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Łódź

THE CONCEPT OF REALISM IN THE MODERN NARRATIVE PROSE

Radical changes in the narrative prose of the last eighty years are a well-known fact and make a puzzling premise of divergent interpretations. The course of these transformations has been the object of thorough analyses, and yet the question — what are the trends of their development? — does not seem less vital now than in the period between the wars, when the features of the twentieth-century prose became distinct enough to provoke a discussion on the so-called crisis of realistic tradition in the novel¹.

The controversy concerns the meaning of that phenomenon. — Does it result from the development of the realistic trend of narrative prose? Does it signify a continuation, a rationalized, parodistic, ironical use of traditional conventions and an experimental exploitation of the newly born ones? Or does it mean that this trend is fading, that it is drowned down by non-realistic tendencies which are the leading factor of the transformation of modern literature?

Putting it otherwise — an answer must be given whether in the twentieth-century novel we may find new consecutive links of realistic prose — further phases of its historical cycle of development, or whether we have to consider a radical parting with the former cognitive philosophical inspiration, existential problems, and a totally changed conception and structure of the world represented in a literary work, as the dominant trend which decides on the perspectives of narrative prose. The dispute on the meaning and the direction of narrative, fabular or descriptive transformations leads us to this question.

This question directly or implicitly accompanies every ambitious attempt at a definition of modern novelistic poetics, whatever may be the position taken in the

¹ This article is a summary of problems which constitute the second part of a work containing: a) a critical survey of views on the scope of the concept of realism in literary studies, b) an analysis of the concept of problems of realism in connection with the transformations of modern narrative prose, and c) an outline of the perspectives of realism in modern literature. For the summary of part I see: *O pojęciu realizmu w powieści dziewiętnastego i dwudziestego wieku* (*On the Concept of Realism in the XIXth and XXth Century Novel*), „Pamiętnik Literacki”, 1963, nr 2.

dispute. We find it in the works of British and American theoreticians of the modern novel: J. Warren Beach, A. Tate, J. C. Ransom, M. Schorer, Cleanth Brooks, H. Levin and D. Daiches. It dominates Lukács' studies and appears in the essays of Szklowski: we find it in the works of W. Kayser, W. Emrich, E. Kahler and also in the diverging conceptions of J. P. Sartre and M. Blanchot; in the panoramic reviews of R. M. Albérès and G. Picon. It inspires the polemical interventions of the defenders of the continuity of development of the "rhetoric of fiction" of J. Paulhan (*Les Fleurs de Tarbes*) or Wayne C. Booth (*The Rhetoric of Fiction*). On the other hand this question has provoked some years ago the declaration of T. S. Eliot (*Ulysses, Order and Myth*) arguing that the birth of a new "mythical order" determines the dynamic development of modern literature.

In 1923, when greeting the newly published *Ulysses* by Joyce, Eliot wrote: — "I hold this book to be the most important expression which the present age has found; it is a book to which we all are indebted, and from which none of us can escape" (p. 120). "It has the importance of a scientific discovery. No one else has built a novel upon such a foundation before; it has never been necessary. I am not begging the question in calling *Ulysses* a »novel«; and if you call it an epic it will not matter. If it is not a novel that is simply because the novel is a form which will no longer serve [...] The novel ended with Flaubert and with James [...] In using the myth, in manipulating a continuous parallel between contemporaneity and antiquity, Mr. Joyce is pursuing a method which others must pursue after him. They will not be imitators any more than the scientist who uses the discoveries of an Einstein in pursuing his own independent further investigations. It is simply a way of controlling, of ordering, of giving a shape and a significance to the immense panorama of futility and anarchy which is contemporary history [...] Instead of narrative method, we may use the mythical method. It is, I seriously believe, a step toward making the modern world possible for art" (pp. 123—124)².

And so the criterion of the modern value of a literary work, the condition of rescuing the author and the work from the contemporary chaos and futility, is finding a foothold in an arbitrarily created order, in a mythical parallelism of time, in the unity of human aspiration beyond history. Arnold Toynbee has undertaken a similar attempt in the philosophy of history; Ernst R. Curtius in his conception of the continuity of culture wanted to make use of Toynbee's suggestions as well as of the idea of the *fonction fabulatrice* of Bergson which — we may add — was shown to be groundless by Lévi-Strauss in his studies on primitive mentality and art.

Let us replace the expression "mythical method" by any metaphysical argument for the notion of transcendence, such as were introduced by theoreticians

² T. S. Eliot, *Ulysses, Order and Myth in Forms of Modern Fiction*, ed. by W. C. O'Connor, University of Minnesota, 1948, pp. 120, 123—124.

of parabolic or allegoric-symbolic poetics — and we shall find in Eliot's thesis the model of the formula which determines the discriminants of individuality of the literature of the twentieth century, a literature conceived in opposition an imitative conception of the world presented in the traditional novel — as it were — reproductive always and topical, a novel of phenomena and semblance.

Is the method of contrasting right and useful? I think that notwithstanding the undoubted pertinence of Eliot's approach to the problems which are disturbing modern literature, his alternative conclusions taken up by a host of followers are leading to generalizations as deceitful as those of the antithetic system of Lukács's: realism — antirealism³.

Both systems, although of diametrically different gauge of value, are stamped by characteristic limitations dating from the period of the antipositivistic crisis and the polemics with the naturalistic theory of culture. The alternative: natural man — historical man formulated for the first time by E. B. Taylor in *Primitive Culture* (1871), and incessantly discussed in sociology, has since ever deformed many a concept of man and of history. In those concepts the antinomy remains unsurmounted though its components are modified.

On the one hand, the notion of an unchangeable elemental human nature underwent a differentiation. "The natural man" in modern literature, and all the more in philosophy and sociology, is seldom confined to a biological status, although such a reduction may be found in some instances of sensualistic poetry and prose. But in an overwhelming majority of his incarnations, he appears as a being characterized by a metaphysical longing, a conscious or unconscious desire fulfilled in the pursuit of transcendency, or realizing some archetypes concealed in the subconscious and released in the need of myth. A myth becomes then a deciding form of thought, not a complementary one. A form which distinguishes the human being, and which is held as absolutely necessary in all the phases of the presence of man in the world, so that he may find his universal identity.

This transcendentalism, however, which is naturalistic in its content, often gets a wrong answer which vitiates the right polemical intent. Because it is a seeming answer or no answer at all, if you oppose to the notion of "natural man" such a concept of historical nature of man as ignores man's participation in the objective world of nature and his ecological distinctiveness. This concept seriously underestimates the relatively stable set of psychological predispositions and pays no attention to the problem of logical structure of human thought. It mars the identity of the human person explaining man as a realization of an all embracing history in Hegelian sense, or as a medium which transmits the consciousness of class, group, environment.

³ G. Lukács, *Wider den missverstandenen Realismus*, Hamburg 1958.

It seems that just such alternative propositions, although sometimes blurred and confused, constitute yet in the last analysis the real ground of antinomical divisions appearing in the area of culture. A wrong absolutization of the components of the antinomy causes deceptions in the resulting contrasts.

In the light of those exciting and still discussed problems, Gramsci's view of the development of culture seems particularly interesting. His whole idea was born in the struggle against the naturalistic theory of culture, the vulgar determinism, the positivistic evolutionism. As well as Eliot, Ortega y Gasset, and Lukács, he had a clear awareness of the disintegration of modern culture. He puts therefore as a basic aim the creation of real conditions for the "cultural unification" of the human kind. But at the same time he perceives with amazing perspicacity how complex the phenomena are which shape cultural situations, and he warns, that it is a great mistake to pretend that there exists only one line of progressive movement⁴. This statement *mutatis mutandis* hits Eliot as well as Lukács in the last stage of his activity.

Gramsci, like Lukács, battled, not always successfully, with the tradition of the last great philosophical systems, aiming at the integration of Marxian philosophy of culture. They both polemized with vulgar determinism in the study of consciousness and its creations. The basic work of young Lukács and his occasional critical articles against introducing mechanistic relicts into historical materialism, his passionate battle against hiding what constitutes the very substance of Marxist methods: — the fact of reducing all economical and "sociological" phenomena to human and social relations⁵ — all that witnesses to a tendency analogous in its most valuable views, and in its one-sided "anthropological trend", with the aspirations of Gramsci.

Young Lukács and Gramsci very often met in principal theoretical stand-points and in particular historical observations. Thus, for instance, they formulated similar theses about the development of the national literatures in the nineteenth century, about the role of the pattern of British and French cultures, about the origin and the results of provincialism. But for Gramsci the basic and undeniable guiding line in all the periods of activity and in every field of research is the acknowledgement of the multiplicity of layers and streams in the development of culture.

One often forgets — he wrote — (and it seems that these words must be interpreted rather in epistemological categories than in ontological ones, rather as conceptions of the development of the consciousness of history than of a historical process) — that in every moment of history there is a struggle of rationality against irrationality, if by "irrationality" we shall mean that what will never win, will never

⁴ A. Gramsci, *Pisma wybrane* (Selected Writings), Książka i Wiedza, Warszawa 1961, p. 192.

⁵ G. Lukács' Review of Bucharin's *Theory of Historical Materialism*, „Archiv für Geschichte des Sozialismus und der Arbeitbewegung”, Leipzig 1952, pp. 217—218.

become real history, but at bottom is also rational, because it is inseparably bound with the rational and therefore cannot be rejected. And although in history what is general wins the day, nevertheless what is "particular" battles also endeavouring to gain ground and finally succeeds in some measure, because it signifies nothing else than a certain development stage of what is "general"⁶.

It follows from Gramsci's words that as yet there was not a period in history of culture which had achieved perfect rationality, no one had attained an absolutely objective concept of reality. Let us add that "culture" signifies here cultural consciousness and her objectivized products; otherwise the cognitive category of "rationality" would be inapplicable.

— Objective means "humanly objective", and that may strictly correspond to "universally subjective" — writes Gramsci. — The man cognizes objectively to the extent in which this knowledge is real for the whole historically united humanity enclosed in a homogeneous cultural system. But that process of historical verification takes place as inner contradictions which separate human society disappear contradictions which condition the growth of groups and ideologies that are not concretely universal and are promptly declining, just because of the practical provenience of their content. Hence there is a need of a struggle for objectivity [...] and that struggle is a struggle for a cultural unification of mankind⁷.

Gramsci, a lover of antiquity and expert in classical philosophy, an investigator of national literary tradition and a methodologist of politics, looked in all the fields of social life and culture for real premises for a struggle for a concrete and objectively universal unification. That is why he passionately tracked the traces of theological transcendental thought in the fatalistic economical determinism. That is why he fought against the dangerous belief that superstructures are only apparent, after he had examined their social functions and the historical origin of ideological subjectivism. That is why, in his endeavour to prove scientifically the immanentism of Marxian philosophy, he obstinately returned to the conception of a historical block. He did not, alas, elaborate the final shape of his theses on the essential unity of the nature of the elements of the base, and of its historical meaning, as well as of the nature of elements constituting the superstructures. His striking theses incited to discussion.

It was not granted to him to make coherent the links of discovery of his thoughts that were born in the struggle with the bourgeois diagnostics of the crisis of European philosophy and culture. He did not live to state precisely the ontological categories, which were the foundation of his controversial theses defining the notions of reality, history and human being; theses which were an ambitious but one-sided anthropological attempt to surmount the antinomy: nature-history. His Hegelian terminology does not elucidate the idea of empirical reality and its relation to the historical

⁶ Gramsci, *op. cit.*, vol. 2, p. 326.

⁷ *Op. cit.*, vol. 1.

process, and it practically veils a concept which is polemic towards the author of *The Phenomenology of the Spirit*, a concept concerning the role of the consciousness of the historical man. Nevertheless, among the methodological propositions concerning researches on the dynamics of the modern cultural processes, Gramsci's theses belong to those that penetrate most deeply into the sources of the crisis, into its manifold manifestations and into the real conditions to overcome it.

His analyses of the philosophical sense of mystified problems are of particular interest for a literary critic; we find them in Gramsci's studies on the origin and the function of myth in literature and in social activity. His reflections show a concern the scope and relevance of which are revealed in a wide range of studies: from Freud and Jung to K. Golstein and A. M. Hocart, from E. B. Tylor and G. Frazer to Boas, E. Durkheim and B. Malinowski, from E. Cassirer with Paul Radin to J. P. Sartre, H. Lefebvre, R. Caillois and M. Eliade.

Gramsci was concerned, first of all, with the social role of the myth, with historical premisses of myth-creating tendencies in social theories and historiosophic systems. He studied therefore the part they played in the seventeenth-century utopias, in Sorel's and Croce's conceptions of the theory of the ethic-political element in history. But at the same time he disclosed the hidden mechanisms of the "myth-creating method" in vast and variagated fields of culture. He did it in a way much more convincing than Eliot and Toynbee; in his analyses he seemed to anticipate the specialistic studies of G. Thompson, Cl. Lévi-Strauss and E. Fromm. He found elements of myth-creating method in universalistic parables of the literature of the twentieth century, in allegoric-symbolical motives of folklore and also in the compensative role of personal patterns and in the models of individual human situations shaped by realistic narrative prose.

He perceived then the presence and the part played by the "myth-creating method" in the literary context of realistic works, and he observed its penetration into their scope. But he never drew a deceptive analogy between the structure of myth-creating thinking and the mental structure of a realist's work. He outlined the problem in innovative but sketchy observations. Premises to its solution will be gathered gradually in the next twenty five years by social anthropology, sociology of cognition and science, by psychology and ethno-linguistics⁸.

His participation in the scientific formation of twentieth-century culture, his intellectual readiness to tackle the problems which impassioned its creators made Gramsci a real partner in the discussion about its meaning and the trend of its transformations. This is the reason why he took special notice of a phenomenon which can be described as a sudden renaissance of myth-creating tendencies appearing in various versions: evasive, optimistic and catastrophic. As he considered the "judging thought" as an active link of historical process, in those tendencies

⁸ I treat this question more extensively in a dissertation that will be published in *Studia z literatury polskiej XX w.* (*Studies on Polish Literature*).

he looked for a mystified expression of universalistic and integrating trends. He analysed their value in the concrete historical social activity for the above mentioned "concrete objectively universal unification". But on the occasion of his studies of the role of subjective consciousness in the cognitive process, he pointed out the futility of antinomic divisions supposedly elucidating cultural dynamics. The perspective of the situation of the twentieth century he has shown, creates new premises of an analysis of the multiple and complex phenomena of the period.

I think it is worth while to appreciate the part these indications may play in the discussion concerning the trends of development of the realistic narrative prose. The cultural context which is shaping the realistic poetics of the twentieth century seems to be their main point. Sartre's smart formula "every novelistic technique refers to the author's metaphysics"⁹ gives a perfect opportunity to illustrate the problem; but to be exact let us replace the term "metaphysics" by "ontology".

The nature of transformations that the prose of the late nineteenth century underwent would be certainly a rebus if we did not read in them the change of the notions of reality, the views of history, and new conceptions of consciousness and human individual. But we must also bear in mind the fact, which seems obvious, that there is no typological sample of modern philosophical-cognitive standpoints which overlaps any typology of narrative and representing structures. Sartre's formula, always necessary in each analytical procedure, cannot be reversed. In the actual stage of development of narrative prose, no philosophic-cognitive posture can *ex definitione* refer to a definite, exclusively own "technique".

The fact also ought to be stressed that this statement does not refer exclusively to the frequently analysed phenomenon of the circulation of conventions which have lost their connection with their social-ideological origin and became "autonomous" according to the well known expression of Lukács and Hauser.

Lévi-Strauss discovered the similar phenomenon in the transformations of the primitive "culture of the mask" when pointing at the gradual change of meaning of certain rituals and objects. In this case however the process was not realized by those who took part in the scene of the primitive culture. The changing part, played by the conventions throughout centuries, was thoroughly documented by H. Focillon and P. Francastel, E. R. Curtius and a Pleiad of scholars; let us mention among them V. Szklowski¹⁰.

⁹ J. P. Sartre, *Situations*, Gallimard 1947, vol. 1, p. 71.

¹⁰ See G. Lukács, *Essays über Realismus*, Berlin 1945; A. Hauser, *The Social History of Art*, vol. 1—4, New York 1958 (Vintage Books); idem, *The Philosophy of History*, London 1959 (Routledge and Kegan Paul); C. Lévi-Strauss, *Anthropologie structurale*, Paris 1958 (PWN), and *Pensée sauvage*, Paris 1962 (PWN); H. Focillon, *Vie des Formes*, Paris 1934; T. Francastel, *Peinture et Société. Naissance et destruction d'un espace plastique, de la renaissance au cubisme*, Paris—Lyon 1951 (Audin); idem, *Art et technique au XIX-e et XX-e siècle*, Paris 1956 (Les Editions de

Evidently, if a situation is conditioned by modern scale of narrative forms, by varied means of realization, and by instability of genres which unite conventions and define the way of treating the reality represented in the literary work; if that situation is also characterized by a general consciousness of mutability and by the contingency of those conventions — you must see in every experiment a potential possibility of different meanings.

The artificial antinomy: realism — vanguard is therefore false, irrespective of the starting point: both when it is based on a general antithesis of seemingly contradictory concepts of the world and when, in the moment of a revision of played out conventions, it suggests an alternative choice of different artistic means.

The slogan “technique and discovery” a leading motive of the experiments of 1920's (honoured by becoming the title of the programmatic essay of Mark Schorer) may refer to the strivings to revive realism, as well as to experiments endeavouring to compromise all realistic claims in art. The results of both kinds of experiments were ambivalent.

The Populists, the Naturists, Neue Sachlichkeit, or the group “Przedmieście” (Suburb), managed — although not uselessly — just to galvanize a naturalistic study and to confirm once more the actual dignity of themes that were ennobled half a century ago, among others by Charles Dickens, George Eliot and Thomas Hardy. Yet it was not Eugène Dabit, Leo Lemonnier or Hans Fallada, but Thomas Mann, Hermann Broch and Robert Musil, André Malraux and François Mauriac, Leonow and Pilniak, who consciously formulated the problems of the real perspectives of the realistic prose of the twentieth century; at the same time the real chances of the renaissance of the epic dawned spontaneously in Sholohov's and Steinbeck's works.

And what about those Jean Paulhan called “The Terrorists” and their ideas shocking because of fantastic juggling, absurd humour and simple mockery. Com-

Minuit); E. Auerbach, *Mimesis. The Representation of Reality in Western Literature*, trans. by W. Trask, New York 1959; R. Curtius, *La Littérature européenne et le Moyen Age Latin*, trad. par Jean Bréjoux, Paris 1956 (P.U.F.); idem, *Essais sur la littérature européenne*, Paris 1954 (Grasset); W. Szklowski, *Chudożestwiennaja proza (Artistical Prose)*, Moskwa 1959; E. Fischer, *Le Problème du réel dans l'art moderne*, „La Nouvelle Critique”, Janvier 1962; R. Garaudy, *D'un réalisme sans rivages*, Paris 1963 (PWN), and *L'Itinéraire d'Aragon*, Paris 1960 (Gallimard); W. Dnieprow, *Problemy realizma*, Moskwa 1960; S. Żółkiewski, *Perspektywy literatury XX w. (The Perspectives of Twentieth Century Literature)*, Warszawa 1960; idem, *Kultura i polityka*, Warszawa 1958; idem, *Przepowiednie i wspomnienia (Predictions and Reminiscences)*, Warszawa 1963; R. Williams, *The Long Revolution*, London 1961; H. Levin, *Contexts of Criticism*, Cambridge Mass. 1957, London 1961; idem, *James Joyce*, Norfolk Conn. 1941; D. Daiches, *The Novel and the Modern World*, London 1960; M. Geismar, *Writers in Crisis*, Boston 1942; L. Trilling, *The Liberal Imagination*, New York 1950; G. Mounin, *Une Ecole sans le savoir*, [in:] *Problèmes du roman*, éd. J. Prévost, Bruxelles 1945; G. Picon, *Panorama de la nouvelle littérature française*, Paris 1960 (Gallimard).

promised conventions, broken petit-bourgeois portraits will be put together again only by museum keepers. Problematic literature, and modern realistic prose, within its framework have drawn a lesson out of the acts of terror in which many of its makers took part.

From the days when Conrad's works, theoretical pronouncements of H. James, Madox Ford and André Gide scandalized the partisans of the Walter Scott-Balzac tradition, many irreversible changes happened in the next half-century; they continued the process predicted by those introductory signals. Let us remind, that those first revisions of the conception of literary realism defined and codified in the nineteenth century, were advertised in the name of a development of realism. They utilized inspirations included in the poetics of Swift, Sterne, Stendhal — a fact which seems particularly important and worth noticing. They formulated and supported with new arguments a growing protest against the inadequacy of traditional conventions, the deceitfulness of classical psychology, the poverty of naturalistic theory of culture and the individual.

The consciousness of convention, which requires a liberation from magic thinking, is not of course a modern discovery, and it has found a theoretical formula long ago. One and a half century ago Coleridge treated it already as a conviction which was well grounded in aesthetic categories. He referred to an opinion stating that every literary work, in order to fulfil its functions, demands from the reader a willing suspension of disbelief. Explorers of analogies may treat this view as an early prognostic of E. Bullough's theory (1912) of *Psychical Distance as a Factor in Art and an Aesthetic Principle*, analysing the conditions of the reception of artistic fiction.

The propositions formulating the results of further extensive researches in this domain, and absorbing the results of many a scientific discipline, from psychology on to the theory of knowledge, had also made profit out of the conclusions deduced from the analyses of "the culture of the mask". They found there premises allowing to include the mask into the system of convention — treating it like an intermediate sign between the social role and the psychological potential of the individual. A similar argumentation is found among others in Brecht's theory of the effect of strangeness.

These propositions, either limited to aesthetic categories or full of integrating ambitions, when based upon the theory of communication, developed in a vast social-cultural context of structural anthropology as an element of research on the system of signs. Qualified as obligatory in methodology, they even entered into the text-books.

And yet it seems to be a common practice to qualify as realistic only one aspect of realistic conventions: — that which was developed through two centuries, exemplified in the nineteenth-century novel and found its climax in Flaubert. Only this aspect happened to be admitted as the natural state, the specific norm of realistic presentation.

H. James, Madox-Ford and A. Gide objected to this convention. And after half a century which produced the works of Proust, Joyce and Kafka, Broch, Musil and A. Malraux, the question about the contemporary usefulness of traditional conventions was repeated over Flaubert's *Madame Bovary* by the narrator of *La Nausée*: Antoine Roquetin. He defined it according to the current set of ideas of the author of *L'Être et le Néant*, in categories of dramatical opposition between authenticity and bad faith of a consciousness that is seduced and stripped of authenticity. In spite of his entanglement in this romantic antinomy (modernized by him, true enough, but nevertheless once absolutized by the romantics) he managed to grasp in a particularly impressive way the problem which was parodistically and skeptically treated by Sterne, and appeared as a drama in modern literature. This problem disturbs, obsession-like, many authors, from Proust to N. Sarraute, M. Butor, A. Robe-Grillet. There are no "true stories", no process can be communicated in *statu nascendi*, the present is accomplished before the reflection, consciousness presented is merely a construction of consciousness.

Therefore, if there is no literature without convention, if all means of communication are conventional, what cognitive criteria, what system of values ought to control their choice? — A question formulated that way was asked by all "the Terrorists" as well as by Maurice Blanchot and Brice Parain, Roland Barthès and the Lettrists. But it seems that in the sphere of phenomenological theory the problem had to be left unsolved.

This problem is to be found, as an open proposition, in the mythical parallelism of *Ulysses*, presenting an idea characteristic of the XXth century, and particularly interesting from the viewpoint of comparability of the structures of logical thinking.

Are these structures complementary or are they contradictory in the framework of a cognitive-evaluating synthesis of a literary work? — That is the key problem in the discussion concerning the creational conceptions of modern literature. But the direction in which Joyce pushed this discussion in his next work did not bring it nearer to a constructive solution.

The proposition of *Finnegans Wake* being extremely arbitrary, and for that reason left prey to hypothetical exegesis, proved to be a mighty warning metaphor of the insoluble contradiction lurking in the idea of an individual creation of universal signs. An integral reconstruction of human notions about the stages and the forms of the relation of consciousness to the world, the defiance bidden to the anthropocentric concept of time, space, history — the stroke of intuitive genius foreboding a possibility of a cosmogonic pattern of relations between humanity and nature — proved to be in a high degree a secret code.

The relativity of the traditional convention proved to be evident not only to the adherents of phenomenological conception, or to Joyce attempting a cosmic synthesis. That relativity was endorsed in an authoritative way by the author of *Lotte in Weimar* and *Doctor Faustus*, who did relativize the would-be

norm of realistic representation deliberately and pitilessly by his method of epic irony.

And yet the conviction of its binding character is still working, not only in current opinions. Open or latent, it conditions the judgements of many scholars, who take up the attempt to define the dynamics of the literary processes of the twentieth century.

The conviction of the necessity of a fundamental distinctness of the ontological bases of modern poetics in relation to the ontological and cognitive assumptions of the traditional realistic poetics dominates Eliot's concept, who expresses this would-be inevitable conflict in a metaphorical replacement of the narrative method by the mythical one. The same conviction underlies the theory of "literary space" defined by M. Blanchot (*L'Espace littéraire, Faux pas*) which is based on the metaphysical interpretation of Kafka's parables assumed as the poetic norm supposed to be obligatory in the modern novel.

A repercussion of this conception is to be found in the views of R. M. Albérès (*L'Histoire du roman moderne*) for whom the nineteenth century pattern of the realistic novel is a codified and essentially perfected model of realistic narrative prose. Albérès perceives indeed in the "Protean variants" of the modern novel instances of a continuation of realistic poetics, but even in the works of eminent writers, he sees only alternate variations without any prospects of development. He considers them as a margin of the leading trends of modern literature, as a symbol of the galvanization of a scheme which has exhausted the possibility of handling contemporary problems: ontological, cognitive and existentialistic. According to the French critic, its existence is justified only in the literature of nations who are catching up with the arrears of civilization.

The self annihilation of realistic poetics, following an unrestrained subjectivization of narrative prose, which shows the loss of objective criteria of knowledge, and consecutively the breakdown of a unifying vision of the reality, is also predicted by R. Brinkmann in his *Wirklichkeit und Illusion (Reality and Illusion)*. R. Wellek agrees with him on that point, although he criticizes very sharply Brinkmann's ahistoricism, his arbitrary arguments and lack of consequence; he advances himself a theory of the present bankruptcy of realistic poetics.

You could endlessly multiply the instances of analogous and approximate arguments stated by adherents of such a conception of the dynamics of modern literature, where the notion of realism appears as a remnant of an expiring novelistic tradition. But as I hinted in the initial discussion, there is also on the opposite side, namely in the above mentioned theses of Lukács, an open or hidden opposition between the twentieth-century norm of realism and the creative vanguard movement of the twentieth-century literature, though in this case the opposition is based on a different scale of values (I always take Lukács's statement as the most explicit theoretic approach to the tendency spontaneously manifested by other authors in many studies without a thorough motivation).

In such a paradoxical way, from utterly different positions, a thesis follows that suggests a permanent link between a definite "technique" and a different "ontology". On the one hand (Eliot, Blanchot, Albérès) this standpoint denies the object of researches into the historical mutability of the concept of realism; on the other hand — it paralyses the development of the method. In any case it mars real orientation in the complicated dynamics of modern literature.

But it does not seem probable that those opinions may take the upper hand in the contemporary science and criticism. In spite of the essential differences in outlook and methodology, which divide Marxian theses of Gramsci, E. Fischer, R. Garaudy, W. Dnieprow, S. Żółkowski or Szklowski from the propositions of such British and American scholars and critics as M. R. Williams, H. Levin, D. Daiches, H. Hatzfeld, W. C. Booth, M. Geismar or L. Trilling, from the theory of Sartre and his adherents, and from the concepts of the catholic personalist G. Mounin, the eclectic but sound appreciations of G. Picon, in all those opinions (quoted as an example) you can find, in different terminology, a similar conviction that there are open prospects of development of the realistic narrative prose in the manifold layers and currents of the twentieth-century literature. This diagnosis is supported by the authoritative opinion of the author of *Mimesis*, E. Auerbach. We find sufficient premises for it in the synthetic-historical and methodological works of A. Hauser (*Social History of Art. The Philosophy of Art in History*). Similar conclusions are laid down by L. Goldmann in his studies about the transformations of the modern novel. They deserve special attention for the sake of their methodological propositions.

L. Goldmann is the author of eminent works on the theory of knowledge and the methodology of humanities. He is passionately absorbed in the problems of the development of dialectical thought in modern times. As explorer of the origin and the functions of world outlook structures and their relation to empirical reality, he approaches the main question of Marxian social theory of culture and creative consciousness.

He analyses those problems in his studies on the concept of man, of the world and human community in Kant's philosophy. He opposes Kant's dialectical and tragic scope of thought to neo-Kantian interpretations. He enlarges on those problems in a work on the origin and the structure of a tragic vision of the world in the paradoxical style and philosophy in Pascal's writings and Racine's theatre. In his recent studies he takes a special interest in the origin and the dynamics of the transformations of novelistic structures; in some articles he has laid out theses constituting a preliminary attempt at interpretation.

He often declared that he makes use of Marxian inspirations, taken directly or included in the early works of Lukács: *Die Seele und die Formen* (1911), *Geschichte und Klassenbewusstsein* (1923) and develops them in an original manner; very often

a polemical one. But he decidedly rejects present theses of the author of *Wider den missverstandenen Realismus*.

Young Lukács, in the above mentioned works, approaches the problems of dialectics and the tragism of the thought of Kant and Hegel, studies the neo-Kantian propositions of the Heidelberg school, and makes critical use of the problems of methodology and of those of the theory of knowledge as defined by the static structuralism of Husserlian inspiration. Goldmann considers Lukács's work as clearing the way to a Marxian synthesis which unites the understanding of the dynamism of the historic process and the cultural phenomena. In *The History and the Class Consciousness* he sees the first twentieth-century interpretation of Marxism (the classical one is in *The Capital*) as genetic generalized structuralism (*structuralisme génétique généralisé*). He substantiates fully the fundamental meaning of the category of totality (*totalité*), as a basic philosophic and methodological category in Marxian dialectical analysis. He emphasizes Lukács's merit in the confirmation of the conviction of the impossibility of separating the cognitive act from the act of evaluation.

As the most essential and the most fruitful performance he considers the introduction into social science of a valuable operational term of the Marxian dialectical notion of potential consciousness (*Zugerechtes Bewusstsein*). Later on, this notion was, in Goldmann's opinion, vitiated by Lukács, himself in his last works. This concept was of no use in the methodological assumptions of the Durkheimists, it was very feebly outlined by Halbwachs, it became fundamental but not precise in the work of M. Weber, it appeared indispensable in practical use in Lenin's and Rosa Luxemburg's theses of theory of knowledge and methodology.

Goldmann analyses in detail the consequences of this notion when introduced into Marxian aesthetics. He stresses the discarding of the mechanical conception of the work as a simple reflection of the real group consciousness — such a conception became fixed in the positivistic sociology of literature. He presents the fundamental change in the proceedings of research, as well in the analysis of the literary fact, as in the study of the structure of social facts. In the light of these studies, the work of art, instead of lecturing to the members of the group on what they are thinking, reveals to them what they did think without knowing it.

Thus the methodological conquests, introduced by the author of the *Theorie des Romans* into the theory of culture, appeared to be most essential in the analysis of the relations between collective and individual phenomena. "So far — writes Goldmann in *L'Esthétique du jeune Lukács (Young Lukács's Aesthetics)* — in the study of social life people were looking for information about the origin and significance of individual works. Lukács's perspective reveals the fact that in the study of an eminent work you may also find information about the origin and the significance of collective structures".

Goldmann will be faithful to this perspective in all his works, whatever changes his method and his subjects of interest undergo. What fascinated him durably in young Lukács's texts were the premises making it possible to unite genetic analysis, structural and functional analysis in the study of man's cultural activity.

He studies with particular attention the problems of the potential collective consciousness. Defining this category as basic and indispensable for the historical analysis of the development of cognitive thought and human creation, he develops it in an original way. In a constructive polemic with positivistic and empirical descriptive methodology he builds his main operational idea: that of the potential collective consciousness of a definite class, otherwise "the vision of the world" uniting social trends, ideological notions, irrational conceptions, affectional attitudes, patterns of behaviour and acting. "The vision of the world" is a concept larger than ideology. It is a pattern category elucidating the structure of the world outlook of the creative individual and his work. It is indispensable, but it does not exhaust the problems of analysis, because the individual's links with his environment may be expressed in the acceptance of its real consciousness as well, as in a partial opposition to it, or in an open revolt. These links may be neutralized by an appeal to the idea of hidden traditions and by acceptance of the world outlook elements of another class. The fullest realization of these assumptions was given by Goldmann in *Le Dieu caché* (1955).

After his studies analysing the tragical world vision of the Jansenists in Pascal's philosophy and in Racine's theatre, the author of *Le Dieu caché* has developed and modified in some essential points the notion of potential collective consciousness. These changes chiefly concern justifiableness of the concept at present.

In consecutive statements Goldmann expounds his conviction that — in the framework of the capitalistic system, at the present monopolistic stage of its structure characterized by arbitrary domination of economic links over other links of social life, and by a decidedly imperialistic-totalitarian trend — the process of the breakdown of coherent world outlooks interferes with an extreme polarization of ideological systems. In that situation which exists and expands for half a century, the idea of potential group consciousness loses its meaning. The explanation of the origin and the structure of the work of art demands therefore a different methodological approach.

Goldmann justifies his statement with arguments taken from the Marxian theory of alienation and fetishization (reification). He has analysed those problems theoretically in the studies published in the *Recherches dialectiques*. He returned to them in his dissertation on aesthetics of young Lukács, where he emphasized the importance of the Marxian idea that the development of capitalistic production of goods (production pour le marché) causes the growing autonomy of economic life, its emancipation from all ethical, intellectual and artistic processes.

In his lecture — *La Structure du roman moderne* and in the article *Marx, Lukács, Girard et la sociologie du roman*, he has formulated for the first time the thesis about the necessity of finding homology of the structures of the novel as a genre and the structure of the basic cell of the system characterized by exchange relation. Let us stress at once: the author uses the notion of the homology of structures in a meaning clearly defined by the leading theoretician of structural anthropology: Lévi-Strauss¹¹. He operates by means of a comparison of pattern structures and formalized relations. He does not compare the empirical contents of the economic and social relations with the contents of the objectivized cultural product: — the literary work. He comes back to this thesis in a complementary dissertation: *Problèmes d'une sociologie du roman*.

So far sociological analyses of the novel as a genre — according to Goldmann's opinion — referred to the subject matter constituted by individual biography or social chronicle while the problem that has to be solved is present in the question: what is the relation between the structure of the novel as a genre and the structure of the modern individualistic society? — In such a formula of the problem we may easily find analogy with the research method theoretically justified and practically applied by the author of *Anthropologie structurale*, *Tristes tropiques*, *Pensée sauvage*. Further I shall return to the subject of differences in the choice of themes and in definitions of some instrumental notions.

Following the earlier works of Lukács and R. Girard's *Mensonge romantique et vérité romanesque* (*Romantic Lie and Truth of the Novel*) Goldmann outlines the typology of the novel or rather of a certain group of novelistic genre, as the art of seeking authentical values by a degraded individual in a degraded society. The inspirations deriving from *Theorie des Romans* and *Mensonge romantique* are of course evident and conscious. Goldmann does not only declare this openly but also modifies them distinctly.

I have discussed elsewhere the themes of Girard's book, which is interesting as a sensitive but disorderly response to current humanistic thought¹². It is born from Heidegger's philosophical movement, but it transgresses decidedly its problems in the direction of researches on the historical evolution of the human consciousness. Reaching for Nietzsche's and Scheller's diagnosis of the breakdown of bourgeois culture, Girard interprets it in the light of modern analyses of Riesman, Vane Pancard, Claude Lévi-Strauss.

The author of *Mensonge romantique* is first of all concerned with the process of the generation of contemporary mythologized notions. He studies therefore the transformations and conflicts of criteria of value in modern societies. The literary

¹¹ Lévi-Strauss, *Anthropologie...*, Ch. V.

¹² A. Brodzka, *Kłamstwo romantyczne i prawda powieści* [rev.: R. Girard, *Mensonge romantique et vérité romanesque*, Paris 1961] „Kultura i Społeczeństwo”, 1963, nr 1.

structure truly revealing those processes is seen by Girard in the novel, strictly speaking in the area delimited by the works of Cervantes, Stendhal, Flaubert, Dostoevski and Proust. The average novel does not unmask myths, it only reflects them. Even Balzac's great work, according to Girard, yields to this fascination. But the novel of great writers he cited is irrefutably characterized by search for "authentic values". In this search, in Girard's opinion, it reveals and surmounts the inevitable phenomenon of mediation, to which the consciousness of each individual is subject. Because the authentic values sought after do not positively appear in a world which is degraded by general rivalry of classes, social groups and individuals; spontaneous contact with them is an illusion, and the individual's autonomy — a fiction. The illusory Manichean division: I — the Others, has shut it in an circle of illusory notions. The hate against the rival-mediator, a real or fictive one, does not elucidate, and does not remove the real fact of mediation.

Girard wants to justify ontologically the phenomenon of an increasing mediation by a progressive deformation of the metaphysical desire (*désir métaphysique*) of the man who pursues values in a world bereft of sacral values. The author of *Le Dieu caché* places the conception of the increasing mediation on the ground of the analysis of the social condition of seduced consciousness.

He develops the above mentioned definition of the novel as the history of a search for values in a degraded way and in a degraded society. He analyses meticulously the social origin and the character of this degradation which by reducing authentic values conduces to their replacing with seeming values. In the next article *Problèmes d'une sociologie du roman*, he summarizes the results of his analysis in the statement, that from the point of view of structure the novelistic form of the works which are constitutive of their genre, is a form of a world ruled by values ignored by the society and sought for by the author in an inauthentic, degraded and mediatized way.

The sociological hypothesis of Goldmann, developed at length in the above mentioned articles, aims at delineating a framework of interpretation of the novelistic structure. The author also tries to represent the evolution of novelistic forms in connection with the transformation of the social structure in the last half century.

In conclusion of his analysis, he states that during this period the novel ceases to be a transposition of coherent and conscious structures corresponding to a world outlook of a definite social group. On the contrary it seems to present (and that may be characteristic of a great part of modern art) the search for values which are not effectively defended by any social group, and which are gradually removed from the consciousness of all the members of the society by economic life.

Two principal tendencies are formed in the conditions of modern cultural creation (in his latest dissertation the author defines them as consecutive phases). The first one expresses itself in a thematical absence of values, the second — in a radical destruction of the subject of creation. The first tendency

may be already found in germ in the work of Mallarmé and Valéry, and in full growth from Kafka to Robbe-Grillet. The other tendency appears at the very foundation of abstractive plastic art and of many trends of modern poetry. We may remind here of the analogical remarks of the author on modern abstract painting. He distinguishes as a trend modifying the common tendency, those works that are aiming solely at a concrete representation of formal conditions, the expression of, let us say, the pure pattern of their structure.

Evasive tendencies appearing here, as Goldmann states, are the expression of unrestrained temptations of romantic thought. They prove a radical breach with objective values, a resignation on the ground of subjective motives as a pursuit of individual authenticity.

What does then condition the maker in modern society, if we assume that it is not potential consciousness of a definite social group — and if we eliminate the hypothesis of purely individual creation, irrational, lacking social foundations? — In the propositions of the above mentioned article, Goldmann's thesis sounds as follows: — The reification, leading to the breaking of some social groups and then swallowing them by the capitalistic society, depriving them to a certain degree of their distinctiveness, is so opposed to the biological, psychological and social nature of the human individual, that it evokes in all the individuals, more or less oppositional responses and in the degraded form — evasive responses, creating in such a way a non-concretized opposition to the reified world. This opposition may be more or less general (of a mass scope, but not organized and conceptually not defined) more or less collective (that is requiring minimum of inter-individual links and minimum of conceptualization) and it constitutes a foundation of creation. In subsequent conclusions, the author confines the extent of this opposition exclusively to middle classes.

The crucial point, designating in the history of literature and modern art the transition from traditional literature to the literature characterized by the thematic absence of values and a will to destroy the subject, ought to be, according to the author, attributed to the caesura separating the period of the liberal capitalism from the period of imperialism. That caesura is connected with the fate of individualistic ideology which, being born in the modern society, became increasingly problematic within its framework.

This thesis has been slightly modified by the author in his latest dissertation *Problèmes d'une sociologie du roman*. Some new approaches are worth noticing; they prove that the interpretative process is still going on, both in the way the concepts are defined and in the historical-literary argumentation.

Thus, for instance, the notion of the general tendencies, characteristic of the development of modern literature, is replaced by a division of these tendencies into two consecutive phases. The first, a transitional one, may be characterized by attempts at a replacement of a problematic individual by values born from different ideologies. In occidental societies these values proved

too weak to stimulate distinct literary forms, but they served as a hold for the transformations of traditional form. The author perceives those values in concepts of community and collective reality (*réalité collective*) that were introduced and developed by socialist ideology. The next phase — also in the Occidental literature — which begins — according to the author — with Kafka's creative activity, and lasts till the actual *roman nouveau*, is characterized by a rejection of all the attempts at replacement of individual biography and tends to create the novel of absence (*le roman de l'absence*). It expresses the nonexistence of any authentic values in the social framework of the reigning system.

According to Goldmann's opinion, this phenomenon reveals radical distortion of the traditional novel structure and the attempts to create a new one. In the above mentioned studies the author gives already sufficient premises to such a conclusion. He elaborates this in his further essays, such as *Les deux Avant-gardes* ("Médiation", 1962, n. 4).

Goldmann considers the novel of absence as an attempt to save in the new structure some relations that were so far constitutive of this genre. After all the novel in its representative works was always a literary form of "problematic quest" after positive values. In the experiments of *roman nouveau* that constitutive element disappears thematically. How are we then to interpret this phenomenon: is it a proof of resignation, or a new form of the hidden quest?

The author defends this last thesis. He maintains that the relativization or the removal of a thematic representation of the pursuit of the authentic values may be a form of radical protest against a situation where the reality of social life corrects itself automatically, showing therefore the aimlessness of any attempt at revision undertaken by individual consciousness. How are we therefore to consider the appearance of a paralyzed consciousness in the literary works? — As an actual form of rebellion against the overpowering pressure of the objectivised reality? — or as a passive result of helplessness only? Goldmann defends the thesis of the dialectical connection of the two phases in one process. This thesis, corresponding with the opinions of Ernst Fischer, Roger Garaudy, Raymond Williams, W. C. Booth, J. P. Sartre, seems right, but it requires a detailed and individual demonstration in every analysed case.

Goldmann's conception contains interesting ideas worth to be discussed. It seems groundless to accuse it of vulgar economism, ascribed to the author of *Recherches dialectiques* by the adherents of "pure" structural studies and by the representatives of positivistic sociology, with whom he struggles unceasingly.

One ought not to confuse the subject of studies with the method of investigation, the analysis of the reified consciousness, with the reification of this consciousness, and the homology of structures with the analogy of content.

Goldmann's hypothesis, when rightly applied, may open some new important perspectives in the studies of cognitive structures and in the field of sociology of literature. At the present stage it is a conception of defined and limited scope. It

is defined in its very assumption: when analysing the notion of literary structure as a form of reified consciousness, Goldmann is almost exclusively concerned with epistemological questions, and he pays much less attention to particular problems of the poetics. On the other hand some limitations of argumentation are simply inevitable at the preliminary stage of elaboration.

If Goldmann's hypothesis catches some fundamental relations in the dynamics of social and cultural transformations, it does explain only a part of the phenomena, both in the domain of the structures of collective and individual consciousness and in the range of the genre of the novel and of progressive trends of modern literature. It is as yet not sufficiently completed by its sketchy outline of real forms of bourgeois consciousness.

Some ambiguities concern not only the historical-literary argumentation, but also the instruments of sociological research. The environmental situation of the concept of oppositional consciousness in the area of middle class consciousness does not, as yet, bring new arguments for the author's previous thesis of non-concretized general and collective opposition. And the attempt to explain the status of the individual consciousness of the middle classes (though it is not a new idea) will certainly meet with opposition from sociologists as well as from literature scholars, as long as the author does not make this status precise and define its part in cultural creation.

A valuable complement presented in Goldmann's last essay is the distinction of a potential perspective of a renaissance and a development of realistic narrative prose, owing to impulsions derived directly or indirectly from socialistic ideology proposing a modern historical interpretation of the man in the world, and fulfilling the demands of authentic cultural creation. The author develops this fundamental thesis in the important essay *L'Individu, l'Action et la mort* in *Les Conquérants de Malraux* ("Médiations", 1963, n. 6).

Thus Goldmann's hypothesis continues to be elaborated though it is not a panacea in the present stage, and it has some gaps in its assumptions. Nevertheless it is an interesting conception. It has values, rightly defined by Lévi-Strauss as a necessary feature of social sciences: — it represents a method which is conscious of risk deriving from the construction of theoretical models. Yet it does not shrink from this operation considering it as a unique chance of going out from the circle of phenomenalist descriptions or immanent analyses impeding sensible cognitive and evaluating questions.

The place and role of Goldmann's works and the character of his method are defined first of all by connections with the most interesting achievements of the modern movement of genetic-structural studies. The most valuable among them is Lévi-Strauss' work. The convergence of orientation of these authors is doubtless, notwithstanding diametrical differences in the choice of material and the dissimilitude of intellectual formations. I do not think only of the tempting analogies resulting from a comparison of particular judgements. The conclusions deriving from the

juxtaposition of the variants of the method seem to be of much greater importance. They show the wealth of possibilities contained in the trend of studies, where the typology of logical structures of thought collaborates with an ambitious construction of "the sociology of the spirit", the analysis of notions develops into an analysis of the system of signs, and the theory of communication delineates a real perspective of a combined research on culture, society and nature. You cannot overestimate the value of these propositions for Marxian theory of culture.

The crux of these problems of theory is defined by the interrelations between the historical process and the structure, the function and the products of human consciousness. Strictly speaking: the relations between the objective and the subjective factors of the process, which, when individuated as a historical process, constitutes an active element of the objective world of nature, or in other words, its modality, a peculiar way of existence.

Within the framework of this monistic concept of the relation of man and world, the Marxian theory of society and culture undertakes tasks well suggested by Lévi-Strauss: — It is not enough to know only the results of the process of cognition; man therefore observes himself as a subject of this process, and the real subject of his studies becomes that inseparable pair: — humanity changing the world and transforming itself in the course of activity and cognition¹³.

In this theory the concept of a significant and dynamic structure becomes one of the chief operational concepts. In the range of interpretation of cultural products such a procedure leads consequently and bindingly to the use of a criterion of structural representation. The necessity of this criterion results also evidently from studies of another representative of genetic structural orientation: Henri Lefebvre¹⁴. His studies constitute a perfect philosophical and sociological foreground for the theses of Goldmann.

Lefebvre's analysis of modern mythology, of the descending traditional myths, and the ascending ones born of everyday reality, leads to a radical critique of reality in a bourgeois industrialized, technicalized society, the so-called consumers' society. In this critic, Lefebvre is much more consistent than other scholars concerned with these problems, both in the field of the so-called sociology of cognition and in the sociology of behaviour. Within the range of everyday reality empirically defined as a distinguishable (though it cannot be definitely delimited) level of social reality, Lefebvre finds dialectics of conflicts and interactions between what is natural and the definite cultural convention, between the authentic necessity and the longing which is mediatized and disguised as a necessity. He analyses meticulously the methods and the areas of mythical thinking, he distinguish-

¹³ Lévi-Strauss, *op. cit.*, p. 394.

¹⁴ H. Lefebvre et N. Gutermann, *La Conscience mystifiée*, Paris 1936 (Gallimard); H. Lefebvre, *Critique de la vie quotidienne*, I, Paris 1958 (L'Arche), and *Fondement de la quotidienneté*, II, Paris 1961 (L'Arche).



shes mythical, utopian and ideological elements, recognizing their mutual penetration. He interprets the functions of the forms of consciousness in the structure of individual world outlooks, and the conclusions he draws from empirically tested studies confirm the general trend of Goldmann's above mentioned theses.

On the ground of the opinions we have cited as instances which express convergent, although differently motivated judgements on the open perspectives of a development of the realistic modern prose, I think we may consider that these studies conclusively justify the reason for structural methodology in the field of literary research. They confirm the thesis of the insufficiency of verism as a principle determining and distinguishing the phenomena of realistic prose. It results from these theoretical conceptions and analyses, showing the indispensability of notions: of structure, of pattern, of relation — that the criterion of structural representativeness constitutes a necessary condition in the construction of a notion of realism in the sense of a typological pattern and in every historical definition of this trend.

This opinion may be confirmed by the studies of Auerbach, practically by *Mimesis*, and in a more theoretical way by the *Scenes of the Drama of European Literature* and also the studies of Arnold Hauser, Harry Levin, Ian Watt, W. C. Booth, J. P. Sartre and Georges Mounin, irrespectively of the differences between their conceptions and the objections that may arise against particular arguments. In the framework of modern Marxian theory of culture this thesis is developed by S. Żółkiewski, R. Garaudy and E. Fischer, W. Dnieprov, W. Szczerbina, T. Motyleva. In each particular case the propositions doubtlessly differ.

A common tendency of those scholars in their interpretation of the events of modern literature, is their conviction of the futility of the attempts at codification of realistic poetics at this stage of changes. Although this conviction may derive from various premises, yet in spite of the suggestions of some polemicists, the undeniable and decisive reason lies in the actual fluidity of genres, the confusion of styles, the highly developed sense of relativity and functionality of every convention. The criteria which were helpful in the definition of the concept of literary trend prove to be deceitful, while the stream of realistic literature is a reality, a set of cultural facts that requires an analysis.

Thus the propositions of Auerbach, Williams and Levin, Booth and Hauser, Garaudy, Goldmann and Lefebvre lead decidedly to the conclusion, that the proper subject of studies is now the trend of transformation of the determinants of the twentieth-century realism. On the ground of those researches the question is possible: — What are the limits of mutability of the historical concept of realism in narrative prose?

This question concerns the nature of the relations between the ontological assumptions and the particular theory of knowledge on the one hand, and the structure of the world as shown in novelistic prose on the other. Precedents in the

history of the concept of realism show so far, that these relations may be shaped in a different form in consecutive periods according to the framework of particular world outlooks, and under the indirect influence of different ideologies. Nevertheless, I think it possible to find, in the history of those changes a regularity and some analogies of development.

Of course, they are not expressed in analogies wrongly identifying the dynamic of particular formations, nor may they suggest a law of an eternal return of closed cultural circles. But a phenomenon, which seems to me to be real and has to be taken into account, is the ontological cognitive and ethical ambivalence of criteria conditioning the literary context in whose framework realistic works are framed, above all in periods of transition. The real facts are: osmosis, interaction of poetics, the process of the moulding by context of the open and always syncretic poetics of realism.

Let us for instance ask about the function, certainly ambiguous, of the part played in the world structure of Boccaccio's novels by the eschatological obsession with medieval "exemples" and morality plays. Let us ask about the part played in the forming of the concept of personality by the introduction of the hero moulded by Jansenistic tragedy, expressing in extreme cases the philosophy of a radical parting with human values — thus a philosophy entirely alien to the assumptions of the epic, such as formulated by T. Mann, G. Lukács and E. Auerbach. Let us ask what was the impact of the discovery of the problem of historical style by the romantics, especially in drama, on all realistic narratives of the former century. A discovery which — according to W. Winogradow — has decidedly speeded up the crystallization of the stylistic and linguistic determinants of realism, which has revealed according to St. Ullman (*Style in the French Novel*) the lexical-stylistic problems of narration which became an innovating attempt inspiring the great realists of the epoch, an attempt at evoking the whole atmosphere of the times and environments: according to the statements of the author of *Mimesis* and of A. Béguin¹⁵.

The metamorphoses of particular motives, characteristic of transient periods, are a separate and inexhaustible deposit of such interactions. Let us remind of the fate of the parable of the "reversed world": at the end of the Middle Ages, in a seventeenth century poem, in a surrealist jest, which was soon conventionally utilized for realistic construction. The astonishment of the simpleton in the philosophic hellenistic short story, the Voltairian tale and the modern film parody-farce. And what about the myth of the labyrinth, Icarus' fall, the defeat of Orpheus?

The historical subjective — in Gramsci's meaning — i. e. kinds of myths and poetics of absurdity play different parts in every period. They may be evasive,

¹⁵ W. Winogradow, *O języku chudożestwiennej literatury* (*The Language of Artistic Literature*), Moskwa 1959.

catastrophic, they may deny the sense of looking for meaning in history. But if they conceal constructive creative ambitions in mystified conceptions, and represent the opposition of an alienated consciousness in poetics of absent values, they may play the part of inspirers and participants in "the struggle of rationality and irrationality" that determines every moment of history for human thought, when made historical and conscious of this fact.

Similar participant part may be played also by creation applying symbolic or allegoric method, different from the figural one — according to L. Auerbach's analyses — although the delimitation may be fluid. These creations refer rather to nature than to history, because the ambiguity of symbols or the schematic-synthetic character of allegory may imply, in the author's views, an archetype origin and even a magical function. And yet, even such a "mythical method" approached in so mystifying a way is not necessarily a mechanical opposition to a concrete historical method of realism. Because it can, in an indirect metaphorical or even unconscious way, approach real questions: historical, ontological, existential that are the common domain of literature. And it may also, if undertaken as a consciously exploited set of cultural signs, mould to some extent the real shape of realistic poetics.

In definite social situations, the realistic poetics may be the more strongly subject to parable conveying so vividly the structural reality of human situation that aspiring to a model situation they also imply its historical setting. In this range, these devices are analogous to the realism of figurative interpretation, although they lack its theological transcendental purposefulness (Camus) or express a state of consciousness called by Sartre a testimony of unattainable transcendency.

It is quite obvious, that in no analytical study or in attempts at synthetic interpretation of the dynamics of modern literature one cannot put aside the question of the bounds and the principle of penetration of the "mythic method" and the parabolic method into the "narrative method" — a question concerning their understanding, motivation and function fulfilled in the realistic structure of the work.

But the problem of the literary context which at present conditions the development of the realistic prose is not exhausted in the question about the function of allegoric and symbolic poetics. They are not the only and — on a universal scale — the dominating tendency of changes in the novelistic prose. "Symbolic-allegoric", "symbolic-naturalistic", "naturalistic-metaphysical" — according to current definitions of critics, all these variants of parable forms do not exhaust the discussional concept of creativeness in the novelistic prose of the XXth century.

This concept may be conceived in different ways. It may be limited to a set of works accomplishing the condition of perfect allegorization, of ideal schematization; to the attempts at rendering "naked structures" expressing an arbitrary conception of connections and references among the "essence of being", the "nature

of things", "human essence" and the parareal, suprahistorical, transcendental source of values. But it seems that it would be a mistake to agree to such a one-sided classification.

In a contrasting but very general notion, creationism is conceived as an antinomy of the nineteenth-century verism. But then the conclusion, that it is a common feature of the non-epigonic modern prose, seems to be evident. — How are we to understand this notion? I believe by simply defining its historical meaning. Because the problem of creation is *de facto* present in all normative and historical poetics. It has acquired a particular significance thanks to theoretical reflections of the contentions of verism which constitutes a definite choice among the realistic conventions down to the end of the XIX-th century. It is the cause of the above mentioned antinomy. But if the contrast: creation—reproduction does not in schematic form correspond to any literary reality, then, especially in the twentieth century, it sounds like a fictitious antinomy. The real conflict is focussed to-day around different creative conceptions: the principle of creation has become current. The discussion on the formation of the concept of modern realism ought, as an irrefutable fact, assume the creative character of realistic ambitions.

This appeared clearly already at the beginning of the antipositivistic crisis, in the introductory period of revision of the tradition of Walter Scott, Balzac and Flaubert. It has been reflected in theoretical statements and in the practice of writers like H. James, Madox Ford and Conrad who followed the inspiration of the poetics of Swift, Sterne and Stendhal. The pattern of Sterne's digressions and of Swift's hyperbole have found willing followers in the later generations of writers. The present generation applied above all Stendhal's method of the "restriction of the field" (a definition of G. Blin in *Stendhal et les problèmes du roman*).

The technique "de la restriction du champ" reflected the belief that every attempt at a representation of empiric reality, every set of statements and evaluations, in order to be motivated, requires to be ascribed to a concrete consciousness situated in conditions you can prove to be empirical. This seems to have some common features with H. James' theory of the point of view which defines the perspective, the cognitive matter and the evaluating nature of the narration.

Stendhal's conception derived from the theory of the sensualistic impressions of relativism and referred to Helvetius and Destutt de Tracy. The theses of H. James were formed in an atmosphere of critical undermining the principle of naturalistic objectivism. They were more advanced than the propositions of Stendhal in the direction of a conscious subjectivization of the narrative prose. This process led finally to results that were not implied in the rationalized theory of H. James, but for the time being, it has grown and made precise one of the real and essential premises of realistic poetics. J. Conrad named him justly: the "historian of fine consciences", because H. James endeavoured indeed to motivate rationally a whole set of conventions which shaped the aspect and the sense of the reality represented in the work.

In the situation of a protest against naturalistic practice (James criticized first of all the arbitrariness of narration, of the author's omniscience, the fluidity of the criteria of selection, the episodic and fragmentary character of the construction), the author of *The Art of Fiction* chose a pattern of prose in which the decisive part is played by the leading intelligence of the narrator. His viewpoint, the range of his perception, the faculty of discovering meanings and relations motivates the structure of the represented reality. His consciousness is the field where the dramatization of perceived phenomena takes place, as well as that of the behaviour and the reflexes of the inner life of the other characters. Thus the leading mind of the narrator — or rather of the consecutive narrators — is at every moment the focus which determines the choice of the unity and the intensity of the spectacle. This procedure aimed at a cohesion of composition, a unified line of tension and a dramatization of the narration always subjective, without void places, i. e. descriptive elements not subordinated to psychological action.

The measure of the conception of empirical reality and personality is here consciously subjective and clearly represented as such. Therefore it is necessary to find an adequate mediator: a narrator of exceptional sensitivity and of "penetrating intelligence"¹⁶.

And yet the rationalized subjectivism of H. James is still very far from the forms of penetration into the subconsciousness inspired by psychoanalysis. "There is none of the welling up of the darkly subconscious life that has characterized the novel since Freud. James's novels are strictly novels of intelligence, rather than of full consciousness" — according to the right definition of F. O. Matthiessen, who reminded us also that, when commenting on the results of his method, H. James warned against "the terrible fluidity of auto-revelation"¹⁷.

Later on the course of events proved the fears of the rationalist to be right, but at the end of the century it brought unforeseen discoveries instead. Thus when similar warnings were repeated by J. Benda (*La France byzantine*) they expressed rather the helplessness of rationalistic categories in view of the surprising results of empiric researches.

H. James, M. Ford and J. Conrad looking for a motivation of the world created in literature, referred to the experience of the individual, but another reference, always present though concealed, — that of a suprasubjective scale of values, was considered by them as common to all the human kind. They sought there salvation from the last consequences of the subjective scale. Each of them, in his own way, tried to approach in a rational way the duties of man towards fate. If the knowledge of empirical reality proved to be illusory, and the motive and mecha-

¹⁶ J. W. Beach, *The Figure in the Carpet*, [in:] *The Question of Henry James*, ed. by F. W. Dupée, New York 1945, p. 114.

¹⁷ F. O. Matthiessen, *The Ambassadors*, [in:] *The Question of Henry James*, p. 230.

nism of human behaviour and psychology seemed unfathomable, there was always a last chance left: the tragic chance of Conrad's heroes.

Notwithstanding all the differences separating H. James, J. Conrad and M. Ford, the last one had the right to find common denominators defining their struggle against the "tyranny of convention" and the passionate research of a new form¹⁸.

He had also the right to stress the part of intensivity and homogeneous tension assigned by the rhythm of inner action, required by the pattern of prose common to them. In M. Ford's approach it had to be a novel of one affair, a one theme novel, a subject whose dramatical possibilities would be squeezed out to the last drop. A novel of one plot developing in variants of one and only stream of psychological action growing up to a crisis and culmination.

Although this pattern did not entirely correspond to their practice, it expressed in rough features the real trend of their aims. They wanted to shake off the petrifications clotting the descriptive prose, they demanded an active function from each detail, they protested against the illegitimate omnipresence and omniscience of the author, because their ambition was to test anew the bounds of the cognitive possibilities of man and his moral responsibility for the level of knowledge he has achieved. In the novel they wanted to close the area of the test, to make the narration its tool — a tool capable of showing the manifold meanings represented by a phenomenon observed from different viewpoints and from different distances.

The pattern of the "one affair novel" did not undermine the concept of personality. The possibility of such conclusions was predicted by M. Proust and J. Joyce led to them in *Ulysses* and in *Finnegans Wake*; it has been taken up by S. Beckett, and in a different approach by N. Sarraute. H. James and J. Conrad did not give up the attempt at a definition of the subject beyond the act of perception like A. Robbe-Grillet in *Jalousie*, who is keeping in the act of narration only an obsessive vision of the impossibility to penetrate the meaning and to correct the course of events taking place in objectivized reality. They did not — according to M. Ford — call in question the hidden, immanent sense of life, although they considered the objective measure of events unattainable.

The pattern of the novel, that of Conrad particularly, has found many continuators among authors taking up the existentialist problems: from André Malraux and Albert Camus to Graham Greene and Jerzy Andrzejewski. Some critics, like R. Fernandez, R. W. Stallman, D. M. Zabel, H. P. Simon, find even that he became a great inspiration of the twentieth-century prose. The concrete pattern of poetics of the "one affair" novel did not become the most important, but the pattern of human situation which conditioned it was incessantly problematized in the minds of the participants of modern history. The Conradian form was a particular attempt to solve the question set forward by the initiators of twentieth-century changes. If this approach finds so different continuators as Catholic

¹⁸ Ford, *op. cit.*, p. 65.

personalists and creators of laicist tragism, it is evident that one can still find in it a part of the questions, vital and unsolved, concerning the bounds of knowledge, the sense of the human attitude, the criteria of value.

What is far more essential for the further development of the conception of twentieth-century realism in prose than the continuation of definite poetics, is the fact of a union of conscious creative efforts and search for realistic motivation. The old principle of relativity of convention was formulated in a precise manner, and after a stage of discussions and experiments, it entered irrevocably the course of critical thought. The analysis of the situation of the narrator, the problem of distance, of verisimilitude, have signalized a new perspective of studies on the notion of novelistic fiction. The perspective which will focus the attention of the theoreticians and creators of the New Criticism school up to Sartrian and Marxian critics. In such a way premises were assembled for thorough reflections on the structure of the work and its ontological motivation, the nature of motivations deciding the choice of conventions.

These tendencies, motivated and developed in a different way with a different stress on creative problems in various cultures and individuals, were growing up in the whole area of continental and Irish-English literature.

There was a work which, like Dostoievski's writings, revealed in the twentieth-century growth the coming crisis of European civilization, and which predicted the style of the crisis art — this work was Baudelaire's poetry. No novel of a naturalist of the last century combined in striking catachreses a drastic and desperately heart-breaking intimacy with a longing for unattainable and perverse sublimity. The proud alexandrines of the *Fleurs du Mal* (*Flowers of Evil*), burdened with a secular tradition of dignified poetry, were taken into the service of *triste misère* (*sad misery*).

The sonnets of Ronsard, Petrarca and the metaphysical poets revealed the pitiless finale of ambiguous mysticism, ending with nonentity instead of a union with the absolute. A symbolical dimension of the realistic description, a provocative concretization of the venerable allegories, in a surprising union, gave a crystallized utterance to the vanguard art of Flaubert, Zola, Van Gogh, sensitive to real signs of an increasing crisis of social, ethical, aesthetic consciousness.

Baudelaire's poetry forestalled them all. It belonged to the stream of the future "Terrorists" that produced Verlaine and Rimbaud, and that played in the French and the world literature the part of prefiguration and leaven. According to E. Auerbach¹⁹ (*The Aesthetic Dignity of "the Fleurs du Mal"*) — without Baudelaire it would be difficult to imagine, not only the form of the modern poetry, but also the form of other literary genres of the present century. We see signs of Baudelaire's influence in the works of Gide, Proust, Joyce and T. Mann, as well as in those of

¹⁹ E. Auerbach, *Scenes from the Drama of European Literature*.

Rimbaud, Mallarmée, Rilke and Eliot. You could go on very long with this enumeration; — it was done by R. E. Curtius, J. P. Sartre, E. Wilson and M. Raymond, Aragon and W. H. Auden, who confirmed Auerbach's opinion.

At the turn of the century the inspiration of French symbolists in prose and poetry, and the parallel changes in Slavic, German and British literatures, have found an expression in so differing creations as the works of Yeats, Synge, Chekhov, Hoffmannsthal, the early writings of both the Manns, of Rivière, Barrès and the work of Proust.

The last became in the French literature a sum and a pitiless analysis of the cognitive illusions of traditional narration. Elegiac and sarcastic, unmasking and yet at the same time — accordingly to symbolical inspiration — confident of psychological revelation, the work of Proust represented, instead of a coherent personality, momentary states of mystified consciousness. It analysed the actual results of an increasing mediation. It showed that the notion of the reality of events as well as the authenticity of experience is shaped in the struggle for their synthetic, intuitive and rational reconstruction. It was a masterly analysis of the formation of impressions, an attempt to examine the mechanism of the function of active memory, as principal premise of psychological integration. As the result of this analysis differentiating the dead and the recovered time, Proust has formulated one of the most precise theories of the inner time. He has created one of the models of subjective measure. He determined the status of the analytical novel, which could be developed by Virginia Woolf or called into question — by Joyce, Dos Passos, Faulkner. But the era of the nineteenth century analysis in the realistic novel was closed.

In the early decades of the twentieth century, the struggle against "the tyranny of conventions" and the shaping of "a new form" exploded in an avalanche of experiments throughout the world literature. They were undertaken in the name of the personal authenticity and the objectivization of the work of art. As a joke and as an expected revelation. In defence of the dialectics of thought, in order to prove the absurdity of all the claims of objective knowledge, to justify the powerlessness of mystified consciousness, the unavoidable and insoluble ambivalence of all values.

The struggle of "rationality and irrationality" is complicated and manifold in this literature, at the same time ironical, pathetic, joking and scoffing, conscious of the conventionality of cultural signs and fascinated by mythical images resuscitated from tradition or actually created by a mystified consciousness from everyday matters. We find in it an extreme individualism and dreams of universal values, a sense of exclusion and the exaltation of a union in the collective non-consciousness, a dread of the age of technique and an apotheosis of industrial civilization. A contempt of scientific determinism, of naturalistic reduction of psyche and development processes, a revision of the notion of primitivism and exoticism, often appear in connection with a subordination to new manifestations of reductionism hidden in the neo-Kantian theory of symbolic forms and psychoanalytical con-

cepts of knowledge, society, culture. And those are only a few of the many conflicts of controversial problems and impulses of development which are at stake.

That is why attempts at classification of the works of this literature on the basis of two streams, *a priori* individuated and opposed, seem deceptive. The birthplace of this literature and the battlefield of its creative ideas happens to be the same place — namely the social reality of the highly developed industrial civilization. In its field, on the ground of culminatively sharpened contradictions of the totalitarianistic and monopolistic phase of the capitalistic system, the developing tendencies of the twentieth-century humanistic literature will clash and polarize.

The fundamental caesura, revealing new perspectives of collective consciousness, a historic chance of "concrete unification", was created by the victory of the October Revolution radiating also on processes of the development of the literatures of areas still enveloped in the deformation of social bonds and ambivalence of values. But this polarization of systems and states of collective consciousness deciding about the fate of present civilization and creating for the whole humanity a real chance of an integration of culture, an elimination of premises of reified consciousness, does not negate the partial results of a subjective historical cognitive process, on the contrary, it does create the optimal perspective in the study of sources, structure, and functions of cultural creation. It helps to reveal the multitude of its connections and the wealth of their meanings.

The alternative of the "mythical method" and the "narrative method", the opposition of realism against vanguard, does not stand the confrontation with the real dynamics of modern literature. But if these antinomies are false, question always remains — how can one distinguish features of modern realistic structure from the features common to all the humanistic literature?

It is of course a risky and difficult task. It is burdened incessantly with the humanistic coefficient of error, inseparable from the interpretation of cultural processes. It requires a notional crystallization of features disseminated in the confusion of heterogeneous and ambiguous tendencies, that are yet united in functional and integral structures, like for instance literary creations. And yet the attempt at discovering the distinctness of realistic structure seems possible²⁰.

Translated by *Magdalena Grzybowska*

POJĘCIE REALIZMU W NOWOCZESNEJ PROZIE NARRACYJNEJ

STRESZCZENIE

1. Przedmiotem artykułu jest analiza zjawiska, które w krytyce współczesnej określone zostało jako kryzys tradycji realistycznej w prozie powieściowej. Podejmując dyskusję nad genezą i przejawami tego zjawiska, autorka próbuje odpowiedzieć na pytanie, czy ów kryzys jest sympto-

²⁰ An outline of the features of realistic structure is given by the author in the following part of the work (cf. reference 1).

mem rozwoju nowoczesnego pojęcia realizmu i odpowiadających mu struktur powieściowych w prozie narracyjnej, czy też, przeciwnie, jest wyrazem uwiadu tendencji realistycznych w literaturze współczesnej.

2. Opowiadając się za pierwszym wnioskiem, autorka polemizuje z dwudzielnymi schematami dynamiki literatury XX w. operującymi alternatywą: realizm albo awangarda, alternatywą skonstruowaną jako przeciwstawienie naśladowczej i odtwarzającej powieści tradycyjnej — prozie nowoczesnej, mitotwórczej, parabolicznej i kreacyjnej. Poddając krytyce założenia tego schematu autorka stara się wykazać ich związek z alternatywnym ujęciem opozycji: człowiek historyczny albo człowiek naturalny.

3. W oparciu o propozycje przedstawicieli badań genetyczno-strukturalnych (A. Gramsci, C. Lévi-Strauss, L. Goldmann, H. Lefebvre, S. Żółkowski i inni), w nawiązaniu do wyników studiów nad historią literatury i kultury przedstawionych w pracach E. Auerbacha, A. Hausera, H. Levina, I. Watta i innych, autorka próbuje zarysować przesłanki teoretyczne, pomocne w analizie zjawisk kultury współczesnej. Z tego punktu widzenia argumentuje zasadność wykorzystania pojęcia struktury, relacji, modelu oraz omawia problematykę świadomości zmistyfikowanej.

4. W nawiązaniu do historii przemian realizmu zarysowuje następnie charakterystykę kontekstu kulturowego kształtującego poetykę realistyczną w XX w. Omawia relacje między strukturą dzieła literackiego a problematyką ontologiczną, teoriopoznawczą oraz społecznymi kryteriami wartości. Analizuje pojęcie konwencji literackich oraz pojęcie kreacyjności.

W zakończeniu umiejscawia problematykę realizmu nowoczesnego w ramach dyskusji o koncepcji kreacyjnej literatury dwudziestowiecznej.

Alina Brodzka