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EWA KĘBŁOWSKA-ŁAWNICZAK

SOME PERSPECTIVES ON PERIODIZATION

The aim of the present article is to bring out a complexity either suppressed or neglected by the majority of concrete style/period[1] studies. By bringing into prominence the variety of potential methodological assumptions underlying these studies, I intend to draw attention to the following diversity of implications. In this article I also attempt to outline the changing concepts of historiography as affecting the notion of period/style.

Any complex discussion of periodization inevitably involves a whole range of already time-honoured questions and controversies concerning historical status and historiographic models. This discussion includes a view of the discourses on historical narration as well as the problems of continuity and transition. The first part of this article will be devoted to the various aspects of a macroscopic perspective, as they gradually appeared in the course of the subsequent endeavours to write literary history. Under the term 'macroscopic' the author subsumes all the approaches which aim to construct (or reconstruct) all-embracing systems of ordering historical facts. In order to investigate the origins of periodization as a methodological concept in literary studies, it also seems necessary to recall the late nineteenth-century argument concerning the status of humanities as opposed to sciences. I will also concentrate on a critique of the openly macroscopic approaches which will not, however, amount to a total dismissal of historiography. On the one hand, a group of postwar studies prefers to consider the problems of style/period itself, its use in literary history, rather than define the semantic domains to be applied in concrete analysis. On the other hand, a gradual recognition of a microscopic view of historical processes seems to point out the way towards a reevaluation of the

[1] The terms 'period' and 'style' were often used interchangeably. Evidently, it is possible to differentiate between them on clear methodological grounds. However, for the purpose of this article, I decided to use the form 'period/style,' especially at some moments of the discussion, in order to emphasize the interest in both options. The use of one term only would lead to certain misunderstandings (typology versus history).

somewhat outworn totalizing concepts. By 'microscopic' I intend to describe the postwar approaches advocating a fragmented and piecemeal view of historical material. Finally, there follow several suggestions meeting some of the essential needs of such a new formulation, i.e. generally more flexible, non-holistic historiographic approaches, semiotic continuations of the prewar cultural studies: hermeneutic, pragmatic and constructivist theories as well as formulations deriving from the theory of reception and new historicism.

Thus the initial group of questions poses the problem of historicity, including its gradually formulated assumption of rupture and continuity as well as its influence upon the problem of periodization itself, and the various approaches to literary studies. The origin of historicity, a relatively new concept breaking the notion of the prominent cycles of eternal recurrence, can be traced back to the Renaissance and exemplified by the writings of Giorgio Vasari (Uhlig 1987: 6). Nevertheless, the first true "histories," even well into the eighteenth century, concentrated on establishing an absolute point of reference. This stable, absolute reference enabled comparative studies to conceive of the different realizations in particular epochs and periods in terms of varied relations to the ideal. Thus till Winckelmann's *Geschichte der Kunst im Altertum* and the idea of *beau relatif* (Jauss 1984: 259), the histories tended to produce recurrently self-destructive schemes by placing ahistorical concepts (or antihistorical) within the sphere of the historical.[2] Even Winckelmann's *beau relatif* succeeded neither in eradicating the concept of aesthetic norm established for a given epoch nor, as a consequence, in abandoning the questions concerning the *telos* of an epoch, or the history's goal. Historical narration in the nineteenth century suffered from the illusion created by Romantic historicism (Jauss 1984: 226) but at the same time employed the characteristic techniques of fiction which follows the Aristotelian principles of plot. E.g. it assumed the existence of a definite beginning and an absolute end. Therefore, a historian in the guise of an omniscient narrator formulated the story of an epoch by following a hidden idea. He bestowed meaning upon dispersed phenomena and thus gradually approached a moment of homogeneity, the *telos*. The same is reflected in attempts at genetic explanation referring to the beginnings, or to the origin, and suffering from the plight of any "complete" image when treated as reality. The monistic explanatory model dominates over both Marxist variants and *Geistesgeschichte*, no matter whether they describe history or prehistory (governed by incident, poses – as its *telos* – history which, in turn, is already dominated by a premediated idea; Manuel 1965: 5).

Fichte's theory seems to be particularly representative of the nineteenth-century German philosophy. Here, history is conceived as a series of logically arranged periods, "the unfolding of a plan, the development of

[2] On *Geschichte der Kunst im Altertum* cf. Tatarkiewicz 1968, II: 207-208.

something akin to the plot of a drama" (Collingwood 1966: 106). The logical quality of historical process solves the problem of periodization as each of the instalments becomes the embodiment of an idea capable of generating its opposite. Hence the change from feudalism to absolute rule, or the passage from the aesthetic code of the Renaissance to that of Mannerism or Baroque becomes a matter of purely logical consequence. In the light of these views a literary period gradually achieves the status of a real being as opposed to an intellectual concept of only a heuristic value, or a hypothesis.

The above assumptions lead to the acceptance of a certain unspecified compatibility between historical processes, viewed mainly in terms of social institutions or social consciousness, on the one hand, and artistic phenomena on the other. Though not for the first time, this nexus was most powerfully questioned by Wellek and Warren (1978: 262-265) and still remains theoretically unsolved because historians have not been able to agree upon a philosophy of history capable of including the various forms of human activity (Uhlig 1987: 10). Therefore, among contemporary historians, a unifying model appears to be even more remote than in the 1950s and 1960s when Arnold Hauser's magnificent social history was published.

The socio-historical approach which focuses on the renderings and reflections of reality in literary works seems to be, quite logically, inscribed into the concept of *mimesis*. Thus considering the previous statements on the principles of historical narration as subjected to the Aristotelian poetics, this approach should, at least theoretically, proceed by haunting mimetic renderings – already a kind of fiction – in terms of another, "historical," fiction. Accordingly, an establishment of the semantic domains of such terms as *Baroque* and *Mannerism* implies that the concept of a represented reality is formulated in the course of a definite historical reconstruction subjected to a particular philosophy of history as well as to a definite poetics of writing literary history. As there appears the possibility of numerous hypothetically assumed realities reflected in a literary text the apparently monolithic concept seems to dissolve into a plethora of variants. This renders the problem of compatibility even more complex. On the other hand, if the historico-philosophical mimesis is applied to the analysis of literary texts, it imposes not only its mimetic image, or an alien form of narration, but also its specific philosophical or historical functions, possibly leaving behind the proper literary uses of the concept. Hence the danger of a particular reductionism, resulting from the effect of historical homogeneity, should be taken into consideration. Apparently, this very strong historiographic tradition allows for a very limited autonomy of literary studies.

Another approach to literary history appeared in the latter part of the nineteenth century as a reaction to the late Romantic treatment of fine arts and literature as subordinated to a certain transcendental idea. Under the influence

of methodological change in the sciences, the positivist scholars attempted to define a single work of art as *wissenschaftliches Material* (Jost 1971: 2-4), a substance investigated analogously to scientific material. As a result they prioritized the importance of biography and fact. Hence historiography was bound to follow the single accepted model of scholarly investigation by applying the methods of sciences, especially biology. They also propagated strict determinism (Kuderowicz 1983: 147-148). Evidently, this approach wiped out the differences between the sciences and humanities as well as deprived the latter of their relatively independent status. The lasting achievements of this tendency were publications of sources, source material stories and lexicons (Jost 1971: 3). This approach, perhaps a reaction against the broad historical generalizations, offered no space for discussing the concept of literary periods contenting itself with a search for parallel motifs and biographical details easily enclosed in decades and other abstract, chronologically arranged sections. These endeavours illustrate the consequences of refuting any definite philosophy of historical investigation and therefore cherish the illusion of objectivism.

The 1880s and 1890s watched a varied reaction against both pseudo-objectivist methods and historical relativism, and encouraged the attempts to formulate the new grounds and principles of proper humanistic investigation. Wilhelm Dilthey's *Einleitung in die Geisteswissenschaften* was the first step to provide clear philosophical distinctions between the sciences and humanities by defining the difference as inherent in the very object of historical investigation.[3] As a consequence he also argued for the limitation of "determinism" to frequently recurrent phenomena. The only link between the two, now separated, fields of human activity and their respective methodologies was maintained by psychology (Tatarkiewicz 1968: 139-142).

Dilthey's earlier works contain three essential aspects pertinent to the further development of the idea of periodization. It was a proposition of an analysis and classification of statements characteristic of the humanities. First, Dilthey distinguished statements concerning facts already discovered and confirmed by historical investigation; second, laws and rules from these facts and, third, valuating systems or norms absent in the sciences. Due to the third group it was possible to include statements which were not directly derived from the substance. In terms of this approach, the positivist literary studies operated mainly on the first level and, partly, on the second by providing classifications. Nevertheless they never reached the level proper for humanistic investigation and remained in the sphere of *Naturwissenschaften*. The above summary follows Dilthey's views. However, at present, this formulation would

[3] Originally published in 1883. A contemporary edition was published in 1958/1963 by G. B. Teubner (see References). Some fragments were published by Z. Kuderowicz in his *Dilthey*, Warszawa: PWN, 1967.

not prevent a controversy questioning, for example, the status of the period/style concept as belonging to the third group of statements. If not granted the status of explanatory category, it can be reduced to a means of classification. The second aspect recognized such concepts as chronology, order of appearance or any kind of continuity as vital to sciences. On the other hand, it argued for the structural nature of the rules in the humanities. The last aspect refers to the epistemological grounds of the respective forms of investigation: (1) In case of scientific studies Dilthey applies the term *cognition*, implying their extrinsic character as reflected, for example, in the use of symbols. (2) In humanistic studies, the epistemological process is described as *understanding* and is supposed to denote an unmediated insight, an approach "from inside" (Tatarkiewicz 1968: 140-141). The last assumption encourages, once again, doubt as to the explanatory value of such an investigation and seems to have been reflected in the controversy over criticism and scholarship.

According to Dilthey, the psychic structure underlying any cultural activity in a given epoch becomes the aim of historical reconstruction. And thus Dilthey's philosophy facilitates a more autonomous study of art and literature, also in terms of epochs and periods. As a result there appear studies using such terms as *Baroque Lebensstil*, *Baroque Sensibility*, and the *Baroque Man*. For example, Nikolaus Pevsner in his *Beiträge zur Stilgeschichte des Früh- und Hochbarock* (1928) tried to reduce artistic, ideological and political phenomena to a set of features which he labelled as *Lebensstil*. Hence the homogeneity of a style derived from a common *Lebensgefühl* which differentiated a given style from that of the preceding and the following periods. What is more, it assumed that, despite differing world views and varying artistic forms, the greatest representatives of a given period were affected by this common sensibility. Even if quite unexpectedly, this approach encouraged the formation of a monolithic period concept in peculiar psychological terms. E.g. Carl Friedrich's *The Age of the Baroque 1610-1660* is based on the Hobbesian thesis which states that "The life of man is a restless desire for power after power, unto death" (Białostocki 1959: 231). The same quotation is used by Jadwiga Sokołowska in her 1978 collection of essays on Baroque literature in Europe and entitled *The Two Infinities*. The Hobbesian belief in continuous struggle underlies her interpretation of Christopher Marlow's *Dr Faustus* as a Baroque tragedy (1978: 232). Evidently, a set of features constituting such a Baroque sensibility should not be assumed *a priori* and is usually abstracted from the given artefacts as well as from literary, historical and philosophical works in order to be projected on other works and serve as methodological instruments for their analysis. Therefore, quite logically, the entailing problems consist in the choice of these works. It was observed by Wolfgang Stechow (1955: 171-173), for example, that such a term might be reliable only when based on the leading artists whom he considers as most representative.

This proposition generates further consequences. First, even if not openly arbitrary, the choice of a representative work or artist may be difficult and confusing as it has been frequently proved in the course of the discussion on metaphysical poetry as either Baroque or Mannerist. Such a choice is likely to involve evaluation and thus touches upon the vast problem of historical relativism versus universal, absolute aesthetic norms. There arises the question whether the choice depended on categories derived from the surrounding historical texts, their contemporary reception, the historian's preference, general consensus among scholars and critics or some universal values. Second, the choice of representative works and authors may lead to the establishment of a concrete pattern instead of a set of species. Certain artefacts and literary figures already became typical examples: the Jesuit church in Rome (il Gesù), the Jesuit poetics as well as the poetry of Richard Crashaw in England, Calderon in Spain and Andrzej Morsztyn in Polish literature.[4] At the same time there arises the problem of an outstanding artist and his status. It is possible to follow Stechow and to assume that the greatest were at the same time the representative ones, and thus propose them as paradigms of a certain sensibility. In such terms, however, it is difficult to imagine either individuality or genius. Besides, there remains the question whether the greatest transgress boundaries or fit perfectly into scholarly models. On the other hand, the choice of a safely representative poet, such as Crashaw, may lead to a considerable narrowing of a style/period concept to the style of an individual, often second-rate, poet. Third, the division into time sections is no longer that arbitrary and therefore the danger of a rigidly monolithic concept of period, epoch or generation is less frequent.

There still remains the problem of the rules of transition which on the grounds of Dilthey's earlier views were defined as governed by changes in psychic structure and therefore had to be defined as irrational and unpredictable. Towards the end of his life Dilthey tried to modify his views by abandoning the psychological aspect and by emphasizing the importance of hermeneutics, i.e. the role of the historico-cultural background which generates meaning to be discovered in a unifying system of norms and values, etc. (Kuderowicz 1983: 149). Instead of scientific determinism, there appeared its equally ambiguous cultural variant. Despite the later modifications, the contribution of Dilthey's concept essentially consists in offering a new methodological alternative to "pure historiography."

The following years watched a proliferation of anti-positivist attempts specifying the distinctions between sciences and humanities. Apart from a Neo-Fichtean (Rudolf Eucken) school, a Neo-Kantian school represented by

[4] One of the first transpositions concerning the term 'Baroque' was attempted by E. Porębowicz in his *Andrzej Morsztyn przedstawiciel baroku w poezji polskiej*, Kraków 1894. Cf. Białostocki 1959: 238.

Herman Cohen and Paul Natorp (Jost 1971: 5), there was the Badenian Neo-Kantian school with the main figures of Wilhelm Windelband and Heinrich Rickert. In *Die Grenzen der naturwissenschaftlichen Begriffsbildung*, usually referred to as *Kulturwissenschaft und Naturwissenschaft*, Rickert promoted the use of intellectually formulated concepts (Tatarkiewicz 1968, III: 140 ff.). They were formulated in opposition to Dilthey's use of psychology and his idea of "understanding humanities." He also departed from the historico-psychological relativism of his predecessor by posing a set of absolute values, encoded in the human mind, and thus establishing the evaluation of historical phenomena.

On these grounds the studies of art and literature, up to now separately pursued, could have been considered synthetically as parts of *Kulturwissenschaft*. In the following years the concept encouraged a considerable departure from empirical studies, as well as from individual works, and stimulated the use of synthetic concepts by introducing the idea of systematic culture, such as *culture* itself, national spirit (*nationale Wesenheit*), stylistic unity, etc. These ideas provided the philosophical roots of transpositions and comparative studies including the much later formulation concerning the mutual illumination of arts: namely the 1917 paper on the "Wechselseitige Erhellung der Künste. Ein Beitrag zur Würdigung kunstgeschichtlicher Begriffe" by Oskar Walzel published in 1923, as well as the 1916 application proposed by F. Strich (1976: 244-262). This synthetic approach to culture generated the need to elucidate the idea of period as a cultural unit embracing the whole of the artistic activity as well as stimulated questions concerning processes within this complex. This controversy is currently viewed as reduced to the simplified dualism of typology and historicism (or *Geistesgeschichte*), of style versus period.

The approach, often labelled as typological, concentrated on the analysis of structure and style, which does not necessarily imply the immediate absence of history. First of all, its sources go back to the antipositivist neo-idealism, rejecting all references to milieu; it shares, to a certain extent, Rickert's demand of intellectually defined concepts. However, secondly, it draws also upon Dilthey's use of psychology as, e.g., expressed in A. Riegl's *Stilfragen* where it amounts to a mixture of *Kunstwollen* modified by the objective concept of a *Darstellungsform*.[5] *Kunstwollen* is defined as a subjective creative potentiality or energy (vaguely specified). *Darstellungsform* is an *a priori* formulated idea, independent of any external influence and capable of shaping individual perception. Thus according to Riegl all works of art can be sequenced in terms of their passage from the *haptic* to the *optic* and thus such a history of artefacts consists in an idealistic causality, a series of forms generated by the *Kunstwollen* of individual artist (Torbicka 1982: 51-53).

[5] On A. Riegl and his *Stilfragen* cf. Tatarkiewicz 1968, III: 394.

As Riegl refuses to recognize any relation between forms provided by the already existing non-artistic material patterns, the stylistic ideals must be abstracted from art itself and, therefore, some of its representatives must be acknowledged as model patterns. The choice of such a pattern is likely to depend on some abstract categories eliminating, as a result, either the outstanding or the average ones. Half a century later George Kubler in *The Shapes of Time: Remarks on the History of Things* (1970), tried to solve the same problem by specifying these categories and thus distinguished between *primary forms* and *replicas.*

A further purification of this formalist approach was proposed by Heinrich Wölfflin. Although initially a follower of Dilthey (as in his *Prolegomena zur einer Psychologie der Architektur*), in his mature works (esp. *Kunstgeschichtliche Grundbegriffe*, 1972), he totally abandoned the biographical aspect as well as any other links with the psychologically determined concept of style, or period, and thus promoted a *Kunstgeschichte ohne Namen.* Rejecting the idea of individual perception (or e.g. *Kunstwollen*), Wölfflin adopted Riegl's idea of the *optic* and maintained that each artist, so as each school, was limited by a certain type of perception (*Sehform*) which he did not specify as historically determined. Still, the set of categories established by Wölfflin and applied in his *Renaissance and Baroque* implied change and a kind of historicity. And so the passage from Renaissance to Baroque appeared in terms of the five pairs of opposite categories: linear versus painterly, flatness versus recession, closed versus open form, absolute clarity versus blurred clarity, and multiple unity versus unified unity (Wölfflin 1972: 46-48).[6]

Wölfflin's concept illustrates the unresolved problem of what is often labelled as typology, on the one hand, and historicity on the other. This typology derives from the need of intellectually formulated categories, i.e. from the need to create a "science of literature" as opposed to an alien methodology imported from psychological and sociological studies. The new categories were supposed to be inherent in works of art and abstracted for the sake of generalizations. The difference between the earlier views and the mature publications is marked by an even more decisive attempt to establish the autonomous status of cultural studies by differentiating them from the purely historical investigation. As a result, history was subjected to abstract categories and was conceived of as a passage from one intellectual configuration to another, from one concept of perception to its opposite. On the one hand, such a concept of history seems to be in many ways deficient since the subsequent periods appear as homogeneous blocks offering no space for transition. On the other hand, due to their general character, Wölfflin's categories were soon adapted by other scholars who, in contradistinction to their author, were

[6] Cf. Podlacha 1962: 16 ff.

inclined to place them within various ideological contexts and, as a result, deprived them of their original value. Somewhat analogous tendencies, in the field of literary studies were expressed in the 1920s by one of the Russian formalists, Tynianov (Mitosek 1983: 208-210). He concentrated on purely literary categories and on the linguistic structure of a literary work. Wölfflin also tried to investigate the language of art at a given time by creating an equally abstract terminology. Contrary to art history, the formalist endeavours did not prove very inspiring to historical poetics. Therefore, sixty years later, in his *Introduction to Poetics* (1981), Todorov concluded briefly: "Let us say that it is difficult to deal with it for a moment, in the absence of distinct works that would prepare the ground: having sought for so long to absorb the neighbouring disciplines, literary history today figures as a poor relation: historical poetics is the least elaborated sector of poetics" (p. 63). Although both Tynianov and, much later, Todorov accepted the existence of styles and periods, the concepts remained confined to the theoretical works and were only vaguely specified.

By maintaining the autonomous status of the new approach, Wölfflin offered an extremely attractive theoretical basis for comparative studies. And thus transpositions of the categories were attempted by several scholars, notably by Oskar Walzel and Fritz Strich. Potentially, Wölfflin's concept was very close to what New Criticism ment to literary studies. However, quite paradoxically and despite the declaration proclaiming the independence of the new method, it was already Walzel who reintroduced the concept of history as a history of ideas by referring to Dilthey's sequence of *Weltanschauung* types, i.e. *objective idealism, poetic realism,* and *subjective realism* (expressionism), (Jost 1971: 26). Although Strich (1976) relied on the recurrence of Wölfflin's "open" and "closed" forms, he expanded the meaning of these categories by considering them as derived from the almost metaphysical ur-polarity inherent in the *Geist* rather than from historical experience. At the same time the spatial categories were transformed into, or compared to, temporal categories of the finite versus infinity and thus became also reminiscent of the early Diltheyan psychological concept (1976: 245 ff.).

Instead of focusing on formal analysis, the further investigations refused to follow the principles of an empirical approach and pursued either the existential or the expressionistic tendencies. As a consequence, the originally aesthetic categories were absorbed by the overwhelming spiritual-existential-psychological concepts and led to a complete dissolution of meaning. The principle of the mutual illumination was discredited and instead of providing concrete examples of interrelations, there appeared the tendency to formulate the ambiguous *Weltbegriff.* And thus, as if in a vicious circle, cultural studies returned to their point of departure, i.e. to history of literature. The new history of literature no longer followed the positivist idea of collecting data but concentrated on discovering the dominating spiritual tendency of a given

epoch. Hence style/periods had to be conceived in terms of autonomous spiritual constructs. Such an all-embracing concept of the spiritual usually amounts to a cluster of political, philosophical and religious ideas, and therefore departs from either Neo-Kantian or Hegelian concepts of history. The essential feature of this macroscopic approach derives from a complete homogeneity of a given epoch, e.g. all phenomena including artistic, political, religious or simply human activities are labelled as Baroque. Furthermore, the typologically defined "epochs" are considered as inherent in the human spiritual *predispositions* and hence recurrent.

In terms of *Geistesgeschichte* period/style concepts appear as spiritually defined totalities and as such are bound to face specific consequences. By analogy to the Renaissance – Medieval idea of a chain of beings, the notion of style/period assumes the status of a real being as opposed to a scholarly concept or hypothesis. Hence, from the viewpoint of the Kantian differentiation between constitutive and regulative ideas this concept of a period/style belongs to the former. All the phenomena embraced by a given period are bound to partake in its spiritual essence. Such a metaphysical concept prevents change, does not admit either proper antecedence or transition and, what is more, concentrates on relations directed towards a single central idea which, paradoxically, should be present in every phenomenon of a given epoch. Thus the extreme case of *Geisteswissenschaft* verges on the absurd idea of restricting the relations of an artefact to the single one, consisting in the reference to its own spiritual essence, shared with the "spirit" of the style/period. Such a concept is also far removed from both historical and cultural contexts, which results in the possibility of a practically infinite expansion of its boundaries. For example, Herbert Cysarz's German Gothic, Baroque and Romanticism melt into one period transcended by the German spirit of a "total Renaissance" (Jost 1971: 18, 23, 27). The applicability of thus formulated concepts is more than debatable.

In the 1930s, as a reaction against both the overgeneralizations and the metaphysically oriented *Geistesgeschichte*, there appeared another proposition for defining the period/style category, which already looked forward to the postwar times. Benno von Wiese's critique was part of a broader movement towards a reevaluation of the positivist empirical studies with their focus on facts, parallelism of motifs and stylistic devices, towards historicism or even a chronologically-oriented study in terms of generations. According to Wiese, period categories should be defined as regulative ideas, as opposed to the constitutive ideas, and thus incapable of assuming a metaphysical status (Wiese 1933: 138-145). Such a notion of period could not be reduced to either a static form of classification or to an absolute essence. The indisputable advantage of this proposition was the possibility of a dynamically conceived process. And so the various subsequent attempts at materializing a value system were

considered as responsible for change in literary history. Unfortunately, Wiese's discussion does not tackle the peculiar aspects of literary periods and therefore remains a mere theoretical option to be picked up almost fifty years later by a moderate constructivist, Baumgartner (1976: 277). In his opinion history itself emerges as an exclusively regulative idea as opposed to something either objective or real. To a certain extent, René Wellek's study on "Periods and Movements in Literary History" (1940) seems to follow the above mentioned prewar concept. Literary history amounts to the uncovering of a hidden system of norms and values pursued in the course of history. As a result, categorization into periods achieves its peculiar status to be differentiated from either a metaphysical essence or a pure theoretical concept. Such a definition also accounts for its ephemeral though dynamic character, encourages the investigation of individual works and thus looks forward to the postwar microscopic trends in literary theory. On the other hand, however, Wellek's proposition remains very general and elusive because it fails to specify the nature of the preassumed value systems.

The postwar period/style controversy tends to develop into several directions. Most studies concerned with the broad cultural concepts, such as Baroque or Mannerism, follow the previously formulated methodological principles arriving, occasionally, at a reassessment concerning specific definitions of style periods. This tendency can be observed, especially after the true advent of Mannerism related to the Amsterdam exhibition of Mannerist art in the 1950s as well as to the following spate of publications. Nevertheless, from a methodological point of view, even the more theoretical studies seem to be rather nostalgic. It is now the confinement to the microscopic studies which becomes the prevailing perspective.

Having sought for so long to formulate the language of literary science on the basis of either empirical history, philosophy or a variously defined cultural context, the postwar historical literary studies lose ground in favour of the analysis of individual works inspired by hermeneutics. The anti-holistic acceptance of plurality and "piecemeal" approaches becomes an essential aspect of the present situation (Uhlig 1984: 247-248). What follows is a shift of interest and a replacement of such concepts as "substance" or as the nineteenth-century tradition of *wissenschaftliches Material* by concepts rejecting objectivity and completeness in favour of relativism. As a consequence the task of a historian can be conceived as a pursuit of timeless values – whether aesthetic, moral or philosophical – inherent in autonomous, isolated literary works, but rather as an *interrelation* of various contexts or texts.

Later on, the discourse of literary historiography itself can be perceived as segmented. This results from the growing plurality of contributing subdiscourses (Ort 1985: 322-323). They trace the interrelations between the variously defined systems as well as follow their own pace of evolution, or

change. The formalist discourse, for example, focuses on the self-regulating quality of literature and elects a number of works as dominant, i.e. those that converge with the general culture as an encompassing system. The rather mechanistic model, stressing "the survival of the fittest" appears to be vaguely reminiscent of its analogue in the macroscopic approach, i.e. Kubler's theory of prime forms and replicas. The assumed convergence with general culture, on the one hand, and the alienated self-regulating literary system, on the other, are hardly compatible. Hence, from the point of view of periodization it does not provide any promising insights. Structuralism, as another option, departs from the empirical reality and focuses on relations including a phenomenological model in what is described as the "consciousness of a collectivity," "thought" or an "ideal type" present in the process of perception and modified by the *humanistic factor* (Okoń 1988: 10-13). This concept encourages interdisciplinary studies on the grounds of an analogy between the sequences of verbal signs: thought (ideal type) versus the designate, on the one hand, and iconic sign – type of perception and the designate on the other. In terms of signs, both literature and artefacts can be treated as subjected to analogous analysis. Hence the problem of transition is likely to be approached in terms of a passage from one text to another or, rather, from one intersection of texts to another. Still, the principles of transition as well as the concrete ways in which texts are affected by the position in the flux of change remain unspecified. In the end, although structuralism presumes the existence of history, it often uses spatial and metaphorical categories such as poliperspectivism, decentralization as well as the horizontal/vertical polarity. It also tends to discuss the more "literary" aspects of the artefacts, such as motifs and narration. Another, perhaps paradoxical feature of both methods is their shifting aim: microscopic by assumption but macroscopic in the essential movement towards the highly integrative systems. This is also true of system theories and constructivist proposals reducing history to fiction. Again, while both concentrate on eclosing and subsuming literature under complex structures, the problems of transition remain beyond the complicated and segmented vision of the interrelated discourses. None of the above surveyed models investigates the status of literature as an essentially historical phenomenon, i.e. a manifold temporal experience.

The theories discussed above remain safely between the rigidly established poles of the micro- and macroscopic polarity. Some of them are more interested in historical processes, other concentrate on the analysis of single works as leading towards more reliable generalizations. None of them, however, questions the ontological status of the investigated object and the epistemological right to truth. Eventually, the most changeable component seems to be the methodology. Still, even in this respect, the striving at a kind of unity – an absolute point of reference whether in psychological, social, chrono-

logical or metaphysical terms – remains prominent. The following, more recent, propositions differ from the preceding concepts precisely in those three rudimentary aspects: they question the ontological status of their subject, they doubt not only the accessibility of truth but also the necessity of pursuing it, and thirdly, unity becomes – at the most – a marginal aim. This radical change in the theory of history did not appear that rapidly. Its roots vary and the number of contributors is considerable. The possibility of formulating a non-monolithic period/style concept can be derived already from the Kantian regulative ideas discarding the set of absolute values and locating it beyond human historiographic discourse. This idea was picked up already by Benno von Wiese but soon postponed due to the overwhelming influence of *Geistesgeschichte*. Several scholars focused on the actual historiographic process and its relation to the studied object. Already Bergson observed that the present contains the past and therefore it is more justifiable to speak about temporal interpenetration than about the unity of a chronological order and the clarity of chronological demarcations (Collingwood 1966: 187-189). Likewise, he questioned both the cause-effect determination and the treatment of the past as a mere spectacle. Such a formulation affects not only the internal structure of any established unit but also destroys the comfortable distance between the "spectacle" and the historian. As a result, historiography becomes involved in its object of investigation; hence, the belief that historiography reveals or discovers the truth – an idea prevalent since the Middle Ages – seems no longer a dogma. These consequences inherent in Bergson's thesis, open new and fairly diverse possibilities for historiographic reflection.

The English historian, R. C. Collingwood, who adopted a pragmatic attitude towards the complexities of the past-present relations, concedes that the "reals," i.e. what really happened, are not avaliable. Accordingly, the historian faces incomplete evidence and proposes its interpretation without any claim to truth. Hence, historiography appears as a reenactment of past experience in the mind, or in the thought, of a historian. As a consequence: "Every period of which we have competent knowledge (and by competent knowledge I mean insight into its thought, not mere acquaintance with its remains) appears in the perspective of time as an age of brilliance: the brilliance being the light of our own historical insight" (Collingwood 1966: 282-283). The above quotation illustrates not only the mechanism of subjective, if not arbitrary, evaluation but also the distance growing between the so-called facts and the products of historiography.

In 1959, Helen Gardner wrote on the historical approach and the difficulty of asking proper historical questions (1976: 383-384). The text, although very moderately, is already inspired by the new concepts and therefore, on the one hand, acknowledges the applicability or usefulness of literary epochs but, on the other, recognizes their provisional and hypothetical status. Following the

new approach, Helen Gardner defines epochs as constructions, products of our imagination feeding on the relics of the past, fragmentary sources of information and often hasty generalizations.

Both Collingwood's theoretical proposition and the application to literary studies proposed by Helen Gardner prove a definite departure from the naïvely reconstructive approach. Certain concepts, regarded as essential to historiographic discourse, disappear or are substituted by different ones, reflecting a general tendency towards partialness, perspectivity, relativity and finally, constructivity. In the nineteenth century, the old term 'chronology' was gradually eliminated due to dialectics, both in its idealistic and materialistic version. At present dialectics – as an absolutist, totalizing vision of historical process – loses ground in favour of mediation, a somewhat subtler concept introduced by H. G. Gadamer in his *Truth and Method*, especially in the logic of question and answer (1975: 325-344). Gadamer regards dialogue as a proper historiographic method. This dialogue is a kind of mediation between past and present. The past is represented by the various remaining relics which are generally defined as texts and answers. Accordingly, the task of a historian is to investigate the questions prior to the existing texts (answers) and embedded in their structure. However, the historian himself is not a free objective scholar as the historical horizon embraces not only the historians-questioners but also the past to which they respond. Hence Hans Georg Gadamer emphasizes the importance of tradition and the phenomenon of fusing horizons. To sum up, real understanding includes *our* comprehension of the so-called historical past. From this point of view, a literary period emerges as a fusion of our present historiographic reflection, aesthetic views or even scholarly competence, on the one hand, and a dynamically conceived horizon on the other. The influence of Gadamer's theory is implicit in the contemporary theory of reception as represented by H. R. Jauss. Instead of the old essence or the central idea, H. R. Jauss suggests a reconstruction (or construction – as it was proved by Gadamer on the example analysis of the Battle of Trafalgar) of questions hidden behind historical accounts of reception. Such a reconstruction of a question was attempted several years later by Helen Gardner in reference to *Hamlet* (Gardner 1976: 384-396). In terms of the aesthetics of reception, a literary epoch is distinguished in the course of eliciting a referential system, superior to the synchronically arranged instances of reception.

The novelty of the contemporary approaches does not rely on a sudden, naïve discovery of the existence of a historiographic theory, previously referred to as the philosophy of history or – more recently – the "science" of the humanities, but in the recognition of its interference and significant presence in any historiographic discourse. They also increase our awareness of the extent to which the space between any historian and his object is filled with a complexity of assumptions; finally, the object itself appears as ephemeral as opposed to a solid "real being."

Some of the most recent and radical views on historiography were expressed by the constructivists (Rusch 1985; Glaserfeld 1981). Their views are most efficiently summarized from the epistemological point of view: the world itself is as we experience it and man is reduced to an *autopoietic* (self-making) cognitive system with his historiographic activities bound to the need of intellectual constructions (analogous to the telling of myths and stories; Rusch 1985: 265-267). The constructivists seem to draw upon Lévi-Strauss, Collingwood, Gadamer and even Jauss. They assume the necessity of forming macrostructural cognitive units and they accept the criterion of plausibility and relative coherence. They differentiate between history to which the above criteria do not apply and stories (closed forms) for which they are relevant and in terms of which history is rendered. From the constructivist view "there are no arguments – based on the nature of the past – that would speak for or against a specific type of historiography, e.g. a history of crowned heads or a history of literary motifs, stylistic principles, etc." (Rusch 1985: 275). All of them, including the very concept of time, become totally self-referential intellectual constructions. As intellectual constructions, closed narrative forms, they meet different criteria of evaluation, such as internal coherence, or even scholarly consensus, as opposed to any absolute truth (or reference to reality). They are experiments, hypothetical propositions, played upon the mosaic of facts and relics.[7]

As a result many studies focus on the problem of historical narration itself as well as on the mutual interrelations between literary narrative structures and historical narratives (Hillis-Miller 1974: 456-460). Assuming a kind of analogy between the two types of narrative, it is suggested that a historian should start with the construction of present first (Bürger 1985: 202). Drawing upon Sartre's *La Nausée* Bürger, for example, rises the question of whether there is a possibility of writing history, which is not determined by its end. However, even if this strictly teleological determinism is eradicated, still another option reveals a possible shape of the absolute referent – the determinism of a traditional plot and its mechanisms. A certain remedy may be provided by the modern concepts avoiding deterministic narratives and constructing models in which an author may need a whole book to describe the contingencies of one day. Once again it occurs that the constructivist approach, in its radical form, leads either to a cool and scientific instrumentalism of an experimenter or to an unavoidably manifold history, concentrating on some narrowly conceived histories, e.g. a history of the function of a given genre at a definite time. To conclude, the constructivists consider completeness as a conservative gesture of saving values – corresponding to the narrative of a traditional pseudo-objective genre. What is more, any historical narration is supposed to clash with the very

[7] Cf. Białostocki 1973, I: 186 ff.

principle of completeness. Problems which remain somehow beyond constructivist reflection concern change, continuity, transition, i.e. the temporal and dynamic aspects of historiography.

As if on the margin of constructivist endeavours, several recent publications, both in the fields of the theory of literary history and philosophy, regard *human time* as the foundation of historic consciousness and propose to ground literary history in the ontic temporality of texts. The following model based upon K. Pomian's *L'Ordre de temps* argues that texts are embedded in time in a manifold manner as past and future inform the presence of literary texts in a double sense: (1) the past may surface intertextually in the present through allusions and quotations (in a very broad sense), whereby a stratum of residual meaning is pointed to; (2) the past may be present as latency which is actualized in the "future": (a) a utopian mode of existence, (b) a potentiality hidden from the contemporary readers and to be eventually discovered in the future (Uhlig 1987: 15).

Evidently, this "chronographic" approach is not entirely new as it follows the Kantian belief in time as the primary condition of human experience as well as the essential mode of existence of a literary work. Hence, to a certain degree, it departs from the radical constructivist concept of time as a purely intellectual construction. Neither does it conceive of time as merely adhesive and connecting the items of experience. The somehow analogous idea of actualization, i.e. of a "growing" literary work, was already developed by Jauss in his theory of reception. Thus what the proposition does seem to offer is, in fact, a return to the past as the essential mode – as the present of a literary work (the constructivists tend to build the present first) and the main referent in historiographic discourse.

The idea of the fourfold temporality of a literary text does not necessarily render the task of a literary historian easier. Yet, as with most contemporary concepts, it avoids the temptation to make neat, though illusory, epochal and textual demarcations. Change, according to the above proposition, can be perceived in terms of individual works and their various immersions in a relativised time. The flexible image of transition, marked by the passage from chronology to chronography, may account for certain aspects of the Renaissance – Mannerism – Baroque controversy. Still, as the authors admit, the remaining problem is the extent to which temporality can by translated into the stratigraphy of a literary text.

To conclude: "What is a literary period?" or, rather, "What remains from the myth of a literary period today?" Certainly, facing the plurality of opinion, it can no longer be conceived as a metaphysical unit – no matter whether it is defined in religious, sociological or historiographic terms. With the exception of (1) the traditional research (Ziomek 1986: 23-32) based on value hierarchies, (2) the belief in change as development, and (3) a whole list of more specific

categories, the avant-garde of literary historians as well as theoreticians of history assume the acceptance of plurality and diversity as the primary task of any historian.

In the search for scholarly consensus, history emerges as either an unspecified flow of events, thoughts, aesthetic views, intellectual constructions, etc. – thus widening the distance between past and present by filling it with a separating complexity and by deferring interrelations; or as a projection of the presence upon the past. In the latter case it results in a diminished or almost non-existent distance between the historian and his object. The fusing horizons enclose the historian and his object with the present of the former. In both cases the emphasis is on the piecemeal and the manifold. The interrelations between the present and the past as well as between the synchronically arranged texts must be very carefully negotiated. To negotiate, means to avoid any search for an untranslatable essence (Greenblatt 1988: 5-9); a particularly tempting option in comparative studies, notably in epoch or style-oriented research. At the expense of another holistic rendering there, again, appears an attempt to investigate what is left beyond the totalizing vision of a chain of beings.

Hence, considering the new approaches, the domain of style/epoch terms emerges as considerably limited, especially when compared to their hitherto ascribed descriptive and explanatory status. At the same time, the more recent studies allow for a much more flexible application of the previously authoritative and totalizing visions. The new historiographic methodologies accept incompleteness, partialness and fragmentation in style/epoch research as a necessary concomitant to the unavoidability of scholarly falsification.

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POLITICS, IDEOLOGY AND REALITY IN J. G. FARRELL'S EARLY NOVELS

Before turning to the historical themes which most fully display his creative imagination, James Gordon Farrell (1935-1979) wrote three novels with contemporary settings. *A Man From Elsewhere* (1963), *The Lung* (1965) and *A Girl in the Head* (1967) all deal with contemporary issues. Although artistically weaker than the Empire Trilogy, they anticipate many of its formal and thematic concerns. Some of these have been noted by the critics: Farrell's representation of characters, his historical and political interests and his use of various cultural codes all link the first novels to *Troubles*, *The Siege of Krishnapur* and *The Singapore Grip*.[1]

However, other aspects of Farrell's later fiction can also be discerned in the earlier writings. Already in the first novels we see Farrell exploring social mechanisms and the relations between individuals and their environments. *A Man From Elsewhere*, like *Troubles*, presents reality through the personal experience of the protagonists and combines a profound sensitivity to period and place with a wide-ranging intellectual curiosity. The settings of *A Man From Elsewhere*, *The Lung* and *A Girl in the Head* may not be historical, but Farrell's manner of registering the spatial and temporal backgrounds of his characters, and the relation between individual life and external reality, adumbrates his later approach to history in the Empire Trilogy. Despite all other differences between the early and the historical novels, this connection seems to be much too important to be ignored.

A Man From Elsewhere is a political novel whose action is set against a contemporary background.[2] The crucial conflict between the main characters, Regan and Sayer, reflects the dispute between different political groups

[1] Bergonzi 1980: 57; Binns 1986: 36; Winnifrith 1983: 290.
[2] I. Howe (1967: 19) defines the political novel as "a novel in which political ideas play a dominant role or in which the political milieu is the dominant setting. Yet, it must also absorb into its stream of movement the hard and perhaps insoluble pellets of modern ideology."

and philosophers common for the 1960s. Since both Regan and Sayer represent certain ideological standpoints characteristic of the period in the sense that they were real contending forces at work, one is tempted to treat their dispute as representative of the French political scene of the early sixties. Besides, their argument "in part echoes the famous quarrel between Sartre and Camus after the publication of *The Rebel* in 1951"[3] when Camus disagreed with Sartre's attempt to fuse Marxist ideas with Existential philosophy. Since in *A Man From Elsewhere* the stress is put on ideological and political considerations, Farrell uses the convention of the novel of ideas.[4] The novelist focuses on the background of the action and points to the fact that the reality in which the characters live is reflected in their personal fate because the protagonists are moulded by the issues of their times.

The depth of his problems and the broad treatment with which he presents them are stressed in the first sentences[5] when Farrell draws a broad perspective:

> It was early morning and the earth was revolving at a terrifying speed [...] And the world continued to revolve with terrifying speed as it circled the sun (ME: 15).

At the same time Farrell allows himself a comment on Paris, which is seen as "the cradle of civilization." This broad perspective quickly narrows to embrace the group of persons directly engaged in the action which is confined to a physically limited area of Regan's estate. This space, as in later novels, is closed, is a small enclave, but an enclave representative not only of the *dramatis personae*, for it soon becomes a microcosm representing the problems of a macrocosm.

This location has the power of evoking social and political ideas. Thus even though after the first few sentences Farrell changes the perspective from which he observes his chosen community, this narrowing is only an illusion since the world of Regan's estate is still typical of broader trends. Therefore this focalization helps to sharpen the point of view and to concentrate on a fragment which always remains representative of the broader forces at work. Against this background the conflicts of the fictional characters mirror the typical processes and express the typical ideas which they accept as their own. As Howe put it, one of the greatest, but also most rewarding, problems of a political novelist is "to make ideas or ideologies come to life, to endow them with the capacity for stirring characters into passionate gestures and sacrifices."[6]

[3] Binns 1986: 38; Edgley 1986: 256.

[4] Howe 1986: 19-25.

[5] J. Spurling (1982: 155) suggests that when Farrell turned to historical settings he did not change his attitude radically because "from the first page of his first novel he was aware of the long perspective."

[6] S. Sierotwiński, *Słownik terminów literackich*, Wrocław: Ossolineum, 1986: 189. According to him, a political novel, in the broad meaning of the term, is a kind of historical novel because the world presented gains historical character with the flow of time.

The action of *A Man From Elsewhere* takes place in France in the early sixties. Farrell presents the atmosphere and general trends of those years. He shows that it is the period of unrest and turmoil in Europe, a period of the cold war, of the "international crisis in Berlin which is likely to begin an atomic war" (ME: 27). In France the political situation is felt to be dangerous and since the Berlin crisis aggravates the international situation, "the President had called for an extension of military service" (ME: 48). At the same time the Algerian problem and the unrest in this colony on the eve of its liberation from French rule find their reflection in the novel. We learn that "explosions of plastic in Oran had caused several deaths and a number of wounded, besides considerable damage" (ME: 48). In order to keep hold of their colonies the French set up detention camps and torture people "to extract confessions"; "the hard faced army colonels and police manipulate doctrinal apparatus for torturing suspects with brown skins" (ME: 144). The Algerians are unpopular in France, racial prejudice is a common phenomenon and the general attitude is as follows: "give the scum their independence and clear them out of the country" (ME: 162).

In Europe and in France the Communist movement starts exerting broad influences. The Communist Party fights to strengthen its position and to gain power. Its members try to disgrace old capitalist mechanisms which govern society. They go to factories and organize meetings with the trade unions during which they explain Communist ideas and try to win new adherents to this ideology. However, there is great resistance to Communism because the workers, through the unions, are beginning to "receive the benefit that was due to them" (ME: 20).

Beside world-wide crises Farrell also presents smaller, local conflicts. There are troubles with the farmers in Provence because they block the roads to support Breton farmers who had gone on strike in order to guard the prices of food.

The action of the novel takes place sixteen years after World War II. In his novel Farrell mentions several military actions, recollects the collaboration of Vichy's government with Hitler, finally, interprets the Warsaw Uprising as an act of betrayal by the Red Army "which continued to wait passively on the other side of the Vistula" (ME: 118) until the insurgents had bled away. The inhabitants of Warsaw are seen as the unfortunate victims of circumstances" (ME: 119), totally subordinated to the wind of history: the Soviets did not help them because they were determined to impose Communism upon Poland.

Recent history presented in Farrell's work reaches back to the Spanish Civil War in which some of the protagonists, Communists in that period, took part. Thus it turns out that even though the novel has a contemporary setting, its historical background is emphasized, so that it is not a mere background of a contemporary novel. It rather stresses that *A Man From Elsewhere* is

a political and ideological work with numerous insights into contemporary and recent history. These historical and political events form the *Vorgeschichte* of the novel.

Apart from these political problems the novel presents the mood and atmosphere of the late fifties and early sixties in France. The period is dominated by Existentialist philosophy, by *nouvelle vougue* and the beginning of the students' revolt. As Farrell claims, the France of those days offers no positive values; instead it brings about general depression, a sense of the uncertainty of human existence and numerous threats. People feel uncertain, literature expresses the confusion of the writers and "the confusion of the time" (ME: 107). Society is in a state of disintegration because: "The old society was irrevocably shattered and the new one was unrecognizable" (ME: 107), being only "a nomad moving restlessly over the desert of cement" (ME: 107). In this society "the young people believed in nothing and had no aim or direction" (ME: 149).

The atmosphere of the period, general depression and senselessness are also evoked indirectly through the imagery. The novel is haunted by the images of rottenness, decay and death. The building of the Communist newspaper is permeated with the smell "of dampness and stale tobacco-smoke" (ME: 18). The dockside slums are "filthy" (ME: 42); „grimy streets" are sunk in "bitter night-fog." The country landscape is depressing, too. The vineyards appear "sickly and unfruitful" (ME: 43). A pasture land is "a barren wilderness of rocky ground covered with patches of dense scrub and wild lavender" (ME: 43). In parks leaves are "dead" (ME: 187). There is a great deal of illness and death which refers not only to the characters' health but also to the socio-political situation. As a result "the ambiance of Farrell's fictionalized France is that of a then fashionable ennui and despair."[7] People have "the lines of bitterness about the mouth" (ME: 47) and look at others with "ironic despair" and "coldness" (ME: 107). "Wounded silence" (ME: 103) falls during conversations. People feel threatened and uncertain. They want "time to stand still for a while" (ME: 138) or to "crawl back into a nice warm womb" (ME: 102); they crave for safety and peace.

Beside Existential philosophy the Communist ideology delineates the intellectual climate of the period. Communism in the novel is presented as a reaction against the reality of those days, especially against social inequalities. Already the first sentences stress the differences between the lives of the workers and the bourgeois. When the workers leave the factories early in the morning after the night shift

> once on the street [...] they would hesitate for a moment like dark, clumsy birds suddenly released from a cage... then they would take stock of their surroundings and hurry away with eager steps, anxious not to lose a moment of their temporary liberty. [At the same time the rich would wake up and] the rites of the day had been performed; the head of the family had been given his breakfast and ushered out of the house to work (ME: 15).

[7] Howe 1967: 23.

The descriptions of cities and people are dominated by contrasts: there is a strong division into social classes, their different ways of living, working and spending free time. Descriptions of this kind partly explain ideological convictions of the characters and provide them with real basis grounded in human lives. Sayer, the most devoted Communist in the novel, consolidates his philosophy when he watches

> the stream of giant buildings, factories, marshalling yards, and slag-heaps succeeding one another in a confusion of black, angry blocks against the melting, sugary sky. This was the price of the city's elegant, tree lined boulevards and graceful domes; these little communities which huddled around their factories and slag-heaps were the arteries which force blood into the beautiful, icy veins of the metropolis. This ugly crust was at the same time the source of the city's vitality and its epitaph (ME: 30).

The social, political, historical and ideological background, either shown directly or evoked indirectly, is presented in order to make the actions and attitudes of the protagonists convincing.

Discussions of the characters play a very important function in the presentation of general trends and the intellectual climate of the period. The characters present the assessment of socio-political reality from a variety of points of view. The shape of the future society, the direction of French Communism, philosophy, culture and art are vigorously debated by the protagonists. It can be seen that an attempt is made to show the views of the characters objectively: supporters of opposing ideologies have equal chances to express their standpoints. This technique, which derives from the novel of ideas, serves Farrell to present the multitude of opinions of his protagonists. Both Regan and Sayer express their views at length while they try to convince each other about their reasons. Regan's and Sayer's philosophies reach the readers directly from their utterances. Gerhardt's lecture on the role and functioning of the Communist Party (ME: 55) is counterbalanced by Regan's long exposition on Existentialism and rigorous individualism (ME: 98); Luc's ideas about society are juxtaposed to Sayer's views.

Farrell presents the past and the present, the social and political situation in a chaotic manner. These issues appear in the form of discussions, descriptions, radio reports, quotations from the press and diaries. This technique, as well as turning to the convention of the novel of ideas, is characteristic also of his future writing, in particular of *Troubles* and *The Singapore Grip*, where the novelist quotes from newspapers, speeches of politicians, scientific reports and history books. In *A Man From Elsewhere* the background is signalled rather than shown at length. Nevertheless, it is sufficiently representative and characteristic to mirror the broadest problems of that period.

In a manner characteristic of his later writing, Farrell makes several points about the relationship between the individuals and the period in which they

live. Thus he claims that individuals cannot separate themselves from the external reality, that independently of their attitudes and interests they will always be influenced by their times. Obviously, the range and scale of dependence on reality and history varies, yet it is always tangible. Some of the characters are directly conditioned by their reality: their way of thinking, views and behaviour are determined by the general situation, their individual experience coincides with and reflects the problems and atmosphere of the age. Regan is aware that his books "express his own confusion and the confusion of his times" (ME: 107).

The influence of reality upon individuals can be seen most clearly in the case of background characters who are under the influence of Existentialism. A young English actor, Simon Bowman, expresses the spirit of the times as his own credo in the following way: "It's hard to carry on when you don't believe in anything [...] when you know the next war will be the last and that there is sure to be a war" (ME: 57). Also Monique, the hotel girl, sees no future for herself, has no interests and leads a dull provincial life. She has no ambitions and when Luc asks her what she would like to do she answers: "Nothing, that's just it, there's nothing I'd like to do... now I don't care what I do" (ME: 168). Luc, the young writer, also feels threatened and confused in society because it exerts too many pressures on him with which he cannot cope. The general mood of depression and senselessness intoxicates and paralyzes him. Luc feels that he "becomes lost in futile arguments and debates" (ME: 116) and that he should give up the senseless, materialistic life which brings nothing but increasing dissatisfaction. He cannot control his life because things happen to him without his will. The result is that Luc is involved in nothing and in his mind there is "a great and terrifying silence" (ME: 168).

Members of this young generation, devoid of any aspirations, to which Gretchen also belongs, are a prey to senselessness and despair and spend their time on primitive entertainment. As Gretchen notices, the only thing that interests them is: "going to cafes, trying to look adult [...] picking girls. In turn girls try to make boys drool with desire for them" (ME: 87). They are a generation of morons. Gretchen believes that the young are hopeless because they are "all empty as paper bags and as worthless" (ME: 131).

In order to kill boredom and find an output for the aggression spontaneously growing in them, the teenagers indulge in acts of violence. This is the reason why they assault Gretchen and Sayer on the beach. In fact, Sayer understands their motives and comments:

> In a society where the young people believed in nothing and had no aim or direction it was perfectly natural that they should want to tear one another to pieces to pass the time (ME: 149).

Farrell also shows other ways in which reality exerts its influence upon individuals. The setting of *A Man From Elsewhere*, Provence, was not greatly affected by the war since it was a "sector of little strategic importance"

(ME: 174). Nevertheless, war remains a "living memory" because it has left many traces and influenced, sometimes radically, the lives of the characters. Regan is not accepted by the local community since some peasants still believe that he collaborated with the Germans.

In his novel Farrell presents still another group of protagonists who react differently to reality. Some characters want to separate themselves from the common experience of other people. Their attitudes and ways of thinking are individual, not infected by general trends. But such separation is not possible in the long run because, whether one wishes it or not, external reality automatically draws individuals into its course. Even against one's will, the external situation compels the individual to certain kinds of behaviour and to assume certain attitudes. Therefore people must fall in line with the trends of their days: they cannot live in a hermetic world of their own. Heinrich, the German commandant, exemplifies this kind of attitude. Even though he tried to confine his world to his interests – art, music and literature – war did not allow him to stand aside: "Heinrich found that this war, which he had hoped would pass by unnoticed, was being imposed more and more forcefully on him" (ME: 174). Soon reprisals and other brutal measures were ordered to deal with the Resistance in the occupied countries, and since the Resistance intensified their actions in this sector, he was forced by his superiors to carry out acts of violence and executions. Heinrich proves that when one is in the centre of a historical crisis one cannot take the position of an outsider.

Yet not all of Farrell's characters passively submit themselves to reality. Some of the protagonists want to participate in the events, feel responsible for what happens and try to create the world. Within this group of protagonists Farrell presents many variations. Serge, as a member of the French Resistance, was involved in many subversive actions of this movement during the war. As a member of an underground organization, he never boasted of his deeds. Besides, he did not participate in military actions but rather took part in repressions against those who sympathized with or helped the Germans. Due to the necessary secrecy of his activities, Serge's war record is not clear to everybody. Some people, Luc for example, even suspect him of low motives and call him

> a nasty character who died opportunely and thanks to his early demise did not have time to show most people how thoroughly nasty he was [...] If he had been alive today he'd probably have been leader of a gang of blousons noirs (ME: 96).

Later Luc adds that in the Resistance Serge only "liked playing with guns because not all of them have been noble heroes risking their lives for the Fatherland" (ME: 96).

But Serge was victimized by numerous fatal coincidences. History derided him – he lost his life not because he took part in the Resistance but because he insulted the German Commandant's mistress. Insulting Heinrich's beloved turned out far more dangerous than blowing up military tracks. This incident

proves how easy it is to be manipulated by various coincidences. Even when one wants to be active, one can never foresee and predict the results of one's deeds. By pure coincidence Serge was severely punished not for anti-German attitudes but for offending a person in love. Serge's death was neither historically nor politically motivated; on the contrary, it was only a private revenge.

Regan, Sayer and Gerhardt consciously and with a sense of responsibility try to control political processes. As Sayer claims, Regan "had been at the very centre of European history before the war, helping to make it rather than passively undergoing it" (ME: 121). Then he devoted himself entirely to "erecting the scaffolding of European Communism" and took part in the Spanish Civil War. But after World War II he radically changed his views and turned away from this ideology. Even though he retired to his hacienda, thus withdrawing from political life, he still remains an important public figure because, as a writer, he has the power of influencing people's attitudes. In Regan's view, it is his duty to guide society and "to warn of danger ahead and command, where necessary, a change of direction" (ME: 107). Now when he is fully aware that he can shape opinions, Regan decides to protest against Communism in a most radical way: he decides to die heroically so that his life would become a legend, and he would be remembered as a martyr to the rejection of Communism as an inadmissible philosophy.

On the other hand, his opponents, Sayer and Gerhardt, are still strongly devoted to this ideology. Gerhardt, as leader of the Communist party, stands in the very middle of historical trends. He has ambitious plans of changing the French political scene and of strengthening the influences of this organization. Gerhardt is the brain of the operations and subordinates all means to the ends. He explains to Sayer that in 1945 it made no sense to defame Regan because then the party "had a lot more important things to think about." But now they must damage the novelist and „counter-attack destroying his reputation" (ME: 23) because Regan's Catholic prize would shake the position of the party. Gerhardt compares his work to

> the launching of a giant ship [...] When the hull has been completed and is ready for the water the wooden pins which hold it on the slipway are knocked away and the ship is at last free to slide down to the water. But unless those pins are knocked away, one after another, the ship will never be launched. Regan is one of those pins (ME: 23).

Gerhardt has an intellectual image of the shape of the future society and does everything in order to reach his aim. His vision of the future strongly resembles anti-utopian models of tyranny and, in particular, his means are very much the same as O'Brian's from *Nineteen-Eighty-Four*. When Gerhardt explains his ideas, his words, in their semantic structuring, evoke O'Brian's speech when he tells Winston about the functioning of the Inner Party. In an Orwellian fashion Gerhardt understands his job in the following way: „our job is to praise or condemn. In a manner of speaking we are the law-givers" (ME: 20). Since, in his opinion, a living hero is more dangerous than a dead person, the writer's reputation should be questioned immediately. He explains his reasons to Sayer:

> There is a considerable difference between a man who dies in disgrace and a man whose good name is questioned after his death. The public image of a person solidifies at the time of his death and if he is subsequently disgraced then two men exist... the good man of flesh and blood whom people remember and, the bad phantom they've been told about. If anything this duality makes the person more attractive (ME: 23).

Once again Gerhardt's ideas resemble O'Brian's explanation which he gives to Winston, who cannot understand why the Party first changes individuals and only later kills them.

Sayer, another active politician, though on a smaller scale, can also manipulate people. Devoid of sentimentality, he can control broader processes. He meets workers and tries to win their sympathy for the Communist movement. Yet it is striking that he seems to impose this ideology for its own sake, for the sake of this purely intellectual idea and not for the benefit of the workers. In fact he feels no sympathy for them and perceives the workers as ugly, even disgusting, broken-down machines. With such an attitude, he has the strength to subordinate people, to use them for his task so that they obey him. During his mission in Provence Sayer believes that he is "here for something very important... for the good of workers everywhere" (ME: 93). And Sayer succeeds—he completes his mission and gathers sufficient material to defame Regan.

Regan, Sayer and Gerhardt are conscious of the historical and political processes and thus know how to shape reality. But in order to play such an important function they have to devote their personal lives to them. Moulding reality is too important a task not to require enormous sacrifices: thus the three characters forsake their personal comforts in order to serve their chosen purpose. At the end of his life Regan realizes that his ambitions to create and not to be manipulated have emptied him of emotionality and have, in fact, ruined his life. Sayer arrives at a very similar conclusion. Both protagonists understand their existence as something historically conditioned. They feel subordinated to broader trends and chose to serve them. Sayer sees himself as

> the emissary of the Party [...] No moral reservations could stand up against the fact of those millions of destitute workers, the poor and the oppressed throughout the world. He had never doubted that but the traitors to the Party had their reasons for betraying it, as Regan had his reasons; what he could not accept was that these reasons could never be judged valid against the constant and universal fact of economic oppression. As if any personal misgivings could be judged as having the weight of the hunger in the world. The poor we have always with us... and the rich also. Everything else was merely literature (ME: 178-179).

Sayer hates his mission but he believes that success can be achieved when he totally submits, even against himself. Regan, too, feels that it is his duty "to create a new ideal" (ME: 184), disregarding the costs. Thus the political

necessity and the roles they impose upon themselves affect their personal, daily lives. Sayer explains this idea to embittered Gretchen:

> Try to understand that I'm only doing what I have to do. I don't like it myself, but there's nothing I can do about it. [...] Your father is not an evil person. On the contrary, he's done a tremendous amount of good in his life... but now he's going to be used by evil people to crush the poor, uneducated, and oppressed. And that's what I have to stop. I'm not doing it out of perversity, as you may seem to think, but because of everything I believe in. You dont' realize how much it pains me to do something that is going to hurt you. I'd give anything in the world not to be in this position, but now that I'm in it you must understand that I can't back out and pretend that it never happened (ME: 153).

These three characters are capable of shaping the reality of their days because they are intellectually devoted to their ideologies and spare no pains to impose them upon other people. Nevertheless, they are all unsuccessful on smaller levels and, since their methods are frequently morally controversial, they evoke neither confidence nor trust. Moreover, when they finally achieve their political aims, they realize that their effort does not change much, that maybe they have contributed to spreading their ideologies, nevertheless, still a lot remains to be done. Thus they are sceptical about the importance of their missions and feel uneasy about the sacrifices they and their relatives had to make. Thus, ironically, despite their active attitudes, they also undergo reality and history. Unfortunately, instead of finding satisfaction, Regan and Sayer only suffer the sense of guilt. In this respect *A Man From Elsewhere* is similar to the novels of Henry Greene and Joseph Conrad (*Under Western Eyes*) where the protagonists suffer pangs of conscience because they have promised to fulfil an immoral political order.

In *A Man From Elsewhere* Farrell contemplates not only the impact of reality upon the personal lot of the characters, but also deals with the problem of communication and interpretation of facts, events and theories. By showing the political and historical processes the novelist stresses the impossibility of objective presentation and evaluation. The majority of events, though apparently simple, are in reality complicated and slip out of rational control. It is equally impossible to interpret reality which reaches the characters in an incomplete and random way.

Serge's war record is one of the numerous events of this kind. His father, Regan, Heinrich, and Sayer believe in totally different versions of events because the appearances are misleading. Ironically, even though the protagonists know the same facts, they interpret them in a totally different manner. The father is convinced that Serge was betrayed by Regan, but Regan claims that the boy was executed for private motives. Another mistake in interpretation refers to the motives of the farmers who block the roads near Regan's estate. It appears that they support other farmers, but in reality they challenge Regan and expose him to another test of courage. Luc also misunderstands the situation when he fights to protect an Algerian in the bar. Taken aback by

racial prejudice, he speaks for the Algerian, but later it turns out that the Algerian provoked resentment not because he was an African but because he insulted a lady. The whole incident is the more ironic in that Luc has always been aware of how misleading appearances can be and always seemed to be sceptical about and afraid of simplistic judgements. He even expressed it fully when he discussed politics with his friends: "How can I make sense of the information when it is probably all lies?" (ME: 49). But later, when he is in the centre of the incident with the Algerian, he chooses not to distance himself and spontaneously defends the supposedly persecuted man. The conflict between Regan and Sayer also proves that it is impossible to find consistent evaluations and solutions to complex political problems.

To Sayer Regan is, at least originally, nothing more than an obstacle hindering the progress of Communism. For this reason, and for this reason only, Regan must be defamed and disgraced. From the very beginning Sayer's mission appears disgusting and heartless. Sayer mercilessly tortures the dying Regan who, at that stage, seems to be a noble character. Sayer's task is often compared to the disposing of filth and his methods evoke nothing but disgust: "The garbage man had filled his cart with trash. [...] He had rummaged through the filth without flinching at the smell of decay" (ME: 177). His actions are the more horrifying since Sayer feels no personal responsibility and always justifies his deeds by virtue of political necessity. Regan, hunted and humiliated, accepts his lot with dignity and appears to be an heroic man with nothing disgraceful to hide. Regan's political credo is humanitarian, at least theoretically, for he simply does not believe that "any abstract idea of an ultimate good should be allowed to hold precedent over the actual suffering of innocent people" (ME: 119). On the other hand, Sayer believes that "in politics the choice inevitably had to be made between more than one evil" (ME: 119) and that the future prosperity of the whole society is worth various sacrifices. He agrees with Trotsky, who said that "if one holds human life to be sacred one must abandon the idea of a revolution" (ME: 112). In this context Regan gains more sympathy and credibility.

Yet when Sayer finally discovers Regan's past, the true image of Regan turns out equally terrifying. Ironically, his ideology also requires sacrifices and, like any other idea, must be imposed upon people. Thus Regan lies when he declares his philosophical motto. The two seemingly radically different characters are more alike than anyone could expect. Sayer, in the name of his ideology, does not hesitate to do harm to a dying person, but Regan, also in the name of his philosophy of rigid individualism, damages everybody who loved or still loves him. Both of them, blinded by fanaticism, cause chaos and destruction and leave an emotional emptiness in those they love. Thus Sayer's Communism and Regan's individualism are equally ruthless ideologies and, though in different ways, bring about similar catastrophes.

In this way Farrell seems to suggest that in politics and in social relationships there are no simple situations – everything is complex and morally dubious. What appears to be obvious, like the strike of the farmers or the humanitarian ideology of Regan, turns out to be totally different. Also coincidence can radically change the human lot. People are at the mercy of processes that slip out of their control. They do not understand what is happening around them even when they finally learn the truth. After having fulfilled his mission Sayer is even more confused than at the beginning of the novel. The truth, instead of illuminating him, makes everything much more difficult. At the end of *A Man From Elsewhere* Sayer realizes that the world is but "a shining maze" (ME: 190). Thus the difficulties of evaluating and making objective observations are also reflected in the general state of confusion the characters find themselves in. This confusion is a typical feature of Farrell's characters.[8] The truth is revealed very slowly, as in a detective story, and before the protagonists learn it, they are deceived several times.

The very structure of *A Man From Elsewhere* which is concerned with the process of mystery solving with the mystery kept unrevealed until the last pages of the novel, seems to support Farrell's point about the impossibility but also at the same time the necessity of personal, social and political explanation. The resolution of the conflict is surprising both for other characters and for the readers. The narrator restrains himself from commentary – his matter-of-fact and cold tone stresses that appearances can be misleading, that it is impossible to evaluate human motives, since any evaluation may be inadequate for real situations. Farrell withdraws from his authorial comment and holds back from judgements which his characters have been so willing to utter. In this sense *A Man From Elsewhere* is a very impersonal book, which some critics have signalled as its major weakness.[9] Yet considering the fact that the very thesis of the novel states that it is impossible to rightly and objectively evaluate the broad processes and the motivation of people entangled in politics, Farrell's restraining from comment is only a logical consequence.

In *A Man From Elsewhere* Farrell makes clear his view that reality can be perceived only in a subjective way, that it is easy to be misled and confused. And even when one already comprehends the broad political processes, a human being is, in fact, helpless when confronted with them. This scepticism about the possibility of finding simple answers and understanding the world brings Farrell to the modernist sense of confusion and doubt. The idea communicated by *A Man From Elsewhere* is highly pessimistic: man can easily be manipulated but his dreams to be creative can hardly come true for the long-run. For this reason the majority of Farrell's characters undergo reality instead of actively shaping it.[10]

[8] Binns 1986: 37.
[9] Drabble 1982: 184.
[10] Bergonzi 1980: 57; Spurling 1982: 156.

Farrel's two following novels, *The Lung* and *A Girl in the Head*, are devoted to psychological considerations. However, they also throw light on the author's future treatment of several aspects in the Empire Trilogy. Farrell presents his characters not as anti-historical protagonists, but as individuals conditioned by the place and time in which they live. As in the trilogy, the characters are conscious of the reality they live in and feel that it influences their lives. In these two novels the settings, though obviously not historical, play a very important function. And since the contemporary background is depicted with the same engagement and is given a similar significance as in the historical triology, it seems worthwhile to analyze Farrell's treatment of this element of his narratives.

In *The Lung* there are two settings – the hospital Martin Sands goes to because of his illness, and Oxford, where he lives. Oxford, with its traditions and academic prestige, has a very morbid influence on Sands. He hates the place and feels suffocated by it. Martin calls Oxford a "suicidal place," "a diabolical place" (L: 22), "a city of effete embryo Hitlers" (L: 21). Dejected by the atmosphere of the city and burdened by his personal experience, Martin falls into a deep depression. He feels safer in the hospital where time has stopped or simply seems not to pass at all. The hospital appears to Sands a shapeless and neutral space, isolated from the tyranny of ordinary life. Only after some time does he realize that it is also subject to the rules of ordinary society, though on a much subtler scale. Martin's discovery that he cannot isolate himself from reality is most painful for him and leads him to total resignation. The awareness that one cannot separate oneself from the external world is a characteristic feature of Farrell's protagonists in the historical novels, too.

In *A Girl in the Head* the setting, Maidenhair, also depressingly influences the protagonist. To Boris Slatery Maidenhair is a "tundra of banality" and "the cemetery of all initiative" (GH: 48). In a sense, Boris has a historical consciousness, though it is not the broad, social understanding of history. To him history (individual history) is just a record of the passage of time perceived by an individual from a subjective point of view. He sees himself as a person created by and resulting from the history of his own life. Like everybody, he has been influenced by his experience and the events of the past. He even notices that "nobody can disinherit his past" (GH: 137).

In *A Girl in the Head* human personality is historically conditioned, though history is not seen as this huge wave of different processes, but rather as a tangle of "insignificant details" (GH: 26), perceived from individual point of view. These details are both material and immaterial, like ideas and events. This is why objects are so important in Farrell's vision of the world. History realizes itself through things, "objects give reality to facts"[11] since they have

[11] The idea of "undergoing" reality or, as Farrell put it, "undergoing history," is the writer's favourite expression depicting the relation between history/reality and an individual. It appears for the first time in *A Man From Elsewhere*, later in *A Girl in the Head* and in *Troubles*. But Farrell himself used it in interviews, e.g. with Malcolm Dean (1978).

the power of evoking past events and, at the same time, are material records of immaterial social, historical and artistic phenomena. When Boris finds his photograph from childhood, he utters the following reflection:

> The trouble about looking at these old photographs is that history leaks into the present through insignificant details... When I look at myself now I get the most disagreeable sensation of being nothing but a detail myself... Of course I realize that it is nonsense to think of one's life as a meaningless detail rapidly receding into a mass of other meaningless details. But I must confess that the thought has occurred to me from time to time (GH: 26).

Boris realizes that man is entangled in his everyday life, that both serious and banal events are perceived with the same solemnity. Only a retrospective glance or a look "from the above" sharpens the perspective and very often proves that human actions and "explosions" of passions lead nowhere, and are, therefore, insignificant. And this is because all human beings "undergo the same sort of evolution" (GH: 167) and move

> with steady inevitability through a cycle of impersonal changes [...] And of all steaming passions no trace would remain. At most a trace of fall-out might collect, like strontium ninety in milk, from the biggest explosions of passion... but bearing no relation to it, merely a debris, a sonnet here and there in a school textbook [...] so why even pretend that it was important? (GH: 167-168).

Boris notices that people delude themselves because they believe that their lives make sense. But in fact nothing significant remains for the posterity. When he walks along a street of imposing Victorian houses with façades decorated with ornate masonry, he wonders what happened to the large families who used to live there. He knows that they were wrong to believe that by "living in solid houses at the centre of a vast Empire they had a foot wedged in the door of eternity" (GH: 87).

Boris Slattery has a very pessimistic vision of the world which to him lacks logic and rules: instead, in his opinion, everything in it "vibrates in random back-and-forth movements" (GH: 168). And since the world is random and unpredictable, man cannot control it. Boris is aware that people are helpless when confronted with the random changes which the world, and in consequence they themselves, undergo. This is the reason why he resigns himself to passivity both in private and public life. In the trilogy the characters express similar ideas. They, too, believe that the world is chaotic and that it cannot be controlled by individual effort. This idea is very significant because Farrell was to consider it again in the trilogy and was to arrive at similar conclusions.

J.G. Farrell's three early novels contain some of the author's attitudes towards broad processes and anticipate his later treatment of historical themes.[12] In particular, the pessimistic vision of the world from *A Man From Elsewhere* and existential views on the absurdity of human condition from the

[12] N. McEwan (1987: 124) notices the relationship between objects and ideas only in the historical novels, but it seems to be present in the early works, too.

following two novels find a profound continuation in the trilogy. Already in Farrell's early novels people depend on the period they live in and circumstances and, no matter how hard they try either to separate from them or to shape them, they will always, though to a different degree, be manipulated by their reality. The times they live in shape Farrell's characters and delimit the spheres of their activities. Even when they think they are independent and free, they are still conditioned by their circumstances.

The social and political events in Farrell's fiction are presented in a manner analogous to how people learn about them. They are shown as random bits of information scattered throughout the narrative. The information about events appears in the form of newspaper cuttings, radio broadcasts, overheard conversations or discussions of the characters. These discussions do not aim to explain problems but only to show various points of view and to justify the confusion of the characters. Yet most information can be acquired by observing people's different ways of life. Thus the presentation of the social *milieux* and human interrelations is most informative. This attention to social detail was to become characteristic of Farrell's mature fiction.

Since people cannot grasp the social, political and historical situation comprehensively, they try to build theories and interpretations based on incomplete information. Their speculations, subjective and often wrong, mislead the characters and leave them baffled and confused. The characters understand neither themselves nor the world. The truth is revealed only at the very end of the novels and when all seems clear, there comes a twist in the action and the solution turns out to be the least expected. Therefore the characters are uncertain, lost and permanently shocked. The difficulty to evaluate the period and the possible huge number of interpretations are reflected in the bewilderment of the protagonists. It is stressed in the last sentence of *A Man From Elsewhere* when Sayer imagines Gretchen's departure: "the train was leaving the platform and running along its shining rails and penetrating deeper and deeper into the shining maze of the world" (ME: 190). According to the modernist ideology, Farrell seems to claim that finding meanings in this labyrinth is, indeed, illusionary.

Since meanings are uncertain and people manipulative and deceptive, it is difficult to treat them seriously without questioning their authority. This is where the ironic tone and ironic understatements, characteristic of Farrell's style, stem from. Though this irony is not so well developed and all-embracing in the early three novels but rather limited to verbal and situational irony, and ironic interpretations are only implied, it is felt that this mode of expression is Farrell's favourite. Sometimes irony is interwoven with the grotesque and the combination of the two modes gives an impression of pessimism and hopelessness.

In his early novels Farrell expresses the view that everything people create, social and political orders are temporary, frail and arbitrary. This opinion,

developed and illustrated with history, forms the philosophical background of the Empire Trilogy.

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MAXWELL ANDERSON'S DRAMATIC THEORY

The dramatic theory of Maxwell Anderson places the playwright in a position of prominence in the American dramatic criticism since it is the first and the only systematic theory to come from an American dramatist (Shivers 1976: 31).

The only principle that he found out for himself in the period following his initial great success of *What Price Glory?* (1923) was that "a playwright's first success was always largely accidental" (Anderson 1947: 24).[1] More serious considerations of a dramatic principle, that could replace intuition as a guide on the way to success in the theatre, came as an afterthought, and mainly for practical reasons.

> As the seasons went by and my failures fell as regularly as the leaves in autumn—Anderson confessed—I began to search again among the theorists of the past for a word of wisdom that might take some of the gamble out of playwriting (ET: 4).

His hunt for a set of workable rules led him back to Aristotle. He reread *The Poetics* and found the clue to his problem in the famous passage on *catharsis*. He discovered that "in discussing construction Aristotle made a point of the recognition scene as essential to tragedy" (ET: 5). That made Anderson examine the work of the best of Greek, Renaissance and modern dramatic writers. He learnt that with the Greeks the discovery scene was usually an artificial device, such as seeing through a disguise or disclosing someone's hidden identity that leads to a recognition of a friend, an enemy or a member of family (ET: 5). Then he

> probed a little more deeply into the memorable pieces of Shakespeare's theatre and our own and began to see that though modern recognition scenes are subtler and harder to find, they are none the less present in the plays we choose to remember. They seldom have to do with anything so naïve as a disguise or the unveiling of a personal identity. But the element of discovery is just as important as ever. For the mainspring in the mechanism of a modern

[1] Henceforth Anderson's major critical works on drama, *The Essence of Tragedy and Other Footnotes and Papers* and *Off Broadway, Essays about the Theatre*, will be abbreviated in bracket references as (ET) and (OB), respectively.

play is almost invariably a discovery by the hero of some element in his environment or in his own soul of which he has not been aware or which he has not taken sufficiently into account (ET: 6).

Thus conceived recognition scene became for Anderson the centre, the pivot upon which the whole construction of a play rested. He comprised the idea into a concise rule according to which

> A play should lead to and away from a central crisis, and this crisis should consist in a discovery by the leading character which has an indelible effect on his thought and emotion and completely alters his course of action (ET: 7).

"The new version of Aristotle" (ET: 8) was, he believed, the most satisfactory theory for a play structure. Any plot meant for the stage should have a scene in which the protagonist makes an emotional discovery that dictates the end of the story. If such an episode were missing, it should be inserted. And if it were present but did not occupy the central position, then it should be made central (ET: 8). With regard to the placement of the episode, Anderson suggested that in a three-act play it should occur near the end of the second act; in a five-act play near the end of the third; though it might be delayed in both cases (ET: 8).

The recognition scene having been established as the focal point of serious drama, Anderson expressly determined the character of his protagonist. He suggested that there should be but one main hero (OB: 25). The story of a play should be based on a conflict between good and evil within the single character; the external events, ideas, situations being only symbolic of his or her inner dilemma (OB: 25).

Believing that excellence in the theatre is always moral excellence (OB: 26), and that "an audience watching a play will go along with it only when the leading character responds in the end to what it considers a higher moral impulse than moved him at the beginning of the story," (ET: 11) Anderson stressed the importance of a moral standard of his protagonist; he must represent the forces of good and must win. If he is on the evil side, he must yield to the forces of good and admit his defeat (OB: 25).

> Besides being moral, the hero must be unusual, for, as Anderson observed, the great plays of the world—these accepted by civilization as part of a great heritage and played for centuries—are almost all concerned with the conduct of exceptional men and women in position of great responsibility (OB: 30).

The playwright formulated the idea as early as in 1923 in his letter to the drama critic Heywood Broun where he stated: "A great play cannot deal with ordinary people speaking commonplaces" (Avery 1977: 19). In the later years, however, Anderson asserted that a man picked up from the street might occupy the centre of the stage, but on stipulation that he

> be so presented as to epitomize qualities which the audience can admire. Or he must indicate how admirable human qualities can be wasted or perverted—must define an ideal by falling short of it, or become symbolic of a whole class of men who are blocked by circumstances from achieving excellence in their lives (OB: 25).

The most important requirement concerning the hero—a change in his thinking—is immediately related to the central position of the recognition scene in the structure of the play. Making the crucial discovery, the hero undergoes a change of heart, which affects the whole course of subsequent events. In order to meet the moral demands of the audience, the change must be for the better. Thus, it is essential that the protagonist is not perfect; otherwise he might change only for the worse. "For the audience will always insist that the alteration in the hero be for the better—or for what it believes to be the better" (ET: 10). Therefore, Anderson concluded, "he must have some variation of what Aristotle calls a tragic fault" which can be "a very simple one—a mere unawareness" (ET: 9). He should arrive at a recognition of his flaw through suffering. Once he has discovered the error in him, he ought to try to rectify it (ET: 9).

> In a tragedy he suffers death itself as a consequence of his fault or his attempt to correct it, but before he dies he has become a nobler person because of his recognition of his fault and the consequent alteration of his course of action (ET: 9).

The rule remains valid for all serious plays, though unlike tragedies they end in a punishment lesser than death (ET: 9).

Describing desirable human attitudes and qualities of his protagonists, Anderson asserted:

> There are human qualities for which the race has a special liking on the stage: in a man, positive character, strength of conviction not shaken by opposition; in a woman, fidelity, passionate faith. There are qualities which are especially disliked on the stage: in a man, cowardice, any refusal to fight for a belief; in a woman, an inclination toward the Cressid (OB: 26).

Anderson's theoretical considerations on the nature of drama led him to the conclusion that the essence of tragedy, as well as of any serious play, is the spiritual awakening or regeneration of the hero (ET: 10). Accordingly, the objective of tragedy is an exaltation of the human spirit. To prove his point, he referred to the beginnings of European drama. The theatre in ancient Greece originated in two complementary religious ceremonies. Old Greek comedy celebrated the animal in man and was dedicated to the spirits of lust and revel. Greek tragedy was dedicated to man's aspiration; it celebrated man's kinship with gods, "his unending, blind attempt to lift himself above his lusts and his pure animalism into a world where there are other values than pleasure and survival" (ET: 11). What Anderson believed firmly was that modern tragedy "has followed the Greek patterns with no change in essence, from Aristophanes to Euripides to our own day" (ET: 11).

It was also the playwright's strong conviction that the theatre had never lost its character of an ancient ritual. At its best, he said, it was "a religious affirmation, an age-long rite restating and reassuring man's belief in his own destiny and his ultimate hope" (ET: 14). As such it was nothing less than a "religious institution" (OB: 28), "essentially a cathedral of the spirit, devoted

to the elevation of men" (ET: 32). Agnostic as he was, he shared in the eternal dream of the human race, that humanity was a part of a wider universal scheme, that it had a destiny to fulfil (ET: 20). It was one of the major objectives of drama, he thought, to bolster up the dream. Putting an imaginary hero to an imaginary test and making him come out of it with credit to the race and to himself (ET: 11) had always been an act of faith in mankind's ability to mature. The growing up had been so slow, so gradual, so broken that scarcely perceptible. Nevertheless, Anderson ardently believed that it was real. The indications that the process was going on were for him the few summits of human achievement such as the age of Pericles, the wisdom of the Sermon of the Mount (ET: 21), "the centuries of Dante and Michelangelo, the reign of Elizabeth in England, the century and a half of music in Germany" (ET: 22). Those he found to be a proof that "men are not essentially as they are but as they imagine and as they wish to be" (ET: 20). Anderson's artistic vocation was fully commensurate with his vision of the theatre as a temple of faith in man. What he felt was an urge to spread the "hope that man is greater than his clay, that the spirit of man may rise superior to physical defeat and death" (ET: 51).

In the nihilistic post World War I years, his was to be a voice calling in the wilderness. The unprecedented mass slaughter of nations in Europe marked a turning point in the history of the whole race. Anderson was well aware that a great civilization had fallen to pieces; the old order had collapsed, the truths and absolutes by which people had lived were all on trial, nothing was taken for granted any longer. Traditional religion was not only questioned, but many rejected it altogether. It was the time of scepticism and rationalism. A new order was to be built on the foundation of reason, and humanity was to "live in the light of scientific day" (OB: 22). Soon, however, the great depression brought the feelings of pessimism, disorientation and uncertainty. In those days of general frustration and loss of hope, Anderson was driven by an irresistible moral compulsion to defy the spirit of powerlessness and senselessness. He called for a renewed faith in man. "Even in our disillusioned era," he said,

> when fixed stars of belief fall from our sky like a rain of meteors, we find that men cling to what central verities they can rescue or manufacture, because without a core of belief neither man nor nation has courage to go on (ET: 23).

The question of belief is the question of man's spiritual survival for, as Anderson expressly asserted,

> we must have a personal, a national, and a racial faith, or we are dry bones in a death valley [...] mere rationalism is mere death. Mere scientific advance without purpose is an advance toward the waterless mirage of the cosmic scavengers (ET: 23).

The message, the playwright believed, was of the utmost importance for his generation, as well as for the generations to come. In its profundity, it cannot be reduced to a plain and simple statement because "the things an artist has to communicate can be said only in symbols, in the symbols of his art" (ET: 17). Thus, accordingly, a work of art must be viewed as "a hieroglyph, and the artist's endeavor is to set forth his vision of the world in a series of picture writings which convey meanings beyond the scope of direct statement" (ET: 17).

Tending to be visionary rather than factual, and aiming at the inexpressible, the art of the theatre should be more than a mere immediate comment on the political, social, and economic life. It cannot be expressed in the statistical language of the scientific era, either (ET: 35). Anderson wrote in his essay "Poetry in the Theatre":

> I have a strong and chronic hope that the theatre of this country will outgrow the phase of journalistic social comment and reach occasionally into the upper air of poetic tragedy (ET: 32).

He believed that "prose is the language of information and poetry the language of emotion" (ET: 34). It is the very nature of poetry to impel the writer "away from the small change of political economy and toward whatever vision he may be able to formulate of human destiny" (ET: 50). In rare instances, the dramatist admitted, prose could be stretched to carry powerful emotion. Synge and O'Casey, for example, in some of their plays rose to poetic hights using speech rhythms of uneducated, common people in the place of the rhythm of verse.

On the whole, however, none of the most prominent authors of the world stage, including Anderson himself, had yet written a play that might meet the competition of the best dramas one could pick up in the library (ET: 33). As Anderson saw it, the reason for the failure was that all the contemporary dramatists, except O'Casey, were not poets, and he thought it unquestionable that "the best prose in the world is inferior on the stage to the best poetry" (ET: 34). It was his belief, which he shared with Goethe, that "dramatic poetry is man's greatest achievement on his earth so far" (ET: 32). Thus, it was to verse drama, and particularly to verse tragedy, that he looked to revive the theatre. His hope was that the journalistic stage of his day would come to an end and the theatre would be transformed once more into a cathedral of human spirit (ET: 35).

Anderson's ideal playwright was a poet. A romantic at heart, Anderson accepted Emerson's concept of the artist as the visionary 'sayer' and 'namer' of things.[2] "It is incumbent on the dramatist to be a poet," the author of *Winterset* claimed, "and incumbent on the poet to be prophet, dreamer and interpreter of the racial dream" (ET: 36). "The artist's faith," the writer asserted, "is simply a faith in the human race and its gradual acquisition of wisdom" (ET: 21). If the day of man's glory has not come yet, the poet, through his art, is able to will it into being, for "the fact is created by the spirit, not the spirit by the fact" (ET: 35). The poet's hope has to transcend the spiritual sterility of the present age.

[2] On the subject see Halline 1944: 69.

He must be always heading for the future, "visioning and projecting [...] man as he must and will be, man a step above and beyond his present, man as he may be glimpsed on some horizon of dream, a little nearer what he himself wishes to become" (ET: 53). And the poet must never stop repeating this prophetic message "lest the race lose faith in itself entirely" (ET: 52).

Anderson's idea of reinstating verse drama on the modern stage is inseparable from his considerations on the drama's poetic element – the verse itself. The playwright's opinions on the poetic language, which he published in his critical essays and prefaces to his plays, were scarce and rather general. It was in his private letters that he voiced his views on dramatic verse; these, however, were made available to the wider reading public only in 1977.[3]

Although he did advocate poetry for the theatre and considered himself a poet first and a playwright second, Anderson did not believe that verse itself should take precedence over meaning, character and structure.[4] He wrote about it in a letter to Margery Bailey: "Play structure is much more important than playwriting even in a poetic play" (Avery 1977: 58). Thus, in fact, poetry is secondary to both the structure and the character which are of primary importance for the play as it virtually rests on them; the poetic language by itself is not able to support a poor dramatic structure. "The more beauty and ornament the style carries," the dramatist advised, "the sturdier must be the skeleton of plot and thinking underneath" (Avery 1977: 58).

Mere beauty of poetry on the stage is not enough. It was as early as 1918 that Anderson wrote: "poetry should communicate clearly and directly in the tradition of Chaucer, Browning and Byron" (Mason 1980: 42). Over twenty years later, in a letter to Lawrence Moor, the playwright repeated the idea writing that "verse should communicate as directly and more forcefully than the prose" (Avery 1977: 80).

Discarding free verse that sounded to him like a highflown prose, Anderson chose iambic pentameter as the best suited for verse drama. He explained his choice in a letter to Hazel Reynolds:

> The use of iambic pentameter for the stage is certainly no accident. It has been found by trial and error to combine the maximum of intensity and elevation with a minimum of artificiality in the theatre. Verse which calls attention to itself detracts from actuality in representation (Avery 1977: 59, 60).

Being aware how powerfully verse drives the artist toward history,[5] the playwright warned against the initiation of verse mannerisms from another age. He advocated that the poet should use the living language, though in verse. He should also try for clarity of meaning and, above all, for accuracy of

[3] In 1977 L.G. Avery published a selection of Anderson's letters: *Dramatist in America: Letters of Maxwell Anderson 1912-1958*.

[4] Anderson's utterances on the subject were gathered by J.D. Mason (1980: 41).

[5] Anderson dealt with the issue in a letter to Margery Bailey (Avery 1977: 55).

metaphor since the accurate metaphor, instantly recognizable, was the test of good poetry (Avery 1977: 58). The paradox of Anderson's theory of dramatic verse was that professing his faith in the necessity of writing "the living language," he simultaneously believed that "poetic tragedy had never been successfully written about its own place and time" (ET: 37).

Anderson perceived the theatre in America as an integral part of the broader national culture which, though "largely borrowed or sectional or local" (ET: 24) so far, was, he firmly believed, at the threshold of greatness. What was needed in order to achieve the cultural growth was the artist's vision which the dramatist held to be "the essential lodestone without which there is no coherence" (ET: 24). There would be no culture, however, unless there was a national interest and enthusiasm for the artist and his art, for "the supreme artist is only the apex of a pyramid; the pyramid itself must be built of artists and art-lovers" (ET: 26). Thus, it was upon a flowering of national arts, and particularly "a flowering of the old forms in this new soil" (ET: 25), like for instance verse tragedy in drama, that Anderson built his hope for a national renaissance of American culture.

The efforts of the artists alone were not sufficient. Although the artist may be devoted to the high cause of the future glory of national culture, he will never be entirely free to pursue his vision for the simple reason that his art has to find an audience. Anderson the dramatist learnt the truth the hard way. Whether one could call it blasphemy or not, he believed that a play was always a conscious compromise between the world about the artist and the world within (ET: 31). Striking such a compromise poses an enormous danger. In order to keep clear of the peril, Anderson made up for himself a set of three guiding rules:

1. Unless you and your play have a dream – or a conviction (much the same thing) – and unless you can defend that conviction against death and hell and wiles of experienced tricksters, your play isn't worth producing.
2. Unless you are willing to make nearly every possible business and artistic concession to the play-producing setup, you'll probably never get your play on at all.
3. But if you let these concessions touch and injure the dream (or conviction) that animates your play (and those you deal with will try their damnest to get at it) it isn't worth while putting on your play at all (OB: 76).

As a man of the theatre, Anderson accepted the fact that a produced play had to be a compromise, but he powerfully emphasized the play's essential integrity as the one thing that must never be sacrificed.

The playwright's considerations on the subject of writing for the stage had been his private affair till 1935 when the first public statement of his theory of drama appeared in the preface to *Winterset*. In the following years, the theory was propounded in greater detail in a number of lectures, prefaces, and articles. These were published in two volumes *The Essence of Tragedy and Other Footnotes and Papers* (1939), and *Off Broadway. Essays about the Theatre* (1947).

The origins of Anderson's theory are obscure. He obviously did not come to the theatre at the beginning of his career in 1923 with all the ideas

ready-made. In 1944, Allan G. Halline suggested that it must have been not until the middle of the 1930's that Anderson started evolving his theory.[6] Mr Halline seems to have been mistaken, though. The dramatic principles must have been germinating already in the 1920s since when in 1930 Anderson came out with *Elizabeth the Queen*, his first historical verse drama, the play was written in accordance with most of the rules he later presented in "The Essence of Tragedy" in 1938.[7] It is Alfred S. Shivers, then, who is probably right saying that there is good reason to believe that Anderson's theory of tragedy was already complete by July 14, 1933, the date that he finished *Mary of Scotland*, the first play to follow it obediently.[8]

Apparently, Anderson's dramatic theory is not original. Yet, to dismiss it on these grounds would be unfair, since, as A.S. Shivers remarks, the dramatist made no claim at all to originality (1976: 32). In the theatre of change, he was always overtly traditional in his views about playwriting. Offering his dramatic principles, he set them forth not as inventions, but as rediscoveries that he had made while studying successful works of ancient and modern dramatists (ET: 5).

A major acknowledged influence on Anderson's theory was Artistotle's *Poetics*, rejected by many in the period of modernism. The Greek thinker's idea of the recognition scene, as central to any dramatic plot, inspired Anderson to develop his own formula of a play's structure which he called "the modern version of Aristotle" (ET: 8).

It was also the genius of the Elizabethan theatre and particularly of Shakespearean drama that influenced both Anderson's theory and practice in a way which can hardly be overestimated. It was the author of *Hamlet* who was responsible for Anderson's zeal for re-introducing tragedy in verse into the modern theatre. The dramatist's choice of iambic pentameter as the poetic vehicle of his verse drama, and his predilection for historical or remote settings and well-known stories are likewise rooted in Shakespeare's work.

The impact of Ralph Waldo Emerson's romantic thought accounts for Anderson's envisioning the poet as a visionary and a prophet, a dreamer of a racial dream and believer in mankind's gradual acquisition of wisdom.

Still another dominant influence on Anderson, suggested by Teresa Pyzik in her work *Teoria tragedii*, is that of A.C. Bradley. In his day, the author of *Shakespearean Tragedy* (1904) and *Hegel's Theory of Tragedy* (1909) was a great authority in the field of theoretical studies of tragedy. The conception he promoted was largely Hegel's. It was based on Hegel's law of the dramatic conflict

[6] See Halline 1944: 63.

[7] The essay "The Essence of Tragedy" was written to be read at a session of the Modern Language Association in New York, January, 1938.

[8] For Shivers' views on the issue see 1976: 32.

which demands that the conflict must take place in the character's psyche and must involve the powers of good and evil. The character, preferably exceptional, is the most important element of tragedy. The disasters that cause his fall are overwhelming and result from his actions or his tragic flaw. The protagonist is torn between the necessity of external circumstances and his inner freedom. Through his suffering and death, the unsettled balance between the two forces becomes restored and a supreme justice is affirmed. Finally, the idea of tragic waste which was stressed by Bradley can be also found in Anderson's theory.[9]

Hegel's and Bradley's concepts concerning the moral nature of the tragic conflict and the stress on the character of the protagonist, his tragic flaw and the affirmation of a supreme order through his death, are distinctly reflected in Anderson's dramatic thought. The dramatist follows Bradley's emphasis on the tragic hero's responsibility for his actions. In his essay "Whatever Hope We Have", he asserted:

> Each man and woman among us, with a short and harried life to live, must decide for himself what attitude he will take toward the shifting patterns of government, justice, religion, business, morals, and personal conduct. [...] Whatever he chooses to conform or not to conform [...] he alone makes decisions for himself. Every other freedom in this world is restricted but the individual mind is free according to its strength and desire. The mind has no master save the master it chooses (ET: 19).

In the world dominated by pessimistic and nihilistic philosophies of Kierkegaard, Nietzsche or Schopenhauer, Anderson's idealism has a special significance. Its major value is its affirmative and positive attitude to man. He tried to restore a belief in the existence of the moral order in the time of general uncertainty about the notions of good and evil, and returned to his characters free will in the era of Freudian psychology that undermined man's faith in the freedom of human mind. Eventually he also denied the death of tragedy in the twentieth century, proclaimed by Joseph Wood Krutch in "Tragic Fallacy" (1929) as well as by some other critics.

Besides being a reaction against the contemporary feeling of unfaith and frustration, the theory turned out to be a germinal impulse pointing to new possibilities of research for scholars; *The Essence of Tragedy* was one of the first publications that presaged the neo-Aristotelian criticism with its renewed interest in the *Poetics*.

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[9] For Hegel's and Bradley's ideas present in Anderson's theory see Pyzik 1976: 19, 33, 77.

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CONTEMPORARY CHINESE AMERICAN WRITERS VERSUS THE PERPETUATORS OF MYTHS AND STEREOTYPES

Any reader of modern Chinese American literature will soon realize that it has a great deal to do with bringing the truth out into the open, and breaking down generally accepted myths concerning the Chinese minority. Chinese American literature of the last thirty years or so is, above all, a cry of protest against old ways of thinking; it documents a struggle to eradicate prejudices against the Chinese. Social, political and racial issues have, in fact, always been present in the literature produced by that minority, and no Chinese American writer has managed to evade them, though some, particularly before the 1960s Civil Rights movement, clearly tried. Since that time several contemporary Chinese American writers have achieved international acclaim due to the indisputably high aesthetic value of their work. For the purpose of this paper, however, we shall concentrate on its social significance, on the ways in which it sets out to influence the reader's consciousness and social awareness. The task of the paper will be to demonstrate some of the ways in which stereotypes of the "unassimilable Oriental" were enforced in the past – by white and Chinese American writers alike – and in contrast, ways in which they are now toppled.

The Chinese have been present in American literature for well over a century, both as its subjects and as authors, yet there is little in literature, and even less in films based on that literature, which the minority can be proud of. The first part of the present paper will, therefore, be an attempt to introduce some of the unfortunate stereotypes and works in which they are to be found. In order to bring these issues closer to the Polish reader, who may feel far removed from the Chinese Question in the United States, the author shall refer to the work of Henryk Sienkiewicz who met the Chinese in California in the 1870s and wrote about them. The contemporary writers discussed in the second part of the paper have attempted to impress on their readers the need to revise the myths and stereotypes which they have, often unwittingly, come to

believe. Among those addressed is the Chinese minority itself. It is for this minority that the contemporary writers hope to recreate Chinese American history and culture from a point of view other than that established in the past.

What the modern writers share and what gives their work much of its power and conviction is their ability to reclaim the stereotypes which the previous generation had taken for granted in order to use them as metaphors – as artistic devices. Had it not been for this conscious and subtle exploration of the metaphoric value of stereotypes, the work of Chinese American writers might perhaps be seen as didactic.

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The American stereotype of the *Chinaman* goes back to the days of the coolie trade in the 19th century, but its mass appeal is still being exploited by hack writers. The Chinaman is a mixture of the evil and the ridiculous. In descriptions of him we invariably find words like: inscrutable or inscrutably foreign, unassimilable and alien. He had shady dealings in Chinatown, smoked opium, spoke a barely intelligible mixture of Cantonese and pidgin English, and was often presented as a prancing, servile and avaricious fool. Yet visualized in vast numbers he became the *Asian hordes or yellow peril* so feared by Americans. Wallace Irwin (*Chinatown Ballads*, 1906; *Seed of the Sun*, 1921) and Sax Rohmer, whose translated works have recently appeared in Polish bookstores, were not the only ones guilty of perpetuating this stereotype. As the critic Elaine H. Kim points out, even highly esteemed writers, like Jack London, made use of it in books such as *South Sea Tales* (1911).

An evil variation of this "stock Chinese" appeared in the early 20th century when America began to fear contamination by the Asian race and the Chinaman was seen as a serious economic threat, competing with white Americans on the job market during the depression years. One of his names was *Doctor Fu-Manchu*. Sax Rohmer (the writer of a series of 21 novels, the first of which was *The Insidious Dr. Fu-Manchu*, 1913) and a number of film directors made their fortunes out of the career of this infamous and sinister character. Thanks to them the master villain, "the yellow menace" and "enemy of the white race" entered every American home through novels, children's comics and the television.

As if in an effort to counterbalance this negative image, the film industry created a less threatening stereotype, who became the hero of 47 films: *Charlie Chan*, the Chinese Sherlock Holmes. This odd character was based on novels by Earl Derr Biggers such as *The Chinese Patriot* (1926) and *Behind that Curtain* (1928), some of which have just been published in Poland. Always polite and composed, he was nevertheless denied the British detective's dignity and self respect. Out of his mouth came "words of fortune cookie wisdom,

a cheap substitute for eastern mysticism" (Wong 1975: 68). Though he was an American, he spoke pidgin English. Film directors made him a passive, effeminite clown with no interest in women whatsoever. It is this lack of masculinity which modern writers Frank Chin and Jeffery Paul Chan find so offensive. In their anthology of Asian American literature they state that Charlie Chan and his look-alikes are the products of what they describe as "racist love":

> Fu-Manchu and Charlie Chan are visions of the same mythic being, brewed up in the subconscious of the white Christian's wetdream. Devil and angel, the Chinese is a sexual joke glorifying white power (XII).

Chinese women, though few were to be found in American Chinatowns before World War II, when they could not legally enter the country, were trapped in two complementary and particularly obnoxious stereotypes. One of them is *The China Doll*, part woman, part child, submissive and delicate, without a will of her own. She existed in works like *Ah Moy: the Story of a Chinese Girl* by Lu Wheat (1908), *Lotus at Dusk* by Dorothy Graham (1927), and *Madame Flowery Sentiment* by Albert Gervais (1937). The magnetism of this character was soon discovered by filmmakers who added "Oriental charm" to their productions by churning out dozens of almond-eyed stereotypes of the helpless "lotus flower." James Clavell's *Tai-Pan*, available in all Polish bookstores and recently shown on television, features one of them. Whenever the white hero Struan looks at May May, his Chinese concubine, he is „filled with the wonder of the smooth lucency of her, like molten porcelain" (211). She responds by giving him complete control over every detail of her life. She has a habit of speaking about herself in the third person, in the most self-depreciating manner: "This slave begs her master to sell her"; and it is this image of Chinese and Chinese American women that Maxine Hong Kingston sets out to destroy in *The Woman Warrior*, and David Henry Hwang in *M. Butterfly* (1986).

If the "China Doll" can in any way be seen as a "positive" stereotype, then her "negative" counterpart is "Suzie Wong" the Chinese prostitute. She exists only as a sex-object, corrupt, demoralized and demoralizing, but pathetic in her worship of white men. Pardee Lowe, in his *Father and Glorious Descendant* (1943), takes a walk through the red-light district of San Francisco Chinatown and spends an entire chapter describing Suzie Wongs.

This list of stereotypes is by no means complete. The five caricatures I have briefly discussed here, and shall refer to from now on, roughly correspond to the categorization used by the critic Terri Wong in his article "From Ah Sin to Kwai Chan" published in 1975. William Fenn in *Ah Sin and his Brethren in American Literature* (1977) traced the development of these stereotypes in American literature since the 1860s.

Rather than seeking an early American literary example of these misconceptions I would like to quote the Polish writer Henryk Sienkiewicz, who

spent two years of his life, from 1876 to 1878, in California as a pioneer farmer. During this sojourn he wrote regularly to the *Gazeta Polska* on various aspects of American life and, among other things, about his impressions of the Chinese. One of his "letters" which originally appeared in 1878, has an interesting history because as late as 1955 it was translated into English and published in *The California Historical Society Quarterly* as "a relatively dispassionate and well-balanced account" (Sienkiewicz 1955: 302).

The image which Sienkiewicz paints of the Chinese immigrant in this article is the easily recognizable unpleasant stereotype of the inscrutable, dirty and immoral "Stock Chinese."

> Ah-Wongs, Ah-Mings, Jeh-Hangs are numbered by the thousands, and each one taken separately resembles another as two drops of water. Each one has the same slanted eyes, the same long pigtail, flattened nose and uniform dress (307).

Horrified, Sienkiewicz observes the living quarters of the Chinese, but attributes the squalor to the backwardness of the race, never to the inhuman social and economic conditions in Chinatown. He deplores the fact that the Chinese "exploits" America by toiling incessantly and "putting aside one cent at a time until he saves several hundred dollars or dies of exhaustion, as frequently happens" (310).

This unsympathetic attitude in a writer who had been the champion of the poor and the oppressed in Poland may surprise the modern reader, but one may guess at its origins. As an inexperienced pioneer farmer, in a commune established together with similarly inexperienced intellectuals and idealists, Sienkiewicz faced relentless competition from the hard-working Chinese vegetable growers of the Bay Area. In fact the enterprise was unprofitable and soon had to be given up.

For the purpose of this paper Sienkiewicz's example can be taken as repesentative of the white educated majority's view of the Chinese in the second half of the 19th century. The fact that he shares their anti-Chinese sentiments is stressed in a part of the "letter" which was excluded from the 1955 American reprint:

> Among the members of the anti-Chinese party, apart from the workers, is the entire intelligentsia of California. If the removal of the Chinese were in the hands of state law, they would have been removed long ago, but the issue touches upon the constitution of all the United States (Sienkiewicz 1989: 423; translation – *D.F.*).

Almost eighty years later his account was published in California with a short foreword by the translator who believed it to be "dispassionate" and "well balanced," which only proves how deeply rooted racial prejudice is and how slow to die.

It is difficult to understand today the precarious position of the Chinese minority in America before the Civil Rights movement in the 1960s. Those who dared to write about Chinese America felt they had, first and foremost, to present the Chinese as clean, non-threatening, westernized folk; it took decades

before writers were ready to challenge racial stereotypes. Those who hoped to have their works published had, in those days, to be conscious of entering upon a diplomatic mission, for praise and approval could only be won by those who, as Elaine H. Kim says, "had no superiority complex, pleaded no causes, asked no vexing questions" and were prepared to appeal for tolerance "by making highly euphemistic observations about the West on the one hand, while explaining Asia in idealized terms on the other" (1982: 24). Lin Yutang, an immigrant writer whose work appeared from the 1930s to the 1950s, and San Francisco born Pardee Lowe, who published his autobiography during World War II, belong to this group of writers.

Both are unpopular today and many heavy accusations have been made against various aspects of their writing, but one of those charges seems to be a key to the rest: "that their writing is from whiteness, not from Chinese America" (Chin 1983: X). Because Lin Yutang adopted this perspective, it was the white reader whose preferences and prejudices he took into account. When he attempted to make Chinese American characters palatable to the white reader he seldom gave them individuality which would let them rise above the stereotype. Thus the people who inhabit Lin's novels function rather like examplary figures whose lives must demonstrate to the reader that the Chinese are not a semi-civilized cheap work force. Tom and Eva, the immigrant children in *A Chinatown Family* (1948), are literally a walking advertisement:

> Regularly at four o'clock the mother dressed them up, Tom with his hair parted and his neck scrubbed, and Eva with her pretty ringlets and a clean cotton dress. It is to be suspected that some advertisement tactics were involved. Clean children should emerge from a clean laundry (45).

In that same novel Lin popularizes the stereotype of the ideal Chinese immigrant, the humble, law-abiding, loyal laundryman "so used to being called a Chink that it did not really hurt." Tom Fong's passivity is turned into a virtue: "What could the world do to Tom Fong, armed with an unpierceable armor of knowing and pretending not to know?" (149).

Suspended between the world of Chinatown and his adopted American world Lin Yutang cannot make up his mind about the model Chinese immigrant he has invented, so while grudgingly praising his willpower to work till "sheer exhaustion," he tends to patronize the Fongs.

> Their one purpose was to deliver clean laundry, quick laundry, and get paid in return... Every minute they spent at the ironing board meant more nickels. It was like picking up nickels from the street (10).

In passages such as this the Fongs are somehow reduced in stature by their craving for nickels.

Though five of the main characters are women, all are one-dimensional stereotypes: The Practical Mother, The Dutiful Daughter-in-Law, The Seductive Sing-song Girl and, predictably, the China Doll.

Pardee Lowe, writing his autobiography in 1943, accepts uncritically every Chinese stereotype existing in his day. He clearly looks down on the people he calls "the average Orientals," ridicules their "outlandish" customs and concentrates his efforts on achieving what his father could not: the status of honorary white. Apart from his mother, who as a housewife was "competency itself," in his book we meet only harlots, procuresses and crowds of Suzie Wongs in "gaping gaudy kimonos."

To understand how drastically the attitude of Chinese Americans towards themselves has changed one needs only to look into Maxine Hong Kingston's *China Men* (1977). The writer is a second-generation Chinese American who studied at Berkeley and began her writing career in the 1970s. In her mind there is no doubt as to the Americanness of her ancestors. They were the builders of the Gold Mountain (as the Chinese called America), and she claims it for them. In the following scene the author recreates the opening of the transcontinental railroad, the Pacific end of which was build mainly by Chinese labourers:

> The China Men cheered when the engine from the West and the one from the East rolled towards on another and touched. The transcontinental railroad was finished... The white demon officials gave speeches. "The Greatest Feat of the Nineteenth Century," they said. "The Greatest Feat in the History of Mankind," they said. "Only Americans could have done it," they said, which is true. Even if Ah Goong [Kingston's grandfather] had not spent half his gold on Citizenship Papers, he was an American for having built the railroad (145).

Though one of Kingston's many "fathers" (as she proudly calls the first settlers) had come to America, like many before and after him, as a stowaway, cramped in a crate below the deck of a steamer, this humiliating experience did not in any way lessen the heroism of his act of conquering a new land. This is how Kingston sees him: "He rode on, coming to claim the Gold Mountain, his own country" (52).

Myths and stereotypes, as Kingston shows us, affected her profoundly as well. In her autobiographical book *The Woman Warrior* (1977) she constantly needs to ask herself: "What is Chinese tradition and what is the movies?" (6). In another passage she describes her efforts to look American-feminine, that is "knees straight, toes pointed forward, not pigeon-toed, which is Chinese feminine" (13). Though she was born in California she says that "even now China wraps double binds around my feet" (57). Had it been just China which wrapped the double bind, things would be infinitely simpler. But America has binds of its own – myths she has to contend with.

One of them is that of the demure, silent China Doll, a role Kingston tried to assume as a child. Kingston became silent in kindergarten. Though she talked freely at home, she would not speak in English. "The other Chinese girls did not talk either, so I knew the silence had to do with being a Chinese girl" (193). The reader learns, perhaps contrary to his expectations, that speaking softly is an alien idea to the Chinese who are "shouters, hollering face to face" whether they are in their native village or in San Francisco.

The fact that Western readers are muddled and confused when trying to discover the "true nature" of the East was made apparent in reviews of *The Woman Warrior*. An entire chapter of the book (White Tigers) in which Kingston re-tells a stereotypical Kung-fu movie story was frequently seen by critics as the most poignant and climactic passage.

Kingston is highly conscious of the existence of stereotypes. She shows them to be untrue by bringing in fascinating characters from her own past and developing their personalities with such understanding and in such depth that they contradict any preconceived notion the reader might have of the Chinese. Unlike Lin and Lowe, she never suggests that her people are in the least like Americans, demonstrating instead that one culture cannot be erased or substituted by another during the lifetime of an immigrant. But like the portrait of her mother, which she builds up chapter by chapter, every one of the figures she portrays has human depth and dignity.

In the first chapter the mother is a storyteller; not the teller of fairytales, but of wonderful and gory horror stories intended to mark the growing of her children and serve as warnings. For this hardened, stern woman "talking-story" is never an idle pastime. It is no use questioning mother about those details of her stories which she finds irrelevant:

> Mother has told me once and for all the useful parts. She will add nothing unless powered by necessity, a riverbank that guides her life. She plants vegetable gardens rather than lawns (6).

She is a trained midwife, but also a shaman and an exorcist with an extensive knowledge of ghosts and their habits, which was not acquired at the Canton Medical School.

> When my mother went doctoring in the villages the ghosts and the were-people, and the apes dropped out of trees. They rose out of bridge water. My mother saw them come out of cervixes. Medical science does not seal the earth, whose nether creatures seep out, hair by hair (6).

While *The Woman Warrior* celebrates Chinese women, Kingston's second book *China Men* is a portrait gallery of her male ancestors. Whatever menial jobs they did, they faced unimaginable discrimination, which made them truly heroic figures. Though some did the work traditionally reserved for women, there is nothing effeminate about them.

Some went to Douglas Island, Alaska, where the local white population regularly shipped them out on a schooner.

> As soon as they touched shore in Puget Sound, the China Men found ways to return and take back their mines, jobs, houses and girl friends. So next year there had to be another shipping (161).

But one day they were forced at gunpoint to board an old schooner and set adrift with no food or water. After eight days at sea they were rescued by a white captain who offered to take them home

> and they said Yes they would take him up on that. "Take us home," said the sourdough China Men, "to Douglas Island" (162).

Those who hammered the granite of the Rockies, making way for the railroad, were heroic figures, supermen.

> When the foreman measured at the end of twenty four hours of pounding the rock had given a foot. [...] After tunneling into granite for about three years Ah Goong understood the immovability of the earth. Men change, men die, weather changes, but a mountain is the same as permanence and time. [...] He worked in the tunnel so long, he learned to see colors in black. When he stumbled out, he tried to talk about time. "I felt time," he said, "I saw time. I saw World" (135).

Kingston also shows up the myth that the Chinese are obedient and passive. She unearths American history preserved in family talk-stories, facts passed over by the history books. In *China Men* we see not passivity but patience and self-denial. When conditions got unbearable the Chinese railway builders organized a nine-day strike. The company hoped to starve them out, threatened with guns and troops—and lost.

Another of Kingston's "fathers" went to a cane plantation in Hawaii. There too the China Men sweated in appalling conditions and when they could not stand the lonelines and suffering they remembered an ancient legend.

> The next day the men plowed, working purposefully, but they dug a circle instead of straight furrows. They dug a wide hole. They threw down their tools and flopped down on the ground with their faces over the edge of the hole and their legs like wheel spokes.
>
> "Hello down there in China!" they shouted. "Hello Mother." [...] "I've been working hard for you and I hate it" [...] "I want my home," the men yelled together, "I want home." [...] Talked out, they buried their words, planted them. "Like cats covering shit," they laughed (117-118).

The white overseers sensed the subversive force born on that day and let the China Men alone. "From the day of the shout party, Bak Goong talked and sang at his work, and did not get sent to the punishment fields" (118). That force was simply the voice the China Men found and the sudden freedom of self expression.

More recently another myth-breaker, Amy Tan, whose bestselling novel *The Joy Luck Club* was published in 1989, returned to the mesmerizing power of the voice. In her book she lets four Chinese women immigrants of her mother's generation and four Chinese American women of her own generation tell their own stories. *The Joy Luck Club* is a cross-cultural work in which the author's perspective on mother—daughter relationships, America and China shifts from that of an outsider to that of an insider and back again. Self expression is vital to women who for such a long time had said so little about themselves, silenced by immigration officials, silent in the face of an alien reality, silent because it takes a lifetime to learn a new language, and worst of all, silenced by their own American daughters. The daughters Amy Tan portrays at times see with their American eyes not the beauty and wisdom of their Chinese heritage but the queerness, darkness and severity of it all.

Amy Tan's method of dealing with racial stereotypes is in many ways similar to Maxine Hong Kingston's. Rather than stating what the myths

about the Chinese are, she addresses the existing stereotypes chapter by chapter by depicting "flesh-and-blood" Chinese and Chinese American women whose characters resist simplification and cannot in any way be pigeonholed.

Paradoxically, both these women authors are myth-makers as well as myth-breakers. In place of the stereotype they present the reader with magical myths which had accompanied them since early childhood, family legends recording the passage to the Gold Mountain—all parables which punctuate and give new depth to the experiences of modern Chinese Americans.

No one makes better use of the stereotype than the playwright David Henry Hwang who by metaphorizing the concept of stereotyping constructs a dramatic masterpiece in which that concept serves as the pivot. Hwang re-appropriates the China Doll myth, transformed through Puccini's opera *Madame Butterfly* into a symbol of purity, loyalty and obedience, and shows it to be the source of the ultimate misconception. The fact that Puccini chose the play by David Belasco, staged in 1900, and adapted it by composing the popular libretto, proves the popularity of this stereotype. In *M. Butterfly* (1986) the China Doll is literally and metaphorically stripped of all her superficial trappings till what is left is an ingenious male actor-impersonator. While the Butterfly is being released from the cocoon of the stereotype, made concrete and "real as a hamburger" (90), the audience witnesses the making of a new stereotype. The protagonist, the European who worships his China Doll, wraps himself in the cocoon of his fantasy and solidifies. Incapable of changing or adjusting his way of thinking he now becomes the stereotype—that of a white man crippled by his inability to see and accept the reality, who dies still longing to be "loved by the perfect woman."

The stage, as Hwang uses it, is the perfect setting for the irony of this dramatic reversal of roles; the art of acting, the putting on and taking off of costumes—the perfect metaphor for both the power and the insubstantiality of the stereotype.

Yet the protagonist Gallimard who narrates his love story in retrospect is not a fool incapable of self-irony. He admits:

> We who are not handsome nor brave, nor powerful, yet somehow we believe [...] that we deserve a Butterfly. She arrives with all her possessions in the folds of her sleeves, lays them out, for her man to do as he pleases (10).

And Song, the Butterfly impersonator, at first sends out warning signals which are obviously incongruous with the Madame Butterfly image. While Gallimard is ecstatic about Puccini's opera Song ridicules it:

> Consider it this way: what would you say if a blonde homecoming queen fell in love with a short Japanese businessman? He treats her cruelly, then goes home for three years, during which time she prays to his picture and turns down marriage from a young Kennedy. Then, when she believes he has remarried, she kills herself. Now, I believe you would consider this girl to be a deranged idiot, correct? (17)

But Gallimard to the end of the play remains incapable of adjusting his ideas. As a result, Song finds it so easy to use Gallimard and extract from him classified information, which she then relays to the Chinese government.

Adding depth and perspective to the play is the undercurrent of political and diplomatic affairs which echo each stage of the strange love affair. Just as he exploits the sexist and racist stereotype of China Doll, Hwang aims to destroy the myth of the passive and feminine East which has traditionally been contrasted with the active, masculine West. This he does very subtly through allusions to the failure of Western diplomatic and military moves in China and Vietnam.

The play is an allegory of East – West relations in which the fantasy is turned against itself. Song, having revealed his true nature loses Gallimard's love. Asia stripped of the veil of exoticism and passive self-denial is unpalatable to the West. The absurdity of the situation is expressed in a nutshell in the final scene when Gallimard, crushed by the scandal, the court case and the ridicule of which he is the object, nevertheless insists: "I am a man who loved a woman created by a man. Everything else simply falls short" (90).

In a sense *M. Butterfly* belongs to the old tradition of didactic literature, following a pattern which Susan Rubin Suleiman would call a "negative exemplary apprenticeship" (Rubin 1983: 86), yet in spite of the fact that didactic literature is far from popular nowadays, the Broadway production of the play was a flying success and earned Hwang several prestigious awards. This can only be explained by the fact that *M. Butterfly* is a stunning and powerful drama in which the toppling of myths takes place on a metaphoric as well as a literal level. Universal human issues are involved here: love and infatuation, self-deceit and disillusionment, the longing for power and acceptance.

It is perhaps possible to see the very successful yet similarly didactic works of Maxine Hong Kingston in the same light. Her ability to absorb stereotypes and explore their metaphoric value in order to present the reader with an antidote to an oversimplified view of the world – is what most clearly distinguishes this contemporary writer from her predecessors Lin Yutang and Pardee Lowe.

Chinese American writers continue to take up similar themes, knowing it will take generations to change the wrongful and hostile attitudes. Literary treatment of racial myths and stereotypes, far from being a passing fad, will always be timely. For the problem lies not merely in changing the attitudes of the white majority. What is even more vital is to erase stereotypes from Chinese Americans' perception of themselves. It is a serious task that Chinese American writers take on today: that of restoring their minority's pride. The role of literature, as the above discussion has shown, can be that of an accomplice in perpetuating stereotypes, yet it can also serve as a tool for breaking them down.

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THE ORAL TRADITION REFERENCES IN THE FICTION OF N. SCOTT MOMADAY, LESLIE MARMON SILKO, AND JAMES WELCH

Native American fiction is, in historical terms, a relatively recent phenomenon. Though sporadically present on the white America's literary scene since the 19th century, it was in the 1960s and 1970s that the Indian voice entered American fiction *en masse* with such notable writers as Novarro Scott Momaday, Simon J. Ortiz, Roberta Hill, Leslie Marmon Silko, and James Welch. (In 1969 Momaday's novel *House Made of Dawn* was awarded the Pulitzer Prize.) Naturally, all of them would write on Native American experience as perceived from the Indian viewpoint. This artistic choice, however, implied much more than a mere topic selection. (After all, novels about Indians or even with Indian protagonists had been written by white authors as well.) Writing "in an Indian way" entailed an inevitable reference to traditional Native American attitudes and values. These, in turn, could hardly be comprehended when dealt with in isolation from traditional Indian culture which was primarily oral.

Thus, drawing heavily upon their tribal cultural heritage as Momaday, Silko, and Welch were, they found themselves, as novelists, in a somewhat paradoxical situation: determined to write "like Indians," they knew they had to render orality into writing, for all traditional Native American narrative and poetry was oral. "Paradox" is indeed a proper word here, as the problem was far from a mere change of medium; it involved an apparently futile search for a compromise between the two conflicting attitudes towards language manifested in two, mutually exclusive, systems of poetics.

In all oral cultures (be it Native American or medieval Celtic) words were treated with respect if not reverence; some of them were even regarded as sacred, their usage restricted by taboos. Through verbal magic an individual could influence the supernatural, just as the tribal myths provided the community with a shared identity and imbued the landscape with spiritual

significance. On the level of presentation, this belief in the word's power resulted in repetitions of whole words and phrases so characteristic of oral narrative and, especially, ritualistic formulas. Repeating the phrase increased its magic power and made it easier for the listener to remember (the latter so crucial in an orally-transmitted culture).[1]

The novel, of all written forms, seems particularly inimical to orality. (Indeed, repetitiveness has always been considered a basic stylistic flaw in traditional prose rhetoric.) The concepts of exposition, plot, linear development, or background presentation, so crucial to the novel, are of minor importance in an oral tradition, where stories usually begin *in medias res*[2] and are quite economic with any background description. Consequently, a traditional Native American narrative would be much closer (if comparable at all) to *The Odyssey* and *Beowulf* rather than to *Tom Jones* or *Great Gatsby*.

Aware of this inherent dichotomy, contemporary Native American prose writers do not write their novels as if they were "told" by the traditional storyteller because then their works would no longer count as novels indeed. Yet, no Indian novelist trying to render the old ways of their people can totally disregard orality. Putting it bluntly, traditional cultural "Indianness" equates orality, whereas a completely "oral" novel is a contradiction in terms.

That is why Leslie Marmon Silko, James Welch, and Novarro Scott Momaday, whose novels (*Ceremony*, *Winter in the Blood*, and *House Made of Dawn* respectively) I intend to discuss here, have on the whole decided to treat oral tradition as a frame of reference rather than a conflicting stylistic device.

[1] Cf. the following Navaho chant:

I am the White Corn Boy.
I walk in sight of my home.
I walk in plain sight of my home.
I walk on the straight path which is towards my home.
I walk to the entrance of my home.
I arrive at the beautiful goxids curtain which hangs at the doorway.

I arrive at the entrance of my home.
I am in the middle of my home.
I am at the back of my home.
I am on top of the pollen footprint.
I am on top of the pollen seed print.
I am like the Most High Power Whose Ways Are Beautiful.
Before me it is beautiful,
Behind me it is beautiful,
Under me it is beautiful,
Above me it is beautiful,
All around me it is beautiful.

(Natachee S. Momaday 1975: 95)

[2] On the introductory page of his memoir *The Names* Momaday writes: "When I turn my mind to my early life, it is the imaginative part of it that comes first and irresistibly into reach, and of that part I take hold. This is one way to tell a story. In this instance it is my way, and it is the way of my people. When Pohd-lohk told a story he began by being quiet. Then he said Ah-keah-de, 'They were camping,' and he said it every time. I have tried to write in the same way, in the same spirit. Imagine: They were camping."

(Although *House Made of Dawn* and *Ceremony*, as will be shown later, do include notable exceptions.) Starting with the same purpose, the three novelists have nevertheless pursued distinct strategies of their own in order to incorporate the oral tradition element in general and the power-of-the-word motif in particular into their fiction.

Thus Silko's *Ceremony*, having a healing ritual as its central theme, overtly becomes a verbal cure itself. The book opens with the appearance of Ts'its'tsi'nako ("Thought-Woman") who is "sitting in her room and whatever she thinks about appears" (1). What follows, then, seems but a magical creation of Thought-Woman (clearly Silko herself) who, like medicine men and women of old, deems words to be the most powerful medicine: "They [the stories] aren't just entertainment. Don't be fooled. They are all we have, you see, all we have to fight off illness and death" (2).

Throughout the narrative Silko intersperses Laguna myths corresponding to the plot's development. This structural manoeuvre clearly suggests that the novel can be interpreted as a contemporary version of an archetypal mythical story. Significantly, the book's final myth implies the temporariness of the plot's happy ending:

> It [the witchery] is dead for now,
> It is dead for now.
> It is dead for now,
> It is dead *for now*.
>
> (261, emphasis mine)

In other words, the battle with the evil has been won, but the war is far from over; the drama will have to be re-enacted over and over again. Perhaps it was for this implication of cyclic recurrence (typical of Indian oral narratives) that Momaday called *Ceremony* a "telling" rather than a novel.[3]

The structure of Silko's "telling" could be graphically represented by a set of three concentric circles, each one standing for a different narrative plane. The innermost circle would stand for the protagonist's return to sanity through the healing ceremony, which in turn is a part of the bigger circle of the recuperation myth (from drought to verdure), the latter being also part of the story pattern devised by Thought-Woman whose words begin and conclude the book (the third, all-encompassing, circle).

It is not only through structural devices, however, that Silko points to her affinities with oral tradition. She also makes the word-as-power motif a recurring theme permeating the whole novel.

It is the cursing chant, which "prayed the rain away" (14), that, combined with the protagonist's cultural inarticulateness, initiates Tayo's mental prob-

[3] "Leslie Silko's *Ceremony* is an extraordinary novel, if indeed 'novel' is the right word. It is more precisely a telling, the celebration of a tradition and form that are older and more nearly universal than the novel as such" (Velie 1982: 107).

lems. Alienated from Laguna culture after his return from the war, the protagonist feels estranged from the reservation community also on the linguistic plane. When talking to the elders of the tribe,

> Tayo had to strain to catch the meaning, dense with place names he had never heard. His language was childish, interspersed with English words, and he could feel shame tightening in his throat (34).

Significantly, Silko implies the mixed-blood veteran's estrangement from the native landscape by mentioning "place names he had never heard," just as earlier in the novel she underscores Tayo's searing loss of self-identity by mentioning that "it had been a long time since he had thought about having a name" (16). The latter, put in a Native American context, gains an ominous import, since in traditional Indian cultures the name was a coded message, a verbal hint about the individual's personality, a spell-bound little story cherished by the owner.[4] Far from being a mere identification label, it was a source of personal pride and the anchor of self-identity. Thus to a traditional Native American the quoted line could just as well read: "It had been a long time since he had considered himself alive." Among the power-imbued words the person's name was one of the most sacred.

But the word in *Ceremony*, like any powerful medicine, is a two-edged sword: its power can cure or kill. One of the myths recalls a long-ago tricksters' contest won by an evil witch whose magic trick amounted to telling a story that was "happening" as it was being told. The narrative about a distant white-skinned people living across the Big Water proved startling enough to get its author the first prize:

> They see no life
> When they look
> They see only objects.
> The world is a dead thing for them
> the trees and rivers are not alive.
> the mountains and stones are not alive.
> The deer and bear are objects
> They see no life.
> They fear

[4] In the 19th century there lived on the Great Plains a Sioux chief whose name literally translated into English as Young-Man-Afraid-Of-His-Horses: a peculiar name for a notorious dare-devil the man was. However, each Indian name tells a story that is hidden to outsiders unless explained to them. The warrior's name was bestowed upon him in honour of a brave charge he had once led, and its meaning amounted to someting like: "he is so brave, so feared, that his enemies run away when merely seeing his horse, even if he is not on it." Similarly, Lame Deer (a contemporary Sioux medicine man) says in Richard Erdoes' book: "Words, too, are symbols and convey great powers, especially names. Not Charles, Dick and George. There's not much power in those. But Red Cloud, Black Elk, Whirlwind, Two Moons, Lame Deer—these names have a relationship to the Great Spirit. Each Indian name has a story behind it, a vision, a quest for dreams. We receive great gifts from the source of the name; it links us to nature, to the animal nations. It gives power. You can lean on a name, get strength from it. It is a special name for you and you alone—not a Dick, George, Charles kind of thing" (1972: 105).

> They fear the world.
> They destroy what they fear.
> They fear themselves (135).

The story ends with the prophecy of the white-skinned people crossing the Big Water to seize the Indian land. To the fervent pleas of other contestants demanding that the tale be called back, the witch replies: "It is already coming" (138). The power of the word, once evoked, cannot be stopped.

Words and magic seem inseparable throughout the novel, also in a bitterly ironic way when Silko refers to the present situation on the Laguna reservation. Just as the old-days medicine has been replaced by liquor—"Medicine for the anger that made them hurt, for the pain of the loss, medicine for tight bellies and choked-up throats" (40)—so has the ancient storytelling been supplanted by bar chatter frequently accompanied by "the beer bottles pounding on the counter tops like drums" (43). This drinking ritual of temporary forgetfulness combined with drunken storytelling about "good times in Oakland and San Diego" (43) clearly presents a dwarfed counterpart of the old healing-through-words ceremonies once performed by medicine men.

One such ceremony is performed in the book by Betonie, an old Navaho medicine man whom Tayo's family call for help when white psychiatrists prove helpless in curing the depressed veteran. Betonie's treatment, which is a preliminary to a larger healing ceremony, consists in telling his patient a story of how Coyote bewitched a man and how the man's relatives took him to the summit of Dark Mountain to see four old Bear People who had "the power to restore the mind." Again, it is a STORY that triggers the process of Tayo's mental recovery.

It is also the story, or rather its absence, that proves vital in determining the fate of the deliberately nameless narrator-protagonist of James Welch's *Winter in the Blood*. The structure of Welch's novel, unlike that of *Ceremony*, does not draw direct parallels with a mythical pattern. Also unlike Silko's novel (where the interspersed myths read, due to the frequently employed repetitious patterns, almost like traditional Laguna storytelling literally transferred into written English), *Winter in the Blood* shows no traces of oral stylization. Instead (and, in this respect, similarly to Silko) Welch refers to his native (Blackfeet) oral tradition by making it the novel's recurring theme. More precisely, he stresses the validity of oral tradition by showing the lacerating effects of its neglect in the life of the protagonist.

For what the nameless narrator misses is the story of both his Blackfeet spiritual heritage and of his own ancestry; he knows little about his grandmother and almost nothing about the mixed-blood Dougie, his supposed grandfather. The only people who tell, or used to tell, stories in the novel are either dead (First Raise, the protagonist's father) or marked with old age and physical frailties. (Yellow Calf, the family's friend, is old and blind, and the

narrator's grandmother lives in the impenetrable world of her own thoughts and rarely revealed memories.) The ancient storytelling tradition is virtually dead. So are the traditional communal bonds.

Recollecting a flood on the local stream, for instance, Lame Bull (the narrator's stepfather) claims that the narrator was at that time not much more than a gleam in his father's eye. The protagonist replies: "I remember that. I was almost twenty" (231). Despite the obvious comic effect here (the text contains so many of these that Alan R. Velie classified it as comic fiction) the conflicting versions of the same tale widen the mental breach between the interlocutors. As Kathleen Sands rightly notices, "the story does not work [i.e. does not build a community] because it does not grow out of a shared perception" (231).

Throughout the novel, separate stories or conflicting variants of the same one create turmoil rather than bring emotional balance. When the narrator and his mother (Teresa) retell the story of Amos, the one duck that survived the neglected water tub, the protagonist becomes confused and mixes up Amos and the turkey. When, later on, he asks Teresa why his father stayed away so much she becomes defensive and, purposely evading the answer, starts to recollect First Raise's infamous death instead. (He died in a snowdrift, out of exposure, on his way home from the bar.) Finally, she accuses her son of being a drifter too. The whole episode only deepens the narrator's alienation instead of bringing comfort resulting from shared grief.

The only stories the protagonist does remember are those spoken by First Raise and the grandmother. The latter revived the old days and ways of the Blackfeet—times of buffalo hunts and war parties; it "revealed a life we never knew," says the narrator of himself and his brother, remembering even the gestures and animation, the traditional storytelling devices employed by their otherwise listless grandmother. Indeed, that was the only time when she shook her apathy away: "When the old lady had related this story, many years ago, her eyes were not flat and filmy; they were black like a spider's belly and the small black hands drew triumphant pictures in the air" (36). The grandmother's narrative, however, has also remained incomplete; the senile woman dropped the storytelling long ago; she is silent now, lost in her own memories and physical frailties. The promising thread linking the past with the present has been cut.

First Raise's storytelling contributed a lot to the protagonist's kind memory of his father. Every autumn First Raise planned to hunt deer in Glacier Park, oiling his gun and explaining to the sons how the hunting should be carried through. He never realized his plans though: "The dream, the planning and preparation were all part of a ritual—something to be done when the haying was over and the cattle brought down from the hills" (7). Apparently, it was not the action but the story—the verbal ceremony—that

counted to First Raise. Poaching on the Park territory entailed the risk of getting caught by the rangers. Perhaps that is why the story appealed so much to him; it combined the elements of hunting and warpath tales once told by his Blackfeet ancestors at a camp bonfire. Significantly, the protagonist seems to miss this annual storytelling as much as he misses his dead father.

Eventually, it is Yellow Calf's story that proves climactic to the narrator's painful quest for the lost identity: it reveals that Yellow Calf and the protagonist's grandmother had been lovers for twenty five years; Teresa was their child. As Sands argues, the hitherto incomplete story the narrator had heard from his grandmother had merged with the one told by Yellow Calf, and with that completion the narrator knows his true origins: "The story has done more than give the narrator a personal identity. It has given him a family, a tribal identity. It has invested the land with history and meaning, for Yellow Calf still lives in that place..." (Sands, 235). Moreover, it is worth noticing how, following Yellow Calf's revelation, the narrator's hitherto arid and taciturn style transforms into a vividly poetic one:

> And so we shared this secret in the presence of ghosts, in wind that called forth the muttering tepees, the blowing snow, the white air of the horses' nostrils. The cottonwoods behind us, their dead white branches angling to the threatening clouds, sheltered these ghosts as they had sheltered the camp that winter (159).

The language becomes picturesque and detailed, and the story merges the past with the present thus performing the crucial function of oral tradition—providing continuity with the past and pride in the tribal ancestry.

Welch pays a tribute to orality not only by making an act of storytelling the climax of his novel; he does so through the book's structure as well. Although, as it has already been indicated, *Winter in the Blood* follows no mythical pattern, its structure does emphasize the atmosphere of cultural void pervading the whole narrative and resulting from the absence of oral tradition in the protagonist's life. The author achieves this effect through the loose, episodic and almost chaotic structure of the novel applicably labelled by Sands as a "broken narrative" (231). Thus the apparent lack of cohesion, strengthened by the taciturn language, perfectly reflects the narrator's lack of coherent story of himself. An extreme example of this purposeful incompleteness is the airplane man episode: the narrator's brief encounter with a mysterious fellow who, claiming to have been pursued by the FBI, asks for help in crossing the Canadian border and does get arrested a few hours later, leaving the puzzle unsolved; "Well, that's another story," he keeps saying (45), but he never tells it. Similarly inconclusive are the protagonist's encounters with the town women and with Agnes, his Cree girl-friend.

In sum, the episodic structure of *Winter in the Blood* conveys the narrator's shattered-self image as efficiently as its arid style.

The structure of N. Scott Momaday's *House Made of Dawn* also hints at the Kiowa writer's oral affinities; his novel begins and ends with the two

Native American words—"Dypaloh" and "Qtsedaba" respectively—which in traditional Tanoan storytelling used to begin and conclude a tale. Similarly, the cyclic recurrence of an oral narrative is suggested by the novel's framework; it starts and ends with the same scene of Abel (the protagonist) running in a ceremonial race for good harvest, just as throughout the book frequent flashbacks from the characters' lives combined with the multiple-point-of-view narration seem reminiscent of the *medias res* fragmentariness of a traditional oral tale.

More importantly, however, Momaday is the only novelist from the discussed trio who tries to adapt traditional oral techniques to fiction not only as a separate element of an overall structure (i.e. a myth or a poem interweaved with the novel's body) but also as a stylistic device fully integrated into prose diction. One of the, admittedly rare, instances of this bold, though risky, formal experimentation occurs at the end of *House Made of Dawn*:

> The soft and sudden sound of their going, swift and breaking away all at once, startled him, and he began to run after them. He was running and his body cracked open with pain, and he was running on. He was running and there was no reason to run but the running itself and the land and the dawn appearing (191).

Judged from a traditional prose rhetoric perspective the quoted passage can be regarded as a failure. So indeed it was by critics like William James Smith who wrote in 1968 that Momaday's language "makes you itch for a blue pencil to knock out all the interstitial words that maintain the soporific flow" (Standiford 1982: 187). Fifteen years later, writing his brilliant defence of Momaday's style, Lester A. Standiford retorted that "of course one could trim that passage down to something like 'The rest of them started to run before Abel did, so he hurried to catch up and felt the true meaning of life as he did,' but it is obvious that the passage depends on, actually requires, the repetition to make the reader FEEL the change taking place" (Standiford 1982: 187).

Appealing as the Standiford's reply sounds, it nevertheless defends the disputed passage on the same grounds as Smith attacks it, i.e. those of the written (as opposed to oral) poetics. Thus both critics seem to overlook the fact that the Kiowa novelist's style defends itself when viewed in its close relation to Native American orality. No wonder the "interstitial" diction "gets in the way of content" (another phrase of Smith); so it must because the "content" here is essentially oral, i.e. cannot be separated from the performance-duration aspect. In oral cultures repetition (whose magical and practical functions have already been mentioned) was also a mode of celebration: it prolonged a joyful or sacred moment in a narrative. Employing the "cumbersome" repetition in the running scene, Momaday seems but to celebrate—in the oral mode—the protagonist's final victory. (In the novel Abel's participation in the race symbolizes his return to the native culture and spiritual rebirth.) Regrettably, this effect is naturally lost on a literary critic who, otherwise able, is totally unfamiliar with Indian oral tradition.

Orality appears in the Momaday's novel not only as a structural and stylistic device but as a recurring theme as well. Indeed, what unites, otherwise so varied, *House Made of Dawn*, *Winter in the Blood*, and *Ceremony* is the motif of the protagonist's cultural inarticulateness stemming from his alienation from the tribal oral tradition.

Abel's inarticulateness is twofold. On the one hand it springs from his estrangement from the Tanoan verbal culture which would enable him, as an Indian, to express his relation to community and place. Alone in the hills,

> he wanted to make a song out of the colored canyon, the way women of Torreon made songs upon their looms out of colored yarn, but he had not got the right words together. It would have been a creation song; he would have sung lowly of the first world, of fire and flood, and of the emergence of dawn from the hills (57).

On the other hand, as Lawrence Evers points out, the protagonist is "plagued by a surfeit of words from white men" (Evers, 223). In the third chapter of the novel, Benally, the Navaho narrator of that part, also instinctively looks for the source, of Abel's plight in the domain of verbal expression:

> They [the white people] have a lot of WORDS, and you know they mean something, but you don't know what, and your own words are no good because they're not the same; they're different, and they're the only words you've got (144).

Being one of Momaday's favourite themes (present also in his *The Names* and *The Way to Rainy Mountain*), the word as sacred and creative force appears in the novel not only in Abel's context. In the second chapter it is addressed explicitly by Tosamah, a Kiowa "Priest of the Sun" (curiously resembling Momaday himself), during a sermon he delivers to a pan-Indian congregation in Los Angeles. Well acquainted with Native American versions of Christianity (the Tanoan Pueblo peoples have been Catholics since the Spanish conquest in the 16th century), the author of *House Made of Dawn* feels particularly interested in the Gospel of John, where the word is presented in divine terms: "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was God" (John: 1, 1). In the novel, this Bible phrase is quoted by Tosamah, who consequently grants the power of creation to the word alone; only through words can Indians create spiritual reality and express their relations to the native landscape and other people.

In his original exegesis of the Gospel of John, Tosamah juxtaposes the Indian and Anglo-American attitudes to words, emphasizing the awe and respect words enjoy in Native American cultures which are founded on oral tradition:

> In the white man's world, language, too—and the way in which the white man thinks of it—has undergone a process of change. The white man takes such things as words and literatures for granted, as indeed he must, for nothing in his world is so commonplace. On every side of him there are words by the millions, an unending succession of pamphlets and papers, letters and books, bills and bulletins, commentaries and conversations. He has diluted and multiplied the Word, and words have begun to close in upon him. He is sated and insen-

sitive; his regard for language – for the Word itself – as an instrument of creation has diminished nearly to the point of no return. It may be that he will perish by the Word.

But it was not always so with him, and it is not so with you [the Indians]. Consider for a moment that old Kiowa woman, my grandmother, whose use of language was confined to speech. And be assured that her regard for words was always keen in proportion as she depended upon them. You see, for her words were medicine; they were magic and invisible. They came from nothing into sound and meaning. They were beyond price; they could neither be bought nor sold. And she never threw words away (89).

Thus, compared to *Ceremony* and *Winter in the Blood*, *House Made of Dawn* takes a pro-oral stand most explicitly. No wonder, then, that in the final scene of the race Abel's spiritual recovery is manifested through his singing the "House Made of Dawn" prayer chant; re-entering the Tanoan culture equated inevitably the return to oral tradition.

All in all, viewed next to Silko's and Welch's, Momaday's use of orality in fiction seems the broadest one.

In *Ceremony*, the Laguna writer provides her novel with a mythical framework, intertwining the oral myth parallel to the plot's development with the main narrative. Besides, by declaring her work a verbal cure itself ("all we have to fight off illness and death") and by making the power of the word its recurring theme, she openly indicates her oral tradition affinities.

Welch, in turn, though also focusing on structure, avoids in *Winter in the Blood* any direct borrowings from oral tradition (in the form of myths, poems, tales, or repetitious syntax). Instead, the Blackfeet novelist employs a purposefully loose and episodic plot construction, combined with a taciturn style, to reflect the protagonist's shattered self image that originates in his estrangement from traditional orality (the "broken narrative" technique). He also turns the story revealing the narrator's family roots into the climax of the novel.

Momaday's concern for tribal storytelling also manifests itself on the structural level: beginning and ending the novel with Native American words as well as with the same scene (the ceremonial race for good harvest), he implies the idea of cyclic recurrence (characteristic of the oral narrative), in the same way as his polyphonic (multiple-point-of-view) and episodic (indeed almost collage-like) narration seems reminiscent of ancient orality. (Both the idea of single authorship and of a linear plot are essentially alien to oral tradition.) Furthermore, like the other two novels, *House Made of Dawn* has the protagonist who suffers from the absence of oral tradition in his life (the motif of cultural inarticulateness). More importantly, however, the Kiowa novelist goes even further in his attempts to incorporate the elements of oral stylistics into fiction and, stepping onto the disputed territory of writing conventions, he applies oral-like repetitions to his prose as a conscious, though sometimes conflicting, literary device (resulting in what Smith denigrated as "soporific flow"). Whatever their artistic value, Momaday's formal experiments have, since 1968, undoubtedly inspired many Native American writers (including Silko in her 1980s *Storyteller*) in their search for an "oral" poetics.

In sum, reading the three novels from the oral tradition perspective, one cannot but conclude that the constant reference to ancient tribal orality is indeed one of the central themes of contemporary Native American fiction.

The words written by Momaday in 1988 seem to confirm that conclusion:

We have side by side on our library shelves anthologies of American Indian songs and stories from the oral tradition and books by contemporary American Indian poets and novelists. We must understand that the dichotomy is more apparent than real, that the one expression informs the other and that the voice is the same. The continuity is unbroken (Elliot 1988: 15).

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