicist author regarded as a sort of precursor of romanticism. Indeed, this poem was suited for Mukařovský to approach it from this angle, for it was the first celebration of nature, of *concrete* nature, as against the abstract speculative poetry of enlightened rationalism. What is in the focus of attention in this study is not the actual or even "enduring" value of the work of art but its phylogenetic value, for Mukařovský, referring to Tynyanov, couples the concept of "development" with "the artistic structure of poetry". Analysing Polák's classicist verse form, by which Polák had wanted to overcome the accentual versification of Jaroslav Puchmajer (1769–1820), Mukařovský (in contrast to the positivist Jaroslav Vlček's conception) arrived at the conclusion that the poem *Vznešenost přírody* had an important part in the development of Czech poetry. It is clear from this brief discussion that Mukařovský, like the Russian formalists, did not abandon his view of the immanent character of poetry, and saw development as taking place only within literature.

Mukařovský elaborated in full detail his theory of the immanent development of poetry in the course of his analysis of Vítězslav Nezval's activity.³⁰ We have already discussed the parallelism

³⁰ 'Dve studie o Vítězslavu Nezvalovi: Několik poznámek k nové Nezvalově sbírce, *S bohem a šáteček*' (1934); 'Sémantický rozbor básnického díla: Nezvalův *Absolutní hrobář* (1938)', in *Studie z estetiky*, pp. 269–285.

between the *Devětsil*, there first of all Nezval's poetic practice, and the theory of the structuralists. Today Mukařovský's critics emphasize, though, that he was not a champion of the principles of poeticism and surrealism in the same way as the Russian formalists had been of futurism in their time.³¹ His works on such subjects are characterized by a neutral theoretical approach to the problems, and not by the approval, propagation or the rejection of Nezval's poetic practice. Květoslav Chvatík tries to back up this position also by pointing out that at the same time Mukařovský also analyses Karel Čapek's work, although this great fiction writer and dramatist of the twentieth century was an opponent of Nezval and his group. We do not wish to dwell on this statement, we only wish to note that Čapek's opposition to the camp of young avant-gardists during the thirties was political. On the other hand, Mukařovský's (and his followers') essential statements regarding Čapek underline those characteristics of modernity which resemble Nezval's and his associates' poetic ambitions in the field of prose fiction and drama. Opposing the conventional forms of expression, Čapek brought everyday language, the vulgar tongue, into literature and strove after a loosening of forms, thereby producing a novel aesthetic effect.³²

Thus, we can well apprehend Mukařovský's further development by giving a more detailed analysis of one of his Nezval portraits.³³

"The foremost task of art in our age", Mukařovský writes in the introduction, "... is not to induce pleasant excitement, nor to exhibit models of balanced beauty, but to help man find his way in this apparent chaos of unusually accelerated development, to guess with a fine sense the coming changes, and to accustom the structure of man's inner life to the first, guessed outlines of the newly forming certainties". But the "guessing of changes" is of an aesthetic poetic nature; its method has practically nothing

³¹ *Struktura a smysl literárního díla*, p. 9.

³² Cf. Eva Strohsová, 'Román pro služky a Čapkovo směřování k epičnosti' in *Struktura a smysl literárního díla*, pp. 126–142.

³³ It is the one about the 'Absolute Gravedigger'. In addition to the places referred to in Note 30, see *Kapitoly z české poetiky* (Praha, 1948), II, pp. 269–289. It first appeared in the 1938 volume of *Slovo a slovesnost*.

in common with the methods of other forms of approach. The poet has to change his poetic method to be able to adapt himself to the changes of reality and to express them.

Mukařovský in his essay illustrates this by demonstrating how Nezval changed the semantic principle of his preceding, poeticist period, and how he came nearer to the semantic outlook of the surrealists. In the poeticist period Nezval was first of all interested in the continuity of meanings, the variable aspects of unbroken successions, the shifting of one meaning into the other — he devoted attention to the relations and interrelations which attract one another by dint of their meanings. This is how the interrelated meanings came to loose direct connection with that reality which each of them denoted, and this looseness receives emphasis. Sometimes Nezval deliberately enters into one or another meaning and thus creates the illusion of vanishing into the thing which he had in mind with the word: “The lawn dances into the beauty . . .” In the poeticist period the sentence proceeds towards a state of continuous coordination, in which the particular clauses join without tension and create the transition of one into another.

In the volume *Absolute Gravedigger*, especially in the cycle with the same title, we encounter an inclination to a different type of sentence construction. Here we find, on the one hand, complex sentences with conjunctions and, on the other, constructions with innumerable complements (attributes, adverbs, etc.). While in Nezval’s previous volumes every single line of free verse corresponded to a single phrase, in the new volume there is nothing of that sort. The poet divides the sentence into small sections running on through several lines, thereby slowing down its pace (as opposed to the previous form which speeded it up, rather). This rhythmic form breaks up the sentence into small semantic sections, every one of which is isolated from its environment by its own rhythmic and semasiological autonomy. This rich interrelation of meanings compels the reader to bring every semantic unit into connection, independently of the context, with the reality which it denotes; the semantic autonomy of the various minor sections signifies an ever recurring deviation from the thematic outline. In the “Absolute Gravedigger”, for example, the gravedigger’s boots are introduced as follows:

become independent, as we have found in Nezval, the correlations with the context must also be loosened. From the point of view of metaphors (tropes), this implies a certain procedure through which the figurative meaning is made not to correlate with the context, as if it were then a basic meaning which belonged to the given word, independently of the context in which it was just used. This causes an uncertainty in the interpretation of the meaning of the context: the reader has to decide if a word is used in its direct or indirect (figurative) meaning. For example:

In the glass-house
on whose translucent tiles
there glitter
pictures of saints
put there
in honour of the carnations,
the athletically built gardener
pulls off his high boots,
and warms his numbed feet
on the fiery tongues
erupting from the ground.
And then
this man
whose ravaged face
is o'ergrown
with bushy black beard
looks with eyes
suffused with blood
when he thrusts into the ground
a long
sharp
knife.

The semantic construction of this poem about the gardener is based on a few literally understood figures of speech. The pictures of saints displayed on the tiles of the glass-house should be understood as the reflection of sunshine on the glass panes, while the fiery tongues are flowers. In the light of these figures (especially the second one) the whole situation acquires an unusual and

seemingly mysterious sense. As long as the “flames” are understood in the literal sense of the word, the gardener’s activity in the glass-house seems to be mysterious and ritual, one whose purpose is incomprehensible. But the moment that we comprehend that the “fiery tongues” are flowers, the real sense of the action becomes clear. The reason why the gardener pulls off his boots is not to warm up but to work, and his eyes become bloodshot not because of his bloodlust or fury (as is suggested by the context) but because he stoops; the long sharp knife he thrusts into the ground is the shovel with which he breaks up the soil. But these interrelations and meanings are obscured on purpose: the gardener’s daily work becomes a myth.

Our use of the word “myth” is not a mistake although it is evident that Nezval did not strive to mythicize reality in the strict sense of the word, nor did Mukařovský interpret him thus. In his semasiological interpretations he only wished to point out that the modern (in the given case, surrealist) artist, when creating his poem (the artistic work) as an aesthetic sign, could not rest content with the direct communication of the subject (which was — at least in their programs — what the artists of the preceding generation had been trying to achieve), because he could no longer depict reality aesthetically. “Art which shows the man of today the way to knowledge and to possessing the all-powerful sign actually discharges its most specific task.” This task, according to another essay of Mukařovský’s, is fulfilled by surrealism in such a way that “it does not attempt the reconstruction of the romantic individuum of psychology, with its noetic validity based on conation, but comes back to his biological personality. For surrealism the personality is a phenomenon of nature; hence the effort, in the course of artistic production, to penetrate deep into those layers of inner life which are seemingly closest to the biological base, including the most diverse types of psychic automism, e. g., the dream. By the help of the biological individuum, deprived of his social relations, the surrealists strive to make direct connection with material reality which must be rediscovered for man.”³⁵

³⁵ Jan Mukařovský, ‘*Dialektické rozpory v moderném umění*’, in *Kapitoly z české poetiky*, II, 293.

THE AESTHETIC FUNCTION OF THE WORK OF ART

After his poetic studies based directly on poetic experience, Mukařovský began to elaborate his system of aesthetics.

In Mukařovský's view, "aesthetic quality" is not an abstract, metaphysical phenomenon. The aesthetic function, he writes, "does not mean reducing the work to a mere phenomenon or to the manifestation of normalized beauty". There is dialectical tension between the work as an aesthetic sign, the social, psychological and ideal content treated in it, and the reading public or audience perceiving and understanding the work. In the structuralist doctrine this tension can have different forms and gradations: "... Society wants art to express it, and, conversely, art also wants to act upon the evolution of society. If society has dominant influence on art, a 'guided' art evolves, but if art's intention to act upon society wins out, we can speak of 'tendentious' art. Of course, it is not always necessary that one of the extremes should dominate, the consensus between society and art may be so complete that the tension disappears. In these cases artistic production usually merges... into other human occupations. So it was, for example, in the Middle Ages when the 'artists' were craftsmen, members of guilds, and also in the nineteenth century when the artist often became a craftsman by producing to order." Obviously Mukařovský feels sympathetic towards the ages in which there is tension between artist and society. The work of art is the expression, the aesthetic expression, of this tension. And the essence here is that — as we have already pointed out in a different context — all the materials of the work, its linguistic, experiential and ideal materials, are "deformed" in accordance with the aesthetic norms of the age or of the author. Thus the independent structure of the work is adapted to a higher structure with given aesthetic norms.

Accordingly, the aesthetic function, which structuralism ascribes to the work of art, has concrete tangible reality. Its essence lies in the fact that it determines the place of the work in evolution. It is the more valuable the more it promotes evolution, the further development of modern aesthetic norms. In other words, Mukařovský's aesthetics is not only descriptive but expressly normative. In several places he even mentions the value of the artistic work

which to him is the extent to which the work or poet participates in the further development of the artistic-literary norm. For example, Mukařovský considers Mácha a great poet because he altered in a revolutionary way the aesthetic norm which had predominated in Czech literature.

In our opinion, however, this evaluative viewpoint has a great defect: it is phylogenetic in character. There is no doubt that it defines the value of the work of art exclusively in terms of its function in promoting evolution and that it ignores other factors. It may be that the case of the Slovak Janko Král' is an extreme example, yet it is a suggestive illustration of what we want to say here. It is common knowledge that Král' did not at all care about the fate of his poems; in his lifetime only an insignificant part of his work appeared in print. Consequently, he could not even have an effect on the development of the generations succeeding Štúr and his group, and he had virtually no part to play in the development alteration, or transformation of the literary norm. The first selection of his extant poems was published by Jaroslav Vlček as late as 1893, when the revolutionary romanticism represented by the art of Král' was already an old-fashioned style. Today he ranks with the outstanding poets of the Štúr school. The analysis of his works was considered important by the structuralists, too; even Jakobson dealt with them lately.³⁶

Mukařovský's group was not interested in the scale of values of poetic greatness; these, nevertheless, must be taken into consideration in every period, within every national literature and even in the sphere of world literature. When, for example, in the first of his essays under review Mukařovský was looking for the artistic characteristics of various poets on the basis of their poetic diction, he made a comparison of two contemporaries, Svatopluk Čech and Jaroslav Vrchlický, without even mentioning that Vrchlický had been a greater poet than Čech. *Mutatis mutandis*, this interpretation would, in Hungarian literature, deny that any difference of value existed between János Arany and Mihály Tompa, who worked equally hard for the development of an up-to-date (popular-national) literary norm.

³⁶ Roman Jakobson, 'The Grammatical Structure of Janko Král's Verses', *Philologica* (Bratislava, 1964), pp. 29—40.

THE PROBLEM OF LITERARY PERIODS, THE IMMANENT DEVELOPMENT OF LITERATURE

We have tried to describe how, within structuralism, the principle of evolution and periodization arose. This reconciliation — at a higher level — of synchrony and diachrony was, however, possible only through the Praguians' refuting the one-sidedly diachronic outlook of the preceding generations: they elaborated a modern method of synchronic analysis, and thus developed the new phylogenetic approach.³⁷ In defining the concept of literary period, structuralism firmly opposes the standpoint of the previous (positivistic) approach where extra-literary — sociological, psychological — factors were seen to determine a given literary period. In the conception of the structuralists, the development of literature, like that of every art, has an immanent character, its movement has autonomous laws which are primarily determined by the evolution of its basic material: aesthetic (poetic) language. Thus the work of art acquires its phylogenetic significance not through its influence on a social community but through its relation to the preceding or future artistic works. Society and art, as we have seen, are in close contact according to structuralists, too, but this contact is not as direct as that within communicative human activity.

PERIODIZATION AND THE GENESIS OF THE LITERARY WORK

Accordingly, the notion and method of literary periodization, too, changes. A literary period is not determined by social, political development, but by the system of aesthetic norms (the totality of the methods of artistic deformation) of the age. In some cases the change in these norms is noticed at once by the "consumers" of literature, (the public), while in other cases new and old norms

³⁷ Cf. J. Tynjanov and R. Jakobson, 'Problémy skúmania literatúry a jazyka', in Nikolaj Bakoš and Klement Simončíč, *Áno a nie* (Bratislava, 1938), pp. 266–268.

may co-exist until the old gives way to the new. The taste of any period is determined by the dominating norms.

This, then, raises the question of the genesis of the literary work. The stress on the immanent character of development shows that, here too, structuralism remains within literature: in responding to social evolution, the work does not express it passively. The cause and circumstances of the genesis of the work are also to be found within the development of literature itself. The poet can perhaps be influenced by external (non-literary) impulses, yet the principal (aesthetic) inspirer of his work is his relation to the existing literary norm. This, of course, concerns primarily his transformation of the norms of the existing aesthetic (poetic) language.³⁸ Let us give only one more example. As we have already stated, Mukařovský sees Karel Čapek's significance in the revolutionary change he brought in Czech prose fiction. In his opinion, this change concerns, besides the plot and figures, mainly his journalistic style: informal everyday language, the "vulgar tongue".³⁹

FROM STRUCTURALIST POETICS TO STRUCTURALIST AESTHETICS AND PHILOSOPHY OF ART

In the late thirties and early forties, Mukařovský went, in a certain sense, beyond poetics in the strict sense of the word: he was working on his own — "non-metaphysical" — system of aesthetics. He never completed his work; although each essay was a step forward, yet as a whole it remained sketchy, unfinished. His development, as Květoslav Chvatík describes it, leads from formalism to antiformalism: it is not an escape from formalism, but, on the contrary, the logical conclusion from formalism.

According to this theory, the aesthetic quality inherent in the artistic work may be described by three principal factors: func-

³⁸ Jan Mukařovský, 'K pojmosloví československé teorie umění', in *Kapitoly z české poetiky*, I. 36.

³⁹ Jan Mukařovský, 'Vývoj Čapkovy prózy', in *Kapitoly z české poetiky*, II, 346.

tion, norm and aesthetic value.⁴⁰ To make this clear, Mukařovský stressed that the artistic work as a sign is the bearer of meaning. Consequently the meaning here is no longer a mere factor of form, but it also has social significance — the artistic work as the bearer of meaning is a social reality. With this precept, Mukařovský extends his inquiries to cover a broader scope than literature. He reckons that literature as a structure with an immanent development, together with other structures, is an organic but autonomous part of the social structure.

Thus he may go further than the Russian formalists in examining the work of art and its inherent aesthetic quality, and on a much broader basis.

The aesthetic value of the work is as follows: "... all factors (of both content and form) of the artistic work bear extra-aesthetic values interacting in the work itself. In the last analysis, the work of art is nothing else but the totality of the extra-aesthetic values, and nothing but just this totality And if we ask at this very moment where the aesthetic value has been lost, we come to realize that it has diffused into the various extra-aesthetic values, and is in fact nothing but a comprehensive name for the dynamic whole of their interrelations The power which the aesthetic value exercises over the others, and which is characteristic of art, is therefore something different from a mere outside superior force. The effect of the aesthetic value consists by no means in absorbing and eclipsing the rest, but in tearing each of them out of its direct connection with the appropriate value in life, while making the totality of values contained in the artistic work into a dynamic whole and bringing it into connection with the entire system of those values which constitute the motive force of the perceiving community's actions From this point of view the autonomy of the work of art — and within it the supremacy of the aesthetic value and function — consist not in creating a gap between the work of art, on the one hand, and nature and society on the other, but in the constant renewal of their connection."⁴¹

⁴⁰ 'Estetická funkce, norma a hodnota jako sociální fakty' (1936), in *Studie z estetiky*, pp. 17–54.

⁴¹ *Studie z estetiky*, pp. 50–51.

Hence, in this definition of aesthetic value and function, Mukařovský emphasized the role of art in the life of man, of society. He points to this significance mainly in connection with the other human activities of the twentieth century. "It is precisely in virtue of the fact that it has no unambiguous content that the aesthetic function becomes easily recognizable, for it does not conflict with the other functions but rather is an auxiliary to them. While a number of 'practical' functions juxtaposed compete with and tend to suppress one another, each aiming to act as the only special and exclusive function (an instance of 'monofunction' – the kind of function that a machine is the most perfectly suited to perform), art, precisely in virtue of its aesthetic function, strives to perform a number of functions in the most richly complex and multifarious way possible, without, however, prejudicing the societal effect of the work of art. The aesthetic function, to the extent that it is characteristically realized in art, helps man to overcome the one-sidedness of specialisation, and thus not only enriches his contacts with reality but also its impact upon him. Far from curbing man's creative initiative, it enables him to give it fuller expression."⁴²

When Mukařovský began to stress the role of art in the life of man, especially of modern man, he could no longer remain satisfied with the examination of literature or of aesthetic (poetic) language. Many point out that in the definition of the aesthetic function he was greatly influenced by modern functional architecture. In his later years he also dealt with questions of the theatre,⁴³ the cinema,⁴⁴ the fine arts⁴⁵ and architecture,⁴⁶ always in agreement with the avant-garde views. It is interesting, however, that Vítězslav Nezval, while acknowledging the role of music

⁴² From his Paris lecture on structuralism, delivered in 1946. Quoted by Robert Kalivoda, in *Struktura a smysl literárního díla*, pp. 32–22.

⁴³ 'Jevištní řeč v avantgardním divadle' (1937), in *Studie z estetiky*, pp. 161–162; 'K dnešnímu stavu teorie divadla' (1941), *ibid.*, pp. 163–171; 'Pokus o strukturní rozbor hereckého zjevu' (1931), *ibid.*, pp. 184–187.

⁴⁴ 'K estetice filmu' (1933), in *Studie z estetiky*, pp. 172–178; 'Čas ve filmu', *ibid.*, pp. 179–183.

⁴⁵ 'Podstata výtvarných umění' (1944), in *Studie z estetiky*, pp. 188–195.

⁴⁶ 'K problému funkce v architektuře' (1937), in *Studie z estetiky*, pp. 196–203.

in the common problems of arts, dealt least of all with musical theory.

According to Felix Vodička, Mukařovský reaches the height of his development at a time (in the late thirties and early forties) when, as a result of his conception of aesthetic value and function, he arrived at considering the social aspects of literature.

At this period Mukařovský could yet see both sides of the question. Without abandoning the principle of the immanent development of literature and art in general, he began to deal with both aspects of the social (human) relations of the artistic work — with its formation (the author's person, too) and its effect (its readers, its public).

He maintained, in his later period, too, his view that the role of a work of art in evolution is determined by the extent to which it changes or modifies the aesthetic norm of its time. Though the author's person is of great consequence to the creation of the artistic work, his part is accidental and incidental to its immanent and organic development; thus it is difficult to grasp it in the analysis of the work.

When Mukařovský here reaches the anthropocentric aspects of aesthetics, of art, he has to face also the psychological considerations which he opposed so strongly at the beginning of his career. This he does in his essay entitled 'The Artist's Person as Reflected in His Work'.⁴⁷ He differentiates between the psychological and aesthetic approaches; yet he no longer denies the possibility of psychological analysis.

For Mukařovský's psychologist, the artistic work is, in the first place, an individual document, its aesthetic function is only secondary. The theory of art, on the other hand, focuses primarily on the aesthetic function and its value which is above the individual's; from this point of view, the personal psychology of the author can come into question only in the second place, in a facultative manner. The essential question which the work itself can no longer answer is whether the work of art is a true and adequate image of its author's psyche. Even if we give *a priori*

⁴⁷ 'Umělcova osobnost v zrcadle díla: Několik kritických poznámek k uměnovědné teorii i praxi', *Akord*, 1931, pp. 253—263. Quoted by Květoslav Chvatík, in *Studie z estetiky*, pp. 348—349.

a positive answer to this question, the theorist — who analyses the work and not its author's psychology — must not, when analysing the artistic work, rest satisfied with a psychological explanation, since accordance between the work and the author's sentiments is not absolutely necessary but only contingent.

If the theorist still ventures the hazards of psychological analysis, complications arise at once. As a matter of fact, it is inevitable that "sentiment", which is the starting-point of creation, should not be far from the "feeling" which is to be found in the work and which the latter occasions in the reader. Two concepts are in question here: first, the experience (*zážitek*) that stimulates the artist; and second, the sensory experience (*prožitek*) that is reflected in the work.⁴⁸ Experience is a concrete, genuine feeling; sensory experience is something illusory, a mere reflection, a psychic phenomenon that has no concrete substratum. It occurs not in the author's consciousness, for then it would again change into raw, unimproved experience, but in the reader's consciousness, as a feature of the work.

The road leading from the artist's experience to the work of art is one of real psychic action; in general it is called the creative process. But creation is a complicated process which is directly objectified in the work itself. Between this and the work there is no place for the phantom of "experience" any more, because creation must by no means be wholistic; it may have its own stages among which the next one may be just the negation of the preceding one. At the same time, with the completion of the work the creative process comes to an end, the connection between the work and the author's person is broken, and on the basis of the work itself it is impossible to reconstruct the creation in its total complexity and variability. If someone slips into the delusion that behind (or rather through) the work it is possible to discover the feeling that is given expression in the work, or maybe the psychic process of which the work is the result, then all that this person does is to project into the artist's consciousness the shadow of what the work contains — its structure.

⁴⁸ The Czech words *zážitek* and *prožitek* are synonyms; dictionaries render both as 'personal experience'.

If, therefore, Mukařovský finds it impossible to give a precise definition of what he calls the creative process even at this stage of his development, he takes note of the presence of the author's psyche in the genesis of the work and at least raises the question of its analysis.

Still more important perhaps is what he says about the effect of the work upon its "consumers" (readers, listeners, spectators). It is clear from the foregoing that he does not ignore the role of the artistic work and art in general in the life of man, and in society; what is more, he allows its aesthetic quality to play an important role in the fight against the dangers of getting automatized. At this point the difference between the Russian formalists and Mukařovský is already essential — he used the notions of sign and meaning in describing the complicated connections between the work and its author, the work and its consumer, and finally between the work and objective reality.⁴⁹

The effect of the work upon the individual reader and upon society, of course, is primarily aesthetic in character and is every time in direct connection with the aesthetic norm predominating in the given period. For this reason, the effect of the same work, or its role in society, can vary from period to period; a contemporary poet's effort to change the existing norm has a different effect than a work of a past period which renews an old norm or even follows a forgotten norm in order to call attention to the necessity of formulating a new standard of taste. The role played by the artistic work in society, or his understanding of this role, prompted Mukařovský to conceive of the artistic work not only as a sign but also as a thing (*věc*), a phenomenon. In this respect he distinguished what is "intentional" in the work from what is "unintentional". A live work that is not automatized for the observer makes, together with the impression of intentionality, the direct impression of reality precisely as a consequence of its unintentional character, and this is what brings the work closer to the sphere of things, of phenomena. When Mukařovský here conceives of the work as a thing, he wishes to indicate that the work of art — in consequence of what is unintentional in it and not unified from the point of view of meaning — appears

⁴⁹ *Studie z estetiky*, p. 351.

to the reader, the listener and the spectator in a like manner as a phenomenon of nature, and from this it derives its informality and emphatic effect. According to Mukařovský, unification from the point of view of meaning is a precondition for the work to have the effect of a sign, whereas what resists this unification or, in other words, what we feel to be unintentional, contingent, the basis of its "reality", of its informality, the source of the continuous renewal of reality, is what we receive from great art and what we feel to be first-hand life-experience.

If we then understand the artistic work only as a sign, we prevent it from adjusting itself to reality. It is not only a sign, but also a thing, a phenomenon, an object, acting directly upon man's life, something that arouses direct and keen attention and acts upon the deepest layers of the human personality as well.⁵⁰

This is the only time when Mukařovský raises the question of the scale of values of artistic productions. That is at least what can be inferred from the fact that he holds "great art" to be the source of the continuous renewal of the sense of reality. But the question did not particularly engage his attention during the formulation of the fundamentals of his aesthetics.

In addition to the effect exercised by the work upon man or society, Mukařovský in this period deals with the question of how man responds to art. In this respect he distinguishes four possible kinds of relationship to reality: practical, theoretical, magico-religious and aesthetic. In his treatise entitled 'The Place of the Aesthetic Function among the Others'⁵¹ (1942) he gives a rational typology of these functions or positions and comes to the conclusion that in the case of theoretical positions, attention is concentrated on the reality outside the sign, while in the aesthetic position attention is attracted by the sign itself which as a whole reflects reality; herein consists the so often falsely interpreted "autotelism" of the aesthetic sign.

At the beginning of the 1930s, Karel Konrad, from the standpoint of Marxism, called the theory evolved in the first stage of structuralism a "false totality", because he saw it completely

⁵⁰ 'Záměrnost a nezáměrnost v umění' (1943), in *Studie z estetiky*, pp. 89–108. — Cf. Květoslav Chvatík, *ibid.*, pp. 359–360.

⁵¹ 'Místo estetické funkce mezi ostatními', *ibid.*, pp. 65–73.

detached from social reality. However, in the second stage of his career Mukařovský got out of the magic circle of this false totality and, though upholding his conception of the immanent character of literature, of art, regarded it as an important and even indispensable factor of human and social life. He ought to have taken just one more step, namely to have combined the new (aesthetic) conception of reality, its "estrangement",⁵² its severance from the automatism of triviality and the aesthetic conception of the world with human practice, the effective, man-changing, historic activity of art and its aesthetic quality. But even so, his relationship to the art of his time did not remain a mere theoretical problem. In the 1940s he mentioned more and more often the practical task of modern poetry, film art, painting,

MUKAŘOVSKÝ'S ONE-SIDEDNESS

Mukařovský's phylogenetic conception discloses one source of his one-sidedness, namely, that while underlining the significance of aesthetic languages he neglects the question of the subject matter. And this arouses in the reader a feeling of want mainly in respect to the analysis of epic and dramatic works. We have to note here also that the structuralists, while believing their methods to be applicable in principle to the poetic products of every period and every genre, nevertheless gave preference to the analysis of certain periods and certain genres. It is remarkable how preponderant the essays on poetry are in Mukařovský's work. It is true that he wrote important treatises on Božena Němcová,⁵³ Karel Čapek,⁵⁴ Vladislav Vančura,⁵⁵ which still influence today's appraisal of these three Czech prose writers. However, if we approach the basic features of this method, we have to take as a starting-point, first of all, his works on poetics, especially lyric poetry. The one-sidedness of his choice of subject is still more striking if we examine

⁵² The concept of estrangement (*ostranenie*) was borrowed from the Russian formalists (in Czech: *ozvláštnění*).

⁵³ Jan Mukařovský, 'Pokus o slovní rozbor *Babičky* Boženy Němcové', in *Kapitoly z české poetiky*, pp. 311–322.

⁵⁴ 'Trojice studií o Karlu Čapkovi', *ibid.*, pp. 325–400.

⁵⁵ 'Dve studie o Vladislavu Vančurovi', *ibid.*, pp. 403–421.

the artistic periods Mukařovský prefers. He deals particularly with two periods: romanticism and inter-war modern art. Not even his works on artistic prose are exceptions. The reason for this is that first of all romantic and modernist (avant-garde) authors "deformed" language (aesthetic, poetic language) and renounced the communicative character of language. Mukařovský is less concerned with classicism and still less with realism. Not that the two schools deny the need for aesthetic deformation, but here he should have paid more attention to what we here – briefly – call him to account for.

He hardly took notice of earlier periods especially those which, from the point of view of the genre, mark a transition between literature with "communicative" intent and literature with "aesthetic" intent, but in which one can still discern the function establishing the aesthetic norm of the taste of the Middle Ages, the Renaissance, Mannerism, the Baroque, etc.

If we want to criticize the views of the Prague structuralists, or those of Mukařovský, from the standpoint of the modern Marxist theory of literature, we have to keep in view first of all the fact that they – just as other schools of literary theory – are characteristic products of the given period and that they had an important and inspiring role to play not only given the Czech conditions but also on a general European scale. That the Praguians proceeded all the time from concrete facts may rightly seem, to anyone who knows their later views, to be a mere "work-method" – a term Lajos Nyirő applies to the purely linguistic, formal starting-point of the Russian formalists. However, this is an optical illusion. Opposed to positivistic biographizing and psychologism at the outset, mainly during the twenties, the Praguians confessed the need for concentrating on language in literary analysis. All the more significant is the fact that Mukařovský, the conscientious and fact-respecting scholar, arrived at the aesthetic theory presented briefly in the foregoing, even though he could not elaborate it in detail. In our criticism of structuralism, therefore, we do not get far if we fail to keep in view precisely this development, this step-by-step progression, if we always analyse Mukařovský's individual periods only. It is something like this that we gather from what Vladimír Dostál says in his criticism of Mukařovský. According to him, Mukařovský's

notion of “semantic gesture”, which after the War he renamed as the “sense-generating principle”, is an unhistorical abstraction, an unchanging constant unduly torn out of society.⁵⁶ According to Milan Jankovič, on the other hand, to renounce the immanent development of literature and the notion of “semantic gesture” is tantamount to seeking in literature merely “such obvious and general truths” as we can find in “plain automatized communications”, in “journalistic or political statements”. We think that language-centred analysis, which was warranted in its time, should be followed by a more complex, more complete analysis which keeps track of all aspects of the work of art, by what Mukařovský began in the forties but could not complete in the political atmosphere of the fifties. But he got so far as to expound, though sketchily, the bilateral relation between literature and social reality. The work of art has been created by man for man, so it has its economic, political and psychological correlations, too. These, of course, do not become directly effective in it and do not act directly through it; the development of literature — like that of any art — is really immanent insofar as it transforms reality by its own means and acts upon it as an artistic sign. And if “tasks extraneous to its laws of development are to be imposed on art at some stage of its development, this may even result in the degradation of the work of art”.⁵⁷ But we cannot fully understand the immanent development of literature either if we fail to include in our inquiries the above-mentioned considerations, and if we stop at the results which structuralism undoubtedly attained in its time. “We can discover and analyse the internal laws of the functions of art and their components only if we proceed from the fact that art exists in the totality of the society’s forms of consciousness, in close and unbreakable unity with the entire mechanism of the social superstructure. The real tendencies of the development of art can be detected only in the simultaneous, historically determined motion (which reflects in the last analysis the changes in modes of existence) of the correlated system of the forms of society’s consciousness.

⁵⁶ Vladimír Dostál, ‘O světovém názoru, básnické individualitě a metodě literárního rozboru’, *Nová mysl*, 1961/1–2, pp. 110–116.

⁵⁷ Lajos Nyírő, ‘Művészet és kibernetika’, *Kritika*, 1965/9, p. 8.

Art can be defined only starting from the evolution of the society's forms of consciousness. This kind of definition can at the same time enhance the particularity of art, its existence for its own sake, its peculiar mode of existence and the historical modifications of its function."⁵⁸

NATIONAL LITERATURES AND THE COMPARATIVE METHOD

Assuming that literary history is determined by changes in the norms of aesthetic (poetic) language, the structuralists distinguish the various developmental series of literature from one another as national literatures. "In the linguistic delimitation of a national literature there exists the completeness of the fact that all component parts of literary structure can be realized only by the agency of a certain linguistic system," Mukařovský wrote in 1940.⁵⁹

But this does not mean that the scholars of structuralism did not recognize the possibility and importance of comparative literature. "Literary development goes parallel in the literatures of a number of nations," Felix Vodička writes.⁶⁰ This view contains nothing any more about the mechanical search for effects of the positivist period. The literary norms of an age can be determined not only by national factors but also by the attitude to foreign literatures, by the realization that the national literature is the richer for foreign norms. Literary fashions (e. g., the Ossianic cult) which find response on a broader — at times universal — scale take shape, and there are works which become the literary property of every civilized nation: they become part of what is called world literature (i. e. Shakespeare, Goethe, Hugo, Tolstoy). Any comparative analysis has to interpret a work within the historical context it belongs to. It is important, therefore, in the study of the common traits of European literary development, to take into account also the individual differences which are consequences of the historical and structural mechanism of the examined

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 7.

⁵⁹ In his article entitled 'Tradice tvaru', *Strážce tradice*, 1940.

⁶⁰ Felix Vodička, in *Čtení o jazyce a poesii*, p. 395.

phenomena of national literatures. Thus, for example, the questions of metrics, which arose in the age of humanism and classicism are solved differently by different nations under the influence of national traditions and the linguistic material.

"We always have to start", Vodička states in the conclusion of his treatise on the comparative method, "from what is common, in order to be able to see what is different. For this very reason comparative literature serves to explain the characteristic features of national literatures. Most of the common features are to be found in questions which concern literary postulates and the literary norm, while what is the distinctive factor in deciding literary problems is the determinant force of the immanent development of the national literary structure itself. Now it is clear that universal literature (world literature) does not create the kind of unity that would be identical with the unities discussed before. Above all the common linguistic material is absent."⁶¹

Thus the structural method subordinates the comparative method to the analysis of national development, using it only to enlarge the knowledge of national literature. This may lead to isolation and produce distortions, especially in the establishment of a scale of values for poets and works of art. It may happen that the mere imitation of a foreign work in a national literature causes a revolutionary change in the aesthetic norm that had predominated until then; therefore it assumes great importance from the point of view of the phylogenetic function dealt with by structuralism, but in itself it is not a significant work of art after all. An expressive example of this is presented by Ján Števček in his essay on the evolution of Slovak "poetic prose" in the inter-war years: development (namely the essential change in the norm) was set off by Dobroslav Chrobák's plagiarism of Giono.⁶² If in this case we seek the aesthetic value exclusively in the function of changing the aesthetic norm, we are bound to fail.

It is also doubtful whether the evolution of one or another national literature can be determined merely by linguistic means.

The difficulties are especially striking in East-Central Europe

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 397–399.

⁶² Ján Števček, 'Az irodalom változásai (Az irodalmi kapcsolatok elméletéhez)', *Helikon-Világirodalmi Figyelő*, 1963/3, pp. 369–375.

where structuralism originated. In this area there is virtually not a single literature — mainly as far as earlier periods are concerned — that does not include works which, though products of the national literary development, were written in other languages. We have to refer here, first of all, to the Latin-language poetry of the Middle Ages and the Renaissance. By the outlook of the structuralists, Janus Pannonius — to mention but one characteristic example — could be associated with neither Hungarian nor Croatian literary development because he wrote in Latin. On principle this question might be solved if we thought of the whole of Latin-language poetry of medieval and modern Europe as an independent development with cohesive forces which resemble those of the developmental series of any single national language. But we cannot judge by the same — linguistic — standard the altogether different phenomena of the Latin of the Middle Ages and of modern times. Latin, language of the Church, science, administration, diplomacy and jurisprudence, had its own innumerable varieties in different nations or cultural areas (i. e. a West-European and East-European context) in the same manner as, for example, Old Church Slavonic had in the cultural sphere of Byzantium. Is it possible to extricate the literature of the Slavonic language from the initial development of the Roumanians? Is it possible to rely upon the linguistic isolation of the Serbian literature of the age of the Enlightenment when the new taste developed as a result of the struggles of Slovene Serbian and popular Serbian? By means of a rigid, one-sided application of the phylogenetic viewpoints of the structuralists we would need to eliminate from literature the bilingual poets who are known in West-European literary history, too, but who in a certain period were — if not prominent, then important — factors for East-Central Europe (Péter Beniczky, Jovan Pačić, Mihály Vitkovics, etc.) The twentieth century also witnesses a phenomenon that cannot be forced in the Procrustean bed of an outlook based merely on the national language. It is evident, for example, that the influence of Black poets who write in French or English does not, or does not primarily, extend to the internal development of the aesthetic norms of French or English literature.

In summary, we put the question: what can, and what cannot, be applied of structuralism today?

We can come up with the right answer only if, first of all, we determine the historical place of the Prague School and emphasize that structuralism — just like any school of literary theory — was a characteristic product of the period in which it originated and in which it developed, performing at the same time an important mission in the formation of the modern outlook of our discipline and offering solutions which the analytic methods had been incapable of.

We have to keep in view also that Mukařovský's method and the related theory which he deduced from the results of his investigations were constantly developing during his activity. This development, as it fit in contemporary European development, has not yet been presented in a thorough and comprehensive manner, not even in the essays which, in the publications issued for the seventy-fifth birthday of the great Czech scholar, expressed the need for historical analysis in this field. Neither can we enforce such a claim for total historicity; our only task has been to present the fundamental theses of Czech structuralism. Yet it is clear that Marxism and the most essential theses of structuralism are not incompatible.

Marxist critics who — especially in the time of dogmatism — unequivocally rejected Mukařovský's life-work attacked his doubtlessly false, idealistic conceptual starting-points and not the positive results of his investigations. It was also a mistake to believe that, for the Marxist theory of literature, the right thing was to select, with a sort of eclecticism, from Mukařovský's theory and methods the elements held to be of use in its own pursuits and to reject those which proved to be outworn. This procedure is wrong also from the historical point of view, since — to use Mukařovský's expression — his work is also a unified structure which progressed, as a result of dialectical interaction between its author's ideological development and the shaping of contemporary conditions, from a linguistic-prosodic approach to the artistic work, towards the elaboration of his aesthetic principles. We have to view Mukařovský's development as a whole even if we approach only some of its minor details. Robert Kalivoda would consider it a most urgent task of the theory of literature of our time to achieve a new, modern formulation of aesthetic taste and value, others would surely demand

a more up-to-date solution of other questions raised by Mukařovský.

Yet this much is certain: the analysis of the aesthetic function is an indispensable requirement of modern Marxist literary scholarship, and, if we think of certain phenomena of human life as separate structures, we cannot but stress the immanent character of literary development. The view that regards any work of art as an aesthetic sign has become common in twentieth-century literary theory; neither could we do without the notion of structure. System and structure are important concepts not only in modern linguistics, but are part of our scientific thinking.⁶³ We likewise emphasize that in our investigations we have to reckon with the dialectic interaction of synchrony and diachrony. Neither can we periodize literature according to extra-literary principles: we always have to take into consideration the literary (aesthetic) taste which developed in each period.

Ján Rozner, a present-day Slovak literary critic, writes: "Structuralism has an initiative function in Marxist criticism: Marxist science gives original, creative answers to questions formulated by structuralism. Structuralism is thus still of topical value today."⁶⁴ Or according to Alois Jedlička, the Czech linguist: "In this field new works may be added to these initiatives to develop them further by using fresh knowledge amid the changed linguistic and social conditions."⁶⁵

There is no doubt that today's Czech and Slovak studies, relying on the heritage of the Praguians, can deal much more thoroughly with questions of stylistic and formal analysis than the literary scholarship of those neighbouring nations (e. g., the Hungarian) in which similar "formal methods" have not taken root. The theoretical studies at the Institute for Czech Literary History of the Czechoslovak Academy of Sciences, the Slovak Mikuláš Bakoš's activity which started during the inter-war years, Jiří Levý's prosodic analyses based on mathematical methods

⁶³ Karel Kosík, 'Filosofické problémy struktury a systému', in *Problémy marxistické jazykovedy*, p. 24.

⁶⁴ Ján Rozner, 'O strukturalizme historicky a polemicky', *Slovenská literatúra*, 1962/1, p. 73.

⁶⁵ Alois Jedlička, 'Zur Prager Theorie der Schriftsprache', in *Travaux linguistiques de Prague* (Praha, 1964), I: *L'école de Prague d'aujourd'hui*.

and his theory of literary translation, all attest that the results of structuralism have not vanished without a trace. Here we only draw attention to how far this fact has promoted the mathematical, “statistical” analysis of poetic language and versification. True, structuralism has only an initiating part or – to use Lubomír Doležel’s expression – a “pre-statistical” character.⁶⁶ Today we can come across many examples of such analyses among the Czechs and the Slovaks. With their help, the researchers can explore more accurately and more thoroughly the laws of the “form-world” of certain poets and works of art. Yet, if this method becomes exclusive, it may lead to distortions similar to those of the descriptive, psychologizing, biographical methods against which structuralism fought in its time.

Today Marxist literary history finds it its task to select and develop the valuable and positive thoughts of the structuralists.

⁶⁶ Lubomír Doležel, ‘Pražská škola a statistické teorie básnického jazyka’ *Česká literatura*, 1965/2, pp. 101–113.

JÓZSEF SZILI
THE NEW CRITICISM

POETRY AS COGNITION AND AS STRUCTURE – THE VIEWS OF RANSOM, TATE AND BROOKS

Croce considered his own critical tenets as *the new criticism*, and Joel Elias Spingarn, a historian of literary criticism and student of the Renaissance, gave this title, *The New Criticism*, to a lecture inspired by Crocean ideas. He demanded a purely aesthetic approach to literary works and rejected every method and theory of literary scholarship which – instead of focusing on the work – focused on the life and personality of the author, the impressions of the critic, dogmatic rules and norms of poetry, or on “history, politics, biography, erudition, metaphysics”.¹ Nevertheless, the name of the school of the New Criticism did not derive from Spingarn’s lecture, but from the title of a book by John Crowe Ransom, published three decades later, in 1941. The title was *The New Criticism*, and the author, dealing with the critical ideas of I. A. Richards, T. S. Eliot, William Empson, and Yvor Winters, arrived at this conclusion: “I think it is time to identify a powerful intellectual movement that deserves to be called a new criticism.”²

Not everyone is satisfied with the attribute *new*.³ According to Cleanth Brooks, new criticism in Ransom’s terminology is no more than a “neutral and modest designation; i.e. the modern

¹ *The New Criticism. A Lecture Delivered at Columbia University*, March 9, 1910, by J. E. Spingarn, professor of comparative literature in Columbia University (New York, 1911), p. 6.

² J. C. Ransom, *The New Criticism* (Norfolk, 1941), p. 220.

³ “It is a frankly reactionary movement, and the word ‘New’ must always have held for it an air of pleasing paradox.” – George Watson, *The Literary Critics: A Study of English Descriptive Criticism* (New York, 1963), p. 172. – “It was not until quite recently that Ransom, perhaps the key figure of the movement, accepted the term as properly designating the movement. The student of literary criticism will readily appreciate his hesitation; the

criticism, the contemporary criticism".⁴ Among the shapers of the New Criticism were Ford Madox Ford, T.E. Hulme, Ezra Pound, T. S. Eliot, I. A. Richards, William Empson, in some respects Spingarn and the American neo-Humanists, Irving Babbitt, Paul Elmer More and others. This type of criticism had great influence on the evolution of literature and the study of literature in England, too, but it was in the United States that it appeared as a single critical school.

Its original nucleus was formed by the "Southern Critics". More renowned members of the group were John Crowe Ransom, Robert Penn Warren, Allen Tate, Kenneth Burke, Richard Palmer Blackmur, Yvor Winters, Cleanth Brooks and W. K. Wimsatt. In the field of theory Ransom, Tate and Brooks represent most markedly the "ontological", "contextualist" and "organistic-formalism" of the New Criticism. Dissimilarities among the members of the group are considerable. There is also a broader interpretation of the New Criticism, covering predecessors and successors alike. In this sense we may count as New Critics also the opposition of the Ransom school, the Chicago neo-Aristotelians (Ronald S. Crane, Elder Olson, W. R. Keast, Richard McKeon, Bernard Weinberg, and Norman Maclean). It is difficult to draw a dividing line between the New Criticism and certain other critical schools of the twentieth century. For example, due to their performance as textual analysts, the "myth critics" who have a background of Freudianism, Jungianism and cultural history (Northrop Fry, Wilson Knight, Francis Fergusson, Philip Wheelwright, etc.) may also be regarded as New Critics.

Another problem is posed by the broad interpretation of the New Criticism in the form it is presented in Robert Weimann's book.⁵ Weimann uses the term "New Criticism" in the broad sense of

movement is more notable for new emphases in criticism than for novelty of ideas. If there had existed in seventeenth-century England a critical school parallel to the metaphysical school of poetry, one might with some propriety name them 'The New Metaphysicals'." — J. P. Pritchard, *Criticism in America* (Norman, 1956), p. 231.

⁴ See Cleanth Brooks' foreword to *Critiques and Essays in Criticism*, ed. R. W. Stallman (New York, 1949), p. XVI.

⁵ Robert Weimann, "New Criticism" und die Entwicklung bürgerlicher Literaturwissenschaft (Halle/Saale), 1962.

the word, with reference to the convergent tendencies of Russian formalism, Polish and Czech structuralism, West-German and Swiss phenomenological poetics as well as to the Anglo-American New Criticism. That is, he applies a term which is as a rule used in a narrower sense to designate a broad philosophical trend of twentieth-century bourgeois literary scholarship, one that certainly deserves a more strictly qualifying descriptive term, for example "structuralism" or René Wellek's coinage, "organistic and symbolistic formalism".⁶ The American New Criticism doubtless bears much affinity to the afore-mentioned formalist and structuralist schools. Its name is, however, no descriptive term. Its theoretical pursuits are more accurately expressed by terms such as "ontological criticism" (Ransom), "contextualism" (Murray Krieger), "analytical criticism", "semantic analysis". But these are liable to the same comment as Walter Sutton makes on the terms of "aesthetic formalism" and "analytical criticism":

"But these titles do not take into account certain attitudes and theoretical assumptions that distinguish the New Criticism as something other than simply a formalist movement. It seems best to limit the term *New Critics* to several men associated with John Crowe Ransom from the early 1920s and to others who share their common outlook. Besides their practice of close textual analysis, the members of this group have been bound by the conservatism of their literary, social, and political views. They have been hostile toward the physical and social sciences and have avoided ideas and terms from these disciplines, depending rather upon traditional rhetorical and literary sources and their own coinages. As defenders of literature, some of the New Critics have attempted to establish standards by which the language of poetry might be distinguished from that of science. On the basis of such distinctions, they have argued that poetry or imaginative literature provides knowledge or truth different from that supplied by science. With this idea of 'two truths' they have contributed to an aesthetic mystique, according to which the truth of art is apprehended immediately through the contemplation of the aesthetic symbol or icon."⁷

⁶ René Wellek, *Concepts of Criticism* (New Haven, 1963), pp. 345, 354.

⁷ Walter Sutton, *Modern American Criticism* (Englewood Cliffs, N. J., 1963), p. 99.

The American New Criticism has fulfilled a specific theoretical function as a concrete historical movement. Its theoretical system (whose systematicness and logic are very disputable) is reducible to a few general theses, but in the actual historical life of the movement these did not appear as mere generalities, but in their full range of colours, complexities and, of course, contradictions.

FUGITIVISM, AGRARIANISM AND NEW CRITICISM

Not all of the Southern Critics hailed from the area south of Mason and Dixon's line. For example, Winters came from the Midwest, and Blackmur from New England. But the nucleus of the group was established in the plantation country of the South, at Nashville, Tennessee. In the late 1910s some poetically disposed professors at Vanderbilt University began to meet regularly to discuss their poems and their views on poetry. This group, which functioned partly as a debating society and partly as a literary circle, was at its peak in the early twenties. They published a bi-monthly literary review, *The Fugitive*, and firmly believed that they were preparing a literary and cultural renaissance of the South in the spirit of conservative antiliberal social ideals. Walter Clyde Curry, Donald Davidson, William Yandell Elliott, James Frank, William Frierson, Sidney Mtttron Hirsch, Stanley Johnson, Merrill Moore, John Crowe Ransom, Laura Riding, Alfred Starr, Alex B. Stevenson, Allen Tate, Robert Penn Warren, Jesse Wills, and Ridley Wills rated as members of the group. The greatest authorities were Davidson, Ransom and Tate.

According to Ransom and Davidson their review owed its title to a poem by Hirsch with the same title. It expressed a flight from the "sentimentality" and "the extremes of conventionalism" of Southern literature, but not escapism.⁸ As they wished to update and reactivate the apology and vindication of the back-

⁸ Louis Cowan, *The Fugitive Group: A Literary History* (Baton Rouge, 1959), p. 44. As to the movement, see also J. M. Bradbury, *The Fugitives: A Critical Account* (Chapel Hill, 1958); J. L. Stewart, *The Burden of Time: The Fugitives and Agrarians* (Princeton, 1965); Alexander Karanikas, *Tillers of a Myth: Southern Agrarians as Social and Literary Critics* (Madison, 1966).

ward social conditions of the South, they turned away from the enervate (sentimental and pathetic) ways of nurturing the Southern Confederate traditions. Like the English imagists, or Ezra Pound and T. S. Eliot, they drew encouragement to develop their ideal of poetry from the style and critical remarks of the French symbolists. The "principle of irony" which, it seems, gradually became a key category of their aesthetics was emerging in their circle already at that time. They saw in it the essence of modernity, an infallible antidote to conventionalism and sentimentalism. Their modern tone which, unlike the European avant-garde, was moderated by the poetical obligations of conservative classicism and was a typical product of Anglo-Saxon compromise at the beginning of the century. It indicated, formally at least, the establishment of a synthesis between the new and the traditional. Unlike the achievement of their more distinguished fellow poets (Pound and Eliot) who gave modern expression to conservative ideas, the sham synthesis of these professor poets will hardly evade charges of academism or pedantry. (Ransom rejected *The Waste Land* on account of its prosodic licences and the difference of its construction from the usual treatment of the theme.)

Their poetry was erudite. Lacking a powerful social demand and spontaneous poetic mission they stood for *good* instead of *great* poetry. Their workshop practices and critiques served this aim, and practically all their subsequent activity reflected this intimate climate of workshop aesthetics. They made the excellence of the artisanship of minor masters the aesthetic standard of "true" poetry. The conscious application of "irony" (also intimating self-irony) created a semblance of moral and emotional superiority and impartiality, and this was enhanced by flashes of erudition, close adherence to formal rules, and virtuoso technique combined with economy of language, imagery and composition. The scope of their themes covered a rather narrow aspect of life. The provincialism of their poetry disappeared only partially due to their repudiation of the most conspicuous and backward forms of Southern provincialism.

The Fugitive ceased publication in 1925, and the group dispersed. A poetic anthology published by the Fugitives in 1928 elicited no response. More attention was attracted to them in the late twenties and early thirties by a dispute in which, together with

T. S. Eliot, they criticized the inconsistency of the antiliberalism of the neo-Humanists. Several members of the Nashville group came out with the programme of agrarianism. A collection of essays (*I'll Take My Stand: The South and the Agrarian Tradition*, New York and London, 1930) was published with writings by Ransom, Davidson, Tate, R. P. Warren, Andrew Lytle, Stark Young, John Gould Fletcher, Frank Lawrence Owsley, Lyle Lanier, H. C. Nixon, John Donald Wade, and Henry Blue Kline. To what they called Eastern industrialism they opposed the Southern planters' traditions. From a romantic anticapitalistic platform they criticized finance capitalism for engendering alienation and changing personal human relationships into financial relations. Their ideal was the Southern hierarchy, believed to be a patriarchal and, therefore, an organic community. Their imagination was stimulated by the same kind of traditionalistic nostalgia which inspired the conventional and sentimental Southern literature they so much despised. A new element was that they tried to look at the situation more sensibly, to allow also for certain negatives of "Southernism". In an essay written in 1935 Tate gave the reasons why the South had produced no great literature and no lively literary culture, whereas in his opinion the Southern way of life might have been a particularly suitable basis to this end. According to Tate, the trouble was not that Southern society was built on the institution of slavery, but that the slaves, being Africans, were not soil-bound but property freely sold and bought as merchandise. This was the reason, he wrote, why no intimate relationship could develop between slave and slaveholder such as between the serf and his lord in Europe. "That *African* chattel slavery was the worst groundwork conceivable for the growth of a great culture of European pattern, is scarcely at this day arguable." So much is true of these allegations that no great culture could flourish in an absurdly anachronistic social system which could be morally vindicated only with utmost hypocrisy (institutionalized in the orthodox fundamentalism of Southern Protestantism). Tate virtually held the Negroes directly responsible for all this: "The white man got nothing from the Negro, no profound image of himself in terms of the soil."⁹

⁹ Allen Tate, *On the Limits of poetry. Selected Essays 1928—1948* (New York, 1948), pp. 272—273.

The "Southern programme" as a practical programme was completely illusory. Some light of interest was thrown on its economic and social aspects by the economic crisis which the Agrarians regarded as a crisis of "Eastern industrialism". This ideology preserved its prestige and efficiency mostly in less practical fields; in the realm of literature and the study of literature in the case of Ransom, Tate and the other critics. They reconciled the general precepts of their programme with other modern forms of romantic anticapitalism, with the reactionary and demagogic criticism of finance capitalism, or of "plutocracy": thus with T. E. Hulme's doctrine that as a form of government, dictatorship was most congenial to modern classicism; with Pound's formula of a fascist, corporative social hierarchy; with Eliot's ideal of an orthodox religious and feudal community. Characteristic of the group's orientation was that Ransom, Tate, Brooks, R. P. Warren, Yvor Winters and Davidson, together with some of the neo-Humanists — Norman Foerster and Robert Shafer among them — and a few neo-Thomists were prolific contributors to the *American Review*, Seward Collins's ultra-rightist periodical. (Other regular contributors were T. S. Eliot, Windham Lewis, and G. K. Chesterton.)¹⁰

The Agrarians counted all means and manifestations of social progress among the phenomena of alienation in modern capitalism and criticized them as such. In their view it was one of the greatest sins of modern capitalism that it had created the working class and Marxism with it. They presented as a process of dehumanization the historical process of demythologization, the process of Enlightenment. They regarded as heresy the belief in human progress, and meticulously criticized explicit and implicit efforts at the secularization and rational interpretation of religion. All that they deemed, on this score, wrong and unacceptable, they imputed to Romanticism, thus following a tradition set up by the French *Action Française*, and then by T. E. Hulme, Babbitt, Spingarn and Eliot. They stressed the opposition between science and poetry, positivism and myth and the superiority of poetry

¹⁰ Cf. Albert E. Stone, Jr., 'Seward Collins and the American Review: Experiment in Pro-Fascism, 1933—37', *American Quarterly*, 1960, No. 1, pp. 4—19.

and myth over science and scientific empiricism ("positivism"). Rejecting the idea of freedom and social progress, they referred to man's transcendental bonds and immanent imperfection, the "original sin" in theological terms. They charged Babbitt's and More's neo-Humanism with concessions to conventional (i.e. anthropocentric) Humanism through its allowances for a sort of correlation, reciprocity, and even rapprochement between the "divine" and the "natural", the religious and the profane ideal of man. Like Eliot, they saw a dangerous tendency to secularization in the neo-Humanists' view that, through belief, people could reach perfection as laymen, unaided by a rigorous observation of religious and ecclesiastical norms. Ransom went so far as to accuse modern Christianity of a rationalist interpretation of its mythology.

In the thirties the group of Southern critics was joined by other critics professing aesthetic views akin to theirs: Kenneth Burke, who also flirted with Marxism, R. P. Blackmur (one of the editors of *Hound and Horn*) and Yvor Winters, who became a passionate but loyal critic of the "obscurantism" of the rest of the New Critics. The names and activities of the New Critics became widely known. In the twenties and thirties their right-wing "radicalism" conveniently counterbalanced the cultural movements of the Left. Focussed on "literariness" and the literary work of art, and picking on the biases of academic circles and university education, together with their insistent demand for a close analysis of literary works, their criticism had an important corrective function. Their university textbooks taught a new view of literature, and the erudition and exactitude of their critique, the intolerant polemic tone of their writings, their devotion to ideological issues interwoven with the cause of literature attracted ever greater attention from the lovers of literature. It was a negative aspect of their interest in modern literature that they tried to monopolize, in the name of extreme reaction, the currents of modern literature and to codify the laws of literary evolution. But they have merits as popularizers, and their critical and theoretical work is a considerable contribution to the exposition and clarification of the problems of twentieth-century literary evolution. Their theoretical activity was directed mainly against theories and practical methods which implied an alleged or real negation of the specific nature of litera-

ture. They ridiculed the extrinsic approach to literature by coining aphoristic generalities that were near caricatures. They used Occam's razor to shave off branches, buds and roots from the living tree of literature, since none of these was literature, or the tree, "as such". As a result, they trod in the footsteps of Coleridge and others, and introduced a long list of "fallacies" into literary criticism: "affective fallacy", "intentional fallacy", the "fallacy of origin", the "fallacy of denotation", the "fallacy of expressive form", the "heresy of paraphrase", etc. Their reference to fallacies should not conceal the fact that the representatives of this school, its founders, do not always respect logic, and they treat philosophical and aesthetic concepts with bewildering high-handedness. In *The New Romantics*, Richard Foster demonstrates that the New Critics replaced logic and system with "the Rhetoric of Speculation", a phantom of both logic and system.¹¹ What are, in Foster's view, the rhetorical instruments of the speculative procedure of the New Critics? — "Big Words" (Idea, the Good, Logos, Substance, Being, Soul, Flux, the One) whose meaning remains usually undefined; "the Rhetoric of Definition" which only imitates or suggests scientific definition; "Mixed Terms" (for example he cites Blackmur identifying *language* with *gesture*, Tate and Ransom identifying *poetry* with *knowledge*, in such a way that the meaning of the interpretative terms must be utterly changed to give sense to these identities); "Intellectual Punning" such as Tate's triplet of "extension-tension-intension", and the "dialectic" which does not get farther than stating and combining opposites and arbitrarily reduces, from the outset, the real sphere of possibilities with an appeal to such unproved antimonies as "Poetry vs. Science, Intellect vs. Feeling, Reason vs. Imagination"; and finally "the Mystical Rhetoric of Negation". "Negation" refers to their attempt to give verbal expression to the inexpressible with the consequence that we are told in negative terms what they talk about. As far as the essence of the questions is

¹¹ Richard Foster, *The New Romantics: A Re-Appraisal of the New Criticism* (Bloomington, 1962). See especially the chapter, 'Criticism as Poetry', pp. 151—189.

concerned, the New Critics are usually satisfied with paradoxical assertion, with the form or semblance of definitions and syllogisms. In the last analysis, they suggest their views by *poetical* rhetoric, by the magic of language, and play with the formal system of scientific explanation and demonstration.

These less sympathetic features of the school make it difficult to outline a coherent system of its theories. A common basis is their conservative view of society and the "radicalism", that is the aggressiveness, of their conservatism. They all disparage science, the cognitive function of science, and they consider it incapable of grasping the essence of its subject. They set poetry as mythical, "ontological" cognition above it. They try to comprehend the difference between science and poetry by postulating a difference between the language of science and that of poetry. They consider the poem all by itself, as a literary and aesthetic model deprived of all extrinsic contexts, an autonomous entity, an organized whole, and, as such, the object of study of literary aesthetics. Since they deny the difference between the act and the object of cognition, what is, in their view, ontological cognition, comes down, in effect, to the cognition of the poem. This means the absoluteness of formal analysis and the negation of critical appraisal. Their theory of art is usually pivoted upon some paradoxical idea (irony, paradox, tension, etc.) with a semblance of dialectics. For standards of literary aesthetics, they use specific categories of style typology, raising to universal validity certain norms of English metaphysical poetry, French symbolism and T. S. Eliot's poetry.

Exceptional productiveness is another characteristic of the New Criticism as a whole. Even though there is no reason to deprecate the abundance of critical writings as a negative phenomenon or as Alexandrianism *ab ovo*, it is striking to see this prolificacy, or, in fact, exuberance, measured against the profusion and profundity of the reflections. Robert Weimann had good reason to complain that the American New Criticism "stellt dann auch den Betrachter in ein Dickicht von literaturkritischen Publikationen und Theorien; diese sind einer knapp orientierenden Darstellung um so weniger zugänglich, als zahlreiche Neue Kritiker 'eine beinahe scholastisch anmutende Freude am Ausbau von System und Methode, an einem hochentwickelten Spezialvokabular'

(R. Stamm) an den Tag legen.”¹² And there is already a similar abundance in works dealing with the New Criticism.

In the thirties the New Critics won recognition by offering a timely and concrete alternative to the historicist approach which was (or seemed to be) indifferent to the particularities of literature. In contrast with impressionistic criticism, they claimed that criticism should be exact and “scientific”. In contrast with the meticulous and even hair-splitting pedantry rampant in the universities, they firmly represented the demand that university programmes and literary studies should be concerned with the appraisal and analysis of literary works, and subordinate all other approaches to literature to this task. Their work on textbooks was also considerable. *Understanding Poetry* (1938) by Cleanth Brooks and R. P. Warren had a special part in propagating the new method. In 1943 it was followed by *Understanding Fiction*, by the same authors; drama was discussed in *Understanding Drama* by Cleanth Brooks and R. S. Heilman, published in 1945. After the example of Hulme, Pound and Eliot, the New Critics re-interpreted the history of Anglo-American literature to suit their disapproval of the Enlightenment and Romanticism as well as the intents of sophisticated taste. They found a positive prototype in the metaphysical poetry of Donne and other seventeenth-century English baroque poets. They theorized about the formal elements of modern literary styles and, for a time, together with other aestheticians with retrograde views on society, monopolized the functions of the *connoisseur* and *elegantiarum arbiter* of modernity. In this respect certain biases and superficialities of progressive bourgeois and Marxist oriented criticism also played into their hands. And when the dynamism of the leftist intellectual movement of the thirties broke down, the New Criticism gained great positional advantages as the aesthetical movement of right-wing radicalism. By the early forties a situation had developed in which, according to Douglas Bush, “no department of English could count itself respectable, unless it included at least one New Critic”.¹³ Already

¹² See Weimann, ‘*New Criticism*’ und die Entwicklung bürgerlicher Literaturwissenschaft, pp. 75–76.

¹³ *Literary History and Literary Criticism. Acta of the Ninth Congress, International Federation for Modern Languages and Literature, New York, 1963*, ed. Leon Edel (New York, 1965), p. 4.

in the thirties several little magazines were workshops of the New Criticism.¹⁴ In the forties there was hardly any university review or other periodical publication of literary studies which did not take every opportunity to publish essays by the New Critics. By the end of the forties the New Criticism had become the most authoritative and influential school of American literary scholarship. Its basic principles became critical truisms, its methods were widespread. At the universities the practice of textual analysis became the main or the only method of the study of literature, and studies in the history of literature were based on authors favoured by the New Criticism.

At the same time the movement changed in a characteristic way. Its precepts became vulgarized and its biases grew more conspicuous. Its increased influence exposed it, in some respects, to the threat of losing its original substantive characteristics. As Forster put it: "It is now impossible to identify the individual species *New Critic* as something distinct from the general run of competent literary academics."¹⁵ This may account for Ransom's remark: "I do not know what is meant nowadays by a 'new' critic."¹⁶ The New Critics were gaining new ground in theory as well, and in such a difficult field as the theory of the epic. It is obvious that at the start their methods and generalizations were based exclusively on lyric poetry, and it was no secret that they regarded the short lyric poem as the ideal model of the literary work. In the forties they attempted to extend their method to the problems of the novel.¹⁷ They also tried to reconcile some central theses of their

¹⁴ *Hound and Horn* (1927–1934), *Southern Review* (1935–1942) founded by Tate, and *Kenyon Review* (1939) founded by Ransom. In October 1944 Tate became the editor of *Sewanee Review* (1892–) with a program (printed on the jacket of No. 3, 1944) of struggle against the danger of paganism and positivism.

¹⁵ See Forster, *The New Romantics*, p. 14.

¹⁶ Malcolm Cowley, *The Literary Situation* (New York, 1954), p. 12.

¹⁷ "We are no longer able to regard as seriously intended criticism of poetry which does not assume these generalizations; but the case for fiction has not yet been established. The novel is still read as though its content has some value in itself, as though the subject matter of fiction has greater or lesser value in itself, and as though technique were not a primary but a supplementary element, capable perhaps of not unattractive embellishments upon the surface of the object, but hardly of its essence." — Mark

militant antihistorism with a historical approach to literature.¹⁸

From the outset the New Criticism was censured for its asocial and unhistorical conception and reactionary ideology. (Hyman mentions as most remarkable a critical analysis by Alick West, a Marxist critic.)¹⁹ In the mid-forties Harry Levin wrote an essay, 'Literature as an Institution', to counterbalance the one-sided influence of the New Criticism and suggested an aesthetic approach with an eye to the social character of literature.²⁰ At the end of the forties the Bollingen Prize was awarded to Ezra Pound who had been tried for treason and collaboration with the fascist regime of Italy, and this fact roused strong antipathy against the New Criticism. F. O. Matthiessen pointed to coincidences between McCarthyman manoeuvres and the irresponsibility of formalist criticism,²¹ while Robert Gorham Davis, in an article on 'The New Criticism and the Democratic Tradition', documented the close connection between the New Criticism and reactionary, antidemocratic traditions.²² The fifties witnessed a growth in the number of those who were dissatisfied with the social attitude of the New Criticism. From the end of the fifties, however, when the school began to appear more like an historical phenomenon than an actual problem, both its opponents and its defenders strove to reevaluate it, and to revise and modify its original conceptions in the light of a

Schorer, 'Technique as Discovery', in *Critiques and Essays on Modern Fiction: 1920—1951*, ed. John W. Aldridge (New York, 1952), p. 67. The essay was first printed in *Hudson Review*, 1948, No. 1, pp. 67—87.

¹⁸ See René Wellek and Austin Warren, *Theory of Literature* (New York, 1948, 1956, 1962).

¹⁹ S. E. Hyman, *The Armed Vision: A Study in the Method of Modern Literary Criticism* (New York, 1952), p. 74.

²⁰ Harry Levin, 'Literature as an Institution', *Accent*, 1946, No. 2, pp. 159—168.

²¹ F. O. Matthiessen, *The Responsibilities of the Critic* (New York, 1952).

²² Robert G. Davis, 'The New Criticism and the Democratic Tradition', *The American Scholar*, 1949—50, No. 1, pp. 9—19. Stenographic record of the debate following upon the article with contributions by William Barrett, Kenneth Burke, Malcolm Cowley, R. G. Davis, Allen Tate, and Hiram Haydn (editor of the review); 1950—51, No. 1, pp. 86—104, and No. 2, 1950—51, pp. 218—231.

broader, more social and more historical approach.²³ René Wellek's positive appreciation sounds like an epilogue: "The New Criticism — whose basic insights seem to me valid for poetic theory — has, no doubt, reached a point of exhaustion. In some points the movement has not been able to go beyond its initial restricted sphere: its selection of European writers is oddly narrow. The historical perspective remains very short. Literary history is neglected. The relations to modern linguistics are left unexplored with the result that the study of style, diction, and meter remains often dilettantish. The basic aesthetics seems often without a sure philosophical foundation. Still the movement has immeasurably raised the level of awareness and sophistication in American criticism. It has developed ingenious methods for the analysis of imagery and symbol. It has defined a new taste averse to the romantic tradition. It has supplied an important apology for poetry in a world dominated by science. But it has not been able to avoid the dangers of ossification and mechanical imitation. There seems time for a change." We have to note, however, that with regard to the future of the broader current, the "organistic and symbolistic formalism", Wellek was not pessimistic: "Today it would need a closer collaboration with linguistics and stylistics, a clear analysis of the stratification of the work of poetry to become a coherent literary theory capable of further development and refinement, but it would hardly need a radical revision."²⁴

It is a most important positive achievement of the New Criticism that in the study of literature it has drawn attention to the work of art, the "poem". It put in high relief the autonomous features of the literary work, and endeavoured to trace its sense and meaning, and even its value, back to them and to their internal coherence, their structure. But it is mainly the intent inherent in these striv-

²³ See Sutton, *Modern American Criticism*, pp. 269–275. On the revaluation of the New Criticism see also R. H. Pearce, 'Historicism Once More', *Kenyon Review*, Autumn 1958, pp. 554–591; Walter Sutton, 'The Contextualist Dilemma — or Fallacy?', *Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism*, December 1958, pp. 219–229; H. H. Waggoner, 'The Current Revolt against the New Criticism', *Criticism*, Summer 1959, pp. 211–225; Mark Spilka, 'The Necessary Stylist: A New Critical Revision', *Modern Fiction Studies*, Winter 1960–61, 281–297.

²⁴ See Wellek, *Concepts of Criticism*, pp. 359–360, 364.

ings that compares well with those achievements which have come about as a result of an interaction between the evolution of literary scholarship and that of modern logic. The prospects opened by these achievements point far beyond the requirements the New Critics laid stress on in their demand to make the study of literature "more scientific". And what is more, their criticism of Charles W. Morris (and, in general, of the semanticists and logicians who stressed that the precision of the language of science was a *sine qua non* of cognition) betrays that they were, in many respects, in opposition to the innermost core of literary structuralism, the exact description of a work of art.

They have proposed two problems of a general character which we shall discuss on the basis of the theoretical writings of Ransom, Tate and Brooks, the classics of the New Criticism. The first is a question much discussed here in Hungary, too: the relationship between poetry and cognition. The second question concerns the substance of the literary work.

RANSOM, TATE AND BROOKS ON POETRY AS COGNITION

"No doctrine is more central to the critical theory of Ransom, Tate and Brooks than their belief in literature as an essential form of knowledge", William J. Handy states in his treatise *Kant and the Southern New Critics*.²⁵ His statement needs correction insofar as according to the critics he mentions, literature is not simply an essential form of knowledge but its *most essential* form. Allen Tate wrote in 1940: "It is my contention here that the high forms of literature offer us the only complete, and thus the most responsible, versions of our experience." The "conviction" of Ransom, Tate and Brooks that literature offers the only "complete" version of experience is based on a negative principle, namely that science provides only partial, indirect, abstract, "distorted" experience, while in their view literature is a complete, direct, concrete and true form of knowledge. The antiscientific bias of the New Critics concedes at most that science may tell

²⁵ William J. Handy, *Kant and the Southern New Critics* (Austin, 1963), p. 64.

something about inanimate nature. They disapprove of the intrusion of science in the realm of the spiritual, which in their view is a property of "poetic cognition", of "imagination". Tate asserts that "historicism, scientism, psychologism, biologism, in general the confident use of the scientific vocabularies in the spiritual realm, has created or at any rate is the expression of spiritual disorder".²⁶ And since, in their opinion, literature is the depository of complete experience, the greatest heresy is the literary scholar's "naturalism", i.e. his attempt to apply to literature the results and methods offered by the progress of science. The word science means, of course, the natural sciences in the first place. Starting from the inapplicability of certain methods and analogies of the natural sciences to social phenomena, the New Critics presupposed that science was by no means capable of dealing with the life of society and man, with the phenomena of the "spirit" in an exact manner. As a matter of fact, they denied the cognizability of these phenomena when they shifted the task of studying them to "literature as a form of knowledge".

A chapter in Ransom's book, *God Without Thunder*, is entitled 'Satan as Science'.²⁷ In *The New Criticism* he points out that the concessions of the new criticism to science (Richards' neurological psychologism, etc.) are responsible for its imperfect beginnings. He condemns science because, as a form of knowledge, it is based on abstraction. Tate also criticized the sciences "whose responsibility is directed towards the verification of limited techniques". He described Richards' theory of poetry as "the powerful semi-scientific method of studying poetry". Not without reason: Richards' bold theories which needed support from psychology were backed by absolutely no scientific experiments; they were built on hypotheses. What Tate could not be reconciled with, however, was not something that was semi-scientific, but science itself, the "naturalist" (materialistic), or "positivist" (empiricist) views and methods. His outlook was in fact based on "the belief, philosophically

²⁶ See Tate, *On the Limits of Poetry*, p. 4.

²⁷ J. C. Ransom, *God Without Thunder* (Hamden, 1965), pp. 110—138. (1st edition: New York, 1930).

tenable, in a radical discontinuity between the physical and the spiritual realms."

If literature is absolute cognition, there can be no case for historical, social determination. Nor is it possible, of course, that knowledge about history or society should be the knowledge supplied by literature. "The function of criticism should have been in our time, as in all times, to maintain and to demonstrate the special, unique, and complete knowledge which the great forms of literature afford us. And I mean quite simply *knowledge*, not historical documentation and information." It sounds good to say that literature is not historical documentation and information; the words "documentation" and "information" allude to the incompleteness of these media of cognition. Tate assumes that a theory that does not absolutize literature ignores its particularity. He affirms, in any case, that literature is equal to cognition, or at least "the great forms of literature", nowhere exactly defined by Tate, are equal to it, as they provide "complete knowledge". It becomes clear from these lines that this knowledge has nothing in common with knowledge about history. (It may possibly have, but not in the form of documentation and information.) But what do we know when we simply "know"? Tate replies to this question in the closing sentence of his meditation: "Literature is the complete knowledge of man's experience, and by knowledge I mean that unique and formed intelligence of the world of which man alone is capable." Tate adds that this definition makes no concession to formalism or to historicism; i. e. to "art for art's sake" or to the sociological approach to literature. He always condemns any conception in which literature is but one among the forms of social and political expression. This definition of knowledge can hardly satisfy us.

The New Critics often say that a poem is knowledge, that it conveys knowledge, but they seldom tell whose knowledge it is, whether this knowledge has a criterion of truth, and if so, what it is. And if they say a word about it, they do so in the way Tate does: "It seems to me that my verse or anybody else's is merely a way of knowing something: if the poem is a real creation, it is a kind of knowledge that we did not possess before. It is not knowledge 'about' something else; the poem is the fullness of that knowledge. We know the particular poem, not what it says that

we can restate.”²⁸ The rational core of this enunciation is directed against the “heresy of paraphrase”. The prose variant of the poem (its “content”, etc.) is not indeed a poem. But what does all this have to do with cognition? Not much, in Tate’s view, for his statement is made up of mutually exclusive propositions. The poem is “merely a way of knowing something”, but “not knowledge about something else”, yet “a kind of knowledge that we did not possess before”, and even the “fullness” of that knowledge, although this fullness is only that of our knowledge about the poem. Tate precludes the possibility that the poem is knowledge about something else: knowing as such is confined only to knowing the poem. Of this we can say either that the poem then is not knowledge, or that if poetry is the real way to the fullness of knowledge, poetry is also the most suitable way of knowing the poem. Thus we obtain an infinite series of poetic cognitions which we can profanely explain with the recipient’s re-creation of the poem. Presumably, Tate has in mind only the formal symptoms of cognition — the experience of evidence, for example. But he points also to the fact that a certain (relative) unity and interaction exist between the object, the medium and the subject of knowledge. His train of thought probably implies that cognition obtains its real, physical, this-worldly form as action and experience. By these formal traits he ought to regard as cognition anything with which man enters into a spiritual, serious, intimate and experienceful relationship. In any case, he thinks that the most experienceful relationship is the most profound type of cognition. In Tate’s philosophy *knowledge* becomes an autonomous concept, it loses its conventional meaning and, with that, also the reference to its real function. But will knowledge directed at itself be knowledge at all? If, however, knowledge is in fact not knowledge (scientific, verifiable, etc.), then of course poetry may be covered by the concept of cognition; but what is the use of regarding as knowledge something that is in fact not knowledge?

Tate argues with some Logical Positivists who claim that the language of poetry is “ambiguous”, “connotative”, or “iconic”, and as such it cannot convey real knowledge. According to Richards’s

²⁸ See Tate, *On the Limits of Poetry*, pp. 47, 9, 4, 8, 15, 8, 250.

communication theory, the statements of poetry are *pseudo-statements* compared to the verifiable statements of science. In his essay "Literature as Knowledge" Tate argues with the representatives of the semantic behaviourist conception of language, in particular with Charles W. Morris, a member of the Chicago school of Logical Positivists.²⁹ In Morris's theory of art the aesthetic sign is an iconic sign, i. e. a descriptive, representational, pictorial symbol. The iconic sign, unlike the symbols used in science, does not denote but it designates. The essential difference is that the denotatum is a real, existing object, situation, relation, etc., but the designatum is not, it may be an imaginary thing. While those suffering from a certain type of insanity, Morris contends, are unable to distinguish between designatum and denotatum, i. e. between imagination and reality, the aesthetic sign contains the trait which prompts the interpretant to make a distinction between denotatum and designatum. It is on this point that Tate locks horns with Morris. He declares that according to this theory there is just a hair's breadth of difference between poetry and insanity. He singles out Morris's remark that the act of distinction (which in Tate's view is already by itself an act of knowledge) is somehow present in the artistic sign itself. On this basis Tate contends that the poem, as it exists by itself, as a system of linguistic signs, is knowledge. He stresses that the mind capable of knowing must not be left out of cognition. That is, a passive "interpretant", one reduced merely to the execution of mechanical responses, cannot be substituted for the cognitive mind representing active spirituality. This is true, we admit, but the cognitive mind must not be mistaken for or confounded with the symbol system. "Distinction" is an act of the mind indeed, but the motive of this act is not yet distinction. The very act of knowing is not present in the artistic sign, therefore on this basis it cannot be posited that the poem is "cognition". (The motive of distinction is not necessarily given in the artistic symbol, it may result from the external context of the symbol or the system of symbols, from the situation, from conventions, etc.)

²⁹ See 'Literature as Knowledge' (1941), in *On the Limits of Poetry*, pp. 16–48.

Tate reckons with the full reality of language; in his opinion, as he states it quoting the words of Richards who later corrected himself, "It [language] is no mere signalling system."³⁰ This is true. It is a different matter that the New Criticism absolutized the autonomy of language, its non-symbolic characteristics, i. e. it disregarded the real conditions of language. Morris's theory of art interprets the realm of art only in relation to the sign and the designated thing, and grasps only an isolated phase of the process of cognition. Inasmuch as Morris substitutes this for the complete process, Tate rightly points to the disregarding of the "cognitive mind" by this theory. Man is really an active, creative factor of cognition. But Tate's idealistic concept of man is only a phantom of the real man who acts as a participant in social practice. Thus here the active, creative mind is in fact nothing else than the demiurge of idealism. After all, Tate considers artistic cognition as the kind of "knowledge" which coincides with the act of "creation", of "making", with an appropriate mode of intelligent existence.

The issue is made extremely complicated by the fact that Tate's concept of cognition *ab ovo* does not deal with real cognition. That is, for him the "ontological" character does not specify the concept of cognition in the general sense (potentially implying the scientific-theoretic mode of cognition or, in an even broader frame, also what is described as artistic cognition). Richards, for example, considered cognition in this light when he excluded from its scope the "pseudo-statements" of poetry, and also later, in his book on Coleridge, correcting (or more clearly defining) his former position, he conceived cognition and existence, or cognition and creation as a Hegelian contradiction, a contradiction inherent in artistic imagination. Unlike Richards, Tate wishes to set poetry as cognition above scientific cognition. He makes experience, perceptually vivid experience, a criterion of true, "complete" knowledge, and by this mixing of terms he comes to the conclusion that poetic cognition is superior to scientific cognition. He refers only very vaguely to the drawback of poetic cognition, to the trait of "distinct irresponsibility" which limits the "advantage" of perceptual representation: "It [poetry] is neither the world of verifiable science nor a projection of our-

³⁰ I. A. Richards, *The Philosophy of Rhetoric* (New York, 1936), p. 131.

selves; yet it is *complete*. And because it is complete knowledge we may, I think, claim for it a unique kind of responsibility, and see in it at times an irresponsibility equally distinct. The order of completeness that it achieves in the great works of the imagination is not the order of experimental completeness aimed at by the positivist sciences, whose responsibility is directed towards the verification of limited techniques. The completeness of science is an abstraction covering an ideal of cooperation among specialized methods. No one can have an experience of science, or of a single science. For the completeness of *Hamlet* is not of the experimental order, but of the experienced order: it is, in short, of the mythical order."

The declaration of a contradictory unity of cognition and existence, or of "ontological knowledge", does not solve the problem. The possible dialectical "solution" was already implied in Kant's antinomies, and the New Critics play variations on it. Tate leaves open the problem: what is knowledge as such if *complete* knowledge is ontological? On the other hand, even if we recognized this particularity of literary cognition, this paradox, as it stands, would at most show the situation in relief. It would not solve the problem; it is only a formula whose solution may be the solution of the problem. But one should not stop at this point unless one is compelled to admit that thinking (one's own thinking) has come to a standstill. Tate understands the situation and at the end of his essay he declares, as an admission, that the study of the theoretical problem should not extend beyond that point: "However we may see the completeness of poetry, it is a problem less to be solved than, in its full import, to be preserved."³¹ We may of course propose at any point of our aesthetic speculation that instead of abstract thinking we should look at the object. But to do so we do not have to indulge in speculations at all; no critical study, none of our aesthetic generalizations will ever serve as substitutes for the concrete poem, sculpture, etc.

Tate tries to look for a solution with his reference to the mythical order. Thus the question of the substance of cognition is shifted over to another plane — instead of poetry as cognition the ques-

³¹ See Tate, *On the Limits of Poetry*, pp. 47–48.

tion at issue will be myth as cognition. This is a problem not without interest, too.

Tate clarifies the concept of mythical order with Richards's words. In his *Coleridge on Imagination* Richards explains that myths do not at all represent escape "from the hard realities of life", they are "no amusement or diversion to be sought as a relaxation". On the contrary, myths "are these hard realities in projection, their symbolic recognition, co-ordination and acceptance The opposite and discordant qualities in things in them acquire a form Without his mythologies man is only a cruel animal without a soul . . . a congeries of possibilities without order and aim."³² First of all, we have the impression that Richards' concept of myth is more positive, more humanistic than that which subsists upon the orthodox mysticism and radical conservatism of the New Criticism. "Myth" and "rite" may be terms which designate rationally conceivable social forms with rational meaning; Marxist scholars also use them in this sense, and in this case the juxtaposition of a "mythical order" and a "scientific order" may be a meaningful utterance. On the other hand, that kind of extrapolation, that exaltation of the mythical order which appears in the works of some New Critics — even Richards included — represents the apology of irrationalism, which makes way for a myth interpretation of very hazy (Freudian, Jungian, traditionalist, religious, etc.) motivation. Much of the practical criticism done by the New Critics nowadays is a crossbreed of textual criticism and myth interpretation. But the fact that in the course of time Ransom, Tate and other New Critics got nearer to mysticism was due to an increasing influence of religious orthodoxy rather than that of myth criticism. (In the second part of Foster's book the chapter headings describe the directions followed by the four "pilgrims" of the New Criticism. Accordingly, Richards came from Laboratory to Imagination, Eliseo Vivas from Nature to Spirit, Blackmur from Criticism to Mysticism, and Tate from the Old South to Catholic Orthodoxy.)

Ransom's theory on poetry as cognition is somewhat different from Tate's. Ransom is ready to accept scientific and theoretical

³² I. A. Richards, *Coleridge on Imagination* (London, 1934), pp. 171—172.

knowledge as a proper type of cognition. But he, too, thinks that this type of cognition is inferior to myth, which, in his opinion, gives a more profound and more complete knowledge and is able to represent the world as a whole, without disrupting its unity and totality, or cancelling its concreteness, unlike science which surveys the world from fragmentary aspects and applies empty abstractions as substitutes for its real properties. In his book, *God Without Thunder*, Ransom tries to discover the myth which has been least secularized. According to him, believers in God-Man (Christ) secularize religion. And the myth of Prometheus, as interpreted by Shelley and others, is in reality the antimyth of the scientific spirit which leads to the ruin of mankind. The sciences, Ransom writes, are incapable of providing man with complete knowledge, for they can, at any one time, deal only with the specific features of things, and their abstractions do not comprehend the concreteness of objects. "This is why science can never give us an adequate knowledge of the concrete thing." As a mathematician, he has found a rather vulgar proof of this imperfection of the science that is held to be the most exact of all. He declares that $\frac{1}{3}$ can be approximated only by an infinite decimal fraction (0.3333 . . .) and cannot be precisely expressed in the decimal system. — "So a surd symbolizes the stubborn concreteness of objects."³³ In his introduction to *The World's Body* he likewise emphasizes how incapable science is to grasp the world in its integrity, although poetry is capable of recognizing and discovering "the world's body", the reality of the world composed of integral, undivided and indivisible objects.³⁴ Science offers "reduced, emasculated, and docile versions of the world", he writes in *The New Criticism* and he adds that it is the job of poetry "to recover the denser and more refractory original world which we know loosely through our perceptions and memories." In his theory of poetry he nevertheless allows a role, though a subordinate one, to this form of cognition which gives a reduced, emasculated, docile version of the world, as this comes closest to what Ransom calls structure in his dichotomic division of the poem into structure and texture. (Structure, however, has only

³³ See Ransom, *God Without Thunder*, pp. 258, 282.

³⁴ J. C. Ransom, *The World's Body* (London, 1938), pp. x—xi.

a passive role in the formation of the aesthetic value.) Yet it is a fact that Ransom is more cautious in his rejection of scientific cognition than Tate or some other New Critics. He willingly admits that science and poetry have equal functions in cognition and complement each other: "The poetic act is an act of knowledge. The scientific and aesthetic ways of knowledge should illuminate each other; perhaps they are alternative knowledges, and a preference for one knowledge over the other might indicate an elemental or primary bias in temperament."³⁵ Accordingly, if the dichotomy of cognition which, since Kant, has been an epistemological premise of idealistic philosophy (including the one-sided Crocean apotheosis of the irrationalistic way of knowledge) is valid, in Ransom's view we shall have a free choice, or at least a choice unbound by facts, and at most by our subjective temperaments only. In Ransom's view artistic cognition gives complete knowledge (whatever this completeness means); so either he made the choice in accordance with his temperament, or it is a fact that this type of cognition does give complete knowledge. If the latter assumption is correct, science has not much business to do in the sphere of cognition — or at least in the sphere of things that require greater concentration and "completeness". For example, the problem of what man and the human world are like will not belong to the scope of science.

According to Cleanth Brooks, all the New Critics did was to expel science from the sanctuary of things not in its line. As he writes, "there is nothing 'escapist' about hostility to science which orders science off the premises as a trespasser when science has taken up a position where it has no business to be".³⁶ Brooks also declares that "poetry, though it does not compete with science and philosophy, yet involves a coming to terms with situations, and thus involves wisdom, though poetry as such indulges in no ethical *generalizations*".³⁷ Tate speaks in similar terms about the relationship of poetic cognition to its object: "Serious poetry deals with the fundamental conflicts that cannot be logically resolved: we can state the conflicts rationally, but

³⁵ See Ransom, *The New Criticism*, pp. 251, 281, 294.

³⁶ Cleanth Brooks, *Modern Poetry and the Tradition* (London, 1948), p. 174 (1st edition: Chapel Hill, 1939).

³⁷ Cleanth Brooks, *The Well-Wrought Urn* (New York, 1947), p. 258.

reason does not relieve us from them. Their only final coherence is the formal re-creation of art, which 'freezes' the experience as permanently as a logical formula, but without, like the formula, leaving all but the logic out."³⁸ These statements sound sensible, even if, in some respect, they need completion, elaboration and explanation. But are the "coming to terms with situations" and the "wisdom" that follows complete knowledge? Are they cognition in the precise sense of the term, or modes of practical action, though motivated by cognition? And although the selection and the recognition of "fundamental conflicts" are genuine acts of experience, does artistic form as the "freezing" of experience or — in the words of Eliseo Vivas — as "informed substance" really mean direct cognizance and knowledge, or only a particular kind of readiness or disposition to cognition?

The answer to these questions depends on how we define cognition. If we prefer a meaning of cognition that expresses — instead of definite, clear, verifiable knowledge — the existence of a polysemous, vague imagery complex which, though essentially "free", is suggestive of the line of action to be taken, perhaps through the indication of the main lines of force and tendencies of the situation, it is to be feared that by cognition we shall mean something else than the disclosure of the objective laws of reality. This "humane" and even anthropomorphic "cognition" is an extremely tame form of cognition, tractable and controllable by our subjective conation. It lends itself particularly well to helping us promote to the rank of cognition not only an anthropomorphic mythical order but also, however incompatible with the knowledge of reality, mysticism, and to making us accept it as "complete knowledge". The New Critics make no secret of pursuing this aim when they place "artistic cognition" beside and above scientific and theoretical cognition.

CONTEXTUALIST MODELS OF THE WORK OF ART

In the aesthetics of the New Criticism the lyric poem is the representative type of a work of art. As a rule, the New Critics do not strive to present a systematic and methodical aesthetics of literature.

³⁸ See Tate, *On the Limits of Poetry*, p. 252.

Their discoveries in literary aesthetics have, of course, equivalents in the general theory and aesthetics of art. In particular the aesthetic activity of one of Cassirer's disciples, Susanne K. Langer, and of Eliseo Vivas is close to the trend represented by the New Criticism. Concentration on lyric poetry, the handling of poeticalness as language, ignorance or neglect of differences in genre point to Crocean features. But a fundamental difference is that the New Critics attributed a primarily "scientific", "exact", "analytic" and not an artistic, empathic, expressive role to criticism. As our earlier references show, with this idea they were proposing, at least on the premises of their own theory, an imperfect, incomplete way of getting to know the poem ("the complete knowledge"). They recognized the consequences. They emphasized that criticism can at most prepare for a better understanding of the work but cannot be a substitute for the work of art itself. We may assume that the "complete knowledge" of the work of art is made possible likewise by artistic cognition. They give hints of this in their disquisitions but do not go so far as Springarn who, echoing Croce, considered it the critic's substantial task to recreate the work of art, to re-experience — though but for a few moments — the expressive intuition.

In analysing the work of art the New Critics execute logical moves. In accordance with their epistemological conceptions their theory of art lays emphasis on the "concrete", "sensory" and "unique" elements, the elements of objectivity, but the correlations of such elements are ultimately regulated by logical formulae. That is to say, they conceive of the order of concrete images, of their interrelations, in the form of logical relationships. They illustrate the ideal realization of this order with the example of the Metaphysical School of English baroque poetry. Although in general they explain the difference between art and science by the difference between the language of art and that of science, their theory of poetry refers to a distinct, closed, limited linguistic object. What is more, they regard the work of art as a completely "closed", accomplished, self-contained object or process. In the case of the poem this completeness implies a limited linguistic text of definite dimensions. Its value and its meaning exist within the limits thus given. What is outside this unity does not matter — except, of course, the associations and

linguistic conventions which go with the sound and the meaning of words, but which are given practically with the words themselves. All this, however, becomes living, meaningful and valuable only as the poem's text. It is understandable that in these conditions the most essential thing is the relationship of the linguistic entities within the context of the poem, or rather the totality of these relationships. Several, more or less divergent, theories and terminologies have been developed to explain and illustrate these internal, meaningful and value-forming relationships of the poem.

According to Ransom the "structure" of the poem is its "content" taken in the usual sense (its theme, subject, plot, message, its train of thoughts exposable in prose, and even the logical moves of the denouement, namely the factors of the intellectual organization of the poem). Yet, as this "structure" involves such "intellectual" elements as rhyme patterns and metre, this is not the same as "content" in the usual distinction between content and form. Ransom is, however, not very consistent in this regard and it is not clear if he draws the line in every respect between his concept of structure and the vulgar concept of content. He states, for example, the following about the structure of the poem: "This is its [the poem's] prose core — its science perhaps, or its ethics if it seems to have an ideology."³⁹ The poem is the unity of structure and texture. Texture consists of unique, particular features which have no logical relation to the structure of the poem. Compared to the poem's subject matter, to its exposable train of thought, these are *irrelevant*, unimportant elements. They include the sound of words, the rhythm of verse (this does not contradict what has been said about metre, as metre is merely an abstraction of rhythm), the figures of speech, etc. Ransom made reference to the aesthetic function of such and similar concrete, sensory factors long before the elaboration of his structure-texture theory, for example in *The World's Body*: "A proper scientific discourse has no intention of employing figurative language for its definitive sort of utterance. Figures of speech twist accident away from the straight course, as if to intimate astonishing lapses of rational-

³⁹ J. C. Ransom, 'Criticism as Pure Speculation', in *The Intent of the Critic*, ed. Donald A. Stauffer (Princeton, 1941), p. 112.

ity beneath the smooth surface of discourse, inviting perceptual attention, and weakening the tyranny of science over the senses.”⁴⁰ In his essay, *Criticism as Pure Speculation*, he explicitly says that these “antiscientific” sensory elements are the vehicles of aesthetic quality. “The ostensible substance of the poem may be anything at all which words may signify: an ethical situation, a passion, a train of thought, a flower or landscape, a thing.” This substance receives its poetic “increment”. And he adds: “It might be safer to say it receives some subtle and mysterious alteration under poetic treatment, but I will risk the cruder formula: the ostensible substance is increased by an *x*, which is an increment. The poem actually continues to contain its ostensible substance, which is not fatally diminished from its prose state: that is its logical core, or paraphrase. The rest of the poem is *x*, which we are to find.” He likens the “ostensible substance” of the poem, or its “logical core”, to the functional elements of a house, its walls, roofing, etc., and the “local texture” to its painting, the tapestry, etc. “The paint, the paper, the tapestry are texture. It is logically unrelated to the structure.” The “irrelevant”, “local” elements of texture make poetry richer and fuller than prose, which according to Ransom is “single-valued”: it gives the mere frame, the logical structure.

The structure-texture formula is akin not only to the distinction between content and form but also to the classicist idea that in the poem the figures of speech, rhymes, etc. serve as ornaments. Ransom, however, is to a certain extent inclined to regard the “logical core” implicitly, in the words of György Lukács, as “aesthetically assimilated content”. And, indeed, from the finished poem we never abstract anything else than the “aesthetically assimilated content”, unless we definitively quit the poem as such. At any rate, Ransom’s theory is directed against the “contentism” of idealist criticism which derives the substance of the poem, its most profound aesthetic quality, from the idea expressed in it. We have the impression that Ransom takes the logical structure as a necessary evil. His discourse reveals that in the formation of aesthetic value, in “the poetic increment of the ostensible substance”, only the texture has a function (true, this function is inconceiv-

⁴⁰ See Ransom, *The World’s Body*, p. 133.

able without the resistance of the structure). And the relationship between structure and texture cannot be examined further on the basis of this formula, for this relationship is not logical but "irrelevant". "The intent of the good critic becomes therefore to examine and define the poem with respect to its texture and its structure," Ransom claims. But the texture is conclusive: "If he has nothing to say about its texture he has nothing to say about it specifically as a poem; but is treating it only insofar as it is prose."

This formula is crude enough indeed. But, in conclusion, Ransom makes a rather self-assured statement of his "discovery" and its perspectives: "A number of fascinating speculative considerations must follow upon this discovery. They will have to do with the most fundamental laws of this world's structure. They will be profoundly ontological, though I do not mean they must be ontological in some recondite sense; ontological in such a homely and compelling sense that perhaps a child might intuit the principles which the critic will arrive at analytically, and with much labor."⁴¹

The child in question may perhaps intuit also what Ransom means by ontology. There are, however, adult critics who admit that they have no such intuition. A Cambridge professor, William Righter, writes in his book, *Logic and Criticism*: "The concepts used are used so loosely as to make any careful examination of them unfruitful, for except in some such vague way as I have suggested, I cannot see at all what Ransom means by 'ontology'." In any case, Righter formulates at least one possible interpretation of Ransom's theory on the ontology of poetry: "The language of poetry 'exists' in an altogether different sense: it is useful for nothing, conveys no information, exists entirely for its own sake, and is more or less a 'thing in itself'." According to Righter, the nature of "texture" is utterly obscure, and Ransom's examples cannot help us either, for the logic of language is not a structure of a sensual character as a building and its structure are, and the analogy of painting presents, as Righter puts it "an analogous dilemma". He thinks that Ransom's only merit is that he used a term to direct attention to a hardly expressible and explainable quality of the language of poetry. Unfortunately, however, this term

⁴¹ See Ransom, *The Intent of the Critic*, pp. 105–106, 111, 123–124.

“certainly fails to satisfy any criterion which would demand of it any precise meaning or clear explanatory value. Ransom himself seems under the illusion that he has added a precise set of distinctions to critical language; he talks often (and vaguely) of logical rigour. And it is here that he is misleading. The effort to make critical language clearer or more logical has hardly been served by the addition of ‘texture’.”⁴²

Ransom in his afore-cited essay refers to the Hegelian “Concrete Universal”, and thinks that with his texture-structure formula he can grasp the organic connection of the concrete and the universal, and correct Hegel, freeing the aesthetic quality from its too close ties with the abstract idea and wedding it more closely to concreteness. As the relation — between structure and texture, or between abstract idea and concrete particularity — is not sufficiently clear in Ransom’s “discovery”, so it is not clarified what reasons he thinks support the victory of the concrete and the particular. What need is there at all for an “ostensible substance”? Tate and Brooks implicitly correct their master’s formula of the poem, suppress its duality akin to the duality of content and form; they see the substance of the poem exclusively in the form-structure. As Walter Sutton writes, “In his dualism and his concern for rational structure, Ransom stands apart from the other New Critics. Except for Yvor Winters, most of them consider the structure of poetry to be un- or anti-logical and the poem itself to be a unified whole. They tend to agree with Ransom, however, that poetic language provides a knowledge distinct from that of science. It does so not so much through its iconic nature, however, as through its contextual quality, the way in which it functions as a unified complex or symbol to express, metaphorically, a knowledge or truth like that of myth or religion.”⁴³

Tate’s “tension theory” resembles Ransom’s insofar as he also presupposes two antithetical basic factors. One is “intension”, which in logic signifies the intension of a term, and the other is “extension”, that is, the extension of a term. The word “tension” is

⁴² William Righter, *Logic and Criticism* (New York, 1963), pp. 111, 110–111, 113, 114.

⁴³ See Sutton, *Modern American Criticism*, pp. 115–116.

no philosophical term, it means "suspense" in everyday language. According to Tate, this word should denote the meaning of poetry: "I am using the term not as a general metaphor, but as a special one, derived from lopping the prefixes off the logical terms *extension* and *intension*. What I am saying, of course, is that the meaning of poetry is its 'tension', the full organized body of all the extension and intension that we can find in it." This verbal schizogenesis implies a quantitative growth as well as a qualitative change: the reference to logical terminology has only a metaphorical value, for if it were not so, tension would not tell us more of the poem than that it is the totality, the "full organized body", of the intension and extension of the terms contained in it. Furthermore, the unity of intension and extension in logic is, in the final analysis, the concept itself. In Tate's interpretation it is the poem itself — not as a concept but as an object. Or is it the "meaning", the "idea", the concept of the poem? Tension used metaphorically is a special metaphor also because the word retains its common meaning as its connotation, suggesting the dynamic energy, the movement of the given poem, or the tension inherent in its statics. The poetically metaphorical formula of the poem, the reference to the dynamics of the poem can arouse a good deal of sympathy for Tate's theory. (Ransom may, of course, allude to the same dynamic movement, the same organical and dialectical interrelationship, if not otherwise, through reference to the Hegelian concept of the "concrete universal".)

Tate's terms are parallel to Ransom's. Extension refers to an abstract "denotative" language (the language of science), and intension indicates concrete, connotational values. The emphasis is on tension, on complete organization. It is precisely "organization" that increases the value of *tension* stripped of its prefixes. And the greater the tension-cohesion between the tendencies denoted by the prefixes, the greater the value of the organization. This again may resemble Ransom's conception inasmuch as Ransom can also demand of structure the full enforcement of its inner logic, and of texture its bold "irrelevance" and an abundance of motifs. (But the elements of the "structure", its "materials", are neutral: their "extrinsic", philosophical, ethical, political, etc., value has no part in the poem's aesthetic value.) "Organization", however, is new as a value-forming element and, in comparison with Ran-

som's theory refers more precisely to the relation between the two poles.

Tate's theoretical comments are more interesting than Ransom's hypotheses also for other reasons. Ransom illustrated his structuralist theory practically by allusions to analogies only. Tate reckons with some of the possible objections and tries to prove his contentions by a closer verse analysis than Ransom did. Tate's train of thought is more consistent and clearer, too. He says that communication debases poetry; if the poet resorts to communication, he uses the language of the masses and employs accustomed associations. At such times the poet is satisfied with appealing in his verse to sentimental dispositions already existing in the readers. He talks of an object which in itself evokes certain feelings – virtually in a predictable manner. He uses expressions which can, through existing conventional emotive associations, rouse some feeling towards an object with which originally they had no deep, inner logical connection. This is “the fallacy of communication”. Such are, Tate says, many anthology pieces of propaganda poetry (patriotic and religious) or sentimental domestic and personal lyrics. And this is probably so. But Tate goes further: he claims that all romantic poetry is a victim of this fallacy. “The poets were trying to use verse to convey ideas and feelings that they secretly thought could be better conveyed by science (consult Shelley's *Defense*) . . .” According to Tate, poetry retreated and surrendered to science the right to cognition, knowledge and meaningful, logical expression. Thus, through the fault of romantic poetry, poetry became synonymous with obscurity, with vague expression. (Whereas, in Tate's view, poetry alone has the right to real cognition and, accordingly, to meaningful expression.)

Tate cites James Thomson's poem, *The Vine*, to illustrate the inconsistency of such, to him, “romantic” imagery. “Now good poetry can bear the closest literal examination of every phrase, and is its own safeguard against our irony.” Even a poor or mediocre metaphysical poem (for example, Cowley's *Hymn to Light*) surpasses the former type in that its denotation is faultless. Its images are no random selection which lose their effect in the very next verse or sentence, but images which preserve, in every point and in every respect, their logical connection with one another

and with the whole of the poem. The imagery of Thomson's poem is far too unorganized and inconsistent:

The wine of love is music,
And the feast of love is song:
When love sits down to banquet,
Love sits long:
Sits long and rises drunken,
But not with the feast and the wine;
He reeleth with his own heart,
That great rich Vine.

Tate is right: "The more closely we examine this lyric, the more obscure it becomes; the more we trace the implications of the imagery, the denser the confusion." Only by loosening or abandoning rational control and making a concession to the "magic" of poetry in advance, can we feel this poem to be the adequate expression of a mood. Is such obscurity perhaps suitable for suggesting inebriation? The catachresis, however, is obviously unintentional and not an essential element of the poem's deliberate effective organization.

Tate decries Cowley's priggish hymn on account of weaknesses in connotation: "This is the poetry which contradicts our most developed human insights in so far as it fails to use and direct the rich connotation with which language has been informed by experience." He says he can give no principled reason for his verdict, he can only refer to the reader's experience, learning and aesthetic culture: "It is easy enough to say . . . that good poetry is a unity of all the meanings from the furthest extremes of intension and extension. Yet our recognition of the action of this unified meaning is the gift of experience, of culture, of, if you will, our humanism. Our powers of discrimination are not deductive powers, though they may be aided by them; they wait rather upon the cultivation of our total human powers, and they represent a special application of those powers to a single medium of experience — poetry." Nevertheless, he prefers this unsuccessful work of the metaphysical poet (considering the chances of the experiment) to the afore-cited, similarly unsuccessful, "romantic" poem.

A positive example is Donne's poem, *Valediction: Forbidding Mourning*, or, to be exact, a quatrain from it:

Our two soules therefore, which are one,
 Though I must goe, endure not yet
 A breach, but an expansion,
 Like gold to aery thinnesse beate.

In Tate's analysis the soul of the lovers is "a nonspatial entity, and is therefore indivisible" — this is the abstract form of the extensive meaning of the quotation, or its logic, as put by Ransom. This nonspatial entity is expressed by the image of a spatial material, gold. Since this material is (in principle) extensible to infinity, the meaning of the metaphor does not cancel its extensive meaning. "Intension and extension are here one, and they enrich each other."

Tate regards intension and extension not only as semantic poles of a successful concrete figure of speech or of any single concrete poem, but also as polar categories of style. He thinks that the leading type of good poetry is metaphysical poetry, which in his view encompasses, very much from the side of extension, the whole range of tension, and also symbolist poetry which he accepts as the most fortunate form of romanticism. In symbolist poetry the main point of departure is intension. "Both at their best are great, and both are incomplete", he remarks.⁴⁴

Wimsatt takes a similar view, but he does not subscribe to the restrictions of evaluation based on a typology of styles: "If we think of a scale of structures having at one end logic, the completely reasoned and abstracted, and at the other some form of madness or surrealism, matter or impression unformed and undisciplined (the imitation of disorder by the idiom of disorder), we may see metaphysical and neoclassical poetry as near the extreme of logic (though by no means reduced to that status) and romantic poetry as a step toward the directness of sensory presentation (though by no means sunk into subrationality). As a structure which favours implication rather than overt statement, the romantic is far closer than the metaphysical to symbolist poetry and the varieties of postsymbolist most in vogue today.

⁴⁴ See Tate, *On the Limits of Poetry*, pp. 77 ff.

Both types of structure, the metaphysical and the romantic, are valid. Each has gorgeously enriched the history of English poetry."⁴⁵ In short, Wimsatt does not disparage the romantic type either; moreover, he cites as a positive example Shelley's poem which proved to be a veritable stumbling-block to the New Criticism.⁴⁶ "Neoclassic iconicity is on the whole of a highly ordered, formal, or intellectual sort, that of the 'figures of speech' such as antithesis, isocolon, homoeoteleuton, or chiasmus. But romantic nature poetry tends to achieve iconicity by a more direct sensory imitation of something headlong and impassioned, less ordered, nearer perhaps to the subrational. Thus: in Shelley's *Ode to the West Wind* the shift in imagery of the second stanza, the pell-mell raggedness and confusion of loose clouds, decaying leaves, angels and Maenads with hair uplifted, the dirge, the dome, the vapors, and the enjambment from tercet to tercet combine to give an impression beyond statement of the very wildness, the breath and power of which is the vehicle of the poem's radical metaphor.

Criticizing the central terms of Tate's structure theory, Wimsatt remarks that words like *denotation*, *connotation*, *extension*, *intension* only appear to be used by Tate in the sense they have as logical terms. He adds that Tate's associates — he cites Hulme's followers, Eliot and Winters — also practise this trick. The reason he gives as a likely explanation of this usage is that "their use of these terms does make an implicit if vague appeal to technical logic and really is a struggle to indicate more than the fairly easy and not always reliable distinction between statement and suggestion."⁴⁷

⁴⁵ W. K. Wimsatt, Jr., *The Verbal Icon* (Kentucky, 1954), p. 116.

⁴⁶ Especially the phrase, 'I fall upon the thorns of life! I bleed!' is cited with scorn. According to Ransom, this exclamation illustrates the *negative* tendency of allegorical Platonic poetry. The poet does not believe in the strength of his ideas and becomes angry at the sight of their ineffectiveness. This indignation is an example of the 'Romantic Irony', Ransom says, 'which comes at occasional periods to interrupt the march of scientific optimism'. — See *The World's Body*, p. 122. — According to Tate, the poet is broken and driven to despair just by the demythologized, scientifically apperceived, 'inhumane' world he propagates. 'This moral situation, transferred to the plane of drama or the lyric, becomes romantic irony — that is, an irony of his position of which the poet himself is not aware.' See *On the Limits of Poetry*, p. 102.

⁴⁷ See Wimsatt, *The Verbal Icon*, pp. 115—116. 146.

With conspicuous one-sidedness Tate's and Ransom's theories favour only a certain type of poetry. When reading essays by Ransom, Tate, Brooks and several other New Critics, the reader may anticipate that, after some complication, the truth will be assembled out of the elements of one of Donne's poems. Sometimes they illustrate their theses with poems by modern metaphysicals: Ransom, with Tate's poems, Tate with Ransom's and Brooks with Tate's and Ransom's poems. According to Hyman, Ransom's structure-texture theory was based upon his own poetic practice.⁴⁸ And Brooks, the propounder of a theory on irony, very convincingly states of Ransom's poems that in them irony "is always present, if only as a sense of aesthetic distance His poems bear their own self-criticism."⁴⁹ Accordingly, these theories were conceived in terms of a definite taste and style formula. The New Critics endorsed this type; their admission that serious and great poetry may exist beside it are for the most part hollow-ringing rhetorical phrases. The keynote is struck by such essays as Ransom's study of Shakespeare's sonnets, which decries Shakespeare (with reference to his lack of education) in every respect where, in producing imagery, he fails to meet the criteria of metaphysical poetry, of the baroque *conceit*.⁵⁰ Tate says explicitly that tension can be created by different, not only metaphysical but romantic and symbolistic, *strategies* as well. Yet the standards of these strategies are the symbolist qualities of metaphysical poetry and the metaphysical qualities of symbolist poetry. In order to justify this type of poetry Brooks explains that paradox is the substance of all worthwhile poetry, and that genuine poetry is — to use Richards' term — inclusive, that is, the poet's self-irony is to be found in the context (forestalling the reader's irony). True, Brooks tries to apply his category of irony also to poems by Wordsworth and Keats. But it remains a problem how far it is irony what he finds in them. Righter says that "The term has been stretched to cover

⁴⁸ See Hyman, *op cit.*, p. 100.

⁴⁹ See Brooks, *Modern Poetry and the Tradition*, p. 99.

⁵⁰ See J. C. Ransom, 'Shakespeare at Sonnets', in *The World's Body*, pp. 270—303. In this respect Ransom's views are regarded as much too one-sided by both Tate (see *On the Limits of Poetry*, p. 79) and Brooks (see *The Well-Wrought Urn*, pp. 243—244).

almost any sort of double meaning that can be found in poetry, or any contrast in meanings."⁵¹

In his theory of poetry Brooks relies on statements by Richards, although like every Southern New Critic, he also rejects Richards' hypothesis that the criterion of the poem's value is its capacity to establish order and equilibrium in the readers' psychic impulses. According to the New Critics' dictum this is "effective fallacy". The critic should study the order and equilibrium in the textually defined poem and not in the reader's psyche. Brooks' preoccupation with the work of art is not entirely free from Richards' psychologism. Brooks, too, projects the impressions of an ideal reader back on the poem's linguistic structure. Richards attempted to study the impressions of concrete readers, but eventually his ideal reader was himself, just as Brooks' ideal reader was Brooks.

Richards distinguishes two basic types of the poem. One of them "is content with the full, ordered development of comparatively special and limited experiences, with a definite emotion, for example, Sorrow, Joy, Pride, or a definite attitude, Love, Indignation, Admiration, Hope, or with a specific mood, Melancholy, Optimism or Longing." Such poems are not devoid of interest, although they are inferior, since they narrow the sphere of responses instead of broadening it. He cites as examples, among others, Tennyson's poem *Break, Break, Break* and Shelley's *Love's Philosophy*. For Richards, genuinely great poetry is represented by Keats' *Ode to the Nightingale*, Walter Scott's *Proud Maisie*, Donne's *Nocturnall upon S. Lucie's Day*, Marvell's *The Definition of Love* and *Sir Patrick Spens*. The difference does not depend on theme, Richards says, but on the interrelations of the impulses active in the experience. Poems belonging to the first type evolve an order of unidirectional, parallel impulses; the other type is dominated by an extraordinary heterogeneity of impulses. But these heterogeneous impulses contrast with one another, and, from the point of view of the *non-poetical, non-imaginative* experience, one of the contrasting groups of impulses is superfluous. It must be eliminated to let the other develop freely. The gift of imagination is that it is able to make us see these mutually exclusive opposites

⁵¹ See Richter, *Logic and Criticism*, p. 109.

as one and to create a unity and equilibrium between them. The first type of poetry, the one which appeals to a single, plain, definite emotion, "will not bear an ironical contemplation", but the other type is immune against the reader's irony, because the contrasting impulses are not excluded from it. The latter is a superior type of poetry – "inclusive" poetry. Irony is included in the elements of the poem providing the impulse; that is to say, the poem includes the opposite, the complementary impulses: "That is why poetry which is exposed to it [irony] is not of the highest order, and why irony itself is so constantly a characteristic of poetry which is." The opposed impulses do not simply create a conflict in the perceiver – this would relate them to two different moods – while, according to Richards, the crux of the matter is that inclusive poetry, despite its heterogeneity, should create a unified mood, a complete equilibrium. "The equilibrium of opposed impulses, which we suspect to be the ground-plan of the most valuable aesthetic responses, brings into play far more of our personality than is possible in experiences of a more defined emotion. We cease to be orientated in one definite direction; more facets of the mind are exposed and, what is the same thing, more aspects of things are able to affect us. To respond, not through one narrow channel of interest, but simultaneously and coherently through many, is to be *disinterested* in the only sense of the word which concerns us here." And disinterestedness is not lack of interest, but a specific type of interest: "The less any one particular interest is indispensable, the more *detached* our attitude becomes. And to say that we are *impersonal* is merely a curious way of saying that our personality is more *completely* involved."⁵²

Irony as a value concept and the concept of "inclusion" mean by and large the same in Brooks' theory as in Richards' interpretation. In the final analysis all come down to the interpretation of the concepts of "disinterest" and "aesthetic distance". Brooks interprets these concepts in a more definite way than Richards does. In his interpretation the principle of "disinterest" is directed against (left-wing, progressive) "propaganda poetry". His starting-point is a broad interpretation of irony which enables it to

⁵² I. A. Richards, *Principles of Literary Criticism* (London, 1938), pp. 249, 250, 251, 252 (1st edition: 1924).

be applied to the "complete" world view included in the poem. He compares this conception of irony to Arnold's conception of sincerity. In the Victorian critic's eyes, sincerity is a criterion of the "high seriousness" of poetry. "The two conceptions are almost diametrically opposed. Arnold's sincerity expresses itself as a vigilance which keeps out of the poem all those extraneous and distracting elements which might seem to contradict what the poet wishes to communicate to his audience. It is the sincerity of the conscientious expositor who makes his point, even at the price of suppressions and exclusions. Poetry which embodies such a conception of sincerity, when it is unsuccessful, has as its characteristic vice, sentimentality. For sentimentality nearly always involves an oversimplification of the experience in question. The sentimentalist takes a short cut to intensity by removing all the elements of the experience which might conceivably militate against the intensity The sentimental poet makes us feel that he is sacrificing the totality of his vision in favor of a particular interpretation. Hence the feeling on reading a sentimental poem that the intensity is the result of a trick."

Much is lost from the claim to theoretical generalization given the reservations of this cautious formulation. The opposition between the two conceptions is "*almost* diametrical"; sentimentality "*nearly* always" involves an oversimplification of the experience. When does this "nearly always" occur? When this type of poetry "is unsuccessful". Does it hold only for the unsuccessful representatives of this type? We may arrive at this conclusion from Brooks's further reservations. *Many fine poems*, he writes, *do not belong* to the type of inclusive or metaphysical poetry. What appears from most of his discourse is, however, that "the poet has been just to the complexity of experience" in this type only, and this is a result of the fact that "the poet attempts the reconciliation of qualities which are opposite or discordant in the extreme". In the whole discourse he forgets about his reservations. It is strange, however, to find him rejecting a type of style on the grounds of its unsuccessful representatives. Isn't it the case that Brooks posed a part of the truth and then ignored that it was only a part of the truth? Even when he discusses the relationship between metaphysical poetry and propaganda poetry, he observes that "the distinction between the two types of poetry

is, as Richards points out, not an absolute one; but this basis of distinction seems valid, and more than that, very fruitful". But the word *seems* clears the way for making the difference absolute and making the typology of style a standard of value. This was the main goal right from the outset: "If we are interested in getting at the core of metaphysical poetry, we should not be surprised if we find that we are dealing with something basic in all poetry, poetry being essentially one. Our definition of metaphysical poetry, then, will have to treat the difference between metaphysical poetry and other poetry as a difference of degree, not of kind." The passage is not unequivocal. If, in accordance with Brooks' intentions, we regard the "core" of metaphysical poetry as the basis of all types of poetry, then the difference between metaphysical poetry and other poetry may also be considered as a (qualitative) difference between poetry and non-poetry.

On the score of "other poetry" Brooks assails first of all the type of poetry which Ransom, and in his wake Tate, called "Platonic poetry", the poetry of ideas. "Tate's reprehension of such poetry", Brooks writes, "is perfectly just: it is an 'over-simplification of life' which is undertaken 'in face of the immense complication of life as a whole'. It is therefore imitative of science (which legitimately and as a consequence of its method makes use of systematic over-simplification); and it lacks the inner poise and stability, the constant self-criticism of poetry of the highest type."

Brooks accuses Shelley's poetry and the socialist-orientated American literature of the twenties and thirties (especially the anthology entitled *Proletarian Literature*) of sentimentalism and over-simplification, that is, of exclusion. He is right to say that "The poet . . . must not place an illegitimate dependence in the possible scientific truth of his doctrine." It cannot be denied either that a definite one-sidedness characterizes the art of the poet who advocates his position openly, frankly and militantly. This is precisely the reason why it does not bear "an ironical contemplation". This ironical contemplation, however, is not rooted in some kind of universal objectivity, but it is the product of a definite one-sidedness. This emerges from Brooks' reasoning which, in connection with the "poet's belief", imposes two conditions: "First, the scientific truth of the doctrine enunciated will not save the poem just as its scientific falsity will not damn it . . .

As Tate puts it, the assertions made by the poet must be 'a quality of the whole poem' — not 'willfully asserted for the purpose of heightening a subject the poet has not implicitly imagined'. Second, the doctrine must be one suitable to a poem which is to stand up under 'an ironical contemplation'.⁵³ The first condition is acceptable (though we do not see why the scientific truth of a doctrine should in any way imperil the value of the poem or why a gap should exist between the scientific truth of the doctrine and its truth of life). But the second condition does not bear our "ironical contemplation". What actually appears from the somewhat intricate phrasing is that the "ironical contemplation" — certainly not by the standard of the scientific truth of the doctrine — is, in fact, of the doctrine itself!

For some reason Brooks resents a doctrine, in particular if it rests on a scientific truth. For example, he says that, although the scientific truth of the doctrine does no special good to the poem, the "propagandist-poet" even incurs "special and positive risks".⁵³ "Inclusive" propaganda art is of course also conceivable, but Brooks has his doubts. According to him the risk is "positive" from the beginning, the chances are predetermined. We have to think not only of superficially didactic poetry, flimsy sentimental lyric poetry, or schematic "political" poetry. As so often in the writings of the New Critics, the alarming example is Shelley. Brooks cites T. S. Eliot who in *The Use of Poetry and the Use of Criticism* stated that he was unable to enjoy Shelley's poems because of the poet's "belief". (The difference between the "belief" of Shelley and that of Eliot is well known.) In the words of Eliot, "when the doctrine, theory, belief, or 'view of life' presented in a poem is one which the mind of the reader can accept as coherent, mature and founded on the facts of experience, it imposes no obstacle to the reader's enjoyment, whether it be one that he accept or deny, approve or deprecate. When it is one which the reader rejects as childish or feeble, it may, for a reader of well-developed mind, set up an almost complete check."⁵⁴ It is not

⁵³ See Brooks, *Modern Poetry and the Tradition*, pp. 45—46, 48, 50, 57.

⁵⁴ T. S. Eliot, *The Use of Poetry and the Use of Criticism* (London, 1955), p. 96.

clear why the reader's mind should "deny" or "deprecate" a doctrine, belief, etc. accepted (by him) as coherent, mature and founded on the facts of experience. It is, of course, no use contesting that Eliot regards Shelley's belief in progress as childish and feeble, unless we wish to deal concretely with the question of the coherence, maturity, etc. of the belief of "a reader of well-developed mind" (Eliot in this particular case).

Brooks seems to expect only the progressive poet to attach — as Tate puts it in his Introduction to *Reactionary Essays* — "some irony to his use of 'ideas'".⁵⁵ Tate recommends this in general to contemporary poets, for he holds that the ideas of modern times, ideas tainted by positivist scientism are, unlike mythological ideas, not enduring.

In his essay 'Irony as a Principle of Structure' Brooks uses the expression "irony" to denote the semantic changes and tensions resulting from the context: "Images, words or statements in poetry, owing to their context, become so impregnated with significance that the images change into symbols and the statements into dramatic utterances. Irony, a transformation of statements due to the context, is a symptom of practically every statement of poetry."⁵⁶ Or, in other words: "irony is the most general term that we have for the kind of qualification which the various elements in a context receive from the context."⁵⁷ The phenomenon described is real, but it is not clear why it should be denoted by a technical term already in use with a more specific meaning. But in the use of terminology Brooks occasionally shows amazing "generosity". For example, in his essay, 'The Language of Paradox', whose governing ideas resemble those set forth on irony, he reaches a point where he has to admit that his use of the term paradox is much too loose, one might as well say: careless. He pleads in a footnote that he wanted only to accentuate the problem and it may be that the issue is merely due to the contradictory character of "metaphor" (another of his loosely applied terms), and he did not intend to call every instance of a contradic-

⁵⁵ See Tate, *On the Limits of Poetry*, p. xv.

⁵⁶ In *Literary Opinion in America*, ed. M. D. Zabel (New York, 1951), p. 730.

⁵⁷ See Brooks, *The Well-Wrought Urn*, p. 209.

tion a paradox.⁵⁸ His intention is nevertheless to demonstrate the omnipresence of paradox (or irony), and his discourse fails to show the limits within which these terms are applicable, since irony cannot be distinguished from paradox, from metaphor, and from other cases of contradiction and contrast. If irony is just another word to express aesthetic distance, impersonality, objectivity or inclusion, the correct thing to do would be to say so. The reason why irony (like paradox) seems a suitable term instead of more general categories of aesthetic quality may be that it refers more directly to the qualities preferred by Brooks, the qualities of metaphysical and symbolist poetry. Characteristically, when he looks for an example of irony in one of Wordsworth's poems and finds something he can, with some effort, interpret as such, he claims that Donne would have made a pure instance of irony out of it. And this is all he has to say in support of the contention that all great poetry — even in the case of Wordsworth, a romantic poet — is based on irony.

Very remarkable are some negative observations, the cornerstones of contextualism. Their essence is what the title of Brooks' essay 'The Heresy of Paraphrase' expresses, namely that there is no substitute for the poem as an intellectual or emotional experience. The New Critic is interested in the intellectual aspect of the experience, and this is the subject of Brooks' clever and profound study, 'What Does Poetry Communicate?'. He analyses Herrick's poem *Corinna's Going a-Maying*, and demonstrates that what the verse says, communicates or signifies is equivalent to no paraphrase of the verse, to none of its statements expressible in prose, but it is identical with the poem itself, together with all its fine nuances: "Our initial question, 'What does the poem communicate?' is badly asked. It is not that the poem communicated nothing. Precisely the contrary. The poem communicates so much and communicates it so richly and with such delicate qualifications that the thing communicated is mauled and distorted if we attempt to convey it by any vehicle less subtle than

⁵⁸ In *The Language of Poetry*, ed. Allen Tate (Princeton, 1942), p. 45. The footnote was omitted from the version of this study published in *The Well-Wrought Urn*. See also 'Preface to the 1968 edition' of *The Well-Wrought Urn* (London, 1968), pp. ix—xi).

that of the poem itself.” This observation of his is not new, but it does not hurt to emphasize it from time to time.

The question of communication raises the question of poetry as language. Brooks, like Tate or Ransom, attributes the difference between science and poetry to their different languages. In Brooks’ opinion the difference lies in the fact that the scientific terms are not (or ought not to be) altered by the tension and semantic shift resulting from the context, but the language of poetry exists just on the basis of such tensions and semantic shifts. It is the job of the words of science to act as “pure” denotations. “But where is the dictionary which contains the terms of a poem?”⁵⁹

Richards seems to have given an orthodox contextualist answer to this rhetorical question in his study ‘The Interaction of Words’ in *The Language of Poetry* edited by Tate. (In the foreword Tate gave his special reasons for publishing writings by Richards in one volume with studies by Brooks, Philip Wheelwright and Wallace Stevens. He explained that Richards, too, managed to proceed from psychology to philosophy; that is to say, he no longer explained poetry by its emotive effect but regarded it as cognition.) Richards defines the “word” — emphatically for poetic usage — as “its interaction with other words”.⁶⁰ This absolute relativism cannot hold its ground even in a specifically poetic context. Words do have extrapoetic meanings. Such meanings do, of course, depend on the context both in everyday language and in scientific communication. Moreover, everyday and scientific usage exemplifies that the meanings of linguistic terms — words, sentences, texts — are determined not only by a strictly textual context. The meaning is determined or modified by the situation in which a sentence is uttered and which (for internal reasons, and in this social conventions, too, have a part to play) is practically an integral part of the text. Richards has to refute his contention by his own critical experience when he goes on to analyse passages from poems by Donne and Dryden in an attempt to clarify the paradox which he claims has defined the language of poetry. At once he stands in need of that criterion of “word” which he omitted from the definition: at every step he has to recall

⁵⁹ See Brooks, *The Well-Wrought Urn*, pp. 72–73.

⁶⁰ See Tate, *The Language of Poetry*, p. 74.

the lexical meaning of words and, to understand the shades of meaning, he is compelled to take into account the facts of linguistic history. And from here it would take a single step to observe the "external" correlations which place the language of poetry and the individual poem in a comprehensive historical and social context. (Richards, Brooks and the rest are, of course, cautious not to take this step.)

The New Critics' theory of language can be interpreted as Murray Krieger understands it: "While the words of a poem, considered atomistically, may function referentially, the poetic structure of words, considered contextually, prevents the individual words from so functioning."⁶¹ But words have their context in any type of communication, including everyday language; it is an integral part of their concrete semantic function. It is difficult or impossible to study meaning in general on isolated words. Common everyday speech and the grammar of language as it takes shape in it are unlike a system of scientific symbols, nor does the view they imply correspond to such a system. This "contextual" correlation between language and life is a natural and normal linguistic basis for certain types of poetic style.

It is doubtful, however, whether this, and only this, characterizes all types. If the tendency that prevails in the language of science is to reduce to a minimum or to eliminate altogether contextual influences, an ideal poetic language would strive for the exclusive prevalence of connotation and the absolute preponderance of contextual influence. But this is not so. While scientific communication tends in fact to make words, each in an equal measure, fulfil a purely denotative function (it may of course utilize contextual compulsions and potentials to achieve that), poetry employs connotation rather unequally and often enjoys the same freedom as is accorded to the language of non-poetic and non-scientific usage. The order of "tension", "unity" and "emphasis" points beyond the sphere of basic linguistic elements (words, their acoustics, and their denotative and connotative aspects), as it is composed of units larger than these. The New Critics who try to extend the

⁶¹ Murray Krieger, *The New Apologists for Poetry* (Minneapolis, 1956), p. 131.

contextual theory to the novel are compelled to consider all these circumstances, because it is difficult to discuss it (unless metaphorically) on a plane confined to relations between "the language of science" and "the language of poetry".

Starting from Brooks' theory of structure, one may proceed to directions other than the semantic distinction. A reason for this is that the language of poetry does not exist by itself, independently of poetic communications; and poetic communications are concrete poems or other types of literary works. Consequently, the determinative factor is not context in general but the actual context — the interrelationship within the text of the given work.

According to Brooks the context of the poem is the organized structure of the poem. The substantive structure is "a pattern of resolved stresses", not of logical ones, but "a pattern of resolutions and balances and harmonizations, developed through a temporal scheme . . . a structure of meanings, evaluations and interpretations; and the principle of unity which informs it seems to be one of balancing and harmonizing connotations, attitudes, and meanings."⁶² This may be true. But unfortunately, this paraphrase of the poem's structure has been written in the language of poetry and so much so that it cannot be translated into the language of science. At all events, the issue is not only about connotations but also about meanings and attitudes. Yet it is clear that, in Brooks's view, these constitute the structure of the poem. This structure is not altogether identical with what is called form in vulgar aesthetics, but it resembles the concept of form in the dialectical approach to aesthetics. This resemblance is most deceptive, since there exists an (apparently dialectical) interpretation of forms which essentially corresponds to a classicist concept of form. The only difference between this concept and that of Brooks is that the type of style which Brooks codifies is different. Yet the fact that the apparently broad interpretation of structure implies the codification of a specific style is proved by Brooks' absolutization of the "closed" character of the work of art, its isolation and its context thus conceived. The statements of a poem are therefore only "dramatic utterances". It is obvious that this theory prefers that type of poetry which seems to assume a disguise cultivat-

⁶² See Brooks, *The Well-Wrought Urn*, pp. 203, 195.

ing “aesthetic distance”, “impersonality” and “objectivity”. The history of poetry shows, however, that social and artistic conventions which compel poets to take refuge in disguise are changed by them just so that people might listen to their speech not as a soliloquy on the stage but as a public profession of faith in the historical drama of everyday life.

From the activity of the three leading figures of the New Criticism we have singled out a period, or rather a group of their works, which best characterizes the theoretical complexion of the whole school. We did not intend to outline a counter-theory. If not the solutions they offered, the problems raised by the New Critics, are far more complex and involved than to allow us to approach them with *ad hoc* speculation. The problem of artistic cognition is widely discussed in Marxist studies. The organic view (and possibly the autotelic conception) of the work of art is also a problem which has both proponents and opponents among Marxists. We are of the opinion that a theory which stands as a polar opposite to the aesthetic system of the New Critics — e. g. a theory based on the novel instead of lyric poetry, or artistic cognition reconciled with scientific cognition instead of artistic cognition reconciled with religion — provides no satisfactory solution.

In the socialist countries the Marxist theory of literature displays tendencies which, aware of the Marxist philosophy of history, strive to refine the methods of textual analysis and structuralism as a theoretical projection of the evolution of modern logic. We may also see attempts, in the United States too, to reconcile the achievements of textual analysis with the requirements of historicity.

GYÖRGY M. VAJDA

**PHENOMENOLOGY
AND LITERARY CRITICISM**

INTRODUCTION

Phenomenology is undoubtedly one of the most impressive currents of philosophy in our century. Its founder, Edmund Husserl (1859 – 1938), who started out as a mathematician, was concerned, within the domain of philosophy, mainly with psychology, logic and epistemology, then with the general theory of science, and ontology. However, in the *Yearbook* of his “school” published from 1913 onwards, he himself urged his followers, disciples and colleagues to apply the phenomenological conception and method to the various branches of science. Thus it was through the *Yearbook* that Max Scheler, Oskar Becker, Gerhard Husserl, Martin Heidegger, Roman Ingarden and others attempted to evolve a phenomenological theory in ethics, theology, sociology, jurisprudence, psychology, and aesthetics. The method was also applied to the study of literature. Consequently, phenomenology gained ground in different sciences; moreover, its effect – along, and sometimes mixed with effects of other currents – was observable in the theory of art and artistic practice of the first two decades of this century.

Today the phenomenological approach is still of interest in literary theory and practice. Our dealing with certain aspects of phenomenology is justified by one more fact. Existentialism, which has become highly influential in western culture after World War II, is built as much upon Husserl’s phenomenology as upon Søren Kierkegaard’s system. Martin Heidegger was a disciple of Husserl’s. He not only succeeded his master in the professorial chair, but borrowed from him his basic notion of time. He carried the idealist elements of Husserl’s philosophy to the point of absurdity, exchanged the rationalism extant in Husserl’s thought for a modern mysticism. Karl Jaspers, another leading figure of German existentialism,

was rather inspired by Kierkegaard; he merely took over a few patterns of thought from Husserl or some neo-Kantians, and argued for the possibility of manifesting existence "in itself" by the aid of symbols and signs. Jean-Paul Sartre and other French existentialists, although indebted to Heidegger and Husserl, took a different road. Phenomenology and existentialism thus became either separated or amalgamated by their various Italian, Spanish, North American, Belgian and Swiss ramifications.¹ From my point of view the genetic connection between phenomenology and existentialism is important indeed and in consequence, I will dwell upon the existentialist variants of the phenomenological study of literature as well.

Neither the epistemology nor the ontology of phenomenology is acceptable for Marxist scholars; some purposes and methodological principles of its application to the study of literature can nevertheless provide Marxist literary scholarship with lessons worth considering.²

PHENOMENOLOGICAL CONCEPTS

Husserl himself intended phenomenology as a general theory of science, but applied it chiefly in areas of research where the objects were not objective-perceptual existents, clearly separated from the subject. He did not directly extend his investigations to the objective-perceptual world of objects; what is more, by looking for ever "prior" logical postulates, in an effort to reach ever more primary and general spheres of non-individual, the "transcendental" consciousness, he deviated more and more from objective-perceptual reality. Therefore, the general questions of ontology occupied a central place in his epistemological method. His disciples and followers, who developed his ideas further in the direction of "regional" ontologies relative to particular branches of science, proceeded accordingly. In the epilogue to one of his principal works (1930)

¹ Sovremenny ekzistentsializm: Kriticheskie ocherki (Moscow, 1966), also Herbert Spiegelberg, *The Phenomenological Movement* (The Hague, 1960).

² On the critique of phenomenology cf. György Lukács, *Az ész trónfosztása* (The Dethronement of Reason, Budapest, 1954) pp. 382–392 in particular.

Husserl clearly explained his method: "Die Rückfrage führt zunächst auf das universale subjektive Sein und Leben, das als vorwissenschaftliches in aller Theoretisierung schon vorausgesetzt ist, und von da aus – und das ist der *entscheidendste Schritt* – auf die (mit dem alten Wort, aber mit einem neuen Sinn so genannte) transzendente Subjektivität als die Urstätte aller Sinngebung und Seinsbewährung". (Regressive inquiry leads, in the first place, to universal subjective existence and life, which in its prescientific character is a precondition of any theorization, and from there – and this is the decisive step – to transcendental subjectivity (designated with an old term but invested with a new meaning), to the primeval place of any sense-giving and any justification of existence.)³ For the existential "development" of phenomenology, for existentialism which has transferred the foundations of the world from "transcendental subjectivity" to human existence taken in the general sense, the departure – as I have already intimated – had been provided by Husserl.

Philosophy has applied the term phenomenology to the study of those changing forms in which a thing appears. It was in this sense that Kant opposed "noumenon" to "phainomenon", essence to phenomenon. Hegel, in his *Phenomenology of Mind*, described the forms through which the mind develops towards full consciousness. To Husserl, the term had a different meaning. According to his definition: "Phenomenology denotes a new, descriptive, philosophical method, which, since the concluding years of the last century, has established (1) an a priori psychological discipline, able to provide the only secure basis on which a strong empirical psychology can be built, and (2) a universal philosophy, which can supply an organum for the methodological revision of all the sciences".⁴

Husserl's original aim was to transcend positivist (empirical) psychologism as well as the Kantian heritage as found in the neo-Kantian schools. At the same time – although unavowedly – he wished to destroy the materialist philosophy and world view. In

³ Edmund Husserl, "Nachwort zu meinen «Ideen zu einer reinen Phänomenologie und phänomenologischen Philosophie»", *Jahrbuch für Philosophie und phänomenologische Forschung* 1930, p. 550.

⁴ The definition is quoted from the 1929 edition of the *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, to which Husserl himself contributed the entry "Phenomenology".

the methodological and ideological crisis of western science, he sought security in a method which is as irrefutable as mathematics, a method which lays down plainly *evident* theses and is able thereby to grasp the essence of things.⁵

Thus, Husserl's phenomenology is not "*the science of phenomena*". Its basic standpoint is that it does not divide the world into two, phenomenon and essence but, by *analyzing consciousness*, it examines subjective cognizance and its object, the thing cognized, simultaneously. It makes no theoretical distinction between them either, but combines the two, regards them as one, and *describes* them at the same time. For Husserl's phenomenology, therefore, there is no dual—"external" and "internal" reality; immanence and transcendence cease to exist: the object is the *activity* of consciousness itself, and the form of activity is the *intentional act*, *intentionality*. In it, phenomenon and essence (Kant's "phainomenon" and "noumenon") are the same. *Thus the preconception of phenomenology is that the description of a phenomenon makes it possible to grasp and know the essence instead of the semblance.* This immanent preconception accounts for the serious mistakes of phenomenology, the biggest of which is that it neglects and even questions the function of reality as the only secure basis. As a matter of principle, it precludes reality as a test of the theory.

Intention, the intentional act or intentionality, is a key notion of phenomenology. The acts of consciousness are always *intending* something, i.e. they are *intentional*. "Ainsi, tout état de conscience en général est, en lui même, conscience de quelque chose, quoi qu'il en soit de l'existence réelle de cet objet . . ."⁶ Every state of consciousness in general—taken in itself—is the consciousness of a thing, every perception is the perception of something, every desire is desire for something, every will is aiming at something. Husserl took over the notion of intentionality from Franz Brentano's psychology, but gave it a meaning consistent with phenom-

⁵ Cf. Dagfinn Føllesdal, *Husserl und Frege: Ein Beitrag zur Beleuchtung der phänomenologischen Philosophie*, (Oslo, 1958). — Lothar Kelkel and René Scherer, *Husserl* (Paris 1964), p. 23 in particular. — Wilhelm Szilasi, *Einführung in die Phänomenologie Edmund Husserls* (Tübingen, 1959). — Alfred Diemer, *Edmund Husserl* (Meisenheim am Glan, 1956).

⁶ Edmund Husserl, *Méditations cartésiennes* 1931 (the French edition came first). Quoted from The Hague edition of 1953, p. 28.

enology. In Brentano's psychology intention meant the aiming of the subject at the object, i.e. it was a concept of *relation*. To Husserl it is the only mode of activity of the consciousness. Intentionality includes the Cartesian *cogito* and what thought is intent upon: the *cogitatum* (the object), as well as the *cogitans* (the subject). This is why the essence of consciousness is not that it is conscious of itself, but that it is intent upon something, that it is intentional.

By doing away with the opposition of subject and object, Husserl attempted to transcend both materialism and idealism, and the antithesis between the two. Yet, he merely arrived at a modern and refined version of *idealism*, which was close to empirio-criticism, the characteristic trend in western philosophy towards the end of the nineteenth century. Richard Avenarius and Ernst Mach based cognition on the "analysis of sensations", and accordingly attributed objective reality exclusively to the objects of consciousness. V. I. Lenin's principal philosophical work, *Materialism and Empirio-Criticism*, refutes the views of Avenarius and Mach by proving that matter, as objective reality, always exists entirely independently of our consciousness. Accordingly, the contents of our consciousness are merely copies and reflections of the objective world. In proving this, Lenin indirectly refutes Husserl's basic philosophical position: "A red thread that runs through *all* the writings of *all* the Machians is the stupid claim to have "risen above" materialism and idealism, to have transcended this "obsolete" antithesis; but *in fact* the whole fraternity are *continually* sliding into idealism and are conducting a steady and incessant struggle against materialism". In this light, we can see how Husserl and phenomenology in general, *sought* a third road between the two basic opposites. Since however, in this case there is no third road, they inevitably revived a modern variety of *idealism*.

The *basic position* of Husserl's system remained unchanged even though he did not stop at investigating the intentional psychic acts of subjective consciousness but reduced them to the acts of "non-subjective" (or "inter-subjective") consciousness. This consciousness is logically previous to any psychic experience and act, i.e. to the acts of "transcendental" consciousness, or rather to the exami-

² V. I. Lenin, *Materialism and Empirio-Criticism* (Moscow, 1947), p. 354.

nation of those acts. Tending towards phenomena which appear to transcendental consciousness and are clear of all empirism, i.e. towards “pure” phenomena, he exercised an *epoche* (self-restraint): as a first step, he disregarded the objects of the real world and, as a second step, he did the same with the subjective psychic effect intending them. This is how he arrived at an *a priori*, transcendental form of consciousness, a form independent of any experience. He named this method *transcendental reduction*, which should make it possible to examine the “pure essences”, or *eide*, given in transcendental consciousness. The *eidos* (idea) is not an individual object; e.g. not something of red colour appearing to consciousness, but red colour in general, colour in general, i.e. a *species*. Husserl does not specify experience as a way of knowing these “pure” essences, or *eide*, (not even inner experience, as he is not concerned with things in the psyche, here). Instead, he relies on *immediate apprehension*, intuition based on evidence, the *perception of essence*. In axiomatic sciences, this perception is built upon evident axioms, but is deliberately given so that the *essence* can be perceived adequately. This is possible because transcendental consciousness is the ultimate bases of everything; everything acquires its sense and meaning from it. Husserl calls the intentional sense-giving act of consciousness *noesis*; this is the way consciousness approaches its object and furnishes it with meaning; and in the intended object itself there is a trait answering the approach, the *noema*, the semantic content.

Those who introduced the above fundamental concepts of phenomenology in specialized branches of science and in art, laid varying emphases on them. The method of description is practiced in psychology and literature, for example. The study of meanings has also turned up, in logic and linguistics; the search for “pure” essence and its method, intuition, has appeared in aesthetics, literary scholarship, and art; the uses of phenomenology in psychology, sociology, and linguistic science have been built on the conception of “inter-subjective” consciousness. The intuitive basis – the identification of phenomenon with essence – has been enforced, covertly or overtly, in every area of application: transcendental consciousness has extended beyond the sphere of logic. As mentioned above, Husserl was ultimately faced with ontological questions, and came to the conclusion that his eidetic phenomenology necessarily provi-

ded "the soil from which all ontological intuition sprouts".⁸ The application of phenomenology in ethics, aesthetics, art philosophy, and literary scholarship proceeded in the very same direction. A sketchy presentation of its applications in the study of literature may perhaps clarify the fundamental phenomenological concepts outlined above.

VARIANTS OF THE PHENOMENOLOGICAL APPROACH TO LITERATURE

THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE PHENOMENOLOGICAL APPROACH TO ART AND LITERATURE

The first attempt to apply phenomenology in the philosophy of art and in literary scholarship was that of Waldemar Conrad in 1908.⁹ In spite of all initial difficulties, Conrad's voluminous essay outlined some applications of phenomenology to the philosophy of art. He did this on the basis of a scholastically rigid but precise application of Husserl's principles. Conceiving the work of art, he distinguished the proper "aesthetic object" of phenomenological examination from the "work of art producing an effect" and from that "object" of the physical world on which the other two appear. Thus, he essentially resorted to a threefold distinction from the phenomenological, psychological, and physical points of view. In his opinion sound in music, and the spoken word in poetry, as acoustic qualities, and matter in the fine arts are *physical elements*, i.e. objects of nature, and therefore the phenomenologist takes no interest in them just as he takes no interest in the effect of the work of art on the enjoyer of art, that is in the *psychological element*. The object of phenomenology is the "aesthetic object". This object, though a unity, has different "aspects". For instance, the object in art is always "expressed" (an object of expression); its expression is realized in a symbol (the word-sign in poetry), which

⁸ "Ideen zu einer reinen Phänomenologie und phänomenologischen Philosophie" Third Book, *Husserliana* vol. V (The Hague, 1952), p. 157.

⁹ Waldemar Conrad, "Der ästhetische Gegenstand: Eine phänomenologische Studie", *Zeitschrift für Ästhetik und allgemeine Kunstwissenschaft* III, 1908, pp. 71–118, 469–511; IV, 1909, pp. 400–455.

expresses the object through its “meaning”. Meaning thus practically intends, i.e. implies the object (*meint den Gegenstand*): therefore the most peculiar department of phenomenology is *meaning*, intentionality.¹⁰ Conrad made an attempt to analyze a song with the phenomenological method but he could only analyze the “word-sign” convincingly, he hardly managed a general analysis of the poetic object, and his detailed study was practically limited to a semantic analysis.

Nevertheless, Conrad’s method contains notions worthy of attention because of later developments. Conrad was careful not to relapse into “naive” description, instead of giving a phenomenological one. Therefore he took care to abide by the “aesthetic object” and *not* to describe the “natural”, “proper” state of reality contained in the object, since in this way, he would have analyzed the existence of real “objectivizations” and their causal relations, although the phenomenological aim is to disclose the “essence”. Conrad’s ideas virtually presented the later principles of phenomenological art analysis both in respect to methodological procedures and to the fact that his phenomenological analysis of the “aesthetic object” ended already in an ontological synthesis.

It seems that some essays in the philosophy of art, published from 1913 onwards in volumes of Husserl’s *Jahrbuch für Philosophie und phänomenologische Forschung*, virtually retreated from Conrad’s method to a psychological approach.

The first attempts at the systematic development of *phenomenological aesthetics*, the works of Rudolf Odebrecht and Moritz Geiger, were published in the late 1920’s. Both authors claimed to establish aesthetics as a “pure science and to separate it from the science of art”, which was concerned with the particular works of art themselves, or applied general aesthetic principles to the particular branches of art. Thereby phenomenological aesthetics carried out its first *epoché*: it refrained from starting with the analysis of specific artistic works, as well as from the psychological approach. What remained for phenomenological aesthetics, was the intentional aesthetic experience of pure consciousness which, in the doctrine

¹⁰ Cf. Edmund Husserl, *Logische Untersuchungen* vol. II. 1 (Halle/Saale, 1900–1901). See the comprehensive chapter “Ausdruck und Bedeutung”, Art. 9 in particular.

of phenomenology, is not attached to the individual, but has a transcendental character and recognizes the aesthetic values through direct evidence. Much as Husserl in his *Logische Untersuchungen* began with the refutation of psychologism, i.e. with the phenomenological analysis of psychological concepts, Odebrecht too, built his work upon the phenomenological study of psychological aesthetics, of the *aesthetic experiences*, and did it on the same scientific basis as Husserl. He declared the antithesis between *traditional* value aesthetics and psychologistic aesthetics a false problem and thus proved both types of aesthetics superfluous at one blow. Odebrecht characterized the phenomenological relationship of aesthetic experience and aesthetic value as intentional: to him aesthetic value was "Umwandlung und Einordnung eines gefühlsmässigen Fremdwertes in die Wertganzheit" (transformation and inclusion of an alien value of emotional character in a value-totality). This implies the mode of existence of the aesthetic object which has no real *existence*, it only contains a possibility or requirement inherent in the emotional value, in other words: it is the intended object of aesthetic experience. Rudolf Odebrecht stresses that during investigations he could not disregard the individual works of art (and so he half-heartedly contests the Husserlian principle that one has to arrive at the perception of essence independently of all empirism), yet his phenomenological aesthetics approaches some kind of value metaphysics. Thus it is a characteristic example of a theoretical aesthetics which has little connection with the artist's practice and with the work of art itself. Nevertheless he approached the work of art mostly by the Husserlian principle of significant symbols, this productive basic principle of phenomenological studies, which was enforced not only in phenomenology but in other kinds of structural examination, too.¹¹ Roman Ingarden's book is the next important landmark in the history of phenomenology because it applied semasiology and the structure principle in a consistent and systematic way in the study of literary work.

¹¹ Rudolf Odebrecht, *Grundlegung einer ästhetischen Werttheorie*, vol. I, *Das ästhetische Werterlebnis* (Berlin, 1927), p. 37. — Moritz Geiger, *Zugänge zur Aesthetik* (Berlin, 1928). — László Mátrai, *A jelenkori esztétika fő irányai* (Main Currents of Contemporary Aesthetics, Budapest, 1931).

Before writing the book which is internationally considered as his principal work, *Das literarische Kunstwerk* (1931), Roman Ingarden had been a prolific contributor to his master's *Jahrbuch*. If with knowledge of this book, we look at his essays published in the *Jahrbuch*, every one of them seems like a preparatory study: Ingarden expounded several epistemological and ontological themes by supporting and confirming Husserl's position and by revising it. He thought that the Husserlian concept of the merely intentional, "ideal" character of the real "outside" world was inadequate; one of his studies deals with the objective nature of the categories of observation (time and space) and refutes the claim to their subjectivization. In another study, he attributes greater significance to the cognitive role of intellect than Bergson (and even Husserl) did in respect to the real world. A third study investigates the problem of idealism vs. realism and starts at once from the assumption that the individual objectivities belong to "at least two spheres of existence", to the sphere of the Husserlian "pure" consciousness and to that of the "real world". The investigation puts the Cartesian question about the existence of a "real" world and also touches upon the problem of the real existence of "pure" consciousness without framing a definite answer.¹² These essays show Ingarden's endeavour to arrive at a standpoint more differentiated than Husserl's distinct idealism. His concept is not so much metaphysically dualist but rather ontologically *pluralist*. As an object of examination, he chose the literary work, the intentional character of which is beyond question (according to Husserl's theory). By this he means that the poem is created through an intentional act of consciousness. This explains why Ingarden's interest is focussed on the mode of existence of the work of art created intentionally; the work's influence being indicative of some kind of objective status

¹² Roman Ingarden, "Über die Gefahr einer *petitio principii* in der Erkenntnistheorie", *Jahrbuch für Philosophie und phänomenologische Forschung*, 1921, pp. 545–568; "Intuition und Intellekt bei Henri Bergson", *Jahrbuch* . . . 1922, pp. 295–461; "Bemerkungen zum Problem «Idealismus-Realismus», *Festschrift Edmund Husserl* (Halle, 1929), pp. 159–190; *Das literarische Kunstwerk* (Halle/Saale, 1931), Second enlarged edition (with an appendix: "Von den Funktionen der Sprache im Theaterschauspiel (Tübingen, 1960). Revision and enlargement particularly with regard to the notes. Our quotations are from the second edition.

within the world of culture. In his logic, published in 1929 (*Formale und transzendente Logik*), Husserl called this problem "embarrassing", and Ingarden replied by excluding the work of art both from the strictly construed ideal world and from the real world. This is what I mean by his ontological "pluralism" (in which he consorts with Max Scheler, Nicolai Hartmann and other axiologists).

Thus the issue of literary composition was primarily philosophical for Ingarden, and he only decomposed the structure of the work of art in order to demonstrate his philosophical insights. His interest was also philosophical when he separated and phenomenologically described the various and superimposed *layers* of this structure and thus constructed a model of phenomenological interpretation. The model serves to determine the different modes of existence of the structural layers of the work of art, and to present the work itself as a polyphonic accord of heterogeneous structural elements.

Establishing the stratification of structures, Ingarden (in accordance with Husserl's aims) attempted to invalidate the psychological theory of the work of art (the conception that the work could be understood through *experience* alone). Moreover, he wanted to put and end to a long dispute, going on since the Renaissance as to whether the language *or* the image should claim priority (poetic style or suggestiveness), since in his analysis language and image—the layers of the structure—do not exclude but on the contrary, mutually complement one another. Ingarden has proved that the four structural strata of the literary work (the visual or phonic stratum; the stratum of the meanings of words and sentences; the stratum of objects described; and the stratum of the appearances of these objects; i.e. strata some of which are primarily of content and others primarily formal in character) provide the whole polyphonic accord of the work by complementing and mutually supporting one another. As he wrote in the preface to the first edition, the misunderstandings arose from the fact that the work of art had, so far, been regarded in aesthetics as a generally homogeneous formation, although it was a stratified structure and its various strata are separable. The stratification of the work of art, however, does not mean that it is not a unity. Ingarden himself speaks of the different "aspects" as ways of approaching the work

of art. According to him the object of examination (the work of art) looks different from different angles, although it is a complete formal unity in itself, a *Gestalt*. The phenomenological application and the psychological application (K. Koffka, M. Wertheimer, W. Köhler) of this conception, proposed by Husserl in several places, gained ground simultaneously and stirred a commotion in linguistics, in the 1920's, too.

Parallel to the emergence of the phenomenological approach to literature, to the linguistic orientation of the Anglo-Saxon criticism, and to the semantic study of literature, began the activity of the Russian Formalists. This was further developed by the Czech structuralist school, although there was no more than a loose genetic connection between these different schools. Victor Ehrlich, the American historian of Russian Formalism, expressly warns us not to overestimate the effect of western research upon the Russian movement which, like Futurism, was essentially independent, although its adherents – first of all Roman Jakobson, one leader of the Moscow circle – were acquainted both with Husserl and Saussure. The Formalists did not regard the significant forms of expression (thus language itself) as accidental phenomena or symptoms of psychic processes, but held them to be self-sufficient realities, “*objects sui generis*”, which require structural description.¹³ Variations of this same principle were also taken up by the phenomenologists, the “new critics”, the Czech structuralists and the American semanticists: linguists and literary critics, and even by students of other sciences.

The fact that Roman Ingarden's book has had much less effect than could be expected, is due to its purely theoretical nature. Anglo-Saxon literary scholarship, paralleled by Ingarden's “semantic” tendency, practically ignored the book, though the first major review of the book appeared in the English philosophical journal *Mind* in 1932. The English critic, D. Leon noticed that Ingarden's work is an example of aesthetics liberated from the domination of psychology, and thus recognized Ingarden's basic efforts. He wrote: “In reading a literary work, Ingarden insists, we have a certain entity presented to consciousness. It is our business to try and describe the nature of this entity and not merely to talk about

¹³ Victor Erlich, *Russischer Formalismus* (Munich, 1964), p. 70.

the writer's or reader's feelings or states of mind". But, being little familiar with phenomenological thought, Leon endeavoured to reduce Ingarden's differentiated ontological conclusions to the metaphysics of "common sense" of G. E. Moore, then editor of *Mind*, ascribed to the work of art a sort of spiritual existence, thus getting around the yet finer recognitions of the twentieth-century theory of value.¹⁴ Still more unfavourable was Ingarden's reception in Germany: up to 1939, no major appraisal of his work had appeared, while the existentialist trend of the phenomenological study of literature was already in full swing.

The fate of Ingarden's book was sealed in German literary scholarship by a devastating rough criticism published in 1931, by Herbert Cysarz, a great authority among the representatives of *Geistesgeschichte*. Working with artistic "intuition" and hiding behind the irrationalism of the "philosophy of life", Cysarz, whose verbal magic was in direct contrast to Ingarden's matter-of-fact style, contested the aesthetic competence of Ingarden's discourse because it did not refer to individual works of art but remained merely on a general theoretical level. Being alien to phenomenological thought, Cysarz apparently did not understand the message of the book and even admitted that he had come trough the volume by accident. In his view, Ingarden's method smashes the work of art to pieces without being able to re-create it in a different sphere; although Ingarden affirms that the work of art is theoretically apprehensible and analysable, even pointing to the method of analysis, he does not say a word about the work of art itself. "Indessen was sein Buch an eigentlichen Kunstwerten erfasst, das verhält sich vorerst zum Kunstwerk, wie sich — es gibt hier nur ein Gleichnis — zum gezeugten Kind der nasse Fleck verhält", Cysarz wrote. (Consequently, what his book apprehends of the actual artistic values, compares with the work of art — there is only one perinent analogy — as begetting a child does with the wet spot.) "Vorläufig phänomenologisiert Ingarden nur den nassen Fleck", Cysarz concluded. (For the time being, Ingarden "phenomenologizes" only the wet spot.) Essentially the same accusation, that of ignoring the artistic value, of being unable to come near the beauty of the work, is repeated fifteen years later in R. Wellek's and A. Warren's

¹⁴ *Mind* 1932, pp. 97—106.

Theory of Literature. In response to the book's German edition, Ingarden indirectly replied to Cysarz's criticism by drawing a distinction between the aesthetic value (theoretically analysable), and the artistic value. The only truth in Cysarz's vehement criticism was, in any case, that the rigid method of phenomenology employed by Ingarden reflected nothing of the emotional charge of the work of art. Indeed, it could not reflect the emotional content, because it examined neither the genesis of the work of art nor the effect it produced on the receiver of art; it did not even allow such an examination as a take-off. What Ingarden's book did present was first appreciated in 1932, by one of Ingarden's less passionate critics: the phenomenological ontology of the literary work. All other aspects were subordinated to this ontology.

Contemporary German literary scholarship, brought up on the "philosophy of life" and the vague currents of philosophy of history, could neither grasp Ingarden's idea of the intention towards form, nor the search for more exact methods of apprehending the work of art, but merely understood his ontological conclusions.¹⁵

No wonder then, that Ingarden's German "discoverer", Günther Müller, concentrated on the *mode of existence of the work*, a question which has been raised so often in the study of literature since. Müller began with the examination of genre forms, and in 1925, he became famous for his History of the *Lied* (*Geschichte des deutschen Liedes*). Writing it, he was influenced by Dilthey's analytic method and by *Geisteswissenschaft*. During and after World War II, Müller belonged to the so-called *morphological* school, which explained the origin, existence, structure, and significance of the work of art and the genres by analogies from biology (sometimes racial biology). The only study with an attempt to apply Ingarden's method in the 1930's, was a doctoral dissertation written under Müller's supervision. In this dissertation, Lucie Elbracht-Hülseweh dealt with the drama *Belisarius* by Jacob

¹⁵ Herbert Cysarz's review: *Deutsche Literaturzeitung*. 1931, pp. 1595–1599. — Hermann Noack, "Über Arbeiten auf dem Felde der Aesthetik und der Kunstwissenschaft", *Deutsche Vierteljahrsschrift*, 1932, pp. 164–165. — Roman Ingarden, "Artistic and Aesthetic Values", *The British Journal of Aesthetics*, 1964; "Werte Normen und Strukturen nach René Wellek", *Deutsche Vierteljahrsschrift*, 1966, pp. 43–55.

Bidermann, the best Jesuit dramatist of the seventeenth century. She examined the literary existence of the dramatic work, more precisely, the mode of existence of the characters in the drama: historical and fictional characters separately, their relation to the temporal and spatial representation of the drama, the way representing the comical and grotesque elements etc. The examination was, however, restricted to the quality of the objectivities appearing in the drama, that is, to the nature of their reality. Thus, she noticed a difference between the characters which had a model existing in reality and represented therefore with "imitating" and concretizing functions, while the others, basically after the model of the former, could appear only as mere imageries. Even along the ontological trend it could have been difficult to misinterpret Ingarden more grossly: for it was precisely the scholastic comparison, carried out with such a simply interpreted model of reality, that Ingarden wanted to disqualify by sketching (which, as we shall see later, is not quite pertinent) the closed structure of the work of art. Nor was Elbracht-Hülseweh's choice of the theme quite justified: Bidermann, on account of his historical significance, would merely have deserved to be discussed on the level of the history of theatre; whereas the author applied to his work the phenomenological method instead, albeit unsuccessfully. Though she also knew of the semasiological aspect of phenomenology, she ignored it in her study.

Müller saw things more clearly than his disciple. In his article "rehabilitating" Ingarden and "introducing" him to German literary scholarship (1939) he properly singled out the key concept of Ingarden's work and (carefully avoiding the term "phenomenology" to avoid allusions to Husserl who had by then died in exile) showed that the role of the meaningful sentence structure in the literary work is at once the mode of its existence and the essence.

Poetry, he wrote, may be permeated ever so much by the strife for reality, it may "give" an entirely definite objectivity through quiet contemplation or violent approach, but what it is surely able to give,—irrespective of the loftiness or baseness of speech—is only a linguistic structure supporting a semantic structure. It is therefore heterogeneous in relation to "reality", to "nature", it is a literary work by existence. It follows that reality does not alter the semantic existence of the work: Poetry may mean reality, but

it is not reality itself. "Weder das Erleben des Dichters, noch die Realität sind in der Dichtung darin. Seinweise von Dichtung, Satzgefüge, Lautgefüge, Bedeutungsgefüge sind die einfachsten literaturwissenschaftlichen Grundbegriffe". (Neither the poet's experience nor reality is included in poetry. The mode of existence of poetry, sentence structure, phonetic structure, semantic structure – these are the simplest fundamental concepts in literary scholarship.)¹⁶

Thus Ingarden's book, like many other works which are difficult to approach, could only exert influence with the help of popularizers. During the past three decades, the above ideas have become "commonplaces" in European literary scholarship, and the proponents of narrowly and exclusively formalist methods could draw moral encouragement from these ideas as they abandoned the aesthetic and the critical analysis of the interconnection and interaction of art and reality.

Nicolai Hartmann in his *Aesthetics* also adopted the system of stratifications. Possibly, or rather probably, this work of his is not entirely independent of Ingarden's. And though there is no direct reference, some sentences clearly allude to Ingarden, sometimes in the form of veiled criticism. Let us take Hartmann's presentation of the "middle strata" of the work of art for example. Which layers of the poetical work are at issue here – he asks. Obviously not the real foreground, not the word, he answers. With this, all that Ingarden had meant by the layer of the "phonetic symbols" and the "semantic units" is done away with. The semantic "way of thought" was alien to Hartmann, though after his neo-Kantian beginnings he came under the influence of phenomenology. Like Max Scheler, Hartmann practiced phenomenology primarily in the field of ethics, and afterwards in general ontology. He worked out the structure of layers in his ontology, decades before introducing it into his aesthetics. His concurrence with Ingarden thus derives at least as much from their similar phenomenological

¹⁶ Lucie Elbracht-Hülseweh, "Jacob Bidermanns «Belisarius»: Beitrag zur phänomenologischen Behandlung eines literarischen Kunstwerkes", *Neue deutsche Forschungen, Abteilung Neuere deutsche Literaturgeschichte*, 4. Berlin, 1935. – Günther Müller, "Über die Seinweise von Dichtung", *Deutsche Vierteljahrsschrift*, 1939, pp. 137–152. Quotations from pp. 143, 151, 152.

erudition as from their effective connection. In his ethics, Hartmann established a doctrine of not merely formal but of material values, too: likewise, in his aesthetics, he worked out, utilized, and adopted a system of not merely formal but material aesthetic values. Accordingly, if we compare his strata analyses with those of Ingarden, we find that Hartmann rather deals with the content relations of the strata, and is not so much concerned with the phenomenological structure of the work of art: he rather strives to penetrate into its moral-existential aspects, starting from the strata in the foreground and descending to deeper ones, the deepest of which is ultimately the "unspeakable". Proceeding from the surface towards the "background" (and schematizing Hartmann's analysis a little), we see the strata situated in this sequence: On the surface we find the word, below this is the sensuously perceptible motion, mimicking and speech (figurativeness), then the action accompanying outward attitudes, and hidden below is the fourth layer, the psychic habit (morals, character, etc.) embedded in the fifth layer, that of the great current of life, of "fate", and this finally leads to the "innermost" layer, to the "limit of verbal expression", to the manifestation of the idea which may be an individual idea or a universal human idea. Now we can clearly see that these layers, in comparison with Ingarden's (the visual or phonic stratum; the stratum of the meanings of words and sentences; the stratum of objects described, and the stratum of the schematized appearances,) refer rather to the content; more precisely, they steadily proceed from the word as the most formal stratum to the idea which is the most comprehensive in terms of content. For the *content* (but not the formal) analysis of the work, they certainly provide a more comprehensive and more complete basis than Ingarden does. Ingarden's arrangement places content elements in the second, third and fourth strata but each stratum can virtually be considered by itself, which means that the investigation can become quite detached from reality. Hartmann's epistemology is more realist, because in his system, the presence of reality "behind" the works of art is more obvious.

Hartmann admits that the aesthetics of "forms and expression" has been helpful in showing the "uniqueness" (*Eigenständigkeit*) of artistic form: this kind of aesthetics deals with the "structure of beautiful objects and especially of the works of art".

Although formal, this approach is also objectivistic, as it applies to the works of art, and not the creative individual, *the search, however, is not directed towards the thing expressed through the object, but towards the specific quality of representation itself.*¹⁷

We can say that Hartmann attempts to make certain principles of phenomenology consistent with a realistic aesthetics which is intent upon the content. But in fact he does not penetrate beyond the limits of objective idealism. On the other hand, as we shall see later, even his views on content analysis of the work of art cannot be seen independently of Ingarden's.

THE EXISTENTIALIST VARIANTS OF THE PHENOMENOLOGICAL APPROACH TO LITERATURE

What phenomenology, as a method, contributed to the study of language and literature, should be examined starting with Husserl and his critical followers. The ways of analyzing the phenomenon, the disclosure and presentation of its layers are the most important elements for those who employ the method in the scientific interpretation of literature. These are doubtless rational features of the phenomenological method, although we have repeatedly pointed out that even these appear as embedded in non-rational or agnostic propositions. With the existentialists, the non-rational elements become ostentatious. Phenomenology, in its original form, despite its basic mistakes, has upheld its claim to be a science. The existentialists – first of all, Heidegger – have often lapsed into mere speculations instead. The tradition of methodological investigations of the Husserl circle have been replaced by intuitive anticipations. Affectation and verbal magic took the place of the abstract but logical trains of thought. Since our aim is to review the phenomenological concept of literature, we point only to those ideas of existentialism which are closely relevant to the theory of literature and art, and which still utilize the original form of the phenomenological approach.¹⁸

¹⁷ Nicolai Hartmann, *Ästhetik* (Berlin, 1953), pp. 25, 171.

¹⁸ From Hungarian contributions to the critique of K. Jaspers and existentialism in general cf. György Lukács, *op. cit.*, pp. 393–421 in particular; *idem*, *A polgári filozófia válsága* (Crisis of Bourgeois Philosophy,

Karl Jaspers is only in remote contact with the theory of art and literature. According to Johannes Pfeiffer, the noted popularizer of the phenomenological-existentialist view of literature, Jaspers faced the questions of art at three levels: first at a spiritual-psychological, second at an existentialist-metaphysical, and third at a universal-logical level. In *Psychologie der Weltanschauungen* (1919), Jaspers explained that from the spiritual-psychological aspects, aesthetic behaviour is contemplative, whereas the aesthetic impression necessarily bears some significance superior to aesthetic significance; were it not so, art would be reduced to empty artistic qualities. At the existentialist-metaphysical level (*Philosophie*, I – III, Berlin, 1932) he constructs his *chiffre* theory, the “mystical” neo-Kantian origin of which is easily recognizable. *Existence* appears in the cipher symbols without becoming essentially accessible. In cipher, it is impossible to separate the symbol from what it symbolizes. Cipher makes transcendence present but it does not become explainable: “In der Chiffreschrift ist Trennung von Symbol und dem, was symbolisiert wird, unmöglich. Sie bringt Transzendenz zur Gegenwart, aber sie ist nicht deutbar”. Originally, art is the illumination of (human) existence through ascertainment, which makes existence present by making it visible in its natural or everyday variant, *Dasein*: “In ihrem Ursprung ist Kunst die Erhellung der Existenz durch eine Vergewisserung, welche das Sein im Dasein *anschauend* zur Geltung bringt”. The art of language, i.e. literature comes into question mainly at the third, logical, level (*Von der Wahrheit*, Munich, 1948). Language conveys a meaning which has to reveal a vision, and this vision reveals existence, and its final aspect leads to God. Thus, to Jaspers, art becomes *revelation*; and Pfeiffer adds: The investigating mind cannot decide (“durch prüfende Vernunft lässt sich nicht entscheiden”) whether, from a message transmitted by man, it is really God Himself speaking to make Himself known out of Himself, or whether all this is

Budapest, n.d.), pp. 129–205; Vera B. Vámos: *Karl Jaspers* (Budapest, 1966); László Mátrai's introductory essay to the translation of J. P. Sartre's work *L'existentialisme est un humanisme* (Budapest, 1947); Béla Köpeczi's introductory study to the volume *Az egzisztencializmus* (Existentialism, Budapest, 1965).

some merely ostentatious absolutization based on self-delusion.¹⁹ Western interpreters of literature have so often advanced theological interpretations that this conclusion can by no means be considered surprising.

The first part of Martin Heidegger's principal work, *Sein und Zeit* (left unfinished), appeared in Husserl's *Jahrbuch* in 1927. It is in *Sein und Zeit* that Heidegger's most influential ideas are exposed. His encounter with Hölderlin's poetry took place in the mid-1930's. At that time, the Hölderlin cult was adopted by Hitlerism. Yet, Heidegger's essays on Hölderlin were published in book form (*Erläuterungen zu Hölderlins Dichtung*) only as late as 1944, and afterwards, with a revised content, in 1951. The dates indicate that Heidegger's relevance to contemporary literary scholarship in fact was established by some fundamental concepts in *Sein und Zeit*, and not in his Hölderlin studies.

By the 1930's, Johannes Pfeiffer already began "popularizing" Heidegger, and Staiger had also formulated his method. At the same time, French existentialism was also penetrated by the concepts of *Sein und Zeit*, in so far as these concepts can be defined and ralled concepts at all. One of Staiger's disciples, Beda Allemann wrote a book on Heidegger's Hölderlin experience. He concludes that Heidegger's mental experiments essentially and expressly start off from a domain that *precedes* all science, and therefore, by scientific thinking, these experiments are difficult to follow.²⁰ If transcendental reduction has led Husserl to pure consciousness, the essence of which is the constitutive act, intentionality, Heidegger turns intentionality into transcendence,²¹ and pure consciousness into a sort of existential "primitive consciousness". Heidegger's turn to "primitive consciousness" is based on mythological and etymological arguments, not as might be expected, on the archetypal psychology of C. G. Jung. His method is a direct irrational-

¹⁹ Johannes Pfeiffer, "Ahnung und Offenbarung: Zur Deutung der Kunst bei Karl Jaspers". In: *Die dichterische Wirklichkeit* (Hamburg, 1962). The quotations from Karl Jaspers. *Philosophie* vol. III. p. 141 and vol. I. p. 331 are taken on the basis of Johannes Pfeiffer. Cf. furthermore, from his work, p. 166.

²⁰ Cf. Beda Allemann, *Hölderlin und Heidegger* (Zurich, 1954), pp. 81, 67.

²¹ P. P. Gaydenko, "Problema intentsional'nosti u Gusserla i ekzistentzialisticheskaja kategorija transtsendentsii", in the volume cited in footnote 1, p. 107.

mystical understanding of intuition. From the mist of the magic conceptual and verbal quibbles of *Sein und Zeit*, a few lucid pages speak of an ancient myth; this lets us comprehend much of Heidegger's fundamental concepts.

According to fable No. 220 of Hyginus, Care when crossing a river one day, caught sight of soil containing clay and moulded a figure from it. Jupiter happened to come by and, at the request of Care, breathed some of his own spirit into it. But in turn he demanded that the creature be named after him. But Earth, the donor of the body, wanted her own name given to the new creature. Saturn (Time) was asked to arbitrate. The decision: after the creature's death Jupiter should have its spirit and Earth its body. But since it was Care who moulded the creature, he is the one to own it during its lifetime. And since it was made of humus, its name should be Homo.

According to Heidegger this mythical "pre-ontological" evidence is significant because it indicates that man, not only in his life but also by his origin, is a product of Care. "Das 'In-der-Welt-sein' hat die seinsmässige Prägung der 'Sorge'": Being-in-the-world bears the existential mark of care. "Worin das 'ursprüngliche' Sein dieses Gebildes zu sehen sei, darüber steht die Entscheidung bei Saturnus, der 'Zeit'": It is Saturn—Time—that decides what constitutes the "original" existence of this creature. "Die in der Fabel ausgedrückte, vorontologische Wesensbestimmung des Menschen hat sonach im vorhinein *die* Seinsart in den Blick genommen, *die seinen zeitlichen Wandel in der Welt durchherrscht*": Accordingly, the "pre-ontological" definition of man's essence, as expressed in the fable, has structinized well in advance that mode of existence which dominates throughout man's temporal path and alterations in the world.²²

Existence itself is a secret hidden from us. This is what sends off man who practically stands out (*ek-sisto*) of existence into human existence (*Dasein*) where, between birth and death, he enters into human relationships (with the cosmos, with fellow creatures, with the environment), and is accompanied on his path by anguish, by care. Existence is thus existence towards death, yet it is not existence in time, but time itself. Heidegger's notion of time has become

²² Martin Heidegger, *Sein und Zeit* (Tübingen, 1960), pp. 198–199.

a key notion of the art analysis based on his philosophy. It is not a physical (measurable) time, and not even the subjective time of psychology, but – just like the Bergsonian “great current of life” – a comprehensive basis of everything, the basic structure of existence and being. Heidegger’s *temporality* (*Zeitlichkeit*) draws the time out of the future, temporality is not a process but the structure, the fundamental *form of perception* and thus the essence of existence – and human existence (*Dasein*). It is not identical with the Kantian forms of perception of time and space; these two being transcendental forms of experience. Heidegger’s form of time is, on the contrary, the general essence of existence, i.e. it is not epistemological but ontological. Heidegger compares it to Hegel’s notion of “mind”, but finds it more original, ontologically more ancient than that, and concludes his book with the question (whereupon, in the second part, the inversion of the problem would have followed): Is time the horizon of existence? Is there a road leading from *original* time to the sense of existence? These questions would certainly have required answers based on a definite view of the world, i.e. answers of content. Heidegger evolved these answers in his philosophy dealing with human existence. This “philosophical anthropology”, was evolved precisely on the basis of his meeting with Hölderlin’s late mystical poetry: he expounded in it his antithesis between human “design” (*Vorwurf*) and the subjection (*Geworfenheit*) of man to existence and death. The antithesis is in this pair of notions of existential world experience and the anguish responding to it; in the (apparent) possibility of choice and freedom on the one hand and, on the other, in the objectively unknowable quality of reality, that can only be approached by individual experience, by intuition, etc. Emil Staiger’s book *Die Zeit als Einbildungskraft des Dichters* (1939) was the first “sovereign” application of these phenomenologico-existentialist views in literary studies.

In his first major book, Staiger chose poetic imagination as the “red thread” of his analyses probably because he regarded poetic imagination as the essence of the poet’s existence. In his interpretation of three poems, he investigated the form of intuition of time according to which the three selected poems had been created. The first was Clemens Brentano’s ballad “On the Rhine” about a passionate young man who meets his deceased sweetheart in a boat

subjected to the current drifting it towards death. In this poem Staiger recognized the form of intuition of “*racing time*” and demonstrated his “recognition” with linguistic-semantic elements and analogies drawn from the poet’s other works, and elsewhere. The second example, Goethe’s poem “Constancy in Change”, is in Staiger’s opinion, based upon the intuition of the *moment*, but a moment that is equal to eternity. The third is a lyric poem by Gottfried Keller, “Time Does Not Pass” – is offered as an example of “*quiescent time*”.

Staiger wanted to *substitute* Heidegger’s concepts for the methods of earlier literary studies, more precisely, the views and methods of the *Geistesgeschichte*. The *pure form of immediate perception* within the new method will have the same function – Staiger wrote – as the poet’s “world view”, i.e. his substantially defined ideas, within the method of the *Geistesgeschichte*. “Der reinen Form der Anschauung ist hier die Rolle zugewiesen, die sonst der “Weltanschauung” eines Dichters, das heisst inhaltlich bestimmten Ideen zuzukommen pflegt.” (213) And although the method based on the pure form of immediate perception did mean to force its way down to the “metaphysical” foundations of poetry, its questions weren’t directed upon the ontic interconnections of *special metaphysics* (God, Nature, Man) but upon *general metaphysics* of transcendental science (in Kant’s interpretation), i.e. upon the form of immediate perception and awareness of the world. Thus, as Husserl wanted to bypass the antithesis between idealism and materialism (realism), Staiger wanted to *bypass* the antithesis between the “ideal” and the “material” (i.e. realistic) elements of the work of art. Thus the comparison of form and content as well as the primacy of the content analysis of the work of art would become pointless. By doing so, Staiger hoped to avoid any experiment which, in his opinion, entirely misunderstood the process of poetic creation and which was meant to deduce the “formal” elements from the “ideal” elements. “Damit sind wir all den aussichtslosen, das dichterische Schaffen gänzlich missverstehenden Versuchen, das “Formale” vom “Ideellen” abzuleiten, ferngerückt” (213). The way up from language to the pure form of immediate perception is not longer than from thought. “Zur reinen Form der Anschauung ist der Weg vom Sprachlichen nicht weiter als vom Gedanken aus”.

In his first important book Staiger tried to explain by the linguistic form of poetry the three kinds of perception of time he meant to utilize in his principal theoretical work, his later Poetics. The racing current: the passing time, the *past*; the moment: eternity, the *present*; and the quiescent time which is not yet “here”: the *future*. These three fundamentals of time-perception adopted to literary genres by Staiger’s Poetics already appeared in his analyses dating from 1939 and displayed affinity to Heidegger’s notion of time. In his Poetics (*Grundbegriffe der Poetik*, 1946) Staiger, in accordance with Heidegger’s “philosophical anthropology”, identified the three great genres of poetry – lyric, epic, and drama – with the three basic temporal forms of human existence: lyric poetry remembers, this is the passing time; epic poetry represents, its form of time is the present; the drama is devising, striving, designing, therefore its time perspective is the future.

On the one hand, Staiger wished to devise a substitute for W. Dilthey’s hermeneutics derived from the ideas and contents of the work of art, as well as for R. Unger’s method of *Geisteswissenschaft*, history of ideas. Staiger hoped to transcend classical German philosophy, which Dilthey and the *Geisteswissenschaft* interpreted and distorted arbitrarily while drawing inspiration from its historicism in their own way. Staiger wanted to avoid the historic view of literature and art. With the help of the pure form of intuition of poetic imagination, and with the existential time concept, he attempted to interpret the poet’s work beyond limits of time, beyond the ephemeral, transient existence. He denied the significance of that “phase in the history of ideas” from which these limits originated, and instead, he strove to direct the study of literature towards the basic question of philosophical anthropology: *What is man?* Works of art reply to this question, independently from any time factor, thus with practically eternal validity, because they are always presential (i.e. in the present). The form of intuition of the Brentano poem is determined by a current of successive “nows”, Goethe’s time is the eternal moment, and Keller’s the quiescent time – all three are “*präsentisch*”. Presential existence, according to Staiger, is the form of *aesthetic* existence. This basic ontological position is most likely to account for the fact that Staiger did not approach poetry from a historical viewpoint since he turned against the characteristic method of the *Geistesgeschichte*. At the same

time, he used another method of the *Geisteswissenschaft*, that of *typologizing*. In "racing time" which carries Brentano's sailor towards death, in the hurrying current to which the young man is helplessly *subjected*, one can recognize the *life-philosophical* essence of romanticism which Fritz Strich called "infinity", while the eternal moment, the whole completed in itself, is Strich's *Vollendung* the classical wholeness or totality. This typology is based on Heinrich Wölfflin's antinomy of the tectonic and atectonic which is also applied by those contemporary students of literature who resort to phenomenological description. It may be possible to define the essence of *romanticism* as "racing time", although Staiger himself avoided the word. "Von da aus liesse sich vielleicht das Wesen des Romantischen – wir haben den Begriff vermieden – besser als bisher betimmen". (216) On the other hand, in Goethe's works from his *classical* period, the artist does not rise against society, the poet does not rise against the scholar, since every human thing is only an analogy, and as such, is sharing in the *eternity of the moment*. "Im klassischen Goethe hadert der Künstler nicht mit der Gesellschaft und der Dichter nicht mit dem Gelehrten; denn alles Menschliche ist ein Gleichnis und als Gleichnis auch der Ewigkeit des Augenblicks teilhaftig". (215) The third poet, Keller, with his "quiescent time" would be left out of the antinomy if his "time" were not practically a synthesis of the preceding two: following upon the tense moment and the racing current, has grown quiet, forgivingly wise, and enjoying life with natural humour. "Und nach dieser wie nach jener Seite gleitet Keller aus und lässt er gerne sich verführen, da er weiss, dass alles Wahre nur im immer wieder hergestellten Gleichgewicht besteht". (180)²³

By not breaking entirely with certain notions of the philosophy of life and the *Geistesgeschichte*, Staiger actually followed Heidegger once again. Heidegger combined certain traditions of *Lebensphilosophie*, with Husserl's phenomenology. This was pointed out, right after the publication of *Sein und Zeit*, by Georg Misch, who related Heidegger's conception of *time* and *human existence* with

²³ Emil Staiger, *Die Zeit als Einbildungskraft des Dichters: Untersuchungen zu Gedichten von Brentano, Goethe und Keller*, 2nd. ed. (Zurich, 1953), pp. 213, 216, 215, 180. — On the use of Wölfflin's concepts cf. inter alia Volker Klotz, *Geschlossene und offene Form im Drama* (Munich, 1960), as well as Peter Szondi, *Theorie des modernen Dramas* (Frankfurt a/M., 1956).

the ideas of the “philosophers of life”. Misch cited Dilthey, who talked of the prime categorical determining nature of time, and he cited Simmel: “Zeit ist die – vielleicht abstrakte – Bewusstseinsform dessen, was das Leben selbst in nicht aussagbarer, nur zu erlebender unmittelbarer Konkretheit ist”: Time is the – perhaps abstract – form of consciousness of all that which in its unspeakable, but experientially, direct concreteness is life itself. Heidegger, however, hardly needed to turn to the philosophers of life for the notion of time. In our judgment, he borrowed the rudiments of his time concept directly from Husserl. In volume IX (1928) of the *Jahrbuch* he published Husserl’s lectures on the “phenomenology of the internal consciousness of time”. In Husserl’s concept, phenomenological time is the unified form of every experience in a *single* stream of experience, in the *one* pure Self: “(die) einheitliche Form aller Erlebnisse in *einem* Erlebnisstrom (dem *eines* reinen Ich)”, quite independently of cosmic and psychic time; with Husserl only individual experience has duration, the process of experiences itself does not, it only consists of “nows”.²⁴ The emphasis on the *formal* character of phenomenological time thus originated with Husserl; Heidegger only had to borrow it, and his sources were various; the philosophers of life on the one hand, and his master on the other. The connections of the philosophy of life with phenomenology and existentialism were repeatedly pointed out by Soviet research.²⁵

The reason why we have had to deal at some length with the *problem of time* in phenomenologico-existentialist aesthetics is that in spite of its dependence upon Husserl, the recent stage has developed something new and different along this line. And the elaboration of an aesthetics of time free from Heidegger’s preconceptions would certainly have connected the practice of phenomenological interpretation with modern literature, with its emphasis

²⁴ Georg Misch, “Lebensphilosophie und Phänomenologie: Eine Auseinandersetzung der Diltheyschen Richtung mit Heidegger und Husserl”, *Philosophischer Anzeiger*, (1929–30, p. 270). — Edmund Husserl, *Ideen zu einer reinen Phänomenologie und phänomenologischen Philosophie*, First Book, Husserliana, vol. III. (The Hague, 1950), pp. 196–199.

²⁵ Cf. I. I. Orekhov, “Filosofia zhizni Vil’gel’ma Dil’teya kak irratsionalisticheskaya reaktsiya na materialisticheskoe ponimanie kategorii”, in *Sovremennyy kapitalizm i burzhuanaya sociologia* (Moscow, 1965), p. 308.

on the problem of time. But Staiger himself refrained from the aesthetic examination of the function of time in modern literature. It was not dealt with, in its essence, by the Zurich periodical of the school of interpretation rallying round Staiger, the *Trivium* (1943–1951), nor was it dealt with by the mass of interpretations which overflowed German literary scholarship after World War II, and which drew inspiration and encouragement from Staiger's greatest work, his *Poetics* published in 1946. The interpreters were also encouraged by Wolfgang Kayser's book published in 1938, *Das sprachliche Kunstwerk* which became a "textbook" for them, since it systematized the traditional and the recent methods of the study of literature.²⁶

The tendency of the phenomenologico-existentialist interpretation of texts, however, was actually determined not by the erudite Staiger, with his fascinating style, nor even by Kayser, the open-minded scholar versed in many literatures, but by Johannes Pfeiffer, a less talented disciple of Husserl, Heidegger and Oskar Becker. His dissertation published in 1931 had the novelty that, after Moritz Geiger, it gave a clearer formulation to the phenomenological refutation of the theory of aesthetic empathy (Theodor Lipps, Johannes Volkelt). If the object (of empathy) is intended by the subject (the agent of empathy), then he projects into the object what he—as the agent of empathy—"penetrating" into the object—must oscillate with. The same phenomenon, the poem's form penetrated with moods, which, as a "primary" element, ought *first* to elicit an adequate empathy, has come about, as such, *through* this (unintentionally executed) empathy itself.²⁷ This is a contradiction, of course, even within the context of phenomenology. The object independent of the subject makes empathy possible, and Marxist aesthetics does apply this concept (without the metaphysical accidents of earlier aesthetics). Of greater significance in Pfeiffer's dissertation is the phenomenological semantic method by which he begins to analyze lyric poetry, and which, penetrating from layer to layer, starts conventionally from the linguistic form,

²⁶ On the Soviet criticism of Staiger and Kayser cf. V. V. Kozhinov, "Teoria khudozhestvennoy rechi v sovremennom literaturovedenii Zapada", in *Slovo i obraz: Sbornik statey* (Moscow, 1964).

²⁷ Johannes Pfeiffer, *Das lyrische Gedicht als ästhetisches Gebilde: Ein phänomenologischer Versuch* (Halle/Saale 1931), p. 82.

from the sounds, and through an analysis of the sense-supporting role of semantic structures (sentences), leads to an attempt to break down the structure of the aesthetic object. This second sketch of analysis was presented by Pfeiffer in a much more developed and more easily intelligible manner in a booklet that has since become exceptionally popular (*Umgang mit Dichtung*, 1936), which, going through degrees of "apprehension" (*Erfassung*) of the lyric poem, gave an illustration of the method of phenomenological analysis of the lyrical work on several examples. Most probably it was because of the detailed examples that the coming generations of interpreters felt competent to tackle lyric poems. On the other hand, it is also certain that the structure of the lyric poem, if only on account of its relative brevity, is easier to analyze than the structure of a novel or a drama and in addition, it is easier to involve its objective content in the act of intentionality than that of the novel or the drama.

The "existential" view of art also attracted people who had started elsewhere, e.g. Max Kommerell, a former member of the George circle. He came close to existentialism primarily because he always compared poetry with human existence and searched for the poetic message in the unity of man, poetry and life. In his method, we can discover only little of the striving for a more exact linguistic analysis of phenomenology; he was rather concerned with the general analysis of the poetic language, but always combining the human behaviour and the message. Kommerell gave a new impulse to the interpretations with two books (*Geist und Buchstabe der Dichtung*, 1940; *Gedanken über Gedichte*, 1943); the subjects of both being the lyric poetry and drama of German classicism. Kommerell's analyses are fine congenial essays which "float" together with the work; he himself was a competent poet and philologist. Poetic inspiration, intrinsic affinity to the arts (utterly absent from the positivist period of German philology) which influenced the writings of the phenomenologico-existentialists, also permeated the work of Wolfgang Schadewaldt (*Sappho, Welt und Dichtung, Dasein in der Liebe*, 1950) who had practised the severe methods of classical philology. The Staiger school has this "muse-inspired" disposition to thank for most of its authority, although with respect to the internal apprehension of poetry, the master is not matched by any of his outstanding followers—Max

Wehrli, Theophil Spoerri, Richard Alewyn or Walther Killy. The “muse-inspired” qualities and attitudes practically result in the peculiar literary aristocratism of the circle in which Staiger’s followers concur with Kommerell or Schadewaldt.

This aristocratism follows from the principle of the German practice of the phenomenologico-existentialist view of literature, according to which the work of art, as an expression of man and his world, is closed and perfect in itself, that it fulfils its purpose by the mere fact of *existing*, and reveals the foundations of human existence. The work of art must not and cannot have any purpose other than its ontological-aesthetic one. Surviving in the aristocratism of German phenomenologico-existentialist literary scholarship was the tradition of George, Nietzsche and even that of the eighteenth-century genius theory which celebrated the fortunate individual manifestation of the creative genius of language in the great poets and regarded the poet himself as a sort of mediator between Heaven and Earth, Divinity and Humanity, human existence and eternity. Hamann, the young Herder, George or Heidegger saw in the poet a mystical *superman*, and Heidegger interpreted Hölderlin’s symbols with magic delight and did not degrade the solemn mission of poetry by the prosaic objects and worries of literature.

Naturally, in France and elsewhere, the followers of the phenomenologico-existentialist method came from among representatives of various branches of scholarship. Interest in phenomenology, under the influence of the existentialist wave, also spread among theoretical aestheticians, and simultaneously with Staiger’s and Kayser’s works on literary aesthetics, French philosophers of art came out, and still come out today, with works on general aesthetics. A feature they have in common is that they stick to scientific methodological, theoretical investigations, and they approach the works of art in a much more rational manner than the German interpreters, while their cognitions are not so closely connected with artistic intuitive methods. We conceive of phenomenology (their most prolific representative, Mikel Dufrenne, writes) just as Sartre and Merleau-Ponty have acclimatized the term in France: i.e. as a description which takes aim at the essence and defines it as a meaning immanent in and given with the phenomenon: “...description qui vise une essence, elle-même définie comme signification immanente au phénomène et donnée avec lui”. The aim

– to discover the essence – Dufrenne wants to attain by progressive “disclosure” and not by jumping from the known towards the unknown: “L’essence est à découvrir, mais par un dévoilement et non pas un saut du connu à l’inconnu”. And after this methodological restriction he adds: “La phénoménologie s’applique en premier à l’humaine parce que la conscience est conscience de soi: c’est là qu’est le modèle du phénomène, l’apparaître comme apparaître du sens à lui-même” – i.e. phenomenology deals with man in the first place, because consciousness is always consciousness of the self: this is the phenomenon model, apparition as such of the meaning to itself.²⁸ Already this standpoint itself explains why in this country of the rational interpretation of texts no German type of phenomenologico-existentialist school burdened with irrational preconceptions has emerged.

A highly valuable achievement of French phenomenology is Boris de Schloezer’s music analysis: *Introduction à J. S. Bach*. The subject is in fact an excuse to work out a specific aesthetics: the phenomenological aesthetics of music. The French author analyses Bach because Bach’s pure music lets one understand the essence of music, the secret of structure: “l’essence même de la musique, le secret de la structure”. In conformity with the rationalist French school he approaches his object, as far as possible, from all sides, he does not confine himself to the investigation of the work itself but “discloses” – as Dufrenne puts it – the “essence” from taking into account the listener, the work and the composer alike. The “concrete idea” of the composition of music is born in the listener’s consciousness, because the composition itself, if not *performed*, has only a virtual existence, and it is precisely its performance which makes us infer man’s existence. Thus the work in itself is located on the boundary between two worlds, it is an existent which is concrete and ideal at the same time (“une réalité dont l’être est à la fois concret et idéal”). A separate problem is the meaning of music as sign-symbol: because the musical symbol implies no meaning of the kind implied by the phonetic symbols of speech. Therefore – and this is how B. de Schloezer comes to the “third” aspect of the phenomenological aesthetics of music – all

²⁸ Mikel Dufrenne, *Phénoménologie de l’expérience esthétique* vol. I, (Paris, 1953), footnote on p. 4. Quoted later in vol. I, p. 285.

that is true of the myth surrounding the artist as a person is the fact that what he invents depends on his technique, his method of composition and organization, and not on his personal feelings, originality, his conception of man, or on the depth of his moral and spiritual life, whether it is conscious or unconscious.²⁹ These conclusions are the consequences of the rigidly applied phenomenological view and explain why Bach's objective music is more suitable for phenomenologico-structural analysis than, let us say, romantic music, in which the subjective element is almost certain to come to light. Schloezer's analysis convinces us that the different branches of art should each be approached on the same basis, though in a particular, differentiated manner.

In his works written during the war and in the postwar years Jean-Paul Sartre aptly voiced the critical mood of the French and the European intellectuals. He highly influenced the world view and moral philosophy of the young intellectuals, which can also be observed in contemporary literature (Simone de Beauvoir, Albert Camus) as well. French phenomenologico-existentialist aestheticisans refer, besides Sartre, mainly to Maurice Merleau-Ponty. What Merleau-Ponty's principal work *Phénoménologie de la perception* (1947), has in common with Sartre and Heidegger is that Merleau-Ponty's interest is primarily focussed on man: nevertheless, with his entire sphere of problems he comes close to the ideas in Husserl's *Méditations cartésiennes* which was concerned, unlike Husserl's earlier works, not so much with logic and epistemology, as with the Cartesian ontological question. Merleau-Ponty (following in the wake of Husserl) sought a factor that would do away with the dualism of object and subject, and he found it in the *nature of perception*. He found that perception on the part of the subject is cognitive (constitutive), and from the angle of the object it has a presentative nature: so in perception the two – subject and object – converge. (Of course, we cannot accept this convergence as real: Merleau-Ponty has only replaced Husserl's concept of intentionality by a new formula!)

This characterization of the nature of perception has also been adopted by Mikel Dufrenne ("l'object perçu est une transcendance

²⁹ Boris de Schloezer, *Introduction à J. S. Bach (Essai d'esthétique musicale)* (Paris, 1947), pp. 32, 219–227, 301.

dans l'immanence" — the perceived object is transcendence in immanence), but this does not mean that Dufrenne denies the objective existence of the aesthetic object. In his two-volume aesthetics: *Phénoménologie de l'expérience esthétique* (1953), which deals with the nature of the aesthetic object, with the analysis of the nature of the work of art, with the nature of aesthetic perception, and the "critique" of aesthetic experience, Dufrenne ultimately arrives at a definitely Platonistic solution, in order to avoid the recognition of the complete dualism of subject and object. In the concluding chapters he discusses the *a priori* nature of affective qualities: the reason why we are able to comprehend the tragic in Racine, the pathetic in Beethoven, and Bach's solemnity is, in his view, that prior to the feeling of the tragic, etc., we already have an idea of the tragic, the pathetic, the solemn, consequently these are affective *categories* which compare with psychic affective qualities as the universal does with the particular, as consciousness of the *a priori* with the *a priori* itself. His rationalism does not keep Dufrenne from metaphysical speculations. In one of his latest books he deals with the aesthetic category of the *Poetic* and, after considering the semantic (informative, significant, expressive) role of language, he raises increasingly general metaphysical questions. Having demonstrated through examples that the words of everyday language acquire new meanings in poetic usage, he asks: How does this triumphant metamorphosis of language take place? And he answers: In the simplest way in the world. Poetry restores language to its primeval state, restores its original vitality and freshness, leads it back to nature. Nature is first of all a necessity. And this necessity, if it is attractive, is the supreme mark of the work which exists before its material is created. The poem is before us as a perfect object: it is completed and irrefutable and just as directly evident as the canvas is to the painter before he finally puts down his brushes. In Dufrenne's book the examination of language is followed by an examination of the poet, then by an analysis of the relationship between the poetic and nature, between man and nature, and its closing chapters come back to the poetic as an aesthetic category and, within it, to the role of the language of poetry, this time on the level of metaphysics. This role, we read, is not confined to recalling something by the expressive power of the word; it does more than that: it conjures, it invokes, it agrees

with what it evokes by magic. And if a conceited poet, Dufrenne writes, sometimes fancies himself accomplice of God, he can do so because Nature reveals itself through the things he names by their name. And this is a safe foundation on which man can no longer get lost, but becomes its equal.³⁰

I think Dufrenne also comes close to the view regarding the relationship of philosophy and the sciences held by another, less active, representative of French phenomenological aesthetics, J. C. Piguet, a metaphysician with an expressly religious world outlook. In Piguet's view, the philosophers of past ages, when confronted with the notions of classical physics, understood them, knew what to make of them; the present-day abstractness of natural science no longer permit a philosophical orientation based upon those notions. *Therefore the new model of philosophy, especially of metaphysics, is aesthetics.* Thus today's aesthetics is not a description of moods, Piguet writes, not even of observed emotions, nor is it speculation about the *beautiful* or a study of its origins. It is not descriptive, not speculative, not psychological, not metaphysical: Today's aesthetics, Piguet concludes, is indeed ontological—it explores the existence of singular things which it apprehends.³¹

The philosophy of Piguet and other metaphysicians is not really justified by today's natural science: modern science remains the verification of dialectical materialism and its basis of orientation. Metaphysics built upon aesthetics is a characteristic symptom of idealist thought which is inclined to contemplate the world in an upside down way, neglecting consciously the value system based on the existence of things. Piguet's experiments to construct an aesthetics from the semantic function of language, to build a linguistic philosophy upon it and a metaphysics upon the linguistic philosophy, make us doubt even the correctness of his detailed observations.

In the second chapter of our essay we will examine a few basic principles of phenomenology—as applied to literary studies—and of existentialism partly related to it.

³⁰ Mikel Dufrenne, *Le poétique* (Paris, 1963), pp., 37, 194.

³¹ J.-Claude Piguet, *De l'esthétique à la métaphysique* (The Hague, 1959), pp. 7–8. — We have omitted dealing with the aesthetic aspects of the philosophy of the “Christian existentialist” Gabriel Marcel. Cf. Paul Ricoeur, *Gabriel Marcel et Karl Jaspers* (Paris, 1947).

METHODOLOGICAL PRINCIPLES OF THE PHENOMENOLOGICAL ANALYSIS OF THE LITERARY WORK

Phenomenology is a “descriptive” scientific method: already Husserl stated so. In order to describe the phenomenon, phenomenology strives to get close to it. To this end, it has taken the phenomenon out of its context and has endeavoured to examine it in itself. If it encounters a complex phenomenon, it distinguishes its parts, takes its layers apart, and discloses its structure. Phenomenological description and the disclosure of the structure constitute the first methodological step as applied to literature. Description and structural analysis has led the phenomenologists to the ontological examination of the phenomenon considered in itself. The application of ontology in literary studies is the second crucial question of the phenomenological approach to literature. If the object of structural and ontological analysis is the work of art considered in itself, the third question arises automatically: What is, in the phenomenological approach, the relationship of the work of art to reality? The latter involves the examination of the role of causality in the phenomenological conception of the work of art. Finally, we have to compare the above methodological principles with the practice of interpretation, and this operation will point to the limitations of this method, its crisis, and some of the lessons to be drawn from it. To present our subject we have considered important works of only a few major representatives of the school, including some scholars heading towards existentialism.

PHENOMENOLOGICAL DESCRIPTION, THE LAYERED STRUCTURE

The method of distinguishing layers was first used in phenomenological description by Husserl. Let us take an example. When transcendental (non-individual, general, “pure”) consciousness perceives or – as Husserl says from the point of view of the *intentionality* of consciousness, of its intention towards the object – creates (constitutes) a (real) thing, then this thing being given in the consciousness already contains several layers. Topmost are the “substantial-causal things” (this would be the layer of the

reality appearing in consciousness), then follows the “inter-subjectively” identical thing (the one which is identically perceived in transcendental consciousness and in everybody’s subjective consciousness, and is therefore inter-subjective), and so forth. In describing the transcendental creation (constitution) of a (real) thing, Husserl thus distinguishes different degrees and layers of the creation (constitution) of the thing within the framework of consciousness which experiences it in its original manner. Each degree, with its pertinent layer, constitutes a separate unity which, however, is at the same time a mediating element necessary for the creation (constitution) of the whole.³² So Husserl constructs the “*model of the layered structure the essence of which is that its layers are independent units, but constitute the whole structure together.*”

Ingarden applies this model precisely to the literary work. The essential structure of the literary work, he writes, is a formation *composed of a number of heterogeneous layers*: “Die wesensmässige Struktur des literarischen Werkes liegt u.a. darin, dass es ein *aus mehreren heterogenen Schichten aufgebautes Gebilde* ist.” Since the layers are heterogeneous and differ also in function, the work is no monophonic formation, but has an essentially *polyphonic* character. This means that in consequence of the singularity of the several layers, each becomes *visible* in the whole in its own way, and adds something singular to the harmony and the integral character of the whole without thereby violating its phenomenological unity: “Infolge der Eigenart der einzelnen Schichten wird jede von ihnen auf ihre eigene Weise in dem ganzen *sichtbar* und trägt etwas eigenes zu dem Gesamtcharakter des Ganzen bei, ohne dadurch der phänomenalen Einheit des letzteren Abbruch zu tun.”

Besides layering the structure of the literary work, Ingarden distinguishes between the work and its concretions, its concrete appearances, and this distinction has a function related to the first layer. The first layer is the layer of word-signs, of *sounds (Wortlaut)*, to which belong, as a higher degree, *phonetic formations (Lautgebilde)* i.e. sentences and phrases. The sounds belong to the real world, they are physical, “material”; when we make them audible, they assume singular properties like melodiousness, rhythm, tempo, etc. *But uttering the sounds of the literary work does not yet make*

³² Edmund Husserl, *Ideen* . . . cited in footnote 24, p. 372.

up the work, it constitutes only a concretion of the work, one of its concrete appearances. At this stage the work is a constant phonetic structure, which appears identically in every individual utterance, irrespective of the differences in pronunciation (modulation, rhythm, tempo, etc.). But what is, Ingarden asks, the nature of the physical-material phonetic structure of the work itself like? It is not independent, autonomous, since its function is to reproduce, not sounds in themselves, but *semantic units* by the agency of sounds. These semantic units (*Bedeutungseinheiten*) make up the second layer of the literary work.

The layer of semantic units is independent and reducible to nothing else. As meaning reproduces objectivities (*Gegenständlichkeiten*) in the whole of the literary work, the layer of semantic units practically disappears between the layer of language's phonetic formations and the third layer, that of the reproduced objectivities. And yet the semantic units ensure that the apprehension of the literary work takes place *through reason* more than the apprehension of artistic or musical compositions does. An element of reason can be found even in the most irrational literary work, and this is due precisely to the presence of the layer of semantic units. The semantic units constitute the style of the work, so this layer supports, to a large extent, the aesthetic qualities and values of the work, too (which naturally, though less effectively, can also appear in the phonetic formations). While non-physical in nature, the semantic units do not belong to individual consciousness either (i.e., they are not even psychic), although they are supported by an act of consciousness; nevertheless, if they disappear from individual consciousness, they are not thereby destroyed, but survive and—since they may be given again to another individual consciousness—furnish a basis for inter-subjective perception.

In Ingarden's view, the third layer of the structure of the literary work is composed of the *represented objectivities* (*dargestellte Gegenständlichkeiten*) supported by semantic units. What first strikes the reader's eyes is the layer of objectivities; because of these he may forget about the rest (sounds, semantic layer). Most studies devoted to literature deal only with these objectivities represented in the work, and these—although being created by an act of consciousness which can modify or even destroy them—are likewise not psychic in nature. For the most part, they refer to real objects

which exist independently of their presence; these objectivities resemble the objects and have a *character of reality*. This character, Ingarden writes, cannot be *completely* identified with the *really* existing, real objects; in the case of the represented objectivities we are dealing only with the *outward form* of reality, which does not demand "to be taken so seriously". But with the represented objectivities—no matter how we look at them—objective reality penetrates into the literary work, therefore in this reality-relatedness of Ingarden's layered structure I see an effort to give an acceptable explanation of the fact, observed by him as well, of the reflection of *objective* reality independent of the work. In a *closed* structure, such as the literary work, according to Ingarden, reflection becomes doubtful since external elements cannot penetrate it. This is why, in the phenomenological view, it is necessary to emphasize the intentional character of objectivities—the fact that consciousness is *intending* them. On the other hand, by describing the relation between the reality character of the objectivities appearing in the work and the objective reality, Ingarden goes beyond Husserl's phenomenology, since he tacitly recognizes not only the existence of objective (experiential) reality only to disregard it later, as Husserl had done, but also recognizes the actual presence, in the literary work, of a modification of objective reality. And this is more than "orthodox" phenomenology could permit. Thus Ingarden does not deny the existence of a connection between objective reality and the objectivities appearing in the work (in other words: *the content layer of the work*), and thereby he in fact denies the Husserlian sense of intentionality. He calls the objectivities appearing in the work intentional objectivities, but this does not mean that these objectivities merely originate in consciousness, or that they are unrelated to reality.

The fourth layer in the structure of the literary work is the layer of *schematized images* (schematisierte Ansichten) which is important primarily from the point of view of the aesthetic value of the work. Mostly "real" objectivities appear depicted in the work, but the extent of their depiction cannot be complete, only schematic: the image appearing in the work can only be a skeleton of concrete perception. Images are evoked by facts established, or by objects depicted, by sentences as semantic units: thus they are present in the literary work as potentialities, virtually *in readiness*. The func-

tion of the layer of schematized images in the literary work is twofold: the images kept in readiness make it possible for the objects to be perceived with the specificities of their appearance, and thus act upon the making of the depicted objects; on the other hand, on the basis of their own properties they constitute aesthetic values of their own, which have an important role to play in the whole work, in the polyphony of the consonant heterogeneous layers.

Ingarden's conception has the definite virtue of analysing thoroughly the role and importance of the layer of objectivities (thus the very layer of *content*) among the structural layers of the literary work, and of presenting it in structural unity with the other layers. The other layers practically prepare, help, "serve" the appearance of the objectivities. One of the most important functions of the phonetic forms and semantic units is to transmit the objectivities, while the schematized images make the objectivities appear. In spite of their "helplessness", the objectivities (elements of content) are present in the work not for their own sake, but it is through them that—in Ingarden's view—the so-called "*metaphysical qualities*" appear, and in these the work reaches its peak. Ingarden's terminology is inappropriate here. In fact, by metaphysical qualities he means important *aesthetic qualities* such as majestic, tragic, comic, horrible, demoniac, holy, etc. which together with the *idea*, make the literary work complete. The idea is also built on represented objectivities, but only at the first stage; at the last stage it rests on the essential connection of substance between the life situation reproduced in the work and the metaphysical quality appearing through it, and this connection of substance, once uncovered and made visible, enables us to understand the internal correlation of the various phases of the work and to conceive of the whole work of art as of an integral product: "Dieser Wesenszusammenhang, einmal enthüllt und erschaut, erlaubt zugleich, den innern Zusammenhang der einzelnen Phasen des Werkes zu "verstehen" und das ganze Kunstwerk als eine Schöpfung aus einem Guss zu erfassen".³³ (It is worth our while to turn back these pages to the section about Nicolai Hartmann in order to con-

³³ Roman Ingarden, *Das literarische Kunstwerk*, 2nd ed., (Tübingen, 1960), pp. 26, 235, 294, 325.

vince ourselves again of Ingarden's priority in the interpretation of the structure of the work from the point of view of the disclosure of the elements of both form and content.)

Describing the layered structure of the literary work, Ingarden has provided a model for phenomenological analysis in general as well as in respect of other areas of science. The literary work has proved very suitable for phenomenological analysis, since there is no doubt, to remain within the phenomenological interpretation, about its intentionality (namely its being constituted by consciousness). The "model" which Ingarden has presented of the literary work is phenomenologically "perfect" because he has not used elements outside the work (the phenomenon) for breaking down the structure of the phenomenon. But this is, at the same time, the vulnerable point of the model: that is why Ingarden, just like Hartmann after him, is compelled to content himself with stating that the *idea*, which rests on the connection of substance between the objectivities represented in the work and the metaphysical qualities, cannot be analysed further, conceptually. Indeed, this is so *within the work*. Characteristically, in fact, the idea gets into the work "from outside", it directs and moves it practically "from outside", sometimes almost "creates" it; and the idea, as Ingarden recognized, is *aesthetically actualized* in the work. For this reason it cannot be conceptually approached merely from inside, through the closed structural analysis of the work. Here are the limits – as well as the lessons – of the phenomenological method of analysis.

In general, the method of starting structural analysis merely from the "internal" point of view has its weakness in that it does not take into account the "connectedness" – the "hierarchy" – of structures, since these are embedded in larger structural systems, not only as regards their constituent parts but also in their entirety.³⁴ Of course, Ingarden knew full well that the structural layer of sounds in the literary work is partly in connection with the physical world (acoustics), that is, with an entirely different structural system alien to the whole of the work; but the fact that the work „as a whole” is also part of a different structure, of the art structure, and this again is part of something, is already, if not

³⁴ Cf. Tibor Erdey-Grúz, *Az anyagi világ szerkezete* (The Structure of the Material World) (Budapest, 1965), p. 40.

beyond his horizon, but outside of his sphere of investigation. His concept of the structure is thus preclusive and *static*, which of course detracts from its value as a model. The literary work "is not only a closed unity but also an open world, a constant interaction with reality".³⁵ Which does not mean that the phonetic formations, semantic units, represented objectivities, or schematized images of the work change under the influence of constantly changing objective reality, but means the constant change of the *function value* of the work of art in the world that constantly changes.

Wolfgang Kayser, in his book of a rather practical nature (*Das sprachliche Kunstwerk*, 1948), tried to go farther than Ingarden, and linked analysis with synthesis. Kayser contrasted the layers of the literary work with one another, first on the analytic and then on the synthetic level: "eventful" content (*Inhalt*) with "internal" content (*Gehalt*), the fundamentals of prosody with rhythm, the doctrine of linguistic forms with style, finally construction with structure. (The level of synthesis is the second member of each pair of notions!) But separation of rhythm from the fundamentals of verse, style from linguistic forms, internal content from eventful content, leads to the forcible separation of things and to the disruption of real interconnections. Only the separation of construction (*Aufbau*) from the structure of the genre (*Gefüge der Gattung*) is justified, but since construction means the concrete constitution of the individual work, and genre is a collective notion of works of similar construction, I think the point at issue here is not merely and only the lower and the higher degree of the same entity, but rather two different entities are concerned.

PHENOMENOLOGICAL VARIANTS OF THE MODE OF EXISTENCE OF THE LITERARY WORK

For the sake of clarity, the best thing is to differentiate sharply the *genesis* of the literary work from its *existence*, i.e. its mode of existence. In the work's genesis, the artist has a "creative" function which ultimately manifests itself as a psychological act. We know that this psychological act is not independent of the artist's *exist-*

³⁵ Lajos Nyirő, "Művészet és kibernetika" (Art and cybernetics) *Kritika*, 1965, 9, p. 10.

ence in which his consciousness is rooted. The factors of the artist's existence (conditions of his social and individual life) play a decisive role in the genesis of the work, and *are reflected* in the work itself so that they can be inferred from it.

Phenomenological art analysis deals only with the realized work, the work *in itself* and independently of the circumstances of its creation. Consequently, as regards its mode of existence, the phenomenologist wants to obtain an explanation from the work or from analogies that can help to understand the mode of existence of the realized work of art. Phenomenologists have, to this day, reached no uniform view regarding the mode of existence of the work, and this is partly due to the fact that, as we already know, the phenomenological approach to art has evolved several variants. But, over and above this, a uniform stand was difficult to reach because the investigations have been conducted partly on a speculative aesthetic level, partly on the basis of the analysis of concrete works and in different branches of art, and consequently, identical results could not be attained objectively. It is evident that a marble statue exists differently from a lyric poem or a symphony. An example characteristic of the mixing of viewpoints is presented by Dufrenne when he compares and practically confronts with one another the views of Sartre, Ingarden, Boris de Schloezer, and Waldemar Conrad regarding the "existence of the aesthetic object", although Sartre speaks of the "aesthetic object" in general, while Ingarden and Waldemar Conrad talk about the literary work, and Boris de Schoezer deals with musical composition. Consequently, these four phenomenologists entertain different ideas. According to Sartre, the existence of the aesthetic object is neither that of the real object nor that of some psychic notion, but is imaginary, i.e. its constituent and perceiver is the imaging consciousness which presumes it unreal: "il est constitué et appréhendé par une conscience imageante qui le pose comme irréel". Conrad attributes to the literary work simply an *ideal* existence (like, for instance, that of the geometrical triangle), in B. de Schloezer's view the musical composition is on the one hand a "concrete idea" (concrete in its concretions) and on the other hand—like any aesthetic object—a "perceived object", i.e. aesthetic perception. Accordingly the perceived musical composition is an "actuality whose existence is at the same time concrete and ideal". (B. de Schloezer uses these

terms a little too freely.) Ingarden, we know, attributes to the work an intentional existence, but—as will be seen—with certain differences according to structural layers. And finally Dufrenne himself comes closest to B. de Schloezer, insofar as he connects the manifestation of the aesthetic object with the perception of the work of art, and regards the perceivable work itself as the vehicle of the aesthetic object; for him also, in any case, no aesthetic object exists without an act of consciousness.³⁶

Still the different views, being phenomenological, agree on one point: namely that the aesthetic object does not exist independently of consciousness, or if it does, this existence is not actual: the work is not actuality. Husserl, of course, could not recognize the work of art or aesthetic object existing objectively and independently of consciousness, for a basic aim of his philosophy was to eliminate or to make pointless the opposition of the perceiving subject and the perceivable object, as well as the antithesis of idealism and realism. Whereas there is no doubt that, if anywhere at all, it is in the field of aesthetics that the opposition of the subject and the already constituted object is very clearly observable, and that, according to what Georg Lukács wrote in his early study on phenomenology and the philosophy of value, in comparison to logic and ethics, only in aesthetics is there a subject-attitude that meets and fulfills the requirements of the sphere, as well as an appropriate object, which has in fact an objective existence: “*ein der Norm der Sphäre entsprechendes und sie erfüllendes Subjektverhalten . . . als auch ein ihm entsprechendes Objekt*”.³⁷

The obvious objective existence of the aesthetic object led Husserl's follower Oskar Becker—failing to find any satisfactory answer to the mode of existence of the aesthetic object—to at least declare its ontology “uncertain” and to regard the mode of existence of *potentiality* as the mode of existence of the aesthetic object,

³⁶ Mikel Dufrenne, *Phénoménologie de l'expérience esthétique* (Paris, 1953), vol. I., pp. 258–81.,—J.-P. Sartre, *L'imaginaire* (Paris, 1940), p. 242. Quoted by Dufrenne, *op. cit.*, p. 259.—Boris de Schloezer, *op. cit.*, p. 32.—Cf. also Mikel Dufrenne, “Critique littéraire et phénoménologie”, *Revue internationale de Philosophie*, 1964, pp. 193–208.

³⁷ Georg Lukács, “Die Subjekt-Objekt-Beziehung in der Aesthetik”, *Logos*, 1917–18. p. 7.

which turns into *actual* existence when it becomes the object of aesthetic experience.³⁸

Ingarden's systematic analyses had undoubtedly enriched these conceptions with solid notions, although by no means did they settle the controversy. Parallel to the structural layers of the literary work Ingarden also examined their ontological aspects from layer to layer, but he was primarily concerned with the "being" of the work in general. In Ingarden's view, the literary work "lives" by its concrete actualizations, that is, it changes, is modified, if for example, sentences are added or deleted. It may even cease to exist if, let us say, the author destroys the manuscript. The act of laying it down on paper however, is not part of the literary work, for what we have written is a series of regulative symbols which make possible the intersubjective concretization of the work. The layer of speech sounds in the work has no actual existence (for it is not identical with physical sound or psychic speech), but it has no ideal existence either (for it comes into being through a process and can be changed). The layer of speech sounds thus finds its mode of existence only together with the semantic layer, and this is *intentionality*. The sense of intentionality is not identical with the meaning attributed to it by Husserl. Consciousness practically "lends" meaning to the real world, and thereby makes it transcendent with regard to itself (to consciousness), for a semantic layer exists even if it is not perceived by any subjective consciousness. This makes it possible for this layer to be concretized repeatedly, and in an identical manner. *The mode of existence of meanings*, therefore, is not real, nor is it ideal, but according to Ingarden it is *intentional*. This is why the objectivities and images supported by the semantic layer also exist intentionally, with the difference that (as has already been mentioned) the objectivities have a character of *uncertainty* as compared to the really existing object world, the image are *schematized*, and their presence in the work is a *state of readiness* (potentiality).

Ingarden soon extended the theory of the intentional mode of existence of the work of art to the examination of the results of other creative activities by applying to them the model of layered structure. In the musical composition he has discerned non-

³⁸ Oskar Becker, "Von der Hinfälligkeit des Schönen und der Abenteuerlichkeit der Künstler". In: *Festschrift Edmund Husserl* (Halle, 1929), p. 29.

acoustic elements in addition to the dominating acoustic layer; in painting, he has distinguished (depending on the subject) two or three layers (besides the visual layer, possibly, a “literary” layer or, for instance, a “copying” layer in the case of a portrait); in the architectural work he has detected layers of visual images and of three-dimensional form; in motion pictures, he has distinguished combinations of the layers observed in painting and literature. As a result of these investigations Ingarden maintained the general conclusion drawn from the analysis of the nature of the literary work, namely that works of art are *in general* singular, intentional objectivities which approximate actuality in different degrees, in other words, the degrees of their actuality differ. Judging from these recent investigations, it is evident that Ingarden, through and beyond the examination of the work of art, headed towards the question of reality, while, in my judgement, he moved away from Husserl’s phenomenology.³⁹

The existentialist phenomenologists have not so much been preoccupied with the “objective” question of the mode of existence of the work as they have been interested in the existential function of the literary work or—as they prefer to use a hazier term—of *poetry*, because it fits in well with their irrational concept of existence as originating with Heidegger. Heidegger himself complained that the main problem of *Sein und Zeit*, his first great work, had widely been misunderstood: “No more eloquent proof of oblivion of existence . . . could have been shown by philosophy than that mad certainty with which it has evaded this proper and only question of *Sein und Zeit*. The question at issue is therefore not the misinterpretation of a book but our being abandoned by existence.”⁴⁰ This state of “being abandoned” was expressed and answered by Heidegger’s Hölderlin experience, by the objective of Johannes Pfeiffer’s interpretation of lyric poetry: the “disclosure of existence”, the “illumination of existence” through the power of poetry; and finally this seems to have been the basic motive of Emil Staiger’s “fundamental poetics”, too.

³⁹ Roman Ingarden, *Untersuchungen zur Ontologie der Kunst: Musikwerk, Bildwerk, Architektur, Film* (Tübingen, 1962), — Furthermore, R. Ingarden, *Der Streit um die Existenz der Welt* vol. I—II (Tübingen, 1965).

⁴⁰ Martin Heidegger, *Was ist Metaphysik?* 5th ed. (Frankfurt a/M., 1949), p. 17.

Our argumentation will be completely clear if we take at least one look at the phenomenological poetic endeavours *preceding* Staiger's, summarized by Günther Müller. All vestiges of "normative" poetics are detrimental and superfluous, Müller pointed out. The question of poetic genres cannot be answered satisfactorily by enumerating characteristic traits, he wrote. The question of the mode of existence of genres is before us as a fundamental question of genre poetics, and it is hardly an exaggeration to say that the deficiency of poetics has been caused by the neglect of this question: "Als grundlegende Frage der Gattungspoetik stellt sich in der Tat die Frage nach der Seinsweise der Gattungen heraus, und es ist kaum zuviel behauptet, dass die Unzulänglichkeit der Poetik in der Vernachlässigung dieser Frage einen entscheidenden Grund hat." Günther Müller outlined at once some elements of phenomenological poetics. In his opinion, what is to be determined is not the *song* as an "idea" (the normative point of view is this: what is the "ideal" song like?) but *the structure of songlikeness*—and so forth.⁴¹ Emil Staiger essentially continued in this way but linked the points of view of phenomenology with Heidegger's "philosophical anthropology".

Thus "it has long become clear" to him "that the genres refer to something that does not belong to literature". What then do they refer to? This will be made clear by a few further quotations.

The lyrical poet is carried off by the tide of human existence: "Der Lyriker . . . vom Strom des Daseins getragen" . . . — Tragedy occurs when that which we live for in a final, complete sense, the creative essence of human existence, is wrecked: "Das Tragische ereignet sich, wenn das, worum es in einem letzten allumfassenden Sinne geht, worauf ein menschliches Dasein ankommt, zerbricht". — Lyric human existence is ignorant of the horror of darkness, of death where the eyes are closed. Nay, it sinks into the nightly element as into a comfortable depth of intimacy, and in there it feels protected as amid the billows: "Das lyrische Dasein kennt ein solches Grauen vor dem Dunkel, vor dem Tod, wo die Augen sich schliessen, nicht. Im Gegenteil! Es sinkt ins Nächtige als in

⁴¹ Günther Müller, "Bemerkungen zur Gattungspoetik", *Philosophischer Anzeiger*, 1928–29, pp. 141–2.

Tiefen der Innigkeit hinein und fühlt sich umflutet, geborgen" . . .

— Epic man, on the other hand, is deprived of his epic essence by darkness. He cannot see in the dark and, since his human existence is based on sight, ceases to go on existing: "Den epischen Menschen dagegen beraubt das Dunkel seiner Wesentlichkeit. Er sieht nichts mehr, und da sein Dasein im Sehen begründet ist, 'ist' er nicht mehr". — Problem-raising and pathetic poetry, or to combine the two in one: dramatic poetry, is possible on the ground that man as such always goes ahead of himself: "Die Möglichkeit problematischer und pathetischer, oder, um beide in einem zusammenzufassen, dramatischer Dichtung beruht im Grunde darauf, dass der Mensch als solcher sich immer voraus ist." In the genres, therefore, it is not the conceptual, internal summary of poetic forms, or structures, that appears. It is not the essence and prototype of their tendencies that we see, but the possibilities of *human existence*. If, as Heidegger said, we suffer from "our being abandoned by existence", in Emil Staiger's poetics existence has changed into poetry, poetry into existence, theory of genres into anthropology.

The concepts of lyricism, epic quality, dramaticism are nothing but general labels for the fundamental possibilities of human existence; and lyric, epic, or dramatic poetry only exist because feeling, figurativeness and logicism constitute the essence of man, both in unity and in succession, in the order of childhood, youth and maturity: "Die Begriffe lyrisch, episch, dramatisch sind literaturwissenschaftliche Namen für fundamentale Möglichkeiten des menschlichen Daseins überhaupt, und Lyrik, Epos und Drama gibt es nur, weil die Bereiche des Emotionalen, des Bildlichen und des Logischen das Wesen des Menschen konstituieren, als Einheit sowohl wie als Folge, worin sich Kindheit, Jugend und Reife teilen". In a way, the world is integral in this poetics. Ernst Cassirer's periods of linguistic evolution correspond to the evolution of genres which reflect, in this manner, also the inner history of man from unconsciousness to consciousness; they reflect the structure of man's psyche and reflect his reason for existence, *time*: lyric passing away, epic present-making, and dramatic intention, the future. So then, Staiger writes, the trichotomy of lyric, epic, and dramatic quality ultimately achieves special dignity in the realization that it is based on three-dimensional time: "Indes gewinnt die Dreiteilung lyrisch-episch-dramatisch zuletzt denn doch eine eigentümliche Dignität,

da sich herausstellt: sie gründet in der dreidimensionalen Zeit".⁴² And we know that time is to Heidegger the innermost essence of human existence, of existence even.

PHENOMENOLOGICAL APPROACH TO LITERATURE AND REALITY

What has been discussed so far, phenomenological description, the disclosure of structure, ontological investigations, was all just a probe into the problem of reality—of the real world—since the phenomenological method and approach could not sufficiently explain the mode of existence of the "outside" world observed at every moment and continuously confronted with consciousness in the practice of life. Husserl's transcendental reduction, the *epoche* was in point of fact merely a working hypothesis in order to remove the "difficulties" arising from the opposition of subject and object, which all previous idealist or dualist systems of philosophy had proved unable to remove. But we know from the foregoing explanation that Husserl himself was, to the end of his life, grappling with the problem of the real world "placed into brackets". J.-C. Piguet makes the pertinent remark that for Descartes the world, the object of consciousness, existed at all times, and his scepticism suspended only the belief in the existence of the world, but not the world itself; Husserl's *epoche*, on the other hand, "refrains" from the world itself as meaning, this is what it suspends and not practical belief in the world.⁴³ When writing about one of Böckling's paintings, Husserl states that the impressions it creates change into consciousness of the "external" image-object so as to become thereby actual components of consciousness. But the painting, the factual painting is there—and consciousness here; why are the colours of the painting such components which are only real in the consciousness? These elements of consciousness, Husserl writes, exist at the same time not only phenomenally and intention-ally, as appearing or merely supposed contents, but they exist in fact. Of course, one must not forget, Husserl continues, *that*

⁴² Emil Staiger, *Grundbegriffe der Poetik*, 2nd ed. (Zurich, 1951), pp. 213, 82, 188, 101, 177, 213, 219.

⁴³ Piguet, *op. cit.*, p. 185.

existing in fact is, not equal to *existing outside consciousness*, it means an existence just *not merely supposed*: “Und sie existieren dabei keineswegs bloss phänomenal und intentional (als erscheinende und bloss vermeinte Inhalte), sondern wirklich. Natürlich wird man nicht übersehen dürfen, dass *wirklich* nicht so viel besagt wie *ausserbewusstseind*, sondern so viel wie *nicht bloss vermeintlich*.”⁴⁴

In these fine distinctions, we can see nothing but an expression of that uncertainty which arises from the contradiction between the reality enclosed into brackets and excluded for the purpose of phenomenological description, and the simultaneous continuous experience of reality, or rather between recognition of this fact and its consideration. It is still understandable if—in the interest of the unhampered examination of the phenomenon given to consciousness, which as the intended object of consciousness is merely the *meaning* of reality—Husserl wished to disregard reality itself; but, over and above this, as concerns the existence or non-existence of experiential reality, he hid behind laconic generalities which often perplexed even his followers. The art philosopher Obedrecht, for example, made explicit objections to our weaving, in dull alienation from the world, a fabric of dead conceptual constructions above the content of hot and active life, when yearning to deal with art: “. . . dass in stumpfer Weltabgeschiedenheit über Inhalte des heissen sprühenden Lebens ein Gespinst von toten Begriffskonstruktionen gezogen werden soll . . .” He thought that “placing into brackets” could mean no more than to have an eye to the aesthetically essential.⁴⁵ And, as we have seen, this was why Ingarden altered Husserl’s interpretation of intentionality. In the examination of the literary work as a closed structure, however, he upheld the principle that it is complete and self-sufficient and, for this very reason, a phenomenon explainable and to be explained from itself.

Consequently, he excluded from the scope of the work of art and its examination, those elements of reality which fell outside *the intended work of art as a phenomenon*. Thereby he dissociated himself from the historical, sociological, and psychological ap-

⁴⁴ Edmund Husserl, *Logische Untersuchungen* vol. II/2., (Halle/Saale, 1922), p. 244.

⁴⁵ Obedrecht, *op. cit.*, Foreword.

proaches to literature. It is worth-while to consider, after Ingarden, what is irrelevant to the literary work *in the view of phenomenology*.⁴⁶

1. The *author* himself with his fate, experiences and psychic condition is irrelevant. The experiences of the author in the course of creation are no part of the finished work. Close as may be the connections between the author's inner life and the work, even though the work depends on his qualities, talents, and ideas, and even though it bears and exhibits marks of his personality: the creator and the work are two *heterogeneous* objectivities, and therefore the two must be kept strictly apart. The ontology of the work of art and the psychology of the process of artistic creation cannot and must not be confused!

2. In no way can any experience or mood of the *reader* belong to the structure of the work. "Emotions", "notions", "impressions" produced by works of art say nothing about the work. One must especially refrain from drawing conclusions about the *value* of the work from the *emotions* and inner processes promoted in the enjoyer of art, in the reader. The "aesthetic disposition" expecting the work to be "evocative of emotions" is only an obstacle to theoretical and rational examination, to phenomenological investigation. These two "approaches" should be kept strictly apart!

3. Finally, one has to exclude from the literary work the sphere of objects and facts which could at most be a sort of model of the objects and facts "present" in the work. Thus ancient Rome, the scene of *Quo vadis?* by Sienkiewicz, does not pertain to the novel proper. (The question of how the presence of objects and facts in the literary work should nevertheless be interpreted, was answered by Ingarden with the analysis of the third layer of the structure.)

By excluding from the literary work the author's psyche and experiences the phenomenological theory of literature wanted to get around the obstacles raised by positivism, sociology, and psychology, and turned against the examination of the experience linked to the name of Dilthey. Exclusion, however, also "enclosed into brackets" all those elements of reality from which the work had originated and, by rejecting the writer-reader relationship,

⁴⁶ Ingarden, *Das literarische Kunstwerk*, pp. 17–24.

dissociated the work from those elements of reality which surrounded it "since its completion"; that is, from the socio-historical circumstances of its genesis, the history of its existence, its national traditions, cultural coefficients, the writer's social class, or background, his personality and family traits (heredity); in all respects it took the work out of the dialectic process of reality, dissociated it from the sphere of reality. It wanted to comprehend and interpret the literary work, "prepared" in this way for phenomenological description, *from itself*, and made use of the "intrinsic" means of art analysis. Thus far we may have succeeded in demonstrating that this procedure did not result at all from the forcing of an arbitrary and "novel" way of distinguishing "all the same" from the previous methods (positivism, sociologism, psychologism, *Geistesgeschichte*), *but was a logical consequence and result of the application of the phenomenological approach*, which put into brackets not only the reality "outside" consciousness but also the subjective psychological reality within the artist's consciousness in order to get at the "pure" (*transcendental*) *consciousness and at the pure phenomena (the essences)*.

The phenomenological method has been the basis of the "*intrinsic interpretation*" of the literary work, which evolved during the 1930's and had become predominant in the 1940's. Based on the same principles, the method's existentialist variant differed only to the extent that it laid great stress on the internal experience of the work by its interpreter, on his "floating together" with the work, on his artistic faculties necessary for art analysis and really indispensable to the student of literature. "Without any particular sensitivity to the poetic phenomenon," Wolfgang Kayser wrote, "all concepts of literary study would remain empty, and their application would miss the point."⁴⁷

The phenomenological conception, as we have seen, has linked the exclusion of the elements of reality with the "synchronic" interpretation of the work, and has given up the possibilities of "diachronic" historical interpretation. Among the "philological preconditions" Kayser included textual criticism, the clarification of what is known about the author, the date of origin of the work,

⁴⁷ Wolfgang Kayser, *Das sprachliche Kunstwerk*, 6th ed., (Bern—Munich, 1960), p. 5.

as well as acquaintance with previous specialized literature. History as an interpretative principle is unknown to him, too. This makes it clear to us that the opposite of the phenomenological approach is in fact the historical approach, and this opposition, beyond the philosophical foundations, strictly separates the phenomenological and similar schools of literary scholarship from the Marxist study of literature, which, in principle, never excludes the legitimacy of the historical point of view from its investigations.

THE EXCLUSION OF CAUSALITY

By excluding the elements of reality, phenomenology has broken with history, sociology, and psychology, having renounced them as means of interpretation. Looking at the essence of things from the aspect of philosophy, however, we have to penetrate a bit deeper. History, sociology, and conventional psychology as means of interpretation are of a *causal* character: they provide explanations, for instance, of why Dante put whom in different places and situations in the other world; why Cervantes chose a knight-errant for his hero; why Goethe connected Werther's love with class relations; why popular style and popular revolution are correlated in Petőfi's poetry. And beyond the rectilinear formal causality the "motion" of dialectic causal relations is indeed the motion of matter, "or the motion of history which we grasp or apprehend in its internal *interconnection* so and so broadly or deeply . . ." as Lenin wrote; from which we can see that historical causality is "only a small particle of the world's interconnection, of the objectively real interconnection";⁴⁸ *therefore, in principle, causality is indispensable in the interpretation of the work which is part of the world.* On the other hand, phenomenology excludes *causality* from the scientific interpretative principles of the world, more precisely: it does not view the objects of examination according to the principle of causality, because these objects are not objects of the world perceived as real, but are phenomena. Or in other words: "The phenomenological approach appears self-explanatory; consequent-

⁴⁸ V. I. Lenin, "Filosofskie tetradi", in *Polnoe sobranie sochineniy*, XXIX (Moscow, 1963), pp. 144–145.

ly the evidence from direct insight obviates the hypothetico-causal approach".⁴⁹

The fact remains that the "dismissal" of causal thinking, or rather its restriction or replacement by teleological thought, has been and still is today a characteristic tendency in the history of twentieth-century western philosophy.

On these philosophical foundations the studious followers and interpreters of phenomenological literary scholarship do not find it necessary, even in principle, to face the *why* of things. If poetry is not an imitation of nature or of great examples any longer as it still was in Gottsched's time, Staiger wrote, but a creative accomplishment, and not a sort of inference but an announcement of the purest existence of man, then only the most fundamental thinking can fit its object: "Sobald die Poesie nicht mehr, wie noch für Gottsched, Nachahmung der Natur und der vorhandenen Muster, sondern schöpferische Leistung ist und nicht ein abgeleitetes, sondern das reinste Sein des Menschen ausspricht, ist nur das fundamentalste Denken diesem Gegenstand noch gemäss".⁵⁰ We are averse to note that this "most fundamental thinking" is Martin Heidegger's own, which eliminates all manner of causal recognition from the act of making the conditions of the world intelligible according to the "essence" of existence. And Emil Staiger does the same thing. With reference to Werner Mahrholz's old theory, in which *poetry* is ageless but *literature* has its history that "constitutes the continuous whole of causal relations and is thus accessible to the historical approach", Staiger concludes that the category of causality can only be a subservient tool in the historian's hands, it is good only for systematizing the phantoms of the entangled mind, but is unfit for anything that is worth the trouble of investigating. "Wir folgern umgekehrt, dass die Kategorie der Kausalität... nur ein untergeordnetes Werkzeug in der Hand des Historikers sei, tauglich, die Gespinste des unfreien Geistes zu entwirren, doch unbrauchbar für alles, was die Mühe der Untersuchung lohnt".⁵¹

⁴⁹ Anna-Teresa Tymieniecka, *Phenomenology and Science in Contemporary European Thought* (Toronto—New York, 1962), p. 19.

⁵⁰ Staiger, *Grundbegriffe der Poetik*, p. 237.

⁵¹ Staiger, *Die Zeit als Einbildungskraft des Dichters*, pp. 12–3. Mahrholz is quoted by Staiger: *Literaturgeschichte und Literaturwissenschaft* (Leipzig, 1932), p. 70.

Is there anything to be added? Nothing really causeless exists in the world and thus non-causal thought renounces the possibility of understanding the real state of things. Horst Oppel wrote in 1957: "In the nineteenth century the feeling was that, by returning to the poet's personality, it would eventually be possible to reach a fixed point. But the causal interconnections of a psychological character, proved just as fallacious as those of a material character. The rapid succession of revolutions in the practice and history of science . . . must be interpreted to mean . . . that literary creation and the process of literary creation are an extremely complex process . . ." This is how Horst Oppel concluded his summary of the methods of postwar literary science,⁵² which ultimately makes it clear to us that in vain did the study of literature give up important and tested instruments, in vain has it replaced them with new ones, it could not achieve a full and complete approach to its object. What it has obtained by one way it has lost by the other. So the phenomenological conception of literature, though it has come closer to the comprehension and disclosure of the structure of the literary work, has lost its connection with the historical conditions of its object, with the reality-relatedness of the work, with its expression of reality. It could not comment on the causal interconnections of a phenomenon, of the work of art, which so just happened to come about, in the view of the phenomenology, "all of a sudden".

THE CRISIS OF THE PHENOMENOLOGICAL APPROACH TO LITERATURE

Thus we have sketched the limits and the potentials of the phenomenological method. It was not for nothing that its representatives and followers primarily turned towards the analysis of the work of art considered in itself: the phenomenological method provided no means of disclosing the interconnections and interactions, and so it disregarded them in its approach. It was necessary to deny the importance of the *poet's personality* and its presence in the work

⁵² Horst Oppel, "Methodenlehre der Literaturwissenschaft". In: W. Stammer (ed.), *Deutsche Philologie im Aufriss*, vol. 1. (Berlin—Bielefeld, 1957), p. 82.

because the phenomenological method *was unfit* to present, for example, the entire path of a lyric poet, the phases of his development, the determinants of his personality and its changes. Yet we know, as do the phenomenologically disposed literary critics, that without steady comparison with other poets and their personalities it is impossible to understand the poetry of most of the lyric poets or any single one of their poems. Consequently no correct interpretation is feasible along these lines. And the phenomenological method is likewise unable to cope with the *history of literature*. It either arranges the interpretations of works considered in themselves one after another in a chronological order (as Benno von Wiese did with German lyric poetry, short story and drama),⁵³ or it has to give up presenting any national or international literary *process*. For the time being we have no knowledge of any historical study of literature which would have consistently applied the phenomenological approach. But the phenomenological approach to the *literature of foreign nations* also comes up against difficulties: the linguistic barrier is already mentioned by the Polish scholar Ingarden. In his German-language book, as he wrote, he could not include analytic examples because—not having sufficient command of the language to express himself correctly at an aesthetic level—he could not afford to risk misunderstandings.⁵⁴ Although this does not mean that literary studies should not deal with literatures in other languages, further difficulties nevertheless arise in the feasibility of the phenomenological approach. By considering the work in itself the phenomenological study of literature renounces one more expedient: the comparison of similar or differing works of one or more literatures.

Of course, practice does not always correspond to theory. The practitioners of the phenomenological approach did not apply strictly the phenomenological principles of art analysis, and mainly they did not follow in practice any uniform principle or method,

⁵³ Benno von Wiese (ed.), *Die deutsche Novelle von Goethe bis Kafka: Interpretationen* (Dusseldorf, 1956). — *Idem* (ed.), *Die deutsche Lyrik: Form und Geschichte: Interpretationen*, vol. I—II (Dusseldorf, 1957). — *Idem* (ed.), *Das deutsche Drama vom Barock bis zur Gegenwart: Interpretationen* vol. I—II (Dusseldorf, 1958).

⁵⁴ Roman Ingarden, *Das literarische Kunstwerk*, p. XVI.

but made analyses at discretion in accordance with their ability and erudition.

We need not refer to the American Kurt Müller-Vollmer to be able to state that Staiger and other renowned representatives of this trend – Wolfgang Kayser, Richard Alewyn, or Walther Killy – usually mixed, if necessary, text interpretation with more conventional methods, since the “intrinsic” approach to literature in itself was not sufficient but, according to the American author, “untenable and self-contradictory”.⁵⁵ Staiger himself has met with difficulties in the practical implementation of the theory in his monograph on Goethe (1951–1959), and the results is that art analysis in those volumes alternates with biographical and historical chapters, disclosing connections and interconnections, giving a picture of the theoretically banished poetic personality.

We are hardly mistaken in thinking that it was as a result of elaborate historical investigations regarding Goethe and his age that Staiger’s outlook took the “turn” we note in his book entitled *Stilwandel* and published in 1963. Here Staiger published four essays on different stages of the Goethean period, four excellent studies of *literary history* which remind one, by their methods more of Dilthey’s writings than of previous analyses by Staiger himself. The expressly historical essays, of course, have called for a motivation. As a result, Staiger restores the rights of the history of styles or the *Geistesgeschichte*: in any case, he has recognized the indispensability of some sort of historical approach. Moreover, *he specifically enunciates the legitimacy of the historical and the social approach alike*. In spite of his compulsory “reservations” voiced against Marxism we have to think that some stimulation coming from Marxist ideas has also been instrumental in Staiger’s “turn”.

Considering the present state of German literary criticism, Staiger writes, we cannot deny that it has come to a crossroads. For more than two decades a surprisingly great number of Germanists have merely practiced interpretation . . . It is not that this has been a mistake, that it would be better to adopt different working

⁵⁵ Kurt Müller-Vollmer, *Towards a Phenomenological Theory of Literature: A Study of Wilhelm Dilthey’s Poetik* (The Hague, 1963), pp. 42, 81.

methods, but it is certain that interpretation is able to handle the work of art from only *one* point of view and therefore neglects its other duties. This is how the introduction begins, and Staiger then speaks of the necessity of a combined use of interpretation and *commentary*; and by commentary he means the presentation of the state of language, the importance of words, the beliefs of the period, its mentality, morals, and actually, if the text so requires, even the social and political situation. In brief: *the commentary should contain the historical part of the interpretation.*

But recognition of the necessity and usefulness of history is not enough. Staiger consistently penetrates deeper. *He cites a series of examples to prove the effective interconnection of literature and history.* To us the accurate illustration of this thesis seems curious: to Staiger's followers, on the other hand, it was obviously quite new. And more surprising perhaps than the thesis itself is the terminology. The fact is that Staiger talks about the *functional* relationship of literature and history. But in order not to be compelled to surrender his former position, he makes a reservation by declaring: although the relationship is functional, there is no way of knowing which of its members is the dependent variable and which is the independent variable. It remains questionable, Staiger writes, whether literature is the function of society or, conversely, whether it is not rather this latter that is the function of literature. Both opinions have advocates, Staiger continues, the former is held by Marxists, and the latter, e.g., by Martin Heidegger . . . But both are merely theories which can be verified with the same emphasis by an infinity of experiences: "Beides aber ist Theorie und lässt sich aus der Unendlichkeit der Erfahrung mit gleichem Gewicht belegen".

On the basis of the essays contained in the volume, we can think that this last sentence is not merely a polite gesture in honor of Heidegger. In Staiger we find an endeavour to synthesize phenomenological existentialism and historicism: to bring Heidegger and Dilthey in consistency. This, we know, is not impossible. Interpretation deals with the work itself, the "head", and the study of stylistic changes deals with the "inheritance" and with the process by which the inheritance is acquired. The two methods do not exclude or disturb each other. Together they struggle to understand the existence and the genesis of literature: "Die beiden

Methoden stören sich nicht. Sie ringen vereint um ein Verständnis des Seins und Werdens in der Literatur".⁵⁶

Accordingly Staiger's "change of style" (to use this personalized rendering of the title of his book) must not therefore be evaluated as if he had radically broken with his past, we should rather try to understand that this "turn" is also a symptom of the fact that literary criticism is seeking new ways. Staiger's "turn" suggests that the isolated phenomenological method has proved insufficient for the study of literature.

CONCLUSIONS

In spite of this it is worth our while to recall once more the most essential features and lessons of the phenomenological approach to literature.

First we certainly have to mention the emphasis on the structural character and structuration of the work of art, although, as we have seen, the static quality of their concept of structure has prevented the phenomenologists from seeing that the structure is embedded in broader interconnections and dialectic interactions.

Apart from the idealist conclusions about the mode of existence of the structure, it is equally not without interest to ask the question, how the work of art exists; but static, formal idealist thinking are again insufficient to answer it. The phenomenologists regard the work practically as a "monad" and do not examine the rich effective interconnections of the actualized work indicating the place it occupies in reality.

As far as methodology is concerned, phenomenologists have called attention to the importance of the language of the literary work and of the semantic connections supported by the linguistic layer, to the significance of form observation and form sensitivity in the study of the literary work, and to the fact that the knowledge and understanding of the work are not at all confined to knowledge of the history of its genesis, to the determination of its place in literary history, to the attainment of the objectives of positivism and the *Geistesgeschichte*. Owing to the isolated application of the

⁵⁶ Emil Staiger, *Stilwandel* (Zurich, 1963). pp. 7, 9, 23.

method, however, it has been revealed that phenomenological analysts do not know what to make of the subjective and objective genesis of the work, so they can only attain partial results. In order not to be compelled to admit the limitations of phenomenology, its practitioners have denied the use of the genetic approach to the work, or at least they have expelled from its sphere both historical and sociological investigations. Thus, in the last analysis, the method has been confined to a single aspect of the approach. Thereby it stimulated literary research to examine its object by increasingly more complex methods and more viewpoints, with due emphasis on the examination of the questions of form.

The most noteworthy lesson drawn from the phenomenological theory of literature is the doctrine of signs and symbols, which doctrine is steadily gaining ground in modern scholarship.

EPILOGUE IN 1977

I am most pleased that the study I had first published in 1966 is to appear in English. It is to be printed in the somewhat abridged form in which it appeared in Hungarian in 1970 and in Russian, in the Soviet Union, in 1975. I did not alter the text, even though some of the statements which may have seemed new or bold in 1966, no longer seem so: others have repeated those statements by now, and mostly independently from me. Nor have I been prompted to alter the text by the fact that in the past ten years structuralism based on linguistics became widespread, what is more, mathematical structuralism, and eventually the structural-semiotic method of literary studies have increasingly penetrated the area of literary scholarship. These objective scientific trends have pushed aside or even rendered obsolete the phenomenological and existentialist interpretations of the work of art, still flowering in the first half of the sixties.

It seems to me, therefore, even more crucial to call attention to the fact that literary scholars basing research on the theory and methodology of phenomenology were the first to attempt describing the structure of the work of art, and of literary work in particular; for instance, Conrad in 1908, and Ingarden in 1931—the methodology of the latter purporting to be more comprehensive

than the modern varieties of structuralism. Its comprehensive nature consisted in the fact that Ingarden examined the components i.e. the symbols, meaning, and “signified” objects in unison along with the aesthetic qualities based upon them, and considered them all equally important. Although the limit of the work of art was also the limit of the phenomenological method, that is, similarly to existentialist interpreters and the linguistic analysts, Ingarden also remained within the work, yet he did not content himself with a mere examination of forms. In his concept the work of art was—in comparison with later varieties of structuralism—not a totally “closed monad” but something that found room in a broader structure, too. Nor was it entirely independent of reality, but assimilated real objects in an appropriate form. Although more comprehensive, Ingarden’s methodology was not less rational than the “exact” methodology of later structuralism, and was equally far removed from the intuitive and irrational proceedings of existentialist criticism. The significance of Ingarden’s principles and methodology is being increasingly recognized and appreciated everywhere, but acquaintance with his work is hampered by the fact that an important portion of his writings is still available only in Polish, and only gradually is it being translated into other languages, particularly German.

The second edition of the almost forgotten main work of Ingarden, *Das literarische Kunstwerk*, appeared in 1960, and this has undoubtedly contributed significantly to an awakening of interest in the literary relevancy of phenomenology, parallel to the spread of structuralism in literary scholarship. Thus the Polish Anna-Teresa Tymieniecka, a former pupil of Ingarden working in the United States, published a useful booklet in 1962 regarding the application of phenomenology to various branches of science (see note 49), and herein she presented Ingarden’s structure model as the most successful example of structure stratification applied to literary works.

Since that time, Norbert Krenzlin has been working on a doctoral dissertation, probably from the mid-sixties on, the subject of which is the critique of the aesthetic application of the phenomenological method. One chapter of this dissertation appeared in print (*Untersuchungen zur phänomenologischen Aesthetik. Weimarer Beiträge*, 1968). In her rather successful manual introducing the methodolo-

gies of literary scholarship (*Methoden der Literaturwissenschaft*, Dalp Taschenbücher, Bern, 1970) Manon Maren-Grisebach devoted a chapter to phenomenological literary research. As a professor at the University of Belgrade, Zoran Konstantinović was already concerned with phenomenological literary research and, after publishing a work in Serbo-Croatian, he published another in German on the same subject, while a professor of comparative literature at the University of Innsbruck, (*Phänomenologie und Literaturwissenschaft*, List Taschenbücher der Wissenschaft, München 1973). Let me briefly dwell on the works of these authors.

The part of Krenzlin's dissertation already in print gives a criticism of Conrad's early experiment. Krenzlin, however, points out that Conrad's methodology represented a break with traditional thinking, and gave rise to a branch of structuralism which renounced the ideological approach to the aesthetic object. Krenzlin clearly distinguishes between the two variants of phenomenological aesthetics: the contemplative and formalist variant on the one hand and the existentialist and programmatic variant on the other. These, as we have seen, succeeded one another in time. The earlier variant, philosophically based on the first part of Husserl's oeuvre, the "classical" period of phenomenology, was dominated by methodological considerations. (Let me remind the reader that, in my presentation, this period was identified with Conrad, Geiger, and Ingarden.) In the second variant Krenzlin correctly saw the predominant role of the ideological impulses. The "existentialist variants" of the phenomenological view of literature (as I have called them), from which the objective scientific criterion of repeatability was lacking, rely on subjective methods based on intuition and are held together merely by the *Weltanschauung*. Krenzlin makes a significant observation: from among the various phenomenological approaches to literature it is precisely the analyses based on language, linguistic signs, and the text itself, that have survived.

Unfortunately, the highly readable book by Maren-Grisebach, which lists the different methods lucidly, is restricted to German literary studies. The title promises more, but the promise is not fulfilled even with regard to German studies. The prevailing method of the sixties, structuralism, is not included among the six methods discussed; on the other hand, the so-called morphological method represented by Günther Müller, Horst Oppel, and a few other

literary scholars, is given equal weight with the methods of positivism, *Geistesgeschichte*, phenomenology, and sociology in literary criticism, the sixth method being the existential. Maren-Grisebach intentionally avoids the history of literary scholarship, although this history has been precisely what has revealed to us the connections between the methods of phenomenology, existentialism, and morphology. It is from the historical part of my essay that the reader may have learnt of Günther Müller's short-lived, but intense enthusiasm for Ingarden, of the dependence of Heidegger's variety of existentialism on phenomenology, as a result of which there has often been an overlapping of basic notions. Maren-Grisebach likewise knows about this, but she stresses those aspects that tend to indicate differences in methodology. On the other hand, the readers of my booklet encounter a description of what is common in these methods, because it is my conviction that these point to the general trends which determine the path of modern literary studies. Among the most important common aspects we find ahistoricity; avoidance of the principle of causality; and the notion of remaining within the work, the intrinsic approach (*Werkimmanenz*, to use a German term). It is mainly these three aspects that distinguish the methods discussed (or only mentioned) by us: the phenomenological, the existentialist, and the morphological from the others (positivism, sociology and *Geisteswissenschaft* in literary criticism) presented by Maren-Grisebach in addition, and it is these same three aspects that link three of the methods to structuralism, omitted from the above study. Professor Maren-Grisebach, however, deserves recognition for the elaboration of the process of phenomenological reduction as related to the literary work and for the bright light she sheds on the essence of this method.

Zoran Konstantinović, the author of the small monograph on phenomenology in literary research, mentions my study in the preface to his work, the first part of which he knew from the French version of 1969 (in a variation more extended than the present one). But the praise he accords my work, however, is primarily due to himself. Konstantinović presents the development of the phenomenological approach to literature and its most important conclusions, includes its existentialist sequence, and discusses parallel trends of literary criticism, the similarities between Russian Formalism and the Anglo-American "New Criticism", as well as

the common grounds of phenomenology and the structuralism of the French *nouvelle critique* of the sixties. He does not deal, however, with Czech Structuralism, the sequel to Russian Formalism, which is, in fact related to New Criticism: the proof of this relation being the fruitful collaboration between René Wellek of the Prague School, and the North American Austin Warren, in their famous *Theory of Literature*.

Konstantinović is not quite right in referring to the phenomenological method of literary study as the German equivalent of Russian Formalism and Anglo-American New Criticism. He rightly considers the Polish Ingarden the most important "figure" of the school. But at the same time, Ingarden was one of the outstanding representatives of "Slav Structuralism" (an expression I have borrowed from the Hungarian specialist on Eastern European literature, Endre Bojtár), though he was primarily a disciple of Husserl. During the interwar years, however, *Geistesgeschichte* was dominant in Germany, and Ingarden was forced into the background, as were the other great early stylistic, formal, and structural analysts, such as Oskar Walzel, Leo Spitzer and Erich Auerbach. They, as the Russian Formalists, were to be duly appreciated only by posterity. Walzel, for one, had explained that he felt himself close to phenomenology, and the endeavours of the others were likewise in consonance with the phenomenological principles of literary research, in that they focussed their attention on the literary work, and saw the applicability of aesthetics in linguistic signs, these being the starting point of their research. Although very close to the thinking of Husserl, Ingarden actually stood alone with his strictly structuralist approach in the German literary research of the thirties. The influence of his principal work was rather limited at that time, not simply because of its abstract and theoretical nature, but also because he stood far removed from the consensus of contemporary German literary scholarship. In fact, it was only a distorted, existentialist outlook of phenomenology that had a truly powerful influence on literary scholarship in Germany because it corresponded to the intellectual climate of the years preceeding and following World War II. Thus if we place the phenomenological „school" next to Russian Formalism, we have to place the German interpretive-existentialist trend next to New Criticism.

Two further queries in the book of Konstantinović deserve to be noted. One asks whether the phenomenological description of the poetic personality, of the age, movement, trend or style, is at all possible. The other refers to the relations between the arts (more precisely, literature) and phenomenology, that is, whether phenomenology exerted an influence on poetry or not.

As Jost Hermand points out (*Synthetisches Interpretieren*, München 1968, p. 121), the Goethe monograph by Gundolf may be the model of the phenomenological description of a poetic personality. It does not describe the poet as one belonging to a certain age, or to a certain environment; and it does not even treat the poet in his relations to others. The poet is seen in isolation; and the decisively important and deep layers are described of his personality's *Urerlebnis* with practically phenomenological reductionism. These *Urerlebnisse* constitute the basic structure of the personality as opposed to the secondary structure built on cultural experiences (*Bildungserlebnisse*).

The phenomenological description of an epoch, current, or style is made possible by the fact that the artistic principles and stylistic characteristics of a given age or given trend show similarities, analogies and transferences, and it is on this basis that we may select the essentially common ones, and those that are purely individual, which we may consider incidental. Yet the poetic personality, as well as the organic ensembles mentioned above, are so complex and so inseparable from the elements of outside reality: time, environment, history, that their isolated phenomenological description would be, to say the least, risky.

As for the second query of Professor Konstantinović, the exposition of how the philosophy of phenomenology is related to living art and literature, I, myself have attempted to give an answer in the French version of the first part of this booklet, but Konstantinović increased considerably the number of examples. His treatment of Rainer Maria Rilke's poetic method in relation to phenomenology—citing the famous study by Käthe Hamburger—is particularly convincing. It cannot be doubted that the artists, writers, poets of an era, current, or trend share a philosophy, and this is reflected in the otherwise most different works; nor can it be doubted that this philosophy affects the creative method; and influences the mode of expression, style, or repertory of forms.

The rationalism of Descartes for instance, penetrated to the very layers of style of the Classicism that evolved in France, the poetry of the Enlightenment let us surmise the philosophy of Locke, Montesquieu, Diderot, Helvétius and others, we are accustomed to refer to the connections between philosophical positivism and naturalism in art or literature as an unquestionable fact, and so on. Why could not the phenomenology—seeking the essence instead of the appearance—be the basis for some of the tendencies of modern art and literature, primarily that of Expressionism, which has selected as its objective the representation of the essence?

But we must recall that the problem of the dichotomy and relationship of essence and appearance has also been the central issue of the neo-Kantian schools, and that the penetration from the surface to the “depth”, and from the appearance to the essence is a common objective of most of the theories of the period—as is eloquently shown by the analytical psychology of Freud. Another method to “solve” the problem of essence vs. appearance was to limit the investigation to the “controllable” appearance, the strict description of that which can be experienced, sensed, counted, repeated. This method was characteristic of phenomenology as *a scientific method*, neopositivism as it made its appearance at the beginning of the century in Vienna, behaviorism in psychology, and the new linguistic trends replacing traditional linguistics (Sausure). At the same time phenomenology, as if bridging the chasm separating opposites, also taught that the essence is not to be found in the depths, beyond the “phenomena”, but must be grasped together with them. This practically offered itself as program to the artist and writer who endeavoured to express the essence through visible, audible, sensible things, by means of their “essential” (to use the expression of Walter Meckauer, *wesenhaft*), that is through their abstract representation. I am referring to the phenomenologist Moritz Geiger who, talking about certain trends of Expressionism, said that they intend to put into relief the essence of some object without adding the empirical phenomenon to it (*Zugänge zur Ästhetik*, Leipzig, 1927, 94). It is time to examine thoroughly and objectively—although some attempts had already been made—the general role of the philosophical trends around the turn of the century, and particularly the role of phenomenology,

in the formation of the theory and practice of the arts and literature of the twentieth century.

Unquestionably, the application of the phenomenological method to literary research had considerable significance and ramified implications. The most significant thought to exert influence was that the work of art constitutes a whole, that everything we can find out about it is contained in it, that it carries its own worth, that it has an autonomous existence and is subject to particular rules. If we want to understand it and explain it, if we want to assimilate it aesthetically, we must turn to the work of art itself. The ontological basis of phenomenological examination is the work of art that constitutes an autonomous whole and speaks for itself. Ingarden also derived the structure of the literary work from the work itself.

In spite of its ramified influence no phenomenological "school" was born in literary research, but the fundamentals of phenomenology continued to survive partly in the objective structuralist, partly in subjective existentialist trends.

Gradually, however, the traditional principles and elements of criticism have regained ground and it may be said that "healthy compromises" have come about as a result. The data extraneous to the work of art, seemed utilisable again; moreover, historicism re-appeared and demanded its place in the approach to the work of art.

In 1968, George Poulet, close to the French phenomenologico-existentialist trend, wrote in his contribution to the meeting of critics at Cerisy that, although the work of art cannot accept guidance from the "outside" and its object can only be in itself, yet we cannot renounce the infinity of biographical, bibliographical, philological data, even if these do not lead us to the internal comprehension of the work . . . "Le sujet qui préside à l'œuvre ne peut être que dans l'œuvre. Assurément pour comprendre celle-ci rien n'est négligeable, et une infinité de connaissance biographiques, bibliographiques, textuelles et généralement critique me sont indispensables. Cependant ces connaissances ne coïncident pas avec la connaissance interne de l'œuvre . . ." (*Les chemins actuels de la critique*, Paris, 1968, 277). History as a criterion for the understanding of the work made its appearance in the concept of "influence history" (*Wirkungsgeschichte*) elaborated by Hans-Georg Gadamer (*Wahrheit und Methode*, Tübingen, 1960), which

implies the inner “dialogue” of the subject and object, the work and interpreter, and involves historical tradition in its “hermeneutical circle” as much as the present. An awareness of the “influence history” does not renounce either the past or the present and, as Jürgen Habermas puts it (*Erkenntnis und Interesse*, Frankfurt am Main, 1968), does not assimilate the tradition by subjecting itself to it, but rather by developing it. Simultaneously Ralph Cohen launched a periodical in the United States in 1968 under the title *New Literary History*, the goal of which was a kind of rehabilitation of the historical view of literature. After Gadamer expounded his phenomenological view of history, Hans Robert Jauss developed a new concept of literary history, inasmuch as he historicized the relationship of subject to object, of the work of art and its receiver (*Literaturgeschichte und Provokation*, Frankfurt am Main, 1970).

Jauss does not regard literary history as the chronology of literary events, but rather as a process of continuous interaction between creation and reception, the work of art and the reader. The work disposes of an “appeal” and attracts the attention of the reader, whereas the latter turns to the work with certain expectations, and works as a “challenge” in instigating the process of creativity. The synchronized factor of this basic relationship is complemented by historical continuity: namely that the respective generations receive the work in differing ways, their reactions are repeatedly modified, thus perpetually changing and recreating the aesthetic content, signification, and value of the work. The readers of the subsequent eras receive the literary work according to their own nature and needs, while practically executing anew upon the work the operation of the Husserlian intentionality, which is not independent from the potentials of their own subjective being. Literary history is brought about by the aesthetic object and the receiving subject in conjunction.

This is the aesthetics of reception of Jauss (*Rezeptionsästhetik*), in its bare essentials. The reason why I deal with it at the end of this essay about the phenomenological view of literary criticism, is that it points to a synthesis. It connects the synchronized, analytical view of literature with its historical fate, the methods of description of the historical process with the objective and subjective methods concentrating on the work, among which, as we have seen, phenomenology had played the role of pathfinder.

KÁROLY VARGA

**THE SOCIOLOGICAL APPROACH
TO LITERATURE**

DEFINITION

The empiric sociological approach to literature must be delimited from three other possible types of approach. First, from the “by no means sociological” type of approach, that is from the aesthetic-norm-based ones in which the questions are posed from the aspect of traditional-classical literary scholarship, literary criticism and the history of literature. Second, within the sociological approaches, from those which are “not programmatically empirical”, being either more or less than that: e.g. the interpretations of literature by past and present schools of social philosophy, A. Comte’s and H. Taine’s “literary sociology” for example or Th. W. Adorno’s or L. Goldmann’s “Marxianizing” theory of literature. Third, from the really Marxist approach to literature, because the sociological school to be reviewed here, however much it stresses the objective social factors, has evolved from a conceptual tradition alien to Marxism and contains several aspects not yet clarified from the Marxist point of view.

When making the first delimitation, we shall point to the specific “secularization” of the sociological approach to literature. To render the second delimitation more pronounced, we shall recall a dispute between two sociologists, a “literary philosopher” and an author of “empirical” inclinations. The third delimitation, the perfect completion of which amounts to a critical appraisal of the empiric sociological approach to be reviewed in this study, is a tremendous task which surpasses the scope of not only this introduction but the entire paper as well. It could only be suitably effected within a comprehensive work whose horizon coincides with the Marxist principles—and practices—developed in contradistinction to advanced sociological methods and some empiri-

cally based generalisations. To this immense task we can only make a modicum of contribution. And the most efficient form of this contribution is not so much the making of declarations of principle, but rather, an informative presentation of important points of detail that can stimulate further research.

1. DELIMITATION OF THE SOCIOLOGICAL APPROACH TO LITERATURE FROM THE TRADITIONAL AESTHETIC APPROACH

In distinguishing the sociological approach to literature from traditional literary scholarship, history and literary criticism, first of all we have to emphasize that while the latter specify their subjects and goals according to intraliterary, and aesthetic considerations, the former uses social criteria even in respect of what it regards and what it does not regard as literature. These "social criteria" follow, on the one hand, from an enumeration "between quotation marks" of the standpoints of the social groups concerned, including of course those of literary scholars, and critics, and, on the other hand, from an evaluation of their relevant attitudes towards the question. Namely, students of literary sociology do not profess, they only cite and analyse these verbal and attitudinal evaluations; they are primarily curious to know what types of approach the various groups represent and why. Therefore, the sociological approach examines from the outside the phenomenon that a given society calls literature, which includes in general, first, the writers, second, the public and third, the persons who are professionally or semi-professionally occupied with literary scholarship (i.e. theory, history and criticism) and also those concerned with literary policy and the economic side of the literary process, that is, all those who are invested with the social roles institutionalized for this end. It is generally not denied that the critics, through their value and norm system, also belong to literary life and that starting from this value system, they contribute to the development of the essential features of literature. Literary sociologists, however, state that the selective and valuational considerations of the historians of literature are also normative (aesthetical and ideological), and from this aspect they are also within the range of the social

phenomena which the school to be reviewed intends to describe and analyse empirically from the outside and without preconceptions.¹

2. DELIMITATION FROM THE "NON-EMPIRIC" SOCIOLOGICAL APPROACHES TO LITERATURE

For this purpose it seems most appropriate to examine the dispute between L. Goldmann and A. Silbermann, because the peculiarities characterizing the empiric approach to literature are the most conspicuous in the differences between them. Accuracy is to be emphasized here, because it would be a mistake either to blur the oppositions between the two schools or to overrate their importance. For although both parties keep affirming passionately their own particularity against the other and the irreconcilability of their ways of approach—Goldmann with his devastating criticism of "content sociology", and Silbermann with his petulant repudiation of Goldmann's "aprioristic literary philosophy"—, to the eye of an outsider the gap between them is not so unbridgeable. In the final analysis, they are differing in a point of methodology, namely, their opposition lies in the inevitable contradiction of "exactitude versus significance".² Actually, both of them attempt to integrate the literary phenomenon into the social structure, Goldmann on a higher level of abstraction, Silbermann in a methodologically "more protected" form.

(a) The theory and method of the structural-genetic school

The sociological approach in general is not alien to the public of Marxist erudition, since it is just a terminological disguise for the Marxian thesis of the social determinateness of cultural phenomena. But how is this basic sociological approach interpreted by a sociologist of literature belonging to the structural-genetic school? Goldmann starts from the assumption that between the parts of an artistic work and its whole there is a kind of relation-

¹ H. N. Fügen, *Die Hauptrichtungen der Literatursoziologie*. (Bonn, 1964), p. 22.

² Cf. E. K. Scheuch, "Methoden". In: René König, *Soziologie*. (Frankfurt a/M., 1958), p. 192.

ship which is similar to that existing between the whole of a really important work of art and the social group whose way of thinking is successfully expressed in this work.³ The question then is: what aspect of the work corresponds to the way of thinking of the social group concerned: its content or its structure? Goldmann criticizes the content analysis partly from an aesthetic and partly from a sociological point of view. His aesthetic judgement is based on his opinion that the content analysers fail to grasp the essence of the literary nature of the work, which is to be found in the structure. His sociological criticism points out that the entire way of thinking of the social group in the background cannot be grasped in the content; this group's collective consciousness is only sparsely reflected in the content of the literary work, wherein the writer's creativity has complete freedom. A reliable "homology" can be established only between *the structure of the work and the structure of the consciousness of the social group which is in the background*. The "joint authorship" of this social group and the writer is interpreted by Goldmann as follows. The social group's collective consciousness, which might also be called its world-outlook, reveals only certain trends, and is not a definitively formed, coherent phenomenon, since its members simultaneously belong to many other groups as well, each of which has its own orientation. A great writer, a man of exceptional talent, creates an imaginary world which not only reveals definite trends but is also coherent, with its structure corresponding to the structure towards which the social group is tending. The "sociology of content analysis" sees the work as a *reflection* of collective consciousness, says Goldmann, whereas structuralist sociology sees it as the most important *component part* of collective consciousness, through which the members of the group themselves suddenly come to realize what they are thinking, feeling and doing. As to what groups the sociologist of literature finds worth choosing in order to compare the structure of the group's attitude with the structure of the work, Goldmann suggests that he seek guidance, first of all, in the great works themselves. But eventually he will have to choose groups whose consciousness progresses towards *a global vision of man*. Such collectivities in European

³ L. Goldmann, *Pour une sociologie du roman*. (Paris, 1964), p. 217.

societies are the classes. The nation, e.g. determines only the peripheral elements of consciousness but not its substantial structure.

(b) *The methodological precision of the empiric school*

Silbermann's critique of this theory is by and large the following:⁴ While C. Lévy-Strauss's structural anthropology examines really concrete social structures, especially kinship structures, exploring their components, for Goldmann this play with structures, structuralization and destructuralization is merely *a priori* thinking. Series of phenomena, like social mobility and social change as well as the developed techniques of sociological research, which are indispensable in up-to-date sociological analysis, are left out of his considerations. (To these, e.g. to *systematic content analysis*, Goldmann is especially unable to resign himself.) What arises from the categories of the "sociological study of the novel", the "literary universe", the "structural-genetic analysis of literature in history" and Goldmann's "dialectic thinking" is, according to Silbermann, nothing else but "diluted Lukács", simply the ideology which Goldmann developed as a philosopher but sells as a sociologist. Whenever Goldmann as an adroit mind-reader, says without querying the novelist what the latter really thought of when making his statements, it is more than audacity to speak of empiricism or to write: "I do it in my capacity as a sociologist." In Silbermann's view Goldmann disregards the fact that in view of the achievements of the empiric sociology of literature, a sociologist must no longer make unproved and methodically unfounded statements like this: the novel built upon a problematical hero corresponds to the liberal economic formations; the non-biographical novel to societies which have already left behind the liberal market economy and the individualism which ensued from it. It is remarkable that Silbermann delimits Lukács's activity from Goldmann's mixed endeavours, and rates the former much more positively. He underlines that Lukács's aesthetics of

⁴ A. Silbermann, "Literaturphilosophie, soziologische Literaturästhetik oder Literatursoziologie". *Kölner Zeitschrift für Soziologie und Sozialpsychologie*, 1966, p. 139.

literature (his theory of the novel) was finished in 1920 and it is understandable that he then tried to go beyond the sterile positivism of the time. Since then, however, the methods of sociology have become so refined that the times when we could speak of formalism and of mere dependence on statistics have long passed.

THE FORERUNNERS OF THE SOCIOLOGICAL APPROACH TO LITERATURE

Below we shall give, without aiming at completeness, a brief survey of the historical development of the sociological approach to literature. The authors belonging to this trend can, with some arbitrariness, be grouped by nations.

1. THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE SOCIOLOGICAL VIEW OF LITERATURE IN FRANCE

Three waves can be distinguished within the effect that the sociological approach had upon the French theory of literature in the past century. The first rests upon the ideas of the Enlightenment and the Revolution and reaches its peak in the works of Louis de Bonald⁵ and Mme de Staël;⁶ the second emerges with Comte's⁷ and Taine's⁸ versions of classical positivism; and the third is a reaction to the latter's rigidity, with J. M. Guyau as its most noted representative, but F. Baldensperger,⁹ who criticizes positivism, should also be mentioned here.

Guyau's theory is sociological in a sense different from Taine's. It deals not so much with the social determinedness of art as rather

⁵ Cf. R. Wellek and A. Warren, *Theorie der Literatur*. (Frankfurt a/M. 1963), p. 79.

⁶ Mme de Staël-Holstein, *De la littérature considérée dans ses rapports avec les institutions sociales* (édition critique par Paul van Tieghem). (Paris, 1959).

⁷ A. Comte, *Cours de philosophie positive*. (Paris, 1864).

⁸ H. Taine, *Philosophie der Kunst* II. (Leipzig, 1902).

⁹ F. Baldensperger, *La littérature création, succès, durée*. (Paris, 1919), p. 193.

with its function in society or, more exactly, in social life.¹⁰ He criticizes Taine's one-sided (meaning opposite) approach.

Guyau came into conflict with Taine's positivism from the platform of his peculiar philosophy which was a mixture of vitalism and Epicurean social ethics. As a consequence of his "ecstatic vitalism", for which some named him the "French Nietzsche" but which is rather reminiscent of Bergson's intuitionism, he assigns an outstanding role in society to positive feelings, first of all to the expansive force of sympathy and compassion. He defines even the function of art by socio-ethical requirements derived from the same range of ideas. Thus, he derives the aesthetic value itself from social roots, namely from the sociological function of creating affiliation.

To Guyau art is a sort of elementary (we might say today: "microsociological") social phenomenon, the effect of which permeates social life. The primary object of aesthetic quality, viz. harmony, is internally related to sympathy which is the primal momentum of human "sociability". So, doubtlessly, the purpose of art is to arouse sympathy for the things described. If people are portrayed favourably in art and become acquainted through such presentations, then universal brotherhood, friendship and solidarity will be promoted.

These ideas of Guyau, aimed at the "associative" functions of art, certainly remind us of those subsequent, mainly American, sociopsychological and microfunctional theories of art – e.g. that of J. Dewey¹¹ – which try to approach the aesthetic quality from the side of everyday-life experiences, the elementary momentums of social interaction and from that of regularities of communication. At the same time, however, it is these same orientations which raise doubts in some authors as to whether this trend can at all be considered sociology. For example, Fügen (in the wake of von Wiese and Ziegenfuss) points out¹² that Guyau does not examine the aesthetic canons from outside, as a sociologist, but he identifies them with the aforesaid socio-ethical norms, the values of which hold him entrapped.

¹⁰ J. M. Guyau, *Die Kunst als soziologisches Phänomen*. (Leipzig, 1911), p. 12.

¹¹ J. Dewey, *Art as Experience*. (New York, 1934), p. 19.

¹² Fügen: *op. cit.*, p. 53.

2. THE SOCIOLOGICAL VIEW IN THE GERMAN THEORY OF LITERATURE

While in France it was a positivist orientation that came to prevail and the Russian philosophers (not yet Marxists) were characterized by a peculiar activist objectivism, the German thinkers were greatly influenced by the Hegelian tradition which was to a certain degree opposed to both of the former ones. The trend of the "Hegelian Right" was characterized by a "breakthrough" of life in the world of science and by a *verstehende* method of investigating the phenomena of life from within, from the side of experience. Instead of the more noteworthy W. Dilthey who, however, was not a sociologist, we cite here G. Simmel who is recognized as a classic figure of bourgeois sociology. We shall deal with A. Hauser from among the authors who espoused the "Leftist" elements of the Hegelian tradition (thus sometimes getting near to the Marxist view of literature) and who analysed the sociohistorical dialectic of the evolution of art. On the extreme left wing are L. Schücking's views which are in many respects reminiscent of those of Plekhanov.

(a) *Life does not determine art but mediates it*

The way the problem is raised by G. Simmel, the founder of "sociological formalism", bears logical affinity to several hypotheses and results of the Russian formalists (we disclaim competence in the question of philological affinity).

In the matter of genesis, Simmel, arguing similarly to the Russian formalists but starting, of course, from his own philosophical pre-conceptions, denies that the *causal* line of any effect previous to the literary work could simply be extended in the system of the work. According to Simmel, here begins the dominion of a new teleology inasmuch as the elements of the work point not outwards, but to the internal organizing principle (the Shklovskian "device").¹³ This thesis in Simmel's formal sociological, or rather philosophical, system means the application of two distinct categories, viz. "process" and "end result", in his theory of art, and this has some

¹³ G. Simmel, "Zum Problem des Naturalismus". In: *Fragmente und Aufsätze*, (Munich, 1923), p. 279.

interesting implications. First of all, there is a remarkable change of aspect as to which trends in art serve subjectivistic and which ones pursue objectivistic aims. As Belinski has expounded, that art is objective which accurately represents the objects of reality, that is, in which the facts of life are represented in the most natural manner possible, without the mediation of the artist's own ideal system of views, values and norms; on the other hand, that art is subjective in which the artist re-creates reality "in accordance with his views concerning things". In Simmel's system, however, the emphasis is necessarily laid on other aspects. If in the work of art taken as an independent *final result*, the *process* preceding it is extended without a forceful formative "device", i.e. without intervening consistently with the system of aesthetic norms, or, in other words, if in the artistic work the artist "acts out" a process taking place in his own psyche, then, essentially, we have here to do with a subjective tendency. It makes absolutely no difference whether this psychic process signifies a sequence of momentums resulting from the accurate observation of external reality, as it does in the endeavours of naturalists, or the internal impulses, as is the case with the expressionists; the crucial thing is just whether the causality tending from this process towards the work is interrupted or not by a teleology which is consistent with an objective, artistic system of norms.

In terms of genesis, at first glance, the only thing that follows from the theory is that it is justified to draw conclusions about the artist's experience, passion and fate only in the case of a "naturalist" i.e. passive types of art, in which the genesis is programmatically extended into the work. Taine's genetic outlook fits only such art. Simmel, however, extends the circle, and paradoxically enough, by "erecting one more rampart" round the work; namely, he interrupts the process of genesis not only in the case of the work of art, but also one step earlier, already in the case of the (true) artist. In his monograph ¹⁴ aimed at an understanding of the *Urphänomen* Goethe, he emphasizes the poet's sovereign superiority over all his determinateness. Creation is prior to all experience, and the creative personality himself creates the relevant moments of his fate. Namely, the experiences only appear as experi-

¹⁴ G. Simmel, *Goethe*. (Leipzig, 1917), p. 17.

ences in consequence of the creative intention; that is, if they fit in with the intention. This idea in Shklovsky's conception is expressed as follows: "The literary form is what determines the writer's consciousness." Shklovsky stresses that the organizing principle of the work of art, the "device" is the starting point of the effect; while Simmel points out that the effect permeates also other spheres of the (true) artist's life than just work.

But this is still not the last step in describing the relationship between art and society. Opposing the view of "art for art's sake", Simmel emphasizes that the autonomous system of art acquires real significance only when set in the context of the larger system of social life.¹⁵ This means that great works and great artists always imply something more than mere artistic greatness. Great artists are in every case also generally prominent persons, and great literature is always part of a historical-social movement of major significance. If the latter is non-existent, we cannot speak of great literature. Life is the medium of art and in this sense—after the danger of naive positivism has been removed—it is important to emphasize their unity.

In Simmel, however, we can find not only a kind of step-by-step rehabilitation of the relationships to the background, i.e. the genesis, but also the interpretation—though with precaution and reservation—that literary description is also a particular aspect of reality. The nature of these aspects of reality is reminiscent of the Russian formalists' categories of "making strange" and desautomation. The precaution and reservation are to the effect that art, like caricature, necessarily oversteps at certain points the proportions of real life. Caricature does so by exaggerating a single feature but leaving the entire personality or phenomena otherwise untouched; whereas art, especially tragic art, elevates the entire system to greatness and solemnity. Hence, here, we obtain an argument which is in tune with the Russian formalists' notion of "making strange" and refutes the naive, mechanistic conception of reflection.

But Simmel goes still further by saying that the artist (and the caricaturist) often reveals just the caricatures of life. This means that by deliberately distorting them still further, he calls attention

¹⁵ G. Simmel, *Zur Philosophie der Kunst*. (Potsdam, 1922), p. 153.

to disproportions and distortions in social life, which are of significance but cannot be seen easily. This idea of Simmel's can be brought into connection with the two functions of literature, concerning which we shall present some results of concrete research. One of these functions is reflection. According to Simmel, the writer can in fact accurately see the right proportions, i.e. what it is that the piece of reality before him caricatures. In order for him to be able to distort deliberately, reality must be reflected reliably in the artist's consciousness. The other function is "social control". The fact is that besides the accurate perception of the given reality, there is in the artist's consciousness also his judgement and evaluation of it. This is the basis on which he sees the given state of affairs as a caricature, and knows the direction in which he should "distort it further".¹⁶

(b) *The social background of stylistic trends*

Arnold Hauser's scientific system, which we discuss in this section, is to be considered a literary *typology* and a related sociological *theory*. He divides the stylistic trends of literature, or the artistic positions behind them, into two principal groups: the "naturalist" approach which copies reality through direct observation, and the "geometric" artistic approach which creates new units out of the elements of reality through speculative viewpoints.¹⁷ Hauser develops a historical typology according to the actual ratios of the two components. He points out that the opposition between the naturalist and the geometric approaches had already existed in the Paleolithic and Neolithic periods of the Stone Age, when the embryonic shape of the social causes which are responsible for this dichotomy could already be observed. The surprisingly naturalist pictures from the Paleolithic period correspond to the *tradition- and convention-free* outlook of the gathering and hunting mode of life. When, however, in the Neolithic period people settled down and started tilling the soil and domesticating animals, *the*

¹⁶ Cf. M. C. Albrecht, "The Relationship of Literature and Society". *American Journal of Sociology*, 1954/2.

¹⁷ A. Hauser, *Sozialgeschichte der Kunst und Literatur*. (Munich, 1953); and A. Hauser, *Philosophie der Kunstgeschichte*. (Munich, 1958).

element of convention appeared in their culture, which entailed the appearance, in art, of the elements of the geometric, denotative, symbolizing stylistic trends. This parallel development is found during later periods as well, albeit often in disguise. Wherever social motion begins, or where informality, competition and individualism predominate, the naturalist outlook makes its appearance. On the other hand, in cultures and historical periods where and when society becomes rigid and conservative and clings to the given economic, political and religious patterns, canons and fixed forms appear in art, and the place of concrete observations is predominantly taken by the reflection of ideas; namely, the artist represents not what he sees but what he knows, or what he believes to know, about a given thing on the basis of his previous knowledge and especially on that of the dogmas of the given culture.

Hauser's vast system covering the history of mankind culminates in the lesson that naturalist observation, which is concrete and exempt from theoretical preconceptions, attained its zenith in modern western culture and has reached its most extreme and purest form of manifestation in impressionism and post-impressionism. Namely, impressionism represents things broken down to their particular moments, with the least speculative preconceptions and the highest reliability of direct observation. Post-impressionism, however, surpasses even this in some respect, since its critical approach exposes even the illusion to which impressionism still clung, namely, that the accurate representation of at least the particular moments means a sort of reflection of reality. This critical approach completely destroys the representational function of art and is content with to believe that beside the things of nature there exist artistic objects which do not imitate them. Behind this art-destroying critical approach, Hauser sees, as a social factor, the shaken self-confidence of modern times, an uneasiness which he relates to the general crisis of capitalism.

(c) The category of the taste-upholding stratum

Levin Schücking's book *The Sociology of Literary Taste* had its first foreign publication in Moscow in 1928. Having understood the purport of the book, this fact is not surprising. From among

the authors mentioned so far it is Schücking who brings to its fruition the idea of art's being embedded in society. He emphasizes the role of special factors which have an effect on the evolution of literature, effectively undermining the contemporary bourgeois view of literature. Almost sarcastically, he cites examples like this: While in 1894, 184 three-volume works were published in England, three years later – as the result of a protest filed in the meantime by librarians – the figure dropped to four.¹⁸ He points out that the writer eventually adapts himself to the standards of taste of the age; this latter, however, he sees not as some sort of mystical *Zeitgeist*, but as heterogeneous, varying from group to group. This is how he introduces a concept that has become very important in the sociology of literature – the category of the *taste-upholding group or stratum*. According to this conception, the phenomenon of taste-transformation means that a new taste-upholding stratum or class comes to the fore to have a say in this matter, i.e. it has seized the means and agencies which control the mechanism of art. Seen from this angle, the ascendance of the new taste is, in fact, never an immanent process but is always the result of active sociological factors, of changes in the social structure. Consequently, the phenomena of taste-transformation are to be treated like social struggles in which, besides the intellectual means, the decisive role is played by material factors.

It is also clear from the above that in Schücking's interpretation the concept of literary value can never signify something objective, but is always related to the judgement of the taste-upholding group. He states that this truth is generally acknowledged by literary critics in respect of bygone times and earlier generations but they are usually not willing to apply it to their own case.

3. THE SOCIOLOGICAL APPROACH IN THE AMERICAN THEORY OF ART

With the American literary theorists of the sociological approach, we come close to the school to be presented here. We are going to cite the thoughts of three authors who represent three

¹⁸ L. L. Schücking, *Soziologie der literarischen Geschmacksbildung*. (Bern, 1961), p. 60.

basic trends in the general strategy of the "American type" of sociological analysis of literature. Dewey includes the concept of art in the categories of the sequence of experiences in social adaptation, of "social learning", and of communication closely related to it. In this way he places it in the focus of modern sociological interest, since this latter very often defines itself as the scientific study of "social interaction". Kenneth Burke, who was considered to be a Marxist in some periods of his career, provides a further structural breakdown of social experience by stating that social reality is in fact a web of endeavours, or rather, strategies; he also works out a scheme for analysing this "dramatized" social reality and the fictional system of literature together. We shall meet this scheme, as regards both its form and its content, in the examinations given below. Finally, Dwight McDonald creates a kind of comprehensive theory of the popular culture which is the primary subject of the communication sociology applied to "literary" phenomena. If compared with the plentiful results of research, the defects in McDonald's theory indicate that only those results of the empiric sociological approach to literature are useful for us which have stopped at lower levels of generalization.

(a) Aesthetic elements of everyday experience

The aesthetics of the social-pragmatist philosopher J. Dewey who interpreted art as a particular form of human *experience* and tried to find the aesthetic element in the simple experiences of everyday life was of determining significance for the American study of art and literature.¹⁹

For Dewey each human experience is a sort of integral whole which can be well delimited and which has phases, the most important among them being the closing one, which is always a kind of *consummation*. The reason why consummation fills man with pleasure and gives him a kind of gratification that nothing else can give is that it is akin to the most profound experience of life, namely, the victorious adaptation to the environment, i.e. "survival" itself. Dewey sees the aesthetic element of life just in the pleasure of consummation or of moving towards the goal of consummation.

¹⁹ Dewey, *op. cit.*, pp. 19 and 58.

In this conception, therefore, aesthetic value is not a kind of ethereal quality but the ordering of human, and thus essentially social, of experiential elements, their rhythms, progression towards accomplishment, consummation, integration.

Besides experience, another key category in Dewey's aesthetics is "expression". Simple, primary impulses have no significance for the executer himself, although they may convey some meaning to an outsider. An action has a meaning, i.e. something "to express", for the person who acts only when conflict arises, causing him to halt and recall earlier relevant experiences. It is in relation to the background of these accumulated experiences that the meaning of the action becomes revealed; that is, this is the time when the moment of "expression" arises. In the expression, the meaning derived from old experiences and the object of the actual action get completely fused, and thus the latter becomes the medium of meaning. It is the distinction of this *medium* appearing in art from the ordinary meaning of "medium" that holds a pivotal position in Dewey's system. Namely, this medium in art is not a mere means but is also a goal. Its complete, perfect unity with the meaning is identification.

And here, in the second round, the social element reappears in Dewey's conception of art. Namely, expression, by its very nature, is communication—not only in the simple mechanical sense of providing information, but also as the process making for participation. The way in which communication makes common what has so far been isolated and individual is that the experiences of both the communicator and the perceiver receive their definitive form and determination precisely in this transmission. It is this participation of meanings in communication that creates the truest human community and is capable of tearing down those barriers between man and man which no other kind of association can remove.

These beautiful humanistic ideas of Dewey, however, do not remain abstract but are given a concrete and seriously warning formulation at the end of his great work *Art as Experience*. Here, he raises the problem that there is something wrong with the aesthetic quality of modern industrial society. He states that, although the mechanistic character of industrial work itself is anti-aesthetical—as is everything that is routine—i.e. it is a process

which does not lead to consummation and integration, yet the bigger trouble does not lie in this but in the fact that the workers do not share in the products of their own labour and, consequently, they are not integrated psychically into the production process. According to Dewey, the aesthetic problem of mankind remains unsolved until production becomes a collective human enterprise.

(b) “Dramatization” and “Categorization”

The two concepts in the above title precisely define K. Burke's contribution to the developing of the sociological study of literature. Dramatization means that for Burke, in the world of fiction as much as in any intellectual product, e.g. the various philosophical systems or trends, it is the dynamic outlook that prevails, an outlook which is identical with the fundamental insight of the structural-functional school constituting the body of American sociology.²⁰ According to this, social reality is a hierarchical network of *systems of action*. These systems are characterized inwardly by “functional imperatives” adjusted to the means-end axis, i.e. to the pole of “gratification-adaptation”, and outwardly by the “input-output” relations, i.e. by those of the exchange between systems. This theory, elaborated in general sociology during the 1930's, has found its way into the methodology of the sociological analysis of literary works, among others, through Burke's activity in the 1940's. As regards individual studies in the sociology of literature, this has had the consequence that researchers not only evaluate the social content exposed by fiction from the point of view of the “reflective function” of literature, but mostly they immediately reveal the effective element of “social control” as well.²¹ In other words, they do not stop at stating that the fictional order follows or does not follow, in its proportions, the changing patterns of reality, but continue to search for the intentions, endeavours and strategies behind the discovered facts.

²⁰ T. Parsons *et al.*, *Toward a General Theory of Action*. (Cambridge, Mass.). 1951.

²¹ Cf. B. Berelson and P. Salter, “Majority and Minority Americans: An Analysis of Magazine Fiction”. *Public Opinion Quarterly*, 1947/1, pp. 168–190.

For example, they examine the purpose of narrative literature in American magazines in generally representing the "not 100 per cent American" characters as usually belonging to the lower levels of the social hierarchy. It was in his work *A Grammar of Motives* that Burke elaborated this method of his which looks for strategy behind every phenomenon, and he summed it up in a "pentad of key terms". These five notions (Act, Scene, Agent, Agency, Purpose),²² if expressed in the form of questions, are strikingly reminiscent of the set of questions used in reports: What was done? When and where? Who did it? How did he do it? Why did he do it? When Burke wants to understand through these five simple questions all the schools of philosophy that have ever existed in the history of mankind, he links realism to the first, materialism to the second, idealism to the third, pragmatism to the fourth, and mysticism to the fifth, and we are not surprised that such a "master stroke" does not evoke too much sympathy from his critics.²³

But this "dramatic" standardization is only one aspect of Burke's contribution. The other, methodological-technical one is "cluster analysis", what we called "categorization" in the title of this section. It is this seemingly simple idea that provides the key (of course, only through the introduction and long-time operation of an immense coding apparatus) to the exact analysis of all sorts of written documents, including works of fiction. Namely, there is not much we could do with the individual moments of a given fictional material in their perfect individuality, but if we lump together the elements which can in some sense be regarded as equivalents in categories, then we can make highly consequential statements both on the strength of the various categories and on the nature of their interrelations. Thus, from a chosen point of view, the beloved woman and the house she lives in come into the same category and thus the weight of this latter category is increased. It can be seen that here the common idea of the symbolic interpretability of the elements is scientifically systematized; and in its scientific form it already implies the possibility of statistical operations with symbolic equivalents. "Symbolic," Burke

²² K. Burke, *A Grammar of Motives*. (New York, 1955), X.

²³ Cf. W. Sutton, *Modern American Criticism*. (Englewood Cliffs, N. J., 1963), p. 208.

writes, is synonymous both with "statistical" and with "representative". It is the "statistical" analysis that exposes the ways in which a "symbolic" action is "representative"; e.g. Lady Macbeth's washing her hands after the crime is "representative" of a guilty conscience.²⁴

It is to be noted that there is a long way leading from Burke to the really scientific application of this idea,²⁵ i.e. to the level on which the standard investigations of the empiric sociological study of literature take place. Below we are going to present a few to these.

(c) *The superficial theory of mass culture*

MacDonald's theory of mass culture is important for us because it attempts to comprehensively analyse the cultural content which is very thoroughly dealt with by the American type of sociology of literature and mass communication research.²⁶ This latter, as we have already mentioned, does not entirely share the pessimism of MacDonald's conception and, though it uses some elements of his system of categories, quite independently of theory, it does have considerable results to its credit. MacDonald distinguishes mass culture both from high culture and from folklore. In his view, high culture is communicated from person to person, whereas in mass culture impersonal producers pass contents of dubious standard to impersonal communities. Folklore is produced by the people for themselves. High culture is produced by an integrated group, the cultural élite, also for itself. Mass culture is produced by specialists who are employed and paid by the power élite. Mass culture is at the same time a tool of exploitation which, based on the cultural needs of the people, is employed in profitable large-scale production. Ease of consumption and ease of production are equally responsible for the fantastic dimensions of mass culture.

²⁴ K. Burke, *The Philosophy of Literary Form: Studies in Symbolic Action*. (New York, 1957), p. 22.

²⁵ Cf. R. C. North *et al.*, *Content Analysis*. (Stanford, 1963); H. D. Lasswell *et al.*: *Language and Politics*. (Cambridge, Mass., 1965).

²⁶ D. MacDonald, "A Theory of Mass Culture". In: B. Rosenberg and D. M. White: *Mass Culture*. Glencoe, Ill., 1964.

MacDonald's theory of mass culture in fact conceals unrealistic and reactionary views behind a sympathetic-looking proposition. In respect of mass culture, MacDonald places the culture of the United States and that of the Soviet Union on the same level. In his view in both countries the ruling élite has cultural contents produced on a mass scale with manipulative purposes. This means that the role of the Maecenas, i.e., the one who orders the cultural product, is greater than that of the creator. The only difference, in MacDonald's opinion, is that American mass culture is already concerned with consumption and entertainment, while the Soviet Union still has problems with production. As a result, this culture is pedagogical in character.

In addition to this reactionary view, MacDonald also has a few strikingly unrealistic preconceptions. He takes over the platitude of traditional cultural criticism which says that mass culture is inferior because, like all mass production, it strives for cheap production. He fails to notice the circumstance that the cheapness of a product alone, without improved quality, does not account for the success of its dynamic spreading. A noted specialist of mass culture, D. Riesman, has pointed out that the psychological argumentation of a motion picture made twenty years ago is felt to be naive by today's public.²⁷ MacDonald paints the future of mass culture in dark colours as well. On the one hand, today's intellectual élite, whose cultural milieu would really be the avant-garde, is unable to create a culture independent of the business interests of those who own the media of mass communication. On the other hand, it is no use even trying to raise the level of mass culture, since contrary to the Marxist conception, in MacDonald's view, the culture of the masses is, in essence, never wholesome.

THE PROBLEMS OF THE SOCIOLOGICAL APPROACH TO LITERATURE

The sociological approach to literature, as a theoretical generalization is frequently based on empiric sociological investigations of literature. It seems promising to get acquainted not only with the

²⁷ D. Riesman *et al.*, *The Lonely Crowd*. (New Haven, 1963), p. 297.

results of a few such investigations but also with the methods which have led to them, since very often it is precisely the knowledge of these methods which provides an experiential notion of the worth of the new elements of the sociological approach to literature.

The empiric investigations, used below as illustrations, are grouped according to two complementary models of literary phenomena. We might call the first one the "topographical" model, which represents the *social structure* of the literary fact, its structural elements being – in the conception of R. Wellek and A. Warren – the writer, the work and the public.²⁸ R. Escarpit makes this static triad more accessible to sociological research by expanding the model to include the media of literary communication, too.²⁹ Thus, he draws our attention to the complicated technical, economic – and even ideologic-political – process of a book's production and circulation. The latter viewpoint becomes an entirely independent unit in H. D. Duncan's model, which tries to grasp the social structure of literature – more broadly of art – in the triad of the creative artist, the recipient public and behind both of them, the guardian or the representative of the society's cultural value system: the critic and the censor. He creates a typology based on the relative weights of these three factors, the artist, the critic and the public.³⁰ It is interesting to note that whereas classical pre-sociological scholarship conceived of the relationship between the work and its creator in terms of the two poles of an axis, in the latter model these two points are seen as coinciding. Finally, H. N. Fügen sets up a scheme consisting of four fulcra and a principal relational axis so as to plug into a large circuit the two poles – writer and reader – of this axis (the fundamental relationship which is realized in the work) through criticism as an ideal medium, on the one hand, and through the publishers, bookstores and libraries as material media, on the other.³¹ Rather for simple practical than for theoretical reasons, we shall treat the writer, the work, the critic and the public as separate structural elements.

²⁸ Wellek-Warren, *op. cit.*

²⁹ R. Escarpit, *Das Buch und der Leser*. (Cologne and Opladen, 1961), p. 26.

³⁰ H. D. Duncan, "Sociology of Art, Literature and Music: Social Contents of Symbolic Experience". In: Howard Becker and Alvin Boskoff: *Modern Sociological Theory*. (New York, 1957).

³¹ Fügen, *op. cit.*, p. 109.

As for the empiric investigations related to the *social functions* of the literary phenomenon, after giving a short survey of the possibilities of grouping these functions, we treat them on the basis of the American sociologist of literature M. C. Albrecht's systematization³² which is a sort of dynamic model including the three functions of reflection, social control and literary effect (aiming primarily at social change).

1. THE SOCIAL STRUCTURE OF THE LITERARY FACT

Since the sociological approach to literature developed essentially in contradistinction to the literary approach concentrating on the work, it is not surprising that it pays less attention to the immortal masterpieces than the customary aesthetic approach does. For a European man of letters, it may be unusual to see how the interest of American research turns away from the literary élite (the small number of past and present classics) and from their often esoteric cultural values and works of art, the knowledge of which is expected at the higher level of literary culture, and turns to the contents of that culture which is popular among the broadest strata of the population. Leo Löwenthal, who dealt perhaps the most — of the empiric sociologists of literature — with the so-called great literature, gives the following explanation for this shift in interest: "The academic disciplines, which have had traditionally the task of cultivating literary history and analysing literary works, have been entirely perplexed by mass literature, the flow of best-sellers, magazines and "comics". This is why they have assumed the proud pose of indifference towards those third- and fourth-rate works. This means, however, that an important area of knowledge has been left unexplored and a requirement unfulfilled, and it is time for these unsolved issues to be tackled by sociologists."³³ Thus "fourth-rate" literature, in which neither the writer's fame nor the aesthetic value of the work plays any role and all that matters is unparalleled mass circulation coupled with various "sub-aesthetic" functions is the most favourite "find" of the empiric sociology of literature.

³² Albrecht, *loc. cit.*

³³ L. Löwenthal, *Literatur und Gesellschaft*, (Neuwied, 1964), p. 244. English edition: L. Löwenthal, *Literature, Popular Culture, and Society*. (Englewood Cliffs, N. J.), 1961.

Before dealing with this "favourite" theme, which comes up in our examination of the public and then in the chapters on functions, it is better to look at a few examples of how the school to be reviewed handles the traditional themes, viz. the authors and works of "classic literature".

(a) The writer's social role and its determinants

To be a writer, as Löwenthal points out, is one of the oldest intellectual occupations and the prototype of the intellectual attitudinal patterns. The writer's sense of vocation has a broad gamut of social forms ranging from the prophet or missionary type through the strictly artistic attitude or political commitment to the disposition of the entertainer or the writer who just "makes good money".

As regards the writer's objective social determinedness, Löwenthal refers here first of all to the writer's prestige and income sources, then to the pressure exerted on him by the agencies of social control, and finally to the influence of technical and market mechanisms.³⁴

Silbermann emphasizes that the artist's peculiar social circle, the "world of artists", should be subjected to thorough structural-functional analysis of the kind he applied to one special discipline, the sociology of music. This analysis seeks answers to questions like: What units are there in this world of artists? How are these coupled with one another to perform their function, their "services" towards the larger community? How and through what institutional forms are candidates to this social circle recruited? And so forth.³⁵

*(α) Some demographic characteristics of the world
of the men of letters*

Robert Escarpit begins his sociological study of writers with seemingly trivial issues like their demographic characteristics, e.g. their "age pyramid".³⁶ With these investigations he tries to point out the density of the "fluctuation of talent" from generation to gene-

³⁴ Löwenthal, *op. cit.* (1964), p. 246.

³⁵ A. Silbermann, "Die Ziele der Musiksoziologie". *Kölner Zeitschrift für Soziologie und Sozialpsychologie*, 1962/2, p. 322.

³⁶ Escarpit, *op. cit.*, p. 35.

ration, the most productive age by genres, and the varying chances which living and deceased writers have of recognition and acceptance. An analysis of centuries of French literature has made the supposition probable that a new generation can really have its say only when the majority of the predecessors are already over forty, i.e. when – after a certain equilibrium period – the self-assertion of those inside the circle relaxes, and they are compelled to give way to the rising young generation. By a thorough examination it has become clear that the most productive periods differ by genres; for example, playwrights reach the top early and fade soon at the peak of their careers; philosophers and historians live long, while poets usually either burn out in the prime of life or outlive everybody.

Finally, H. C. Lehmann's investigation based on the analysis of two lists of the "most outstanding literary works" (which were drawn up by experts of the National Council of Teachers of English and included works by 285 living and 203 deceased authors) has revealed that in the case of deceased writers it is their early works, those written under the age of forty, which survive while in that of living writers, there is a second upswing after the age of sixty.

(β) *The sociological study of the writer's attitude*

Sociology of literature is of course interested not only in such "rough" demographic characteristics but also in the writers' attitude patterns, in their systems of ideas and values and in how they relate to those of the given society. This is how W. A. Bruford in his great work³⁷ examines the social implications of *Bildung*, the culture-ideal of Goethe and his circle. On the one hand, he examines the tendency that had been alarmingly manifest in this ideal from the very outset, namely that the German intelligentsia failed to find a political link with the broad masses, which meant that its place in the social structure remained basically problematical. On the other hand, he investigates the process of the deformation and disintegration of this culture-ideal, one through which *Bildung* became synonymous with drill and submission.

³⁷ W. A. Bruford, *Culture and Society in Classical Weimar (1775–1806)*. (Cambridge, 1962).

These two themes, which are practically introduced to us in Bruford's work, are remarkably treated by Löwenthal in his revealing analysis of an authoritarian type of writer, and also by Gertaud Linz in one of her monographs in which she tries to locate in the power structure of society the place of the literary personalities of the Federal Republic of Germany.

Löwenthal, the Californian sociologist already mentioned several times, graduated from Frankfurt University. The proposition and the programme of research on the sociopsychological determinants of a fascist personality, which resulted in one of the most important sociological studies of the years following World War II, was started by Frankfurt sociologists, notably by Th. W. Adorno, M. Horkheimer and partly E. Fromm.³⁸

Löwenthal, the disciple, who had worked in this sphere of thought already in the 1930's, published a sensational essay on Knut Hamsun. He pointed out that from Hamsun's image of man the moment of man's moral independence was completely missing; it was nature that worked directly behind personal and social forces. For him, historical regularity is replaced by the rhythms of nature; and, according to his world-outlook, these should not be dominated and controlled, but obeyed. Hamsun's heroes are robust young peasant lads whose principal virtue is their submission to higher forces. Löwenthal has demonstrated that the extolment of these traits indigenous to the *Weltanschauung* of a society of primary producers signifies an about-face on the road towards man's freedom. The myths of "blood and soil", "natural community" and the like materialize in dedication to the autocratic state.

Knut Hamsun, in whose political attitude—as Löwenthal remarks—not even the liberals or the socialists had found anything objectionable, joined the party of the Nazi lackey Quisling to the great surprise of most of his contemporaries. This is an interesting fact which proves that the sociology of literature is capable of sensible prognostication, too.³⁹

³⁸ Th. W. Adorno *et al.*, *The Authoritarian Personality*. (New York, 1950).

³⁹ L. Löwenthal, "Knut Hamsun. Zur Vorgeschichte der autoritären Ideologie". *Zeitschrift für Sozialforschung*. 1937, pp. 295—345. In English: L. Löwenthal: *Literature and the Image of Man: Studies of the European Drama and Novel 1600—1900*. (Boston, 1957).

(γ) *The writer and the ruling élite*

It was under Dahrendorf's inspiration that a series of sociological research projects was launched in the Federal Republic of Germany to explore the characteristics and changes of the leading stratum, the so-called *élite* or *élites*, of West German society, the degree of their exclusiveness and in general their relation to the community at large. Dahrendorf has been labelled a „neo-Marxist” for his struggles against the American structuralist-functional school. Gertraud Linz is a disciple of Ralf Dahrendorf's. Linz's book is part of the above-mentioned undertaking.⁴⁰ It approaches literary prominence from the viewpoint of *élite* sociology. One of Linz's hypotheses is that, as e.g. power is the attribute of the political *élite* and income of the economic *élite*, the cultural *élite*, to which the prominent writer also belongs, enjoys first of all prestige, which is primarily linked not to position but to the writer's name and person. In unison with several authors, she sees the social function of this cultural prominence in the person's role as a “paragon”, a “point of orientation”, an “integrating force”, a “supporter of norms”.

In clarifying the criteria of literary prominence, Linz takes into account three factors—the public, the fellow writers, and the critics—and fuses the latter two (on the basis of only partly convincing arguments), while trying to grasp the judgment of the public by categories like the number of copies of a publication or the number of performances of a stage play. But, ultimately, she does not find the public to be the appropriate jury. After stating that this and other means (membership in institutions such as broadcasting companies, decorations, etc.) are impracticable, she takes the members of the six West German literary academies (including West Germany's Pen Club) as being prominent men of letters according to the common judgment of writers and critics. In 1960, the year of the survey, these academies (apart from a few actors, stage directors, etc.) included 199 persons. The 55 writers co-opted between 1960 and 1965 have been included in a supplementary survey.

⁴⁰ G. Linz, *Literarische Prominenz in der Bundesrepublik*. (Olten and Freiburg), 1965.

For lack of space we present just one result of the sociological analysis of the full sample. Nearly two-thirds of the literarily prominent come from that uppermost stratum of society which makes up hardly one-twentieth of the total population. This striking figure shows that the road of social advancement is barred to the lower strata even in the case of a profession which quite a few say is outside the social hierarchy. The West German literary élite is therefore in almost all respects a part of the uppermost social stratum. These people have reached the pinnacle by starting from directly below it. Another tie that binds them to the West German leading stratum is the type and level of their secondary occupations: public-relations managerships with the TV and Radio, professorships, etc.

Taking a glance at this result, the sociologist asks the literary man the very embarrassing question of whether it is possible for literature to reflect a society whose writers belong to the top of the social hierarchy. It is highly probable that in *this* kind of representation society cannot be described, portrayed and shown in its full variety.

(b) The work of art as a social fact

Literature as a social institution, like other social institutions, consists of persons, more precisely, of roles played by persons. This is why a narrower institution-centred sociological approach has of necessity to leave out the element which in fact has been the central part of every traditional study of literature based on the aesthetic approach: the work of art. More precisely, the work of art cannot be considered a "substantial unit" detached from its creator, it is rather merely an "accessory" of the creator. It is the creator's manifestation, his symbolic action, and we could even say, merely an instrument of his endeavours. But if we take into account that all kinds of action, symbolic and non-symbolic alike, reflect only in part the intention behind them, and their result reflects only in part the action itself, and that in our case the result of the action is relevant just in the form it is encountered by society, then it becomes reasonable to devote a separate chapter to the work of art in the sociological, or "*interactional*", analysis of literature. The work is exposed to effects which the writer does

not even know of, because they are "in the air" and are taken as self-evident facts. The work undoubtedly contains elements owing more to the social group behind the writer than to the writer's personality, the world of his personal desire and anxieties, plans and concerns. Goldmann's bold theory refers just to these elements when he declares that the "substantial" elements are those authored by the group, and that the elements of direct personal origin are accidental. The authors of empirical orientation do not of course use such philosophical categories but distinguish merely R. K. Merton's simpler terms, the manifest (psychological) and the latent (sociological) functions.⁴¹ Löwenthal writes: "Creative literature has a multi-level meaning. The meaning that the author intends to give to the work is only one of those levels. It has an entirely unintentional meaning, too."⁴²

(α) *The work reflects the individual's relation to society*

For an analysis of the work as a function of social influences we again have to cite an example from Löwenthal. Löwenthal's work surveying the classical drama and fiction of three centuries is perhaps the most important contribution to the branch of literary sociology dealing with classic literature.

His theory can be summed up briefly as follows. "When the writer invents a story, describes a plot, depicts the connection of the characters, emphasizes certain values, then he impresses on the work the stamp of his own personality by his individual selection of problems and characters. But *this process of selection is influenced by man's relation to society*, his privileges and responsibilities of belonging to a class, his conceptions of work, love, friendship, religion, nature, art. Scrutinized from this angle the more important literature of these three hundred years reveals a drastic change in man's relation to himself, his family, his social and historical environment . . . The task of the literary sociologist is to place the writer's imaginary characters and situations in the historical milieu from which they come. He has to

⁴¹ R. K. Merton, *Social Theory and Social Structure*. (Glencoe, Ill., 1963).

⁴² Löwenthal, *op. cit.* (1964), IX.

transform the individual equations of themes and stylistic means into social equations!"⁴³

How Löwenthal carries out this programme we shall try to illuminate through some selected lines of thought from his work.

In Shakespeare's lifework, more particularly in *The Tempest*, Löwenthal thinks he grasps that moment of the history of culture when the medieval theological dogmas and the institutions serving the purpose of moral control are *no longer*, and the slowly consolidating middle-class control is *not yet* strong enough to shape the attitude of the individual. That is how there appears the psychologizing and moralizing disposition of mind which tends to confront the individual directly with the forces of nature. In this posture the person cannot count upon the guidance of social codes of behaviour but instead he has to mobilize his own psychic and moral forces. But this image of the individualist man which sometimes appears in Shakespeare's work is not long-lived. The individual's attention, which in the vacuum following the disappearance of feudalism is directed not to the new society but to the individual's own nature, is compelled slowly, with the stabilization of the new middle-class society, to turn to its social institutions. It is no longer the problems of the person's "inner self" but his self-conscious relation to society which becomes the central theme in literature. The French theatre of the seventeenth century represents the long process of middle-class socialization. From that time on every important writer's problem is the individual's adaptation to society. Goethe is aware of the price of this adaptation, too. In his youth he stands up against society, but later he hopes that the optimum development of the individual and the optimum good of society can be reconciled. The matter at issue is the way from *Werther* to *Wilhelm Meister*. *Werther* is opposed to the society whose ruling stratum, the nobility, stifles the creative personality by its rigidity. *Wilhelm*, on the other hand, renounces his in-

⁴³ Löwenthal, *op. cit.* (1964), X. — This last sentence quoted from Löwenthal is practically an accurate echo of G. V. Plekhanov's programme: "The critic's number one task is to translate the idea of a given work from the language of art into the language of sociology, to find what we may call the sociological equivalent of a given literary phenomenon." G. W. Plechanow, *Kunst und Literatur*. (Berlin, 1955), p. 219.

dividualist claims against society, for he feels that a changed society, the bourgeois society, does not give cause for revolt any more. He loses confidence in the rebel individualist mentality and lets useful activity, the promotion of the public good and the ideal of successful adaptation prevail. It is common knowledge that Goethe's final stand is nevertheless not so "harmonious" but more like a criticism of the existing order that points forward to the following literary period's judgement on society.

In the second half of the nineteenth century the institutions and manner of society came entirely under the sway of the middle class. Ibsen, though he accepted and defended the ideology of liberal society, already made violent attacks on its reality. Up to the middle of the century the writers' criticism was directed against the aristocracy and the reactionary monarchy. Beginning with Ibsen, it is the world of the middle class that is judged. The Wilhelm Meister way is no longer valid: it is no longer a solution for the individual to renounce certain of his claims in the interest of the others. Ibsen's hero can adapt himself to society only if his entire individuality becomes one-sided, specialized, and if he pursues a selfish goal with all his might, yet this leads not to consummation but to failure and loneliness. Both the person's private life and even his inner world seem to challenge and at the same time to reflect the forces of society. In society the individual cannot achieve his self-fulfilment; it is only in nature where he can feel free and at peace. This is how we get to the state of mind of the subsequent historical period which has already been mentioned in connection with Knut Hamsun's inhuman cult of nature.

(β) *The work's "spirit" and the receptive society*

The work's "spirit", however, can be investigated not only in connection with the society that has influenced its writer, but also with the one which receives the work with openness and "congenial" disposition. This is well illustrated by another of Löwenthal's investigations which demonstrates through the material of contemporary books, reviews and daily papers that Dostoevski's surprisingly warm German reception was due to the defeatist and passive mentality of the German bourgeoisie which had no decisive influence in the classical period of liberalism. The sadistic and

masochistic reactions arising from the German bourgeoisie's social subjection found rich material for experiences of identification in the self-tormenting and pain-inflicting heroes of Dostoevski's novels.⁴⁴

(c) *The critic's place in the social structure of literature*

And here we have come to the third dimension of the work, namely the public: its popularity has been a part and indicator of the public's consciousness.

(α) *Literary "value-fact" and the readers*

The importance of the public in respect of the social structure of literature, however, becomes really central only when the circumstances of the social origin of the literary "value-fact" have to be clarified. Value, and also aesthetic value, is a moment of "preferential behaviour" and basically refers to a relationship. Namely to the fact that a thing means more, is more appropriate, to somebody than some other thing.⁴⁵ Well, this "somebody", whenever literature is conceived of as an interaction, can *ab ovo* be only the "other party", i.e. the group of readers (comprising fellow-writers and critics as well) and never the writer himself. This consideration provides a basis on which the sociological approach to literature can make, with the help of the public, a positive study of the value-fact character of literary masterpieces, the character so jealously guarded by traditional bourgeois aesthetics. Maurice Duverger writes: "In any given social group there can exist different conceptions of right and wrong, good and evil, beautiful and ugly. These conceptions are positive facts in the eye of the sociologist, because they express the conviction of the group, and the observer for his part does not take sides".⁴⁶ Therefore, as a consequence of its

⁴⁴ L. Löwenthal, "Die Auffassung Dostojewskijs im Vorkriegsdeutschland". *Zeitschrift für Sozialforschung*, 1934/3.

⁴⁵ Cf. C. Kluckhohn, "Values and Value Orientations in Theory of Action". In: Parsons *et al.*: *op. cit.* — V. P. Tugarinov, *Über die Werte des Lebens und der Kultur*. Berlin, 1962. — Ch. Morris, *Varieties of Human Value*. (Chicago, 1956).

⁴⁶ M. Duverger, *Méthodes des sciences sociales*. (Paris, 1964), pp. 34–5.

innermost endeavours, the sociological approach to literature is far from ignoring the fact that each literary phenomenon is regarded as a value-fact by one or another stratum of the public, expert group, aesthetic school, or generation. This circumstance is referred to also by the afore-cited classic on the topic, Levin Schücking, who emphasizes, in respect of the birth of literary value, the correlations of the valuative behaviour of the taste-upholding stratum with material interests and social struggles.

(β) *Experts and consumers*

There would be no trouble with the above ideas if the content of popular culture and the taste of the broadest masses of society did not present a striking contrast to the traditional values of literary aesthetics. Yet this contrast exists and, in several respects, does not follow but rather crosses the division-lines of class structure to which Schücking's aforesaid idea refers. This circumstance induces the sociologist of literature to distinguish in Escarpit' terms between two strata of readers which can most pertinently be called consumers and experts. The experts form evaluations in *judgments* that are founded, because to be an "expert" means a social role involving rights and duties. This role must be performed in harmony with the expectations of an intellectual professional élite, and the reward for its exemplary and successful performance is socially guaranteed appreciation and prestige. On the other side, the consumers' evaluations are based on *taste*, liking, inclination, the factors of which are given in the determinedness of social existence and become conscious only in exceptional cases. This latter spontaneous evaluation is well exemplified by the fact that women homogeneous in their social life, e.g. the "merely housewives" of various strata, are uniformly susceptible to escapist literature.

On the one hand, the sociology of literature is "fully tolerant" of popular culture and the values of the masses which carry it; on the other hand, it pays particular attention to the social role of those who deal with literature by profession.

Based on a survey of historical and primitive societies H. D. Duncan draws the conclusion that in all probability there has never existed a situation in which the public has not been differen-

tiated according to the point of view of the authority qualified to judge art.⁴⁷ In his opinion, however, the forms of the judgements on art can really be understood only if one understands the basis of such hierarchies of criticism. Some sort of judgement has always been formulated on art, and in the long run this judgement has always determined art to a great extent, since it has provided the norms of the production, distribution and consumption of art. In his analysis, therefore, Duncan is first of all curious to know who had the right of criticism in each and every society, what institutions watched over criticism, and further how these preserved their influence in struggles with other institutions, how those destined for the critic's function were recruited, trained and supported, whom the critic could inform of his opinion, and finally on what occasions the critic's views were required.

According to a remarkable comment by Duncan, from the sociological point of view, the type of criticism which bases its judgements on aesthetic canons is *only one of several types*. The Church, the State, business and school—each institution judges art from its own viewpoint. The Church wished to have its dogmas endorsed, the State is in need of patriotic citizens whose assistance it can rely on for the purpose of defence, business is striving for profit, and the school needs suitable material for the aims of education. Whether we call it criticism, or censure, or market research, or a visit by a school inspector, such judgements radically influence the kind of art that is actually produced.

(γ) *Interaction types of artist, critic and public*

It is worth taking a glance at the typology set up by Duncan in the interactional structure of literature on the basis of how close the relationship of criticism to one or the other party is—a fact which decisively influences the relationship of artist and public. This typology made up of five types displays a scale of differentiation, starting from that most primitive, embryonic stage when a direct personal contact still exists between the artist and his public (see Figure I/a), but when the function of criticism cannot yet be isolated, up to the most developed stage when art already becomes

⁴⁷ Duncan, *op. cit.*, p. 490.

an institution that is fully aware of its own social function and has equal rights with all the other social institutions, and its own inner system of functions crystallizes in the equilibrium of the three social functions (see Figure I/e). Between these two extreme types we find, first, the structure in which the production of art is monopolized by a class, a group or an institution, and within this a close connection exists between artist and critic, but there are hardly any ties with the public at large, as in the case of monastic

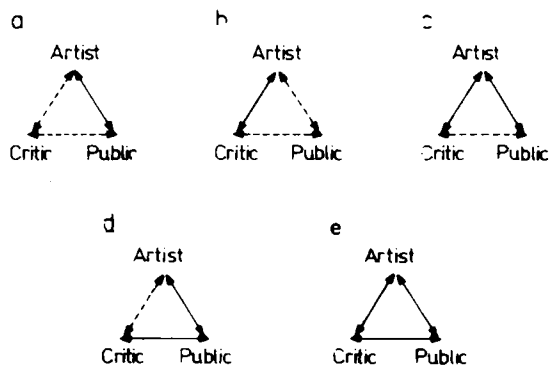


Fig. 1. The five types of connection between artist, critic and public

or court literatures (see Figure I/b). Second, we find the type loaded with perhaps the highest tension, the type in which the artist keeps in close touch with both the critic and the public, but the latter two are alien to each other and may remain indifferent and even hostile to each other's goals. Thus, for example, the critic of refined taste may despise the vulgar public and encourage or compel the writer to follow his own aesthetic or ideological standards. And at the same time the writer—heated perhaps with a prophet's or a leader's self-consciousness—may seek a separate tie with the public. As an example Duncan refers to the English literature of the Victorian ages (See Figure I/c). In the third intermediate type the artist and the critic take pains individually, often as rivals, to please the public. *Vox populi, vox Dei*, and the consumer foots the bill. The critic only informs the public, he does not highlight his own evaluations. The writer is more interested in the reaction

of the public than in the critic's arguments. This literary structure roughly reflects the mass literature of western, mainly American, popular serials, magazines and newspapers as well as the drama, music, literature, and film criticism proliferating in the mass media (see Figure I/d).

We have to note here that the empirical sociology of literature discussed in this paper is for obvious reasons, most interested in the latter type, so in our exposition we shall concentrate on the problems arising in this structure.

(d) The sociological and sociopsychological characteristics of the public

Here, we shall speak of the camp of readers who get into touch with literature not during their professional activities like writers and critics, but precisely when they retire into leisure after having finished work in their various occupations. In principle, therefore, such people may belong to any stratum of society and to any line of occupation, except the profession and status of men of letters. In practice, however, the situation is not quite like that. Escarpit points out emphatically that the vast majority of the readers of literature—in the western society he has studied—belongs to that aesthetically educated social circle from which the majority of writers are recruited (teachers, educated employees, and an insignificant number of manual workers).

This statement indicates the closed nature of the “literary milieu” and brings the readers of literature (and to a greater extent those of classical literature) one step closer to the professional men of letters, while removing them just as far from the masses active in other fields of society. Furthermore, the probability also arises that a peculiar passive character type predominates among the people consuming certain types of mainly fictional, narrated and dramatized literature.

(α) Extravert and introvert leisure-time activities

This interesting idea, which in fact criticizes the “friends of literature” or at least one type of them from the point of view of social psychology, is also given an indirect voice in investigations like

G. A. Almond's and S. Verba's. Their comparative analysis of political culture is based on a representative sample of about 1,000 persons from each of five countries.⁴⁸ By grouping the leisure-time activities, the authors separate the individual's *extravert* activities from his introvert ones. The first group includes active participation in political, economic, social and various collective activities. The second group includes active subgroups of hobbies and sports as well as the passive subgroups of cultural activities (book-reading, radio-listening, television watching, movie-going). Well, what can be seen from the results and what we find interesting is shown in Tables I and II.

Table I. *Percentage of chosen leisure-time activities*

Chosen activities	USA	Great Britain	West Germany	Italy	Mexico
Extravert activities	40	30	16	7	11
Within this: Social activities	18	18	8	3	6
Cultural activities (reading, TV)	33	44	52	33	58

As is to be seen from Table I, there is an *inverse* relation of definite intensity between extravert activities, including the social type of leisure-time activities and the cultural type of leisure-time activities like book-reading, TV watching, etc. More interesting is Table II which shows the percentage of cases in which active readiness to help has been most highly appreciated among human virtues:

Table II. *Percentage of those who prefer active helpfulness*

	USA	Great Britain	West Germany	Italy	Mexico
Percentage of those who favour active helpfulness	59	65	42	25	36

⁴⁸ G. A. Almond and S. Verba, *The Civic Culture*. (Princeton, 1963), p. 263.

A common conclusion from the two Tables is that the percentage of those who consider active helpfulness the noblest of human virtues is directly related to the ratio to those favouring extravert leisure-time activities, including the social activities, and is in inverse ratio to the devoted consumers of the cultural material transmitted by the media of mass communication (books among them!).

(β) Personality and character traits of the public

What kind of man is the reading type? Is he really a strange creature who withdraws from social activities into the circle of his own personal problems and who likes to escape even therefrom into the world of fiction and tries to solve his personal problems by formulas taken from fiction? Beside a representative sample covering the whole non-agricultural female population of the United States, Herzog⁴⁹ examines the differences between listeners and non-listeners of radio serials (altogether more than 10,000 persons) in a sample of listeners in three regional groups studied more closely and in two big cities, New York and Pittsburgh.

The author has found that persons whose level of self-confidence is below the average constitute a higher percentage among listeners than among non-listeners. This interrelation, however, has proved to be really strong only within the group of educated women; a liking for fiction is closely related to a lack of self-confidence only within the groups of more educated women. This connection has proved to be far less definite in the case of uneducated women. This means that if educated women do not avail themselves of the richer opportunities of entertainment provided by their schooling but become devoted listeners to serialized stories and radio plays, then typically psychological reasons must be responsible for this. Whereas in the case of less educated women the shorter leisure-time and the narrower range of occupations account for the interest in radio serials even without a special psychic disposition.

⁴⁹ H. Herzog, "What Do We Really Know About Daytime Serial Listeners?". In: B. Berelson and M. Janowitz (eds.): *Reader in Public Opinion and Communication*. (Glencoe, Ill., 1953), pp. 352–65.

(γ) The reader and three behaviour patterns

A suitable basis for understanding the behaviour patterns will be C. Morris's typology which he has successfully applied in several international comparative analyses of attitude, and which eventually boils down to three types of interest (and occupation).⁵⁰ These different types of interest come into existence according to the consecutive phases of action, i.e. whether it is the perceptual, the manipulatory or the consumption phases of action which receive the main emphasis. The basic dispositions distinguished in this manner—thinker-analyser, producer-organizer and consumer-user—have as equivalents the most broadly interpreted professional groups of scientists, technologists and artists. (These dispositional types, as has been empirically proved by thoroughgoing sociological, psychological and characterological studies, are fairly closely related social, psychic and physical factors). The devoted reader of the literary masterpiece can be included definitely, and even on two counts, in the third attitude-pattern. On the one hand, art itself already bears the marks of the concluding, i.e. consuming phase of action (experience being its decisive element), though, here, in the conscious planning and the production of the work of art, also the scientist's and the technologist's tasks become visible. On the other hand, the reading of a modern novel or the viewing of a classical drama—if it is not a critic's occupation but a leisure-time activity—already includes virtually exclusively elements of the consumption phase and in any case hardly any manipulatory ones. This is possibly one of the reasons for the aforesaid phenomenon, namely that the persons who have a liking for artistic fiction can easily be separated from those who live in the dynamism of real action.

2. THE SOCIAL FUNCTION OF LITERATURE

Within the social structure of literature we have distinguished four groups, namely writers, readers, critics, and—as peculiar figures who can be separated analytically from the writers, and who sometimes become really independent and “identify” with certain

⁵⁰ Morris, *op. cit.*, and Ch. Morris, “Science, Art and Technology”. *Kenyon Review*, 1939/1.

groups of the public—the characters populating the world of fiction, the “inner” society of the work and its laws. Hereafter, in our chapter on the social function of literature, we ought to answer one after the other questions such as for what purpose society supports writers and their critics, why people read, and why hundreds of thousands of imaginary figures who symbolize destinies, characters, social roles and cultural situations “are born” year by year, issuing from writers’ minds like Athena from the brain of Zeus. In short, we ought to consider one by one all aspects of the social destination of the structural elements distinguished above. But there is still another, “more loosely structured” possibility: the social functions presumed or alleged in an empiric sociological approach to literature can be outlined *only* for the literary phenomenon as a whole, in the hope that, in this way, too, the special role of the various structural elements and the interrelations of these roles can be elucidated. For lack of space, we opt for the latter possibility.

Even by gleaning from the views of “precursors” we could find more easily relatable ideas on the function of literature.

The classification resulting from such observations by and large corresponds to the idea of the functional triad represented by the American literary sociologist N. C. Albrecht.⁵¹

Taine, for example, together with the Russian revolutionary democrats, defines the substance of literary activity in a reflection of *content* which is frequently direct. But with Bonald, Baldensperger, Hauser and the Russian formalists the nature of reflection is characterized by a rather formal correspondence, in Goldmann’s terms by a structural homology.

In contrast to this function that is eventually *cognitive* in both variants, Mme de Staël and Guyau as well as many American authors from Dewey and Burke to Duncan and Löwenthal lay stress on those *active* functions of literature which serve to strengthen the existing socio-cultural order. Thus, Mme de Staël, Guyau and Dewey emphasize the internalization or general popularization of certain functionally positive character traits, first of all the sense of solidarity, while Burke and Duncan emphasize the virtually religious (though, of course, hidden) glorification of the existing

⁵¹ Albrecht, *loc. cit.*

power hierarchy, and Löwenthal underlines the relieving of interpersonal tensions among the functions of literature.

There has been proposed, however, also the possibility of a third group of functions, at least by Dobroljubov and partly by Simmel – the changing, or at least the critique, of the existing institutions of society. Yet this does not readily fit in with the functional approach according to which the function concept receives a meaning only given the equilibrium of the social forces and the survival of the given society. It is not by chance that in western sociology certain schools that are dabbling in Marxism experiment with the transformation of this statically functional approach into a flexible longitudinal-historical model. In this changed approach the force behind the literary endeavour to effect social changes is not the existing order but social progress.⁵²

(a) *The function of reflection*

Among the theories concerning the reflective functions of literature the American literary sociologist M. C. Albrecht distinguishes three schools according to the emphasis laid on the contents of reflection: the trend that follows the Hegelian traditions, the Marxist school, and today's American empirical trends. According to the first, literature reflects the specific ethos of culture, its world view, its *Geist*. The latest representative, and perhaps the most prominent one of this school is P. Sorokin. He brings the ideational type of culture into connection with the religious and ascetic themes as well as the plain, rough technique and symbolic, formal and conventional styles. On the other hand, the sensate type is connected with the themes dealing with ordinary human phenomena as well as sensual, erotic, individualistic and sceptical dispositions, and with the corresponding sensory, realistic and naturalistic style applying more elaborate and more complex techniques.⁵³

Compared with the preceding theory, Albrecht is right to see the distinctive feature of the Marxist theory of reflection in the

⁵² Cf. R. Dahrendorf, "Die Funktionen sozialer Konflikte". In: R. Dahrendorf, *Gesellschaft und Freiheit*. (Munich, 1961).

⁵³ P. A. Sorokin, *Social and Cultural Dynamics*. (New York, 1957).

fact that behind the cultural factors in the strict sense Marx's theory also takes into account the social factors of broader meaning (by ascribing, of course, proper significance to the economic factors).

On the other hand, a deliberate and intentional "superficiality", a peculiarity conspicuous at first sight, characterizes the American empirical school. This abstention from exploring the dimension of depth is rooted in the mentality which regards the conception of the "X-raying of facts"⁵⁴ as much too poetic for the purposes of science and is programmatically satisfied with any modest but exact information that can be obtained about interrelations of lesser importance. Instead of the essence, the *Geist* of the period, this school first looks only for plain facts in the work of art and confines itself to mechanically comparing the world of literary fiction to reality by means of factual data collected from both. And later, by virtue of the refinement of its own logic and the enrichment of its own points of view, it steps beyond this narrow horizon of factuality and looks for living attitudes, values and life-regulating norms both in the world of literary fiction and in real society. That is to say, it returns to the schools which strive to find the essence of the period. As to the spiritual milieu of the school, it is understandably concerned with the cultural substances of the Hegelian traditions, i.e. the dominant values, rather than with the socio-economic substance playing an essential role in Marxist philosophy; but even so, the concrete investigations have supported a Marxist tenet, namely that the dominant ideas of the period are ideas of the ruling classes.

(α) Reflection of demographic values

First of all, let us examine more closely an example of the simplest – mechanical – comparison between literary stories and the events of real society. That the logic of this is not altogether shallow and trivial either appears from the following reasoning: Much of what has happened in society in the past years is accurately related by various statistical and other yearbooks: What and how much we have

⁵⁴ Th. W. Adorno, "Das Bewusstsein der Wissenssoziologie". In: Th. W. Adorno: *Prismen*. (Frankfurt a/M., 1955), p. 42.

produced, how many people have moved from village to town, how many engineers, veterinarians and teachers have begun their careers, the trend of the number of old-age pensioners, live-births, abortions, etc. These are a society's "vital statistics": its chest measurement, weight, vital capacity, blood pressure, blood count. Well, it is to these data obtained by counting and measuring that we try to compare the image of society outlined in literary narratives. Is such comparison feasible at all? At first sight it looks very difficult.

An American scholar, R. Middleton, found that in the past few years more children had appeared among the characters in stories published by American magazines than before.⁵⁵ Is it really a fact that lately there have been more children in the United States than a few years earlier? He looked into statistical yearbooks and saw that while in 1956 there were 24.9 live births per thousand of the population, twenty years before the corresponding figure had been merely 16.7. But when he looked further, he found that another twenty years earlier, in 1916, the birth rate had likewise been 24.9 per thousand. In other words, between 1916 and 1956 we can see on the chart a downward curve which levels out in the middle year of 1936 as shown by the yearbooks.

And what do the literary narratives say? This cannot be found out by simply consulting the statistics. There are no reports on how many people in literary fiction have moved from village to town every year; how much has been produced in industry and agriculture; how many engineers and teachers have begun, continued and ended their gainful occupations, how many children were or were not born, etc. In the world of literary fiction there is no central statistical office and there is no information service. Although the life that is shown in the world of literary fiction is not coherent, psychologists have observed that the dreams of a thousand sleeping persons do not constitute a thousand separate worlds, but that those dreams can be basically grouped around very similar themes. The "dream-world" of literary fiction can hypothetically be unified in just the same way.

Middleton picked out eight American mass-circulation magazines which had regularly published stories for the forty years

⁵⁵ R. Middleton, "Fertility Values in American Magazine Fiction, 1916—1956". *Public Opinion Quarterly*, 1960, pp. 139—48.

between 1916 and 1956. Three issues of each magazine from the three pivotal years (1916, 1936, 1956) were chosen at random (that is, so as to let all the issues have an equal chance of getting into the sample). By rules established in advance the short-winded stories and the serialized novels were dropped. Finally there remained $3 \times 75 = 225$ stories from the three sample years. Three researchers, independently of one another, read through all the stories, and after reading each of them they filled out a long questionnaire on the family background of the characters of the story. Thereafter they met and compared the filled-in forms to discuss possible differences. To augment the dependability of the coding operation, an independent team of another three researchers did the same with another random selection of stories. The findings of the two teams showed a 95 per cent correspondence.

And what results did they obtain by this method? They found that, although the members of the families in the literary fictions were few in number in all three years—since the stories were mostly about grown-ups—significant divergences developed between the three sample years. While in the fictions of 1916 the average family had 1.39 members, in the 1936 stories the figure sank to 0.74 and in 1956 again went up to 1.08. Significance calculations have shown that this difference, considering the size of the comparative material, could not be accidental. But the following Table may convince the reader also of the significant difference between the three years.

As we can see from the Table, while in 1936 only one-tenth of the married couples had more than one child, in 1916 more than a quarter of them had. It is also clearly visible that the two crests, namely the figures for the years 1916 and 1956, are not equally high either. The main difference between them lies in the fact that the really big family—four or five or more children—was still very common in the first years of the century, but this type did not return with the baby-boom which set in again after the end of World War II.

In any case, the study has convincingly proved on the level of numerical generality that in one literary genre, namely in popular magazine fiction, values of a kind, namely the values of fertility, reflect fairly truly the actual changes taking place in society.

Table III. *Size of families in stories published by the popular magazines (1916–1956)*

Number of children	Percentage of married couples		
	1916	1936	1956
0	32.5	40.5	32.5
1	38.5	48.8	42.9
2	14.6	8.3	17.1
3	7.3	1.2	4.8
4	2.1	1.2	1.9
5 or more	5.2	—	0.9
Percentage of married couples	100.0	100.0	100.0
Number of married couples	96	84	105
Number of children	133	62	113
Average number of children	1.39	0.74	1.08

(*β*) *Reflection of changes in value under the impact
of economic causes*

The reader of Marxist erudition can note here that by “social change” we mean something different, something more than the fluctuation of the number of births, or the size of the prevailing type of family—namely, the maturation of revolutionary situations, the rise and decline of classes, and so forth. Some of those, too, who engaged in empiric sociological studies have noticed that the value-system of literature is sensitive not only to demographic fluctuations but also to socio-economic changes. In American society the difference in historical atmosphere between the first “golden decade” following World War I and the second decade full of crises is so striking that with the aid of suitable devices it can be seen reflected also in literature. At least that is what researchers P. Johns-Heine and H. H. Gerth supposed.⁵⁶ For their investigations they chose five mass-circulation literary magazines destined for different strata of the public (high society, housewives, farmers, etc.). In a random manner they selected stories

⁵⁶ P. Johns-Heine and H. H. Gerth, “Values in Mass Periodical Fiction, 1921–1940”. *Public Opinion Quarterly*, 1949, pp. 105–13.

for analysis from each magazine and from every year between 1921 and 1930, then between 1931 and 1940. They worked by and large in the same way as we have seen in the case of the Middleton research, with the only difference that they gathered specific information also by separating the materials of the various magazines.

While e.g., in the stories written for farmers in the twenties the ratio of farmers by occupation was still 35 per cent and dropped to 18 per cent in the thirties, and simultaneously the characters living on farms dropped from 46 per cent to 20 per cent, in the stories for urban high society the ratio of farmers by occupation rose from 10 per cent in the twenties to 19 per cent in the thirties, with a parallel rise in the ratio of farm people from 9 per cent to 18 per cent. The shift in occupation and dwelling place in the farmers' magazine *Country Gentleman* indicates the breakthrough of urbanization. The opposite tendency that appears in the magazine of urban middle classes, on the other hand, is attributable to the influence of the economic crisis. The fact is that the romantic nostalgias roused by the crisis turned the ideas of these circles towards their fathers' rural and semi-rural mode of life and environment. Besides, this latter phenomenon is also a manifestation of the impact of the depression years which reduced the spirit of enterprise and suggested a more modest "security orientation".

The turning away from "achievement orientation" to "security orientation" is exemplified also by the shift in the occupations of literary heroes from the business type towards the professional type. For example, the characters of the stories in the afore-mentioned magazine in the "golden decade" are 38 per cent from business circles and only 18 per cent from among professional people, while in the second decade, in the crisis years, the ratio of business people drops 6 per cent and that of professionals goes up 11 per cent.

The conclusion the authors have drawn from the literary investigations is that the optimism and economic expansion which in the boom years following the victory won in World War I had been regarded as a typical – but erroneously as an "archetypical" – American national characteristic, gave way in the years of economic crisis to certain more traditional and more conventional values and to the common people upholding them, who were less pretentious, less daring but more intimate in character.

This finding does not speak of a maturing revolutionary situation and depicts society in a profile unusual in Marxist social analyses. It does not come to recognize deeper dialectic interconnections. But its import must not be underestimated. By presenting rough and poor empirical figures and the reality reflected in them, it has torpedoed maybe the most cardinal myth of the "American" *Weltanschauung*.

(γ) *The values of classes and strata of society in literature*

But a variant of the empirical study of literary reflection, one that is better established and more developed in respect of both theory and practice than any previous one, has been executed by the same researcher whose summarizing, classificatory models we have relied on in the foregoing discourse: M. C. Albrecht.⁵⁷ We see one importance of his undertaking in the fact that in a more differentiated approach to the problems of the literature reflecting social values he gives a more prominent place to different levels of aesthetic value, thereby serving the rapprochement between the European (aestheticizing) and the American (sociologizing) viewpoints. But since Albrecht, too, follows essentially the traditions of the art analyses of American communication sociology, the point of view of aesthetic stratification does not come out plainly and independently but, as it were, in its social equivalent. For a meticulous European aesthete this social equivalent, however, is not entirely to be trusted, because it measures not only the traditional aesthetic value but also other, extraliterary factors, just as, for example, the aesthetic value patterns of the paintings which have come down to us from the Cinquecento do not correspond exactly to the art collector's value pyramid of \$ 1,000 bills.

In fact, Albrecht divides the public into three strata on the basis of the combined indices of educational and income status commonly used in American sociology. American literary scholarship has long-established routine traditions in establishing with a high degree of dependability, what magazine types are for what strata of the reading public. To rate literary stories as being above the demands of their readers may seem risky. A closer examination of the material,

⁵⁷ M. C. Albrecht, "Does Literature Reflect Common Values?" *American Sociological Review*, 1956, pp. 722—34.

however, has proved that the range of themes of the stories written for the upper strata is wider, their tackling of the subject is more personal, and their endings contain less common moralization and fewer stereotypes (in other words, some "closer" indices of artistic quality have also been discovered in them). The stratification according to artistic quality is only a secondary aspect of research. Namely, the comparative elements defined as the main objective of research are, on the one hand, the values which are valid and acting in society (and on its three strata) independently of literature and, on the other hand, values which come into play in the literature addressed to society (and to the very same three strata of society). The aesthetic value criterion will come up later merely as a modifying point of view that intervenes in the interpretation of the results obtained. For example, the more liberal nature of the upper stratum may perhaps account for the glaring contradiction between the more licentious literature of the upper stratum and such results of independent sociological research which reveal the decay and loosening of certain traditional family values precisely in the lower strata (and here we do not have to think exclusively of the Kinsey reports). It is in fact obvious that, e.g., art of Proustian stature represents also deviant attitudes (such as homosexuality) often from the viewpoint of the character's own values and pays less attention to the social qualification of the "value" at issue. Starting from this consideration, the literature of the upper strata does not even have to reflect the values prevailing in the upper strata.

But the contradiction between the forces which loosen conventional family morals in literature from above and in society from below can be solved in a different way, even without using the aesthetic viewpoint. In this conception, a certain *compensatory mechanism* is responsible for the inverse proportionality of more licentious elements. There is an effective link between the value system of the more educated and well-to-do strata, which represent the more conventional family values, and the literature written for them (which is not as independent of it as is believed by those who overemphasize the artistic quality), only the effect mechanism. is particular: it provides some fictional pseudo-satisfaction to compensate for a life bound by conventions. This hypothesis is made likely also by the fact that readers of the upper strata are on an average older than readers of the lower and middle strata.

Albrecht, after selecting three types of magazines corresponding to the three strata of the public (two magazines from each type, one annual volume of each of them) and picking at random 153 stories (62 from magazines of the lower, 59 from those of the middle and 32 from those of the upper strata), related the entire material obtained in this way to a very interesting measuring device. From previous studies he had compiled a system of ten moral ideas and values concerning the American family and held to be generally valid in American society (e.g., marriage shall be based on personal affection and individual choice; the family shall be an independent unity with a home of its own; marriage may be dissolved upon good grounds, etc.). Then he drew up another list containing precepts valid in certain subcultures (e.g. slums) as alternatives to the particular values (e.g., in choosing the partner in marriage the viewpoint of group solidarity is more important than personal sentimental attachment; extramarital sex is permissible; divorce is never permissible, etc.). Thereafter he stated with regard to every one of the narratives whether the writer's open pronouncements or his descriptions of the characters in them or the conclusion of the story were consonant with any of the ten fundamental values included in the list, or where they represented an alternative value or one which was not even listed.

As regards the result, it would take up too much space to present them in a comprehensive chart. But we may refer to a few points of interest. For example principle No. 5 in the list says that the criterion of successful marriage is the happiness of husband and wife. Ninety-two per cent of the cases and characterizations pertinent to the question are in agreement with this position, only eight per cent hold different views. But if we separate the positive and negative standpoints concerning this same value according to upper, middle and lower strata, we find that those in agreement are 97 per cent in the literature of the lower strata, 96 per cent in the literature of the middle strata, but only 75 per cent in the literature of the upper strata. The remaining 25 per cent vote for the appropriate value of the alternative list; that is to say, they see the success of a marriage in the fulfilment of one's duties towards the spouses' social status. In other words: they are in favour of marriages of convenience. The researcher himself also treats as a social fact (demonstrated in other investigations) the circumstance that in the

sphere of interests of high society marriage is a suitable means of strengthening group (and class!) power, and on this point he finds the reflection of literature to be accurate.

The common problems of the next three values of special interest involve the family's traditionally (patriarchally) overemphasized or latterly fading significance. Principle No. 6 approves of divorce in case husband and wife are unhappy, according to No. 8 the individual objectives of the spouses, despite mutual emotional commitments, must not be absorbed in a common goal, and according to No. 9 children must be protected from the worries of the adult world. The results have shown that the justification of divorce as a way out of unhappiness is rejected in 16.67 per cent of the relevant cases found in the literature of the upper strata, in 19.05 per cent of those in middle-class literature, and in 26.67 per cent in the literature of the lower strata. This means that the literature of the lower strata is more conservative and that of the upper strata is more liberal. It should be noted that in reality the situation is just the contrary on this point, too: in the lower strata divorce is more frequent and the family is less stable, as we can see when skimming through the statistical yearbooks. Principle No. 8 which proclaims the individual to be an end in himself as a value also in marriage, likewise threatens the patriarchal status and the stability of the family as does No. 6 which permits of divorce in case of unhappiness. Namely, in the bound patriarchal family the individual values should be subordinated to the family's unity. Well, the survival in marriage of individual values is disapproved of in only 23.53 per cent of the cases in the literature of the middle strata, while the literature of the upper and lower strata reject it much more emphatically (30.77 per cent and 42.86 per cent, respectively).

The picture is even more interesting if we add to the aforesaid two principles the impact of No. 9 on the different strata. The literatures of the lower and upper strata stress the independence of children against the far too solicitous family; that is, essentially they represent an alternative in opposition to No. 9. This opposition is 40 per cent in the literature of the upper strata and 50 per cent in that of the lower strata. This large-scale divergence from the norm, however, already indicates clearly that the norm itself is questionable. The surprising thing is that even the patriarchal Principle No. 9 proves to be weak in the same literature in

which non-patriarchal No. 8 also proves to be weaker than expected.

The lesson is not literary but sociological in character: on this point the analysis of literary reflection has led to the recognition of the conflicting nature of a social phenomenon, the value system of the American family. It unearthed a problem which otherwise would have remained hidden even from the family sociologists. Namely that the values of the patriarchal family prevail more firmly in two points and less firmly in one point than we have thought: Divorce and the spouses' personal independence within marriage have been accepted less generally, and the children's independence more generally, than we have supposed.

(b) The function of "social control"

(α) Distortion and overrepresentation

We have reviewed the above three investigations to illustrate how the new type of empirical approach to literature can determine the extent to which literature reflects real social changes: the demographic or even economic fluctuations or the changes in attitudes occurring as a reaction to them, as well as the value systems of the several strata. Well, in the above we have seen examples not only to show that literary reflection is surprisingly truthful and precise but also to prove that sociology does make use of the social information gathered from literary reflection for its own purposes.

The question arises, however, of how we should value the case when it appears that in some respects literature does not so much truthfully reflect as definitely *distort* the image of society. The question already pertains not so much to the issue of reflection as rather to the sphere of social control. Whenever we notice distortion, we ask right away: In what direction does it diverge from reality? And if it does not reflect the proportions of reality, and yet it claims to represent reality, then the untruth (which is not always deliberate falsification) can be supposed to conceal the action of some influential force (interest, inclination, attitude). If, e.g., R. Arnheim's investigation⁵⁸ has shown that in none of 43 different radio serials

⁵⁸ R. Arnheim, "The World of Daytime Serial". In: D. Katz *et al.* *Public Opinion and Propaganda*. (New York, 1962), p. 243.

has any important character been played by a workingman or a mine-worker, while the characters included an unduly large number of wealthy men; if furthermore the same investigation has brought out also that 47 per cent of the conflicts or problems occurring in those stories have arisen from interpersonal relationships and only 15 per cent of them have been due to suprapersonal, objectified forces, then it is difficult not to allow of the supposition: the world of fiction is an emotional advocate of the social order controlled by the ruling classes and strata, i.e. a means of "social control". (At this point, then, we have to take into consideration that the outlook prevailing in America imputes social inequalities not to the social system but to the differing skills and activities of individuals; accordingly it reckons with a well-meaning impersonal background behind the endeavours of individuals. The phenomenon discovered by Arnheim further reinforces this belief of the population.)

(β) Strengthening of the stereotypes

A more convincing illustration than the preceding example to show that literature has a function which points beyond "conscientious" reflection and distorts according to certain social interests is provided by the classical essay of B. Berelson and P. Salter investigating the ethnic status of the characters in American magazine fiction.⁵⁹ From two years' issues of eight American magazines they selected 185 stories whose scene is located in America. Each of the 889 identifiable characters found in the 185 stories have been evaluated by five researchers from eight viewpoints. For example, according to the roles they played in the story (leading, middling or insignificant character, positive or negative hero), sex, social status (line of work, economic position, level of education, class consciousness), origin (nationality, race, religion), personal characteristics, goals and interests (what the person is striving for, e.g. economic promotion, romantic love, comfortable family life, social prominence), etc.

Here are a few of the more interesting findings of the investigation. The ratio in fiction between "100 per cent" Americans and

⁵⁹ Berelson-Salter, *loc. cit.*

the national or ethnic minorities is fantastically different from reality.

The two diagrams speak for themselves. National and ethnic minorities make up barely 10 per cent of the characters in fiction, while in reality they amount to 40 per cent of the population of the United States.

The distortion becomes still more obvious if we classify the identifiable characters according to the importance of their roles in the stories.

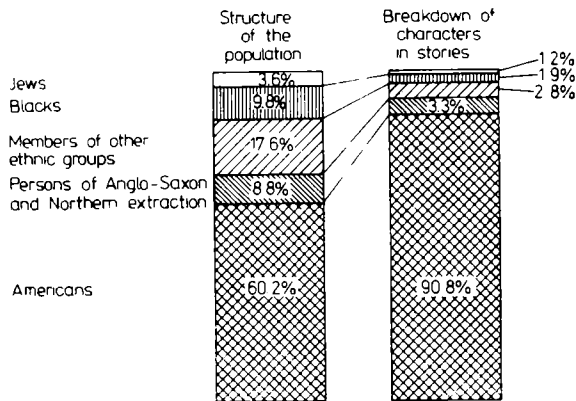


Fig. II. Native Americans predominate more in stories than in reality

Table IV. Americans more often play major roles than minorities

	Americans per cent	Anglo-Saxon and Northern immigrants per cent	Other minorities per cent
Leading characters	52	38	30
Medium characters	16	18	14
Minor characters	32	44	56
Total percentage	100	100	100
Total number of characters	745	61	77

While most of the many Americans play leading roles, the few minority characters include a small number in leading roles, while the majority of them are just extras.

The writers' casting of sympathetic and antipathetic characters from among the particular ethnic groups is equally disproportionate. But even more enlightening is perhaps the incidence of the identifiable social status of various characters.

Table V. *Americans are in higher positions than the minorities*

	Americans per cent	Anglo-Saxon and Northern immigrants per cent	Other minorities per cent
Prominent positions	59	29	20
Median positions	19	23	20
Subaltern positions	11	27	36
Illegal and suspect occupations	1	2	15
Military	10	19	9
Total percentage	100	100	100
Total number of characters	602	52	66

Of course, discrimination can be observed also in the military ranks of characters appearing in the stories. But this discrimination is topped off with the differences between the goals and values of "pure" American and "other" American characters. The investigators have distinguished two groups of goals: the heartfelt and the calculated objectives. Included in the firsts are love, marriage, patriotism, enterprise, justice, independence, etc. The second group includes money and material goods, the solution of immediate problems, economic and social safety, domination, etc. Well, the majority of the Americans pursue the first group of goals; namely they are warm-hearted, noble-minded, idealist, but the "others" are much more scheming and abject-minded.

As appears from the Table, the quantitatively and qualitatively different treatment of "pure" Americans from the "other" Americans is an incontestable fact. The only question is how the "social control" mechanism is to be interpreted given this fact. In general the better the characters approximated the criteria of the population which is the representative and depository of the American

Table VI. *Heartfelt goals are pursued by Americans rather than by minority groups*

	Americans per cent	Anglo-Saxon and Northern immigrants per cent	Other minorities per cent
Heartfelt goals	69	61	49
Calculating goals	31	39	51
Total percentage	100	100	100
Total number of goals	793	57	53

system of norms, the more favourable was the treatment they received. This population is white, Protestant, English in language and Anglo-Saxon by birth. That is why Anglo-Saxon and Northern immigrants enjoy more prestige in literature than the members of ethnic groups who are likely to be less secure in these norms.

(γ) *Letting off negative feelings*

Every kind of general negative feeling works against the *status quo*, consequently all manner of treating this general feeling is a means of social control sanctioning the existing order. On this basis, of course, we can conceive of a wide range of functions and effects as means of social control. On the effects of these "social controls" we have a long series of studies available. First of all, we have to mention again the investigation by H. Herzog, and this in respect of the *effect* which literary fiction has on chronic listeners to radio plays. The typical control function of *emotional reconciliation* with the social order appears quite clearly from the results. To listen to a story or a drama is a more pleasant way of surveying the outcome of certain anxieties, troubles and calamities than to live the very same story. It is more pleasant and has a tranquillizing effect. But the formulation of hazy and alarming daydreams in concrete endeavours also works towards emotional disciplining. And so does, last but not least, the lessening of tension through complex compensation. Identification with the successful hero magically elevates those frustrated in life, and sympathy with the criminal lets off the pent-up aggressiveness

owing to failures, whereas conscious approval of punishment (self-punishment in a sense) strengthens identification with the social norms.

Also included in the function of social control are the effects which may be brought under the concept of the so-called "school of life". The investigation conducted by H. Herzog is interesting from this point of view, too. Of 2,500 radio listeners of a more thoroughly examined sample 41 per cent claimed that they had received vital advice from literary fiction listened to on the radio; 28 per cent denied having done so, and the remaining 31 per cent had not so far thought of it or did not answer the question. But the investigator examined more closely the kind of advice thus received, and found that a part of such advice was real (e.g., how the heroine overcame her nervousness and remained faithful to her husband, and how this proved to be a blessing); for the most part it was a latent form of compensatory daydreaming (e.g.: "Now I also know what I would do with my money if I grew rich suddenly."). The most general lesson from the survey clearly belongs to the strategy of social control: "Take it easy, the problems will take care of themselves!"

(c) The impact of literature on social change

The definite distinction between the functional categories of social *control* and social *effect* is vindicated by the fact that the large number of surveys pertaining to the empirical type of approach and described above have provided one lesson: Indeed, literature is capable of upholding and strengthening the *existing* value patterns but in practice it cannot change them. The dynamic effects felt in society come from elsewhere even if they are often ascribed to literature or some other art (mainly the film). The optical illusion is due to the fact that in a state of socio-cultural change the population begins to notice the most conspicuous moments of change and sensing their objective and resistless current attributes to them an autonomous existence and even driving force.

In the description of investigations concerning the public we have seen that the consumers of literary works—readers, viewers, listeners—have the hazy but discernible profiles of a peculiar type of man. Here the question is whether these people have been formed

into this type by the world of literary fiction or whether, on the contrary, it is in consequence of their sociological and psychological characteristics that they have joined the camp of literary consumers taken in the broadest sense of the word (but kept in evidence as in fact different groups). Two types of concrete investigations also make this latter supposition probable. One of them deals with the question at the level of facts, the second at the level of causes.

*(α) Investigations at the level of facts: the limitation
of literary effect*

As concerns the investigations of the first type, their common logic is that they show literary consumers to have stable personal traits which are in all probability of a more remote origin than the fact of intensive literary consumption, and for this reason these can be explained in a more likely manner by other factors, chiefly by the family pattern that plays so great a role in moulding the personality. As in one respect this type of research has of necessity to dig so deep, we often find among such surveys socio-psychological examinations of *children's groups*. Let us not forget that the question here is no longer the nature of the frame of mind of groups of people who are fond of the world of fiction and like to slip from prosaic life into the current of strange stories. This, as we have seen, has been convincingly clarified by a few very serious examinations of adult groups. Here the question is merely what makes these groups of people such as they are.

Of those seeking answers to this more modest question which nevertheless confronts the investigator's ingenuity with a more difficult task, we have to mention J. W. Riley and M. W. Riley who interviewed 400 school-age children about the types of reading they liked and their effect.⁶⁰ A remarkable result of the survey has been the realization that children who belong to no children's group, i.e. who are raised practically exclusively within the family community are not only more interested in any kind of story, reading or television and radio programme with plenty of action,

⁶⁰ J. W. Riley and M. W. Riley, "A Sociological Approach to Communication Research". *Public Opinion Quarterly*, 1951, pp. 440—60.

but they like most of all stories of violence. Furthermore, they not only like better the asocial and antisocial types than do their pals growing up among children, but even from the relatively neutral stories they absorb the asocial impressions (e.g., they identify themselves with the irresponsible heroes, they hold some characters to be supernatural beings, etc.). On the other hand, the members of children's groups already at this age develop a sound idea of social helpfulness. That is to say, they know what to do with the stories both in everyday life and in their plays, they view the heroes realistically and with practical eyes. But since other surveys allow us to see clearly enough that the expectations of the family and the values demanded of the child (to do well at school, to be of help at home, etc.) keep much more chances of failure in store for the child than the expectations of his peer group (love of sports, popularity with the other sex, knowledge of popular songs, etc.), these results should be interpreted to mean that the use of literary fictions for asocial purposes, as well as the preference for those utilizable for such purposes is simply an effect of the asocial behaviour resulting from frustration. On this point, therefore, it has been made clear enough that it is not the literature filled with aggressive motives that has deprived the youngsters, but the negative effect, if it has come about at all, has been produced by an extraliterary, sociopsychological cause.

Eleanor Maccoby's investigation based on a similar logic⁶¹ concerning still younger children's likings for watching television is in some respect even more deep-going. It takes a deeper look into the nature of supposed frustrations. Maccoby questioned 379 mothers about their educational practices. She had researchers evaluate the parent-child relationship deduced from the interviews on the basis of nine points (how the parent reacts to the child's aggressiveness, etc.). The children then were distributed on a scale combined from the nine viewpoints. The result: a fairly close connection exists between frustration and escapist TV watching, and it is very likely in any case that it is not the children's liking for watching television that has acted on the mothers' educational principle and practice but the other way round.

⁶¹ E. Maccoby, "Why Do Children Watch TV?" *Public Opinion Quarterly*. 1954, pp. 439-44.

On the other hand, a survey by L. Bailyn⁶² concerning children's reading tries to illuminate the mechanism of how the child who feels out of place in its environment seizes, and tries to make the best use of, the opportunities of reading stories which divert its attention from the everyday world. Namely, such children, when relating the stories they have read, interestingly skip particular details and employ a few plain and unambiguous types and situations to make the world of fiction solid and comprehensible. They build up for themselves a very unreal world free of tension, but it is evident that they do all this only as a reaction to the anguish, perplexity and bad feeling experienced in the real world.

The lesson of all these and other investigations is that literary effect—and here we mean its most talked-of variety: the act of depraving the readers, of educating them to be unreal, asocial, etc.—is by no means as real and important a factor as many would think. Moreover, we can state together with J. T. Klapper that escapist tendencies find expression only in part in reading, viewing or listening to literary stories.⁶³ Others vent the tensions in walking, talking, drinking or sleeping. Escapism is a sociopsychological phenomenon that acts far beyond the scope of literary fact. Thus, such and similar effects, which in the minds of people attach erroneously to the literary fact, already build upon dynamic prerequisites, and without these latter—as will be seen immediately—they have only a very limited latitude.

(β) *Investigations at the level of causes: What limits the literary effect?*

The type of empirical research examining the literary effect not on the level of facts but on the level of causes tries to illuminate the regularities observed from two central theoretical premises of

⁶² L. Bailyn, "Mass Media and Children: A Study of Exposure Habits and Cognitive Effects", *Psychological Monographs*. 1959, pp. 1–48. — Cf. also G. Maletzke: *Psychologie der Massenkommunikation*. Hamburg, 1963.

⁶³ J. T. Klapper, *The Effects of Mass Communication*. (New York, 1965), p. 197.

⁶⁴ Cf. T. Parsons, "Die jüngsten Entwicklungen in der strukturell-funktionalen Theorie". *Kölner Zeitschrift für Soziologie und Sozialpsychologie*, 1964, pp. 39–40.

modern sociology.⁶⁴ Notably, first, from the premise according to which the individual receives every effect aimed at him (literary effect included) in accordance with the values and norms already internalized in the course of his education and experience. In other terms: he receives every effect with an extremely strong bias. Second, from the premise which says that the individual will absorb practically no cultural influence until he is prepared for this by his reference group composed of persons important to him. The process of internalization and the influence of the reference group are two different aspects, in longitudinal and in cross section, of the same phenomenon, namely the socialization of the individual.

As regards the preventive effect of the internalized values and norms, its mechanism has been subjected to a variety of excellent investigations. This mechanism involves the operation of three blocks. People first examine the kind of effect to which they expose themselves and simply do not get in touch with the views contrary to their orientation. (They turn a deaf ear to it.) C. F. Cannel and J. C. MacDonald, for example, have stated that newspaper articles on the probability of interrelations between smoking and cancer had been read by 60 per cent of non-smoking male population and only by 32 per cent of the smokers in Ann Arbor, a city they had examined.

The second block means that if people cannot any longer avoid being reached by the effect, they distort its meaning and, regardless of its original purport, use it to justify their own views. This special metamorphosis was studied by G. W. Allport and L. J. Postman as follows.⁶⁵ They showed experiment subjects a picture representing a very patient Negro being bullied by a white man clutching a razor. The subjects were asked to tell the purport of the picture to other people, and these were asked to relate it again to others. Of course, the Negro soon became the bully and also the razor happened to be in the Negro's hand. Other investigations show that pictures ridiculing religious and racial prejudices have been interpreted by subjects—in just the contrary sense—to be in support of the prejudices they shared.

⁶⁵ G. W. Allport and L. J. Postman, "The Basic Psychology of Rumor". In: Daniel Katz *et al.*: *op. cit.*, p. 317.

As far as the third block is concerned: once people have had to take notice of views conflicting with their own opinion, they do not much muse upon them but forget them amazingly quickly.

The second fundamental factor, the preventive mechanism of the reference group, is perhaps still more merciless. What is more, in reality it is the persistent effect of the reference group that is concealed behind many apparently individual opinions and attitudes. The views held by those persons who are important to the individual create the inner "forum" which evaluates newly heard ideas and values.

The content conveyed through books, magazines, television, etc. has thus two roads to travel. First it has to find its way to the reference group, and only from here can it effectively reach the individual. Those who study this two-step process of effective communication have noticed first of all the very dynamic effect of the so-called opinion leaders, and in interpreting this phenomenon they have come to the conclusion that cultural values can expect favourable reception and actual acceptance only if first they are personalized in sympathetic acquaintances of suggestive strength.⁶⁶

All this has possibly made it clear why the empirical students of the social function of the literary phenomenon are inclined to separate the essentially static control effect, which preserves and strengthens the values in force, from the effect aiming at change: the surveys have demonstrated nearly unanimously that the factors inherent in communication and in the artistic process understood as a special kind of communication offer substantially better chances for the former than for the latter type of effect.

Therefore, the question is whether we can reckon at all with such an attitude-changing effect. The researchers reply: Yes, if the social factors communicating the cultural content allow it (and what matters here are not the immanent media, such as a well

⁶⁶ H. H. Keller and E. H. Volkart, "The Resistance of Group Anchored Attitudes". *American Sociological Review*, 1952. — J. W. Riley and M. W. Riley, "Mass Communication and the Social System". In: R. K. Merton *et al.*: *Sociology Today*. New York, 1959, p. 549. — Cf. also E. Katz and P. F. Lazarsfeld, *Personal Influence*, Glencoe, Ill., 1964; see especially the chapter on "The Opinion Leader Idea and the Two Step Flow of Communication", p. 32.

written book, but a content-activating, external, group mechanism), though usually in a rather small degree. Most concerned with changes of opinion, the election surveys have stated that election campaigns had resulted in a 5 to 8 per cent change of attitude; this ratio is about twice as high in the case of those who have departed from their previous standpoint to take up an undecided middle position due to the influence of the reference group.

Most instrumental in the change or turn of attitude is not the high quality of the cultural content communicated but a defect in the preventive mechanism. Such a short-circuit occurs for the individual when he gets into the area of collision between reference groups which follow conflicting values and norms. At such times we can say that the real life social effects cancel one another and enable cultural effects like that of literature to prevail.

(γ) *The reciprocity of effect – the effect model*

When, however, we speak of the effect of literature at the level of demonstrability, i.e. speaking practically with empirical responsibility, we cannot leave out of account the fact that this communication effect is a reciprocal phenomenon. If, in accordance with the traditional approach, we asked with H. D. Lasswell's formula:⁶⁷ which writer says what, by what artistic means, to whom and with what effect, and if already through the questions "to whom" and "with what effect" we enforced the sociological approach (namely, if we examined the reader not as an isolated atom but in his social commitments), we certainly would not arrive at the full understanding of literature as a social phenomenon. This absolutely requires the feed-back of the expectations of the public. The proposition of the first classic of the theory of communication, G. H. Mead, about identification with the partner's role as a prerequisite of human communication and sensible interaction⁶⁸ remains valid also in respect of the literary phenomenon. The writer reckons with the expectations of his public—contemporaries or future generations, experts or the broad masses.

⁶⁷ H. D. Lasswell, "The Structure and Function of Communication in Society". In: Wilbur Schramm (ed.): *Mass Communication*, (Urbana, 1960), p. 117.

⁶⁸ G. H. Mead, *Mind, Self, and Society*. (Chicago, 1934), p. 149.

The picture can be completed, of course, by two aspects. First, we have to consider the effects exercised upon the writer by his own reference groups, other writers, critics, editors and publishers working with him, and by his personal acquaintances. Second, we see also the influence of the social and cultural values and norms internalized by the writer during his own experiences.

But we must not forget about the influence of those broader social structures either which serve as a background for the particular reference groups of both the writer and the reader. In these structures the system of objective social relations, the wide-ranging class aspirations and ideological currents are constantly shaping and weaving, while keeping at the level of historical actuality, the living web of those primary and secondary reference groups which surround the writer and the reader.

To sum up, the sociological approach serves to examine literary and artistic interaction and all sorts of communication processes *within the dialectical whole of the social process*; in other words, it is aware that in grasping the phenomenon of literary effect the "hardest" variables will always be those of the most fundamental social process.

The afore-mentioned investigations into literature as a social phenomenon therefore orientate themselves essentially by a model which we can obtain from the application of the communication model of J. W. Riley and M. W. Riley as follows:

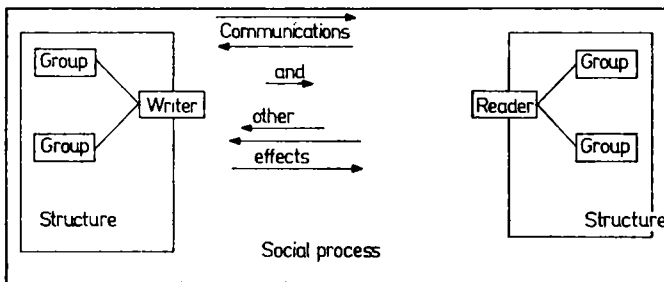


Fig. III. The model of literary effect

On the one hand, this model can be part of M. C. Albrecht's dynamic function model (reflection, control, effect) described above; on the other hand, we can also reduce to it such more

specific relational and effect models as that of the oft-mentioned H. N. Fügen regarding the problem areas of empirical literary sociology, where the ideal and material media (criticism, libraries) are separate entities, or the Duncan model shown in the diagram, too, which distinguishes five institutionalized types of interaction between writer, reader and critic.

THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE SOCIOLOGICAL APPROACH TO LITERATURE IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE THEORY OF LITERATURE

1. INTUITION AND SCIENTIFIC METHODOLOGY

The studies of literary sociology reviewed in the foregoing chapters strengthen those schools of literary scholarship which base their research not upon intuition but upon verifiable, really scientific systems. It was W. Dilthey who tried to construct a general theory of literary studies based on intuition as well as on professional skills and capacities. He called his hermeneutics, which is the "study of the apprehension of the written expressions of life", *Kunstlehre*, i.e. a collection of the rules and tricks of art.⁶⁹ The emphasis on the individual approach is striking in this conception. Akin to this is H. Rickert's distinction between the nomothetic natural sciences, which explore scientific laws, and the idiographic cultural sciences, which deal valuatively with chronologically successive individual and unique phenomena.⁷⁰ This conception naturally, does not brook laws in history, and on this account it is irreconcilable both with the modern scientific ideal and with the Marxist ideology.

In short, this "artistic" type of science has the major disadvantage that its results are never consonant but differ according to the individual approach and points of view of the particular thinkers. If someone ventures the justifiable question as to which of several

⁶⁹ W. Dilthey, *Der Aufbau der geschichtlichen Methode in den Geisteswissenschaften*. 1910.

⁷⁰ H. Rickert, *Kulturwissenschaft und Naturwissenschaft*. (Tübingen, 1921).

solutions is the real one, the need will soon arise for a method which determines with binding force the only solution to the unambiguously asked questions. Two basic requirements of the methodological ideal are that its concepts and statements, first, be formulated unambiguously and, second, have an empirical content, i.e. one which can be verified by simple experience.

2. TYPOLOGY AND THEORY

In concert with H. L. Zetterberg we distinguish two fundamental types of scientific theory.⁷¹ The first of them, descriptive theory, cannot even be called theory in the strict sense. It is rather only a typology or taxonomy. It is concerned only with certain dimensions of reality but not with its laws. It classifies the phenomena observed into groups according to their criteria, but says nothing about the cause and interrelation of the classification of these groups. Its building stones are not theses i.e. statements to be verified, but definitions, i.e. arrangements for the classification of the material. And its result will be no explanatory model but a descriptive schema which we set up, for the sake of clearness, with an arbitrariness determined by the research purpose.

Together with C. C. Hempel we have to distinguish in typology "extreme types" and "ideal types". Types are not classes. Already the logic of extreme types requires the application of the rules of a relative logic going beyond traditional class logic. This is well illustrated by Mme de Staël's typology of Homeric and Ossianic literatures. Here, the works of Homer and that of Ossian represent two extreme types. But of a given literature it is not enough to state that it belongs to the Homeric or the Ossianic "class", because the respective concrete literature may be *more* or *less* Homeric or Ossianic, namely it can be situated closer to the poles or farther away. Relative logic accordingly enables us also to ascertain whether one of the literatures is more Ossianic than the other. The same rules of the logic of extreme types are applicable also to Hauser's typology of geometric and naturalist arts.

⁷¹ H. L. Zetterberg, "Theorie, Forschung und Praxis in der Soziologie". In: R. König (ed.): *Handbuch der empirischen Sozialforschung* I. Stuttgart, 1962, pp. 65–104.

3. THE THEORY CONCEALED IN THE IDEAL TYPE

The ideal type as against the extreme type already represents a higher level of theory construction, because it contains a concealed explanation or reasoning, that is to say, a theory taken in the stricter sense of the word. Namely, the ideal types are concrete historical – or, in our case, artistic-literary – patterns, e.g. (to abide by Hauser's exposition) the "rigid naturalism" of the Quattrocento against the background of a *dynamic* society which, however, still puts up strong resistance to the rising bourgeoisie, or the "flexible classicism" of the Cinquecento against the background of an already traditional society which is not yet definitively settled in conventions. The ideal types of this kind ensue not merely from an arrangement along a single dimension, but they cover the convergence of at least two dimensions, one of which (in our case, the social one) is the explanation of the other (in our case, the artistic one).

In trying to solve the contradiction implied in his statement, namely that the necessarily classical art of the rigid society of the Cinquecento, for all its stylized character, is more naturalistic than the programmatically naturalist art of the dynamic society of the Quattrocento, we apply the following dimensional analysis:

		<i>Independent variable: society</i>	
		Mobile (15th c.)	Conventional (16th c.)
<i>Dependent variable: art</i>	Naturalistic		Ideal type 2: more flexible Cinquecento art
	Formalistic	Ideal type 1: more rigid Quattrocento art	

Figure IV. The contradictory ideal type

The ideal types in the chart imply a contradiction, since in them the dimension of mobile society crosses the dimension of more rigid art, and the dimension of conventional society crosses the

dimension of flexible art. Consequently, this result observed is for the time being just the opposite of the *theoretically expected* results.

The contradiction disappears at once, that is to say, the results observed and the theoretically expected results coincide, if we introduce Hauser's refinements into the Figure (see Fig. V). Methodologically, all we have done is to have decomposed further both dimensions, i.e. the social and the artistic dimensions. We thus distinguish progressive and conservative forces both in the mobile society and in the conventional society, just as we distinguish naturalistic and formalistic elements both in the art of the Quattrocento and in the art of the Cinquecento. As can be seen from the following diagram, now the social forces with positive sign have positive style elements, and those with negative sign have negative style elements as corresponding values. It has also become clear that the confusion and contradiction has been caused by the two "irregular" types, the rigid trend of Quattrocento art and the flexible trend of Cinquecento art (ideal types 2 and 3), whose weight and importance have obscured the pure types. But it cannot be doubted that these also have equivalent social forces behind them. What is formalism and rigidity in the Quattrocento is related to social conservatism just as the naturalism and flexibility found in the Cinquecento are related to social progress. The ideal types discussed here are without exception situated along the principal diagonal axis of the matrix, indicating interrelation without contradiction. Along the axis perpendicular to it (mainly at its two poles) ideal types cannot be situated without logical contradiction, because it would mean that the progressive forces of a mobile period would be in relationship with the most rigid wing of a formalist school of art; and moreover, the reactionary forces of a conventional period would support the most flexible endeavours of a naturalistic school of art. The dimensional analysis is a simplifying attempt to solve the problem. Its presentation has been necessary in order to make the subject better understood.

4. THE THEORY IS EMPIRICALLY VERIFIABLE

The ideal type, however, does not yet provide the most developed form of the theory. Namely, this latter is nothing else than an unequivocally formulated *implication* which is usually expressed in

		<i>Independent variable: society</i>			
		<i>Mobile society</i>		<i>Conventional society</i>	
<i>Dependent variable: art</i>	Quattrocento art	Progressive forces	Conservative forces	Progressive forces	Conservative forces
		Ideal type 1: more flexible Quattrocento art			excluded
	Cinquecento art		Ideal type 2: more rigid Quattrocento art		
				Ideal type 3: more flexible Cinquecento art	
					Ideal type 4: more rigid Cinquecento art

Fig. V. The solution of the contradiction implied in Figure IV

utterances by phrases like "if . . . then . . ." or "the more . . . the more . . .", etc. This more strictly formulated theory is superior to the theory concealed in the ideal type inasmuch as it presents the variables, the independent and the dependent variable or group of variables, not in a complex figure but in their perfect explicitness. It is through this formal perfection that the regular theory can fully enforce its advantage of having a really empirical content. This means that if I make the truth of a proposition dependent on the fulfilment of a specific empirical prerequisite, on the occurrence of a thing, then the truth of that proposition is always accurately verifiable.

Keeping this in view, we can see that the reason why the empiric sociological approach to literature is of significance to the theory of literature is not only that its concrete researches provide empirical material to literary scholarship, but also that its strict research methods transplant to the field of literary scholarship a logical stringency which is rather unusual in the traditions of the latter. Herzog's large-scale investigation reviewed above is illuminating from this point of view. The author has verified the effect of five well-defined characteristics of individuals (degree of collective-mindedness, personal stability, etc.) with regard to the same individual's preference for radio serials as a dependent variable. The separation of the variables supplies science with especially differentiated and exact information.

But the most important contribution of exact methodology to the sociological approach to literary theory is that *it integrates the variables into the larger unity of the social and behavioural sciences*. In this way it explains some literary phenomena by more general social or more fundamental behavioural factors. In this sense it really traces back certain moments of the subject of literary scholarship and the regularities of their changes to the more fundamental social and sociopsychological forms of motion. (We may as well say, of course, that it deduces the meaning of the phenomena observed in the field of literary life from some of the most general and most fundamental—verified—theories concerning the behaviour of social man.) A concrete example of this act of integrating activity is the above-mentioned American method of literary studies which deduces the regularities of literary effect from regularities observed in connection with general human

communication, after deducing these latter regularities in part from the theory of internalization and in part from that of the reference group.

Integration into such a more general and more fundamental theory, as is pointed out by A. Malewski, has the great advantage of accelerating the comprehensive and systematic consideration of extensive problem areas. Theory-oriented research may save many haphazard experiments, since the verified theses of more general validity supply a good basis for predicting the results that might be expected. The most typical operation of this procedure is looking deliberately for situations which limit the applicability of the general theses. Such delimitations, for example, have been yielded (to abide by the Herzog research) by the thorough examination of the hypothesis reviewed, in so far as it has been found that preference for radio fiction is indicative of a clearly unstable personality not in a general way but only in the case of women having higher education.

5. LESSONS AND TASKS

As regards what can be drawn from the sociological approach to literature as lessons to Marxist literary scholarship and the tasks that ensue therefrom, first of all we have to point out that the sociological approach to literature has again proved the truth of a series of theses of Marxist literary scholarship which have sharply conflicted with bourgeois conceptions of literature. In this respect empirical investigations strengthen the position of Marxist literary scholarship and it is well to be aware of this circumstance. Thus, e.g., in contrast with the phenomenological approach to literature, which overemphasizes the autonomy of literature and its isolation from society, the sociology of literature self-evidently (and certainly successfully!) deals with the social contents identified in literature. Identical positive lessons have been supplied also by concrete empirical observations concerning bias, whether we think of Arnheim's or Saenger's or Head's observations of "overrepresentation", or of Albrecht's investigation finding different – conflicting – values in the literatures of different strata and classes of society.

Here, however, we have to notice still another circumstance, and thereby we have passed from the area of simple lessons to the sphere of tasks. The empiric sociological approach to literature, which has evolved since World War II, and which with some degree of generality may be called "the American type", is characterized by a more advanced stage of the practical application of theory than that of our literary studies. That is why the sociological theory of literature can take a conclusive stand on some issues. Thus, as concerns the tasks following from the lessons, we could briefly say that in the future the theoretical theses of Marxist literary scholarship ought to be put into practice to an increasing degree. This is the point where Marxist literary scholarship can learn from the sociological study of literature and where it can surpass its present level of development. In the future we shall have to be able to determine the concepts and hypotheses of our literary theory more and more by research operations.

Of course, the determination of a concept by one research operation is never exhaustive. In the concept there is always left a kind of "excess meaning" (*Überschussbedeutung*) which is not grasped by the research operation. An intelligence test never measures a person's entire intelligence, but merely some aspects of it. In making generalizations great caution is always needed. This warning is especially in place in the critical reception of the "American type" of literary investigations; namely this latter, as can be surmised from the procedures reviewed above, is inclined to present its results concerning trivial literature as results applicable to literature in general. In this case it is very much in place to apply the control operation of "limitation" and specification mentioned in our theoretical reflections. It is then a self-evident requirement for our operation, which is the measuring device of the hypothesis at issue, that it measure what we really want it to measure. Thus, for example, lovers of literature rightly harbour the suspicion that in Almond's and Verba's international comparative surveys the measuring device (the questionnaire) – which was employed in identifying the groups characterized by "introvert" leisure-time activities and found to be selfish and antisocial – was perhaps too crude to distinguish genuine literary mentalities, from those with a hunger for criminal stories and similar rubbish.

After all this, we can formulate the two tasks facing Marxist literary scholarship in connection with the empiric sociological study of literature. The *first task* that is becoming increasingly pressing is to carry out a few analyses of reflection and effect similar to those described above. We learn to speak by speaking, to investigate in new ways by investigating in new ways. In this connection it is in the researcher's practice that we can try out, correct and develop further the categories which have been quite successfully worked out by the students of communication sociology before us. Criticism starting from this level of concreteness guarantees professional reliability as well as ideological accuracy.

This critically receptive and actively critical attitude of Marxist literary scholarship cannot of course be satisfied with *ad hoc* disclosures of the defects of various categories and the dangers arising during their application. As a *second task*, a comprehensive study has to cover the entire system of the more or less "operationalized" analytic categories of the empirical sociology of culture. Modern Marxist literary scholarship, as we have already pointed out in the introduction, cannot perform this task without taking into consideration the whole of Marxist sociology and its general strategy that takes shape against the methodological and substantive results of bourgeois sociology, for instance, without a comprehensive critical interpretation and a practical examination of the question of committed literature. Similar essential clarification is required also by the Marxist critical interpretation of the often applied categories of "social function", "functional equivalent" and "cultural lag".

