CHAPTER V

General, Comparative, and National Literature

Within literary studies, we have distinguished between theory, history, and criticism. Using another basis of division, we shall now attempt a systematic definition of comparative, general, and national literature. The term "comparative" literature is troublesome and doubtless, indeed, one of the reasons why this important mode of literary study has had less than the expected academic success. Matthew Arnold, translating Ampère's use of "*histoire comparative*," was apparently the first to use the term in English (1848). The French have preferred the term used earlier by Villemain, who had spoken of "*littérature comparée*" (1829), after the analogy of Cuvier's *Anatomie comparée* (1800). The Germans speak of "*vergleichende Literaturgeschichte*." [1] Yet neither of these differently formed adjectives is very illuminating, since comparison is a method used by all criticism and sciences, and does not, in any way, adequately describe the specific procedures of literary study. The formal comparison between literatures—or even movements, figures, and works—is rarely a central theme in literary history, though such a book as F. C. Green's *Minuet*,[2] comparing aspects of French and English eighteenth-century literature, may be illuminating in defining not only parallels and affinities but also divergences between the literary development of one nation and that of another.

In practice, the term "comparative" literature has covered and still covers rather distinct fields of study and groups of problems. It may mean, first, the study of oral literature, especially of folk-tale themes and their migration; of how and when they have entered "higher," "artistic" literature. This type of problem can be relegated to folklore, an important branch of learning which is only in part occupied with aesthetic facts, since it studies the total civilization of a "folk," its costumes and customs,

superstitions and tools as well as its arts. We must, however, endorse the view that the study of oral literature is an integral part of literary scholarship, for it cannot be divorced from the study of written works, and there has been and still is a continuous interaction between oral and written literature. Without going to the extreme of folklorists such as Hans Naumann [3] who consider all oral literature as "*gesunkenes Kulturgut*," we can recognize that written upper-class literature has profoundly affected oral literature. The incorporation into folklore of chivalric romance and troubadour lyric is an indubitable fact. Though this is a view which would have shocked the Romantic believers in the creativity of the folk and the remote antiquity of folk art, nevertheless popular ballads, fairy tales, and legends as we know them are frequently of late origin and upper-class derivation. Yet the study of oral literature must be an important concern of every literary scholar who wants to understand the processes of literary development, the origins and the rise of our literary genres and devices. It is unfortunate that the study of oral literature has thus far been so exclusively preoccupied with the study of themes and their migrations from country to country, i.e., with the raw materials of modern literatures.[4] Of late, however, folklorists have increasingly turned their attention to the study of patterns, forms, and devices, to a morphology of literary forms, to the problems of the teller and narrator and the audience of a tale, and have thus prepared the way for a close integration of their studies into a general conception of literary scholarship.[5] Though the study of oral literature has its own peculiar problems, those of transmission and social setting,[6] its fundamental problems, without doubt, are shared with written literature; and there is a continuity between oral and written literature which has never been interrupted. Scholars in the modern European literatures have neglected these questions to their own disadvantage, while literary historians in the Slavic and Scandinavian countries, where folklore is still—or was till recently—alive, have been in much closer touch with these studies. But "comparative literature" is hardly the term by which to designate the study of oral literature.

Another sense of "comparative" literature confines it to the study of relationships between two or more literatures. This is

the use established by the flourishing school of French *comparatistes* headed by Fernand Baldensperger and gathered around the *Revue de littérature comparée.*[7] The school has especially given attention, sometimes mechanically but sometimes with considerable finesse, to such questions as the reputation and penetration, the influence and fame, of Goethe in France and England, of Ossian and Carlyle and Schiller in France. It has developed a methodology which, going beyond the collection of information concerning reviews, translations, and influences, considers carefully the image, the concept of a particular author at a particular time, such diverse factors of transmission as periodicals, translators, salons, and travelers, and the "receiving factor," the special atmosphere and literary situation into which the foreign author is imported. In total, much evidence for the close unity, especially of the Western European literatures, has been accumulated; and our knowledge of the "foreign trade" of literatures has been immeasurably increased.

But this conception of "comparative literature" has also, one recognizes, its peculiar difficulties.[8] No distinct system can, it seems, emerge from the accumulation of such studies. There is no methodological distinction between a study of "Shakespeare in France" and a study of "Shakespeare in eighteenth-century England," or between a study of Poe's influence on Baudelaire and one of Dryden's influence on Pope. Comparisons between literatures, if isolated from concern with the total national literatures, tend to restrict themselves to external problems of sources and influences, reputation and fame. Such studies do not permit us to analyze and judge an individual work of art, or even to consider the complicated whole of its genesis; instead, they are mainly devoted either to such echoes of a masterpiece as translations and imitations, frequently by second-rate authors, or to the prehistory of a masterpiece, the migrations and the spread of its themes and forms. The emphasis of "comparative literature" thus conceived is on externals; and the decline of "comparative literature" in recent decades reflects the general turning away from stress on mere "facts," on sources and influences.

A third conception obviates, however, all these criticisms, by identifying "comparative literature" with the study of literature

in its totality, with "world-literature," with "general" or "universal" literature. There are certain difficulties with these suggested equations. The term "world literature," a translation of Goethe's *Weltliteratur*,[9] is perhaps needlessly grandiose, implying that literature should be studied on all five continents, from New Zealand to Iceland. Existing courses in world literature, like the textbooks and handbooks written for them, often supply us with snippets from famous authors and great books ranging from the *Rig-Veda* to Oscar Wilde and encourage an indiscriminate smattering, a vague, sentimental cosmopolitanism. The possibly preferable term "general literature" has the disadvantage that Paul Van Tieghem [10] has tried to capture it for a rather narrow conception in specific contrast to "comparative literature." According to him, "general literature" studies those movements and fashions of literature which transcend national lines. In practice, however, it would be difficult to determine beforehand which movements are general and thus to draw a line of distinction between the purely national and the general. Most of Van Tieghem's own books are rather conventional investigations of a comparative sort, studying Ossian in France or the international vogue of "graveyard poetry," or are handbooks of external facts and interrelationships.[11]

Whatever the difficulties into which a conception of universal literary history may run, it is important to think of literature as a totality and to trace the growth and development of literature without regard to linguistic distinctions. The practical result of such thinking will be a general history, especially of the Western tradition. One cannot doubt the continuity between Greek and Roman literatures, the Western medieval world, and the main modern literatures; and, without minimizing the importance of Oriental influences, especially that of the Bible, one must recognize a close unity which includes all Europe, Russia, the United States, and the South American literatures. This ideal was envisaged and, within their limited means, fulfilled, by the founders of literary history in the early nineteenth century, such men as the Schlegels, Sismondi, Bouterwek, and Hallam.[12] During the later nineteenth century, this ideal was more closely defined and brought nearer to a coherent view through the influence of evolutionism. The first theories of comparative litera-

ture, the books by Karayev and Posnett,[13] were largely under the influence of the sociological conceptions of Herbert Spencer and drew far too close a parallelism between the growth of institutions and that of literature. But a return to the ideals and ambitions of the great masters of general literary historiography is overdue, whatever modifications we may make today in the details of their methods and however ampler our sources of information may be. Literary history as a synthesis, literary history on a supernational scale, will have to be written again. The study of comparative literature in this sense will make high demands on the linguistic proficiencies of our scholars. It asks for a widening of perspectives, a suppression of local and provincial sentiments, not easy to achieve. Yet literature is one, as art and humanity are one; and in this conception lies the future of historical literary studies.

Within this enormous area—in practice, identical with all literary history—there are, no doubt, subdivisions sometimes running along linguistic lines. There are, first of all, the groups of the three main linguistic families in Europe—the Germanic, the Romance, and the Slavic literatures. The Romance literatures have particularly frequently been studied in close interconnection, from the days of Bouterwek up to Leonardo Olschki's partially successful attempt to write a history of them all for the medieval period.[14] The Germanic literatures have been comparably studied, usually, only for the early Middle Ages, when the nearness of a general Teutonic civilization can be still strongly felt.[15] Despite the customary opposition of Polish scholars, it would appear that the close linguistic affinities of the Slavic languages, in combination with shared popular traditions extending even to metrical forms, make up a basis for a common Slavic literature.[16]

The history of themes and forms, devices and genres, is obviously an international history. While most of our genres descend from the literature of Greece and Rome, they were very considerably modified and augmented during the Middle Ages. Even the history of metrics, though closely bound up with the individual linguistic systems, is international. Furthermore, the great literary movements and styles of modern Europe (the Renaissance, the Baroque, Neo-Classicism, Romanticism, Real-

ism, Symbolism) far exceed the boundaries of one nation, even though there are significant national differences between the workings out of these styles.[17] On the whole, the importance of linguistic barriers was quite unduly magnified during the nineteenth century.

This emphasis was due to the very close association between Romantic (mostly linguistic) nationalism and the rise of modern organized literary history. It continues today through such practical influences as the virtual identification, especially in this country, of the teaching of literature and the teaching of a language. The result, in this country, has been an extraordinary lack of contact between the students of English, German, and French literature. Each of these groups bears a completely different imprint and uses different methods. These disjunctions are in part, doubtless, unavoidable, simply because most men live in but a single linguistic medium; and yet they lead to grotesque consequences when literary problems are discussed only with regard to views expressed in the particular language and only with reference to texts and documents in that language. Though in certain problems of artistic style, meter, and even genre, the linguistic differences between the European literatures will be important, it is clear that for many problems of the history of ideas, including critical ideas, such distinctions are untenable; artificial cross sections are drawn through homogeneous materials, and histories are written concerning ideological echoes by chance expressed in English or German or French. The excessive attention to one vernacular is especially detrimental to the study of medieval literature, since in the Middle Ages Latin was the foremost literary language, and Europe formed a very close intellectual unity. A history of literature during the Middle Ages in England which neglects the vast amount of writings in Latin and Anglo-Norman gives a false picture of England's literary situation and general culture.

This recommendation of comparative literature does not, of course, imply neglecting the study of individual national literatures. Indeed, it is just the problem of "nationality" and of the distinct contributions of the individual nations to this general literary process which should be realized as central. Instead of being studied with theoretical clarity, the problem has been

blurred by nationalistic sentiment and racial theories. To isolate the exact contributions of English literature to general literature, a fascinating problem, might lead to a shift of perspective and an altered evaluation, even of the major figures. Within each national literature there arise similar problems of the exact shares of regions and cities. Such an exaggerated theory as that of Josef Nadler,[18] who professes to be able to discern the traits and characteristics of each German tribe and region and its reflections in literature, should not deter us from the consideration of these problems, rarely investigated with any command of facts and any coherent method. Much that has been written on the role of New England, the Middle West, and the South in the history of American literature, and most of the writings on regionalism, amounts to no more than the expression of pious hopes, local pride, and resentment of centralizing powers. Any objective analysis will have to distinguish questions concerning the racial descent of authors and sociological questions concerning provenience and setting from questions concerning the actual influence of the landscape and questions of literary tradition and fashion.

Problems of "nationality" become especially complicated if we have to decide that literatures in the same language are distinct national literatures, as American and modern Irish assuredly are. Such a question as why Goldsmith, Sterne, and Sheridan do not belong to Irish literature, while Yeats and Joyce do, needs an answer. Are there independent Belgian, Swiss, and Austrian literatures? It is not very easy to determine the point at which literature written in America ceased to be "colonial English" and became an independent national literature. Is it the mere fact of political independence? Is it the national consciousness of the authors themselves? Is it the use of national subject matter and "local color"? Or is it the rise of a definite national literary style?

Only when we have reached decisions on these problems shall we be able to write histories of national literature which are not simply geographical or linguistic categories, shall we be able to analyze the exact way in which each national literature enters into European tradition. Universal and national literatures implicate each other. A pervading European convention is modified

in each country: there are also centers of radiation in the individual countries, and eccentric and individually great figures who set off one national tradition from the other. To be able to describe the exact share of the one and the other would amount to knowing much that is worth knowing in the whole of literary history.

CHAPTER VIII

Literature and Psychology

By "psychology of literature," we may mean the psychological study of the writer, as type and as individual, or the study of the creative process, or the study of the psychological types and laws present within works of literature, or, finally, the effects of literature upon its readers (audience psychology). The fourth we shall consider under "Literature and Society"; the other three shall here be discussed in turn. Probably only the third belongs, in the strictest sense, to literary study. The first two are subdivisions of the psychology of art: though, at times, they may serve as engaging pedagogic approaches to the study of literature, we should disavow any attempt to evaluate literary works in terms of their origins (the genetic fallacy).

The nature of literary genius has always attracted speculation, and it was, as early as the Greeks, conceived of as related to "madness" (to be glossed as the range from neuroticism to psychosis). The poet is the "possessed": he is unlike other men, at once less and more; and the unconscious out of which he speaks is felt to be at once sub- and superrational.

Another early and persistent conception is that of the poet's "gift" as compensatory: the Muse took away the sight of Demodocos' eyes but "gave him the lovely gift of song" (in the *Odyssey*), as the blinded Tiresias is given prophetic vision. Handicap and endowment are not always, of course, so directly correlative; and the malady or deformity may be psychological or social instead of physical. Pope was a hunchback and a dwarf; Byron had a club-foot; Proust was an asthmatic neurotic of partly Jewish descent; Keats was shorter than other men; Thomas Wolfe, much taller. The difficulty with the theory is its very ease. After the event, any success can be attributed to compensatory motivation, for everyone has liabilities which may serve him as spurs. Dubious, certainly, is the widespread

view that neuroticism—and "compensation"—differentiate artists from scientists and other "contemplatives": the obvious distinction is that writers often document their own cases, turning their maladies into their thematic material.[1]

The basic questions are these: If the writer is a neurotic, does his neurosis provide the themes of his work or only its motivation? If the latter, then the writer is not to be differentiated from other contemplatives. The other question is: If the writer is neurotic in his themes (as Kafka certainly is), how is it that his work is intelligible to his readers? The writer must be doing far more than putting down a case history. He must either be dealing with an archetypal pattern (as does Dostoevsky, in *The Brothers Karamazov*) or with a "neurotic personality" pattern widespread in our time.

Freud's view of the writer is not quite steady. Like many of his European colleagues, notably Jung and Rank, he was a man of high general culture, with the educated Austrian's respect for the classics and classical German literature. Then, too, he discovered in literature many insights anticipating and corroborating his own—in Dostoevsky's *The Brothers Karamazov,* in *Hamlet,* in Diderot's *Nephew of Rameau,* in Goethe. But he also thought of the author as an obdurate neurotic who, by his creative work, kept himself from a crackup but also from any real cure. "The artist," says Freud, "is originally a man who turns from reality because he cannot come to terms with the demand for the renunciation of instinctual satisfaction as it is first made, and who then in phantasy-life allows full play to his erotic and ambitious wishes. But he finds a way of return from this world of phantasy back to reality; with his special gifts, he moulds his phantasies into a new kind of reality, and men concede them a justification as valuable reflections of actual life. Thus by a certain path he actually becomes the hero, king, creator, favorite he desired to be, without the circuitous path of creating real alterations in the outer world." The poet, that is, is a daydreamer who is socially validated. Instead of altering his character, he perpetuates and publishes his phantasies.[2]

Such an account presumably disposes of the philosopher and the "pure scientist" along with the artist, and is, therefore, a kind of positivist "reduction" of contemplative activity to an

observing and naming instead of acting. It scarcely does justice to the indirect or oblique effect of contemplative work, to the "alterations in the outer world" effected by the readers of novelists and philosophers. It also fails to recognize that creation is itself a mode of work in the outer world; that, while the daydreamer is content to dream of writing his dreams, one who is actually writing is engaged in an act of externalization and of adjustment to society.

Most writers have drawn back from subscription to orthodox Freudianism or from completing—what some have begun—their psychoanalytic treatment. Most of them have not wanted to be "cured" or "adjusted," either thinking they would cease to write if they were adjusted, or that the adjustment proposed was to a normality or a social environment which they rejected as philistine or bourgeois. Thus Auden has asserted that artists should be as neurotic as they can endure; and many have agreed with such revisionist Freudians as Horney, Fromm, and Kardiner, that Freud's conceptions of neurosis and normality, drawn from turn-of-the-century Vienna, need to be corrected by Marx and the anthropologists.[3]

The theory of art as neurosis raises the question of imagination in relation to belief. Is the novelist analogous not only to the romantic child who "tells stories"—i.e., reconstructs his experience till it conforms to his pleasure and credit, but also to the man who suffers from hallucinations, confounding the world of reality with the phantasy world of his hopes and fears? Some novelists (e.g., Dickens) have spoken of vividly seeing and hearing their characters, and, again, of the characters as taking over the control of the story, shaping it to an end different from the novelist's preliminary design. None of the instances cited by psychologists seem to bear out the charge of hallucination; some novelists may, however, have the capacity, common among children, but rare thereafter, of eidetic imagery (neither afterimages nor memory-images yet perceptual, sensory, in character). In the judgment of Erich Jaensch, this capacity is symptomatic of the artist's special integration of perceptual and conceptual. He retains, and has developed, an archaic trait of the race: he feels and even *sees* his thoughts.[4]

Another trait sometimes assigned to the literary man—more

specifically, the poet—is synaesthesia, or the linking together of sensory perceptions out of two or more senses, most commonly, hearing and sight (*audition colorée:* e.g., the trumpet as scarlet). As a physiological trait, it is apparently, like red-green color blindness, a survival from an earlier comparatively undifferentiated sensorium. Much more frequently, however, synaesthesia is a literary technique, a form of metaphorical translation, the stylized expression of a metaphysical-aesthetic attitude towards life. Historically, this attitude and style are characteristic of the Baroque and the Romantic periods and correspondingly distasteful to rationalist periods in search of the "clear and distinct" rather than "correspondences," analogies, and unifications.[5]

Since his earliest critical writing, T. S. Eliot has urged an inclusive view of the poet as recapitulating—or, better, preserving intact—his strata of the race-history, of keeping his communication open with his own childhood and that of the race while reaching forward into the future: "The artist," he wrote in 1918, "is more primitive, as well as more civilized, than his contemporaries. . . ." In 1932, he recurs to this conception, speaking particularly of the "auditory imagination" but also of the poet's visual imagery, and especially his recurrent images, which "may have symbolic value, but of what we cannot tell, for they have come to represent the depths of feeling into which we cannot peer." Eliot cites with approval the work of Cailliet and Bédé on the relation of the Symbolist Movement to the primitive psyche, summarizing: "the pre-logical mentality persists in civilized man, but becomes available only to or through the poet." [6]

In these passages it is not difficult to discover the influence of Carl Jung and a restatement of the Jungian thesis that beneath the individual "unconscious"—the blocked-off residue of our past, particularly our childhood and infancy—lies the "collective unconscious"—the blocked-off memory of our racial past, even of our pre-humanity.

Jung has an elaborate psychological typology, according to which "extravert" and "introvert" subdivide the four types based upon the dominance respectively of thinking, feeling, intuition, sensation. He does not, as one might have supposed, assign all writers to the intuitive-introverted category, or, more generally, to the category of the introvert. As a further guard

against simplification, he remarks that some writers reveal their type in their creative work, while others reveal their anti-type, their complement.[7]

Homo scriptor, it should be conceded, is not a single type. If we devise a romantic blend of Coleridge, Shelley, Baudelaire, and Poe, we must presently remember Racine, Milton, and Goethe, or Jane Austen and Anthony Trollope. We may begin by differentiating lyric poets, and Romantic poets, from dramatic and epic poets and their partial equivalents, the novelists. One of the German typologists, Kretschmer, separates the poets (who are leptosomatic and incline to schizophrenia) from the novelists (who are pyknic of physical structure and manic-depressive or "cycloid" of temperament). There is certainly a typological pair of the "possessed," i.e., the automatic or obsessive or prophetic poet, and the "maker," the writer who is primarily a trained, skillful, responsible craftsman. This distinction seems partly historical: the "possessed" is the primitive poet, the shaman; then the Romantic, the Expressionist, the Surrealist, we say. The professional poets, trained in the bardic schools of Ireland and Iceland, the poets of the Renaissance and neo-classicism, are "makers." But of course these types must be understood as not mutually exclusive but polar; and in the instances of great writers—including Milton, Poe, James, and Eliot as well as Shakespeare and Dostoevsky—we have to think of the writer as both "maker" and "possessed," as combining an obsessively held vision of life with a conscious, precise care for the presentation of that vision.[8]

Perhaps the most influential of modern polarities is Nietzsche's in *The Birth of Tragedy* (1872), that between Apollo and Dionysus, the two art-deities of the Greeks, and the two kinds and processes of art which they represent: the arts of sculpture and of music; the psychological states of the dream and of ecstatic inebriation. These correspond approximately to the classical "maker" and the romantic "possessed" (or *poeta vates*).

Though he does not avow it, the French psychologist Ribot must owe to Nietzsche the basis for his own division of literary artists between the two chief types of imagination. The former of these, the "plastic," characterizes the sharp visualizer who is primarily incited by observation of the outside world, by per-

ception, while the "diffluent" (the auditory and symbolic) is that of the *symbolist* poet or the writer of Romantic tales (Tieck, Hoffmann, Poe), who starts from his own emotions and feelings, projecting them through rhythms and images unified by the compulsion of his *Stimmung*. It is doubtless from Ribot that Eliot starts in his contrast of Dante's "visual imagination" and Milton's "auditory."

One more specimen may be offered, that of L. Rusu, a contemporary Rumanian scholar, who distinguishes three basic types of artist: the *"type sympathique"* (conceived of as gay, spontaneous, bird-like in its creativity), the *"type démoniaque anarchique,"* and the *"type démoniaque equilibré."* The examples are not always fortunate; but there is a general suggestiveness to the thesis and antithesis of "sympathetic" and "anarchic" with a synthesizing greatest type in which the struggle with the daemon has ended in triumph, an equilibrium of tensions. Rusu cites Goethe as the example of this greatness; but we shall have to assign it all our greatest names—Dante, Shakespeare, Balzac, Dickens, Tolstoy, and Dostoevsky.[9]

The "creative process" should cover the entire sequence from the subconscious origins of a literary work to those last revisions which, with some writers, are the most genuinely creative part of the whole.

There is a distinction to be made between the mental structure of a poet and the composition of a poem, between impression and expression. Croce has not won the assent of writers and critics to his reduction of both to aesthetic intuition; indeed, something like the contrary reduction has plausibly been argued by C. S. Lewis. But any attempt to dualize the pair as *"Erlebnis"* and *"Dichtung,"* after the fashion of Dilthey, also fails to satisfy. The painter sees as a painter; the painting is the clarification and completion of his seeing. The poet is a maker of poems; but the matter of his poems is the whole of his percipient life. With the artist, in any medium, every impression is shaped by his art; he accumulates no inchoate experience.[10]

"Inspiration," the traditional name for the unconscious factor in creation, is classically associated with the Muses, the daughters of memory, and in Christian thought with the Holy Spirit. By definition, the inspired state of a shaman, prophet, or poet,

differs from his ordinary state. In primitive societies the shaman may voluntarily be able to put himself into a trance, or he may involuntarily be "possessed" by some ancestral or totemic spirit-control. In modern times, inspiration is felt to have the essential marks of suddenness (like conversion) and impersonality: the work seems written *through* one.[11]

May not inspiration be induced? Creative habits there assuredly are, as well as stimulants and rituals. Alcohol, opium, and other drugs dull the conscious mind, the overcritical "censor," and release the activity of the subconscious. Coleridge and De Quincey made a more grandiose claim—that through opium, a whole new world of experience was opened up for literary treatment; but in the light of modern clinical reports it appears that the unusual elements in the work of such poets derive from their neurotic psyches and not from the specific effect of the drug. Miss Elizabeth Schneider has shown that De Quincey's "literary 'opium dreams,' so influential on later writing, actually differ little, save in elaborateness, from an entry made in his diary in 1803 before his use of opium began. . . ." [12]

As the mantic poets of primitive communities are taught methods of putting themselves into states conducive to "possession" and as, by spiritual disciplines of the East, the religious are advised to use set places and times for prayer, and special "ejaculations" or *mantras,* so writers of the modern world learn, or think they learn, rituals for inducing the creative state. Schiller kept rotten apples in his work-desk; Balzac wrote dressed in the robes of a monk. Many writers think "horizontally," and even write in bed—writers as different as Proust and Mark Twain. Some require silence and solitude; but others prefer to write in the midst of the family or the company at a café. There are instances, which attract attention as sensational, of authors who work through the night and sleep during the day. Probably this devotion to the night (time of contemplation, the dream, the subconscious) is the chief Romantic tradition; but there is, we must remember, a rival Romantic tradition, the Wordsworthian, which exalts the early morning (the freshness of childhood). Some authors assert that they can write only at certain seasons, as did Milton, who held that his poetic vein never flowed happily but from the autumnal equinox to the

vernal. Dr. Johnson, who found all such theories distasteful, believed that a man might write at any time if he would set himself doggedly to it: he himself wrote confessedly under economic compulsion. But one can suppose that these seemingly capricious rituals have in common that, by association and habit, they facilitate systematic production.[13]

Does the mode of transcription have any demonstrable effect on the literary style? Does it matter whether one writes a first draught with pen and ink or composes directly on the typewriter? Hemingway thinks that the typewriter "solidifies one's sentences before they are ready to print," hence makes revision as an integral part of writing difficult; others suppose the instrument has made for overfluent or journalistic style. No empirical investigation has been made. As for dictation, it has been used by authors of very various quality and spirit. Milton dictated to an amanuensis verses of *Paradise Lost* already composed in his head. More interesting, however, are the instances of Scott, Goethe in his old age, and Henry James in his, in which, though the structure has been thought out in advance, the verbal texture is extemporized. In the case of James, at least, it seems possible to make some causal connection between dictation and the "later manner," which, in its own complexly eloquent way, is oral and even conversational.[14]

Of the creative process itself, not much has been said at the degree of generalization profitable to literary theory. We have the individual case histories of particular authors; but these of course will be authors from comparatively recent times only, and authors given to thinking and writing analytically about their art (authors like Goethe and Schiller, Flaubert, James, Eliot and Valéry); and then we have the long-distance generalizations made by psychologists concerning such topics as originality, invention, imagination, finding the common denominator between scientific, philosophical, and aesthetic creation.

Any modern treatment of the creative process will chiefly concern the relative parts played by the unconscious and the conscious mind. It would be easy to contrast literary periods: to distinguish romantic and expressionistic periods which exalt the unconscious from classical and realistic periods which stress intelligence, revision, communication. But such a contrast may

readily be exaggerated: the critical theories of classicism and romanticism differ more violently than the creative practice of their best writers.

The authors most given to discussing their art wish naturally to discuss their conscious and technical procedures, for which they may claim credit, rather than their "given," the unelected experience which is their matter or their mirror or their prism. There are obvious reasons why self-conscious artists speak as though their art were impersonal, as though they chose their themes either by editorial compulsion or as a gratuitous aesthetic problem. The most famous document on the topic, Poe's "Philosophy of Composition," professes to explain by what methodological strategies, proceeding from what initial aesthetic axioms, his "Raven" was constructed. To defend his vanity against the charge that his horror tales were literary imitations, Poe wrote that their horrors were not of Germany but of the soul; yet that they were of his own soul he could not admit: he professed to be a literary engineer, skilled at manipulating the souls of others. In Poe, the division is terrifyingly complete between the unconscious, which provides the obsessive themes of delirium, torture, and death, and the conscious, which literarily develops them.[15]

Were we to set up tests for the discovery of literary talent, they would doubtless be of two sorts: one, that for poets in the modern sense, would concern itself with words and their combination, with image and metaphor, with linkages semantic and phonetic (i.e., rhyme, assonance, alliteration); the latter, for narrative writers (novelists and dramatists) would concern itself with characterization and plot-structure.

The literary man is a specialist in association ("wit"), dissociation ("judgment"), recombination (making a new whole out of elements separately experienced). He uses words as his medium. As a child, he may collect words as other children collect dolls, stamps, or pets. For the poet, the word is not primarily a "sign," a transparent counter, but a "symbol," valuable for itself as well as in its capacity of representative; it may even be an "object" or "thing," dear for its sound or look. Some novelists may use words as signs (Scott, Cooper, Dreiser), in which case they may be read to advantage translated into another lan-

guage, or remembered as mythic structure; poets normally use words "symbolically." [16]

The traditional phrase, the "association of ideas," is an inaccurate name. Beyond the associative linkage of word with word (marked in some poets) there is the association of the objects to which our mental "ideas" refer. The chief categories of such association are contiguity in time and place, and similarity or dissimilarity. The novelist operates primarily, perhaps, in terms of the former; the poet, in terms of the latter (which we may equate with metaphor); but—especially in recent literature—the contrast must not be made too strong.

In his *Road to Xanadu*, Lowes reconstructs with the acumen of a brilliant detective the process of association by which the vastly and curiously read Coleridge moved from one quotation or allusion to another. As for theory, however, he is soon content: a few purely figurative terms serve him to describe the creative process. He speaks of the "hooked atoms" or (in the phrase of Henry James) of images and ideas as dropping for a time "into the deep well of unconscious cerebration," to emerge having undergone (in the favorite quotation of scholars) a "sea-change." When Coleridge's recondite reading reappears, we sometimes get "marquetry" or "mosaic," sometimes a "miracle." Lowes formally acknowledges that "at the zenith of its power the creative energy is both conscious and unconscious . . . controlling consciously the throng of images which in the reservoir [the "well" of the unconscious] have undergone unconscious metamorphosis"; but he scarcely attends to or attempts to define the really purposive and constructive in the creative process.[17]

In the narrative writer, we think of his creation of characters and his "invention" of stories. Since the Romantic period, both have undoubtedly been conceived of too simply as either "original" or copied from real people (a view read back also into the literature of the past) or plagiarism. Yet even in the most "original" novelists like Dickens, character types and narrative techniques are chiefly traditional, drawn from the professional, the institutional literary stock.[18]

The creation of characters may be supposed to blend, in varying degrees, inherited literary types, persons observed, and the

self. The realist, we might say, chiefly observes behavior or "empathizes," while the Romantic writer "projects"; yet it is to be doubted that mere observation can suffice for life-like characterization. Faust, Mephistopheles, Werther, and Wilhelm Meister are all, says one psychologist, "projections into fiction of various aspects of Goethe's own nature." The novelist's potential selves, including those selves which are viewed as evil, are all potential *personae*. "One man's mood is another man's character." Dostoevsky's four brothers Karamazov are all aspects of Dostoevsky. Nor should we suppose that a novelist is necessarily limited to observation in his heroines. "*Madame Bovary, c'est moi,*" says Flaubert. Only selves recognized from within as potential can become "living characters," not "flat" but "round." Whatever characters a novelist has succeeded with must be parts of himself, since only from himself, and not *ex nihilo*, could he give them life.[19]

What kind of relation have these "living characters" to the novelist's actual self? The more numerous and separate his characters, the less definite his own "personality," it would seem. Shakespeare disappears into his plays; neither in them, nor in anecdote, do we get any sense of a sharply defined and individuated character comparable to that of Ben Jonson. The character of the poet, Keats once wrote, is to have no self: "it is everything and nothing. . . . It has as much delight in conceiving an Iago as an Imogen. . . . A Poet is the most unpoetical of any thing in existence, because he has no Identity—he is continually informing and filling some other body." [20]

All these theories we have discussed belong actually to the psychology of the writer. The processes of his creation are the legitimate object of the psychologists' investigative curiosity. They can classify the poet according to physiological and psychological types; they can describe his mental ills; they may even explore his subconscious mind. The evidence of the psychologist may come from unliterary documents or it may be drawn from the works themselves. In the latter case, it needs to be checked with the documentary evidence, to be carefully interpreted.

Can psychology, in its turn, be used to interpret and evaluate the literary works themselves? Psychology obviously can illumi-

nate the creative process. As we have seen, attention has been given to the varying methods of composition, to the habits of authors in revising and rewriting. There has been study of the genesis of works: the early stages, the drafts, the rejected readings. Yet the critical relevance of much of this information, especially the many anecdotes about writers' habits, is surely overrated. A study of revisions, corrections, and the like has more which is literarily profitable, since, well used, it may help us perceive critically relevant fissures, inconsistencies, turnings, distortions in a work of art. Analyzing how Proust composed his cyclic novel, Feuillerat illuminates the later volumes, enabling us to distinguish several layers in their text. A study of variants seems to permit glimpses into an author's workshop.[21]

Yet if we examine drafts, rejections, exclusions, and cuts more soberly, we conclude them not, finally, necessary to an understanding of the finished work or to a judgment upon it. Their interest is that of any alternative, i.e., they may set into relief the qualities of the final text. But the same end may very well be achieved by devising for ourselves alternatives, whether or not they have actually passed through the author's mind. Keats' verses in the "Ode to the Nightingale":

> *The same* [voice] *that oft-times hath*
> *Charm'd magic casements opening on the foam*
> *Of perilous seas, in faery lands forlorn,*

may gain something from our knowing that Keats considered "ruthless seas" and even "keelless seas." But the status of "ruthless" or "keelless," by chance preserved, does not essentially differ from "dangerous," "empty," "barren," "shipless," "cruel," or any other adjective the critic might invoke. They do not belong to the work of art; nor do these genetic questions dispense with the analysis and evaluation of the actual work.[22]

There remains the question of "psychology" in the works themselves. Characters in plays and novels are judged by us to be "psychologically" true. Situations are praised and plots accepted because of this same quality. Sometimes, a psychological theory, held either consciously or dimly by an author, seems to fit a figure or a situation. Thus Lily Campbell has argued that Hamlet fits the type of "sanguine man's suffering

from melancholy adust" known to the Elizabethans from their psychological theories. In like fashion Oscar Campbell has tried to show that Jaques, in *As You Like It,* is a case of "unnatural melancholy produced by adustion of phlegm." Walter Shandy could be shown to suffer from the disease of linguistic associationism described in Locke. Stendhal's hero Julien Sorel is described in terms of the psychology of Destutt de Tracy, and the different kinds of love relationship are obviously classified according to Stendhal's own book *De l'Amour.* Rodion Raskolnikov's motives and feelings are analyzed in a way which suggests some knowledge of clinical psychology. Proust certainly has a whole psychological theory of memory, important even for the organization of his work. Freudian psychoanalysis is used quite consciously by novelists such as Conrad Aiken or Waldo Frank.[23]

The question may be raised, of course, whether the author has really succeeded in incorporating psychology into his figures and their relationships. Mere statements of his knowledge or theories would not count. They would be "matter" or "content," like any other type of information to be found in literature, e.g., facts from navigation, astronomy, or history. In some cases, the reference to contemporary psychology may be doubted or minimized. The attempts to fit Hamlet or Jaques into some scheme of Elizabethan psychology seem mistaken, because Elizabethan psychology was contradictory, confusing, and confused, and Hamlet and Jaques are more than types. Though Raskolnikov and Sorel fit certain psychological theories, they do so only incompletely and intermittently. Sorel sometimes behaves in a most melodramatic manner. Raskolnikov's initial crime is inadequately motivated. These books are not primarily psychological studies or expositions of theories but dramas or melodramas, where striking situations are more important than realistic psychological motivation. If one examines "stream of consciousness" novels, one soon discovers that there is no "real" reproduction of the actual mental processes of the subject, that the stream of consciousness is rather a device of dramatizing the mind, of making us aware concretely what Benjy, the idiot in Faulkner's *The Sound and the Fury,* is like, or what Mrs.

Bloom is like. But there is little that seems scientific or even "realistic" about the device.[24]

Even if we assume that an author succeeds in making his figures behave with "psychological truth," we may well raise the question whether such "truth" is an artistic value. Much great art continuously violates standards of psychology, either contemporary with it or subsequent. It works with improbable situations, with fantastic motifs. Like the demand for social realism, psychological truth is a naturalistic standard without universal validity. In some cases, to be sure, psychological insight seems to enhance artistic value. In such cases, it corroborates important artistic values, those of complexity and coherence. But such insight can be reached by other means than a theoretical knowledge of psychology. In the sense of a conscious and systematic theory of the mind and its workings, psychology is unnecessary to art and not in itself of artistic value.[25]

For some conscious artists, psychology may have tightened their sense of reality, sharpened their powers of observation or allowed them to fall into hitherto undiscovered patterns. But, in itself, psychology is only preparatory to the act of creation; and in the work itself, psychological truth is an artistic value only if it enhances coherence and complexity—if, in short, it is art.

CHAPTER IX

Literature and Society

Literature is a social institution, using as its medium language, a social creation. Such traditional literary devices as symbolism and meter are social in their very nature. They are conventions and norms which could have arisen only in society. But, furthermore, literature "imitates" "life"; and "life" is, in large measure, a social reality, even though the natural world and the inner or subjective world of the individual have also been objects of literary "imitation." The poet himself is a member of society, possessed of a specific social status: he receives some degree of social recognition and reward; he addresses an audience, however hypothetical. Indeed, literature has usually arisen in close connection with particular social institutions; and in primitive society we may even be unable to distinguish poetry from ritual, magic, work, or play. Literature has also a social function, or "use," which cannot be purely individual. Thus a large majority of the questions raised by literary study are, at least ultimately or by implication, social questions: questions of tradition and convention, norms and genres, symbols and myths. With Tomars, one can formulate: "Esthetic institutions are not based upon social institutions: they are not even part of social institutions: they are social institutions of one type and intimately interconnected with those others." [1]

Usually, however, the inquiry concerning "literature and society" is put more narrowly and externally. Questions are asked about the relations of literature to a given social situation, to an economic, social, and political system. Attempts are made to describe and define the influence of society on literature and to prescribe and judge the position of literature in society. This sociological approach to literature is particularly cultivated by those who profess a specific social philosophy. Marxist critics not only study these relations between literature and society, but

also have their clearly defined conception of what these relations should be, both in our present society and in a future "classless" society. They practice evaluative, "judicial" criticism, based on non-literary political, and ethical criteria. They tell us not only what were and are the social relations and implications of an author's work but what they should have been or ought to be.[2] They are not only students of literature and society but prophets of the future, monitors, propagandists; and they have difficulty in keeping these two functions separate.

The relation between literature and society is usually discussed by starting with the phrase, derived from De Bonald, that "literature is an expression of society." But what does this axiom mean? If it assumes that literature, at any given time, mirrors the current social situation "correctly," it is false; it is commonplace, trite, and vague if it means only that literature depicts some aspects of social reality.[3] To say that literature mirrors or expresses life is even more ambiguous. A writer inevitably expresses his experience and total conception of life; but it would be manifestly untrue to say that he expresses the whole of life—or even the whole life of a given time—completely and exhaustively. It is a specific evaluative criterion to say that an author should express the life of his own time fully, that he should be "representative" of his age and society. Besides, of course, the terms "fully" and "representative" require much interpretation: in most social criticism they seem to mean that an author should be aware of specific social situations, e.g., of the plight of the proletariat, or even that he should share a specific attitude and ideology of the critic.

But it seems best to postpone the problem of evaluative criticism till we have disengaged the actual relations between literature and society. These descriptive (as distinct from normative) relations admit of rather ready classification.

First, there is the sociology of the writer and the profession and institutions of literature, the whole question of the economic basis of literary production, the social provenience and status of the writer, his social ideology, which may find expression in extraliterary pronouncements and activities. Then there is the problem of the social content, the implications and social purpose of the works of literature themselves. Lastly, there are the

problems of the audience and the actual social influence of literature. The question how far literature is actually determined by or dependent on its social setting, on social change and development, is one which, in one way or another, will enter into all the three divisions of our problem: the sociology of the writer, the social content of the works themselves, and the influence of literature on society. We shall have to decide what is meant by dependence or causation; and ultimately we shall arrive at the problem of cultural integration and specifically at how our own culture is integrated.

Since every writer is a member of society, he can be studied as a social being. Though his biography is the main source, such a study can easily widen into one of the whole milieu from which he came and in which he lived. It will be possible to accumulate information about the social provenience, the family background, the economic position of writers. We can show what was the exact share of aristocrats, bourgeois, and proletarians in the history of literature; for example, we can demonstrate the predominant share which the children of the professional and commercial classes take in the production of American literature.[4] Statistics can establish that, in modern Europe, literature recruited its practitioners largely from the middle classes, since aristocracy was preoccupied with the pursuit of glory or leisure while the lower classes had little opportunity for education. In England, this generalization holds good only with large reservations. The sons of peasants and workmen appear infrequently in older English literature: exceptions such as Burns and Carlyle are partly explicable by reference to the democratic Scottish school system. The role of the aristocracy in English literature was uncommonly great—partly because it was less cut off from the professional classes than in other countries, where there was no primogeniture. But, with a few exceptions, all modern Russian writers before Goncharov and Chekhov were aristocratic in origin. Even Dostoevsky was technically a nobleman, though his father, a doctor in a Moscow Hospital for the Poor, acquired land and serfs only late in his life.

It is easy enough to collect such data but harder to interpret them. Does social provenience prescribe social ideology and allegiance? The cases of Shelley, Carlyle, and Tolstoy are ob-

vious examples of such "treason" to one's class. Outside of Russia, most Communist writers are not proletarian in origin. Soviet and other Marxist critics have carried out extensive investigations to ascertain precisely both the exact social provenience and the social allegiance of Russian writers. Thus P. N. Sakulin bases his treatment of recent Russian literature on careful distinctions between the respective literatures of the peasants, the small bourgeoisie, the democratic intelligentsia, the *déclassé* intelligentsia, the bourgeoisie, the aristocracy, and the revolutionary proletariat.[5] In the study of older literature, Russian scholars attempt elaborate distinctions between the many groups and sub-groups of the Russian aristocracy to whom Pushkin and Gogol, Turgenev and Tolstoy may be shown to have belonged by virtue of their inherited wealth and early associations.[6] But it is difficult to prove that Pushkin represented the interests of the impoverished landed nobility and Gogol those of the Ukrainian small landholder; such a conclusion is indeed disproved by the general ideology of their works and by the appeal the works have made beyond the confines of a group, a class, and a time.[7]

The social origins of a writer play only a minor part in the questions raised by his social status, allegiance, and ideology; for writers, it is clear, have often put themselves at the service of another class. Most Court poetry was written by men who, though born in lower estate, adopted the ideology and taste of their patrons.

The social allegiance, attitude, and ideology of a writer can be studied not only in his writings but also, frequently, in biographical extra-literary documents. The writer has been a citizen, has pronounced on questions of social and political importance, has taken part in the issues of his time.

Much work has been done upon political and social views of individual writers; and in recent times more and more attention has been devoted to the economic implications of these views. Thus L. C. Knights, arguing that Ben Jonson's economic attitude was profoundly medieval, shows how, like several of his fellow-dramatists, he satirized the rising class of usurers, monopolists, speculators, and "undertakers."[8] Many works of literature—e.g., the "histories" of Shakespeare and Swift's *Gulliver's Travels*—have been reinterpreted in close relation to the political context

of the time.[9] Pronouncements, decisions, and activities should never be confused with the actual social implications of a writer's works. Balzac is a striking example of the possible division; for, though his professed sympathies were all with the old order, the aristocracy, and the Church, his instinct and imagination were far more engaged by the acquisitive type, the speculator, the new strong man of the bourgeoisie. There may be a considerable difference between theory and practice, between profession of faith and creative ability.

These problems of social origins, allegiance, and ideology will, if systematized, lead to a sociology of the writer as a type, or as a type at a particular time and place.[10] We can distinguish between writers according to their degree of integration into the social process. It is very close in popular literature, but may reach the extremes of dissociation, of "social distance," in Bohemianism, with the *poète maudit* and the free creative genius. On the whole, in modern times, and in the West, the literary man seems to have lessened his class ties. There has arisen an "intelligentsia," a comparatively independent in-between class of professionals. It will be the task of literary sociology to trace its exact social status, its degree of dependence on the ruling class, the exact economic sources of its support, the prestige of the writer in each society.

The general outlines of this history are already fairly clear. In popular oral literature, we can study the role of the singer or narrator who will depend closely on the favor of his public: the bard in ancient Greece, the *scop* in Teutonic antiquity, the professional folk-tale teller in the Orient and Russia. In the ancient Greek city state, the tragedians and such composers of dithyrambs and hymns as Pindar had their special, semireligious position, one slowly becoming more secularized, as we can see when we compare Euripides with Aeschylus. Among the Courts of the Roman Empire, we must think of Virgil, Horace, and Ovid as dependent on the bounty and good will of their Caesar and Maecenas.

In the Middle Ages, there are the monk in his cell, the troubadour and *Minnesänger* at the Court or baron's castle, the vagrant scholars on the roads. The writer is either a clerk or scholar, or he is a singer, an entertainer, a minstrel. But even

kings like Wenceslaus II of Bohemia or James I of Scotland are now poets—amateurs, dilettantes. In the German *Meistersang*, artisans are organized in poetic guilds, burghers who practice poetry as a craft. With the Renaissance there arose a comparatively unattached group of writers, the Humanists, who wandered sometimes from country to country and offered their services to different patrons. Petrarch is the first modern *poeta laureatus*, possessed of a grandiose conception of his mission, while Aretino is the prototype of the literary journalist, living on blackmail, feared rather than honored and respected.

In the large, the later history is the transition from support by noble or ignoble patrons to that afforded by publishers acting as predictive agents of the reading public. The system of aristocratic patronage was not, however, universal. The Church and, soon, the theater supported special types of literature. In England, the patronage system apparently began to fail early in the eighteenth century. For a time, literature, deprived of its earlier benefactors and not yet fully supported by the reading public, was economically worse off. The early life of Dr. Johnson in Grub Street and his defiance of Lord Chesterfield symbolize these changes. Yet a generation earlier, Pope was able to amass a fortune from his translation of Homer, lavishly subscribed by nobility and university men.

The great financial rewards, however, came only in the nineteenth century, when Scott and Byron wielded an enormous influence upon taste and public opinion. Voltaire and Goethe had vastly increased the prestige and independence of the writer on the Continent. The growth of the reading public, the founding of the great reviews like the *Edinburgh* and the *Quarterly*, made literature more and more the almost independent "institution" which Prosper de Barante, writing in 1822, claimed it to have been in the eighteenth century.[11]

As Ashley Thorndike urged, the "outstanding characteristic of the printed matter of the nineteenth century is not its vulgarization, or its mediocrity, but rather its specialization. This printed matter is no longer addressed to a uniform or homogeneous public: it is divided up among many publics and consequently divided by many subjects, interests, and purposes." [12] In *Fiction and the Reading Public*, which might well be considered

a homily on Thorndike's text, Mrs. Q. D. Leavis [13] points out that the eighteenth-century peasant who learned to read had to read what the gentry and the university men read; that the nineteenth century readers, on the other hand, are properly spoken of not as "the public" but as "publics." Our own time knows still further multiplications in publishing lists and magazine racks: there exist books for 9-10-year olds, books for boys of high school age, books for those who "live alone"; trade journals, house organs, Sunday School weeklies, Westerns, true-story romances. Publishers, magazines, and writers all specialize.

Thus a study of the economic basis of literature and of the social status of the writer is inextricably bound up with a study of the audience he addresses and upon which he is dependent financially.[14] Even the aristocratic patron is an audience and frequently an exacting audience, requiring not only personal adulation but also conformity to the conventions of his class. In even earlier society, in the group where folk poetry flourishes, the dependence of the author on the audience is even greater: his work will not be transmitted unless it pleases immediately. The role of the audience in the theater is, at least, as tangible. There have been even attempts to trace the changes in Shakespeare's periods and style to the change in the audience between the open-air Globe, on the South Bank, with its mixed audience, and Blackfriars, a closed hall frequented by the higher classes. It becomes harder to trace the specific relation between author and public at a later time when the reading public rapidly expands, becomes dispersed and heterogeneous, and when the relationships of author and public grow more indirect and oblique. The number of intermediaries between writers and the public increases. We can study the role of such social institutions and associations as the salon, the café, the club, the academy, and the university. We can trace the history of reviews and magazines as well as of publishing houses. The critic becomes an important middleman; a group of connoisseurs, bibliophiles, and collectors may support certain kinds of literature; and the associations of literary men themselves may help to create a special public of writers or would-be writers. In America especially, women, who, according to Veblen provide vicarious leisure and consumption

of the arts for the tired businessman, have become active determinants of literary taste.

Still, the old patterns have not been completely replaced. All modern governments support and foster literature in various degrees; and patronage means, of course, control and supervision.[15] To overrate the conscious influence of the totalitarian state during the last decades would be difficult. It has been both negative—in suppression, book-burning, censorship, silencing, and reprimanding, and positive—in the encouragement of "blood and soil" regionalism or Soviet "socialist realism." The fact that the state has been unsuccessful in creating a literature which, conforming to ideological specifications, is still great art, cannot refute the view that government regulation of literature is effective in offering the possibilities of creation to those who identify themselves voluntarily or reluctantly with the official prescriptions. Thus, in Soviet Russia, literature is, at least, in theory again becoming a communal art and the artist has again been integrated into society.

The graph of a book's success, survival, and recrudescence, or a writer's reputation and fame is, mainly, a social phenomenon. In part it belongs, of course, to literary "history," since fame and reputation are measured by the actual influence of a writer on other writers, his general power of transforming and changing the literary tradition. In part, reputation is a matter of critical response: till now, it has been traced chiefly on the basis of more or less formal pronouncements assumed to be representative of a period's "general reader." Hence, while the whole question of the "whirligig of taste" is "social," it can be put on a more definitely sociological basis: detailed work can investigate the actual concordance between a work and the specific public which has made its success; evidence can be accumulated on editions, copies sold.

The stratification of every society is reflected in the stratification of its taste. While the norms of the upper classes usually descend to the lower, the movement is sometimes reversed: interest in folklore and primitive art is a case in point. There is no necessary concurrence between political and social advancement and aesthetic: leadership in literature had passed to the bourgeoisie long before political supremacy. Social stratification may

be interfered with and even abrogated in questions of taste by differences of age and sex, by specific groups and associations. Fashion is also an important phenomenon in modern literature, for in a competitive fluid society, the norms of the upper classes, quickly imitated, are in constant need of replacement. Certainly, the present rapid changes of taste seem to reflect the rapid social changes of the last decades and the general loose relation between artist and audience.

The modern writer's isolation from society, illustrated by Grub Street, Bohemia, Greenwich Village, the American expatriate, invites sociological study. A Russian socialist, Georgi Plekhanov, believes that the doctrine of "art for art's sake" develops when artists feel a "hopeless contradiction between their aims and the aims of the society to which they belong. Artists must be very hostile to their society and they must see no hope of changing it." [16] In his *Sociology of Literary Taste*, Levin L. Schücking has sketched out some of these problems; elsewhere, he has studied in detail the role of the family and women as an audience in the eighteenth century.[17]

Though much evidence has been accumulated, well-substantiated conclusions have rarely been drawn concerning the exact relations between the production of literature and its economic foundations, or even concerning the exact influence of the public on a writer. The relationship is obviously not one of mere dependence or of passive compliance with the prescriptions of patron or public. Writers may succeed in creating their own special public; indeed, as Coleridge knew, every new writer has to create the taste which will enjoy him.

The writer is not only influenced by society: he influences it. Art not merely reproduces Life but also shapes it. People may model their lives upon the patterns of fictional heroes and heroines. They have made love, committed crimes and suicide according to the book, be it Goethe's *Sorrows of Werther* or Dumas' *Musketeers*. But can we precisely define the influence of a book on its readers? Will it ever be possible to describe the influence of satire? Did Addison really change the manners of his society or Dickens incite reforms of debtors' prisons, boys' schools, and poorhouses? [18] Was Mrs. Stowe really the "little woman who made the great war"? Has *Gone with the Wind*

changed Northern readers' attitudes toward Mrs. Stowe's war? How have Hemingway and Faulkner affected their readers? How great was the influence of literature on the rise of modern nationalism? Certainly the historical novels of Walter Scott in Scotland, of Henryk Sienkiewicz in Poland, of Alois Jirásek in Czechoslovakia, have done something very definite to increase national pride and a common memory of historical events.

We can hypothesize—plausibly, no doubt—that the young are more directly and powerfully influenced by their reading than the old, that inexperienced readers take literature more naïvely as transcript rather than interpretation of life, that those whose books are few take them in more utter seriousness than do wide and professional readers. Can we advance beyond such conjecture? Can we make use of questionnaires and any other mode of sociological enquiry? No exact objectivity is obtainable, for the attempt at case histories will depend upon the memories and the analytic powers of the interrogated, and their testimonies will need codification and evaluation by a fallible mind. But the question, "How does literature affect its audience?" is an empirical one, to be answered, if at all, by the appeal to experience; and, since we are thinking of literature in the broadest sense, and society in the broadest, the appeal must be made to the experience not of the connoisseur alone but to that of the human race. We have scarcely begun to study such questions.[19]

Much the most common approach to the relations of literature and society is the study of works of literature as social documents, as assumed pictures of social reality. Nor can it be doubted that some kind of social picture can be abstracted from literature. Indeed, this has been one of the earliest uses to which literature has been put by systematic students. Thomas Warton, the first real historian of English poetry, argued that literature has the "peculiar merit of faithfully recording the features of the times, and of preserving the most picturesque and expressive representation of manners";[20] and to him and many of his antiquarian successors, literature was primarily a treasury of costumes and customs, a source book for the history of civilization, especially of chivalry and its decline. As for modern readers, many of them derive their chief impressions of foreign societies from the read-

ing of novels, from Sinclair Lewis and Galsworthy, from Balzac and Turgenev.

Used as a social document, literature can be made to yield the outlines of social history. Chaucer and Langland preserve two views of fourteenth-century society. The Prologue to the *Canterbury Tales* was early seen to offer an almost complete survey of social types. Shakespeare, in the *Merry Wives of Windsor,* Ben Jonson in several plays, and Thomas Deloney seem to tell us something about the Elizabethan middle class. Addison, Fielding, and Smollett depict the new bourgeoisie of the eighteenth century; Jane Austen, the country gentry and country parsons early in the nineteenth century; and Trollope, Thackeray, and Dickens, the Victorian world. At the turn of the century, Galsworthy shows us the English upper middle classes; Wells, the lower middle classes; Bennett, the provincial towns.

A similar series of social pictures could be assembled for American life from the novels of Mrs. Stowe and Howells to those of Farrell and Steinbeck. The life of post-Restoration Paris and France seems preserved in the hundreds of characters moving through the pages of Balzac's *Human Comedy;* and Proust traced in endless detail the social stratifications of the decaying French aristocracy. The Russia of the nineteenth-century landowners appears in the novels of Turgenev and Tolstoy; we have glimpses of the merchant and the intellectual in Chekhov's stories and plays and of collectivized farmers in Sholokhov.

Examples could be multiplied indefinitely. One can assemble and exposit the "world" of each, the part each gives to love and marriage, to business, to the professions, its delineation of clergymen, whether stupid or clever, saintly or hypocritical; or one can specialize upon Jane Austen's naval men, Proust's *arrivistes,* Howells' married women. This kind of specialization will offer us monographs on the "Relation between Landlord and Tenant in Nineteenth-Century American Fiction," "The Sailor in English Fiction and Drama," or "Irish Americans in Twentieth-Century Fiction."

But such studies seem of little value so long as they take it for granted that literature is simply a mirror of life, a reproduction, and thus, obviously, a social document. Such studies make sense only if we know the artistic method of the novelist studied, can

say—not merely in general terms, but concretely—in what relation the picture stands to the social reality. Is it realistic by intention? Or is it, at certain points, satire, caricature, or romantic idealization? In an admirably clearheaded study of *Aristocracy and the Middle Classes in Germany*, Kohn-Bramstedt rightly cautions us: "only a person who has a knowledge of the structure of a society from other sources than purely literary ones is able to find out if, and how far, certain social types and their behavior are reproduced in the novel. . . . What is pure fancy, what realistic observation, and what only an expression of the desires of the author must be separated in each case in a subtle manner." [21] Using Max Weber's conception of ideal "social types," the same scholar studies such social phenomena as class hatred, the behavior of the parvenu, snobbery, and the attitude toward the Jews; and he argues that such phenomena are not so much objective facts and behavior patterns as they are complex attitudes, thus far much better illustrated in fiction than elsewhere. Students of social attitudes and aspirations can use literary material, if they know how to interpret it properly. Indeed, for older periods, they will be forced to use literary or at least semiliterary material for want of evidence from the sociologists of the time: writers on politics, economics, and general public questions.

Heroes and heroines of fiction, villains and adventuresses, afford interesting indications of such social attitudes.[22] Such studies constantly lead into the history of ethical and religious ideas. We know the medieval status of the traitor and the medieval attitude towards usury, which, lingering on into the Renaissance, gives us Shylock and, later, Molière's L'Avare. To which "deadly sin" have later centuries chiefly assigned the villain; and is his villainy conceived of in terms of personal or social morality? Is he, for example, artist at rape or embezzler of widows' bonds?

The classic case is that of Restoration English comedy. Was it simply a realm of cuckoldom, a fairyland of adulteries and mock marriages as Lamb believed? Or was it, as Macaulay would have us believe, a faithful picture of decadent, frivolous, and brutal aristocracy? [23] Or should we not rather, rejecting both alternatives, see what particular social group created this art for what audience? And should we not see whether it was a naturalistic or a stylized art? Should we not be mindful of satire and irony,

self-ridicule and fantasy? Like all literature, these plays are not simply documents; they are plays with stock figures, stock situations, with stage marriages and stage conditions of marriage settlements. E. E. Stoll concludes his many arguments on these matters: "Evidently this is not a 'real society,' not a faithful picture even of the 'fashionable life': evidently it is not England, even 'under the Stuarts,' whether since or before the Revolution or the Great Rebellion." [24] Still, the salutary emphasis upon convention and tradition to be found in writing like Stoll's cannot completely discharge the relations between literature and society. Even the most abstruse allegory, the most unreal pastoral, the most outrageous farce can, properly interrogated, tell us something of the society of a time.

Literature occurs only in a social context, as part of a culture, in a milieu. Taine's famous triad of *race, milieu,* and *moment* has, in practice, led to an exclusive study of the milieu. Race is an unknown fixed integral with which Taine operates very loosely, and moment can be dissolved into the concept of milieu. A difference of time means simply a different setting, but the actual question of analysis arises only if we try to break up the term "milieu." The most immediate setting of a work of literature, we shall then recognize, is its linguistic and literary tradition, and this tradition in turn is encompassed by a general cultural "climate." Only far less directly can literature be connected with concrete economic political and social situations. Of course there are interrelationships between all spheres of human activities. Eventually we can establish some connection between the modes of production and literature, since an economic system usually implies some system of power and must control the forms of family life. And the family plays an important role in education, in the concepts of sexuality and love, in the whole convention and tradition of human sentiment. Thus it is possible to link even lyric poetry with love conventions, religious preconceptions, and conceptions of nature. But these relationships may be devious and oblique.

It seems impossible, however, to accept a view constituting any particular human activity the "starter" of all the others, whether it be the theory of Taine, who reduces all creativity to a mysterious biological factor, "race," or that of Hegel and the Hegelians, who consider "spirit" the only moving force in his-

tory, or that of the Marxists, who derive everything from the mode of production. No radical technological changes took place in the many centuries between the early Middle Ages and the rise of Capitalism, while cultural life, and literature in particular, underwent most profound transformations. Nor does literature always show, at least immediately, much awareness of an epoch's technological changes: the Industrial Revolution penetrated English novels only in the forties of the nineteenth century (with Mrs. Gaskell, Kingsley, and Charlotte Brontë), long after its symptoms were plainly visible to economists and social thinkers.

The social situation, one should admit, seems to determine the possibility of the realization of certain aesthetic values, but not the values themselves. We can determine in general outlines what art forms are possible in a given society and which are impossible, but it is not possible to predict that these art forms will actually come into existence. Many Marxists—and not Marxists only—attempt far too crude short cuts from economics to literature. For example, John Maynard Keynes, not an unliterary person, has ascribed the existence of Shakespeare to the fact that "we were just in a financial position to afford Shakespeare at the moment when he presented himself. Great writers flourished in the atmosphere of buoyancy, exhilaration, and the freedom of economic cares felt by the governing class, which is engendered by profit inflations." [25] But profit inflations did not elicit great poets elsewhere—for instance, during the boom of the twenties in the United States—nor is this view of the optimistic Shakespeare quite beyond dispute. No more helpful is the opposite formula, devised by a Russian Marxist: "Shakespeare's tragic outlook on the world was consequential upon his being the dramatic expression of the feudal aristocracy, which in Elizabeth's day had lost their former dominant position." [26] Such contradictory judgments, attached to vague categories like optimism and pessimism, fail to deal concretely with either the ascertainable social content of Shakespeare's plays, his professed opinions on political questions (obvious from the chronicle plays), or his social status as a writer.

One must be careful, however, not to dismiss the economic approach to literature by means of such quotations. Marx him-

self, though on occasion he made some fanciful judgments, in general acutely perceived the obliqueness of the relationship between literature and society. In the *Critique of Political Economy,* he admits that "certain periods of highest development of art stand in no direct connection with the general development of society, nor with the material basis and the skeleton structure of its organization. Witness the example of the Greeks as compared with the modern nations or even Shakespeare." [27] He also understood that the modern division of labor leads to a definite contradiction between the three factors ("moments" in his Hegelian terminology) of the social process—"productive forces," "social relations," and "consciousness." He expected, in a manner which scarcely seems to avoid the Utopian, that in the future classless society these divisions of labor would again disappear, that the artist would again be integrated into society. He thought it possible that everybody could be an excellent, even an original, painter. "In a communist society there are no painters, but at most men who, among other things, also paint." [28]

The "vulgar Marxist" tells us that this or that writer was a bourgeois who voiced reactionary or progressive opinions about Church and State. There is a curious contradiction between this avowed determinism which assumes that "consciousness" must follow "existence," that a bourgeois cannot help being one, and the usual ethical judgment which condemns him for these very opinions. In Russia, one notes, writers of bourgeois origin who have joined the proletariat have constantly been subjected to suspicions of their sincerity, and every artistic or civic failing has been ascribed to their class origin. Yet if progress, in the Marxist sense, leads directly from feudalism via bourgeois capitalism to the "dictatorship of the proletariat," it would be logical and consistent for a Marxist to praise the "progressives" at any time. He should praise the bourgeois when, in the early stages of capitalism, he fought the surviving feudalism. But frequently Marxists criticize writers from a twentieth-century point of view, or, like Smirnov and Grib, Marxists very critical of "vulgar sociology," rescue the bourgeois writer by a recognition of his universal humanity. Thus Smirnov comes to the conclusion that Shakespeare was the "humanist ideologist of the bourgeoisie, the exponent of the program advanced by them when, in the name of

humanity, they first challenged the feudal order." [29] But the concept of humanism, of the universality of art, surrenders the central doctrine of Marxism, which is essentially relativistic.

Marxist criticism is at its best when it exposes the implied, or latent, social implications of a writer's work. In this respect it is a technique of interpretation parallel to those founded upon the insights of Freud, or of Nietzsche, or of Pareto, or to the Scheler-Mannheim "sociology of knowledge." All these intellectuals are suspicious of the intellect, the professed doctrine, the mere statement. The central distinction is that Nietzsche's and Freud's methods are psychological, while Pareto's analysis of "residues" and "derivatives" and the Scheler-Mannheim technique of the analysis of "ideology" are sociological.

The "sociology of knowledge," as illustrated in the writings of Max Scheler, Max Weber, and Karl Mannheim, has been worked out in detail and has some definite advantages over its rivals.[30] It not only draws attention to the presuppositions and implications of a given ideological position, but it also stresses the hidden assumptions and biases of the investigator himself. It is thus self-critical and self-conscious, even to the extreme of morbidity. It is also less prone than either Marxism or psychoanalysis to isolate one single factor as the sole determinant of change. Whatever their failure at isolating the religious factor, the studies of Max Weber in the sociology of religion are valuable for their attempt to describe the influence of ideological factors on economic behavior and institutions—for earlier emphasis had been entirely upon the economic influence on ideology.[31] A similar investigation of the influences of literature on social change would be very welcome, though it would run into analogous difficulties. It seems as hard to isolate the strictly literary factor as the religious factor and to answer the question whether the influence is due to the particular factor itself, or to other forces for which the factor is a mere "shrine" or "channel." [32]

The "sociology of knowledge" suffers, however, from its excessive historicism; it has come to ultimately skeptical conclusions despite its thesis that "objectivity" can be achieved by synthesizing, and thus neutralizing, the conflicting perspectives. It suffers also, in application to literature, from its inability to connect "content" with "form." Like Marxism, preoccupied with an ir-

rationalistic explanation, it is unable to provide a rational foundation for aesthetics and hence criticism and evaluation. This is, of course, true of all extrinsic approaches to literature. No causal study can do theoretical justice to the analysis, description, and evaluation of a literary work.

But the problem of "literature and society" can obviously be put in different terms, those of symbolic or meaningful relations: of consistency, harmony, coherence, congruence, structural identity, stylistic analogy, or with whatever term we want to designate the integration of a culture and the interrelationship among the different activities of men. Sorokin, who has analyzed the various possibilities clearly,[33] has concluded that the degree of integration varies from society to society.

Marxism never answers the question of the degree of dependence of literature on society. Hence many of the basic problems have scarcely begun to be studied. Occasionally, for example, one sees arguments for the social determination of genres, as in the case of the bourgeois origin of the novel, or even the details of their attitudes and forms, as in E. B. Burgum's not very convincing view that tragicomedy "results from the impact of middle class seriousness upon aristocratic frivolity." [34] Are there definite social determinants of such a broad literary style as Romanticism, which, though associated with the bourgeoisie, was anti-bourgeois in its ideology, at least in Germany, from its very beginning? [35] Though some kind of dependence of literary ideologies and themes on social circumstances seems obvious, the social origins of forms and styles, genres and actual literary norms have rarely been established.[36]

It has been attempted most concretely in studies of the social origins of literature: in Bücher's one-sided theory of the rise of poetry from labor rhythms; in the many studies by anthropologists of the magic role of early art; in George Thomson's very learned attempt to bring Greek tragedy into concrete relations with cult and rituals and with a definite democratic social revolution at the time of Aeschylus; in Christopher Caudwell's somewhat naïve attempt to study the sources of poetry in tribal emotions and in the bourgeois "illusion" of individual freedom.[37]

Only if the social determination of forms could be shown conclusively could the question be raised whether social attitudes

cannot become "constitutive" and enter a work of art as effective parts of its artistic value. One can argue that "social truth," while not, as such, an artistic value, corroborates such artistic values as complexity and coherence. But it need not be so. There is great literature which has little or no social relevance; social literature is only one kind of literature and is not central in the theory of literature unless one holds the view that literature is primarily an "imitation" of life as it is and of social life in particular. But literature is no substitute for sociology or politics. It has its own justification and aim.

Two Influence and Imitation

THE notion of influence must be regarded as virtually the key concept in Comparative Literature studies, since it posits the presence of two distinct and therefore comparable entities: the work from which the influence proceeds and that at which it is directed. At this point, I hardly need to stress that, as Wellek notes, the difference between the study of influences occurring within a national literature, and that of influences which transcend linguistic boundaries is not a qualitative and hence methodological one. The two approaches are merely distinguished by the fact that, in the latter case, works written in two different languages are scrutinized, which generates an urge to account for the language barrier.

In Ihab H. Hassan's opinion, it is unfortunate that often, in literary studies, "the concept [of influence] is called upon to account for any relationship, running the gamut of incidence to causality, with a somewhat expansive range of intermediate correlations."[1] In recent years, this question—which is vital for the comparatist—has repeatedly been the focus of scholarly attention, especially in the United States. Besides Hassan, scholars like Anna Balakian, Haskell Block, Claudio Guillén, and Joseph T. Shaw have participated in the lengthy and animated discussion.[2] The controversy reached its temporary climax at a symposium held during the First Congress of the ACLA.[3] In the following pages, the views of the scholars referred to

will be discussed with a view toward clarifying the concept of influence.

To prevent undue methodological complications I shall at the outset disregard the fact that often the "emitter" and the "receiver" of a literary influence are not in direct touch with each other but are linked by "intermediaries" or "transmitters," such as translators, reviewers, critics, scholars, travellers, or vehicles like books and journals. The function of the intermediary is ignored here, as a matter of principle, but will be briefly dealt with in the following chapter. Two examples will serve to draw the reader's attention to the fact that, in the case of influences, the question is not invariably one of simple cause/effect relationships.

To begin with, Mikhail Lermontov was a Russian poet who borrowed from Pushkin the model of the Byronic verse tale, but at the same time went back to Byron's own works in order to utilize certain characteristics of the English poet which had been overlooked or rejected by the author of *Eugene Onegin*. Byron's influence on Lermontov was thus twofold. This situation elicited the following comment from J. T. Shaw:

> One of the most complex problems in the study of literary influence is that of direct and indirect influence. An author may introduce the influence of a foreign author into a literary tradition, and then, as in the case of the Byronic tradition in Russia, it may proceed largely from the influence of the native author. But as the tradition continues, it may be enriched by another native author going back to the foreign author for materials or tonalities or images or effects which were not adopted by the first author. (S/F, p. 94)

A.O. Aldridge, on the other hand, uses the example of Benjamin Franklin and his collection of moralizing commonplaces, *Poor Richard's Almanac*, to show that "one author may be influenced by parts of another's work without being aware of his predecessor as an artist or of the totality of his work" (CLS, Adv. Issue, p. 146). Some of the

maxims included in the almanac originated with La Rochefoucauld; but it would be hard to prove in each case whether Franklin borrowed them directly from the Frenchman or whether he derived his knowledge of them from an English-language compilation.

I turn to the systematic study of the problem with the proviso, in the form of a warning, that in principle the comparatist should make no qualitative distinction between the active (giving) and passive (receiving) factors of an influence, for there is, or should be, as little disgrace in receiving as there is honor in giving. In most cases, at any rate, there is no direct lending or borrowing, and instances of literal imitation are probably rarer than more or less creative transmutations.

Schools and movements would seem to constitute an important exception to this rule of thumb; for, in such configurations, emission and reception, characterizing the relations between a master and his pupils, or a leader and his followers, are often closely attuned to each other. This relationship, however, constitutes not influence but imitation. It should also be noted that, in this present theoretical discussion of the problem, less attention needs to be paid to the emitter, since his contribution is to be weighed in the chapter on reception. In reception studies, however, purely aesthetic criteria play a relatively minor role since, chronologically, reception can best be characterized as a preliminary step to the kind of assimilation known as influence.

For the moment, I bypass the question whether, and to what extent, literary influence is a conscious or unconscious form of appropriation. In terms of their mutual interdependence, we might tentatively and dialectically define influence as unconscious imitation, and imitation as directed influence. As Shaw aptly remarks: "In contrast to imitation, influence shows the influenced author producing work which is essentially his own. Influence is not confined to individual details or images or borrowings or even sources—though it may include them—but is some-

thing pervasive, something organically involved in and presented through artistic works" [S/F, p. 91]. Aldridge, who defines influence as "something which exists in the work of one author which could not have existed had he not read the work of a previous author," corroborates Shaw when stating: "Influence is not something which reveals itself in a single, concrete manner, but it must be sought in many different manifestations" [*CLS*, Adv. Issue, p. 144]. In other words: Influence cannot be quantitatively measured.

If one wishes to exhaust the range of possibilities opening up to the student of influences, one may conceive of a series of steps which, beginning with literal translation, proceeds in an ascending order through *adaptation*, *imitation*, and *influence* to the original work of art. "Originality" applies to creative innovations in form or content as well as reinterpretations and combinations of ingredients borrowed from diverse models. In this regard, I am in agreement with Wellek and Warren, who note that

> Originality is usually misconceived in our time as meaning a mere violation of tradition, or it is sought for at the wrong place, in the mere material of the work of art, or in its mere scaffolding —the traditional plot, the conventional framework. . . . To work within a given tradition and adopt its devices is perfectly compatible with emotional power and artistic value.[4]

The dialectic of originality and imitation has long pervaded cultural history. Thus imitation [whose sibling is eclecticism] is generally praised in classicist periods and invariably damned by such anticlassical "movements" as Storm and Stress, Romanticism, and Surrealism. As plagiarism, that is, as imitation on the sly or quotation without reference to the source, it is generally unacceptable; yet exactly where plagiarism ends and creative imitation begins is often doubtful, as in the case of Brecht's "impudent" use of K. L. Ammer's Villon translations in his *Dreigroschenoper*.[5]

"In the case of imitations," says Shaw, "the author gives

up, to the degree he can, his creative personality to that of another author, and usually of a particular work, while at the same time being freed from the detailed fidelity expected in translation" (S/F, p. 88). *Adaptations*—which, when they involve works written in a foreign tongue, are often based on literal translations—range all the way from congenial reworkings of a model to more or less commercial attempts at making a work palatable to foreign audiences, as in the case of Maurice Valency's English version [*The Visit*] of Friedrich Dürrenmatt's play, *Der Besuch der alten Dame*. The resulting product often amounts to "creative treason" (*trahison créatrice*). In recent years, some leading American poets—Robert Lowell, for example—have employed an unusual form of poetic recreation which they themselves tout as imitation. Like Goethe in his *West-Östlicher Divan*, or Pound and Brecht in their reworkings of Chinese poetry, they have, using available translations, produced lyrical paraphrases that are "original."

Another kind of imitation is not based on a particular model but aims at the style of a single poet, a whole movement, or even an entire period. In scholarly parlance, this technique is known as "stylization" (the German *Pastiche* and French *pastiche*): "Related to an imitation but perhaps best considered separately is a *stylization*, in which an author suggests for an artistic purpose another author or literary work, or even the style of an entire period, by a combination of style and materials" (Shaw, in S/F, p. 89). Shaw cites the example of Pushkin's epitaph for Byron and his use of the old Russian style in certain portions of *Eugene Onegin*. In this context, one might refer to the familiar practice, common in turn-of-the-century secondary schools, of requiring students to write poems in the style of certain classics or contemporary works (see T. S. Eliot's youthful exercises as described by Rudolf Germer).[6]

As a comic variant of stylization, we should mention the *burlesque* which (say in the operettas of Gilbert and Sullivan) ridicules a style by means of a comically distorted

imitation. In the *pastiche* (which is not humorous), on the other hand, formal traits and, more rarely, traits related to subject matter and extracted from different works, are loosely but not ludicrously mixed. If an imitation pokes fun at specific literary models, one speaks of *parody* in the strict sense. Whereas in literary *satire* and pictorial *caricature* life itself furnishes the model, art serves the same function in the case of parody.[7] In this connection, it should be emphasized that parody and satire are frequently found side by side, and often complement and enhance each other. Moreover, it sometimes happens that in parody the consciously distorting imitation of a model results in an original product. Unconscious parody, on the other hand, is a contradiction in itself, although it is tempting to think of *Stilblüten*, *Kitsch*, and literary clichés in precisely these terms.

As creative genres, parody and travesty form a bridge to the so-called negative influences, by which latter term scholars like Anna Balakian signify the emergence of new trends and beliefs within a national literature, often inspired by foreign models in protest against prevailing artistic theories and practices. Literary history offers a wealth of relevant examples, such as Victor Hugo's repudiation of the Neoclassicism of Corneille and Racine in the foreword to his drama *Cromwell*, and Filippo Marinetti's unmitigated Futurist rejection of the art "of the museums."

As Professor Balakian points out, such "negative" influences are felt mostly within a national literature, as when rebellious sons rise in protest against their literary fathers:

> It is interesting to note that very often the influences of authors of the same nationality and language upon each other are negative influences, the result of reactions, for generations often tend to be rivals of each other and in the name of individualism reject in the work of their elders what they consider to be the conventions of the past. (*YCGL*, 11 [1962], p. 29)

Thus, she continues, Comparative Literature will be rather indifferent to this remarkable and characteristic

phenomenon of literary history, all the more so since, in the case of importation, "there is no longer a question of rivalry, and particularly as the reading of foreign literature is done generally at a more mature age when one may be more aware of the need for models and direction."[8] An interesting variant of negative influence, the phenomenon known as "counter-design" (*Gegenentwurf*), a term coined or at least popularized by Brecht, should perhaps also be mentioned. Here, a literary model is changed into its opposite, as it were, through a reversal of the polemic thrust, much as Brecht at one point intended to do with Beckett's drama *Waiting for Godot*.

It is necessary to draw still further lines of demarcation, in order to avoid pitfalls in terminology and semantic overlaps. The urgency of such regulation is underlined by the fact that the French theoreticians of Comparative Literature were singularly reluctant to distinguish between "influence" and "effect" (impact). Thus, Van Tieghem writes: "Moreover, in practice, the study of a writer's influence on a foreign writer or country is so closely linked to the study of his appreciation or his fortune . . . that it is often impossible to separate them from each other" (p. 117).

In his rather eclectic survey, Guyard even goes so far as to regard "influence" as one of several phenomena to be treated under the heading "The Fortunes of Authors." Although he expressly states that one must differentiate between *diffusion*, *imitation*, *fortune*, and *influence*, he indiscriminately lists the cult of Rousseau, the effect of Shakespearean drama on the French Romantics, and the European dissemination of Voltaire's ideas among the "several kinds of influence." Guyard opens Chapter Five ("Influence and Success") of his compendium with the equally ambiguous sentence: "The fortunes of authors outside the countries of their origin have certainly kindled, in France and among foreign adherents of the French comparative school, more studies than any other branch of Comparative Literature" (p. 58).

By comparison, Carré shows better sense, for in his foreword to Guyard's book, he speaks of influence studies as being "difficult to manage" and "often deceptive" and has a marked preference for straightforward reception studies. In the article Anna Balakian wrote for *Yearbook of Comparative and General Literature*, as well as in the above-mentioned symposium, she bemoans the contamination of influence and reception studies and demonstrates how very different are the data to be accounted for in each case. Reception studies, that is to say, may well succeed in shedding new light on the artistry of the emitter, but in most cases they operate on sociological, psychological, ethnic or even statistical levels. Generally, their unity depends on the unity of the emitter whose fame and reputation are to be accounted for. With influence studies, on the other hand, the primary interest is in tracking the sources of creativity, a task in which quantitative criteria are replaced by qualitative ones. Here, too, the dialectic of originality and imitation is at work:

> One is sometimes led to wonder whether any study of influence is truly justified unless it succeeds in elucidating the particular qualities of the borrower, in revealing along with the influence, and almost in spite of it, what is infinitely more important: the turning point at which the writer frees himself of the influence and finds his originality. [*YCGL*, 11 [1962], p. 29]

In an aperçu of Gustave Lanson's, quoted by Guyard, the line separating quantity from quality is even more clearly drawn, with reference to the determinism of the Naturalists: "The great works are those which Taine's doctrine does not entirely dissolve."

The use of quotes or allusions offers a special case of influence. Literal correspondences [unless they are coincidental] constitute an extremely superficial form of influence; indeed, they still belong within the realm of reception studies. The qualitative leap occurs in situations of the kind which Hermann Meyer studies in *Das Zitat in der Erzählkunst*, i.e., in extended prose works where quo-

tations are used in the manner of *leitmotifs* and thus assume the function of structural props.[9] Very informative, in this respect, is the Naturalistic sketch "Papa Hamlet," published by Arno Holz and Johannes Schlaf under the pseudonym Bjarne P. Holmsen. For, in pursuing their parodistic and satiric intents, these authors place literal or not-so-literal quotes from Shakespeare's drama in the mouth of their rather seedy protagonist. Unintentional or half-intentional quotes, such as the numerous *Faust* echoes in modern German literature, can hardly be counted as genuine influences, simply because they occur randomly and are merely proof of the speaker's formal education.

At this point, reference should perhaps be made to that type of negative influence which Escarpit has named creative treason.[10] The French champion of literary sociology alludes thus to the well-known fact that literary works are often misunderstood by a subsequent, or even their contemporary, public. Escarpit speaks of "recoveries" or "resurrections" which enable a work "to surmount social, spatial, or temporal barriers and achieve surrogate successes with audiences other than those originally contemplated." He continues,

> We have seen that the foreign audiences do not have direct access to the work. What they see in it is not what the author wanted to express. There is no coincidence or convergence between their intentions and those of the author, but there may be compatibility. That is to say, the author did not expressly wish to put something in or did not even dream of its being there. (p. 111)

As typical examples of such shifts in emphasis due to social, historical, or cultural differences, Escarpit cites the fate of Swift's *Gulliver's Travels* and Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe*, books which are now popular among children, whereas Lewis Carroll's classic *Alice in Wonderland* attracts many adult readers and critics. This whole trend is effectively parodied in F. C. Crews's book *The Pooh Perplex* (New York: Dutton, 1965).

In the case of translation, creative treason is almost unavoidable, and there is a popular Italian saying which speaks, not incorrectly, of the *traduttore* as a *traditore*. Seen from the standpoint of the receptive and receiving literature, a literal translation (especially of lyric poetry) is, in any case, indefensible. The transfer of a poem from one idiom to another is justifiable only when it is congenial to the new audience so that "it gives the work a new reality by furnishing it with the possibility of a new literary exchange with a larger audience, because it enriches the work not simply with survival, but with a second existence" (Escarpit, p. 112).

The treason is clearly most creative when the recasting of the model is not limited to mere translation, although, even on this level, translation often plays a major role (witness Baudelaire's versions of Poe). Anna Balakian draws our attention to a chain of *trahisons créatrices* that is firmly anchored in the nineteenth-century tradition, but which can be seen as pointing in either direction: namely, that of French Symbolism, which extends from the German Romantics (mainly Novalis) through A. W. Schlegel, Coleridge, and Poe to Baudelaire and Mallarmé, and continues past Symbolism to Surrealism.

Twice more we must briefly pause on our way to the core of the present chapter. First of all, it should be stressed that in the case of the so-called analogy or parallel studies there can be no question of influence in the proper sense, but only of "affinities" or "false" influences. Witness the following example, given by Van Tieghem:

> There are very marked affinities which at first it seems plausible to attribute to an influence; thorough investigation shows that there is none. There are two classic examples of this kind. "That fellow Ibsen, who is so much talked about, is not original," said Jules Lemaitre in 1895. "All of his social and moral ideas are found in George Sand." Georg Brandes . . . replied that Ibsen had never read Sand. "That makes no difference," said Faguet to M. Huszar. It makes a lot of difference: they moved in the same current but are not indebted to each other: hence there was no

influence. The other example is that of Alphonse Daudet, considered, on the basis of *La Petite Chose*, to be an imitator of Dickens. But he firmly denied having read Dickens. However strange it may seem, there was, then, no influence but only a common trend. (p. 136f.)

From such evidence Van Tieghem would infer that one must treat the relationship of Ibsen to George Sand, and of Daudet to Dickens, under the heading of General rather than Comparative Literature. I, for one, eschew a pat solution while sharing, in principle, Ihab Hassan's view that one must clearly differentiate between affinity and influence:

When we say that A has influenced B, we mean that after literary or aesthetic analysis we can discern a number of significant similarities between the works of A and B. . . . So far we have established no influence; we have only documented what I call affinity. For influence presupposes some manner of causality. (*JAAC*, 14 [1955], p. 68)

For all the plausibility of this statement, it must be observed that the two phenomena are not always distinct, since affinities and influences are often intertwined. For instance, Claudio Guillén, in a footnote to his article "Literatura como sistema," points out that there are, in the *Celestina*, attributed to Fernando de Rojas, textual echoes of other Spanish works; on the whole, however, these "influences" are less significant than the impact of the Stoic tradition evidenced in Petrarch's *De remediis*—even though there are no verbal parallels to Petrarch.[11]

The scholar dealing with the problem of influence will be forced to draw, on many occasions, upon the concept of *source* (*Quelle*), which looms especially large in nineteenth-century literary historiography. A connection between influence and source exists, semantically, by virtue of the fact that both terms relate to the flow of liquid, the source being the origin of that flow, and the influence or influx (the German noun *Einfluss* covers both) its goal, that is, the point at which the movement ceases. In literary

scholarship, one would do well to distinguish between these concepts and to use "source" only with regard to thematic models, subjects which furnish material but are, themselves, nonliterary. Shaw justly speaks of "source" as the matter "providing the materials or the basic part of the materials—especially the plot—for a particular work" (S/F, p. 90). Thus Holinshed's *Chronicles* and Plutarch's biographies of the great Greeks and Romans, as well as news reports which serve as stimuli for literary works, would constitute bona fide sources.

In insisting on this distinction, one staves off any conflict with the usage designating the word "source" as a preformed literary model. But here, too, there are instances where confusion is unavoidable because the source itself is literary, as in the case of many mythological or legendary subjects which, even at their most elemental stage, are known only in their poetic guises. [Here the concept of Simple Forms, to be discussed in Chapter Five, comes in handy.] To put it even more bluntly: Aeschylus and Sophocles serve both as models and as principal sources for all Prometheus dramas and Oedipus or Antigone plays, respectively.

After this extended introduction, I now give the floor to a comparatist who refuses to accept the traditional concept of literary influence and who flatly asserts that the term is insofar inappropriate as it presupposes a dearth of creativity and poetic imagination. Since influence implies a passive role, Guillén—the scholar referred to—banishes this term and what it implies from the realm of aesthetics and wishes to retain it only *in psychologicis*, as a fragile link between a source and an original work of art. Seen in this way, source—newly merged with influence—is reduced to the role of a mere substratum, demonstrating that a true *creatio ex nihilo* is impossible.[12]

Using this thesis as my point of departure, I proceed following Guillén's argument with the hackneyed observation that in a study of literary influence the works as well as their authors must be accounted for, although generally

greater emphasis will be placed on the works themselves. With his customary acumen, Ihab Hassan reminds us, however, that "no literary work can be said to influence another without the intermediacy of a human agent" (Hassan, p. 69). Thus, in determining influences, we are, in fact, compelled to proceed psychologically, even if we would prefer to steer clear of psychology. For it is clearly as dangerous to maintain that influences occur only between works (Zhirmunsky) as it is to state axiomatically that they involve only their authors (Guillén).

At the beginning of his article "The Aesthetics of Influence Studies in Comparative Literature," Guillén poses the question: "When speaking of influences on a writer, are we making a psychological statement or a literary one?" (*Proceedings* II, Vol. I, p. 175). In his contribution to the ACLA symposium, he subsequently called upon ordinary usage to support this view. After all, we like to say that author B was influenced by author A, whereas we should in all honesty assert that work B^1 shows traces of work A^1. "Thus," Guillén comments, "we prefer to retain the equivocal 'X was influenced by Y,' where we blend the psychological with the literary" (*CLS*, Special Advance Issue, p. 150).

In the course of his systematic presentation, Guillén seeks to resolve this apparent paradox, which has long been a topos in literary historiography. He objects, firstly, to the underlying assumption that a solid chain of causes and effects lies at the root of all influence, and maintains that actually we deal with two entirely different series pertaining to two different kinds of affinity. Thus the psychology of the creative process operates in the space intervening between an author A and his work A^1, the psychology of the receptive process in that separating work A^1 from author B, and the psychology of the creative process—this time enriched by the reception—once more between an author, B, and his work, B^1. At the same time, however, A^1 and B^1 should, ideally, transcend psychological subjectivism and interact in a strictly aesthetic manner. This, at

least, is alleged by those scholars who castigate the "intentional fallacy" (Hassan calls it the "expressionist fallacy"), and will not be persuaded that a work of art is the conscious or unconscious expression of an individual and, therefore, bound to him with iron bands.

Two solutions to the problem at hand have, so far, been suggested and discussed in literary criticism. A simplistic one, cherished especially in the nineteenth century, sought to raise the barrier between art and psychology by a series of causes and effects subordinated to the ironclad law of causality—as if the step from A to A^1 were, in every way, equivalent to the steps leading from A^1 to B, and from B to B^1. This quantified, mechanistic conception of the creative process rests on the assumption that, basically, there is nothing new under the sun and that the imagination, too, is only a synthesizer. As might be expected, Taine is the chief defendant in the case which Guillén brings against this critical *modus operandi*:

> Taine's interpretation of the creative act is not as explicit as his view of the nature of art or of the relationship between an artistic work and the people or the environment which produce it; to indicate a starting-point and an end-result, a cause and a product, is not the same as to show how the distance between the two is eliminated, that is to say, as to question the process of creation itself. We know that in Taine's system every work of art is determined by a cause and should be explained by it; but to indicate, again, that A controls B is not to show how the artist went from A to B. [*Proceedings* II, vol. I, p. 176]

Like most of his contemporaries, Guillén rejects this positivist solution. He is far more sympathetic to Croce's theory, which is based on the belief that a work of art is always *sui generis* and that it is, by its very nature, monadic:

> At the moment in which a new work of art is born those of its predecessors which were present in the poet's mind, whether perfect or imperfect, great, mediocre or poor, turn inevitably into matter [i.e., raw material].[13]

In Croce's wake, similar views emerged in the late thirties and early forties among the New Critics and, in the German-speaking world, in the writings of Emil Staiger, whose book *Die Kunst der Interpretation* conveys the notion that the positivist who wants to know what is inherited and/or acquired abuses the law of causality by forgetting that the creative act—because it is creative—is nonderivative.[14]

Guillén shares this view in principle, but qua comparatist he does not like to scotch the concept of influence. (By the way, the practice of T. S. Eliot and Ezra Pound, the very poets acclaimed by the New Critics, contradicts Croce's puristic theory, as in the montage of the "Waste Land" and the "Cantos," as well as the various techniques described by Joseph Frank under the general heading of "reflexive reference.")[15] In his divided loyalty, Guillén eases his conscience by trying to strike a compromise between the two extremes, that is, he condones the use of psychological categories without abandoning his firm belief in the qualitative leap. For, in the execution of his program, influence is simply shunted onto the psychological track and appears as a moment or phase of the creative process:

> Our idea of influence . . . would define [it] as a recognizable and significant part of the genesis of a literary work of art. . . . The writer's life and his *creative* work exist . . . on two different levels of reality. Influences, since they develop strictly on the former level, are individual experiences of a particular nature: because they represent a kind of intrusion into the writer's being or a modification of it or the occasion for such a change; because their starting-point is previously existing poetry; and because the alteration they bring about, no matter how slight, has an indispensable effect on the subsequent stages of the *genesis* of the poem. [*Proceedings II*, Vol. I, p. 181]

Guillén thus recognizes influence in the *process* or influx, but not in its *product*. Under these circumstances, however, he is wrong in regarding influence as a recognizable component of the genetic process. The example he uses clearly demonstrates how rarely a literary critic suc-

ceeds in penetrating to the inner sanctum of genius. It is, in fact, pure chance when the biography of a poet offers us clues to this type of influence.

The fact that the problem raised by Guillén is a logical rather than a poetological one is affirmed by his own admission, in a footnote pertaining to Block's objection, that it is difficult to determine "the exact moment in which a work of art becomes independent of its creator and assumes an aesthetic vitality of its own" (Ibid., p. 182, note 14).

Guillén in his attempt to create a new foundation for the study of literary influence has committed a sin of omission, or *petitio principii*, which rocks the scaffold he has erected. For he conceals or overlooks that what he calls influence and wishes to see upheld against all objections as the object of serious scientific study goes, more properly, by another name—that of *inspiration*. He actually speaks of "genetic incitation," and, in so doing, echoes Amado Alonso, who maintains that "literary sources must be related to the act of creation as incitations and forces of reaction."[16]

Inspiration, however, is in fact a psychological category; it presupposes, as an effect upon the poet, a personal experience which leaves visible traces in exceptional cases only. Even there where one honors it as a gift from Heaven it is always that ingredient of art which, by definition, is neither transferable nor communicable. It designates rather the point at which, out of the mass of available themes and techniques, the essence of the work-to-be-conceived suddenly flashes like lightning in the poet's mind. Moreover, inspiration is often extra-literary, drawing its nourishment from painting, music, history, or life itself.

Guillén himself refers to a poem written by his father ["Cara a cara"] which received its basic impulse from the rhythmic *Gestalt* of Ravel's *Bolero*: "The stubborn, unrelenting, obsessive quality of this piece's rhythm—but only its rhythm—fired the poet's initial desire to write his tenacious response to the more chaotic aspects of life" (*Pro-*

ceedings II, vol. I, p. 185). In the case of Valéry's "Cimetière Marin," it was, by the poet's own admission, a rhythmic figure totally devoid of specific musical models which obsessed him and led him, step by step, to the discovery of a metrical and strophic form and, finally, of a subject suited to that form.

In the case of "inspiration," then, we are dealing with a mood about which we know nothing unless the poet himself furtively permits us to peer into his soul. By definition, such a mood is not subject to scientific proof. Under these circumstances, the approach suggested by Guillén is truly impracticable.

Whether in determining literary influences we may overstep the bounds of literature proper is a question which, as far as the other arts are concerned, will be clarified in Chapter Seven. What stance we should take concerning the status of nonartistic influences, however, is difficult to say. Without probing into the matter deeply, I would point out that, although the scientific discoveries and theories of a Darwin, Marx, or Freud have had a powerful impact on literature (in such aesthetic doctrines as Naturalism, Surrealism, and Socialist Realism), this force should not be overrated, for, in these cases, an influence "will usually be upon content, rather than directly upon genre and style, upon *Weltanschauung* rather than upon artistic form" (Shaw in S/F, p. 93). Methodologically it seems therefore appropriate to separate this kind of effect from the purely aesthetic one and to distinguish, accordingly, in the study of Surrealism between the role of Freud and Charcot, on one hand, and that of Arnim and Lautréamont,[27] on the other.

I shall conclude the present chapter by analyzing Guillén's views regarding influences that are recognizable in the art work. Not unpredictably, Guillén assigns all factually ascertainable influences to the realm of literary *tradition* and *convention*, by which terms he means shared forms, types, subjects, or techniques (*topoi*, form and content of the elegy, the external structure of the five-act

drama, mythical and legendary figures, etc.] which cannot —or at least can no longer—be credited to a specific writer but have, in a manner of speaking, become public property and now serve as useful vehicles within a given civilization.

Aldridge regards tradition and convention as "resemblances between works which form part of a large group of similar works held together by a common historical, chronological or formal bond" (*CLS*, Special Advance Issue, p. 143), while Guillén notes that traditions are diachronic and conventions synchronic:

> One tends to think of conventions synchronically, and of traditions diachronically. A cluster of conventions forms the literary vocabulary of a generation, the repertory of possibilities that a writer has in common with his living rivals. Traditions involve the persistence of certain conventions for a number of generations, and the competition of writers with their ancestors. (*CLS*, Special Advance Issue, p. 150)

To be distinguished from "tradition" and "convention" are concepts like "program" or "manifesto," which presuppose an individual's, or group's, deliberate focus on a clearly delineated goal, whereas tradition and convention are characterized precisely by the fact that where they operate specific intentions can no longer be assigned.

Guillén poses what is certainly not intended, or not solely intended, as a rhetorical question, namely: "Did a Renaissance poet have to have read Petrarch in order to write a Petrarchan sonnet?" And since the answer is clearly in the negative, he surmises that "literary conventions are not only technical prerequisites but also basic, collective shared influences." Little fault can be found with this conjecture, which does not free us, however, from the obligation of scrupulously investigating, in every instance, whether collective influences suffice to explain correspondences in form or subject matter.

My critique of Guillén's views has shown that the attempt to solve the problem of literary influence in this

manner, with the help of the dialectic of inspiration and tradition-convention, must ultimately fail on terminological and semantic grounds. Simultaneously with Guillén, but without dabbling in psychological categories, Hassan has attempted to take the bull by the horns. In his essay "The Problem of Influences in Literary History. Notes Toward a Definition," he tries to prove "that the ideas of Tradition and of Development provide, in most cases, a sounder alternative to the concept of Influence in any comprehensive scheme of literature" (*JAAC*, 14 [1955], p. 66). It will be noted that Hassan replaces "convention" with "development," and thereby dissolves spatial coexistence into temporal succession.

Hassan succeeds in unraveling the Gordian knot formed by the numerous intertwined strands of the complex subsumed under the concept of influence, which Guillén tries in vain to cut. To be sure, this solution, too, was not arrived at without the use of generalizations; for Hassan seeks to come to terms, at whatever price, with the plethora of historical, biographical, sociological, and even philosophical findings. His reflections culminate in the assertion that, in its full ambience, influence should no longer be understood as "causality and similarity operating in time," that is, as *rapports de fait* and parallels, but as a network of "multiple correlations and multiple similarities functioning in a historical sequence, functioning . . . within that framework of assumptions which each individual case will dictate" (p. 73). This definition furnishes, concurrently, an answer to Guillén's futile attempt at using Beelzebub to drive out the Devil. For only when the interpenetration of *rapports extérieurs* and *rapports intérieurs*, and the interrelation between specific influences and general conventions or traditions is fully considered, is it possible to reconstruct the chain A—A^1—B—B^1 satisfactorily.

Four Epoch, Period, Generation, and Movement

SLIGHTED for decades in deference to the rising fortunes of criticism, literary history has only recently come to the fore in American scholarship. And those scholars who have concerned themselves at all with the historiography of literature have paid little or no heed to its theoretical framework. Thus, writing in 1940, Wellek could still state with impunity: "Only a very few writers of literary history indicate the principles which underlie the formation of periods in literary history. I cannot find an express discussion of our problem in English, though many historians make, of course, incidental remarks and reflect on the nature of specific periods such as 'Romanticism.' "[1] The slim change for the better in recent years is exemplified by a periodical called *New Literary History*, founded at the University of Virginia (its second issue, published in the winter of 1970, actually contains a "Symposium on Periods"). Claudio Guillén has also published a collection of his essays under the auspicious title *Literature as System: Essays Toward the Theory of Literary History* (Princeton, 1971). Overseas, a series of relevant papers, originally presented at a conference in Bordeaux, has just appeared. The book, *Analyse de la périodisation littéraire* (Paris: Editions universitaires, 1972), is rather disappointing, however, insofar as its contributors restrict themselves to a more or less dogmatic sociological point of view or, where they come to grips with the problem as an aesthetico-literary one, simply ignore the existing secondary

literature in English and German, a circumstance which greatly diminishes the value of their contributions.

Since, among other things, Comparative Literature is a branch of literary history, it is, like all historical disciplines, faced with the thankless task of bringing order into the seeming chaos of ceaselessly unfolding and constantly flowing events, "the directionless flux," as Wellek calls it. Those who, like Croce and his ilk, take works of art to be ahistorical, to lack any sort of meaningful precedent or frame, are wont to sever them bluntly from their natural context, and tend to be blind to the ineluctable fact that the movement is continuous and complex, and that if we wish to define the major phases of the progression we must find an ordering system which permits them to be extracted for the purpose of inspection and analysis.[2] Taking my cue from R. M. Meyer, I would like to present the criteria subsumed under the label "period" as the ones most congenial for this purpose, at least in the initial stages of the investigation. As Meyer points out in his still eminently readable essay, the *period*, as a mode of classification, corresponds, in the historical disciplines, to the *concept* in philosophy and to the *class* in natural science.[3]

To the extent to which we ascribe any significance at all to it, history is by no means merely the sum total of more or less random data. Historiographically it is, rather, constituted by our knowledge of such events as phenomena that have occurred at a specific time, at a particular place, and in a certain unique manner. A true apprehension of history results from the attempt to explain, after reconstructing the scene, what *happened* in the context of what *might* have happened. Originally, it was the Occidental awareness of history as a remembrance of things past which, dawning in the Hellenistic age, necessitated some sort of division—at first often with distinctly religious overtones in a nostalgic or teleologically apocalyptic manner.[4] This stratification was, at first, effected by a rough separation into epochs, and it was not until the nineteenth century that a more subtle and systematic (though flex-

ible] arrangement according to periods was undertaken, as in Wölfflin's distinction between Renaissance and Baroque styles, culled with the help of categories from the history of art.

From the prophetic books of the Old Testament, a direct line of descent leads to the Revelation of St. John, and from there to the writings of the Church Fathers. "The division according to periods," says Meyer, "generally applies only since the time when, with St. Augustine, universal historiography made the empires of the prophet Daniel the guide to the history of mankind." The reference is to Nebuchadnezzar's dream, which the Biblical prophet interprets in the second chapter of the book bearing his name. The head of the statue which appeared to the king of Babylon, we are told, "was of fine gold, his breast and his arms of silver, his belly and his thighs of brass, his legs of iron, his feet part iron and part clay." Daniel reads the vision thus: "Thou art this head of gold. And after thee shall arise another kingdom inferior to thee, and another third kingdom of brass." As suggested by the feet of the monument, the last-named kingdom is no longer powerful and united.[5] In a secularized vein, a similar division and sequence is presupposed by the topos of the Golden Age —of which Goethe's Tasso says he knows not where it fled —and, by a reversal of perspective, in the notion of Utopia, the happy No-Place of an indeterminate, longed-for future.

What Meyer calls a *period* should perhaps be more aptly termed an *epoch*, however, for the latter term customarily encompasses the larger, and the former the smaller segment.[6] While making this distinction, we should also take note of the fact that *period* may, at times, overlap with *age*—the difference being that an age is frequently determined by a great individual—for instance, a Shakespeare, Goethe, or Napoleon—dominating a timespan of some length. It is unfortunate that scholars generally—and German scholars in particular—tend to use the above terms indiscriminately. The clearest articulation of the problem comes from H.P.H. Teesing's book *Das Problem der Peri-*

oden in der Literaturgeschichte: "The term *epoch* would be preferable if it did not have a somewhat weightier meaning, and should, therefore, be applied only to larger units of time" (p. 9). What constitutes the "weightier meaning" is the circumstance that, etymologically, epochs are primarily determined by an "event or time of an event marking the beginning of a relatively new development" (to quote from Webster), which implies, historically, a certain indifference with regard to their length and their conclusion. We sometimes speak of an epoch-making event, and Goethe, quibbling on the term, once scathingly referred to his own time as an "epoch without an epoch" (*Epoche ohne Epoche*). *Era*, like *epoch*, stresses the beginning, rather than the duration, of a time span of considerable length, for, as defined by Webster, the term signifies "a chronological order or system computed from a given date as a basis, as, the Christian era." Semantically, it is thus not entirely suitable as a periodizing concept.

Equally regrettable is the circumstance that, semantically, *period* may suggest periodicity, that which returns at certain specified intervals. This is a slant which the true historiographer—who views history as a series of irreversible and inimitable events and is, as a matter of principle, opposed to all cyclical or even rhythmic thinking in such matters—would like to avoid. The periodic period, as Meyer calls it, is indeed an intellectual construct which sadly presses the facts into a Procrustean mold.

Although the term *epoch* is probably less significant for Comparative Literature studies than are either *period* or *movement*—largely because direct, measurable influences play a minor role when we think of literary phenomena in relation to so vast a backdrop—I should, nonetheless, like briefly to dwell on it. Wellek defines *period* as "a time section dominated by a system of norms, whose introduction, spread and diversification, integration and disappearance can be traced."[7] To be sure, it is theoretically possible to apply the same criteria to *epoch* as well. In doing so, however, we must consider the likelihood that a pattern of in-

dividual traits reducible to a system of norms, such as Wellek has in mind, will scarcely remain constant for so long a stretch of time.

If we consider our Western culture, for example, the triad Antiquity-Middle Ages-Modern Age (*Neuzeit*) immediately springs to mind. This threefold division, however, is a product of the Renaissance, in whose eyes the Middle Ages were truly dark ages, across and through which a return to the ancients, and a renewal of their art, was to be effected. This pattern, by the way, may well exist, analogously, in certain non-Western cultures, as has recently been suggested by Earl Miner and Etiemble, at least with a view toward the Far Eastern *medium aevum*.[8]

The tripartite division just referred to is still in force, at least by implication, although the *Neuzeit* has to be redefined and remeasured as time passes. In German we already distinguish between *Neuzeit* (the era beginning with the Renaissance) on one hand, and *neuere Zeit* and *neueste Zeit*, on the other. The *neuere Zeit* might be said to have begun with the French Revolution, whereas the *neueste Zeit* (roughly corresponding to "present age") would seem to have been ushered in around the turn of the century. What follows is the immediate present or *Gegenwart*, the contemporary age, or that which happens in our lifetime. Life ends with death, however; and with our passing away the present turns into the past.

However great the temptation, I gladly refrain from elaborating on the concept of modernity, but would like to point out in passing that what is called modern is always seen in contrast to the ancient, the familiar or the classical. Ernst Robert Curtius has sketched the prehistory of this term, from its inception with the Alexandrine *neóteroi*, through the *poetae novi* mentioned by Cicero, to the *moderni* of Cassiodorus and the *seculum modernum* of Charlemagne, up until the twelfth century,[9] and subsequently, by way of the "Battle between the Ancients and Moderns" (late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries) to the quarrel between Classicism and Romanticism

in Germany and to the real *Moderne* of the 1880's and 1890's.[10]

It should further be noted that even though epochs are theoretically qualified by their capacity for being periodized, as regards ancient and medieval literature, this is possible only to a very limited extent. With the beginning of the *Neuzeit*, on the other hand, we run [at least in the retrospective view embraced by recent scholarship] into increasingly smaller zones of demarcation with constantly shifting and highly flexible limits. The closer we come to our own time, that is to say, the shorter are the time-spans we have to cover—or, at least, that is how Teesing argues.[11] After 1870, the periods are altogether replaced by movements and avant-garde splinter groups; and immediately before World War I the waves follow each other in such rapid succession that we are faced with programs and manifestos in a jungle which is nearly impenetrable for the purpose of scholarly periodization.[12] Could this impression be the result of an error in perspective caused by our manifest lack of detachment? I personally would not regard the progressive decrease in the length of measurable units as a mere optical illusion but am inclined to think that the reduction in size, and the frequency of change, is partly due to the fact that, beginning with Romanticism, at the latest, art has become increasingly self-conscious and programmatic, and that, consequently, the modern artist is virtually forced to seek out new, unprecedented solutions that will call attention to himself and his products. Eduard Wechssler, incidentally, supports Teesing's—and my own—view when he points out that in cultural history the gap between generations is constantly narrowing as well.[13]

When studying epochs—like all entities abstracted from the historical flux—the scholar is faced with the need of setting them off from one another and marking the transitions as neatly as possible. As students of literature, though not as art historians, we can forgo the consideration of prehistory and primitive history—the stage of "oral" literature—which have only recently entered our

field of vision. However, even the archeologist and the anthropologist have little choice but to periodize these early stages. On the whole, art history has always had an easier time than literary historiography, as for example in the treatment of Greek antiquity, whose course can be charted with the aid of period styles broadly defined as geometric, archaic, classical and Hellenistic. The series epic poetry/lyric poetry/drama, frequently postulated in the nineteenth century, on the other hand, is little more than a skeleton; and within the individual genres we have, at best, the development from Old to New Comedy.

In the Renaissance, the question regarding the beginning of Antiquity was relatively easy to answer, since, with the possible exception of Egyptian hieroglyphics, only the Greco-Roman culture was then familiar. The Near East was, therefore, never considered as an important source of rejuvenation. For us moderns as well, literary history actually begins, not with the Egyptian Book of the Dead or the Gilgamesh epic, but with the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*.

Nor does the question as to the end of Antiquity appear to create much of a problem. This should not, however, be construed to mean that the onset of the Middle Ages is easy to determine, for every attempt at periodization is rendered more difficult by the fact that the periods, as categories, must not leave any remnants behind, and that, ideally, their sum, as Meyer puts it, "must coincide with the content of their entire course, for otherwise, the whole purpose of the division fails" (p. 19).

Antiquity ended—one would like to imagine—not with the emergence of Christianity, but with the fall of Rome or the founding of Constantinople, but certainly no later than with Boethius and St. Augustine. Yet it survived in the static-hieratic culture of Byzantium, that Yeatsian "artifice of eternity," in which, in the course of a whole millenium, no radical changes from one epoch style to another occurred either in literature or the other arts. In one part of Europe, then, Antiquity was still kicking, while elsewhere the Middle Ages had already been "born."

Next, the fundamental question arises as to whether the Middle Ages, seen from the perspective of cultural history, partake at all of the nature of an epoch, whether they are divisible into clearly marked periods. In considering this matter, we must keep in mind that, as a matter of principle, we cannot assume a temporal concurrence of the arts and that at times a division into periods is, therefore, easier in one artistic realm than in another. (The possible preeminence of certain arts over certain other arts, as postulated by some scholars, is a matter of no concern to us in the present context.) It should nonetheless be noted that, in the history of medieval German art, for instance, the succession of styles has been precisely fixed by means of the series *Frankish*, *Carolingian*, *Ottonian*, *Romanesque*, and *Gothic*. In literature no similar stylistic-historical articulation of this epoch has, unfortunately, emerged, although Guillén (*Literature as System*, p. 448) refers to a recent attempt on the part of the historian M. Seidlmayer. The linguistic tension running throughout the Middle Ages between the vernaculars and the Latin *koiné* may be partly responsible for this condition.

In his lucid book, Professor Teesing bemoans the fact that in most literary histories medieval literature is staggered primarily according to sociological or philological viewpoints, and that criteria derived from *Geistesgeschichte* or stylistics are only hesitantly used:

> But now a question we expressly wish to pose as such arises: is it perhaps not so much the material as the treatment of the material in our discipline which prevents such a periodization of medieval literature? It is a well-known fact that the literatures of the Middle Ages and the *Neuzeit* are handled differently: in the treatment of medieval poetry, the emphasis lies on the philological method, whereas with modern literature it lies on stylistics and *Geistesgeschichte*. [Teesing, p. 120]

The *Deutsche Vierteljahrsschrift für Literaturgeschichte und Geisteswissenschaft*, founded in 1928, among other tasks, set itself the specific goal of remedying this situation.

If, according to Meyer's theoretical construct, the end of

the Middle Ages must coincide with the beginning of the Modern Age, the question concerning the precise moment of transition could be solved by fixing the birthdate of the Renaissance. But was there, actually, such a point? Seen from a pan-European, i.e., comparative, viewpoint, a single date means nothing under the circumstances, as is proven by the discrepancies between various histories of national and world literature in the fixation of this vital moment.

Let us adduce a few examples. In doing so, we will, for methodological reasons, refrain from examining Erwin Panofsky's persuasively argued thesis that numerous renascences but no genuine Renaissance had already occurred during the Middle Ages.[14] Following the example set by a famous essay of A. O. Lovejoy, "On the Discrimination of Romanticisms," Panofsky's essay could have been entitled "On the Discrimination of Renascences," although the phenomena it describes were successive rather than simultaneous. Panofsky is at pains to show that many of these medieval reform efforts were half-hearted and largely inconsequential attempts to bring the surviving heritage of the ancients [as surveyed by Jean Seznec in his book *The Survival of the Pagan Gods*][15] back into focus. As a true Renaissance, meaning a systematic revival of the spirit of Antiquity in all spheres of cultural activity, he recognizes only the Carolingian Renaissance of the ninth century.

If we compare the principles of periodization used in three different literary histories chosen at random—Buckner B. Trawick's *World Literature*, Philippe Van Tieghem's *Histoire de la littérature française*, and Fritz Martini's *Geschichte der deutschen Literatur*[16]—the following picture emerges: Trawick marks the beginning of the Italian Renaissance as 1321, the year of Dante's death. Thus Dante is treated as a poet of the Middle Ages, whereas Boccaccio and Petrarch are no longer "in the dark." Actually, the author of the *Divine Comedy* does not fit too well into the Renaissance mold when one considers that, although he

turned to Antiquity for his model, he wished to have his poem understood as a vast allegory illustrating the Christian doctrine of salvation.

As we examine Dante's style, we discover that his full-fledged realism—as Erich Auerbach has so convincingly demonstrated—must be seen as part of a figurative style, and that the faithful rendering of surface reality is the top layer of a stratified depth which must be plumbed for its symbology. The unsuspecting reader of the *Divine Comedy* all too easily forgets that it is the embodied souls and not the real bodies of the sinners which roast in Hell. The realism of Boccaccio's *Decameron* and even of Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales* is equally deceptive, and a thorough reading of both works leads to the conviction that here, too, reality is heavily stylized or symbolically enriched. In this context, the *topos* quality of the depiction (for example, of the gardens and parks in the *Decameron*) plays a role the significance of which should not be underrated.

Nor must we forget that both Dante (in his famous letter to Can Grande della Scala of Verona) and Boccaccio (in the introduction to the fourth Decade of the novellas) found it necessary to apologize for their use of the vernacular. Even Chaucer in the Prologue to his *Canterbury Tales*, where he appeared in the guise of a pilgrim, ironically defended the "realism" in the structure and the language of his poem by pointing out that, being uneducated, he was unable to meet the standards of high literature. It would be equally justifiable, then, to assign Boccaccio, like Chaucer, to the Middle Ages, and to have the actual Renaissance start with Petrarch, who learned Greek expressly in order to read the Classical writers in the original.

Even in France, chronologically the third country—after Italy and Spain—where the Renaissance took hold, the situation is by no means as clear-cut as the literary historian would like. Trawick, for instance, who has the Spanish Renaissance begin with the marriage of Ferdinand of Aragon to Isabella of Castille in 1469 (its first significant

literary achievement was the *Celestina* of Fernando de Rojas), regards 1494—the year of François Rabelais' birth and of the invasion of Italy by Charles VIII—as the *terminus post quem*. Van Tieghem, on the other hand, relegates Villon and Rabelais to the Middle Ages (1050–1550!) and treats Montaigne and the poets of the Pléiade as the first writers of the Renaissance, for which he reserves a time-span of no more than forty (!!) years, 1550–1590.

Martini altogether eschews the use of the label "Renaissance," which, in Germany, is not easily applicable to belles-lettres, and is content with using the para-literary terms *Humanism* and *Reformation* to characterize the period in question. Like Trawick, he limits both to the sixteenth century. In England, lastly, the transition from the Middle Ages to the Renaissance was not completed until well after 1500, with poets such as Spenser, Wyatt, and Sir Philip Sidney; while Shakespeare—like Cervantes in Spain—already seems to reach beyond (meaning into the Baroque).

Certain difficulties in coordinating the epochs and in attempting to set up guiding principles for the purpose of a universal assignment of periods arise when one examines literature internationally. The system of norms which would seem to characterize the Renaissance emerges at different times and often after such long delays that, viewed comparatively, one must constantly take "unusual developments and temporal displacements" into account. Viewed *in toto*, the Renaissance, as a European phenomenon, virtually extends from the fourteenth century well into the sixteenth, without ever being in full swing in all countries simultaneously. Indeed, as the Dutch historian Jan Huizinga sought to show in his book *The Waning of the Middle Ages*, the *medium aevum* lingered on. In a comprehensive presentation of the Renaissance, then, Comparative Literature, notwithstanding its usual preference for the synchronic approach, will have to proceed diachronically as well.

I now turn to the examination of periods in the proper sense, that is, of more strictly limited and more tightly structured divisions in the history of Western culture since the Renaissance. Periods, according to Teesing, are time spans of varying length, "which are, in themselves, relatively unified and which distinguish themselves markedly from others" (p. 8). The question arises, therefore, of what forces are involved in shaping the profile of a period.

At the outset, all organizing principles based on the conviction that an inexorable law governs the course of history must be repudiated. For good reasons both von Wiese and Teesing are wary of the polar, phasic, or cyclical ("periodic") constructs of a Vico, Spengler, and Cazamian, whose theories make either openly or tacitly deterministic pretensions. In his cogent essay, von Wiese deals with two other unreasonable approaches to the problem of periodization. Firstly, he repudiates any attempt at transforming it into a metaphysical category. Such attempts, in his view, arise from the erroneous belief, shared by Herbert Cysarz among others, that the period is a true essence (*Wesensform*) instead of being merely an ordering principle (*Ordnungsform*). This ahistorical dogmatism causes Cysarz and his sympathizers to posit the existence of a Gothic or Renaissance Man combining all the typical features of a period style. Like Werner Milch, I, too, deplore this cancerous outgrowth of German *Geistesgeschichte*.

Through manipulations of the sort which Cysarz undertakes, the period concept becomes abstracted and the resulting patterns are rigid and inflexible. Actually, the periods of cultural and intellectual history do not follow each other "in a calculable single file, but rather in a constantly changing permeation, in such a way that each normative unit contains within itself a profusion of other units" (von Wiese, p. 144). Cogent proof for this contention is furnished by the works of what one might loosely call the Romantic Realists—not only in Germany (Gottfried Keller, Theodor Storm, among others), but also in France (Victor Hugo's foreword to *Cromwell*, Flaubert's *Madame*

Bovary) and England (Wordsworth's foreword to the second edition of the *Lyrical Ballads*). And what applies to periods goes for epochs as well. Thus, E. M. W. Tillyard, in his book *The Elizabethan World Picture*, shows how medieval thought lurks hidden in the works of Shakespeare and his contemporaries.

If undue abstraction in the formulation of concepts is the Scylla of literary historiography, the setting up of ideal types (*Idealtypen*) is its Charybdis. Viewed closely, a classification based on ideal types is only a variant of the cyclical or phasic scheme, although this kinship is not always evident. This scheme is based on the assumption that certain normative systems are typical, not only for single, nonrecurrent units of time, but also for historically unconnected periods separated by other units (and perhaps even in other civilizations). According to this view they can therefore be not only abstracted but also extracted and transplanted. We thus arrive at a Greek Rococo (the Hellenistic Tanagra style) and a medieval Baroque. This metaphorical usage is a sure sign that the norms selected by historians were not sufficiently distinct to serve their purpose. The fact that there are entities such as Neoclassicism and Neo-Romanticism (*Neuromantik*) does not invalidate this claim, since such movements imply the imitation or revival of past tendencies, so that, chronologically, the cart is not hitched before the horse.

Any purely nominalistic definition of "period" should also be avoided in our attempt to make the term palatable to students of Comparative Literature. This conception corresponds to the pragmatic view, embraced by Huizinga, that periods are artificial constructs of extremely limited value. Since periodization is necessary but bound to be arbitrary, "colorless designations of epochs, with random caesuras, are preferable," according to the Dutch historian.

In the definition of individual periods, one should not be dismayed by the need for resorting, at times, to circular logic, a mode of reasoning to which the humanities are necessarily subject. "There is," says Wellek, "a logical cir-

cle in the fact that the historical process has to be judged by values, while the scale of values is itself derived from history" (*English Institute Annual for 1940*, p. 89). In our case, this means that the norms which serve as guidelines in the identification of periods have actually been abstracted from the historical process, usually by the investigator himself. As von Wiese knows,

> as a matter of principle, one must adhere to the epistemological insight that such epoch concepts are historical categories rather than historical substances; they are conceptual schemes, designed to aid us in comprehending and ordering the historical flow, but not real entities, which the scholar's genius, in a particularly original "vision," has at last discovered and defined. (*DVLG*, 11 [1933], p. 137)

In the present context, I do not wish to play logical games, but am content with stating that period concepts are, in Teesing's words, "conceptūs cum fundamento in re"[17] (*Reallexikon*, p. 77), manifestations of the historical object as perceived by a given subject. This explains why no conclusive, binding definitions can ever be obtained. New facts are constantly being unearthed, and unknown aspects of the past discovered (the *fundamentum in re*); and, beginning with the self-interpretation of periods like the Renaissance or Romanticism, the standpoint of the observer (the *conceptūs*) markedly changes from generation to generation. Thus, every period—like every work of art—will be seen with fresh eyes and in a new manner, since each generation calls for its own Goethe and its own Baroque. Even with the accumulation of specialized studies and monographs, we will, therefore, never completely *exhaust* Neo-Classicism or Mannerism.

It is only one step—though, at times, a bold one—from the theory to the actual practice of periodizing. At the outset of my investigation, I referred to the traditional tripartite division of the history of Western culture. Following in this vein, I would now like to consider quite simply, into how many periods the *Neuzeit* can be broken down.

Naturally, a few of the most familiar labels (Baroque, Rococo, Neoclassicism, Romanticism, and Realism) immediately come to mind; but when, as comparatists, we seek to do justice to all of European literature and culture, we soon run into unexpected difficulties.

If we look backward from Romanticism or forward from the Renaissance, for instance, we notice that a considerable number of period terms are indeed available, but that few of these are readily applicable to simultaneous developments in different national literatures. The term Baroque, for instance, which was first applied to literature thanks to the efforts of the literary historians among Wölfflin's disciples, and which, at times, has served to designate the entire literary production of the seventeenth century, has since met competition from "Mannerism," a term just as intrinsic in art history. The newer coinage has not yet ousted the older, however, although Curtius took this substitution to be *de rigueur* and his disciple, Gustav René Hocke, tested it in two monographs.[18]

Especially in France literary historians continue to dispute whether Baroque and Mannerism are proper designations for literary period styles. Both, however, are now on the point of being firmly entrenched. Philippe Van Tieghem still gave the chapter of his book which is devoted to the time span 1590–1656 the title "From Malherbe to the *Provinciales*" but added the cautionary subtitle "Style Précieux (Baroque)." The following section of his survey treats the age of the Sun King and of the *Grands Classiques*, Pascal, Molière, Racine, and Boileau, among whom, even in France, Racine, at least, is now frequently assigned to the Baroque.

Classicism (Neoclassicism, *Klassik, Klassizismus*), too, has its drawbacks as a period term, since the age of the French *Grands Classiques* is not at all synchronic with English Neoclassicism (from Dryden to Pope) and German Classicism in the last third of the eighteenth century (ca. 1775–1795). Similarly, in the case of the Enlightenment, there are temporal overlaps with Rococo and Pre-Romanticism. If one wishes to carry finesse to the extreme, one

could even argue that there is no literature of the Enlightenment, properly speaking, since whatever was "enlightened" in the belles-lettres of the first half of the eighteenth century belongs more properly to "the history of ideas." Just how difficult it is to reconcile the often contradictory and intersecting tendencies of the eighteenth century is shown by the Protean figure of Denis Diderot, who was at once enlightened, "sentimental" and irrationalist, as well as by G. E. Lessing, whose *Hamburgische Dramaturgie* seeks to vindicate Shakespeare by an appeal to Aristotle.

Even for the well-informed student of European culture, it is thus almost impossible not to get lost in the tangle of period terms. Additional confusion results from the fact that their number is not fixed but is constantly raised by attempts to let smaller segments ascend to the order of greater magnitude or to regroup the available periods. Many of these newly propagated terms are, again, derived from art history. With the "Baroque," the maneuver succeeded, as we have seen, whereas "Mannerism" and "Rococo" have not been fully acclimatized in literature. With "Biedermeier" [Early Victorian], over which a lively battle was fought in the thirties, the attempt has failed for all practical purposes, despite Jost Hermand's concerted efforts.[19] More recently, Norbert Fuerst has made a stab at applying the term Victorianism—which Wellek, speaking of English literature, says has acquired its own flavor and is no longer restricted to those works which were created during the lifetime of the Queen—to German literary history as well:

> The term "Victorianism" needs all the indulgence of the reader. It is not much more than a chronological and ideological approximation. What little more it contains is a reminder that in the main the waves of nineteenth-century German literature did not flow with the revolutionary current of French [and in part even Russian] literature; that its artistic tides and its moral groundswell were more with English and American literature.[20]

In periodizing one should, at all costs, avoid such compromises as are struck in the case of *pré-romantisme* and

Post-Impressionism. The label "Pre-Romanticism" represents a grand-scale attempt, undertaken largely by Van Tieghem, to summarize the irrationalist undercurrents in the Age of Enlightenment, and to view Rousseau, Diderot, Richardson, Sterne, Goldsmith, and the German *Stürmer und Dränger* as the vanguard of Romanticism, that is, as writers whose works approximate the system of norms of which the sum total is Romanticism. What we have here, however, is not a genuine period style, but merely an anticipatory current or trend. Following this precedent, Panofsky could have subsumed the medieval renascences under the term "pre-Renaissance," and Auerbach could have epitomized certain stylistic traits of ancient and medieval literature under the corresponding term "proto-Realism."

The term "Post-Impressionism" offers a singularly unattractive example, which fortunately is limited to painting, since Impressionism remains an ambiguous term in literary history, insofar as its lines of demarcation with Symbolism have not yet been satisfactorily drawn.[21] The prefix "post" is, in this case, doubly misleading, because it does not mean that, after the death of the movement called Impressionism, the latter's stylistic peculiarities were retained by a cohesive group of painters. It means, rather, the exact opposite, namely that the "big four" (Seurat, Cézanne, van Gogh, and Gauguin), having been influenced by the Impressionists, developed counter styles prefiguring the art of the twentieth century: Cézanne that of Cubism, van Gogh that of Expressionism, and Gauguin that of *art nouveau* and Symbolism, whereas the pointillism of Seurat, who died in his early manhood and whose experiments remained inconclusive, may best be regarded as a transitional style. Post-Impressionism is, in fact, neither a sequel to (*Noch-Impressionismus*) nor a recurrence of Impressionism (*Wieder-Impressionismus*) but in many ways already a Counter-Impressionism (*Gegen-Impressionismus*). These few examples could be multiplied at will with others drawn from the history of music, literature, and the visual arts. One need only recall the alleged Proto-Expressionism

of Ernst Stadler, Georg Heym, and Georg Trakl, which haunts so many recent German literary histories.

Before I turn to the question concerning the genesis of literary periods and the fixing of their duration, I would like, following René Wellek, to comment briefly on the labeling of these units. In his essay "Periods and Movements in Literary History," Wellek rightly decries the fact that, in national as well as international periodization, extra-literary viewpoints are often used. Realizing that it is no longer possible to eradicate these *faits accomplis*, he still expresses the hope that, sometime in the distant future, the norms might be derived from literature itself:

> We must try to derive our system of norms, our "regulative ideas," from the art of literature, not merely from the norms of some related activity. Only then can we have a series of periods which would divide the stream of literary development by literary categories. Thus a series of literary periods can alone make up, as parts of a whole, the continuous process of literature, which is, after all, the central topic in the study of literary history. [*English Institute Annual for 1940*, p. 93]

It is doubtful, however, whether purely literary norms can be found in every instance. If, for example, in a fit of puristic fervor, the comparatist were to toss out designations like Baroque or Mannerism, he would be forced to find substitute terms placing such diverse national phenomena as Gongorism, Euphuism, Marinism, Conceptismo, Metaphysical Poetry, bombastic literature [*Schwulstdichtung*], among others, under one terminological umbrella, a task that might well prove impossible.

If, then—especially in Comparative Literature—one cannot adjust the period term to the class of objects it represents, one should at least attempt to strike a workable compromise by insisting that the appellation of a period in literary history support the claims of a cultural activity then prevalent. Thus, the labels *Reformation*, *Humanism*, and *Enlightenment* justly indicate that the literature so designated is not aesthetically weighted.

In cases where the period term or the name of a literary movement has been borrowed from another art, one should be tolerant if that art was actually in the ascendant. With the Baroque, for instance, one must consider that, within the span so designated, architecture and painting were either more prolific than literature or at least more representative. The pre-eminence of terms from art history in the naming of literary periods may also be justified by the fact (not nearly as obvious as might appear) that the language of visual art—like that of music, which only subsequently voiced its claim of leadership—is more universal and requires little or no translation.

Of the most important literary movements of the last one hundred years or so, relatively few derive their names from literature: as, for instance, Naturalism (which was practically stillborn in music and painting), Symbolism, and Surrealism. In the case of Realism, an approximate concurrence of origin can be assumed, even though it was clearly Gustave Courbet's exhibition *Le Réalisme* which started the ball rolling. With Expressionism and Impressionism, on the other hand, the priority of the plastic arts is undisputed. It would thus be wrong if in analyzing the literary offshoots of these styles we used literature as our point of departure, or totally ignored the other arts.

Of the many kinds of periodization, the one which is to be most emphatically rejected, in addition to the purely philological classification (which has its place in the individual national literatures and will, therefore, be suspect to the comparatist) is the annalistic approach. Unfortunately, it cannot be altogether ignored, because its use has become second nature to philologists. Only in its excrescences—instances where the dates are lined up mechanically—it should be resolutely attacked. Fortunately, in the synoptic tables prepared by Paul Van Tieghem and Adolf Spemann in their repertories, as well as in the ninth volume of Bompiani's *Dizionario letterario*, the aim is to *identify* simultaneous events rather than to *order* or *periodize* them.[22]

Arithmetically computed time spans can also serve as a

basis for the organization of historical data, as was demonstrated by R. M. Meyer, who admits that he was prompted to reflect on techniques of periodization by critiques of his presentation of nineteenth-century German literature according to decades. In a book about the reception of American literature in Germany between 1861 and 1872, for instance, Eugene F. Timpe rises only slightly above the level of the annalistic approach.[23] Although he claims that "the dates designating this period are of some significance because they encompass the most important years of an interval of American poetry sandwiched between two eras of prose [sic] (p. 2)," the true reason underlying the choice of this particular time span may well have been the existence of a chronological gap between the segments already covered by his predecessors.[24] With greater historical sensitivity, Simon Jeune, in his book on American characters in French fiction and drama, chose a time span (1861–1917) which may be regarded as a relatively coherent phase in the history of the political ties between France and America, for it stretches from the outbreak of the Civil War to America's entry into World War I.

Even today, the favorite kind of annalistic periodization is the display of literary wares according to centuries. The catalogues of our colleges and universities literally bulge with titles like "English Seventeenth-Century Literature" or "Deutsche Literatur des 19. Jahrhunderts." It is seldom realized that such labels and the content of the academic package do not necessarily coincide. And yet, when as comparatists we speak of the nineteenth century, we scarcely think of the calendar years 1801–1899, but rather of the Victorian Age or of the realistic-naturalistic period beginning, roughly, with Goethe's death and the revolution of 1830, and ending with the public protest by five "disciples" of Zola against the publication of *La Terre*, and with the proclamation of literary Symbolism.

A partial abstraction from chronology without repudiation of the chronological framework is found not only in the periodization according to centuries but also in more

differentiated alignments according to strictly historical viewpoints, such as the reign of a monarch and the duration of a war or a political alliance. In pragmatic England, this seems to be the preferred method, although it is by no means consistently applied; for example, there is no literary period named after Henry VIII or George V, corresponding to those named after Elizabeth or Victoria. This can probably be explained by the fact that the two latter monarchs had a stronger impact on, or were more representative of the culture and literature of their age, or that important changes in the social and intellectual life of their country occurred during their reigns.

Here, also, the distinction between national and international viewpoints must be made, however, since English literary history favors the term "Jacobean Drama," while, in a pan-European view, the dramatic production of that time segment would still seem to belong to the Elizabethan Age. After all, Shakespeare continued to write plays even after the death of Queen Elizabeth (for example, *The Tempest*). And the entire reign of a monarch need not be designated by a period term: this is shown by Jost Hermand's recent attempt to introduce the stylistic label *Gründerzeit*, to cover the years 1870–1890 in German cultural history.[25]

In determining the length of periods in literary history, it might be wise to use the dialectics of "generation" and "period" as a starting point. If, for simplicity's sake, one assumes that these terms pertain to different orders of magnitude, one can proceed on the basis that one generation represents either thirty years or one-third of a century, and in this manner set what might be termed the lowest temporal limit of a period. Helmut Kreuzer's recent attempt at periodizing German post-World-War-II literature borders, admittedly, on the absurd. Most periods in literary history—with the exception of the more extended Renaissance, which almost rises to the level of an epoch—last probably between two (Romanticism, Realism) and three (Baroque) generations. The term "period" should not be used in connection with German Classicism, for example,

because the quantitative minimum is not reached in this particular instance.

The equation "period equals generation" must be rejected in principle because it mixes biological criteria with historical and stylistic ones. According to Wilhelm Pinder, physiognomies of style are, however, "basic formal units spanning several lifetimes and not bound by the limits of individual existence."[26] Periodization on the basis of generations is also undesirable because a man's life normally covers sixty to eighty years; therefore, if one discounts his childhood and early youth, the individual writer is creative on the average for two generations. In fact, it is unwise to periodize by generation precisely "because its representatives undergo further development, which separates them from their origins."[27]

Goethe's literary career offers ample proof of the fact that the generation is "no regular yardstick furnished by the average length of the individual's creative career."[28] The author of *Faust*, for instance, belonged to the generation of the Storm and Stress; stood, initially, under the stylistic influence of the Rococo; turned into a Classicist in his fourth decade; came to grips with Romanticism in the second part of his *Faust*; and, at the end of his career, had a brush—however fleeting—with Realism. A single poet can, therefore, belong to several literary generations and his writings can exemplify various period styles, which need not, however, follow each other in strict chronological order. Rather, overlaps or rhythmic alternations may occur, as was the case with Gerhart Hauptmann, whose sudden "conversion" from Naturalism (*Die Weber*) to Neo-Romanticism (*Hanneles Himmelfahrt*) can scarcely be explained as an organic development, since subsequently Hauptmann more than once returned to Naturalism. This particular phenomenon, by the way, can perhaps also be accounted for by the fact that the German writer—in whose breast there "dwelled two souls"—grew up at a time of stylistic transition; for when he wrote *Vor Sonnenaufgang*, the most Naturalistic German drama from the European viewpoint,

Naturalism in France and Scandinavia was already on the decline, and barely two years elapsed before Hermann Bahr, the living barometer of his age, announced *Das Ende des Naturalismus* to the Germans.

According to Wylie Sypher, similar occurrences abound in English literature. In *Four Stages of Renaissance Style*, Sypher even sought to prove that the four styles touched upon in his book (Renaissance, Mannerist, Baroque, and High Baroque) overlap, in the work of a single writer like Shakespeare:

> Especially in any period as fertile as the Renaissance two or more different styles can be current at not only the same moment in different artists but even in the same artist; for in certain phases Caravaggio utilizes simultaneously mannerist and baroque techniques, and Shakespeare within the same year (c. 1604–05) wrote both *Measure for Measure* and *Othello*, the first Mannerist, the second Baroque, in style. Shakespeare's course is so alternating, various and questing that any effort to contain his art within the category of a single style is self-defeating; like Milton, he demonstrates the coexistence of unlike styles and the intricacy of their relations.[29]

Even a single work may, through the length of its gestation, or changes wrought in the creative process, combine several period styles within its frame, as is demonstrated by the evolution of *Faust* from its original Storm and Stress *Gestalt*, through the Classicist Helena act and the subsequent fusion of Classicism and Romanticism to its mystic-baroque apotheosis. Especially revealing in this respect is the fate of the Expressionist writers, most of whom were born in the 1880's and who, after 1920, either fell altogether silent or began to write bourgeois comedies. The art of the twenties (especially the *Neue Sachlichkeit* [New Objectivity]), is, accordingly, no longer an art to be credited to the Expressionist generation, that is, to a group of contemporaries (*Altersgemeinschaft*) whose *élan vital* had petered out, with their movement, by the time they had reached the age of thirty.

More appropriate than a chronological periodization ac-

cording to generations, in Teesing's opinion, is the view of a generation as the "spearhead of a period" (Teesing, p. 73), a band of likeminded innovators who succeed in displacing the art of their predecessors.[3*] If such experimenters are humanly and artistically united and have developed a specific program, they constitute a literary *movement*, a body which normally consists of a nucleus of writers enjoying roughly equal status, and sometimes strengthened by representatives of the older generation.

If—as often happens fairly quickly—a movement loses its momentum, it may be replaced by a new wave or may receive, like Surrealism, a second impetus through the introduction of new techniques or arts. Since a movement represents a "fresh group of youths" (Petersen), it seldom lasts for an entire generation. However, if it is spared a struggle with a counter-movement or triumphs over new opponents, the dominant system of norms it has established may, under certain conditions, carry over into the following generation and even to the one after that; actually it may expand into a period.

When speaking of representatives of a generation, one usually thinks of individuals who were born within five or, at the most, ten years of each other, thus involving a group of contemporaries linked by age (*Altersgemeinschaft*), not by experience (*Erlebnisgemeinschaft*). This view was upheld by Wilhelm Pinder who stubbornly believed in the "priority of growth over experience" and broached the hypothesis "that the movement of art history results from the combination of dominant entelechies born in a mysterious natural process" (Pinder, p. 145).

For the student of Comparative Literature, Pinder's notion is, negatively, relevant because it seeks to level all racial, political, religious, and social differences, and makes all contemporaries, regardless of their origin and talent, operate under a single star. The attempt to write a history of world literature, according to contemporaries rather than nations, periods, or movements, however, would run into opposition from conservative as well as progressive prac-

titioners of our discipline. For, apart from the fact that *rapports de fait* are meaningless in such a context, the uneven (early, normal, or late) development of the individual artists whose works we study—precisely the "non-contemporaneity of contemporaries" with which Teesing counters Pinder's "contemporaneity of non-contemporaries"—is obviously disregarded.

The nature of the relationship between coevals (biological age-groups) and contemporaries (sociological age-groups) was studied by Eduard Wechssler, who attached greater significance to the latter than to the former. By *Altersgenossenschaft* Wechssler meant

> a group of contemporaries in a nation, who, as a consequence of their near-simultaneous birth and the similar experiences of their childhood and youth under the impact of a certain spiritual-moral situation and certain socio-political conditions, have fairly identical desires and aspirations. (*Die Generation . . .*, p. 6)

Wechssler justified his preference for contemporaneity with the argument:

> The fate of a person is decided by the years of his youth rather than by the date of his birth. By youth is meant that point of experience around which a new generation crystallizes in the life of its people, announces its presence and makes itself felt. (Ibid., p. 25).

At first glance, it would appear that such common points of experience exist only within a nation. Here, too, the paths of Pinder and Wechssler part, particularly since Pinder, with his ill-concealed belief in spontaneous generation (*Würfe*), succumbs to an irrationalism which ill befits the serious scholar. Books such as Henri Peyre's *Les Générations littéraires* prove that Wechssler's view, on the other hand, is shared by many literary historians.[31] I do not altogether deny that the concept of *Erlebnisgemeinschaft*, as well, can be rendered fruitful for Comparative Literature. This is especially true when experiences are shared by several nations or continents, like the global military conflicts from the Thirty Years War onward to World War II, and

the universal threat posed by atom, hydrogen, and cobalt bombs. As the pertinent example of an international movement in which a generation emerges as an *Erlebnisgemeinschaft* we might mention Dadaism, a movement which should be seen as a reaction against the misguided nationalism and chauvinism of the early war years, and also as an anarchist protest against a decadent civilization digging its own grave. In stressing *Erlebnisgemeinschaft* as a factor shaping the profile of a generation, however, we begin to skirt the realm of thematology, which will be treated in Chapter Six.

In closing, I should like to cast a glance at Brunetière's conception of the nature and division of literary periods, namely his opinion that, in periodizing, one should use the date of publication of important works, in other words, their initial shock or impact, as a point of departure. In this way, the center of gravity would be shifted from individuals to the *effect* engendered by their works:

> Actually, literary epochs should only be dated according to what are called literary events—the appearance of the *Lettres provinciales* or the publication of the *Génie du Christianisme*. . . . This not only conforms with reality, but it is still the only means of imparting to the history of a literature that continuity of movement and life without which, in my opinion, there is no history.[32]

A periodization in the sense of a nationally or internationally valid system of norms could scarcely be achieved, however, in the sociological manner suggested by Brunetière, since, at different times, different works obviously produce different effects. Moreover, the quality of artistic constructs cannot be measured by the effects which they produce, as Brunetière seems to assume, since the *Wirkung* differs from case to case and is often dependent on mere chance. What period, as a system of norms, could have begun in the year 1857, for instance, which saw the publication of Baudelaire's *Fleurs du Mal*, as well as Flaubert's *Madame Bovary* and Champfleury's collection of essays,

Le Réalisme? (In Germany, as was pointed out in Chapter Three, Flaubert was alternately characterized as a Romantic, Symbolist, and Realist.)

I have treated the problem of periodization so thoroughly from a comparative viewpoint because I wished to show how much work remains to be done in this domain. My survey is also intended as a counterweight to the prevailing French opinion—still shared by Pichois/Rousseau—that it is more profitable to study currents than periods or movements:

> Is it, therefore, necessary to renounce all periodization by epochs? Yes, if one wishes to cut up the development into fine pieces and to place walls between them. Yes, if, in availing oneself of this static aspect, one neglects the dynamic element, those currents which do not stop at any barrier. (P/R, p. 111)

Guillén would agree wholeheartedly. In fact, at the conclusion of his essay "Second Thoughts on Literary Periods" he opts for an "alternative" which relies on the use of a "noninterpretative" chronology and "stresses essentially the confrontations, within such chronological units, of a plurality of durations, movements, systems, schools, institutions, and other temporal processes" (*Literature as System*, p. 469). I, too, believe that one should not dismiss this warning out of hand. At the same time, however, I am convinced that studies like those offered by René Wellek in his volume *Concepts of Criticism*[28] are, from a comparative point of view, at least as rich and as suggestive as the large syntheses of Paul Hazard (*La Crise de la conscience européenne, La Pensée européenne de Montesquieu à Lessing*) and of Paul Van Tieghem (*Le Préromantisme*). Unfortunately, unlike the periods, the international literary movements have, so far, been rarely surveyed in their full scope. Thus, the study of Symbolism by Anna Balakian does not treat the dispersion of the movement throughout Europe with the same authority with which it discusses the French antecedent; the monograph on Dada by Manuel Grossman is largely restricted to France and Germany; and Lillian

Furst's recent survey of Romanticism fails to account for the Slavic literatures. As for universal portrayals of Naturalism and Surrealism, little more than bibliographical beginnings and fragmentary investigations have been made.[34]

The theoretical basis for the comparative study of literary movements lies, as I have already indicated, in the dialectic of *movement* and *period*. By a "movement" one understands—to repeat it once again—the conscious and, in most cases, theoretically founded attempt, on the part of like-minded persons, to illustrate and propagate a new conception of art. A *movement* differs from a *school* particularly in the sense that it is usually constituted by coevals, so that no teacher-pupil relationship exists. A movement has a distinct personality as its leader, but not necessarily as its master. Customarily, that is to say, the leaders are just as firmly bound to the projected program as are their fellow members, whereas the voice of the master speaks almost with the authority of law. The term *school* also (and particularly) implies a longer duration, since the disciples usually represent the younger generation and regard it as their mission to preach the gospel of their master.

The *movement* differs from the *cénacle* in that it is no mere literary club or coterie which meets regularly in a café or some other public place but does not require the close-knit unity possessed by the artistic community (*Künstlergemeinschaft*), which evidences genuine collaboration, the effect of which may be enhanced by communal living (*die Brücke* in Dresden and, as a composite of academy and *Künstlergemeinschaft*, the Weimar *Bauhaus*). The *salon*, which outwardly differs from the *cénacle* by virtue of the fact that an intellectually keen lady of high social rank presides over it, pursues artistic ends only by the way and often achieves unity of purpose only within the politico-ideological sphere.

The differentiation of historical concepts such as the above proves especially useful in the exploration of such hybrid phenomena as Romanticism and Expressionism. In German letters, for instance, Romanticism should be re-

garded as a movement only to the extent that like-minded writers participated, at given times and in specific places (such as Jena, Heidelberg, and Berlin), in common enterprises, as did the brothers Schlegel and Novalis in the case of the periodical *Athenäum*, or Achim von Arnim and Clemens Brentano in the lyrical anthology known as *Des Knaben Wunderhorn*. But there were also individualists like E. T. A. Hoffmann, who presided, at most, over a *Stammtisch* at Lutter and Wegner's, or Heinrich von Kleist, who moved briefly in the Dresden circle.

If one speaks of a Romantic School—as Heine and, later, Rudolf Haym have done—one should be prepared to name its master. But given all the divergent trends of Romanticism from Ludwig Tieck to Ludwig Uhland and from Zacharias Werner to Joseph von Eichendorff, who among them should be accorded that particular honor? When speaking of a Romantic period in German literature, one means the time span between 1795 (Schiller's essay "On Naive and Sentimental Poesy") and, roughly, Goethe's death; but one has to exempt immediately such prominent writers as Goethe and Schiller, who had little or no liking for the Romantics, taken individually or as a group. The disadvantage of this particular concept becomes apparent, comparatively speaking, in light of the French and Anglo-Saxon preference for treating Goethe and Schiller as Romantics or pre-Romantics.

If one examines Romanticism in the other European countries, the difficulties in coordinating the known facts increase immeasurably. In France, for instance, after a modest prelude with Chateaubriand and Bernardin de Saint Pierre, a full confrontation with German Romanticism resulted only from Madame de Staël's travels in Germany and the literary distillate of her trip, *De l'Allemagne*. The word *romantique*, however, did not come into use until the end of the second and the beginning of the third decade of the nineteenth century, and Stendhal was the first major writer who styled himself a Romantic, though chiefly for political reasons. French Romanticism only

jelled into a movement around 1830, mainly in the wake of Victor Hugo's plays and the scandals caused by their production. But the movement did not flourish for long. Strong countercurrents soon asserted themselves, and Realism, in many ways already presaged by Balzac, had its way at the latest with the Revolution of 1848.

In England (to bring a third national literature into play) the situation was still different, for there simply was no English Romantic movement, since even the so-called Lake School (which was no school in the sense referred to above) was so incohesive as hardly to deserve that name. Yet Wordsworth's foreword to the second edition (1800) of the *Lyrical Ballads,* co-authored with Coleridge, is a program of Poetic (Romantic) Realism in its British strain. That there was a phenomenon called the Lake School was known to Byron, who, in the introduction to his satirical verse epic *Don Juan,* harps on one of its members, Robert Southey, in particular:

> Bob Southey, you're a poet—poet laureate
> And representative of all the race;
> Although it's true that you turn'd out a Tory at
> Last—yours has lately been a common case;
> And now, my Epic renegade, what are ye at?
> With all the Lakers in and out of place?
> A nest of tuneful persons to my eye
> Like "four and twenty blackbirds in a pye."

Byron never dreamed that, like Southey, he himself might be a Romantic and was quite surprised, in fact, when he learned that he was considered as such in Germany. In the following passage, Wellek underscores this anomaly:

> We all know that Romanticists did not call themselves Romanticists, at least in England. So far as I know, the German scholar Alois Brandl, in his book on Coleridge (1887) first connected Coleridge and Wordsworth definitely with the Romantic movement and grouped them with Shelley, Keats, and Byron. In her *Literary History of England Between the End of the*

Eighteenth and the Beginning of the Nineteenth Century (1882), Mrs. Oliphant never uses the term, nor does she conceive of the "Lake" poets, the "Cockney" school and the "Satanic" Byron as one movement. (*Concepts of Criticism*, p. 79)

Even if we disregard Italian Romanticism with Manzoni and the collaborators of the *Conciliatore*, as well as its Spanish, Scandinavian, and Russian counterparts, we would still have to admit that European Romanticism possesses little enough unity when viewed from an international perspective. This lack of coherence distinguishes it from the more clearly profiled Naturalistic movement, which constitutes an ideal test case for the periodizing comparatist.

In view of the fact that almost everywhere in Europe Romanticism finds itself "in a consistently changing process of permeation" in which (as von Wiese puts it) "every normative unit contains within itself a plethora of other units," it cannot be reduced to a system of norms that is simultaneously, or even consecutively, valid for all of Europe. One could also say that there are too many norms here to form a system.[35]

In the case of Expressionism, which I should like to use as a second illustration of the dialectic of movement and period, the circumstances are somewhat different. From the outset, the brief time-span usually assigned to that phenomenon—within the literary realm, the years 1910–1920 (according to Gottfried Benn) or 1925—would seem to preclude its usage as a period term.

In the plastic arts, German Expressionism, which had its forerunners in foreign painters like van Gogh and Munch, was concentrated in two essentially different groups, the *Brücke* and the *Blaue Reiter*, which were active in Dresden and Munich, respectively. As an artistic commune, the *Brücke* for several years had the character of a movement, so that it was able to regroup even after resettling in Berlin. Unfortunately, the chronicle in which its members intended to outline their program remained incomplete for

personal reasons. Like the *Fauves* in France, the members of this *Gemeinschaft* developed and cultivated a common, clearly recognizable style.

The *Blaue Reiter*—descended from the *Neue Münchner Künstlergemeinschaft*—on the other hand, was no true artistic commune. In matters of art, its chief exponents, Franz Marc and Wassili Kandinsky, were individualists and initially joined forces only for the organization of an exhibition and the publication of the almanac which bears the group's name. This almanac was no manifesto, however, and the various contributions contained in it are only expressions of a common desire to foist primitive, popular, and exotic art onto the tradition of Western painting. The *Blaue Reiter* adherents were fairly unanimous also in their craving for pictorial abstraction, which in Kandinsky is lyrically spiritualized; while Marc took the more concrete Cubism as his point of departure. However, idiosyncratic painters like Paul Klee and Alfred Kubin also belonged temporarily to this group.

In literature, Expressionism was even more disparate than in the plastic arts. Admittedly, a hard core of word- and sound-poets, who—from a purely linguistic point of view—represented the radical wing of so-called Expressionist literature, gathered around Herwarth Walden. Through the founding of the *Sturm* school and the *Sturm* theater, Walden solidified his position as arbiter and spiritual head of a movement which he himself had launched and for which he recruited such "forced" talents as August Stramm. The fact that, in his critical efforts at clarifying the issue, he did not clearly differentiate between Expressionism, Futurism, and Cubism should not be held against him, since elsewhere too (with Theodor Däubler and later with Benn, who looked at everything with a view towards the destruction of reality) Expressionism served as a catch-all term.

Naturally, there were further groupings in the Expressionist and Activist camps. *Die Aktion*, *Das Ziel*, and *Die weissen Blätter* were, essentially, organs of the political

Left, whereas the book series *Der jüngste Tag* and *Tribüne der Kunst und Zeit* were more pronouncedly literary. However, the publisher Kurt Wolff later vigorously denied that he had either triggered or propagated the movement through the publications of his firm. The hectic activity and constant reshuffling of alliances renders it even now impossible to bring order into the chaos of Expressionistic voices.

Moreover, until a few years ago, Expressionism was rarely, if ever, treated as an international phenomenon but was generally regarded as a uniquely and characteristically German product. With the publication of the first volume in the ICLA-sponsored History of Literatures in European Languages, this gap has been filled, in part, by a sequence of essays devoted to the impact of literary Expressionism on, and its transformation in, countries like England [Vorticism], the United States, Russia, Yugoslavia [Zenitism], Rumania, Poland, Belgium and Holland.[36]

Methodologically, the historical concepts treated in the present chapter are essential tools in the hands of those wishing to strengthen Comparative Literature as a scholarly discipline. In closing, I would like to reiterate, however, that it would be foolish to employ terms like era, age, movement or period statically and mechanically instead of dynamically and flexibly, since, by their nature, historical phenomena remain fluid even in retrospect; hence, the vital interpenetration of literary theory and history.

Six Thematology (*Stoffgeschichte*)

From Benedetto Croce to German *Geistesgeschichte* and the Anglo-American New Criticism, it was widely believed that subject matter (*Stoff*) was merely the raw material of literature, which acquires aesthetic valence only after it has been shaped or fashioned in a given drama, epic, poem, or novel. Thus, when viewed historically, the branch of literary scholarship known as thematology or *Stoffgeschichte* is so strongly discredited from the outset that it would seem to be difficult to overcome the deeply-rooted prejudices. Under the influence of folklore studies, our nascent discipline, at the end of the nineteenth century, was being pushed so much in a positivistic direction that, following the abrupt change in the intellectual climate around the turn of the century, it found itself suddenly under heavy fire, which has abated only in the last decade or so.

In laying the theoretical basis for *littérature comparée*, Van Tieghem and the other representatives of the Paris School found themselves moving in a kind of ideological backwater, whereas their predecessors—Max Koch and the Turin School, for instance—had swum with the stream while holding the same views. Only recently, new life has been breathed into this seemingly dead body by way of *topos* studies and a re-emerging interest in questions of tradition, convention, and *Wirkung*. Raymond Trousson in Belgium, Elisabeth Frenzel in Germany, and Harry Levin in the United States, each in his or her own fashion,

has resurrected thematology by seeking to adduce scientifically sound arguments for the cultivation of this branch of learning. Their first and foremost task was to overcome the terminological uncertainty which arose from the fact that the technical terms used in the context of different national literatures did not always coincide semantically. What German scholars refer to as *Stoff- und Motivgeschichte*, for instance, is called *thématologie* in France, while in the English-speaking countries the term *Stoffgeschichte* is often used by way of compromise,[1] at least as long as Harry Levin's coinage "thematology" remains an obvious neologism.[2] In view of this Babylonian confusion, the first step in the critical analysis of thematological methods involves a careful distinction between subject matter (*Stoff*) and theme (*Thema*).

What is usually meant by *Stoff* is revealed in one of Goethe's maxims:

> The poet's conscious activity focuses primarily on the form. The world liberally supplies the subject matter (*Stoff*), while the meaning (*Gehalt*) arises spontaneously out of the fullness of his soul. The two meet unconsciously, and ultimately it is impossible to tell which is responsible for the result. But the form, even though it is innate in the mind of genius, must be realized and pondered. Great circumspection is required in blending and integrating form, content and meaning with each other.[3]

Goethe, then, distinguished between subject matter (= content), meaning, and form, and maintained that only the shaping of form is a truly aesthetic act. The fact that he attributes relatively little significance to the choice of subject matter may surprise us, for it appears that Germany's prince of poets was unaware of how much the greatness and unity of a literary work depend on the affinity between subject matter on the one hand, and form and meaning on the other. It is equally striking that Goethe views "meaning" as a psychological (rather than morphological) category. In this he was emulated by Curtius, who further muddled the issue by calling this psychological component *Thema*:

> The theme is everything which concerns the individual's unique attitude toward the world. A poet's thematic range is the catalogue of his typical reactions to specific situations into which life casts him. The theme is in the subjective realm. It is a psychological constant. It is innate to the poet.[4]

For Curtius, as for Goethe, then, the meaning of a literary work results from the poet's personal experience, which forms a kind of basic pattern for which he seeks a corresponding subject during the creative process.[5] [In psychoanalytically oriented studies, these basic strains are known as motives, which gives rise to further terminological confusion. I will shortly return to this knotty problem.] The idea that this catalysis occurs "spontaneously" and "unconsciously" is extremely modern; for to contemporary critics of thematology art lies neither in the *Stoff* nor in the experience, but solely in the writer's esemplastic imagination, as Coleridge would have called it.

The threefold division of the literary cosmos suggested by Goethe is still valid, although "content" [*Inhalt*] is now often substituted for "subject matter" [*Stoff*], and, especially in German scholarship, *Gestalt* [= *shape*] for *form*. My most urgent and immediate task will be that of demarcating the three spheres. To begin with, the heading of *form* clearly implies the subheadings of *style* and *structure*. In the current chapter, however, I am not at all concerned with style—a term difficult to define but distinctly gauged to the personal manner of expression[6]—but only with what we would like to call the internal correlate to external structure. By "external structure" I mean, in this particular context, the interdependence and integration of the parts of an epic, dramatic, or even [as in the case of the ballad] lyric piece: the sequence and concatenation of scenes, the sequel and arrangement of chapters or stanzas, and the various strands of action—in short: what, in regard to the drama, is commonly known as fable or plot. Plot is that part of an action which can be summarized or, as Petersen puts it, "a reduction of the content of an epic or drama to the combination of motifs which forms the hub

of its action."[7] Thus, while plot refers to a specific content, it always does so in the manner of a simplified, foreshortened account of a sequence of events. One begins to approach subject matter (*Stoff*) proper only when one ceases to look at an action in terms of a more or less regularly flowing movement and—once more abstracting—observes it from a bird's-eye-view. Now the plot is reduced to a *synopsis*, digest, or epitome (the Shakespearean plat), and its latent dynamism has come to rest. Such a summary of the most important components of an action helps to uncover the themes and motifs which lie at the root of the action and are illuminated by it. Motifs and themes, however, are thematological categories rather than units of meaning.

According to ordinary usage, "meaning" (*Gehalt*) refers to those aspects of a literary work which relate to problems or ideas—in short, the "philosophic-ideational tenor, the ethical bases" of a work.[8] The "idea" may appear in the abbreviated form of the so-called *moral*, an aphoristic phrase offering a solution to the problems at hand. The concluding lines of Schiller's *Braut von Messina*, for example, read "Der Leben ist der Güter höchstes nicht,/ Der Übel grösstes aber ist die Schuld" ["Life is not the greatest good,/ But guilt is the greatest evil"]. Taking his cue from Karl Jaspers, Petersen in his methodological survey characterizes this highest level of poetic intent as follows:

> With the plot, as well as with the characters and their psychology, it is the posing of problems that proves itself to be the connecting link in the chain in which these elements are linked with the principal idea. Every problem signals the posing of a question, which must find an answer in the idea; and an idea can find poetic formulation only in the solution of problems. As regards the problems, what Jaspers exemplified as the "antinomic structure of existence" in the so-called *Grenzsituationen*, applies to literature as well: "Each of these cases—conflict, death, chance, guilt—implies an antinomy. Strife and mutual help, life and death, chance and design, guilt and the sense of redemption are tied together, as the one does not exist without the other."

> The problem always implies an either-or, no matter whether it is a question of practical life or theoretical insight, of ethical principles, human psychology, basic ideological decisions, or metaphysical truths. (*Die Wissenschaft von der Dichtung*, p. 239)

In the elevation of *problem* and *idea* to the level of *meaning*, the subject matter and, in fact, any direct relation to the individual work of art is gradually lost sight of. This was one of Croce's points of departure for his critique of thematology in particular and comparative influence studies in general. For the Italian scholar was convinced that "poetry is essentially form, and form alone cannot influence culture. But the material of poetry, detached from its form, may operate as an influence; it is, then, no longer art, but emotion or ideas." Harry Levin also seems to take it for granted that thematology serves (inevitably?) as a vehicle of *Problemgeschichte*, for he calls the theme an "avenue for a progression of ideas, whose entrance into literature it invites and facilitates." In other words: "Themes, like symbols . . . are polysemous: that is, they can be endowed with different meanings in the face of differing situations. This is what makes an inquiry into their permutations an adventure into the history of ideas."[9]

In the realm of *Gehalt*, the literal meaning—still a content category—tends to give way to deeper significance. In literature, for example, the relation between content and meaning is mirrored in the dichotomies of image and symbol, motif and problem, theme and idea. Thus, for both logical and methodological reasons, I most emphatically disagree with Elisabeth Frenzel, according to whom—

> *Stoff*, motif and symbol are regarded as components of that structural element of literature which pertains to subject matter and content. They represent three levels in the spiritualization of the material encountered by the poet or placed at his disposal. The *Stoff* can be condensed into the motif, and the motif can be raised to the symbolic level.[10]

Harry Levin also "take[s] the symbology for granted in this connection, since it involves interpretations of *Stoff*

and *Motiv*." In contrast, I shall exclude symbology from this survey, since it more properly fits into the realm of meaning, and focus instead on the genuine content categories present in, or suggested by, the literary work. To the best of my knowledge, these include, besides subject matter (*Stoff*) itself, theme, motif, situation, image (*Bild*), trait (*Zug*), and *topos*.

In this connection, it should be pointed out that, for Comparative Literature, *Stoff*, theme and *topos* are of considerably greater interest than, for example, motif and situation, although—or because—these latter features are more universal and archetypal than the former. The image and the trait, on the other hand, are too limited in size to lend themselves easily to monographic inquiry. Finally, the leitmotif, a structural device, differs from the motif, which is content-oriented. Being an internal feature, it is of little interest to the comparatist *sensu strictu*.

Fortunately, I can be brief in sketching the historical outline of the joy and sorrows of thematology which must precede the theoretical discussion, since pertinent remarks on this subject have been, and will be, offered in Chapters One and Appendix One respectively. I would like to reiterate, however, that thematology has, traditionally, been considered a German preserve—primarily because in the nineteenth century it was nourished and sustained as a consequence of the German folklore mania. For the study of folk literature, "which, especially in its beginnings, focused mainly on the genesis and evolution of an often fragmentarily and poorly transmitted body of literature, found it necessary, faced with alternate versions of a given tale, to turn to comparison and the sketching of family trees."[11]

In point of fact, the study of legends and fairy tales left its imprint on the fledgling discipline of Comparative Literature in Germany and the adjoining regions (notably the Alsace, Switzerland, and Northern Italy) and probably stifled its growth in Scandinavia. Van Tieghem commented in 1931: "Thematology is . . . strongly developed

in Germany. This is true of all those countries where the folk literature is vital, where it has remained alive, and where it exercises a profound influence on the literature produced by men of letters."[12] To be sure, this statement relates to conditions which the *Geistesgeschichte* of the twenties had profoundly modified. Yet, from 1929 to 1937, Paul Merker was still active as editor of a series of thematological monographs. But not until after World War II, was the time ripe for Elisabeth Frenzel to set about compiling her dictionary of literary themes, which had been repeatedly called for by Karl Goedeke and Petersen. The fruits of her labor, forming an indispensable platform for comparatistically oriented thematology, were published in 1962 as a collection of "longitudinal cross-sections through the history of literature."[13] Using her contribution to *Deutsche Philologie im Aufriss* [1957] as a prop, the same author published, in 1963, a small *Realienbuch*, which was followed, three years later, by her book *Stoff- und Motivgeschichte*.[14] Concurrently with this development initiated by Frenzel, Germany witnessed a renaissance of "survival" and *topos* studies undertaken in many cases by the representatives of the "Bonn School" gathered around the editor of *Arcadia*.

Ever since Baldensperger's denunciation of *Stoffgeschichte* in the first issue of *RLC*, French scholars have been wary of thematology, as have the *geistesgeschichtlich* inclined Germans, albeit for much more pragmatic reasons. Baldensperger sought to prove the scientific vacuity of the thematological approach by pointing out that such studies will always be incomplete and full of *disiecta membra*, since all the links of a chain can never be flawlessly reconstructed. This criticism was further sharpened by Paul Hazard, who dismissed thematology because it did not confine itself to the study of *rapports de fait*.[15]

Van Tieghem, being somewhat less stringent than Hazard, assigned to thematology the task of determining not only "the dependence of more recent authors upon their foreign predecessors," but also "the role played by their

own genius, their ideal, and their art, in the variations they have played on a common theme" (Van Tieghem, p. 89). However, he considered this type of comparatism to be properly placed within General Literature. Guyard, for his part, apologetically notes that "despite Paul Hazard, it is necessary to take account of these studies, whose authors have sincerely desired to promote the cause of Comparative Literature" (Guyard, p. 49) and concedes that "the thematological realm offers many resources to the scholar;" for "without falling into folklore or crude erudition, Comparative Literature is capable of finding there a sure opportunity for contributing to the history of ideas and feelings, of which the writers were always the most vocal and the most persuasive exponents" (p. 57).

Baldensperger's and Hazard's objections notwithstanding, thematology was never ignored in French academic circles, where the number of comparatists rejecting the "official" doctrine was always large. Methodologically, the subject was recently discussed, at some length, by the Belgian scholar Raymond Trousson, whose reputation rests primarily on the merits of his two-volume monograph on the Prometheus theme. His booklength essay, along with Elisabeth Frenzel's stated views, will serve as the basis of my subsequent discussion.

Trousson's book may occasion some shrugging of shoulders among American, German, and French literary critics and historians; but, if the latest developments may be regarded as symptomatic, it is only a question of time until its contribution to scholarship will be universally acclaimed. As the author states in his introduction, the study is a kind of personal confession or stock taking:

> Why do [men] feel the need constantly to inventory their ancestral legends? It is because to study their history, to pore over the secret of their infinite mutations, is also to learn to know their own odyssey, in which there is something supremely exalted and often supremely tragic. In every mind devoted to justice, there is an Antigone. . . . These heroes are in us, and we in them; they partake of our lives, and we see ourselves reflected in

their shapes. . . . Our myths and our legendary themes are our polyvalence; they are the indices of humanity, the ideal forms of the tragic destiny, the human condition.[16]

To be sure, as comparatists, we could immediately raise the objection that the phenomena spotlighted by Trousson are not so much literary universals as Jungian archetypal categories. This may well be true, but even so, Comparative Literature, in this case, might at least serve as the means to a nonliterary end. Nonetheless, it should be noted that, in thematology, the aesthetic interest declines in proportion as the emphasis is shifted from the action to its agent, as happens, for instance, in Käte Hamburger's book *Von Sophokles zu Sartre: Griechische Dramengestalten antik und modern*.[17] If, following Aristotle, one defines drama primarily as action, the wrenching of individual figures from their context is a disclocation that must, perforce, destroy the nexus. Käte Hamburger took that risk. She also sensed that it is precisely this wresting the part from the whole to which, from Croce to the present, the foes of thematology have objected.[18] Hence, her note of caution:

Since I am solely concerned with the conception of the figures and their behavior, my attention is not directed at the structure of the plays and my gaze does not follow the details of the action. In fact, in many instances a thorough analysis accounting for every moment and every figure of the various ancient and modern works discussed here must be forgone, since it would detract from the guiding principle of this comparative study. (p. 25)

Miss Hamburger seems to have wasted no time on reflecting whether it is the function and purpose of thematology to prove the identity of the figures or the unity of the theme. Her assertion that in cases where different problems are posed the identity of the figures is "merely a sign of the immutability of the basic situations which were established by the tragedians" (p. 24), sounds slightly naive when viewed in light of Croce's earlier observation:

If the figure and the plot have acquired new life in the poet's mind, that new life is the true figure and the true plot. If no new

> life has been instilled, that which always interests us is the stirring, however feeble, of new life—and not the alleged tractability or what is believed to be the ideal way in which the theme should have been treated.[19]

For Croce, there exists no continuity of literary figures in the sense postulated by Käte Hamburger. As he puts it,

> In the series of *Sophonisbe* dramas studied by Ricci, there is no Sophonisbe but, rather, Trissino, Mairet, Corneille, Voltaire, or Alfieri: these men are the true protagonists, but not the daughter of Hasdrubal, wife of Sifax and bride of Massinissa—a mere name, or mere external facts, which the poet fills with the proper substance.[20]

In her theoretical musings, Miss Hamburger fails to see the logical fallacy inherent in the assumption that, simply because the protagonists of two plays are called Electra, both figures must be identical and, therefore, comparable. But, in fact, such an identity can only be established via the correspondence of essential traits and experiences. The more these traits and experiences diverge, the more a character ceases to be "himself."

To conclude the historical survey, I briefly turn to the views of American comparatists on thematology. As previously stated, there is in the United States no strong tradition along these lines; as yet, very few prominent scholars in this country have made such a study the cornerstone of their historical/critical endeavors. Woodberry, as well as Chandler, included this branch of learning within the province of Comparative Literature, but did so largely for the sake of rounding off. Thanks to the efforts of A. O. Lovejoy, the 1920's witnessed the emergence of the History of Ideas, a discipline programmatically focused on meaning and for which *Stoff* was just as incidental as it was for the neo-classical formalists.

The extent to which thematology was discredited in America only two decades ago[21] is evident from the fact that Wellek/Warren's introduction to the *Theory of Literature* does not contain a separate chapter on this subject.

Even in its index, the words "Stoff" and "theme" are missing. This noticeable gap is best explained by the book's overall structure, the authors being bent on differentiating between intrinsic and extrinsic approaches to literature. "Extrinsic," in their regard, is the study of literature in its relation to the (other) arts and sciences; while "intrinsic" study, for them, is the type of inquiry which is attuned to the purely literary aspects of a novel, play or poem. Naturally, the question arises whether thematology belongs to the first or the second category. Wellek/Warren's answer is unequivocal: *Stoff* is *extrinsic* as long as it has not been assimilated and digested by the writer; it becomes *intrinsic* as soon as that transmutation has occurred. However, the qualitative leap, mentioned in Chapter Two in connection with Guillén's notion of influence, places a gap between these two conditions. Thematology thus falls sadly between two chairs.

The only references in the *Theory of Literature* to thematology are found in the chapter entitled "Literary History," where we are told that it is wrong to speak of originality only in connection with the choice of subject matter; for, "in earlier periods there was a sounder understanding of the nature of literary creation, a recognition that the artistic merit of a merely original plot or subject was small" (W/W, p. 271). True originality, the authors assert, inheres in the shaping and treatment of the material. On the next page, *Stoffgeschichte* is dealt a mortal blow in a manner that would have pleased Croce, as well as Baldensperger and Van Tieghem:

> With this type of study [the history of poetic diction] one might be expected to class the many historical studies of themes and motifs such as Hamlet or Don Juan or the Wandering Jew; but actually these are different problems. Various versions of a story have no such necessary connection or continuity as have meter and diction. To trace all the differing versions of, say, the tragedy of Mary Queen of Scots throughout literature might well be a problem of interest for the history of political sentiment, and

would, of course, incidentally illustrate changes in the history of taste—even changing conceptions of tragedy. But it has itself no real coherence or dialectic. It presents no single problem and certainly no critical problem. *Stoffgeschichte* is the least literary of histories. [W/W, p. 272]

Significantly, even the journal *Comparative Literature* omits thematology from its comprehensive program. No wonder, then, that the *Bibliography of Comparative Literature*, which appeared in 1950 and devotes ample space to this subject area, was so harshly judged by some comparatists. Yet, even in the United States, time does not stand still. What, ten, or even five, years ago, was anathema to professors of literature is now well on its way to becoming once more acceptable. Thus Harry Levin places his stamp of approval on thematology in the following excerpt from his contribution to *The Disciplines of Criticism*:

If a theme itself can be so concretely pinned down, particularized into a local habitation and a name, the speculative area of thematics remains much wider and more flexible. We have seen that it embraces much of what used to be set aside as having to do with externals of literature. We are now willing to admit that a writer's choice of subject is an esthetic decision, that the conceptual outlook is a determining part of the structural pattern, that the message is somehow inherent in the medium. [p. 145]

As far as thematology is concerned, the circle has thus finally come full course, and I can proceed, with a good conscience, to offer some remarks concerning the methodology underlying this branch of Comparative Literature.

In the center of my theoretical considerations regarding *Stoff- und Motivgeschichte* I place the dialectics of *Stoff* and motif to which Elisabeth Frenzel alludes in the title of her book. As regards *Stoff*, further distinction must be made between preformed subject matter and raw material [*Rohstoff*] which is still to be shaped. *Rohstoff* is "an element external to the work of art, which becomes part of it

only in the poetic process. Such matter can be anything which nature and history furnish to the writer" (Frenzel, p. 21).

Even in its rawest state, however, the *Rohstoff* is often somehow preformed—if not aesthetically, then at least as a "simple form" (*einfache Form*), such as a news account or an eyewitness report. A totally amorphous *Stoff* exists, at best, in the guise of purely documentary or statistical material. Or would undigested experience do the trick? This is essentially a semantic problem, for one must decide whether any kind of structured experience, prior to its verbal expression, already constitutes *Stoff*.

It should also be remembered that many themes—most of those treated in Greek drama, that of the *Nibelungenlied*, that of the *Chanson de Roland*, and numerous others—actually do not, or no longer, exist as *Rohstoff* but only in a literary *Gestalt*, however primitive. Accounting for this difficulty, Elisabeth Frenzel chose to open her survey at the point "where firm footing is gained through an existing version," and to touch only briefly upon "the prehistories and meanings of individual figures belonging to the realm of mythology," as well as on "the more or less convincingly deducible primitive and preliminary versions" (p. xiv). *Stoff* in the "narrower sense" is, in her view,

> a well delineated story line (*Fabel*) existing prior to the literary work, a "plot," which, as an internal or external experience, as a report on a contemporary event, as a historical, mythical, or religious action, as a work already shaped by another writer, or even as a product of the imagination, is treated in literary fashion. (p. 21)

The unity of a theme lies, accordingly, "in the lowest common denominator of all extant versions" (p. 25). But, we ask ourselves, how can this denominator be derived from the different treatments of a subject? The most suitable answer would seem to be that the common denominator of a *Stoff* is the combination of motifs absolutely essential to its profile.

In the Don Juan theme, for example, the motif of seduction will hardly do as the only hallmark. The seduction must, rather, be a running motif at the very center of the hero's life. Even then the *Stoff* would be incomplete, however, without its explicitly religious overtones—the invitation extended to the dead Commander, the Don's balking at repentance, and the damnation of the *dissoluto punito*. Trousson comes to analagous conclusions with regard to the Medea and Pandora themes. It can, therefore, be assumed that the identification of *Stoff* can be accomplished only by means of breaking it down into its components (motifs).

For the sake of clarity and consistency, it would be useful, in principle, if we could replace the German word *Stoff* by "theme"; for the German *Thema* and the French *thème* obviously have the same root as their English cognate, whereas the German *Stoff* corresponds more closely to the English "subject matter" and the French *matière*. But the problem is complicated by the fact that theme or *Thema* point towards the History of Ideas and seem to imply an abstraction from *Stoff* (as in the German phrase "Er äussert sich zum Thema" [he comments on the subject]. Moreover, as Levin points out, in both English and French the word has a distinctly rhetorical-pedagogical ring:

> Our keyword *theme* may sound somewhat jejune, particularly to those who associate it with required compositions for Freshman English. The original Greco-Latin *thema* simply denoted a rhetorical proposition, the argument of a discourse, what in Jamesian parlance we now like to term the *donnée*. It could be the topic chosen by the orator or assigned to the schoolboy; through the pedagogical influence of the Jesuits the term became equated with an academic exercise; and the French soon specialized it to mean a translation of a given passage into another language. (*The Disciplines of Criticism*, p. 128)

Van Tieghem further adds to the confusion by designating as themes precisely those phenomena which I prefer to call *motifs*, namely, "the impersonal situations, the traditional motifs, the subjects, places, settings, usages, etc.,"

while labeling *légendes* those "events or groups of events whose protagonists are mythic, legendary, or historical heroes" (Van Tieghem, p. 90). For our present purpose, then, the word "theme" would seem to be less suitable than *Stoff*. However, in order to honor usage, I shall, in the remainder of this chapter, use *Stoff* in the singular but themes (instead of the awkward *Stoffe*) in the plural.

In this context, musical terminology could give rise to further confusion between *Stoff* and theme. Since the so-called "absolute" music has no content properly speaking, the thematic material here takes the place of the subject matter. The musical theme, however, as the starting point of an instrumental composition or as a basis for variations, is the member of a series which extends from the individual note over the motive to melody. Since the difference is largely quantitative, it is not always possible to distinguish between a long motive and a short theme, or between a long theme and a short melody.

What, then, is the relation between motif and theme in literature? For an answer to that important question we turn first to Frenzel and Trousson. In the opinion of the German scholar,

> the word "motif" designates a smaller thematic [*stofflich*] unit, which does not yet encompass an entire plot or story line but in itself constitutes an element pertaining to content and situation. In literary works whose content is relatively simple, it may be rendered in condensed form through the central motif [*Kernmotiv*]; generally, however, in the pragmatic literary genres, several motifs are required to make up the content. In lyric poetry, which has no actual content and, thus, no subject matter in the sense here intended, one or several motifs constitute the sole thematic substance. (p. 26)

Trousson parallels this view:

> What is a motif? We have chosen to use this term for designating a setting or large concept denoting either a certain attitude—e.g. rebellion—or a basic impersonal situation in which the actors are not yet individualized—for example, the situation of a

man between two women, of the strife between two friends or between a father and his son, of the abandoned woman, etc. (Trousson, p. 12)

What is striking in Trousson's treatment is the fact that the Frenchman, who calls the theme (*thème*) "a specific expression of a motif, its individualization or, if you wish, the result of a passage from the general to the particular" (ibid., p. 13), regards literary motifs as part of the *Rohstoff*. This view, however, is unique in literary scholarship.

From the two above definitions it follows that, generally, motifs relate to situations, and themes to characters. Themes are concretized through characters,[22] whereas motifs are derived from situations, for "we grasp them only when we abstract them from their specific embodiments."[23] (Situations, by the way, are groupings of human views, feelings, or modes of behavior, which give rise to, or result from, actions in which several individuals participate.) Decidedly, motifs never reach the level of abstraction proper to problems or ideas; and Trousson errs when listing as motifs "the idea of happiness or progress" (p. 13). Using the terminology adopted by Robert Petsch, one may, moreover, speak of stereotyped combinations of motifs and situations as *formulae*. Such formulae are, naturally, often found in Jolles' simple forms—like fairy tales, fables, folk tales, and legends.

The total store of motifs available to writers throughout the world is relatively small—Paul Merker estimates their number as amounting to about one hundred[24]—that of themes, on the other hand, is practically unlimited. Mathematically, the sum of possible thematic combinations among motifs in groups of two, three, four, or more, is easy enough to calculate. In addition, there are the endless variants governed by time and place and in the historical, mythological, legendary, or fantastic trappings in which a theme may be clothed. The total number of available situations, of course, is even smaller than that of possible motifs, as there are relatively few characteristic modes of

human behavior capable of producing and sustaining action. (Semantically, the possibility of theatrical realization is clearly inherent in the concept of situation.) Thus Georges Polti, emulating Carlo Gozzi, sought to define pragmatically the *Thirty-Six Dramatic Situations*, convinced as he was that their number could not be increased.[25]

The situations which Polti lists—we still have to discuss their choice and grouping—are so general as not to be limited to one civilization or to one level of society. What Goethe said about the motifs fits to a "t," for according to him they are "phenomena of the human spirit, which have repeated themselves and which will continue to repeat themselves."[26] By contrast, the universality of motifs is subject to certain limitations imposed by temporal and geographical conditions and idiosyncrasies. What meaning, for example, would an African pygmy or an Australian Bushman attach to the palace-hut dichotomy? And how ridiculous the so-called Graf-von-Gleichen motif of the man between two women would be in the eyes of a Mohammedan or Mormon, or the motif of conflict between secular and divine law (*Antigone*, Reinhard Goering's *Seeschlacht*) in the eyes of a people whose King is also its High Priest? It is precisely for this reason that, with all due caution, we would like to extend the validity of Trousson's assertion that "in regard to themes, factual relations and cultural unity are indispensable conditions" (p. 70), to motifs as well.

It goes without saying that themes have a much narrower scope than motifs. This is especially true of historical subjects whose relevance is geographically limited and whose comprehension requires a specific awareness of time and place. Only where the historical peculiarities have been sloughed off and universal human traits have come to the fore, such themes may acquire a broader basis. Thus it is that the themes of Greek tragedy—which are either mythical or legendary—are well-known throughout the West, while only for a few of the more recent ones—

such as the Don Juan or the Faust *Stoff*, in both of which the historical core is already surrounded by an aura—can this stake be claimed. Even the Joan of Arc *Stoff*, for example, has a somewhat limited appeal; and with the Napoleon and Hitler themes, which are, from our perspective, much too diffuse and episodic, it may be our closeness, historically, which keeps them from acquiring the kind of cohesion which suits the thematologist's taste.

Despite Croce's blunt rejection of Ricci's attempt to explain the artistic weakness of all Sophonisbe dramas as a consequence of flaws inherent in that particular *Stoff*, it must be granted that certain themes may well carry their own weight. As Ricci puts it,

> Every author is doubtless responsible for the defects of his work. But, in the case of a Corneille, Voltaire, and Alfieri, it would be rash to blame these authors for the mediocrity of their *Sophonisbes*. It is quite possible that there are more general reasons, relating to the nature of the theme. At first glance, the most intriguing subjects are not always the best and most tragic ones.[27]

I have to rest my case at this point, since, as Croce ironically notes, we are dealing here with a *circulus vitiosus*; for we know that a *Stoff* is suitable for tragedy (*tragédiable*) only because several dramatists have already used it. A great writer, however, should be capable of extracting even from a recalcitrant *Stoff* a modicum of theatrical and literary effect.

In Trousson's view, the *type*, i.e., the embodiment of a motif (or, more precisely, of a character trait) that never attains individuation intervenes between the concepts of theme and motif. Since types are, in a manner of speaking, characters in the formative stage, one may regard them as thematic modes which have not yet developed a valid symbolic prototype:

> Certain motifs never develop to the point where they turn into themes. They are arrested at a stage in their evolution which one might call that of the type: thus, the motif of avarice produces

> the type of the miser, which can be found in Plautus and Molière, in Balzac and Ghelderode, but which has not established a literary tradition epitomized by a specific personage. (Trousson, p. 14)

Types, then, are more universal than themes and are therefore better suited for comparatively oriented analogy studies.

In order to counter Baldensperger's and Van Tieghem's objections that thematology slights continuity, and thus completeness, Trousson creates two subspecialties, the one dealing with the so-called heroic themes, and the other with the so-called situational ones. In the first instance, the study focuses on the character of the hero who lends dignity to the *Stoff*; in the second, attention is centered on the action resulting from the interplay of the figures.[28]

In the case of "heroic" figures—Prometheus, Orpheus, Heracles, Faust, for instance—a choice of specific situations is moot, according to Trousson; for most of these characters have outgrown the frame of reference originally assigned to them. There is a process of accretion, in that at different times and places the same figure may display different or even opposite, characteristics:

> Supple, Protean, polyvalent and independent of narrative frames, the heroic theme, due to the almost endless proliferation of phenomena, is capable of integrating itself into the characteristics of thought, manners and taste of a given century, of assuming virtually all, even the most contradictory, meanings, of adapting itself to all the nuances of contemporary life by embracing all the variations: thematology is, concurrently, *Geistesgeschichte*. (Trousson, p. 39)

Conversely, identical ideas may also be expressed by different characters acting as their *symboles condensés*. During the Romantic period, for instance, Faust, Cain, Satan, and Manfred were all portrayed as rebels. In such cases, the personality and the character of the hero is relatively immaterial; in other words, the theme is subordinated to the motif. If, in view of this fact (which refutes Käte Ham-

burger's thesis concerning the persistent identity of characters despite thematic changes), the comparatist should attempt to compile the history of such "themes," he would have to renounce from the outset any hope of achieving total coverage; for a catalogue of all the references and allusions he is likely to encounter would be both futile and unwieldy.

According to Trousson, however, completeness can and must be aimed at in outlining the history of situational themes, which involve specific milieus and confrontations within a specific framework. Trousson feels that almost all historical themes belong to this category,

> because the authors enjoy, in this respect, considerably less freedom of choice than with regard to legendary themes, considering the pressure of historical fact, which is exercised by the time [Waterloo cannot be moved to the twentieth century], the place [Cromwell cannot be executed in America], . . . and the veracity of facts [Mary Stuart cannot be made Queen of England]. [p. 36]

This statement applies, naturally, only to a more or less realistic treatment of such themes, since no limits can be set to the poetic imagination, even in its use of strictly historical subjects. Brecht, for instance, has his Joan Dark wandering around the stockyards of Chicago; and his Coriolanus displays character traits which differ substantially from those traditionally ascribed to that pseudo-historical figure.

As examples of such situational themes Trousson lists Antigone and Oedipus, and maintains that when we hear these names we do not so much think of their bearers as of the events to which their fates are linked. The same holds true, he claims, for the figures of Phaedra and Medea, whose destinies are intricately bound up with those of Hippolytus and Jason, respectively. Moreover, Antigone and Oedipus have no true polyvalence, for the number of possible variants in the motivation of their actions—which is all the leeway given to the adaptor—is extremely

small. The comparatist concerned with the history of a situational theme will, thus, be typically confronted with self-contained works (rather than mere allusions), whose number is extremely limited. This is due to oversaturation, which results when no strikingly new interpretations are possible. Harry Levin shares this view and confesses that

> themes, like biological entities, seem to have their cycles, phases of growth, of heyday, and of decline, as with *Troilus and Cressida*. It is not surprising, in our latter day, that so many of them seem to have reached a state of exhaustion. Audiences get tired of hearing the same old names, and writers find it harder and harder to compete with their illustrious forerunners. But motifs seem inexhaustible. (*The Disciplines of Criticism*, p. 144).

Trousson also feels that many situational themes are prone to dramatic treatment, because in a play the story lines must be clearer and the plots more compact than in an epic or novel, while the lyric is by its nature too fragmentary and aphoristic (Trousson, p. 42). Frenzel, too, suspects that there exists a natural affinity between certain themes and specific genres, a fact she explains partly by their structural properties and partly by the simple weight of tradition.[29]

In the eyes of many readers, Trousson's distinction between heroic and situational themes may seem to be mere hair-splitting, especially since experience teaches us that pure specimens of either type are rare. Idiomatically, this removal of mythical or legendary heroes from their original setting is attested by such phrases as "he's a real Don Juan" or "his striving is truly Faustian." On the other hand, there are cases which prove that situational themes may also exist apart from the basic situation and can be transposed into a new context, as in the case of the Antigone *Stoff*, which is built into the dramatic action of Reinhard Goering's drama *Seeschlacht*.

In order to eliminate still another source of confusion, I turn once more to the question of the motif. That word

derives from *movere* (to move) and thus originally carries the meaning of *movens*—that which moves something. The musical motive actually engenders a motion, since music is a linear time-art, at least in its melodic components. In the plastic and visual arts, on the other hand, motif is linked to movement only in a figurative sense. Actually, in painting, sculpture, architecture, and the decorative arts, the term denotes either the model (= *Vorlage*) of a work—i.e., Cézanne's Mont Saint-Victoire or Van Gogh's cypresses at Arles—or the use of recurrent compositional features, called in English *design* or *pattern*. The first meaning relates to a content category, and the second to a structural ingredient, which roughly corresponds to the leitmotif in music. The emphasis in literature is on content, for the literary motif is conducive to action only to the extent that it contains a situational element.[30] Those scholars, on the other hand, who proceed psychologically or psychoanalytically, rather than morphologically, are the victims of a false etymology. Thus Joseph Körner and Willy Krogmann[31] use the term *Motiv* synonymously with the English motive, rather than motif, as signifying a mental impulse or basic urge dormant in the subconscious and impinging upon the work of art *in statu nascendi*. For these scholars, motif persistence (*Motivkonstanz*) no longer means the transmission of a thematic pattern from one generation or one writer to another but the thematic unity of a poet's works (as, for example, the motif of male infidelity in the writings of the young Goethe)[32] related to a basic world view. The study of motifs thus understood, however, is not comparative, but monographic. In its search for constants of human behavior, it becomes comparative only at the universal level of Freudian complexes or Jungian archetypes. As far as literary history is concerned, it is doubly ironic that these complexes bear the respective names of the exemplary themes. Psychoanalysts "define the general motif by the particular *Stoff* which it has generated: the motif of the father-son

rivalry is called the Oedipus complex, and the motif of the incestuous love between father and daughter the Electra complex" (Trousson, p. 13).

I have stated that from a literary viewpoint *situation* denotes divergent feelings or thoughts reflected in, or giving rise to, an action or conflict. Using Polti's book as an example, I would like further to clarify the meaning of this term. Unfortunately, Polti himself never arrives at a formal definition. What he means by "situation" is shown, in passing, by his observation that every dramatic situation (his study being restricted to such) arises "from a conflict between two principal directions of effort."[55] This would exclude those conflicts which rage within an individual, as well as unmotivated or one-sided actions. Thus, in connection with the twenty-sixth situation (amorous crimes of passion) Polti calls sexual assault or rape an act rather than a situation.

A "situation" also presupposes two or more persons engaged in a conflict. The actual dramatic nexus of a given play, accordingly, takes the form of a rhythmic sequence of actions and situations, the situations resulting from the actions, and triggering further actions in their turn. As Kayser notes: "It lies in the nature of situation that the motifs point towards a 'before' and an 'after.' The situation has arisen, and the tension it generates demands a resolution" (*Das sprachliche Kunstwerk*, p. 62). Levin erroneously believes that Gozzi computes a maximum of thirty-six *plots* for the stage. In fact, he knew that situations, like motifs, can be reshuffled in numerous ways to form myriad constellations.

Unfortunately, the situations which Polti lists are too diffuse to produce a coherent pattern. On the one hand, the French critic catalogues simple acts like abduction, rebellion, murder, and adultery; while on the other, he lists genuine motifs, such as enmity or jealousy, which must first be translated into the language of the stage. This patent mixture of motifs and situations is enhanced by Polti's statement that there is no situation "which may not be

combined with any one of its neighbors, nay, with two, three, four, five, six of them and more" (Polti, p. 120). To prove his point, he cites the case of Oedipus, which he assigns to the eighteenth situation, while suggesting cross-references to the eleventh, sixteenth, nineteenth, and twentieth situations as well. It is easy to see, however, that only motifs can be abstractly combined, while situations are sequential.

What I have so far said suggests that, thematologically, the situation constitutes a link between the motif and the action, just as the type forms a link between the motif and the theme. An action suggests physical activity, whereas the motif is abstracted from concrete reality. The situation, however, tips the scale: "The physical situation, which . . . inspires the painter and sculptor, means little in the literary work if it lacks a spiritual dimension. It is this dimension which we must view as belonging to the literary motif."[34] If the motif is static and the action dynamic, the situation must then be the "pregnant moment from which all the motifs of the action evolve."[35] As a literary category, the situation is, accordingly, more closely linked to structure than to content and carries relatively little thematological weight.

The smaller the thematic unit in question, the less productive, from the comparatist's point of view, will be an investigation. In our field, themes are the ideal objects of study, whereas motifs, due to their endless ramifications and interlacings, are much more difficult to trace. Nevertheless, Van Tieghem highly recommends this specialty:

> As regards maternal jealousy, blood vengeance, sacrifice to duty, etc., comparative studies of this sort—they are rare—might cast a vivid light on the genius and the art of different writers, as well as on the change of sensibility in their public. (p. 92)

Van Tieghem quite correctly notes that there are few comparative monographs of the kind exemplified by Kurt Wais' book *Das Vater-Sohn Motiv in der Dichtung bis 1800*.[36]

In winding up this thematological survey, I proceed to a brief discussion of the smallest thematic units, namely the *trait* (*Zug*), the *image*, and the *topos*. As long as they are not symbolically enhanced and thus shunted over to the realm of meaning, both trait and image are additive or decorative elements which become objects for thematological research only through conscious repetition or subtle linkage. The *trait* is an incidental attribute, which, taken by itself, is fairly insignificant. According to Petsch, however, it can be raised to the level of the motif by means of a *Pointe* that shows it to be characteristic or symptomatic. Through the *Pointe*, as it were, the trait is pushed into the limelight.[37]

The *image*, also, is often too inconsequential to arouse one's thematological curiosity. How many images there are in a novel, an epic, or a drama! Still, these are sometimes used as leitmotifs. And Caroline Spurgeon has written a book on Shakespeare's imagery, in which she attributes to each play a characteristic "cluster of images" which provide a clue to the author's intentions. For the comparatist as comparatist precious little is to be gained here, however. It may well befit the classical philologist to study the imagery of a Virgil within the corpus of Virgilian writings, but the comparative study of the *Bilder* used by various authors would seem to belong more properly to the province of *Kulturgeschichte*, where monographs on the flea, the rose or the nose in literature have their place.

The *leitmotif* has been defined as a "repetition of the same word sequence, at least by way of allusion or in slight variations, at different points of a poetic work," which, in this manner, "are related to each other through this attribute which they have in common" (Frenzel, p. 31). As I have already indicated, this phenomenon is meaningful only in the structure of the individual work.

Occupying roughly the same place within the hierarchy of thematological values as the trait and the image, but far more fruitful for Comparative Literature, is the literary *commonplace* or *topos*. Modest in scope, the *topos* yields

food for thought to the literary critic and historian. Derived from classical rhetoric, the *topoi* were originally arguments which served, within a given speech, to make something palatable to the listeners, and which, in the pursuit of this goal, appealed either to the hearer's mind or heart.[38] They also served as mnemonic aids. In late Antiquity, the *topoi* made their way into poetics and were gradually naturalized in literature. Only those readers who are familiar with ancient and medieval usage can tell exactly whether an image, a metaphor, or a figure of speech is newly minted or fraught with tradition. In comparative *topos* studies, the interpenetration of originality, tradition, and imitation thus constitutes an important factor.

Literary scholarship is somewhat divided over the exact nature and function of the *topos*. Kayser, for instance, assigns to topology the task of writing the history "of certain concrete images, motifs, or figures of speech" (*Das sprachliche Kunstwerk*, p. 75). With regard to the latter, one might think of expressions like *mater natura*, which Walter Veit says could well be reduced to the pure concept *natura*, and of the metaphor *naturae cursus*, which Hans Galinsky has recently analyzed from a historical perspective.[39] For the thematologically oriented comparatist, it would be important to know exactly how a *topos* turns into a motif (the *locus amoenus*) or a theme (the world as a stage) and whether, besides the motifs and themes which are extended *topoi*, there are those which have found their final, unconsecrated home in the cliché or commonplace.