



interlitteraria

history of literature as a factor of a national and supra-national literary canon

l'histoire littéraire en tant qu'élément constitutif d'un canon littéraire national et supranational

literaturgeschichte als faktor für die herausbildung eines nationalen und supranationalen literaturkanons

la historia de la literatura como factor del canon literario nacional y supranacional

interlitteraria

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Introductory Note

Since the break-through of postmodernism, the value of “grand narratives” has been seriously questioned. They include histories of literature that at least since the nineteenth century have embodied for bigger as well as smaller nations one of the main tasks and challenges. The canon of literature of any nation greatly relies on histories of literature. Its “peaks” in their turn have been assembled in the histories and the canon of world literature.

The topic of national histories of literature continues to be in the focus of literary scholarship. Especially in smaller nations whose independent political history has been shorter, as compared with bigger nations, there is a lot of vulnerability regarding literature and its history. Maybe there is statue of Walt Whitman in New York, but I confess that – even though I consider Whitman one of the greatest poets of Western history – during my half a year’s stay in the North-American metropolis, in 2004/2005, I never came across it. At least it was not mentioned in New York tourist guides as a sight worth seeing. Quite to the contrary, in any capital city of Eastern or Central Europe a visitor meets immediately statues of the founders and greatest representatives of national literatures. In the central square of Ljubljana, the capital of Slovenia, there is an impressive monument of the romantic poet France Prešeren. In the central park area of Riga, the capital of Latvia, not far from the Monument of Liberty, a visitor notices the monumental statue of the symbolist poet Jānis Rainis.

In Estonia where prose writers especially in their lifetime have been more appreciated than poets, the monuments of Friedrich Reinhold Kreutzwald, the poet who created what is now considered to be the Estonian national epic, *Kalevipoeg*, appear rather dispersed: Kreutzwald is fully visible in the small provincial town Võru (where the poet worked as a medical doctor for forty years), but both in Tartu and Tallinn his statue is located at some distance from the town centre: in the former case, it is on the riverbank of Emajõgi

and, in the latter, in the park of Kadriorg. A memorial stone of Juhan Liiv – perhaps our greatest lyrical-philosophic poet of all times – is not missing in Tartu (where the mentally ill Liiv wrote some of his finest poems and prose pieces). However, as the poet spent his lifetime in humble invisibility, even a part of Tartu's own citizens may not be aware at all that one should look for Liiv's memorial stone in a modest place in the shadow of the National Archive of History. Beside the ancient 14th-century cathedral (now the university's museum of history) one can see the statue (erected in the late Soviet period) of Kristian Jaak Peterson, the first significant poet who wrote in the Estonian language, while from older times, the statue of Lydia Koidula, the great patriotic woman poet of our “national awakening”, adorns a square bearing her name, in her native town Pärnu.

In any case, all the main pillars of Estonian national literature have been visually and artistically reproduced in the hope that they can thus better last in the national consciousness.

Why have different nations considered literature so important? It is probably because literature covers most widely the phenomenon that we call spirituality. In the field of creative arts, literature is interiorly its most varied manifestation. Especially in smaller nations whose philosophic tradition is scarce, writers take the place of philosophers. In fact, literature is philosophy *sui generis*, but just the thinking dispersed in images which reaches the receiver through senses even sooner than thought, and also for the same reason settles in the receiver more permanently. Also because what we in Estonian call *vaimsus* (spirituality) can hardly be restricted to the exclusive product of thinking, or intellect.

What about the present day? Have national histories of literature become irreversibly a historical relict? Have we entered such an epoch in which nations do not need any stories besides the life-stories of politicians, actors and TV stars? I do not think that the rich experience of the 8th international conference of the Estonian Association of Comparative Literature, “History of Literature as a Factor of a National and Supranational Literary Canon” would confirm such a suspicion. Its multilayered conclusions, gathered in the present two-volume issue of *Interlitteraria*, would rather certify that in the field of histories of literature there are no universal “norms”

applicable in equal rights to the “centres” and “peripheries”. They also assure us that, whatever the deficiencies of earlier histories of literature, the search for new forms of writing, reflecting both national and supranational history of spirituality – with literature ever in its centre – continues in different parts of the world.

Starting from the present issue of *Interlitteraria* we will publish besides full-length articles also reviews. The only condition for their inclusion is that they should be recognizably centred on the issues of comparative literature.

As *Interlitteraria*'s international prestige and responsibility are growing, starting from the present issue we have restructured our journal's boards. The editorial board takes care of the practical aspects of preparing MSS for publication, while the international academic advisory board secures peer-reviewing of contributions and specialized advice in all cases of doubt.

The next issue of *Interlitteraria* (16/2011) will be once again a thematic *miscellanea*. We certainly will welcome among other articles those in which the ample topic of histories of literature and literary canons is further expanded. The manuscripts should arrive by January 31, 2011.

Jüri Talvet,
Editor

*Methodological Dilemmas
of Contemporary Literary
Historiography*

The close connection between literary history and comparative literature is self-evident, since comparative literature came into being in the 19th century as a literary-historical discipline.¹ The self-evidence of this connectedness later used to be problematized, whenever the historical method became questionable, for instance within the early Russian formalism,² phenomenological methods, new criticism or structuralism. The identification of comparative literature with literary-historical approach was further undermined in a famous lecture by Wellek, *The Crisis of Comparative Literature*.³ Nevertheless, at least since the end of the 1960s, when Jauss conceived the reception aesthetics, literary history has been rehabilitated, for it plays a crucial role in contemporary approaches, such as new historicism, cultural materialism, genre studies, postcolonial studies etc. Today, several comparatists explicitly welcome the return of comparative literature to literary history (cf. Leernout 2006: 46), and literary history is “as topical as never before: as an experiential field of

¹ It is understood as a part of literary history even by some recent comparatists. According to Đurišin, “the comparative literary research always directly depends on the momentary state, aims and tasks of literary history” (Đurišin 1976: 33).

² However, in its later phase Russian formalism started developing a (rather modern and dynamical) conception of literary history; yet in the Western literary criticism, the reception of this developmental phase was even more belated than the reception of the early, strictly “formalist” phase.

³ In this view the lecture was supplemented by the article *The Fall of Literary History*, published in the 1970s.

encountering the Other, as the vastness of mutual openness of unique cultural subjects...” (Венедиктова 2003: 19).

Of course, the history of this relationship is more complex and dynamic than that. Literary history as a serious, academic discipline did not develop simultaneously with comparative literature. The 19th century, which is the birth period of the literary history proper, is the period of national rather than comparative literary history. The most eminent literary histories – for example *Storia della letteratura italiana* (1870–1871) by De Sanctis, in which the author explicitly asserted that the history of Italian literature was identical to the history of Italy itself (and the same point was later emphasized also by two renowned introductory articles of two later editions, Croce’s and Wellek’s)⁴ – were not only national, but frequently nationalist. The reasons are well-known today. They can be expressed briefly by the words of John Neubauer: “This institutionalisation of literary studies was a tremendous boon to literature but the price was to be paid: literature was put to the service of national purposes; it came to be seen as one of the most authentic expressions of the national spirit” (Neubauer 2005: 110).⁵ All the great positivist or *Geistesgeschichte* literary histories appeared to be of this type, which was still prevalent as late as the first third of the 20th century, until the comparative literary-historical syntheses turned up, such as Hazard’s, Auerbach’s or Curtius’. But only after World War II did comparative literary history come to its highest reputation. After the nationalist experience of the 19th century and distinctively political ideologization in totalitarian systems of the 20th one of the main tasks of general and literary history became deideologization of historical

⁴ Cf. Sinopoli 1999: 10; Cornis-Pope and Neubauer (eds.) 2004: 10.

⁵ However, the widespread argument about privileging and institutionalizing literary history by the state authorities to support national interests also has its weakness (it is the same weakness that we can find in fashionable theories today: the facts, regarding the less known, smaller, although declaratively and “theoretically” particularly important and exposed cultures, are in fact still neglected and overlooked). The assumption that “national(istic)” literary histories developed with the active support of the authorities, which were in this way granted the power and identity, fails when we look at the nations which were gathered under Austria-Hungary.

discourse. New historiographic conceptions emerged, for instance Lotman's and Genette's idea of literary history as "a history of literary system, that is, history of formal and thematic procedures" (Sinopoli 1999a: 16),⁶ Goldman's "genetic structuralism", the concept of literary history as a history of literary institutions or *literary field* (Dubois, Bourdieu), Đurišin's concept of interliterariness, Jauss's notion of reception history, the notion of intertextual literary history etc. The common feature of all these conceptions is that they understand the history of literature as a dynamic, transnational process. Gradually the opinion started developing, that literary history is in its nature transnational (Cornis-Pope 2006: 197), or that comparative method is "the essential basis for all possible types of literary history", national literary history as well (Kos 2002: 7).⁷ In the last third of the 20th century comparative literary history therefore was re-established as one of the central tasks of comparative literature, which is also manifest on the "institutional" level: the magazines *New Literary History* (1969) and *Neohelicon* (1974) started, both devoted particularly to methodological problems of (comparative) literary history; and the International Comparative Literature Association launched the project "Comparative History of Literatures in European Languages" (in the 1960s).

In this way, the status of comparative literary history was confirmed both conceptually and institutionally. However, from the 1970s on, with the emergence of poststructuralism, general historiography witnessed shifts, which weakened its status anew. The historiographic discourse underwent a strong revision under the influence of the French school *Annales* and growing influences of authors, such as Hyden White, Paul Ricoeur, Franklin Ankersmith and, of course, Foucault. Its supposed objectivity became demystified, its narrative nature and foundation on the strategies of the fictional discourse rather than objective truth were revealed, and Grand

⁶ For such literary history, which aims at being the history of literary genres, see also Genette 1972: particularly 18–19.

⁷ In contemporary comparative literature this opinion, illuminated from several aspects, strongly prevails. Cf. Valdés 1992: 18; Pavel 1999: 3; Hokenson 2000: 7; Kos 2001: 5–6; Hutcheon 2002: 26, 30; Cornis-Pope 2003: 71; Strutz 2003: 315; Zaplotnik 2005: 137 etc.

narratives were problematized, defined as the unconscious presumption of traditional historiography, literary as well. As a consequence, on the one hand – similarly to Fukuyama’s “The end of history” – rumours about the end of the literary history spread; and on the other hand, new literary histories emerged, which tried to implement new epistemological and methodological criteria.

In what follows, my attention will focus on two revisionist projects: Denis Hollier’s *A New History of French Literature* (1989), and *History of the Literary Cultures of East-Central Europe* (2004–; edited by John Neubauer and Marcel Cornis-Pope). Hollier’s literary history explicitly rejects the holistic presentation of the past in the shape of well-rounded historical narrative. It refuses not only any literary-historical synthesis and periodization concepts, but also Grand narratives, in which literature would play a role of the main hero. The book consists of 198 short articles, written by as many as 164 authors. The articles are not connected and united to any sort of Grand narrative; they do follow in a chronological order, but regardless of whatsoever homogenous substantive principle; the only principle that remains is the methodological decision for absolute fragmentariness and absence of any arranging order. Within the frame of each discussed year there is a *pelle-melle* of several cultural events of the year, but nowhere can we find complete information, for instance about a certain author, period, genre, generation, literary current etc. – Neubauer’s literary history similarly declines the established periodization. Instead, it focuses on five “nodes”: dates of political history, traditional concepts of literary history, topographic nodes, institutions and imaginary or historical figures. According to editors, such a concept does not represent any causally arranged “Grand narrative” of literary history; instead, it offers a “five-time scanning” of the last two centuries in the literary culture of East-Central Europe from various perspectives. As a matter of fact, it does not wholly refuse the chronology, but it reverses it: chronologically ordered “political nodes” in the first part are dealt with from 1989 back to the past.⁸ In contrast to Hollier, such a history preserves a

⁸ This is of course not an experimental feature of the “reversed time current”, as in Amis’s “holocaust” novel *Time’s Arrow*. It rather refers to the

connection to the historiographic discourse, but the history here consists of several microhistories (Cornis-Pope and Neubauer 2004: 17–18), denying any close links between them.

Both Hollier's and Neubauer's literary histories triggered numerous responses; some indeed positive, but also many negative ones. I cannot resume the polemical discussion here.⁹ However, I wish to draw attention to some common neuralgic points, which can be found not only in these two but also in other revisionist attempts in the field of literary historiography. I will briefly discuss the following principal concepts: linearity, continuity, teleology, Grand narratives.

According to advocates of the radical revision of literary history, history does not happen as a continuum, but rather in the form of coincidences and leaps, which are only *a posteriori* linked into a continual Grand narrative by historiographers; consequently, literary historiography should refuse the linear teleology – as both Hollier and Neubauer do. Instead of the integrity of the epochs and continual processes it ought to “emphasize contingency, discontinuity, heterogeneity, and the localization of distant events” (Juvan 2006: 32). – Let me first stress that the idea of (necessary) discontinuity is far from new and has gained a general epistemological value in modern theories. In the context of the treatises in humanities probably the most influential was Derrida with his essay on Husserl in 1967 (*Le voix et le phenomene*). However, Derrida was not the first one. While reflecting on history, Nietzsche and the school *Annales* had spoken in favour of this thought before Derrida; similarly Jurij Tinjanov in the field of literary history (cf. ТЫНЯНОВ 2002: 191); in the first half of the 20th century the idea of discontinuity appeared even more sub-

fact that the past is always (re)constructed from the point of view of the present and that with historiographic reconstruction we are moving from the present back to the past, and not that the past travels linearly to the present, which is common with the chronological surveys (not only of literary history, of course).

⁹ Let me just mention some of the most important publications, where the polemical discussions appeared: for instance in the collections of scientific papers *Writing Literary History* and *Rethinking Literary History*, and in special thematic editions like *Arcadia*, *Neohelicon* and *New Literary History*.

versively in quantum physics, namely as a theory of the so-called quantum leap, which did not go unnoticed in literary criticism (it was used as a theoretical concept by Ihab Hassan¹⁰). The concept of discontinuity of (literary) development is therefore an indispensable consequence of the epistemological movements in natural sciences as well as in humanities, and is also inevitable correction of philosophical-historical concepts of the 19th century.

However, this does not mean that we may push this thought to the very edge and request literary history which would completely do away with continuity, for this is practically impossible due to anthropological and hermeneutic reasons. As Mario Valdés points out, a human being dwells temporally and can perceive anything as sensible only within the time's continuum (cf. Valdés 1998). Or to quote the findings by Ricoeur: we are condemned to the condition of experiencing and understanding only through the mode of narration, through its linearity. Thereupon one can conclude that continuity and discontinuity in literary historiography do not necessarily exclude one another. The idea of discontinuity justifiably reminds us that we construct and synchronise all historical coincidences into a smooth, fluent Grand narrative, which is always only our subjective, *a posteriori* conceptualization of the otherwise muddled happening, full of unusual leaps and discontinuities. Yet this does not mean that quite evident continuities do not reside beside the obvious discontinuities. Literary history itself offers an abundance of examples: the authors of *nouveau roman* felt themselves to be in a continuum (as the opposition) with realism, which they wanted to surpass; this relation holds an implicit notion of development, progress.¹¹ Similar statements can be made about the postmodernists; although the postmodern period in particular witnessed different conceptions of time, the postmodernists frequently understood themselves in a sort of continuity with the modernists—as the term *postmodernism* itself implies.¹² If theory on the one hand denies continuity, the mere

¹⁰ For instance in his essay *Culture, Indeterminacy and Immanence*.

¹¹ As much as opposing the tradition is still in continuity relation with it. It is a sort of continuation, only with “different means”.

¹² If there is some doubt as to the continuity of postmodernists, let me mention the essay “The Literature of Replenishment”, written by one of the

reality or life-experience on the other hand definitely confirms it. The postmodern paradigm did inarguably point out some drawbacks of the continuity model of literary history, but it did not do away with it. It co-exists as one of the possibilities (or even necessities) of literary history today, which cannot be ignored; it is essential, however, to reflect upon it.

Something similar could be said about the declarative refusal of the Grand narratives. I believe the disadvantages of the Grand narratives at least since Lyotard's *Postmodern condition* have been rather transparent. However the question arises, whether this means we can completely avoid them.¹³ In spite of Cornis-Pope's and Neubauer's explicit endeavour to avoid the conceptual traps of the Grand narrative (Neubauer 2005: 114), their literary history remains under its verdict and cannot possibly escape it. This can be observed on several levels, but let me give only one example. The inevitability of the Grand narratives becomes quite evident—albeit at the same time also concealed—in the following way. The two authors postulate in nearly all their programmatic and explanatory articles, related to their literary history,¹⁴ that East-Central Europe is an especially suitable area for comparative history because it is distinctively “cross-cultural”, where each nationalism is *a priori* relativized with the perpetual and lively intercultural relations and mixes. However, bearing in mind the extreme importance of national identity for the majority of literary cultures involved, the question arises, whether this conceptualization of the “cross-cultural” identity of East-Central

leading postmodernists John Barth, which explicitly places postmodernism in a continuity line *realism-modernism-postmodernism*.

¹³ One of the reasons we cannot avoid them is that, as Valdés summarizes Ricoeur, “temporality is the structure of human existence and that it resides in language as narrativity” (Valdés 2002: 77). This implies that the very nature of time – or of the course of history – is narrative, and that the narrative structure is not imposed on the treated matter by the historian, but on the contrary, the history itself and the historical events themselves imply it. Therefore, according to Valdés, even Braudel, a fierce opponent of narrativity, cannot avoid it. (ibid.: 79)

¹⁴ Cf. Cornis-Pope and Neubauer 2004; Cornis-Pope 2003; Neubauer 2003; 2005.

Europe is not itself merely a Grand narrative?¹⁵ Is it not so that the refusal of the Grand narrative of Nation is performed in the name of another Grand narrative, the “cross-cultural” East-Central European one? The whole idea of the project and its methodology are subordinated to this very construct—which is at least as much an “imaginary community” as the nation; and the Grand narrative is entering it through the back door. The authors are of course very well aware of this dilemma (cf. Cornis-Pope and Neubauer 2002: 22), but nevertheless avoid any conclusive answers to it; they only somehow unclearly suggest that the difficulty could be solved by the paradigmatic shift from national(istic) literary histories to transnational, comparative ones (Cornis-Pope and Neubauer 2004: 14–15).

I could go on with the analysis, but the examples mentioned probably demonstrate the basic idea sufficiently. Every turn of epistemological and methodological paradigms makes demands for changes, and the inevitability of the changes in literary historiography today is transparent. Yet the most radical demands, which in the last resort mean the abolition of literary history, are nonetheless unjustified. The opening of this area to various thematical, methodological and ideological aspects seems to be more suitable. The awareness of the necessary renovation of literary history today should probably be the awareness of the pluralism of perspectives.¹⁶

¹⁵ It would be too myopic to think that internationalism is Grand narrative less than nationalism is, and incorrect to attribute the ideological neutrality to ourselves and decline it to others.

¹⁶ The conclusion, oriented above all towards the surprising excludedness of some recent debates on the revision of literary historiography, seems to be merely the starting-point for a thorough reflection on literary history today. The true problem of contemporary (literary) historiography might lie in the distinguishing between a multi-perspective attitude on the one hand and relativism, arbitrariness, dilettantism on the other. This is a hermeneutic problem and particularly Valdés raises the right questions, based on hermeneutics. He is aware of the fact that the existence of a historical “event” cannot be questionable, what is questionable is its interpretation. Hermeneutics has a significant task to approach the “event as such” as closely as possible, and to fix the boundaries between it and (in itself unavoidable) constructivism or perspectivism of interpretation. Valdés tackles it (logically enough) from the aspect of reception, but meanwhile gradually slips from hermeneu-

And most of all it should be the consciousness of the specific contribution of comparative literature to the literary-historical problematics. Comparative literature is according to its definition a plural, interdisciplinary, intercultural, transnational discipline, and therefore its most appropriate standpoint is the one argued by Linda Hutcheon, namely, that we need more alternative ways of narrating the history of literature.¹⁷ This means that we should try to treat each chosen subject of literary history with as many methods and from as many points of view as possible. Continuity and discontinuity approaches can go hand in hand, they can be complementing each other, since only all together illuminate the whole. The writing of literary history with the purpose of rehabilitation of, for instance, overlooked writers cannot just replace “official” literary history, but it is certainly supplementing it in an important way. The position Knut Hamsun occupies in the political history of world literature is probably different from his position in the “merely literary one”. The greatest Slovene poet Prešeren plays – regardless of whether Slovenes like it or not – a much smaller role in transnational literary history than in the national one, therefore we need both literary histories to get a more detailed picture, and in addition another one, which for instance depicts the symbolic figures of Slovene culture. Comparative literary historiography does not need to be the field of exclusions, but the field of inexhaustible possibilities, including those which are (wrongly) thought of as out-of-date.

tics (from the mere literary “fact” as an “event”) towards sociology and cultural studies (towards the analysis of several forms of its reception and reception’s conditions).

¹⁷ Cf. Hutcheon 2002: 31. In addition, Vera Nünning enumerates twenty four different approaches to literary history only in the sphere of contextual models (Vera Nünning 2006: 43).

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Iuri Lotman y la semiosis histórica ante

el historicismo

(Un debate europeo del siglo XX)

Este artículo es una aproximación inicial a la sistematicidad de la cultura como realidad susceptible de ser documentada y analizada de modo empírico en su temporalidad histórica. En concreto, se analizarán las alternativas para una historia del campo cultural con metodología no historicista y se presentará en perspectiva crítica un largo debate europeo que cruza el siglo XX para culminar en cierto modo en la noción lotmaniana de semiosfera. Igualmente, se señalará algo sobre el lugar que en este plano corresponda a la canonicidad, concepto delimitado por Victor Shklovski en trabajos de los primeros años 20 del siglo pasado para marcar el carácter postulado, normativo y legitimador de modelos y textos en un estado de cultura determinado, pero que ha sido desarrollado con pleno aprovechamiento empírico por investigadores de la escuela de Tel Aviv (Even-Zohar 1990: 15–17, Sela-Sheffy 2002) para reforzar la idea de la no esencialidad del valor artístico.

Dos aclaraciones se hacen necesarias antes de comenzar: por alternativas al historicismo se entienden aquí tanto las dirigidas a la expresión idealista de esta posición epistemológica como las más próximas al positivismo o incluso al materialismo histórico, pero no propiamente las vinculadas a los desarrollos del anti-idealismo nietzscheano; en segundo lugar, en relación con el proceso meta-disciplinar de la Historia como saber/ciencia y como conjunto de prácticas discursivas e institucionales, debe reconocerse de partida no sólo la posibilidad sino la existencia real de una tradición que no se deja explicar como Historia historicista, fundamentalmente por haberse desprendido del impulso hacia una individualización excluyente en relación con “el sujeto de la historia”. Quiere indicarse, en

otros términos, que el historicismo no es condición epistemológica o metodológica ineludible o connatural de la disciplina moderna identificada como Historia. Y que no lo es o no lo ha sido, sobre todo, en tanto en cuanto la Historia alcanzó a pluralizar, o como mínimo a jerarquizar en una serie cerrada, sus sujetos, los *individuos históricos* que la protagonizan, el Estado entre ellos (Carreras Ares 2000: 43–58).

Sin embargo, nada es sencillo cuando se pretende hablar de historicismo. En una línea de argumentación ciertamente polémica y a la vez sólida, Juan Carlos Rodríguez (1996) ha negado la supuesta crisis del historicismo en la segunda mitad del siglo XX y ha mostrado algunas vías ciertas de su continuidad. Sobre todo las dos siguientes: el *historicismo evolucionista*, que sin abandonar un horizonte hegeliano se ejercitaría en el formalismo empirista y en el formalismo kantiano, y el *historicismo tecnicista/ profético*, con fundamentación en Nietzsche y en Heidegger. El primero de ellos, lo ejemplifica Rodríguez con la obra de Roman Jakobson y con el trayecto general del estructuralismo; el segundo, con la arqueología del saber de Michel Foucault¹.

Por supuesto, las coyunturas que mayor interés tienen en esa perspectiva son las que supieron desconfiar de una autonomía disciplinar de la Historia llevada al límite. Esto fue con certeza más fácil de asimilar en la agenda de los historiadores *no sectoriales* que en la propia de quienes en la modernidad se han ocupado de hacer Historia literaria, Historia de la cultura o Historia del arte, por ejemplo. En efecto, todo parece más complejo cuando se atienden las líneas de desarrollo que a partir del haz disciplinar concentrado de una Historia sin adjetivar – suficientemente legitimado en el reduccionamiento por románticos y positivistas – se fueron diferenciando a partir del último cuarto del siglo XIX, momento por cierto en el que

¹ Un aspecto importante de este análisis es el lugar respectivo que ocuparían las épocas o las epistemes en esas formas contemporáneas (¿vigentes?) del historicismo. Rodríguez defiende que frente al carácter rector y regulador de la noción hegeliano-evolucionista de *época* en cuanto expresión del *Geist*, el concepto foucaultiano de *episteme* poseería una marca enraizada en el pensamiento de Heidegger, ontológica y hermenéutica por tanto, orientada en fin a facilitar la interpretación del ser y del lenguaje.

comenzó a usarse el vocablo *historicismo* y en el que Friedrich Nietzsche marcó sin medias tintas un uso peyorativo del mismo por vinculación con dos notas básicas que Carreras Ares (2000: 40) ha descrito con exactitud en sus estudios sobre el historicismo alemán: “pasividad esteticista y erudición desprovista de vida, o lo que era peor, enemiga de la vida misma”.

Pero tan relevante como esto que se indica lo fue la propia pluralidad de significación del historicismo como pauta ya desde sus mismos orígenes, con incidencia muy variable en los planos epistemológico y discursivo dependiendo de la clase de axialidad de lo histórico que se promoviera como programa heurístico de partida. Piénsese, por ejemplo, en la concreción narrativa del historicismo cultural propio de los procesos de *nation-building* y en los elementos sobreañadidos por esa dinámica discursiva a la idea – mucho menos problemática – de aceptar la historicidad como categoría básica de comprensión de los hechos humanos. Piénsese incluso en el modo de gestionar en términos discursivos las claves *individualidad* y *autonomía*, en las que tanto insistió Friedrich Meinecke en *Die Entstehung des Historismus*, la obra que en 1936 dedicó al frustrado rescate epistemológico del historicismo, cuando una revista como *Annales d'Histoire économique et sociale* llevaba ya siete años de rodaje.

El proceso del historicismo y la centralidad de la historia entre el idealismo alemán y la filosofía de la praxis gramsciana se comprende en su auténtica dimensión sólo al repasar la trayectoria conceptual del término *historia*. Según ha expuesto Reinhart Koselleck en *Geschichte, Historie* (1975) los cambios conceptuales del término fueron de tal profundidad a partir de finales del siglo XVIII que en realidad estaríamos en ese momento ante un verdadero neologismo moderno. Tras la revolución francesa, la palabra *historia* vino a ocupar este lugar de referencialidad absoluta como “principio regulador de toda experiencia y de toda expectativa posible” (Koselleck 1975 trad. 2004: 82) y como efectivo concepto-guía de la modernidad. Esto fue inicialmente así solo en el ámbito cultural alemán, pero irradió pronto hacia la mayor parte de los sistemas de pensamiento europeos. El proceso que según la *Begriffsgeschichte* de Koselleck introdujo la posibilidad de un uso abstracto y global del

concepto, sin limitación a la experiencia de lo individual, tuvo que ver con la comprensión de la historia como entramado de causas y efectos, por encima de la simple relación de sucesos.

En estas coordenadas, propicias ya al teleologismo que incorporarían la filosofía de la historia hegeliana y las formas variables del determinismo, hay que situar el debate sobre el *punto de vista* del historiador, que, con precedente en Leibniz, trajo a primer plano desde la hermenéutica prerromántica Johann Martin Chladenius. Sus razonamientos sobre la legitimidad del punto de vista del historiador como base de su discurso incorporaron la justificación de una perspectiva crítica en la labor de hacer y escribir historia, posición que ahora nos parece la única irrenunciable entre las que puedan sustentar cualquier empresa historiográfico-literaria, según se ha encargado de subrayar Remo Ceserani: “una cosa, tuttavia, è certa: chi si accinge a scrivere una storia letteraria deve sapere che egli ha comunque di fronte a sé un problema di scelte, di assunzione esplicita di un punto di vista e di una prospettiva” (en Lavagetto 1999: 99).

Pese a lo señalado, el vigor metodológico posterior del positivismo, su abanderamiento antidogmático y su programa a favor de la asimilación de las premisas y operativos de la ciencia experimental vencieron aquel impulso constituyente del *punto de vista* heurístico y analítico. El apoyo programático vino del propio Auguste Comte y de los postulados de Leopold von Ranke. Entre estos últimos emergieron dos claves con incidencia directa en lo que aquí tratamos: 1) el historiador reúne sin juzgarlos un conjunto de hechos documentados que se *autoconstituyen* en relato histórico por sí mismos y 2) la historia tiene entidad propia como *res gesta* y posee una estructura definida accesible al conocimiento. Se trata con toda evidencia de marcas de autonomización no solo de la discursividad de la Historia sino ya antes de la propia entidad de los acontecimientos en una temporalidad que en ningún momento se siente la necesidad de explicar como construcción cultural. Lo promovido por el historicismo positivista fue así una temporalidad ajena a toda semántica histórica, una temporalidad desentendida de toda semiosis, autónoma de cualquier explicitación de base sobre la percepción o la experiencia concreta del tiempo y de sus ritmos en el discurso técnico. En el terreno de la historiografía literaria es constatable en

ese plano la preeminencia de dos modos de resolución del programa científico del historicismo, el teleológico y el genético, según se haya priorizado un proyecto planificador o un proyecto comprometido con la localización de los orígenes de una cierta (o incierta) singularidad, básicamente cultural-nacional. En ambos casos, el canon se acomodó a menudo como mecanismo de fijación de un supuesto destino histórico, el de la nación.

A propósito de una historia literaria o cultural de signo no historicista los marcos de referencia más propicios me parecen los derivados del paradigma sistémico-funcional tal como se empezó a formular a finales de los años 20 del siglo pasado entre los formalistas rusos², con continuación posterior en el Círculo de Praga y en el último tercio del siglo – tras el ocaso de la hegemonía del funcionalismo estructuralista fundamentado por la escuela de Ginebra, tendente a la observación sincrónica – por la semiótica de la cultura y los estudios del polisistema cultural. Hablamos en consecuencia de las escuelas de Tartu-Moscú y de Tel Aviv y de sus máximos representantes, Iuri M. Lotman e Itamar Even-Zohar, respectivamente. Este último, según es bien sabido, ha reconocido en sus trabajos la deuda o al menos la confluencia intelectual con Lotman, bastante evidente en nociones como *polisistema*, *repertorio* y algunas otras. Se trata de una convergencia que podría haber surgido, según señala Even-Zohar (1990: 2), por la decisiva influencia de una tradición teórica compartida, pero también por el simple hecho de haber partido de premisas heurísticas próximas, lo que podría explicar un paralelismo más, el dado con la sociología del campo cultural de Pierre Bourdieu, ajeno en este caso por completo a la tradición ruso-checa del funcionalismo dinámico (Even-Zohar 1990: 3).

He hablado de signo no historicista a propósito de estos modelos y acaso sean necesarias algunas precisiones, no todas abordables en este momento. Resulta constatable que ni Lotman ni Even-Zohar han reclamado una centralidad de la Historia literaria o cultural en sus modelos pese a referir permanentemente a la historia la descripción

² Fue Tinianov el primero en hablar de una perspectiva sistémico-funcional para los Estudios literarios.

de los procesos culturales estudiados³. También lo es que, contra la práctica historicista, no ciñen su atención en exclusiva al terreno de la individualidad histórica, llámese *Estado*, como en Ranke; *pueblo*, como en el pensamiento prerromántico herderiano; *época*, como en la estilística de Karl Vossler; o *genio autorial* en diversas perspectivas de signo historicista o antihistoricista. Incluso podría valorarse si en sus respectivos programas de investigación sigue ausente, como en los formalistas, la categoría de tiempo histórico⁴. Sin embargo, nunca deja de ser operativa en uno y otro pensadores la referencialidad epistemológica de lo que Even-Zohar ha descrito⁵ como *funcionalismo dinámico*, entendido como una alternativa a la práctica historiográfica común, además de serlo también sin duda a un funcionalismo estático y a su correspondiente teoría de sistemas estáticos. Por esto es por lo que parece apropiado hablar de una *policronía dinámica*, como ha sugerido Milan V. Dimić en sus análisis sobre el método en la teoría de los polisistemas. Tampoco es

³ Manuel Cáceres ha recordado recientemente “el papel central de la historia en la obra de Iuri Lotman” y en la de una mayoría de los investigadores de algún modo vinculados con la escuela de Tartu-Moscú (Cáceres 2007). Entre éstos menciona explícitamente a Arón Gurévich, Eleazar Meletinski, Vladímir Toporov y Mijaíl Gaspárov. De este último teórico ofrece una colaboración el número 9 de la revista *Entretextos*, referida en su práctica totalidad a la cuestión de la historia en el pensamiento lotmaniano, con trabajos además del propio Lotman, uno de ellos en colaboración con Uspenski, y otros dos de Gueorgui Knabe y Boguslaw Żyłko.

⁴ En el primer Lotman probablemente sí estaba ausente (Żyłko 2006). En Even-Zohar no lo parece, según se desprende del título y de la organización interna de su primera monografía, *Papers in Historical Poetics* (1978). Al emplear la expresión “tiempo histórico” incorporo la argumentación de fondo de la crítica de Bajtín a los desarrollos teóricos sobre Historia literaria debidos a Shklovski y al propio Tinianov, la cual, por cierto, además de una dimensión ideológica está asentada en una disensión estética (Bajtín 1928 trad. 1994: 245–265). Recuérdese que Bajtín interpretaba que en la concepción de lo histórico por parte del formalismo pesaba en exceso su proximidad estética con el futurismo.

⁵ En especial en la introducción a su trabajo más leído (Even-Zohar 1990: 1–6) y en los epígrafes iniciales de “System and Polysystem in Modern Functionalism: Statics vs. Dynamics” (1990: 9–11).

desproporcionado decir que un objetivo presente en los dos programas de investigación es la localización de un equilibrio entre lo individual y lo tipológico (de ahí el hincapié en los sistemas modelizantes), entre lo particular y lo general regido por normas o leyes y entre las dos manifestaciones de la historicidad, la estática y la dinámica. A este último respecto, como defendió Even-Zohar en “Poly-system Studies”, es insostenible la reducción de lo histórico a lo diacrónico. Dicho en otras palabras: la sincronía es histórica⁶. Que en este punto se pueda señalar o no una posible respuesta a los juicios críticos de Bajtín sobre la teoría del método formal, o incluso una contestación a la metodología del materialismo histórico en su conjunto, es materia compleja que aquí no puedo desarrollar.

Donde más nítida se hace la marca no-historicista de los dos modelos señalados es en la denuncia compartida de lo que bien podría denominarse *falacia autonomista* del historicismo, a través de la cual se sublimó el carácter autorreferencial, cerrado y unificado del objeto de estudio, rebajando o negando de paso la existencia de marcas de heterogeneidad o incluso de conflicto en la presentación individualizada de Estado, pueblo, época, etc. También, en otro plano, en la propia naturaleza semiótica de la historia, esto es, en el reconocimiento previo del hecho de que, como indica Boris Uspenski (1988–1989), la percepción de la procesualidad histórica nace de la semiotización de la realidad, lo cual incorpora un momento heurístico, un momento cognoscitivo y por supuesto también un momento discursivo. De nuevo, si así lo queremos ver, una recuperación del *punto de vista* del que habló Chladenius en 1742 (Kosselleck 1975 trad. 2004: 113–126), solo que ampliado ahora al destinatario social de la historiografía, que es quien a fin de cuentas agrega un significado determinado al texto de los acontecimientos seleccionados y presentados, por constituir necesariamente toda conciencia histórica una *semiósis*, una transformación del no-signo en signo (Uspenski 1988–1989 trad. 1993: 49–50). Y esto ya en el mismo arranque de la semiotización, pues para el teórico ruso el

⁶ Por lo que para una negación de esta perspectiva sería más apropiado utilizar la etiqueta *funcionalismo sincronístico* antes que *sincrónico* (Even-Zohar 1990: 11).

proceso histórico es representable como un proceso de comunicación abierto en el cual se incorpora sin cesar información nueva que origina reacciones también nuevas en la comunidad aludida (apelada) por esa acción comunicativa. Así que el proceso histórico entendido como comunicación constituye a la vez una exigencia de semiosis renovada. En un trabajo temprano, "*Historia sub specie semioticae*", Uspenski formalizaba la idea con estas palabras: "in its rudimentary phase the historical process is a process of generating new «sentences» in some «language» [entendido éste en términos amplios, semióticos] and of having them read by a societal addressee or social group" (Uspenski 1974 trad. 1988: 107).

Todo historicismo eleva la Historia a disciplina suficiente y autónoma, y por ello mismo opta por delimitar objetos de análisis compactos sobre los que postular los principios de autonomía y centralidad. Mientras, lo importante de modelos no-historicistas es, en primer lugar, que incorporaron una interdependencia disciplinar de la Historia con otras ciencias; en segundo término, que se ocuparon de los espacios fronterizos de intercambio y de transferencia entre lo central y lo periférico; y tercero, que supieron delimitar nociones como *sistema* o *semiosfera* justamente en cuanto campo de ajuste entre identidades y alteridades, razón por la que se hizo preciso hablar de *polisistemas* – en plural⁷ – e incluso de la irregularidad estructural interna de la semiosfera, porque, como ha señalado Lotman",

la semiosfera es determinada, en particular, por el hecho de que, siendo heterogénea por naturaleza, ella se desarrolla con diferente velocidad en sus diferentes sectores. Los diversos lenguajes tienen diferentes tiempo y diferente magnitud de ciclos: las lenguas naturales se desarrollan mucho más lentamente que las estructuras ideológico-mentales. Por eso, ni hablar se puede de una sincronidad de los procesos que transcurren en ellos. (Lotman 1984 trad. 1996: 31)

⁷ Y no como simple convención terminológica, destacó Even-Zohar (1990: 12).

De lo anterior se sigue el interés por lo conflictivo y por el permanente reajuste sistémico, también por lo fragmentario e incompleto. Ello no supuso ignorar un principio de jerarquización, sistémico también en sí mismo por marcar posiciones de dominio y de subsidiariedad o dependencia en los repertorios, en el plano institucional o entre los propios agentes que intervienen en la producción y el consumo de bienes culturales, dicho todo ello en el lenguaje de la teoría polisistémica. Son presupuestos que en realidad tienen su formulación inicial en las tesis de 1928 que Iuri Tinianov y Roman Jakobson expusieron de modo sumario a propósito de la Historia literaria, en principio como intento de compatibilizar la descripción sincrónica y la diacrónica a propósito de fenómenos literarios y de lenguaje⁸. Se hace preciso detenerse brevemente en esos presupuestos porque conservan vigencia y porque, formulados casi un siglo después, siguen constituyendo un reto metodológico y heurístico que no pierde actualidad, como dejó anotado el propio Lotman en un trabajo de 1974 proyectado después de forma vertebradora en *Cultura y explosión*⁹ (1992). En la tesis quinta, los formalistas oponían la noción de sistema literario sincrónico a la de época literaria, de evidente regusto historicista. Lo más relevante de su posición – resultado probable de un ajuste con las posiciones del pensamiento sociológico marxista y muy en particular con las críticas de Mijail Bajtín (1928) – fue la apertura del concepto de sistema literario e incluso el desbloqueo de su núcleo central para integrar en él, si así correspondiere, elementos que aún hoy son percibidos por la

⁸ La declaración de principios tuvo su precedente fundamental, casi punto por punto, en un trabajo escrito por Tinianov en 1927 y publicado dos años después, “Sobre la evolución literaria”. En él se postula que el único modo de estudiar la evolución literaria es dando cuenta de la sustitución de sistemas. El ensayo figura en la compilación de Volek (1992: 251–267).

⁹ Baste la mención de las cinco polaridades atendidas en la publicación de 1974: sistémico/extrasistémico, unívoco/ambivalente, núcleo/periferia, descrito/no descrito y necesario/superfluo. Teniendo muy presente este trabajo de Lotman, Jüri Talvet (1997) ha dedicado un estudio a la descripción comparada de la modernidad en el pensamiento de Lotman y en el de Ortega y Gasset. Y a eso mismo nos encaminaremos aquí de inmediato, aunque bajo un prisma algo diferente.

historiografía literaria prevalente como extrasistémicos. La posición de Tinianov y Jakobson (1928 trad. 1970: 104) se concretaba del modo siguiente:

La noción de sistema literario sincrónico no coincide con la noción ingenua de época literaria, puesto que el sistema está constituido no sólo por obras de arte próximas en el tiempo, sino también por obras incluidas en el sistema y que provienen de literaturas extranjeras o de épocas anteriores. No es suficiente catalogar los fenómenos coexistentes y otorgarles iguales derechos: lo que interesa es su significación jerárquica para una época determinada.

Además, la tesis octava localizaba una nueva alternativa para la Historia de los sistemas literarios al defender la necesidad de hacer compatibles las leyes inmanentes de la evolución y el cambio literario-cultural con las propias de las "otras series sociales", orientándose ese conjunto como una correlación que Tinianov y Jakobson calificaron lúcidamente como *sistema de sistemas*¹⁰ (105). Exactamente de aquí y de las propuestas semióticas de Mukařovský y de otros *seniors* del Círculo de Praga que desarrollaron el pensamiento historiográfico-literario de Tinianov y de Tomachevski, en especial durante la primera mitad del decenio de los treinta (Galan 1988), derivaría en 1942 el joven Felix Vodička su alternativa a la Historia literaria historicista.

¹⁰ En ello cabe señalar otra línea más de negociación y ajuste, no solo con la ortodoxia marxista sino en particular con las especificidades del programa de investigación propio del Círculo de Praga. En 1928 Jakobson llevaba ocho años viviendo en la capital checa, donde fue miembro fundador del núcleo, mientras que Tinianov residía en Leningrado, desde donde viajó en alguna ocasión a Praga (Galan 1988: 28). El cierre de la tesis octava del texto que firmaron los dos teóricos rusos dejaba claro en todo caso que no se hacían concesiones a un régimen de heteronomía para la producción artística y literaria: "Considerar la correlación de los sistemas sin tener en cuenta las leyes inmanentes a cada sistema, es un camino funesto desde el punto de vista metodológico" (1928 trad. 1970: 104).

Su objetivo era alcanzar la reconstrucción de la norma literaria en un momento sistémico dado y, de modo conjunto, presentar una jerarquización axiológica y sociológica de los valores estéticos dominantes. Así lo resumía el propio teórico: “La evolución y los cambios de la norma literaria, la estratificación social del público literario, el cambio de los valores literarios, la relación de la norma con la evolución literaria y con la evolución cultural y política, son tareas que se nos ofrecen” (Vodička 1942 trad. 1995: 43). Con ello se abría un espacio para integrar la recepción, la canonicidad y el consumo como factores histórico-culturales sin desatender lo que de forma un tanto equívoca, y desde luego no parangonable con nociones como *habitus* o *toma de posición* en Bourdieu, Vodička apelaba en aquel momento como *volición* o *intencionalidad* (autorial o incluso epocal), en dependencia de un principio teleológico¹¹. Sin embargo, sí hay un aspecto en el que Vodička *previó* la crítica bourdiana de la Historia literaria como historia del subcampo de producción restringida (Bourdieu 1994 trad. 1997: 65–73). En particular al advertir, con giro sociológico, que en el estudio de los valores literarios y de la conciencia artística se hace precisa la mayor atención y una afinación del método para entender lo que denomina “base social de la diferenciación del gusto literario” (Vodička 1942 trad. 1995: 29). Lo más interesante de las páginas que el teórico checo dedica a la reconstrucción de una axiología literaria en un momento histórico dado me parece su consideración de algunos de los parámetros que Rakefet Sela-Sheffy (2002) ha estudiado como muy pertinentes para una teoría sistémica del canon y de la canonicidad. Sobre todo en lo referido al canon como mecanismo de estabilización sistémica y, quizás en mayor proporción aún, en lo tocante a la capacidad generativa (*generativity*) de los modelos canonizados, que opera muy diferenciadamente según en qué clase de producción cultural se fije la atención.

Casi en simultaneidad con el proceso indicado, José Ortega y Gasset concretaba en España un giro en su pensamiento para

¹¹ No dependiente del idealismo hegeliano sino de desarrollos fenomenológicos de la escuela jurídica de Brno por los que también se interesó Jakobson.

desarrollar la clave *razón histórica*, en la cual es preciso señalar distancia epistemológica y a la vez algún elemento de proximidad con las posiciones de los formalistas rusos y los estructuralistas checos. Me referiré en particular a su ensayo "Historia como sistema", enviado para el homenaje a Ernst Cassirer, el maestro de Marburgo exiliado en Londres desde 1933¹². El análisis de Ortega, además de sustentarse en un título tan efectista, contiene pasos significativos para la interpretación de su propio proceso intelectual, aunque no es de esto de lo que se va a hablar ahora, ni tampoco de lo que pueda haber de concordancia con otras propuestas anteriores o coetáneas, a partir ya de la filosofía de la vida de Dilthey, ante el telón de fondo de lo que con Husserl llamaríamos *crisis de la razón* en la Europa de entreguerras¹³.

¿De qué sistematicidad hablaba Ortega? Lo primero que hay que recordar es que en 1928 había fundamentado como alternativa a la filosofía de la historia de Hegel y, con acritud, también al positivismo de Ranke lo que llamó *historiología*, disciplina caracterizada como propiciatoria de un acceso inmediato a la realidad de los hechos históricos. Acceso que lo sería también para Ortega a la estructura preexistente y no estática sino dinámica de la realidad. Ortega no está tan lejos en esas breves páginas de los presupuestos de *Annales*¹⁴. Pero lo que escribe unos años después en el homenaje

¹² El volumen colectivo aparecería en el propio Londres el año 1936 en edición de R. Klibansky y H.J. Paton con el título *Philosophy and History* (Oxford UP).

¹³ Se mencionó ya en estas páginas a Friedrich Meinecke, quizás el último gran defensor y sistematizador del historicismo idealista alemán (Carreras Ares 2000), autor en 1945 de un triste libro fruto de la coyuntura vivida, *Die deutsche Katastrophe: Betrachtungen und Erinnerungen*, en el que se carga el error nacional alemán más a esa crisis europea de la razón que a motivos propiamente político-ideológicos y económicos.

¹⁴ O, más que de esos presupuestos, de la forma de encarar los abusos del positivismo en su formulación rankiana. Otra cosa es, sin duda, la concreción de una alternativa. Ahí la distancia de Ortega con Marc Bloch y Lucien Febvre se agranda. Véanse estas líneas, todavía neokantianas, como muestra de la proximidad (y de la diferencia): "Sólo cuando exista una historiología la historia dejará de ser en lo esencial un cronicón – porque sólo entonces

a Cassirer va más lejos. Diferencia entre ideas y creencias y defiende que si bien las ideas de un tiempo histórico no constituyen un sistema propiamente dicho sí lo constituyen en cambio las creencias, tanto si se refieren a un ser humano, a un pueblo o a una época (apréciese la persistencia del rasgo historicista de la individualización y la equiparación de esos tres niveles de realidad). Ortega reconoce que en un tiempo histórico dado convive una pluralidad de creencias y es interesante anotar que a esto lo denomine *repertorio* (Ortega y Gasset 1941 2006: 48). Pero además reconoce que ese repertorio estructurado de creencias está sometido a socialización y a jerarquización. Y no sólo esto. Argumenta además – nótese que en coincidencia con lo defendido por Vodička – que la tarea del historiador es justamente descubrir el orden oculto de la jerarquía de ese repertorio, en Ortega no estrictamente estético o estimativo, sino más bien de naturaleza epistémica. ¿De dónde pudo proceder esta indudable proximidad? Creo que la clave la ofrece Peter Steiner cuando analiza la recepción de la obra de Ernst Cassirer entre los formalistas rusos, en especial en el propio Tinianov (Steiner 2001: 90–95), y se fija en la oposición entre la lógica sustancialista y la lógica relacional tal como figura expuesta en *Substanzbegriff und Funktionsbegriff* (1910). En ese punto es justo donde convergen la sistematicidad orteguiana de la historia y el pensamiento sistémico-

estará constituida plenamente como ciencia empírica, a semejanza de la física. Pues es un grave error suponer que puede existir un ciencia empírica labrada con puro empirismo, es decir, con la mera constatación de contingencias. Contingente es «lo que pasa» – pero nada pasa si además y antes no es[,] quiero decir, si no posee una estructura *a priori*. [.../...] Se impone, pues, frente al puro contingentismo en que ha sido educada nuestra mente reaprender la sabiduría que ya lograron los griegos – Parménides, Platón, Aristóteles –, según la cual «ser» significa las constantes de un fenómeno. Lo histórico que es, en definitiva, la vida humana en sus variaciones consiste, por lo pronto, en un sistema de constantes. Estas constantes son las que abren un margen a su propia variación” (Ortega y Gasset 1941 2008: 22–23).

funcional y relacional del máximo representante de la teoría de la Historia literaria entre los formalistas rusos¹⁵.

El gran cambio por el que se interesa Ortega es en ese terreno el producido entre 1900 y el momento en el que escribe, poco antes del estallido de la Guerra Civil española, auténtico preámbulo de la II Guerra Mundial. El paso dado representó deponer de la posición de jerarquía la fe en la razón experimental y en la ciencia para ubicar en su lugar, según la apreciación orteguiana, la vida humana como auténtica realidad. El cambio se reformula pues en estos términos: “el hombre no tiene naturaleza, sino que tiene... historia” (Ortega y Gasset 1941 2006: 73), lo cual representa tanto como decir que está en permanente cambio. En el lenguaje orteguiano lo anterior se formula indicando que la vida humana se expresa *en gerundio* y que los hechos se fluidifican “en el *fieri* de que proviene”. Ese es el camino por el que la razón histórica supondría una alternativa cognoscitiva, ética y estética a la razón físico-matemática. La historia sería así *sistema* para Ortega porque documenta la experiencia humana en toda su extensión, en toda su interdependencia, en su absoluta totalidad. Por eso señalará que “nada puede estar verdaderamente claro en historia mientras no está toda ella clara” (75). Véase en ello un nuevo registro del historicismo orteguiano, confluyente con la subordinación de la verdad al sentido, tan típica del historicismo no positivista. Un resultado concreto de estas premisas en el campo de la historia cultural y en el de la canonización artística correlativa lo constituye el ensayo titulado *Goya* (1958), de publicación póstuma en su formulación última, que he analizado en otro lugar. Lo único que querría destacar en este momento es que este operativo conduce en Ortega a una estética hermenéutica desprovista de entidad crítica

¹⁵ Una convergencia que afronta el conocimiento de las producciones artísticas y literarias con sentido divergente. Antiinmanentista a partir de cierto momento en ambos casos, pero en el ruso dirigido hacia el sistema cultural como horizonte y en el español marcado por una impronta hermenéutica hacia la razón histórica. Resulta significativo, por otra parte, que Pierre Bourdieu incorporara asimismo la diferenciación formulada por Cassirer en libros como *Raisons pratiques* para postular que lo real es lo relacional, principio heurístico clave en su pensamiento y en sus análisis de los campos cultural y del poder.

o analítica, motivo que contribuye a explicar por qué su método de exploración de la sistematicidad de la historia careció de proyección y de efectividad tras la desaparición del pensador. Y añadiré algo: la imposibilidad de un punto de encuentro entre las dos vías antipositivistas en las que nos estamos centrando – pongamos que las que tienen por referentes respectivos a Dilthey y a Tinianov –, más que diferir en su reacción común frente al *a priori* kantiano, frente al sujeto trascendental, acabaron haciéndolo por el lugar que la filosofía de la vida de Dilthey y sus continuadores, Ortega y Gasset entre ellos, reservaron a lo experiencial, a la *Erlebnis*, a la biografía y su reviviscencia a fin de cuentas. En buena medida, por la incorporación del psicologismo. Obviamente, la tradición empírico-semiótica europea que se reconocería varios decenios después en el legado sistémico-funcional de Tinianov, y que ajustó con no pocas dificultades heurísticas una forma de historicismo *otro* (el Lotman que gira hacia la noción de semiosfera, por ejemplo), integró los materiales más asimilables de aquella protosemiosis de la alteridad diltheiana y orteguiana pero arrumbó, con matices ya desde los escritos de Eichenbaum sobre Nekrasov y Gogol (Bajtín 1928 trad. 1994: 227–232), la tendencia a un biografismo duplicado, el referido al engranaje entre las vivencias de autor y crítico, débil en términos metodológicos y válido apenas como registro del pensamiento del segundo.

El verdadero motor de la reacción antipositivista en la Europa de los años 30 llegó con Marc Bloch y Lucien Febvre, directores de la revista *Annales* desde 1929 hasta el asesinato en 1944 de Bloch por el nazismo, lo que propició la entrada de Fernand Braudel en la codirección. Desde el principio, la propuesta se configuró como respuesta al protagonismo histórico de los grandes hechos aislados y sus grandes protagonistas, e igualmente como llamada de atención sobre la existencia de procesos de *longue durée*, lo cual exigió la aplicación de una metodología serial con fundamento multidisciplinar y la renuncia probablemente definitiva a la posibilidad de construir historiografías válidas al margen de la constitución de equipos plurales de sociólogos, politólogos, geógrafos, lingüistas, economistas, demógrafos, estadísticos y otros especialistas coordinados con los historiadores. Por la axialidad de la Historia y su postulación como lugar de encuentro de todas estas disciplinas

podría plantearse que *Annales* quiso reinventar el historicismo, pero esta es una exageración que fue a menudo rechazada de forma explícita por los miembros de las sucesivas generaciones de miembros de la Escuela. Lo que ahora interesa destacar es la existencia innegable de una serie de elementos, ya en la trayectoria inicial de *Annales*, que posibilitan la asociación con lo que representaron Iuri Lotman y la escuela de Tartu-Moscú, asunto que ha sido estudiado por Bogusław Żyłko en trabajos recientes (Żyłko 2006 y 2007).

En el trabajo de la primera promoción de *Annales* se constata ya una semiotización de la historia con la asimilación, tan central al proyecto del nuevo historicismo anglosajón en los pasados años 80, de la textualidad de la historia por la forma en la que llegan al historiador los hechos: ya como textos, casi siempre como registros fragmentarios y parciales. De ahí la idea cara a Lotman del investigador como intérprete y traductor de códigos y lenguajes, como explorador de la semiosfera y de sus autodescripciones. Recuérdense estas palabras del trabajo “Un modelo dinámico del sistema semiótico” (1974):

el estudio de la cultura de tal o cual etapa histórica incluye no sólo la descripción de la estructura de esa cultura desde la posición del historiador, sino también la traducción, al lenguaje de esa descripción, de la propia autodescripción de esa cultura y de la descripción del desarrollo histórico por ella creada, resumen del cual ella se consideraba a sí misma. (Lotman 1974 trad. 1998: 72)

Según Żyłko, que se apoya en textos del propio Lotman, la gran diferencia entre lo que representa Tartu y lo que fue *Annales* radicaría en el exceso de atención de la escuela francesa a la larga duración y en especial sus concesiones aún no controladas al determinismo histórico y, por tanto, también la reducción de la historia a ciencia de la predictibilidad. Para Lotman, en la mentalidad de los *annalistas* no entraría la posibilidad de lo que frente a la gradualidad de la historia cultural o de la historia en general él mismo estudió como *explosión*, concepto que de nuevo tiene un correlato en la teoría sistémica even-

zohariana a través del concepto de *energía*¹⁶ (Even-Zohar 2002) y que, según él mismo se encargó de reforzar en conversación con Peeter Torop (1993: 128), podría abrir un campo nuevo para la semiótica de la cultura y para la propia Historia cultural:

Yo creo que si hay alguna idea de las nuevas que realmente tenemos en nuestras manos, una de ellas, me parece que la más importante, es la idea del sentido histórico, científico o de algún otro significado, de la impredecibilidad; la impredecibilidad como objeto científico. Hasta ahora, o bien considerábamos que no existía la impredecibilidad, siguiendo a Hegel, o bien suponíamos que si existe se encuentra más allá de los límites de la ciencia. Esto era lo que daba a nuestra ciencia una extensión muy pequeña. Y en esencia la ciencia recibía una débil reproducción de la realidad. Lo impredecible, o lo casual, si esta palabra le gusta más, cuyo mecanismo, por cierto, es uno de los principales objetos de la ciencia, incorpora de una forma totalmente nueva en la ciencia el papel del arte. Porque si la ciencia de alguna forma está orientada hacia lo predecible, por lo menos hasta ahora así lo estaba, sin embargo, el arte estuvo siempre orientado hacia lo impredecible.

En otro lugar, Lotman lo expresó en forma de máxima, sirviéndose de las investigaciones de Ilya Prigogine sobre los procesos naturales de fluctuación y bifurcación: “La historia no es un proceso unilineal, sino un torrente multifactorial” (Lotman 1992b trad. 1998: 252). Esto mismo es lo que ha llevado a Żyłko a oponer las concepciones de Uspenski y de Lotman en relación con la tarea del historiador y con la propia conformación disciplinar de la Historia: para el primero la Historia estaría fundamentada en una semiosis filológico-retrospectiva mientras que para Lotman habría que hablar de una *semiosis prospectiva* que algo tiene que ver con la noción hermenéutica de historia efectual tal como se ha desarrollado por Gadamer, Ricoeur o Valdés.

¹⁶ En todo caso, como ha destacado Lourido Hermida (2007), la orientación nomotética de la teorización de Even-Zohar es remisa a dar cabida a lo impredecible en el sentido exacto que interesó a Lotman.

Para finalizar concretaré, en línea con un trabajo anterior (Casas 2008), los que me parecen tres planos de observación más relevantes a propósito de una historiografía capaz de informar en perspectiva semiótica sobre la sistematicidad de la cultura. El primero es la existencia de fronteras o límites de la semiosfera en tanto sistema y la decisión sobre el modo idóneo para informar sobre ello desde una perspectiva histórica. En particular, a propósito de los dos niveles de interacción antes mencionados: sistema-extrasistema y sistema-subsistema. Ello introduce una vertiente comparada y a la vez la exigencia de adoptar una explicación sobre el modo de incorporación al discurso historiográfico de la subalternidad, de la dependencia, de la heteronomía o de la periferia cultural. Es decir, de todo lo no canonizado. De aquello que pertenece a los márgenes del sistema o incluso a lo que Lotman (1974 trad. 1998: 65-72) engloba en lo extrasistémico y lo alosistémico, esto es, lo que pertenece a un sistema diferente.

El segundo es el hecho cierto, ya tratado por Ortega y reconsiderado posteriormente por Lotman, pero sobre todo reactivado en términos estrictamente sociológicos por Pierre Bourdieu, de que la historia cultural debería informar no sólo de lo preponderante/canonizado o de lo que se impone, sino además de las opciones en liza, de las alternativas existentes en el campo como tomas de posición (“prises de position”). En definitiva, de lo que la sociología del campo literario denomina “espace des possibles”, con vinculación asimismo al *habitus* como objeto de estudio histórico. En el pensamiento del último Lotman, como ha visto con precisión Żyłko, se produjo un giro similar:

la tarea principal de los historiadores es exponer el pasado en su total complejidad. Deberían interesarse no sólo en las soluciones históricas realizadas, sino tener en cuenta las posibilidades “cortadas” no realizadas. Estas últimas forman un fondo indispensable que permite mostrar toda la “energía” de la historia y su “informacionalidad”. (Żyłko 2006)

El tercer plano es el de la forma historiográfica de la diacronía cultural: ¿cómo se concreta la atención a distintos momentos histó-

ricos?, ¿qué forma se le ha dado y puede dársele a esta atención? A este respecto es pertinente de nuevo la distinción entre gradualidad y explosión por parte de Lotman (1992), puesto que la primera pregunta es sobre el modo en el que la Historia considera y explica la dialéctica entre continuidad y cambio cultural – incluso con atención, según se ha dicho, a los factores casuales – y la segunda se refiere a la forma en la que la descripción/ narración histórica semiotiza las que son sus únicas condiciones esenciales, temporalidad y causalidad¹⁷ (Uspenski 1988–1989). Vienen a ser, nuevamente, claves con incidencia directa en la cuestión del canon, sistematizadas también en este caso con pericia heurística por la escuela de Tel Aviv.

Terminaré recordando las palabras con las que Iuri Lotman abrió su libro *Cultura y explosión* (1992a trad. 1999: 11): “Las cuestiones fundamentales de todo sistema semiótico son, en primer lugar, la relación del sistema con el extrasistema, con el mundo que se extiende más allá de sus límites, y, en segundo lugar, la relación entre estática y dinámica”. Sigue siendo un programa por cumplir al que el propio Lotman llegó a poner nombre. Se trata del desarrollo de la semiótica de la cultura como semiótica histórica.

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¹⁷ Aquí reside la diferencia – añade Uspenski – con el tiempo mitológico, que en realidad niega la temporalidad; en segundo lugar, con la cronología y la genealogía, desentendidas de la causalidad; y, en fin, con la descripción cosmológica, donde domina una causalidad ajena a la temporalidad.

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*L'Histoire de la Littérature,
les valeurs transnationales et le canon.
Légitimer la classicité esthétique
ou le canon ouvert?*

Le problème du canon ne peut pas être remis en discussion sans prendre en considération la nature duale des valeurs: historique et pérenne, circonstancielle et générique, nationale et transnationale. C'est justement cette nature composite et flexible des valeurs qui rend possible la communication, le transfert et le dialogue entre les cultures. On ne peut pas parler de valeurs pures, obtenues dans le laboratoire. La valeur se précise, se détache individuellement, s'enrichit des points de vue symbolique, philosophique, religieux, moral, et intègre de manière alchimique les significations de l'histoire, de la sensibilité (*la passion, le goût, l'époque, la mode*) et de la socialité assurée par la langue.

Si les théories académiques de Sainte-Beuve isolent la valeur, la rendent canonique et la soumettent au classique normatif, soit universel, soit national, Georg Simmel (1983) semble situer les valeurs dans la mode, dans la dynamique du temps qui les affirme, mais les dégrade aussi. En synthèse de la raison hégélienne, H.G. Gadamer (1996) et H. Bloom (1995) extraient la valeur de son état de musée en l'emportant dans le champ des confrontations historiques. Sans qu'elle devienne relative, la valeur perpétue sa suprématie dans le sens classique, héroïque, fondateur. Le relativisme et l'historisme sont éludés par la confrontation avec l'autoritarisme académique, propre à une période classicisante. Ainsi, la raison / la rationalité de l'histoire et la raison / la rationalité normative, conservatrice, de la communauté des critiques, des historiens littéraires sont-elles devancées au XXe siècle, par la conception de Gadamer ou de Bloom, par

les études de genre ou de mentalités. Il y a une autre option pour aborder l'histoire de la littérature aujourd'hui: dans le dialogue, dans la confrontation des valeurs esthétiques nationales avec les valeurs du nouvel *ethos* de l'Europe (dans le sens du Paul Ricœur, 2004), dans les processus graduels lents, aussi comme dans la dynamique de la rupture (Lotman, 2009).

À l'avis d'Allan Bloom, la valeur est créatrice d'histoire; qui plus est, on peut dire qu'elle fait front à l'historicité par sa "capacité d'engendrer la culture", par sa permanence dans la dynamique de certaines cultures. "Une valeur n'existe pas – dit Allan Bloom – que si elle préserve et enrichit la vie" (1987: 239). Le théoricien américain partage une pensée fondatrice de descendance nietzschéenne; c'est pourquoi il considère les valeurs comme de larges horizons, des forces de la diversité imposées par les grands créateurs, par ces "gens qui ont forgé les horizons, tels les fondateurs de la culture judaïque, chrétienne, grecque et indienne".

Voilà pourquoi il rappelle dans son discours Moïse, Jésus, Homère, Bouddha, esprits fondateurs (en d'autres termes, modèles et héros civilisateurs), personnalités et énergies qui imposent les valeurs comme lois, au-delà des catégories de la raison: bien – mal, vrai – faux. Dans ce contexte, les distinctions seront "authentique – inauthentique, profond – superficiel, créateur – créé", pas celles d'en haut. La valeur a d'abord un caractère individuel; ce n'est que par la suite qu'elle acquiert un nouveau statut. De la communication, transmission, investissement par révélation des (ou: avec les) valeurs on aboutira à des événements fondateurs. Les valeurs ont d'habitude un parcours dynamique: de l'ésotérique à l'exotérique, de l'individuel au trans-individuel, de l'historique au transhistorique; ce trajet est en quelque sort récurrent et dans les époques archaïques, et dans les modernes.

Dans les époques archaïques, autrement dit dans les mentalités hautement religieuses, la communication des valeurs se réalisait par élection spirituelle, par investissement, et seulement après par délégation et transfert, par imposition et prise en charge du modèle. Voir, à ce sujet, l'apprentissage dans les cultures sémantiques ou symboliques, comme les appelle Juri Lotman (1970), cultures dans lesquelles la loi envisageait la préservation intacte du sens du Livre,

l'approfondissement de celui-ci et non pas la déviation par rapport au Texte sacré. La répétition et la mémorisation assuraient le caractère sempiternel de ces valeurs traditionnels, permettaient leur renforcement par remémoration, par des rituels visant le culte des ancêtres et le respect des origines (Eliade 1963).

Les valeurs appartenant aux cultures archaïques, symboliques (tels les conseils et les codes moraux, religieux – les tables des lois – les pratiques magiques, les lois de la guerre et les codes de manières, la pratique des incantations et *l'art courtois*) ont un caractère exemplaire, obtenu par donation, par la grâce divine, par le choix ou l'investissement octroyé par un pouvoir souverain.

Voilà pourquoi on peut les nommer sacrées, elles ont un caractère prédéterminé, ordonné par une volonté, une conscience supérieure, transcendante (la divinité) ou immanente (la royauté) qui se dévoile sous différentes formes de transfert: *mania*, *furor*, grâce divine, inspiration, illumination.

Ces valeurs sont communiquées en état de transe, dans des situations historiques exceptionnelles; c'est pourquoi bon nombre de disciplines (comme l'histoire des religions, la philosophie, l'anthropologie, la sociologie des religions, l'ethnologie, les histoires littéraires et des mentalités) cherchent à expliquer, à rendre l'irrationnel raisonnable, à définir les modèles invariables par des approches comparatives, des réductions et des jeux herméneutiques qui fassent possible la dénomination et la définition de ces complexes moraux-intellectuels qu'on appelle valeurs exemplaires.

De l'autre côté, les valeurs du monde moderne *deviennent* exemplaires, ne sont pas *données* comme exemplaires, mais le deviennent par la reconfiguration de l'espace culturel, par éblouissement et mode, par des actions programmatiques et de légitimation de la diversité, des nouvelles règles, par des actions de construction identitaire (d'habitude en opposition visible avec l'altérité, dans le contexte de certaines crises, stases, processus d'évolution lente, de certaines époques cumulatives, vieilles (cf. Ortega y Gasset 1923).

Communiquées de façon consciente, programmatique et volontaire, ces valeurs du monde moderne, comme on les a appelés, sont transmises d'ordinaire par les lois du contrat, de la négociation, sont adaptées et finalement adoptées, canonisées après que l'état conflic-

tuel, l'*agon* culturel fussent annulés par la diplomatie du dialogue, du transfert raisonnable, négocié et toléré.

Malgré toutes ces différences, les deux types de valeurs produisent une brèche dans l'ordre antérieur du monde, bouleversent le canon, fût-il religieux, moral ou esthétique. Même si les premières se manifestent sous la forme de l'épiphanie, de la vision, en se traduisant dans des narrations légitimatrices, leur action est d'ordre historique, de même que celle des valeurs modernes, pour tomber ensuite dans la légende, dans la mythologie (*mythos-logos*) et perdre leur aspect temporel.

Les autres valeurs, celles de la modernité bourgeoise rationalisent l'histoire, contrôlent les effets, amoindrissent l'impact par l'explication, par des mécanismes fictionnels, par commentaire et autocommentaire, par des méta-narrations. Généralement parlant, ce sont des valeurs issues de la manipulation, fût-elle esthétique, publicitaire, idéologique ou sociopolitique. C'est justement pourquoi les histoires de la littérature sont contraintes à faire recours non seulement à une narrativité organique, imposée par les mutations du champ culturel, de la dynamique des écoles, des courants littéraires, des formes, genres et styles; cette narrativité, issue comme un effet du concept d'évolution (Wellek 1963) d'un discours culturel à un autre, d'une configuration d'idées à une autre détermine aussi un cadre intellectuel où doit s'inscrire l'histoire de la littérature du point de vue herméneutique, critique, philosophique. Cela parce que l'histoire littéraire n'est pas qu'une science factologique, mais aussi – et surtout – une axiologique. L'histoire des valeurs, des monuments, des chefs-d'œuvre est un concept dominant du XX-e siècle, présent et dans le discours théorique, et dans celui des essayistes, des poètes et des prosateurs (ex. T. S. Eliot, Ezra Pound, J. L. Borges, Michel Foucault, Harold Bloom).

Comme règle générale, les valeurs produisent des transformations, des mutations sensibles dans les cultures qui les ont produites, elles transfigurent ou agissent dans le champ de la culture par des valences difficiles à suivre sans un parcours comparatif. C'est pourquoi l'histoire de la littérature ne peut pas être que nationale, ni tout simplement une histoire littéraire ou de la littérarité, comme souhaitaient les formalistes russes.

En outre, l'histoire de la littérature ne saurait se contenter d'être une histoire des monuments, car les valeurs se décanent par le conflit, par le jeu d'*agon* de chaque contexte culturel. Dans ce cadre, les auteurs d'école, les épigones, les maîtres, les belles-lettristes (dans la typologie d'Ezra Pound, de l'essai "*Comment lire*") se définissent réciproquement, en compétition, par des rôles uniquement définissables dans une analyse de *l'habitus* (Bourdieu 1992), du champ culturel et des relations de pouvoir symbolique et / ou politique. Par conséquent, force est aujourd'hui à l'histoire littéraire d'entreprendre une recherche de certaines situations délicates parfois, une histoire des ambiguïtés, des conflits sourds mais aussi véhéments, celle *des refusés de l'histoire* politique, comme de ceux qui se sont frôlés à différents régimes politiques, une histoire honnête qui n'élude pas les non-valeurs, mais les appelle et les confronte aux véritables valeurs. Ce sera une histoire littéraire transparente, qui d'abord problématise et contextualise, puis situe – de manière interrogative – les *valeurs* et le *canon* entendus dans le sens d'une pensée forte (du point de vue esthétique, métaphysique, ontologique), les soumet aux fluctuations du succès littéraire et des épreuves de résistance universelle ou de caste.

Cela ne signifiera pas forcément une concession faite au relativisme, mais un coup d'œil jeté sur la littérature dans la dynamique des modèles et des structures culturels, à l'intérieur des mutations de mentalités, dans le cadre des débats sur l'histoire des idées. Il en ressortira, implicitement, une histoire littéraire ayant comme projet l'analyse et l'interprétation, la compréhension et la révélation des attitudes des intellectuels face à l'histoire, au présent, au pouvoir, au progrès, aux modèles, traditions, langages – bref, au monde.

Dans ce cas, l'histoire littéraire ne visera pas que la manifestation directe, l'implication ou les manifestations iconoclastes, polémiques, correctives des écrivains par la littérature qu'il font à un moment donné; mais, au-delà de l'activisme, de la volonté de puissance, de l'esprit anarchique, révolutionnaire, dynamiste (ex. les futuristes italiens, les constructivistes russes, l'intégralisme de l'avant-garde roumaine), l'histoire de la littérature a le devoir d'enregistrer fidèlement et les attitudes apparemment passives, de retenir aussi les écrivains et les œuvres de la non-implication, du repli volontaire du

monde et de l'histoire (ex. Mallarmé, qui avouait être *en grève* quant à la société). De la sorte, l'historien sera soumis à un trajet complémentaire; il enregistre des évidences, mais en même temps sonde des "apparences", explore des profondeurs, donne parfois dans le piège de l'anecdotique et puise (dans les témoignages, les journaux, les lettres, les interviews, les souvenirs, les évocations) aussi ce qui était moins visible: les états, les émotions, les attitudes spécifiques de la réclusion et de l'ascèse esthétique, sociale et morale. A peine ainsi réussira-t-il à offrir une image complexe et authentique de la littérature d'une époque.

Puisqu'on impose souvent à l'historien littéraire une pensée totalisante (dans l'ambition utopique de l'exhaustivité, qui implicitement réclame: la finesse et l'objectivité du biographe, le talent du narrateur, l'esprit aigu et la capacité de synthèse du critique), son discours sur la littérature devra aussi enregistrer l'histoire des compromissions, des désertations, de la renégation, de l'insuccès, de la tolérance et des intolérances de tout genre. Ce n'est que ce type de discours qui puisse finalement conduire à la compréhension exacte de la littérature écrite à des moments troubles, et je pense ici à l'histoire du XX-e siècle, à l'histoire récente: celle de la littérature proletcultiste (prolétarienne), de la littérature partisane, écrite dans les régimes communistes du fin de siècle, de la littérature de consommation écrite par de grands écrivains pour la survivance financière à l'ère de l'individualisme post-moderne etc.

Peut-on encore aujourd'hui parler d'une histoire de la littérature dans la perspective unique de la suprématie de l'esthétique? Une histoire de *l'anxiété des influences* des grands maîtres sur les auteurs en voie de formation? La réponse va de soi: même si Harold Bloom a octroyé ce sens au *Canon occidental*, il n'est pas dépourvu de l'élitisme continental. Les valeurs, bien qu'individuelles, sont des réalités émergentes, ont un trajet universel, dépassent les frontières d'une langue ou d'une culture, voire d'un continent. Elles communiquent des énergies insaisissables à une simple expertise esthétique restreinte. Les valeurs de la littérature européenne et universelle influent sur les langues nationales, sur les consciences. Mais en même temps, elles façonnent des esprits, transforment des comportements. C'est trop notoire l'idée théorique de T.S. Eliot (de l'essai

“Tradition and the Individual Talent”, 1919) pour qu’on la reprenne et élargisse à ce moment.

Mais on doit préciser que le prestige conféré par l’historien littéraire aux auteurs, en les insérant dans l’ordre des valeurs, n’est pas seulement interne, canonique, de caste; il outrepassé les frontières de la tour d’ivoire, au-delà de la patrie des idées, dans le monde de l’extralittéraire. En tant que directeur de conscience, l’historien de la littérature crée au fait et soutient le prestige symbolique des auteurs; il négocie, à côté de la critique littéraire, les positions à l’intérieur du canon; il établit des hiérarchies, identifie des influences esthétiques, des affinités intellectuelles-spirituelles; il ouvre des lignes d’affirmation des écrivains contemporains.

Roland Barthes disait que l’histoire de la littérature *institutionnalise la sensibilité*, le nouveau. Par conséquent, elle impose des repères, des modèles, des hiérarchies. Encore plus, elle monumentalise. C’est peut-être pourquoi, dans le contexte actuel, quand le succès des ventes détrône la lente gestation culturelle des valeurs, le rôle de l’historien semble caduque. (D’habitude il n’est pas un chasseur des classements). La résistance de celui-ci par rapport à *l’exemplarité, l’authenticité, la tension et l’aspiration* vers les expériences capitales que les valeurs de la littérature communiquent renforce la responsabilité critique de l’historien, son autorité intellectuelle et finalement son prestige personnel dans la culture nationale et / ou universelle.

D’un simple inventaire de noms, œuvres, transformations esthétiques et de sensibilité, l’historien arrive à imposer une vision personnelle, articulée de façon cohérente sur le spécifique de la littérature de telle ou telle période. Il n’est pas qu’un spécialiste contraint à respecter des principes scientifiques, mais il devient formateur du goût, du public lecteur, il détermine la modification de l’horizon d’attente, il attire ou, au contraire, bloque l’empathie des lecteurs quant à certaines œuvres, il catalyse autour de sa propre métanarration une série de critiques et de débats. Bref, il rend collective la valeur individuelle d’une œuvre, il détermine *d’autres* expériences de lecture, *d’autres* directions d’interprétation des œuvres en relation avec le reste des œuvres canoniques, il induit la connaissance

complexe de la littérature dans le cadre plus large des idées et des mentalités.

L'historien d'aujourd'hui ne peut pas abandonner une perspective esthétique sur la littérature, même après la fameuse proposition d'ouverture du canon, et ce symptôme n'est pas uniquement national, présent par ailleurs dans les cultures gauchistes de la dernière moitié du XX-e siècle. Le sociologisme de l'histoire, à la manière *des études culturelles, des études de genre*, d'autres formes de déterminisme a été répudié du discours critique des études européennes d'histoire littéraire; ou, en tout cas, il n'est pas devenu un parcours herméneutique dominant, justement parce que la pression culturelle du canon authentique et de ses membres était au-delà des idéologies, des doctrines ou des utopies politiques et sociales.

Le canon esthétique a représenté et représente encore un facteur essentiel dans l'affirmation de la liberté de réflexion, dans le sondage des limites de la créativité, dans l'affirmation de l'identité personnelle non-pervertie. Le rôle du canon esthétique est évident dans la formation de la pensée critique, de l'indépendance de l'esprit de problématisation. Ses valences éducatives sont implicites, subtilement (pas dogmatiquement) communiquées. Voilà peut-être pourquoi l'identité de groupe et celle nationale ont besoin d'une pareille affirmation, d'où s'ensuit le problème de la légitimation par un anti-canon ou un contre-canon, et la nécessité d'étudier ce canon alternatif, ouvert à *d'autres* valeurs, à la communication avec *l'autre*, à l'*éthos* de la tolérance, de la communauté postmoderne dans laquelle les minoritaires, les marginaux ne sont plus refusés et exclus de la participation au dialogue des valeurs et des maîtres.

L'ouverture du canon moderne vers les valeurs du pluralisme, de la différence, de l'altérité, commencée avec le protestantisme et continuée ensuite par l'esprit catalytique de certaines personnalités cosmopolites, telles Whitman, Apollinaire, Ezra Pound, T.S. Eliot, Fernando Pessoa, accentuée par les hétérotopies de l'avant-garde européenne, a inévitablement mené à cette reprise en discussion des valeurs européennes, à la reformulation de l'objet d'étude des sciences de la littérature. Ainsi, les mécanismes de réception, du transfert (Poe-Baudelaire, Whitman- l'avant-garde européenne) et de la *greffe* culturelle (Guy Scarpetta sur Ezra Pound), les mécanismes de

l'implication dans d'autres espaces culturels par dépaysement, exil, retranchement volontaire du canon (Tzara), par le refus de la commande sociale, par déportation (Osip Mandelstam) devraient préoccuper l'histoire de la littérature non seulement du point de vue esthétique, mais encore de celui de la sociologie littéraire, de la théorie du champ culturel européen (P. Bourdieu, 1992).

C'est pourquoi le modèle herméneutique le plus pertinent pour une histoire de la littérature nationale et transnationale pourrait à mon avis s'inspirer des idées du nouveau *éthos* européen, tel que le définit Paul Ricœur (2004). En sa conception le crédo supra-individuel, qui devrait régir la reformulation de l'esprit d'Europe se fonde sur trois principes du dialogue: les *traductions* (bilinguisme, adaptations, réécritures), *changement de mémoires culturelles* et *modèle du pardon*. Comprise de ce point de vue, l'histoire de la littérature fera le spécialiste repenser les options, les effusions momentanées des écrivains, abandonner la posture de l'autorité glaciale et réévaluer les actions, les positions critiques, les compromissions, les attitudes des intellectuels en certaines circonstances. Et ce modèle d'interprétation de la littérature dans la perspective de la théorie de l'action et des théories des discours de légitimation culturelle se justifie à plusieurs niveaux, y compris celui stylistique, où la communication „pervertie” symboliquement, paraboliquement, métaphoriquement cache – sous le polymorphisme esthétique – un magma de transformations de profondeur du mental collectif et individuel¹.

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*Literary Histories: From the National
to the Post-National Perspective*

In the last decades of the twentieth century, it became increasingly clear that the writing of *national* literary histories in the past was not only one of the main vehicles for the formation and dissemination of national literary canons – as one of its most manifest consequences – but that this also had other functions. One of the answers to the question of the role of literary historiography in various European regions, be it “in West or East, in great or small cultures,”¹ is obviously related to the fact that national literary histories, even when applying the facets of the comparative approach, served as an instrument of *cultural nationalism*, the overall ideological matrix that strongly determined European literary cultures, especially in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries (cf. Leersen 2006). Facing the growing corpus of knowledge about the dynamics of national movements in Europe, many literary scholars insisted on a self-reflective, critical reevaluation of the disciplinary past and on moving beyond the prevailing national(ist) orientation.

On the other hand, the hardships of the national approaches coincided with the much deeper, even fundamental crisis of historiography; a crisis that stretched far beyond the binary opposition of *national* vs. *post-national*. In order to cope with its consequences, many interesting theoretical models have been discussed. Instead of resuming this impressive debate or taking sides, my paper starts from the simple ascertainment that, regardless of theoretical doubts,

¹ All of the conceptual issues that were raised at the conference *History of Literature as a Factor in a National and Supranational Literary Canon* (Tartu, 2009) are highly relevant and should be taken seriously. Although some are left out due to lack of space, I attempt to provide insights into many of them in this article.

historiographic accounts of quite different kinds are still being produced, and that in practice the “application” of new theoretical concepts is often restricted to the context in which the texts are being produced. After outlining the *constructivist* epistemological presumptions that seem to render possible a non-exclusive observation of contemporary enterprises, I will illustrate some of the practical difficulties regarding the problem of “national” in Slovenian literary history and comment on how this can be redirected towards a post-national perspective, such as indicated by the ambitious attempt to write a historical survey of literary cultures of east-central Europe (cf. Cornis-Pope and Neubauer 2004).

Literary Historiography “in Reconstruction”: A Constructivist Viewpoint

By presenting and interpreting literary histories as “grand narratives,” postmodern criticism has seriously subverted the opportunities to write texts of this genre, especially those of a more ambitious kind. At the same time, many have tried to offer supplementary models for such writing, and there are several theories designed to back up the “reconstruction” of literary history.² Among those that called for methodological renovation of the writing of literary histories, the empirical science of literature, such as represented by Siegfried J. Schmidt and others, was among the most explicit. The main reason for this was the adoption of the framework of *radical constructivism*, a revolutionary epistemological theory derived from very different sources – from biology and neurology to sociology.³

² “In reconstruction” is a reference to Marko Juvan’s book *Literarna veda v rekonstrukciji* (Literary Studies in Reconstruction, Ljubljana 2008), which deals with the issues of new literary historiography in a highly qualified manner (see also Juvan 2006).

³ Decisive seems to be the notion of *autopoiesis* of the preeminent Chilean biologists Humberto Maturana and Francisco Varela, a notion that also has a certain background in contemporary neurology (e.g., Gerhard Roth and Heinz von Foerster), and the constructivist epistemological models of Jean

According to the constructivist views, the past is an intellectual construct used to organize sensual and mental experience into a coherent system. This is done by creating “narratives,” by linking fragments through the operational schemata of causality, intentionality, and conditionality. These “narratives” – biological, philosophical, literary-historical, or even “quotidian” – have an internal coherence, although the coherence is always merely constructed. By using causal schemes, we link a multitude of elements and episodes into an intelligible and synoptic whole. Because the past is not directly accessible to human experience, it can be neither empirically verified nor experimentally reproduced within a scientific framework. History can do no more than construct narratives on the basis of given “documents of the past” and verify these against other sources and other histories. It cannot be tested against “historical facts.” History is never anything more than an interpretation whose validity is measured by the single criterion of probability or, more precisely, plausibility; indeed, perspectivism, relativism, and subjectivism are the *conditio sine qua non* of every historical account.

Reconstructing the past through the use of “objective”, empirically documented data is impossible inasmuch as texts are themselves not objectively given artifacts, but are always interpretations. For Schmidt himself, the most problematic aspect of literary history concerns the production of relations, connections, and transitions, the “networking” of facts into coherent units such as periods, genres, and concepts that are used to mediate between the literary and the social (causality, innovation, continuity, structure, or evolution). Acknowledging this, old-fashioned literary history, which predominantly concerned itself with authors and their works and tended to be motivated by ideological interests, must step back. The new literary history should no longer attempt to find a way out of the loop of subjectivism, but should accept these restraints as a necessary burden and counter-pose new standards to evaluate them: historical plausibility and applicability. Instead of aspiring to universality, it should

Piaget and Ernst von Glasersfeld. The “empirical” model of literary history is also significantly indebted to *systems theory* as developed by Niklas Luhmann (cf. Rusch 1985, Glasersfeld 1995, Maturana 1998, Luhmann 1984).

occupy itself with *explicit articulation of assumptions*, requiring that historians clearly establish for what, whom, and which needs they construct their histories (Schmidt 1985).

To be sure, the “revelation” of the fact that literary history serves to legitimate certain interests (usually political, but masked under intellectual, cultural, or aesthetic agendas) is not innovative in itself. On the contrary, it is becoming a common ground of recent discussions. In practice, every history exists to satisfy some need. One of the most obvious of these needs was political, both in the nineteenth and in twentieth centuries, when literature served the interests of national movements – which was especially important for cultures in subordinate positions. On the other hand, a growing consensus can also be presumed regarding the key constructivist assumptions about *narrativization*. Although not supported by biology and psychology, similar observations have already appeared in very different theoretical contexts; for example, in the works of Hayden White, who is often cited in connection with these issues. His term “emplotment” indicates that a wild chaos of past events can only be captured and interpreted by fabulistic patterns, which are usually taken from other, often fictitious, genres (White 1987). This especially becomes obvious when constructing synthetic, large-scale historical surveys with impressive titles such as “a literary history of ...,” which can be labeled a “great genre” of literary historiography – a term attached to this kind of enterprise by the Slovenian theorist Marko Juvan. Historians’ dilemmas – how to start, which events to choose, and how to arrange them and bring them to an (effective) conclusion – have an aesthetic dimension. One has to consider tension, wit, suspense, the sense of dramatization, and so on. Not only Hayden White, but also Michel Foucault, Paul Ricoeur, David Perkins, and others have shown that *a story* was actually always a privileged element of (successful) *histories*. Usually it is possible to reveal a certain “idea of the whole,” a certain *in-depth motive*, which gives coherence to a particular historical account. At the same time, due to this acquired coherence, the story becomes cognitively manageable and aesthetically convincing, even *charming* – which is something completely opposite the chaos, multi-levelness, and diversity of the “real world” (cf. Juvan 2006, Kralj 2006).

Such organizing principles – a basic idea, coupled with specific strategies of narrativization – have been continuously creating numerous specific histories, or, rather, stories. The principles may be modified, but, as shall be seen, they seem to retain much importance even in the most recent historiographic treatments.⁴

National Literary Histories: The Slovenian Case

Although in theory certain signs can be interpreted as a growing consensus on how to reconstruct literary historiography (or at least, how *not* to do it), in practice, historical accounts of very different levels, ranges, and qualities are being produced. This brings us to another important question raised at the Tartu conference: how has theory been related to the practical creation of literary histories in different cultures? It seems that, alongside highly innovative surveys stimulated by theoretical discussions (such as Hollier's much-debated history or the large-scale ICLA projects), other, more traditional approaches are still possible that do not show any allegiance to contemporary theoretical quarrels. In many respects, the heritage of *methodological nationalism* obstinately persists and is not even close to being surpassed.

A brief overview of literary historiography in Slovenia, for example, reveals a typical story from a small central European culture. In its beginnings in the mid-nineteenth century and later, as it tended to be established as a scholarly discipline at the beginning of the twentieth century (with Ivan Prijatelj and France Kidrič), Slovenian literary history bears a strong national emphasis, even an enthusiastic sense of a national mission (Dolinar 2006). The prevailing perspective retained a national character during the twentieth century (major historiographic texts were produced as part of

⁴ What can illustrate this assertion better than Schmidt's own ambitious attempt to (re)write German eighteenth-century literary history in terms of theory of literary systems, an attempt that itself definitely reads as a compelling story (cf. Schmidt 1989)?

Slovenian studies), and the situation has slightly changed only with the emergence of comparative literature.⁵ The Ljubljana comparative school has substantially widened the focus of literary historiography, especially by treating Slovenian literary phenomena as a part of greater environment. The most impressive achievement in this respect may be the monograph *Primerjalna zgodovina slovenske literature* (Comparative History of Slovenian Literature, 1987) by Janko Kos, which treats Slovenian literature in a (European) comparative context. As the title itself suggests, the object is still the *national corpus*, whereas the treatment – focusing on foreign influences – is by no means nationalist.

Recently, Slovenian scholars have taken part in contemporary discussions on literary historiography, especially with the conference *Kako pisati literarno zgodovino danes?* (How to Write Literary History Today?, 2003) which resulted in the English volume of proceedings entitled *Writing Literary History: Selected Perspectives from Central Europe* (2006), edited by Darko Dolinar and Marko Juvan. This dialogue has brought most of the contemporary issues to the fore and also managed to offer some reflexive critique of past practices. In this respect, it seems quite impossible to imagine a new scholarly account based on anachronistic presuppositions. However, things may not be so simple. In the remainder of this article, I will comment on three recent historiographic projects that I have been involved in myself, demonstrating how different the starting points are that “historians” start constructing from when working on a project, how divergent the objectives of their enterprise can be, and what kinds of recipients their work is designed for.

The first case is a textbook for Slovenian high schools.⁶ The text follows conventional generic patterns: it includes literary passages, basic historical remarks, text-oriented questions, illustrations, reference to external contexts, and so on. The choice of authors and texts

⁵ Comparative literature was brought to Slovenia by Anton Ocvirk, an apt representative of the “French school,” who established and consolidated the discipline in the mid-twentieth century.

⁶ Darja Pavlič et al. *Berilo 2. Umetnost besede*. Ljubljana: Mladinska knjiga, 2008. I contributed with a chapter on Slovenian romanticism.

is very limited because they are already prescribed in the national curriculum. When writing this kind of text, there is a *hidden agenda* in the background, which should be respected and followed: the “reproduction” of well-educated, literate, and nationally aware Slovenian citizens that appreciate their roots and, if possible, possess a broad general and literary background. This educational mission creates some obvious *side effects*: only slight deviations from traditional views are allowed and one has to rely on existing interpretations and evaluations to an unusually high degree. Focus is placed on pre-selected canonized texts and authors, and there is very little room for innovation, as well as the tension to avoid ambiguity and uncertainty. Even if stimulating freer interpretation of literary passages is encouraged, the “facts” (such as periods, genres, and evaluations) have to be presented in a rather authoritative manner.

The situation is almost the opposite when writing a scholarly historical account (on the evolution of the role of the literary producer in the Slovenian literary system) because the anticipated audience is members of the Slovenian research community, scholars, specialists, and students.⁷ In accordance with the internal norms of the field and the research funding policy, the “mission” here seems to be completely different: production of an explanatory framework that is innovative and persuasive. In seeking to create something new, something to transcend traditional approaches, all new and relevant findings can be presented, including more skeptical positions toward canonized authors, opuses, interpretations, and so on, which is quite in contrast to the textbook situation. However, in constructing such a large whole, a need arises to connect the scattered historical fragments into a story of some kind, into a suspenseful narrative. It is possible to control this narrativization (and keep it in the boundaries of a “good taste”) through methodical self-reflection, but it still remains there – trying to convert a history into a nice, readable story.

⁷ Marijan Dovič: *Slovenski pisatelj. Razvoj vloge literarnega proizvajalca v slovenskem literarnem sistemu*. Ljubljana: Založba ZRC, 2007.

The Post-National Paradigm and the Literary Cultures of East-Central Europe

In the end, in both cases mentioned above, the focus inevitably remains national. Even more, in the first case it is almost impossible to move beyond or at least relativize the strong national orientation imposed by the prescribed curriculum.⁸ The opportunity for such innovation is only offered in the context of writing a text for an international project, such as the *History of the Literary Cultures of East-Central Europe: Junctures and Disjunctures in the 19th and 20th Centuries*.⁹ This ambitious project, supervised by ICLA and edited by Marcel Cornis-Pope and John Neubauer, deserves special attention as one of the rare historiographic enterprises of such breadth. It introduces two major shifts. The first is a highly critical attitude towards *nationalist reductions*, so characteristic for traditional literary historiography. The second is the *innovation of the contextual framework*: not only in the (typical) sociological sense, but also in the spatial and temporal sense. The concept of east-central Europe (ECE) seems arbitrary at first, but in the course of the argument it turns out to be at least as legitimate as other influential concepts such as eastern Europe, central Europe, the area of the "Habsburg myth," "Mitteleuropa," and so on.¹⁰ Recalling Peter Handke's ironic remark regarding central Europe, it does turn out to be more than a "meteorological" concept. Even if the connections among individual cultures were weak or mediated, the *structural analogies* among the

⁸ This tension between the research process as something inquisitive, disrespectful, and almost subversive in comparison to the stiffness and simplifications of the (dogmatic) canonical handbooks was not perceived early (Kralj 2006: 62).

⁹ The project will finish with the fourth volume (in preparation), for which I have contributed the article on the canonization of the Slovenian "national poet" France Prešeren.

¹⁰ The concept of *Mitteleuropa*, launched by Friedrich Naumann's book in 1915, was resumed by writers and intellectuals (e.g., Kundera, Konrád, and Miłosz) towards the end of the communist era as a catchword in the resistance against totalitarian rule.

cultures that have been developing in a narrow strip from the Baltic to the Mediterranean, squeezed between the areas of hegemonist Russian and German cultures, are simply striking; and these analogies themselves are a sufficient reason to take the ECE concept as a plausible one.

The specific position of most cultures in this area in the last two centuries – namely, a periphery “in-between” – led to certain similar developments. The common historical mechanism in the region that the project tends to reveal was the *invention of distinct national identities* (a process mostly led by poets and philologists) through the construction of both *institutions* and *texts*. In this process newspapers, magazines, publishing houses, theaters, operas, libraries, national academies, and university chairs for vernacular literatures were set up; on the other hand, oral literature was collected and published, historical texts were pedantically edited, and new literature was enthusiastically produced, including historical genres that tended to “reconstruct” the national past (epics, novels, and plays).¹¹ In this way, vernacular literature became canonized and included in the school curricula, and literary history has played a very special role in this process. As John Neubauer states in one of his introductions, the production of literary histories was one of the vital tasks of the new imagined communities and their contribution to the “social construction of reality” was enormous; in ECE, literary histories not only served as a basis for teaching and dissemination of (national) literatures, but also included the self-representations of entire nations.

What exactly, however, remains hidden to national(istic) historiographic approaches? According to Neubauer and Cornis-Pope, it is the fact that the entire region was once characterized by multilingualism, multiculturalism, and the plural coexistence of various communities. Such diversity was efficiently suppressed by nationalist unifications in the last two centuries. From Odesa to Gdańsk, from Trieste to Tallinn, surprisingly similar stories can be followed. The focus on national identity, culture, and literature has at the same time stimulated provincialism and intolerance: minorities were dying out,

¹¹ In addition to Neubauer’s articles in vol. 3, see also the anthology *History and Its Literary Genres* (Troha et al. 2009).

and the possibility of multiple ethnic and linguistic identities along with them. Therefore, among the immediate motives for revising existent historical accounts, is the *cognitive* one: the traditional national views are to be corrected because the historiography bound to the national matrixes has produced reductions and deformations. However, even more than the cognitive dimension, the *ethical* dimension is the one that obliges the revision of anachronistic national self-representations. The main reason for this, to put it in Neubauer's words, is because "they continue to foment alienation, hostility and aggression against minorities and against neighboring states" (2004/III: 345).

Conclusion

Like any ambitious project, this one also deserves to deal with the last set of questions prepared by the Estonian Comparative Literature Association for the 2009 Tartu Conference; namely, whether "a stylistic and conceptual unity can be achieved in literary histories," and whether "a comparative literary history of a larger region (Europe, world) is possible beyond compilations of national literary histories or thematic treatises." Regarding the first question, this project evidently does not even intend to emulate such a unity: its authors do follow certain editorial guidelines, but remain recognizably individual. The other question does not offer such a transparent answer. As some of the responses indicate, the project may have certain methodological and conceptual difficulties.¹² Especially when comparing the coverage of individual cultures, it is hard to avoid the impression that the entire selection has an arbitrary flavor. The list of objections from the point of individual literary cultures could grow

¹² Marko Juvan has properly highlighted the lack of a real comparative approach (Juvan 2009). Many articles remain rooted in the national tradition. However, even simply treating the national cases one after another yields interesting effects.

quite long indeed.¹³ However, to mangle the collection from the comfortable wicker-chair of the established “vernacular” disciplines would be to miss the point completely. As the editors have emphasized in advance, the project has no goal of being an encyclopedic literary history, and the problems treated should merely be regarded as *specific illustrations* of general patterns. The fact that there can be no individual “polyhistoric” mind that could master the kaleidoscope of literary cultures in a region of such linguistic complexity is compensated for by a network of individual contributions, loosely connected by introductory articles that indicate possible “nodes of coherence.”¹⁴

Despite certain weaknesses, in the end it has to be acknowledged that we are dealing with an important achievement of literary historiography of the day. In this light, the project deserves all due attention from the national scholarly traditions that it openly challenges. Although the details and overall balance are sometimes contestable, its general aim – the shift from isolated national perspectives towards a post-national view – seems to be well achieved. The lesson on the structural affinity of the literary cultures in the region, even if at this stage insufficiently backed up with comparative research, is highly instructive and should become compulsory reading, especially for practitioners of “national” literary historiography. Apart from this, the innovative concept of ECE tries to surpass that tradition of European comparativism that is only apparently supra-

¹³ In a review for the Slovenian journal *Primerjalna književnost* (Comparative Literature) I have highlighted some factual lapses and several spots that can be seen as “unbalanced.” From the point of view of Slovenian literary studies, certain relevant problems were treated relatively extensively whereas others, equally relevant, were not even mentioned; and marginal names and events were sometimes treated whereas certain crucial names and schools were left out (Dovič 2009). The conclusions of another reviewer were quite similar (Koron 2009). Still, at the same time most reviews have concluded that the overall advantages of the approach prevail in the end (see also Baár 2006).

¹⁴ “Nodes of coherence” should be understood as a slightly metaphorical reference to the *temporal nodes*, one of the key organizational concepts of the entire survey.

national, whereas in fact its hidden agenda is to map the trajectories of influence and expansion of the dominant cultures – which the small cultures only passively and belatedly accept.

Of course, in the spirit of the constructivist principles outlined above, it would be irrelevant to ponder whether this history comes close to *an ideal one*. Actually, the question “how does theory envisage an ‘ideal literary history’” is superfluous. Once again, this is a mere construction, one that is based on the spirit of its time and on a specific agenda that intends to leave nationalist concepts behind – to offer an account more viable than the “national” compilations ever could. Together with other recent historiographical efforts – from those that radically neglect tradition to those restricted to the re-production of vernacular canons – it proves that there is still a variety of ways that literary history can be written even in the circumstances when many have renounced it completely. On the other hand, it also proves that narrative structure, once labeled a “grand narrative,” retains some importance. The crucial change might be that, after a series of critical interventions, literary histories have turned into a genre that is by no means “great” any more; on the contrary, it became a highly hazardous and suspicious enterprise. This is why the demand to *explicate* the goals, agendas, methodologies, and target readers as precisely as possible is becoming even more important. The same should be said for inexorable *self-reflection*, another indispensable companion of any credible writing of literary histories in the new century.

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*Rethinking Literary Historiography:
Narrative and Literary Event*

Literary historiography is facing a crisis. This is something it has long been aware of.

The *krisis* of literary historiography means that it stands in judgment itself, that it sets out itself for distinction: self-judgment and self-distinction. In their endeavours to separate their projects from traditional literary historiography, literary historians have, especially over the last two decades, intensively studied historiography in general – or, rather, its theory, which began to flourish in the second half of the 20th century. Indeed, at times they have paid more attention to the theory of historiography than to their own discipline.

First and quite simply: literary history and literary historiography are not the same thing, although “literary history” is often pronounced to be the activity or work of literary historians. Literary history is, strictly speaking, the history of literature. In order to tell the difference between literary history and literary historiography, one needs to distinguish between history and historiography, to which literary historiography itself looks in its self-distinction. In traditional historiography, the difference does exist, but is at the same time obscured.

History is traditionally defined as *res gestae*, and historiography as *historia rerum gestarum*. History, then, is the “accomplished things,” deeds, events in the human sphere – what happened. Historiography, by contrast, is *historia*, an inquiry into and report on these deeds or events. The Greek word *historía*, which was used by the “father of history” himself, Herodotus, to describe his activity, actually means “inquiry” or “investigation” as well as “report” or

“narrative” (and it preserved this semantic ambiguity on being adopted by the Latins).

The influential 19th century German historian, Leopold von Ranke, defined the task of historiography as reporting on *wie es eigentlich gewesen* (cf. von Ranke 1970: 75).¹ This is the crucial word: *eigentlich*. It obscures the difference between history and historiography. In Ranke’s programmatic formula, *eigentlich* means more than the commonplace “properly speaking.” A historian must report on what “actually” or “really” happened, or, better yet, on what is “proper” (*eigen*) to history itself – on its own story. In a mass of events, he must search for the story and find it. Find a well-knit, rounded-off story – *eigentlich*, with no interventions or additions.

Assuming that he has succeeded, the history is the story of history itself, told through the historian. The historian’s narrative is a transparent medium for the story of history: *it is the story*.

Now is that true?

The overlap of the historian’s narrative with the story of history, culminating in the 19th century with the equation of the two in historiographical methodology, has aroused explicit suspicion in meta-historiographical reflections roughly since the 1950s. Is not a transparent, pure transmission of a discovered story of history through a historiographical narrative an illusion, the self-deception of a historian’s naive mind, a mere fiction?

The dividing line between traditional and contemporary historiography is marked precisely by their respective attitudes to history as story. What has become tangible for the radical modern (and postmodern) hermeneutics of suspicion in the field of historiography is something else: from a multitude of events, which have no story structure by themselves, the historian’s narrative selects and connects a handful, imposing a story pattern on them only by setting them in a

¹ Originally in the introduction to his first important work entitled *Geschichte der romanischen und germanischen Völker von 1494 bis 1514* (1824).

plot. The ostensible story of history itself is nothing but an invention, a narrative construction.

To continue talking about the *story of history* is thus erroneous and outdated. According to Hayden White, it is only the *emplotment*, the narrative configuration of events into a whole with a beginning, middle and conclusion, that gives rise to the *plot*, which is, in contrast to the ostensible story of history itself, a work of narrative. In a historiographical narrative, the found – that is, the events – is always read in the key of the invented. White distinguishes between four types of emplotment in historical narrative, and since these imitate, in his view, some of the typical emplotments of literature or (literary) fiction, they are subsumed under the concepts of the tragic, comic, novelistic, and ironic – concepts largely referring to literary genres. To explain the construction strategy of the emplotments, moreover, these terms are supplemented by tropes from rhetoric – metaphor, synecdoche, metonymy, and irony (cf. White 1987: 1–42).

It is hardly surprising, then, that the narrative came under fire from meta-historiographical criticism as early as the 1940s. Aware of the constructibility and fictionality of narrative, and striving for scientificity, the historians who had gathered around the journal *Annales* turned away from historiography's traditional focus on actions and their agents. They sought to banish the event from historiography in practice as well. Their postmodern successors found in the narrative a "metaphysical" structure and recognised in the historiographical narrative a form of the *grand récit*, the "great narrative," which is always dictated by the existing (or emerging) centres of social and political power. In the field of literary historiography, the shadow of suspicion fell, for example, on the national literary histories of the 19th century, which emerged in the German, Italian, and Central European countries as exponents of the national movements struggling for the foundation of national states. In our own time, the most telling example of an anti-narrative orientation, which turns against such inherent "metaphysical" principles of the narrative as continuity, teleology and wholeness, adopting instead an encyclopedic manner of presenting the materials, is represented by Hollier's new French literary history (cf. Hollier 1989).

But still: are the “stories written by life,” as the phrase goes, nothing but an empty metaphor?

Indeed they are not. According to Paul Ricoeur, “to imitate or represent action is to pre-understand what human acting is: its semantics, symbolism, temporality” (Ricoeur 1983: 125). The narrative is a *mise en intrigue* (Ricoeur’s equivalent for White’s *emplotment*), literally a “setting-in-plot,” a configuration of actions which already mean something. Each plot, each *histoire racontée* or “narrated story” has its “prehistory” (Ricoeur 1983: 142), formed by the primary semantics of the actions, and each is an explication of this prehistory, that is, a developing, unfolding of the story which is folded in an action not yet narrated but rich in meaning.

Actions, events are being narrated even before they are fully elaborated in a historiographical or literary narrative. The chief source for Herodotus’ writings on the Greco-Persian Wars was, after all, nothing but hearsay. *Autopsia* as the main methodological principle of his historiography stems from a desire to see the events with his own eyes, but it presupposes both hearsay, which connects events uncritically, and a distancing from it. It is a critical observation of what has been transmitted by a rudimentary oral narrative.

Similarly, the tragic *mýthos* defined by Aristotle as *synthesis* or *sýstasis tôn pragmatôn*, “the combination of the things done” (Aristoteles 1965: 11), presupposes an ancient myth, a narrative or story about gods and humans, which has been orally transmitted by bards from times immemorial. A tragic myth, which may be understood more broadly as a literary narrative in general, emerges precisely with an emplotment of the original aoidic narrative.

Emplotment, either historiographical or literary, is thus an elaboration, a formation of the prior narrative, an explication of a story which is already conceived but still implicit (however, a literary narrative is freer than a historiographical one in that it is not bound to textual or oral testimony, this freedom being a fundamental feature of its fictionality). The narrative is older than historiography or literature. It races ahead of them.

Narrative ability – *pace* Heidegger – may in fact belong among the fundamental existentials which essentially distinguish man from the other living beings and things. In a whirlwind of retrospections

and prospections, a narrative already somehow touches upon events without necessarily linking them into a linear or causal sequence. It is the source of the primary division of human temporality. The temporalisation proper to the narrative is older than any attempt at a conceptual comprehension of time. Homer's narrative, for example, lacks the concept of time (cf. Fränkel 1955: 1–2), but with the aid of retrospections and prospections it skillfully distinguishes between the time of narration and the time narrated, thus spreading out a rich temporality.

In short, we have always narrated. We cannot do otherwise. In our narrative, the “arrow of time” is always turning. And this narrative is story-making narrative.

But what are the implications of all this for the relation between the narrative and the event? As the narrative of historiography is founded on the event, the narrative of literary historiography is founded on the literary event.

Now what does the literarity of the event consist in?

To begin quite simply again: its literarity consists in its being bound to the letter. As far as I know, the event itself has been best described by an anonymous author known in the history of literary criticism as Pseudo-Longinus (or Longinus for short), although he was explicitly describing something else.

Longinus' treatise *On the Sublime* is, next to Aristotle's *Poetics* and Horace's *Art of Poetry*, one of the three most important ancient treatises on literature. In fact, Longinus' goal was not to write a theory of the sublime but to educate the reader to judge what was valuable in literature. From a theoretical viewpoint, his definition of the sublime is rather meagre. At the beginning he says that the sublime is “a certain excellence and prominence [*akrôtes kai exochê tis*] of words” in the greatest poets and prose writers (‘Longinus’ 1964: 1).² In Chapter Seven, however, it is the master of literary

² The English translations in this paper, however, are not taken from Russell's English text but based on the Greek original.

experience who finds his voice, describing the action of the sublime as follows: “For the truly sublime in fact somehow uplifts our soul [*hypò talethoûs hýpsous epáiretai te hemôn he psyché*], and the soul, experiencing a wonderful exaltation, is filled with joy and pride [*charâs kai megalauchias*], as if she had brought forth [*gennésasa*] herself what she had heard” (‘Longinus’ 1964: 7–8).

To translate more literally: the soul is uplifted by the sublime (the verb *epáiro* is used here in the medial or passive voice). Thus she suffers the action of the sublime wording, but in this suffering she is carried upward rather than humiliated. And while carried up by the wording, she is also filled with pride: both pride and joy at the extraordinary birth. For the soul is like a pregnant woman, proudly glad of the fruit which she is carrying. She is “now herself giving birth to what has made her pregnant”. The wording she has heard while reading – the ancients always read aloud, listening to themselves reading – finally becomes like her own issue. In the process of this genesis, of this bringing forth, what comes from the writer emerges as something coming from the reader as well. But Longinus’ simile of giving birth suggests no hermeneutic usurpation or appropriation of the meaning that would reside in the *mens auctoris* as the author’s “possession.”

Let me now continue from Longinus’ suggestion, bearing in mind the literary event. When the soul is giving birth, it is not appropriating the meaning; rather, it is captured by the wording. Such a wording, coming over us captor-like through the writer, evokes the thrilling sense that we have somehow thought the same without being able to express it. Indeed, we recognise something that we have touched, in our heart of hearts, with the apex of our soul, as the writer must have touched it with his – something most intimate which is closest to us yet immensely far away, something that seems thoroughly homely yet entirely strange. We might say: something that seems *unheimlich*.

Unheimlich as the concept of a particular ambivalence of feeling was introduced into the discussion of literature by Freud. *Das Unheimliche* is the – initially hidden – homely or familiar which reveals itself in its ghastliness (this is not fully conveyed by the translation “uncanny” without an explanation). Or, translated into the analytic

terminology of psychic life: it is a return of the repressed, the traumatic childhood event which fights its way from the unconscious into consciousness as a psychological disorder (cf. Freud 1988: 335–376).

In the case of a wording, the “uncanniness” of the most intimate is different. The wording becomes (like) the reader’s own, because it reminds him of the innermost in himself. It awakens an “anamnesis of that touched upon with the soul”, which has no visible paradigm in the background: the recognition of what the reader is somehow acquainted with already – but “as the familiarly unfamiliar” which is left unknown.

Thus the literary event is nothing to do with language. It is a meeting of writing and reading or listening. It occurs at the wording, which is the linguistic correlative of the “creative” act: a spark of suffering on the apex of the soul.

The literary event on which literary historiography as the narration of the story of literature is founded is by itself ahistorical and transhistorical. It is ahistorical because it takes place in the timelessness of the ecstatic exaltation of the soul, and transhistorical because it occurs in all ages, in Longinus’, ours, and those in between, at the wording of any time. In order to occur, it needs reading in addition to writing, but it is not dependent on any historical reception. There are two paths opening up from it: one leading to literary creativity, to a new superb wording, and the other leading to a responsibly answering response to it.³

One of the creative forms of this response is literary historiography. This, in contrast to literature, makes use of a conceptual language. Without a responsible response, however, its concepts and categories are merely empty accusations (the Greek verb *kategoréō* means “indicate,” “display,” “declare,” while its primary sense is “accuse”). Unless it stems from the literary event and fosters a responsible response to the wording which gives rise to the event, it

³ Cf. the *responding responsibility* referred to in Steiner 1989, 8.

wanders hopelessly, no matter how systematic it is, how coherently it assigns works of literature to its ordering categories, or how much support these win before the tribunal of the discipline itself, in meta-literary historiographical criticism. If, however, it does stem from the event, it can maintain the good old tradition of philology as love of words, taking in everything – to its advantage.

In his important text *The Newest Russian Poetry* (1921), focusing on the literarity of literature, Roman Jakobson wittily remarks: “Up till now, however, historians of literature have mostly behaved like the police who, when they want to arrest someone, take in everyone and everything found in the apartment and even chance passers-by. Historians of literature have in the same way felt the need to take in everything – everyday life, psychology, politics, philosophy. Instead of a science of literature we have fetched up with a conglomeration of cottage industries” (Jakobson 1978: 57).

Of course Jakobson is right. A chaotic mixing of disciplines is fatal. But this holds true only if literary historiography does not know what is sending it on its way. If, by contrast, a narrative of literary historiography follows the wording responsibly, it does not close on the text but opens on the other side into a (non-linguistic) context. This narrative may also speak of the writer’s life which is the first among the subjects of literary historiography “incriminated” by Jakobson. It can take in everything as it draws closer to the unique experience behind the non-conceptual word of literature.

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History of Estonian Literature as a Kernel Structure of Estonian Culture

The history of literature is not only a summary of writers' biographies, their creative work and its reception but also about the change of literary consciousness (i.e. visions and conceptions of literature) in the history. During different periods different texts have been gathered under the term "literature", which means that the boundaries of literature have changed during history. The process has occurred on axes, one boundary of which is the objectivity of literature – the acknowledgment of its ever-valid value. The fundamental *Theory of Literature* by René Wellek and Austin Warren suggests the following wording: "The term 'literature' seems best if we limit it to the art of literature, that is, to imaginative literature" (Wellek&Warren 1977: 22). According to these authors it is better reflected in the German languages, in which a synonym to literature is *Wortkunst* – art of words. The approach, which focuses on the value means actually that in every piece of literature we should not seek for the literary reflection of imagery or the amplification of reality but rather for the "literariness" in the meaning of the Russian form school of the 1920s. At the other end of the process axis literature is comprehended contextually. Terry Eagleton has said in the introductory chapter "What is Literature?" of his *Literary Theory* that "There is no such thing as a literary work or tradition, which is valuable *in itself* (---) 'Value' is a transitive term: it means whatever is valued by certain people in specific situations, according to particular criteria and in the light of given purposes." (Eagleton 1983: 11).

It means that during any period literature has always comprised sub-literature (Hennoste 2003: 62). How do such "different sub-literatures" create a new literary canon in history, how is "a network of relationships within the literary situation" generated, which Tiit

Hennoste, an Estonian language and literature researcher, has considered inevitable for literature as an institution? (Hennoste 2003: 180, 188). Furthermore, how does this canon extend beyond its impact on the history of culture and society? Finding answers to these questions would be relevant in respect to understanding Estonian literature.

At this point two main aspects should be kept in mind. Firstly, history is the narrated and written past. It is rather difficult for people to distinguish between real historical events and the events they have read about in history books, studied at school or heard in the stories told by other people. Certain fictitiousness (estimated additional writing, overwriting) is inevitable in history, because real events and actions cannot be identical to their reconstructions. The outstanding contemporary German historical philosopher Jörn Rüsen has said: "Historical consciousness is a complex relationship comprising a recollection of the past, interpretation of the present and the anticipation of the future (---). The historical consciousness of a human being is always much more than just history." (Rüsen 2000: 159). Such complex relationship may be observed in the history of literature, which centrepiece is the fusion of language and imagery of ethics, aesthetics, psychology, sociology and politics. From this point of view the history of literature is permanently opened for unceasing dialogue between different communities of readers.

At this point we should observe the characterisation of the literary field provided by Pierre Bourdieu: anyone acting upon the literary field or as he says the *actants* (writers, critics, publishers, editors, literary scientists) uses different capital (cultural capital as the knowledge of the game rules in the cultural space, symbolic capital as social recognition, prestige or reputation, *habitus* – a system directing/influencing individual activities, behaviour and thinking) (Bourdieu 1996: 179–181, 215–223.) for positioning themselves in the literary field. Or in other words – such a dialogue between subjects comprises a substantial amount of manipulations. Literary history like history is figuratively speaking rewritten as the history of the "winners", i.e. as the history of writers and publication included in canons.

Secondly, it has to be kept in mind that according to my subjective opinion, despite the openness that enables manipulations and continually expanding nature, the history of literature is intrinsically a teleological process down to its depth. At least I want to make such a statement about the history of Estonian literature. The exterior (hidden, unconscious) objective of the history of literature may be literariness, which I understand differently from the “literariness” hidden in the structure inherent to formalists and perceived as absoluteness (essence) of the unison of all literary phenomena above (or even deeper)¹. Such kind of “literariness” is kept in mind if spirituality *per se* is seen in literature, a kind of philosophy, scattering ideas into images. “The mainstream historical process is summarised best in the national history of literature” (Talvet 2010: 127–128). In Estonian literature it is expressed for example in the ode “The Moon” (1819) by the first Estonian poet Kristian Jaak Peterson (1801–1822), putting forward the idea that the Estonian language should establish a position that would enable it to achieve the eternal status of the Estonian language via literary creations *resp* poetry. Friedrich Reinhold Kreutzwald (1801 – 1882) the author of the Estonian national epic *Kalevipoeg* (Kalev’s Son) (1857–1862) saw it as his main literary work, “which like Homer’s, shall be found 1,000 years later in any library of people, who have no understanding of the language whatsoever” (Kreutzwald 1976: 425–426). There is no doubt that the high and normative assessment of his individual work expresses the thirst for sacral absoluteness.

Kalevipoeg as a multi-vocal text creating myths and the nation like the *telos* (the definite goal having an impact on the direction of development and the interpretation of the development proceeding from it), which unites, according to Jaan Undusk, the openness of the text, “the cosmopolitan reflections and the deep rooting in the soil” (Undusk 1994: 150) has been recognised by different scholars in their presentations and articles (Talvet 2003: 888–890; Undusk 1994: 147–150; Veidemann 2006: 121–129). Or let us take one of the most

¹ I admit that such an approach proceeds from literary phenomenology that phenomena are elements perceived by us in our consciousness apart from elements that really exist irrespective of our experience (See Viik 2009: 216 jj)

outstanding representatives of Estonian poetry Juhan Liiv (1864–1913), who has been characterised as “a voice from the depth of Estonia” (Talvet 2007a: 296) and several of whose poems embody an existential interpretation of a nation, in which the responsibility and sense of guilt for the fate of the nation is assumed (Talvet 2007b: 27). The existentialist outlook (dealing with good and evil, the antinomies of the meaning of work and life) is observed in the creative work of the greatest Estonian prose writer Anton H. Tammsaare (1878–1940) in his 5-volume novel *Tõde ja õigus* (Truth and Justice) (1926–1933) and in his novel *Põrgupõhja uus vanapagan* (The New Old Pagan from Põrgupõhja) (1939) (Scholtz 2001: 136). “*Tõde ja õigus* / is / a dramatic chain of search for the meaning of life,” as the translator of Tammsaare in Czech language Vladimír Macura claims (Macura 2001: 155). The sequence of examples, which may be definitely complemented by the fact that the writer’s yearning for absoluteness, to cross the earthborn boundaries by means of literature, an effort to perceive something essential in life and in the fate of one nation, resound with literary-historical *telos*.

Thus, literary history (as stressed is the *n a r r a t e d* and *w r i t t e n* history) is the movement towards the one absolute core value. Such movement is measured by proceeding from such “literariness”. The literary canon may be considered the embodiment of the core value or example, specifying one or any other national literature. This takes us back to the source of the creation of the term of literature: the literature of ancient Greece followed by Rome (Kolk 2009: 45), in which the term *litteratura* was used to describe the aggregated whole of authors and books worth reading.

The internal functional objective of literary history is to have a reading community and besides that a power able to create a nation, idea as a form of creation. When I state that Estonian history of literature is the kernel structure of Estonian culture, I really mean that the **history of literature is both the idea of Estonian culture as well as its form of creation**. Or in other words: Estonian cultural history in its essence is derived from Estonian literary history. When handling *the (history of) culture* as a text, Estonian literary history influences it in the respect of code text and meta-text. Code text according to Lotman’s definition is a text, which exists only in the

head or the sub-conscious of the person retelling it, “organising the memory and defining the boundaries of the possible text variation” (Lotman 1990: 285) – literary history is the discourse of Estonian culture or the “membrane”, which measures the meaningfulness of literary events in the aspect of meaningfulness of the cultural history. On the other hand, literary history may be regarded also as the model or meta-text of Estonian culture. It may be observed especially at the beginning of the 20th century with the appearance of the literary group called Noor-Eesti (Young Estonia) (Gustav Suits, Friedebert Tuglas, Villem Grünthal-Ridala, Aino Kallas, Johannes Aavik, etc.) and their “project” and mission to modernise the entire Estonian culture. “Noor-Eesti has introduced (borrowed if you wish) the liberal undertsanding of art and elite aesthetics into the consciousness of Estonian culture”, a statement put forward by the literary critics Sirje Olesk and Marin Laak in the opening article of *Methis* – a special issue of the magazine dedicated to the 100th anniversary of Noor-Eesti (Olesk, Laak 2008: 12). The meta-textuality of literary history is revealed in respect to Estonian culture also in the observations of translated literature, the first decades of which may be regarded as the explosion of reception of the world literature in Estonia (Veidemann 2006: 294–304).

One may wonder at once if the openness for dialogue of the history of literature, for continuous re-reading and writing shall not contradict the subordination of the goal, figuratively speaking, to be the midwife and advocate of Estonian culture. This cannot be said about the history of Estonian literature. Until today, thirteen different treatments of the history of Estonian literature or some of its periods have been published (the first one was written by D. H. Jürgenson under the title *Kurze Geschichte der ehstnischen Literatur* (1843–1844), and the last one was published in 2008 as *Eesti kirjandus paguluses XX sajandil* (20th Century Estonian Literature in Exile), and it may be observed in the topic treatment since the end of the 19th century that it has influenced the formation of the Estonian literary canon (classical works and main authors), creating the axis of the history of literature and having an impact on the entire Estonian culture.

As a matter of fact, the 5-volume *History of Estonian Literature* (1965–1991) written during the Soviet doctrine did not include Estonian literature written in exile by a number of Estonian modern classics who had to flee Estonia during the war (like Gustav Suits, Marie Under, Henrik Visnapuu, August Gailit, Albert Kivikas, Karl Ristikivi and others), or its value has been overlooked or minimised. However, the history of literature as the kernel structure of national culture is still transparent in the above-mentioned literary work.

What is it then that was important in the history of Estonian literature and is also the creative form of Estonian culture?

Primarily it is the folklore (myths, legends) and especially folk songs. The main principle of the structure of folk songs in Estonia and the Balto-Finnic region is the runic verse (*runo*) and parallelism. The folk song, comprising runic verse, may be regarded the genuine feature of the entire Estonian culture. The writer Jaan Kaplinski has called it the ancient grammar of the Estonian culture. Unfortunately, this grammar was fractured in the 19th century, when the old folk songs, as paradoxical as it may seem, perished (they could not be written down as there was no knowledge as to how to write them down) during the period of national awakening and were replaced by a kind of imitation of a simple-structured German folk song – *Volkslied*. Thus, the reference culture established was the German culture. This denoted acculturation. The folk culture had a totally different structure. It could not be placed into one-to-one relationship with the German culture dominant in towns and estates. Until the middle of the 19th century Estonia had nothing the literate Germans had had for a very long time (writers, science, history), and due to that, as Kaplinski explains it, the new Estonian culture had to be definitely defined as something that the Germans considered culture, but appearing as “national” for the Estonians. This “national” feature for Estonians, the free and cultured nation, was the ancient history before the German colonisation. This kind of history was constructed in the Estonian literature of the 19th century starting with Kristian Jaak Peterson, Friedrich Robert Faehlmann, Friedrich Reinhold Kreutzwald up to Carl Robert Jakobson, Jakob Hurt, Eduard Bornhöhe and Andres Saal. Whereby, this ancient history was characterised as high culture.

Kalevipoeg (Kalev's son) was the first literary hero – literary and fictional because its origin in the folklore was known in a rather limited area of Estonia, but the protagonist was not confined only to literature, it became the symbol of the entire culture. Furthermore, as mentioned by academic Jaan Undusk, Kalevipoeg was a political challenge to the Baltic-German rulers. “He was the first free person in the literary space of the Baltic countries, the first artist and anarchist, who participated in the fight of good and evil with typical human eagerness,” wrote Undusk (2009: 3).

We may observe that such kind of folk and literary heroes organise and influence Estonian culture in the 20th century, which impact, however, is not necessarily positive. Even the best-known protagonist, Andres of Vargamäe in Anton H. Tammsaare's novel *Tõde ja õigus* (Truth and Justice) was very ambivalent. Or let us take Joosep Toots, Arno Tali or Tõnisson in *Kevade* (Spring) by Oskar Luts – all of them and many other characters created by Oskar Luts constitute a generalisation of typical people, who lived in the Estonian village community at the end of the 19th century. Their presence is vital in the Estonian culture today because they symbolise typical human features on one hand, and on the other hand generate childhood nostalgia. *Rehepapp* (The Old Barney) written by one of the most popular Estonian writers Andrus Kivirähk and published in 2000, illustrates the process how a central figure – the Old Barney (*rehepapp*) – in the ancient Estonian village community acquires a symbolic status in the literary approach and becomes a proper name for denoting a certain type of behaviour.

The function of history of Estonian literature in culture as a creator of form may be observed in the fact that throughout history Estonian writers have made up an influential part of the intellectual elite in Estonia. In the 19th century they were the enlighteners of the nation (Johann Voldemar Jannsen, Friedrich Reinhold Kreutzwald). But we can also see ideologists and politicians among them (Carl Robert Jakobson in the 19th century, Eduard Vilde and Gustav Suits at the beginning of the 20th century, Lennart Meri at the end of the 20th century) or critical thinkers who have given meaning to social and cultural life (Friedebert Tuglas, Anton H. Tammsaare, Jaan Kaplinski, Jaan Kross, Hando Runnel and many others). At the end

of the 20th century, especially since the end of the 1960s Estonian writers acquired the position of the spiritual authority in the society and retained it until the re-establishment of the independent Estonia in 1991.

Mythology, a discussion about the method of describing life in Estonian literature acquires a cultural meaning beside fictional heroes and writers. Discussion about critical realism at the end of the 19th century brought out the idea that nationalism remains only a rhetoric image (or as it was said "patriotic sighing") if not bound to the changes in the society and an explicit education program. Realism was no more restricted only to literature, but became a choice of cultural orientation. The expansion of such literary-historical problems is expressed more vividly in culture in relation to the movement of Noor-Eesti. After its literary manifesto and the collection of poems *Elu tuli* (Fire of Life) (1905) by Gustav Suits, the Noor-Eesti albums became influential. The movement Noor-Eesti acquired the status of a revolutionary cultural movement, because it combined the ambition of modernising literature, applied art and the language.

Writers' discussions at the end of 1920s expanded to the entire Estonian culture, known as the down-to-earth movement, which stimulated aesthetic and socio-ethical thought. When the literary critic and translator Ants Oras gathered a selection of poetry by the new generation of poets into an anthology *Arbujad* (Soothsayers) in 1936, it denoted also a change in the discourse of culture (spirit versus power).

At the turn of the 1950s–60s there was a breakthrough of free verse in Estonian poetry (Jaan Kross, Ain Kaalep, Ellen Niit), which expanded into a cultural upheaval in the 1960s (in poetry, Paul-Eerik Rummo, Jaan Kaplinski, Mats Traat, Viivi Luik, Hando Runnel; in prose, Mati Unt, Arvo Valton, Enn Vetemaa; in music, Arvo Pärt, Veljo Tormis, Jaan Rääts; in visual arts, Jüri Arrak, Peeter Mudist, Enn Põldroos, Tiit Pääsuke; in theatre, Voldemar Panso, Mikk Mikiver, Jaan Tooming, Evalt Hermaküla). Paul-Eerik Rummo published his play *Tuhkatriinumäng* (The Cinderella Game) in 1968, of which the stage version in Vanemuine Theatre in Tartu a year later (in 1969) triggered political repression (the performance of the play was banned, Paul-Eerik Rummo became an internal exile after

suspension of the publication of his collection of poetry "Saatja aadress" (The Return Address) and the discussion of the possibility of alienation in the socialist system.

Everything that afterwards developed into a literary event of historical importance (active reception, inclusion in the literary canon), like Hando Runnel's collection of poetry *Punaste õhtute purpur* (The Purple of Red Nights) in 1982 and Viivi Luik's novel *Seitsmes rahukevad* (The Seventh Spring of Peace) in 1985, becomes also the element of the kernel structure of Estonian culture.

The entire literary intertextuality (interaction of texts with each other, translations from other languages into Estonian) and inter-semioticism (staging of literary texts, their transformation into films, and even into a ballet, not to mention the literary subject matter being recorded in figurative art) forms a network, of which the Estonian culture creates its identity. Hence, it may be declared that the identity of Estonian culture is primarily constituted in Estonian literature and its history.

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Literary Histories as an Aspect of Discursive Construction of National Identity

Stuart Hall has written in the article *The Questions of Cultural Identity* that one of the aspects of national identity is the narrative of a nation. The narrative of a nation exists in national narratives, in literature, in media and in everyday culture. It creates a connection between stories, landscapes, historical events, national symbols etc. Hall assigns literature a very important role in the creation process of national identity (Hall 1996: 613–615), as well as David Perkins does:

A function of many literary histories has been to support feelings of community and identity. [...] a history of literature, whether it be the literature of a nation, class, region, race, or gender, would help instruct us who we are individually and as a community. It displays the tradition in which we stand whether we will or no, for this tradition has formed us. [...] Literary histories explain allusions in text, establish the expectations associated with a genre in a given time and place, show how a work broke through a general crisis in aesthetic construction, demonstrate that it served or subverted a dominant ideology, and so forth. (Perkins 1992: 180–183).

Literary histories are stories about (national) literatures, i.e. literary histories are metatexts which are created by literary critics, translators and literary historians. Most of all theorists still believe that “literary historians ‘create’ literary history, with its power lines, centre and periphery”, according to Estonian researcher Aare Pilv (Pilv 2004: 70).

Literary historians and others interpret other literary works, and they are able to influence the cultural system and society. They may play an important role in constructing national identity too. The main

aim of national identity is to construct a large national unity which can exist as a discursive construct. So, it is reasonable to analyse literary histories as text(s) in contexts to explain how literary histories work in culture and society. If we compare different literary histories, we can see that they have been quite different in different times and they also represent different ideologies.

1. Early Estonian Literary Histories

Estonian literature is not very old and we have very few academic literary histories. The first histories of Estonian literature were written in the middle of the 19th century in German (Dietrich Heinrich Jürgenson, *Kurze Geschichte der ehstnischen Literatur*, 1843–1844), and in Finnish (August Engelbrekt Ahlqvist, *Viron nykyisemmästä kirjallisuudesta*, 1856). Both of them were written for the foreign readers not for the Estonians.

The first literary histories in Estonian and for the Estonian readers were compiled at the end of the 19th century. The first one was written by Juhan Kunder (*Eesti kirjandus koolile ja kodule* / Estonian Literature in School and at Home, 1890), who was a teacher at school and also a poet and playwright. The next history was compiled by a philologist, poet and composer Karl August Hermann (*Eesti kirjanduse ajalugu* / Estonian Literary History, 1898). The last literary history in the 19th century was written by the teacher and literary researcher Tõnu Sander (*Eesti kirjanduse ajalugu* / Estonian Literary History I–II, 1899–1901). Unfortunately, Sander's literary history ends at the end of the 17th century.

All these three literary histories were hastily written and unreliable up to a point, but the readers still accepted them (*q.v.* Annus *et al* 2007: 356).

The most important literary histories from the early 20th century wrote a teacher Mihkel Kampmaa: *Eesti vanem ilukirjandus* (Early Estonian Literature, 1908), *Eesti kirjanduse peajooned I–IV* (Main Features of Estonian Literature, published 1912–1936). Kampmaa's history was "Written in the spirit of Georg Brandes, they described the main literary currents, discussed the writers' personality, and

provided much contextual information. Kampmaa saw the writer's childhood and genealogy in a romantic light and he perceived literature and writers within a movement towards perfection. His subjective views, written in a colourful style, were delivered with a powerful, omniscient voice. He did make some attempt to present the writers, the process of writing, and the texts in a wider context, for instance by employing Romanticism, Realism and other transnational critical terms and naming their foreign representatives, but in discussing individual Estonian writers he avoided comparisons. While he took it for granted that Estonian literature reflected movements beyond the border, he looked upon particular Estonian writers in isolation. (Annus *et al* 2007: 356)

Consequently, Kampmaa's literary history was theoretically pretty adequate and exhaustive according to the contemporary researchers (Epp Annus, Luule Epner and Jüri Talvet).

Another researcher Endel Nirk had bit different opinion in his book *Estonian Literature* (1970):

Kampmaa's history was essentially conservative and eclectic in character, and it could not keep abreast of the literary thought of the period. As a teacher, Kampmaa wrote his history mainly for secondary schools and it was first and foremost an extensive and systematised collection of material. [...] Nevertheless, no profound history of literature based on a systematic study of the literary heritage was written in bourgeois Estonia. (Nirk 1970: 275)

Nirk's *Estonian Literature* was written for the foreign readers in the Soviet period. At the end of the 20th century Nirk wrote that Kampmaa's literary history was very important and developed work in the context of its time (Kruus, Puhvel 2000: 172–173). It means that the meaning of a literary history may change in different times even for one and the same person.

2. Writers' Literary Histories

The eminent Estonian literary histories have written still in the 20th and 21st centuries. It is notable that several Estonian literary histories have been written by writers, for example Friedebert Tuglas, Gustav Suits, Karl Ristikivi and Bernard Kangro. This means that our writers are not just research objects; rather, they take part in the creative process of literary history and the literary canon, as well as the national identity. Some writers also have the opportunity to decide what belongs in the canon and what is peripheral. (A similar situation also exists in Estonian criticism: it is not unusual that, when our writers publish books, the critics are other writers, sometimes friends.) It means that Estonian literary histories demonstrate a somewhat different situation, as Stuart Hall describes it: our literary histories are not always created by literary historians.

2.1. Friedebert Tuglas' Literary History

Friedebert Tuglas was one of the writers who created and also directed the canon and mainstream of Estonian literature. Endel Nirk has written:

Tuglas the critic has influenced Estonian literature no less profoundly than Tuglas the writer. With his imposing erudition and his formidable analytical and controversial talent he struggled persistently to rise the aesthetic standards of the national culture. When he made his debut as a critic in the days of the Noor-Eesti movement he was mainly an adherent of the school of Georg Brandes ... (Nirk 1970: 167)

Tuglas was a leading figure in Estonian literary and cultural life for several years:

Although largely self-educated, Tuglas became the chief speaker for the conscious approach to literary style in Estonian literature at the beginning of the 20th century. His critical studies cover a wide range

from folklore to modern literature and are distinguished by their power to synthesize: Tuglas not only retains a fine sense of local context while introducing modern European critical ideas, but also has as his stylistic ideal a kind of hermaphroditic combination of Realism with Romanticism, of male with female. Starting to write criticism already in the early years of exile that lasted from 1906 to 1917, his most spectacular critical period belongs to the 20s and 30s when he published four extensive monographs and eight volumes of his critical works. (Undusk 2005: 9)

Tuglas wrote in his short Estonian literary history (1934) that Estonian literature is literature which is written in the Estonian language. (It is interesting that Cornelius Hasselblatt's new Estonian literary history presents the same idea). Tuglas believed that other ethnic groups who have lived in Estonia have not created their own independent culture in this country, but they have represented the connection with the larger countries where they have their roots. (Tuglas 1936: 6). He was referring to Danes, Swedes, Poles and Russians. Even Germans created, in Estonia, only marginal and provincial literature. At the same time, the reason Estonian literature has developed so slowly is because of the exploitation of Estonians by the ethnic groups mentioned above: they did not establish their own great culture and inhibited the development of Estonians.

Tuglas began his literary history with Estonian folklore and the first publications in Estonian. He also described the works of Baltic-Germans, and national romanticism in the 19th century. Tuglas concentrated on such literary styles as realism, new romanticism and new realism. Tuglas, of course, expressed his own preferences. Realism, as well as new romanticism, is also a part of the canon in contemporary time; Tuglas' creative work was very successful.

2.2. Gustav Suits' Literary History

Another Estonian writer, Gustav Suits, wrote his literary history in exile (1953). Suits was a distinguished poet and the first professor of Estonian and general literature in the 1930s at Tartu University. He

was the leader of the Noor-Eesti movement. So, he did much to develop “Estonian literary research and criticism, and helped to bring into existence a whole new school of literary thought” (Nirk 1970: 164).

The style of his history is much more poetic and essayistic than Tuglas’ literary history. (Aarne Merilai’s and Õne Kepp’s treatment of Estonian exile poetry books, published in 1994 and 2008 respectively, continued in a similar style). Suits concentrated only on written culture and literature, and excluded folklore in the first part of the book. Suits began with religious texts written in Estonian in the 16th century, continued with Enlightenment tracts (works by Baltic German estophiles, and literature for peasants) and the national romantic movement in the 19th century. The second part of the book contains essays on selected Estonian writers: August Kitzberg, Juhan Liiv, Eduard Vilde, Anton Hansen Tammsaare, Marie Under, Villem Grünthal-Ridala, Friedebert Tuglas and Henrik Visnapuu.

Suits’ selection is impressive but also extremely selective. At the same time, Suits tried to place Estonian writers in the European context: he compared them with different writers from other countries, drew parallels and created the impression that all European literature is connected in some way. That is a really valuable aspect of Suits’ literary history.

3. Literary histories in the Soviet period

During the Soviet period, a large five-volume *Eesti kirjanduse ajalugu* (*Estonian literary history*, 1965–1991) was published (edited by Endel Sõgel) for Estonian readers, as was Endel Nirk’s *Estonian Literature* (1970) for foreign readers. It was a totally different time and both of the books are strongly ideological, especially the history compiled by Sõgel. It was

The Estonian version of the team-produced communist literary histories... Compiled according to Soviet ideology, it was methodologically a mixture of author-centered positivism and text-centered new criticism. In accordance with the critical discourse of

this era, Estonian literature's relation to foreign literatures was considered in two parts: the first one dealt with the friendly and fruitful collaborations between Soviet regimes, the second with the unworthy Other, the capitalist world. Once again, Estonian exile literature was excluded. (Annus et al 2007: 357)

But at the same time these books include much more information than Estonian literary histories written before and after.

It was also a time when Estonian literature was divided into two parts: literature in the homeland and literature in exile. Jaan Puhvel, a professor at the University of California, is very critical of Nirk's short literary history, although he has a positive reaction to some parts of the book. Puhvel approved of the treatment of Karl August Hindrey and Karl Rumor, but he resented the influence of political doctrine which changed the picture of the literature and paid more attention to the class war between the bourgeoisie and working class (Puhvel 2007: 65–68). By the way, Nirk's literary history adopted the principles of the five-volume Sõgel's literary history (q.v. Annus et al 2007: 357).

Thus we can read from Nirk's literary history about Estonian writers abroad:

The events of the Second World War contributed to a dispersal of thousands of Estonians all over the world. The reason that compelled them to abandon their home-country, at that time occupied by fascist Germany, were rather complicated. Some of them had compromised themselves by their relations to fascists, others had fallen victim to panic-engendering fascist propaganda. [...] Continuing their activities abroad, the Estonian writers assumed the role of political refugees and, despite their previous dissensions, provisionally found a language in common on the outdated bourgeois nationalist platform. The mission the Estonian refugees took upon themselves was to "maintain Estonian culture", since they assumed that national culture could not be preserved under Soviet rule. A prominent role in promoting that standpoint was enacted by the Estonian émigré press, which had adopted a blind anti-Soviet attitude since the very beginning, getting further support in the atmosphere of intensifying "cold war" (Nirk 1970: 362).

Such books are paradoxical and contradictory: on the one hand, they contain very important information but on the other hand, all the information is buried under ideology and the reader must read between the lines. Actually this ideology is the rhetoric of old Byzantium, of a totalitarian empire, and the main idea is to subject people to power. Paradoxically, it is still possible to save the national identity in this situation if you can read between the lines, and mentally resist the ideological doctrine.

3.1. Literary Histories in Exile

Gustav Suits was not the only author who published literary histories in exile. Arvo Mägi published, in exile, two-volume *Lühike eesti kirjanduslugu* (A Short History of Estonian Literature, 1965), which dealt with folklore and literature till 1940. Actually Mägi continued Tuglas' tradition: the main topics are realism, new realism and new romanticism.

Another writer Karl Ristikivi published his book *Eesti kirjanduse lugu* (*History of Estonian Literature*, 1954) also in Swedish exile. Both the literary histories by Mägi and Ristikivi were not innovative:

They escaped Marxist simplifications, but their exilic perspective, tinged with nostalgia, were attached to a pre-war tradition. Due to the authors' isolation, these works could not, for instance, trace Estonian literature's complex connections with the modernist currents, nor could they introduce new theoretical perspective. (Annus et al 2007: 357–358)

At the same time it is still paradoxical and interesting that both poetic and ideological innovations were initiated by exile literature. The first innovative exile poet was Ilmar Laaban. His collection *Ankruketi lõpp on laulu algus* (The End of the Anchor Chain is the Beginning of Song, 1946) is one of the most innovative poetry books in Estonian literature, which had a very strong influence, since its surrealist freedom liberated our poetic language and metaphor, and

it is also paradoxical, and very significant, that the new innovations began with surrealism.

One of the most innovative prose books in Estonian literature is Karl Ristikivi's novel *Hingede öö* (All Souls' Night, 1953) which expressed the homeless nation's spirit, and, according to Rein Veidemann, "Karl Ristikivi's novel *Hingede öö* can be considered a manifesto of existentialism in the Estonian literature of the 1950s (Veidemann 2000: 50).

It seems that Karl Ristikivi has influenced Estonian literature more as a writer, and not so much as a critic.

4. Literary histories from recent years

Epp Annus, Luule Epner, Ants Järv, Sirje Olesk, Ele Süvalep and Mart Velsker published our most recent literary history in Estonian in 2001. It continues Sögel's grand literary history tradition, but in a different way. It concentrates on the literary process and connects it with the social context. Each of the five authors has his/her own style and the text changes the focus from the process to the authors, and from the authors to literary texts. It is also a very selective book and subjective. Essays are mixed with more academic treatment.

Cornelius Hasselblatt, a professor at Groningen University published a great Estonian literary history in German, *Geschichte der estnischen Literatur. Von den Anfängen bis zur Gegenwart*, in 2006. That book was published by the prominent German publisher Walter Gruyter. It is the first "modern treatise of Estonian literature in a world language" that is not translated from Estonian, and it is a view from the outside (Hasselblatt, Kesküla 2007: 28).

Hasselblatt's literary history focuses on texts in Estonian and it is written for foreign readers. At the same time, he used Soviet sources when he wrote his literary history: "I'm not so stupid as to be totally unable to read Soviet texts and understand their meaning. Any text must be critically read, analysed and interpreted. It is sometimes assumed here that no foreigner can possibly understand anything that has happened or is going on. This is not true." (Ib.)

It is significant that Hasselblatt believes that

... the difference between east and west is smaller than I thought, i.e. the problems tackled by Estonian writers are more or less the same as in other countries. So the Estonian culture is less exotic than expected (or occasionally perhaps hoped for) – we all come from the same planet. (Ib. 29)

At the same time Hasselblatt's literary history relates with Tuglas' literary history from 1930s very well.

What we need in the 21st century? Conclusion

Linda Hutcheon has written in her article "Rethinking the National Model" that the world is globalized, multinational, and diasporic in the 21st century, and we need not only single-nation focus of literary histories, but also new literary histories based on race, gender etc. (Hutcheon 2002: 3); c.f. with Hasselblatt's words "we all come from the same planet" mentioned above. It still seems that one idea of what kind of literary histories we need in the 21st century is the comparative literary history, which would compare literatures of neighbouring countries or even literatures which are not from neighbouring countries but exist in the same area or continent (European literatures, for example). One of them was published last year in Riga, *Latvieši, gauņi un lietuvieši: literārie un kultūras kontakti* (Latvians, Estonians and Lithuanians: Literary and Cultural Contacts, 2008), edited by Benedikts Kalnačs et al. Although it is in Latvian with English summaries and, as Kalnačs writes, "The intended audience for this book is the Latvian reader. For this reason we have paid attention to the attitudes regarding Latvian–Estonian and Latvian–Lithuanian connections. The authors have provided a detailed overview of the literary and cultural presence of Estonians and Lithuanians in Latvia" (Kalnačs 2008: 1084), Estonians have the opportunity to read about literary contacts and translations from other Baltic countries. And it is also important that it is possible to read about the reception of our neighbouring countries' literature. Thinking about the future, Kalnačs writes: "...we have attempted to provide a factual base that can be used as a foundation for further

research into various types of literary development in Latvia, Estonia and Lithuania” (ib.).

At the same time, we still need literary histories which give overviews of literature written in one country or in one language. This would provide a basis for possible comparative literary histories. It seems that if we have many different literary histories, or histories about texts, the readers (the members of different nations, classes, regions, races or genders) not only read the texts differently, but also create new histories – the grand narratives does not hold, more exactly, it holds only partly, because the horizon of the past and the horizon of the present converge in the process of reading. The reality and the fictional world are mixed in literary texts and also in meta-texts, the texts of literary histories.

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*The Trans-national Literary Canon and
Shared Literary History between
Supra-national and National Dimensions,
Ideologies and Literariness*

This article wants to address the question of relations between comparative literature (and cultural) studies and national literature (and cultural) studies whose function is (among others) constantly to restore the literary canon(s) formation. (According to the results of a short revision of one from the plentitude of European national literary canons, the cultural studies' view seems to be reasonably included in this question.)¹

The three types of literary canon, mentioned in the title of this article, i.e., the national, the supra-national, and the trans-national, refer to two words ("literature" and "nation") which in the context of a single historical culture activate an abundance of connotations and restore many different historical concepts; this "production" of meanings will be of great importance for the cultural spaces of Europe considered as a space where the concepts of nation and national state were invented (see Hobsbawm). Probably none of these different conceptualizations of literature and nation can avoid more or less transparent ideological factors being at work in their cultural spaces (even the most neutral comparative literature representation of a certain literary period or movement can be more or less clearly recognized as a representation of cultural imperialism, at least from the cultural studies' point of view, etc.). Therefore, the central

¹ According to M. Riffaterre (1995: 71), the canon means "cultural appearance of a text", the frame of "a certain type of worship" being at work in an appointed "social context".

question addressed in this article should refer to dynamic relations between the concepts of literature(s) and nation(s).

Contemporary literary theory can designate the identity of literature with the term "literariness": this concept of literature should be at work in the literary canon formations as their *differentia specifica* in cultural systems which generate different kinds of values. Briefly described, "to reflect on literariness" mean "the suspension of the demand for immediate intelligibility [i.e., fictionality], reflection on the implications of means of expression [i.e., semantic polyvalence], and attention to how the meaning is made [i.e., auto-referentiality of a literary text]" (Culler 1997: 41). In Pettersson's opinion, "literature in the modern western sense could be understood, approximately, as *presentational discourse produced with pretensions to being culturally important, and/or well formed, and/or conducive to aesthetic experience.*" (Pettersson 2006: 16)

On the other hand, literature as the art of words necessarily refers to a langue, or more precisely, to the "natural language of a certain culture", which, according to J. M. Lotman's description of semiosphere,² belongs to the group of "the most developed and structurally organized languages", i.e., those languages which reestablish the "centre of semiosphere". In Lotman's opinion, no language (not even a natural one) can be at work outside semiosphere; and no semiosphere can exist without "its" natural language, which plays the key role of a certain "organizing nucleus" (Lotman 2006: 180). In the course of European history, especially since the period of Romanticism in European cultural history, natural languages have been identified with national languages and their (literary) representations, comprised in the traditions which are associated with the foundations or origins of a single national community and at the same time as the actual (contemporary) centres of national culture, or cultural history.

² "Permanent restoration of the codes [...] synchronically occur in the whole space of semiosis." A certain language can function just because of its co-operation with the whole semiotic space, into which it has sunk. Therefore, a semiotic unit is not a single language; this is a whole semiotic space which belongs to a certain culture: this space is semiosphere as a result of culture, as well as a condition of its development and operation. (See Lotman 2006: 175)

Therefore, in the context of European cultural history literature, written or orally performed literature in a national language inevitably represents not only the art of literariness but also the inner dynamic of “its” semiotic space as a result and condition of a single national culture. In other words, in the context of European cultural history neither national nor supra-national literary histories can be even theoretically separated from the dynamic³ space of interactions that generate the single national cultural histories; on the contrary, literary histories and their canon formations operate in the semiosphere(s) which can be observed as a result of and at the same time as a condition of the (otherwise historically multifaceted) “European” culture(s).

In such conditions of cultural history, ranging from the concepts of national identity to the concepts of literary identity (cautiously named literariness), the answer to the question about the literary canon could take into account the principle of predominance of either the criterion of literariness or the criterion of national identity in a certain historical moment of a certain culture, in order to illustrate *pro and contra* arguments for the supra-national and the national types of the literary canon. The trans-national literary canon should tend to find a possibility of some balance between them, directed to the same way as the aspirations of one of the contemporary historiographical concepts or even sub-disciplines, i.e. “shared history”.

Comparative literary history has given the impression of being able to create and continuously re-create the supra-national literary canon by taking into account the aesthetic dimension of literature as the dominant criterion of literariness in literary texts. The idea of the supra-national literary canon refers to the possibility of transcending the differences of literature(s) produced in an abundance of single national languages and represented in the single national literary canons; however, the selection(s) of literary texts which should serve as representation of this aesthetic transcendency, reveal(s) an in-

³ This description tries to follow Lotman’s opinion: in each synchronic section of semiosphere each single language struggles with other languages. (See *ib.* 178)

teresting picture of “presence”: it reminds us of a family fresco in whose spatial frame many of the relatives, “wearing” somewhat different “clothes”, i.e., speaking partly unfamiliar language(s), are missing. The same principle of representation (as “exclusion”) which in the name of aesthetic value tends to transcend the different images of literature (in this case more obviously recognized in the frame of time)⁴ as a result of different historical poetics, generates of course the fresco(es) of the single national literature(s) where, on the other hand, the missing unfamiliar “relatives” with their unfamiliar linguistic clothes or voices are from abroad (see Juvan 2008).

The first case of the same principle of representation, being at work in forming the supra-national literary canon, can be observed through representations of the period of Romanticism from the aspect of comparative literature: this period seems to be of the greatest importance for the discussion of the supra-, trans- and –national literary canon (see note 4). The second case of the same principle of representation, which is at work in forming the national literary canon(s), can be observed through the historical cultural functions of literature which, through the Romantic heritage, can be considered

⁴ Formations of the national literary canons are associated mostly with the period of Romanticism which argues its identity as a historical one, i.e., through the concept of an irreversible time course characteristic of western history and intensively based on the selfconsciousness of modernity. Modernity which should generate the (western) New Age culture(s) as its central myth reflects/produces the difference (and at the same time recognizes identity) predominantly as a time-difference (historical, or more precisely *geistesgeschichtlich* difference) between “now” and “before”, namely between modern times and the Old Age (brothers Schlegel, also Mme de Staël); György Lukács (referring to F. Schlegel) associated this consciousness of irreversible time or the modern consciousness – of proceeding modernisation – with one’s very concrete perceptions of all-embracing (historical) change caused by the French Revolution and its effects on everyday life (see Lukacs 1978). At the same time Romanticism is considered as the “birth” period of one nation’s selfconsciousness, i.e., recognition or invention of national identity different from the others; mostly since J. G. Herder’s essays, one folk or national identity refers to one folk or national tradition, i.e., cultural characteristics developed through the time course or through history.

even as the “highest” expression of the linguistically based identity – according to the presupposition that language articulates imagination of one’s (or one linguistic community’s) reality. In this perspective, the aesthetic dimension of literature can also be considered as the modern mode of transcending the differences which of course appear in the historical course of *one* national literature. (Not to forget that the differences recognizable in this historical literary course are associated with the single historical poetics as well as with the single historical ideological re-interpretations of literary tradition or the literary canon).

This article tries to juxtapose some very concrete fragments of these two cases in order to confirm the importance of the concept of literariness in forming the literary canon (especially in transcending different (political) ideologies which are historically at work in the single cultural communities) and to be at the same time aware of the fact that even comparative literary history, which can tend to the supra-national literary canon, cannot ignore the concepts of nation in literary history.

Pro and contra: Case 1: “*pro* literariness”: the national literary canon between ideologies and literariness, or why at least the “supra-national” concept of literariness should not be ignored

An example which can serve as an argument for the predominance of the criterion of literariness (i.e., its aesthetic dimension) in literary canon formation is borrowed from the history of modern Slovene literature. During the second half of the 20th century (more precisely, during the period 1941–1990) the Slovene literary canon was obviously divided into three cultural applications or variants which functioned as cultural signs, representing two oppositional political ideologies (political Catholicism and communism) and their aesthetic opposition. The third application, i.e. the aesthetic variant, represented the literary canon as a selection based on the literariness of the literary texts which were accepted in the national literary canon. The three more or less parallel canon-formation variants co-produced, i.e., were generated by an intensive and unhidden discourse of the two political ideologies and by (at first merely hidden) attempts

of transcending them both in the case of (national) literature. These three applications of literature can be represented by three tendencies of interpretations discussing the lyric poetry of France Balantič (1921–43).

Briefly described, the cultural-historical conditions in which Balantič's poetry appears as probably the most significant literary sign were as follows: after 1945, i.e., after World War II, Slovene cultural politics in the Republic of Slovenia (as one of the federal republics of former Yugoslavia) was directed by the communist ideology,⁵ which programmatically stressed the cultural importance of writers and poets who directly – or indirectly – supported the partisan movement.

Regarded from the aspect of literary cultures, the literary canon represents “one of the central means of social cohesiveness; it is an institutionalized medium of preserving the traces of cultural memory” (Juvan 2006: 227). In fact, literature (together with its canon formations) in the Slovene cultural history has kept the most important role (consciously since the Romantic period). According to the historical conditions of a nation which was recognizing itself through feeling the deficiency of the final (namely political) confirmation of its emancipation, i.e., as a nation without its (national) state, the functions of this non-existent state should be projected onto the culture.⁶ Moreover, the most important cultural function (also substituting for the functions of a state) was ascribed to literature, considered as the highest expression of language as a basic generator of national identity.

⁵ In autumn 1944, Boris Zihelr who in the next decade and after directed Slovene cultural politics based on communist ideology, stressed the artistic currents which were considered as (“bourgeois”) ideological opposition (*Marksiistično-leninistična teorija umetnosti*, 1944). Among other things, impressionism and expressionism appeared on his list. (see Gabrič 1995: 27; see also Gabrič 2004).

⁶ This phenomenon (which in varieties of differing intensive degrees presumably could be recognized in many other European national communities) was described by literary historian D. Pirjevec and others under the name of the “Slovene cultural syndrome”.

For this reason, it is not surprising that during World War II (interpreted as the age of the Slovene national liberation movement and communist revolution)⁷ many of the Slovene partisan units were named after the Slovene literary classics, for example: Prešeren's, Cankar's, Gregorčič's (etc.) brigade. The cultural(-political) application of the national literary canon seemed to be intensified to the highest degree. This can be illustrated by the fate of Balantič's poetry in the national literary canon – the fate of poetry whose literariness has been extremely reduced for about fifty years while it was identified with its author, i.e., his ideological gesture: after publishing some poems in 1940, Balantič joined the Slovene anti-communist army and lost his life in 1943 as a member of the White Guard. How can the fate of Balantič's poetry illustrate the insufficiency of literariness, or even the aesthetic dimension as the central factor which should generate (the national) literary canon formations?

Balantič's literary opus appeared in "index librorum prohibitorum", made by the government (27.7. 1945).⁸ In 1950 Balantič was represented as a "betrayers of the nation",⁹ his poetry was designated by the terms "decadent" and "expressionist".¹⁰ Similar connotations suggested the pre-war term "mystical realism", which referred to the religious variant of literary expressionism. On the other hand, the poetic expression of modern religious re-questioning started to be programmatically appreciated in the ideological context of political

⁷ These two aspects of the partisan movement were intertwined by the Slovene Liberation Front which was founded an ideologically pluralistic organisation; however, in March 1943 its leadership was taken over by the communist party.

⁸ Public libraries should eliminate the literary texts of thirteen writers and poets from their book collections. Some of these thirteen writers emigrated to Argentina, some of them lost their lives on the "wrong side" of the political history. The texts of some other well known pre-war writers were not allowed to be published.

⁹ Ivan Bratko: "Nekaj misli h kulturnim rubrikam naših dnevnikov in tednikov", *Novi svet*, 1950 (see Pibernik 2003: 41).

¹⁰ In the left-oriented literary reviews, these terms suggested the socially dysfunctional kind of art since the last decade before World War II.

Catholicism: Balantič's lyric poetry¹¹ was posthumously published in 1944. The glorifying foreword designated Balantič as a White Guard in the service "of the homeland and God".¹² The importance of Balantič's lyric poetry for the Slovene national literary canon was continuously stressed by the Slovene political emigration¹³ after 1945, especially in Argentina where the Slovene community developed an impressive cultural activity, including publishing the texts¹⁴ of Slovene literary classics, the writers and poets who lost their lives on the anti-communist side of the war, and the contemporary writers who in 1945 and later emigrated from Slovenia/Yugoslavia.

Balantič's lyric poetry (among the literary texts of many other writers) therefore appears on the stage of the Slovene national literary canon as a transparent cultural sign: the ideologically argued reception of Balantič's poetry clearly represents the cultural function of the national literary canon in the Slovene linguistic (national) community, existing both within the territory of the Republic of Slovenia and outside it.

During World War II, especially between 1944 and 1945, and in some later decades, the Slovene national literary canon was obviously divided into two variants which reduced the *literariness*, i.e., the basic condition of any literary canon, to the minimum.

The cultural values of national literature in the context of Slovene political emigration refer to the Slovene national identity, the Roman Catholic religion, (mostly) anti-communist stands which can be (though not necessarily) associated with the ideology of political catholicism, based on the cultural struggle in Slovene history since

¹¹ Its title (*V ognju groze plapolam*) refers to Balantič's death in a fire caused by the partisan attack.

¹² Or: a "soldier" wearing the "blue helm of Poetry". The foreword was written by probably the most prominent Catholic literary critic and editor Dr. Tine Debeljak, who emigrated to Argentina at the end of World War II. (See Balantič 2003: XXIV)

¹³ Three poets (V. Kos, F. Papež and Z. Simčič) wrote essays on Balantič and his poetry.

¹⁴ Slovene bibliography in Argentina 1945–1987/90 includes literary and philosophical texts, journals etc. (see Pertot 1987 and 1991).

the end of the 19th century (see Pelikan 1995). In this ideological variant of the Slovene national literary canon, Balantič's poetry appears *in praesentia*. On the other hand, the cultural values of (national) literature which were at work in the Slovene national community inhabiting the territory of the Republic of Slovenia (as one of the federal Yugoslav republics) refer to the Slovene national cultural tradition (despite the fact that the concept of national identity actually represented an opposition to communist universalism), social engagement and the modern myth of progress, which were officially associated with the communist ideology based on co-operation with the Soviet Union and after 1948 on the principle of nonalignment. In this ideological variant of the Slovene national literary canon, Balantič's poetry appears *in absentia* (in which only the poet's condemned military "career" was stressed).¹⁵ Most of the Slovene literary classics were included in both variants of the national literary canon; classics born after 1900 and younger authors were included in one of these two ideologically motivated variants of the clearly split national literary canon.¹⁶ Both variants of the national literary canon were reproduced continuously by two educative and publishing "policies"; both of them were generated by two different ideologies (political Catholicism and communism) which undoubtedly tended to universalism. (However, in the Slovene case they paradoxically reduce even their universalist dimension in order to stress the value of national identity.) How could the (Slovene) national literary canon in these cultural-political conditions restore the criterion of its *differentia specifica*, which represents it as the *literary canon*?

¹⁵ The ideological transformation of (Balantič's) literature into a cultural sign was significantly described by the secretary (Franc Šetinc) of the Executive Committee of the Slovene Communist Party: "as soon as the poet declared for [...] collaborational political movement, his poetry, apolitical by itself, acquired a political dimension". (*Obramba*, October 1976. See Pibernik 2003: 46, 48).

¹⁶ Literary authors included in the variant of the national literary canon formed by political emigration are Z. Simčič, F. Balantič, I. Hribovšek, V. Kos, V. Truhlar, etc. Their texts are included in the contemporary Slovene literary canon.

The fact is that in the whole of Balantič's (preserved) literature there is not any thematic sign of any political ideology, not even political catholicism;¹⁷ it is far from any pragmatic literary engagement and thus from the possibility of any ideological reduction of its literariness. It undoubtedly articulates the Christian-based world view; however, the religious belief is thematized through the ambivalent, subjectively uncertain quest for metaphysical transcendence of (the Christian) God. This thematics, including "the aesthetics of ugliness" and the concept of modern "homo duplex", takes shape in the intertextual relations or literary discourse of modern lyric poetry from Charles Baudelaire to Georg Trakl, mostly referring to the tradition of so-called (Central-European) religious or Catholic Expressionism.¹⁸ This intertextuality is in the domain of *literary discourse*; the later reductions of its literariness, which was transferred to the domain of political ideological discourse, are signs of the pragmatic and secondary ascribed intertextual relations of Balantič's poetry. This *literary* intertextuality namely settles Balantič's lyric poetry in the national literary canon: shortly after World War II in the aesthetic variant of the national literary canon as the third variant of three parallel ones.

During the period of the most extreme circulation of ideological discourses, i.e., during World War II, including some years before and after the war, the third variant of the national literary canon of course was at work, referring to its pre-war tradition, which appreciated the aesthetic value of many brilliant and at the same time ideologically "useless" literary texts; however, this variant of the national literary canon obviously proceeded as a quiet voice to the fifties, when some first signs of it re-appeared. These signs could be recognised mostly in the light of annihilating attempts, i.e. in the discourse of the official cultural politics which also argued against every trace of "bourgeois" "intimism". One target of these attacks

¹⁷ None of Balantič's lines refer to his military activity in the White Guard (see Pibernik ib. 25).

¹⁸ This literary current also characterizes a significant part of Slovene literature before World War II; it refers to the former or contemporary currents of literary Decadence, Post-Romanticism and Symbolism from Maeterlinck's to Rilke's poetic works (J. Kos 2001: 340, 292, 296, 300).

was also the “intimistic” lyric poetry of Ada Škerl, the poetess who (according to oral tradition) had tried to call some readers’ attention to the (artistic) literary value of Balantič’s poetry in an essay published in 1951 in a paper copied and distributed “underground”,¹⁹ probably meant for a straitened circle of readers, i.e., at the utmost half-public status of discourse.²⁰ Balantič’s lyric collection²¹ actually appeared on the book market in Slovenia no earlier than 1984, when many literary authors, reviewers and editors, literary historians and other “actors” of (the national) literary system discussed the undoubtedly aesthetic value of Balantič’s literature in public discourse.²² Although postwar Slovene literature since about the sixties has not been necessarily identified with the ideological stamps and gestures of its authors any more (at least, not in the politically non-critical moments of those times), *literariness* as the predominant criterion of (the national) *literary* canon formation could not have been officially confirmed until the eighties when Balantič’s name as the clearest sign of this regained (relative) autonomy of literature appeared in literary-historiographically oriented publications. The third “application” of literature, i.e., the third (aesthetic) variant of the national literary canon, predominated over the two ideological applications. (For now?)

¹⁹ This paper should have been provided by a group of Ljubljana’s art-fanciers named *Osamela kočija* (Lonesome carriage). (See Pibernik 2003: 42, 39)

²⁰ This more or less quiet, i.e., “underground” “voice” of literary readers was followed by the next sign of the ultimate ignoring of ideological stamps in literature in the name of its aesthetic value: university professor Dr. Anton Slodnjak mentioned Balantič’s poetry in a monograph on the history of Slovene literature, published in Germany; in 1958, sanctions were imposed on him.

²¹ Entitled *Muževna steblika* (a little branch of tree or bush, full of spring sap, which can be used for making a simple flute).

²² The second convention of Slovene poets (1982) addressed the question “The Responsibility of Poetry?” which contributed to transcending ideological classifications of literature. Thus, the second, critical publication of Balantič’s poetry (*Zbrane pesmi* [Collected Poems]) was published in 1991. Etc.

To conclude this aspect of *pro and contra* arguments, the national cultural history as a possible factor of reducing literariness in the national literary canon formation(s) cannot give an assurance of the sufficient and absolutely decisive point of departure for any “transcending”, i.e., the supra-national literary canon formation while it is submitted perpetually to this or that historical (ideological, or any other kind of pragmatic) application of literature.

Pro and contra: Case 2: “pro literariness”, or against it? from the aspect of the supra-national canon

The aesthetic criterion of the supra-national literary canon also serves as a means of transcending ideological, i.e., pragmatic applications of literature. By this means, the (aesthetic) autonomy of literature was restored in many national European cultural contexts towards the conclusion of the “Age of Extremes”, as E. Hobsbawm denotes the period 1914–1991 (which is characterized by the phenomenon of totalitarian ideologies). In this aspect, the contemporary question about the supra-national literary canon somehow “uses anew” the aim of restoring the aesthetically considered *modern* totality as the transcendence of differences which are necessarily produced by different single national languages/cultures as the conditions/products of the single national literatures, i.e., the art of words.

The previous paragraphs described the Slovene case of ideological applications of literature in the “age of extremes” to illustrate the radical, i.e., extremely clear variant of the (political-) ideological application of literature. However, the “pure” aesthetic argument, considered as opposition against different supra-national political ideologies can easily be used as a way of fortifying national ideology: contemporary cultural studies and post-colonial theory (etc.) are re-questioning the ideological implications of the concepts of national literature, too, namely, the possible applications of literature to support radicalizing national ideology into nationalism(s).

The myth of a 'national tradition' is employed not only to legitimise a general idea of a social group ('a people') but also to construct a modern idea of a nation-state, in which all the instrumentalities of state power [...] are subsumed and legitimized as the 'natural' expression of a unified national history and culture. [...] The confusion of the idea of the nation with the practice and power of the nation-state makes [...nationalism] an extremely contentious site, on which ideas of self-determination and freedom, of identity and unity collide with ideas of suppression and force, of domination and exclusion. (Ashcroft 2002: 150–151)

As with any other forms of institutionalization, the institutionalized forms of national culture can adopt more or less the characteristics of ideological regimes, moving the literature in the language of a single national community to the service of the totalizing concept of nation. In other words, what was undoubtedly legitimized by the single nation's emancipation process, can probably be questioned since this process has been concluded (usually by establishing a national state which can provide conditions whereby literature is relieved of the duty of supporting this process). From this standpoint, the *art* of literature should re-establish the artistic autonomy in such pragmatic domains of "domination and exclusion".

It seems to be a fact that the literature of many of those literary authors whose status has proceeded from the ideologically argued (national) betrayers to the (national literature's) aesthetic heroes, could not be ascribed to the supra-national literary canon. The Slovene case of many of Balantič's poems, as well as of the majority of some other literary authors' work confirm this assumption: they certainly play an important role in the national literary system by being involved in the process of the national literature's self-reflection, i.e., reflection of the grounds, or principle(s) of the national literary canon formation(s); however, some of these literary works represent rather thematic and formal responses to the poetics from beyond the borders of one "nationally" centred semiosphere: they do not seem to be very autonomous creative answers or even great individual innovations which can co-produce the perpetual series of literary ruptures, or historical poetics, dynamically keeping literature alive as a (relatively) autonomous – transnationally com-

municating – “language”. In short, from the purely aesthetic aspect, which in these days seems to be a conservative one, single literary texts which are of special importance for one national literature (articulating national cultural history), could hardly be considered in a (relative) aesthetic autonomy: they do not seem to radiate enough innovation and at the same time self-sufficient artistic power which would enable them to cross (national cultural and chronological) frontiers. Does this mean that national literary canons should be subordinated to the supra-national literary canon, which should only be capable of being founded on the pure aesthetic value?

In this case, the initial question is about the repository of the texts to which the aesthetic selection or canon formation refers. Probably the best known image of the supra-national literary canon, i.e., Harold Bloom’s *Western Canon* (1994) clearly represents the problem with this. Critical remarks on Bloom’s favouring Anglo-Saxon literature/authors are well-known: just a quick look at Bloom’s list of 26 literary works/authors from Dante to modernists, which are suggested as forming the Western canon, reveals that many of the literary/linguistic areas from which Bloom makes his selection by way of aesthetic deduction are simply missing.

But let us look at the very basic principle of Bloom’s canon formation, i.e., the aesthetic principle. Can his “supra-national” literary canon, supposedly founded on this timeless principle, really avoid the historicity of literature, generating/being a product of culture(s)? In other words, can Bloom’s project absolutely transcend at least the New Historicism’s perspectives (as one of the other “pupils” of the culture-critically engaged “School of Resentment”) (Bloom 1994: 526)?

The first argument against his attempt is precisely the fact that so many literary/linguistic areas as a repository for Bloom’s canon formation are missing. Although Bloom declaratively takes into consideration the single linguistic/literary areas (implicitly also some national literary canons) which obviously represent the referential repository from which “their crucial figures” (see note 27) have been selected, Bloom’s image of these linguistic/literary areas does not extend across the frontiers of literatures written originally in the most widely-spoken “western” languages (Italian, English, French,

Spanish, Russian, German).²³ Even one New Historicist can agree that there is an implicitly reasonable argument for (Bloom's) referring to such a limited repository of selected literary works/authors – in the circulation of literary discourse, the literary texts written in the widely-spoken languages can certainly radiate their artistic power to the largest extent: meta-literary documentation, such as essays, authorial correspondence, diaries, etc., can prove this very fact. However, Bloom's image of the Western canon seems to imply that this (obviously presupposed) circulation²⁴ is unmistakably centred on the English-speaking areas while the lines of influence in the domain of the aesthetic autonomy of literature, which were decisively at work in the "other" Western linguistic areas (even of the widely-spoken languages like French, German or Russian), have simply been excluded (!); and just another short look at Western literary history confirms this simple fact with some of the most obvious observations (for example, A.S. Pushkin's creative answer to the Byronic hero and to the genre of romantic poem was of utmost importance for the literary creativity of the East-, Central-East and South-East European cultural areas in the Romantic period; C. Baudelaire's creative answer to E.T.A. Hoffmann's (thematic and structural) radicalisation of Romantic dualism was of the greatest importance for the literary expression/construction of modernity in most areas of continental Europe; not to mention the basic influence of F.M. Dostoevsky's psychological insights or his dialogical modernisation of the novel, as well as P. Verlaine and S. Mallarmé's extraordinarily influential Symbolist rupture to the literary discourse which changes the paradigm and prepares the conditions for different courses of literary modernisation on the continent, etc.) Although Bloom lists these and many other authors/literary works in the Appendix, they remain somewhat in the position of fellow passengers of the (Western) supra-national, aesthetically established literary canon. Therefore, not only Bloom's (variant of) the Western

²³ Some of the smaller linguistic communities are barely mentioned in the *Appendix D* ("Serbo-Croat", Czech, Polish, etc.).

²⁴ The term has been widely spread especially by the New Historicism.

canon, but also its aesthetic foundation, to which Bloom refers, appears rather questionable.

This questionable result maybe derives from the fact that Bloom does not explain very precisely what the aesthetic criterion as the ground of "his" canon should actually mean: "Aesthetic value is by definition engendered by an interaction between artists, an influencing that is always an interpretation." (Bloom 1994: 24) The sense of his definition seems to try to amalgamate the "pure" aesthetic dimension as somehow universally effective aesthetic experience in Kant's sense²⁵ with, on the other hand, the historical inventions in poetics, transcending both of them under the designation "the autonomy of the aesthetic" (10): although Bloom stands by the (timeless?) aesthetic principle, it is at least implicitly associated with historical changes (which can only confirm the timeless effect of the aesthetic object) – for this implied historicity, it does not really matter that in Bloom's voluntaristic belief this historical change is reduced and ascribed to the individual, i.e., the single artist. Namely, the question is how a single prominent literary author "meets" a prominent literary work of art to which he/she creatively responds in the course of the "anxiety of influence": a pure individual coincidence certainly should not be excluded from the range of conditions; however, nothing less than the impact of precursive literary values formed in the (historical and culturally supporting) tradition should be taken into account (Bloom for himself mentions the role of the educational, i.e., school programme). Bloom also argues his selection on the principle of the "strangeness, a mode of originality that either cannot be assimilated [such as *The Divine Comedy*], or that so assimilates us that we cease to see it as strange [such as Shakespeare's works, i.e., their "powers of assimilation and of contamination"]," "adding strangeness to beauty" (Bloom 1994: 3). This "strong literary originality" (25), "power and authority" (36) certainly are a cogent argument for Bloom's project of the (Western) supra-

²⁵ I.e., as a pleasure without any interest which cannot be grounded on any other (aesthetic or reasonable) judgement and – in the context of this writing – certainly not on any pragmatic ideological application of the artistic "object".

national literary canon, which could easily be subscribed to by many (more, or even less educated or experienced) readers – even from the widely-accepted contemporary methodological aspect of the literary system which is generated by its relative autonomy as a product of a consensual aesthetic autonomy, too, Bloom's arguing the aesthetic autonomy gives an assurance of freedom to an individual reader,²⁶ who through the aesthetic experience can (at least relatively) cross the momentary borders of his/her historical culture and its socially pragmatic applications of art ("the aesthetic is, in my view, an individual rather than a societal concern") (Ib. 16). However, this – romantic – stand cannot solve the above-mentioned problem with the literary repository: even if one accepts Bloom's principle of taking into account just the most Western-referential authors, who have motivated the most diverse "misreadings", or the "anxiety of influence" in the history of Western literature, one would wonder why Baudelaire with his powerful figurative language (or at least Mallarmé, especially in the frames of the first possibility) did not deserve a position among the selected 26 authors, and, on the other hand, why not Dostoevsky²⁷ (in the frames of the second possibility): among some others declared as "the greatest", their works seem persistently to evoke the aesthetic experience in different cultural historical conditions, i.e., across the historical changes of reception – and therefore give the impression of their (Western-)universal aesthetic value.

²⁶ "[...] a solitude only the two could share" (Wallace Stevens. See: Bloom 1994: 36).

²⁷ Dostoevsky is mentioned many times. However, in Bloom's opinion Dostoevsky obviously does not represent "the crucial figure" of the Russian national literary canon ("I have tried to represent national canons by their crucial figures") (Bloom 1994: 2). This standpoint (explained in the *Pre-face*) is in contrast to the prevailing principle of "the anxiety of influence" which should take into account the Western literature as a whole.

“*Pro and contra*: Case 3: “*contra* literariness” from the cultural aspect of ignoring the aesthetically grounded supra-national literary canon, or does this viewpoint neutralize the dominance of some cultures/literatures in representing international interactions?”

To address this question, a contemporary representation of a certain literary/cultural historical period, i.e., the period of Romanticism, can serve as an interesting example. As was said before, this period forms conditions for the so-called “birth of the nation”, supported/generated by literatures written in languages of the nationally self-identified communities and is in this aspect also of special historical importance for the (European) national literary canon formations. The example entitled *Romanticism* was written in 2005 as an “Oxford Guide” (edited by N. Roe).

The fact is that this “guide” through the Romantic period (slightly centred on the English-speaking areas) carefully presents an array of dominant themes of the period in the contemporary aspect of considering literature as an incessant factor of culture, i.e., being at work in a circulation of discourses and dynamic interactions between different (influential) phenomena. The programmatic complexity of this access to literature/culture is clearly represented under the titles: *Romantic orientations* (which include the historical context, the literary background, sensibility, classical inheritances, science, philosophy and religion, print culture, visual arts and music in different cultural spaces from Europe to the Americas), contemporary *Reading Romanticism* (which takes into account critical aspects and additions/corrections from the domains of New Historicism, feminism, ecocriticism, psychoanalysis, Post-Colonialism, and formalisms), *Romantic forms* (which address the questions of romantic popularisation, innovation, or (pre)conceptualisation of lyric, epic, drama, the novel, fragment, essay, biography, letter and diary, travel writing) and *Romantic afterlives* (which include the 20th century’s applications of romantic inventions for considering poetry and the author, etc., romantic sources for the film, romantic foundations of contemporary environmentalism, etc.) From the (historical-) cultural point of view, there is just one problem with the practical application of this access to complexity – the same one which appeared in the

completely different methodological aspect of Bloom's arguing the aesthetic principle. In contemporary Oxford's decentralizations/ dis-seminations of artistic canons performed by co-positioning literary and non-literary texts in circulative and dispersed interactions of very different kinds (or aspects), many brilliant and influential literary texts, literary innovative authors, and even some important movements, like national movements which decisively characterize the Romantic period in many historical cultural contexts – are either hardly mentioned²⁸ or are simply omitted.²⁹

However, in contrast to Bloom, the writers of this great monograph at least seem to be aware of (the slightly English-centred) representation of Romanticism: "If we look at it [i.e., the Romantic age] in conjunction with the British scene, it is apparent that some characteristics are shared by some 'national' Romanticisms and other traits by others, while it would be very difficult to name a number of features shared by all. The picture that emerges is maybe best summed up by the [Wittgenstein's] concept of 'family likeness' ..." (Bode 2005: 134–35). Moreover, the authors seem to be aware of the problems with literary/cultural diversity which (of course within the universalisation, *geistesgeschichte* considered as the modern, i.e., romantic phase) constructs its theoretical foundations precisely with the factor of romantic individualism: "[...] even the apparent contradictions and seeming incompatibilities within European Romanticism have common roots in that they form diverging responses to the same set of cultural changes: the fascination of the past [...] as well as dreams of a utopia to come, the lure of the exotic as well as the cult of domesticity and the familiar, revolutionary cosmopoli-

²⁸ For example, the Italian *Risorgimento* (indicated just by the name of its leader Garibaldi, in a short description of Byron's impact on liberation movements), the Polish patriotism of Mickiewicz and the Catholicism of Słowacki, etc.

²⁹ There is no sign of the presence of (national) literatures (not to mention the ethnic communities) in the following languages: Czech, Slovak, Slovene, Croatian and Serbian, Estonian, Lithuanian, Latvian, Ukrainian (etc., including the majority of the cultural spaces of Eastern Europe, with the exception of three Polish authors) and their collaboration in creating the literature/cultural history of Romanticism.

tanism as well as rampant nationalism, active political partisanship as well as cautious withdrawal from the political sphere – they all form possible answers to a unique historical situation in which, it seems, nothing can be taken for granted any more...” “In that sense, Romanticism is an ongoing, undeniably European project, whose very diversity is, paradoxical as it may sound, the hallmark of its unity”³⁰ (Bode 2005: 135).

One can agree that the diapason of this romantic diversity could hardly be precisely represented by even the most ambitiously conceptualized (European) supra-national literary/cultural history. However, despite this diversity, the Oxford selection seems to be clearly too exclusive. The majority of (national) literatures generating the so-called “smaller” nations (or the less internationally influential national, ethnical and cultural communities of the period) have remained either in the cursorily glanced “periphery” of this image of Romanticism or – in the worst case – are simply “absent” (together with most of the referential literary works and authors of their national canons as if nothing happened in so many parts of the European literary/ cultural map). If there could be any explanation for such “vague places” in the romantic texture, one could agree that Bloom’s aesthetic principle, however subjective it is, represents a more cogent argument than culturally oriented access to the historical period. However, from the aspect of these “blanks”, the results tend to be similar: even in the multifaceted textualisation of Romanticism, the Oxford monograph pays attention to the most influential (national) literatures of the period, i.e., those literatures which in the romantic circulation of inspirational literary and non-literary texts gained a privileged position based (at least partially) on their widely-spoken languages (like English, German, French, Russian), i.e., the linguistic “support”.

³⁰ This viewpoint cautiously follows Friedrich Schlegel’s opinion: the identity of the romantic *poetry* is defined by the fact that it has no identity (*Über das Studium der griechischen Poesie*, 1794).

Comparable problems³¹ appear in the literary historiographical image of Romanticism, published by ICLA/AILC (!) in the collection *Comparative History of Literatures in European Languages*.

There is of course a differential factor of impact which prevents us from mechanically equalizing the circulative impact, or role of literatures of long traditions, with literatures which started to develop their (relative) aesthetic autonomy, i.e., *differentia specifica* of literary discourse no earlier than after the Romantic period. However, this fact cannot mechanically mean that literatures of this “smaller” or developing kind did not produce any aesthetically top-level literary works of art, or individual creative “answers” to the romantic challenge of dynamic relations between national-centred and transnational-crossbordered dominants of semiosphere(s). Even from the “pure” cultural aspect, the single (“small”) national Romanticisms fully created some central preoccupations of the Romantic period precisely in the course of emancipation and therefore should not be ignored: romantic representations of either personal or national individualism were spontaneously articulated by the cult of poetry /literature according to its unique ability to speak from the interactive position between the individual and the community, i.e., between linguistic/literary/cultural common memory and the individual creative *ré-emploi* of it in a transcendent work of art. Furthermore, even from the “pure” aesthetic aspect, such literary works of art which sometimes (also explicitly) refer to the national self-awareness, do not necessarily reduce their artistic dimensions to the bare (national) ideological application of literature: this could hardly be ascribed to Mickiewicz’s *Pan Tadeusz*, some of Leopardi’s *Canti*,³²

³¹ T. Virk’s review of some of the issues on Romanticism “demonstrates that the international comparatists heading the CHLEL project are still (ideologically) burdened by western-centrism” (Virk 2009: 22).

³² G. Leopardi is mentioned twice. Romantic literature in Italian is represented in a range comparable to the representation of literature(s) in French. Literature(s) in German is stressed much more (Fichte is mentioned twice, as is E. T. A. Hoffmann; Novalis/F. von Hardenberg four times, the Jena circle is described more precisely, as well as the work of I. Kant and the Schlegel brothers) and in French. Russian A.S. Pushkin is mentioned twice, M. J. Lermontov once.

Prešeren's *A wreath of Sonnets*, Mažuranič's *The Death of Smail Aga Čengić*, etc. On the contrary, these romantic literary works of art represent a literary artistic "application" of the promoted idea of nation.

To conclude, different romantic literary currents, ideas and concepts which were circulating in their (more or less creative) inter-textual exchange, travelled across very different literary and cultural traditions of the European area. Single concepts (like *romantic novel* or *romantic poem*), ideas (like *nation*) and currents (like *gothic*) were commonly accepted/developed and at the same time creatively modified in different ways by the individual artists speaking from these different traditions: following F. Schlegel (as this *Oxford Guide* in principle somehow does), the European romantic literary image is extremely complex and multifaceted. According to the Schlegelian fact that romantic theory by itself realizes these "characteristics" of the period, the "vague places" in the romantic literary/cultural European map made by the Oxford contemporary view on Romanticism should not grow to such an extent; otherwise the image of Romanticism seems to become just another historical falsification. And certainly it cannot serve as a reliable foundation for comparing the national literary canons in order to draw up the trans-national literary canon.

However, the principle of dispersion by itself can be of assistance in creating the trans-national (European) literary canon.

Conclusion, or why the national literary canon should not be completely ignored

In Lotman's opinion, "[...] the model of semiotic structure of the European Romanticism could be constructed by an approximate chronological limitation. But one could hardly find homogeneity even in such a completely artificial spaciousness, while different degrees of iconicity create the situation of just conditional adequacy" (Lotman 2006: 177). Romanticism occupies just a certain domain of semiosphere, where different traditional structures co-exist too. And besides, no single stage of this progress is secure from attacks by

texts that come from outside, from the cultures which were previously placed behind the semiospheric horizon. These invasions of texts and cultural scopes chaotically transform the inner settlement of the 'image of world', organized by a certain culture. (See Lotman 2006: 178)

An image of (European) Romanticism, considered in this way, can be extended to an image of the (European) literary past forming the trans-national literary canon as a project which is characterized by a conceptual shift from the "infinite project" – as G. Vattimo denoted Modernity – to a (more) post-modern "dispersive project" – dispersive in the sense of de-centralization, i.e., taking into account the concrete literary/linguistic/cultural diversity and at the same time the complexity of the literary past. The only centre or dominant of such a project should be literature, characterized by its discursive *differentia specifica*, i.e., literariness.

According to the obvious fact that already in contemporary literary historiographical practice (where one could hardly imagine the (European) supra-national literary canon formation), the majority of literary texts and authors considered as significant in the creation of literary tradition come from literary/linguistic/ cultural communities of widely-spoken (national) languages. For this reason, it seems indispensable to take into account the single national literary canons for the trans-national literary canon formation. If a nation is defined (less rigidly than in the above quotation from post-colonial theory) as "a named population sharing an historic territory, common myths and historical memories, a mass public culture, a common economy and common legal rights and duties for its members" (see Smith 1995), the trans-national literary community should share awareness of the complexity of "its" literary past. The starting-point for this could hardly be the principle of so called common history, which chronologically records past events which are considered as of special importance for the community: in the case of trans-national literary history and its canon formation the dates/events of special importance (such as publishing single literary texts and literary works of art and their translations, or publishing single influential meta-literary texts and their translations, or the appearance of documented reception of phenomena which collaborate in the further

creation of literature(s), etc. – research into which is a usual task of comparative literature) are too dispersed. Therefore, the possible “shared” literary history as a ground for trans-national literary canon formation cannot strictly follow the direction of the so-called shared history in looking for similarities and differences in the ambiguous imaging of a certain event or a certain course of events, important for at least two historical subjects which consider each other as “the other”. However, the possible shared literary history and its trans-national literary canon formation’s (dynamic) result can look for similarities and differences between single literary communities’ ambiguous or multifaceted imaging of a certain theme, genre, a historically characteristic complex of figurative semantic paradigms, i.e., imagery, ideas and concepts, which could be recognized as shared in considering literature. Therefore, the starting-point for the trans-national literary canon formation, founded on these shared *ambiguities*, should take into account every single national literary canon which collaborates in creating this shared literary past. The trans-national literary canon at least re-employs the effect of the national one: “While the same texts repeatedly appear in new contexts, [...] the literary canon enables us to disperse meanings, ideas, and values across the narrower historical contexts of their production.” (Juvan 2006: 277)

Does this oppose the aesthetic principle as a means of (relatively) transcending the synchronic canon variants, or the ideological applications of literature which were illustrated by the Slovene case? Does this oppose the aesthetic principle as a foundation of the trans-national literary canon? – At least, the obvious cultural differences which intensify difficulties in the aesthetic experience of the literary “the other” are implied – and, moreover, aesthetically creative in themselves – in a literary work of art.³³

³³ “Literature is [...] the only discourse which is by its very ‘essence’ paradigmatically open for the otherness. While – as fiction – it does not have any real reference,” by its special nature, i.e., literariness (suggested through different accesses, such as Aristotle’s concept of *catharsis*, Ingarden’s concept of *quasi-reality*, Iser’s concept of *leere Stellen*, Adorno’s considering literature), it also does not transform the relation with “the cultural other” into a unanimous thesis. (See Virk 2007: 132, 131)

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France – Etats-Unis:

Promotions nationales détournées

à l'heure du déclin des histoires nationales.

French Theory et le canon littéraire

1. Culture française, culture américaine à l'heure du global

Quand on parle de littérature française et de littérature américaine, de culture littéraire française et américaine, il est évident que de tels “brands” n’ont pas besoin d’être soumis à la logique d’une narration de la littérature nationale ayant comme but la constitution d’un canon littéraire national – et plus loin, dans les limites des stratégies de promotion culturelles à l’étranger, d’un “canon surnational”. La narration culturelle française et celle américaine sont, tout au long de la modernité qui commence, pour l’une et pour l’autre, à la fin du XVIIIe siècle, tellement connues et exercent, de par leurs valeurs fondatrices, une telle influence dans la constitution d’autres histoires nationales au point que leurs histoires littéraires ne sauraient, comme dans le cas d’une culture mineure comme la culture roumaine, avoir le rôle de renforcer une identité problématique. Bref, la politique du canon littéraire est, aux Etats-Unis et aujourd’hui en France, un combat idéologique à visée occidentale, voire mondiale: un combat pour la prééminence d’un set de valeurs contre un autre (local *versus* universel par exemple). Si pour les Américains la littérature est tout d’abord l’histoire d’une émancipation ethnique, morale et politique, pour les Français la littérature désigne une émancipation d’une autre nature: la constitution du sujet autarcique et de la communauté au nom de l’humain universel et universalisant; mais aussi, on verra plus tard, une justification: la littérature française est appelée à

rendre compte de la violence de tout mouvement d'émancipation, et cette tâche a depuis toujours été inépuisable.

Or, de cet échec – ou bien de ces victoires vite périmées –, il s'agit de faire un spectacle ou, sinon, de faire avancer la pensée, à l'aide d'autres arguments que ceux de l'émancipation. Le canon de la spécificité aux Etats-Unis et la littérature du soupçon en France essaient, vers la fin du XXe siècle, de s'imposer et d'imposer leurs valeurs sur le marché littéraire mondial. Or, le succès de celle-là et l'assombrissement de celle-ci font que l'affirmation littéraire du spécifique culturel est en passe de devenir universel, alors que la promotion d'une littérature critique et des valeurs universelles (jugées telles par l'homme occidental) est en train de devenir une spécificité, "l'exception française". A l'heure de la globalisation, il serait trop naïf de rédiger une nouvelle histoire de la littérature, en France et aux Etats-Unis, car c'est la vérité narrative elle-même qui est contestée par les deux cultures en question: l'*ère du soupçon* (Nathalie Sarraute 1956) et le *new historicism* (Stephen Greenblatt 1980) en sont deux preuves. Garder sa place sur le devant du marché globalisé ne peut plus être un problème que la rédaction d'une histoire de la littérature nationale résoudrait. Les tactiques de survie supposent des astuces. Du côté des Américains, l'astuce est d'envisager et pratiquer *une politique de la culture* apte à prendre la forme de la *politique du texte*. Ce geste est déjà trop bien connu dans le monde anglo-saxon pour qu'il faille insister ici, à l'endroit des considérations générales. Pour les Français, l'astuce a été de procéder à un doute hyperbolique de tout ce qui fait partie de la littérature – et de l'acte de la parole du doute également –, pour mettre en évidence les failles, les interstices, les manques et les ratages des textes, tous preuves, en creux, d'une rationalité sous-jacente à dévoiler. Mais chacun de ces gestes, effectué en hôte, a été mal compris du côté de l'autre. Il y a donc une *French Theory* (Sylvère Lotringer, Sande Cohen 2001 et François Cusset 2003) et, depuis peu, une sorte de théorie – à laquelle aucune étiquette ne convient pas encore en tout – qui se pratique désormais des deux côtés de l'Atlantique et qui n'est pas étrangère à la littérature.

Tout d'abord, ce sont les Français qui sont allés faire de la "déconstruction" aux Etats-Unis, et ils n'ont réussi qu'à y renforcer

le courant relativiste américain, celui pour lequel le contexte et le spécifique l'emportent sur l'en soi de la loi et des valeurs. Une sorte de culture de la contestation (et explicitement du capitalisme) s'est constituée sur les restes des collisions entre les penseurs et écrivains "du soupçon" français et des théoriciens, sociologues et littéraires américains, décidément politique en anglais et beaucoup plus "pratique", c'est-à-dire "scripturaire", en français. D'autre part, la politique de la culture à l'américaine commence à passer, depuis une dizaine d'années, en France, où, à côté de la littérature et de la philosophie, ce sont le film, la musique, les médias et tout ce qui participe au circuit du capital qui s'y rejoignent pour constituer l'objet de pratiques de pensée (de "théories") réservées jusqu'alors, à quelques exceptions près (Edgar Morin et Roland Barthes dans les années 1950, avec *Le Cinéma ou l'homme imaginaire* et *Mythologies*, ou bien Jean Baudrillard et Michel de Certeau, dans les années 1970, avec *La Société de consommation* et *l'Invention du quotidien*), à la culture savante ou noble. Mais cette importation d'objets d'étude de l'espace américain ne développe aucunement en France une pensée sociale et politique sur l'idée du bien commun – autrement dit: une réflexion morale –, mais tend à donner des raisons supplémentaires à passer le réel au crible de la réflexivité pour y découvrir de nouvelles expériences poétiques: telle la pratique du tube qu'étudie Peter Széndy dans un livre récent (Széndy 2008), un essai dont l'auteur n'a aucune intention de tirer une morale bonne pour tous de l'alliance du répétitif et de l'unique dans le tube et de formuler aucune dénonciation du capitalisme émotionnel qui exploite le tube à son intérêt, mais de montrer le fonctionnement d'une poétique à laquelle personne ne s'intéressait et, par là, à suggérer que n'importe quel fait, une fois pensé, devient une pensée, singulière au moins au début, et soutire, par le travail marginal de la réflexion, des pans du réel à la mainmise du capital. Ainsi se fait-il que ce soit l'emprise du détail qui caractérise la théorie culturelle française, et l'histoire culturelle où l'histoire littéraire puise "des exigences méthodologiques et épistémologiques" (Vaillant 2010: 5), et le fameux *close reading* de l'école américaine de Yale n'en est que l'illustration de proue.

1.1. Politique du canon en France et aux Etats-Unis

Pour le cas de la littérature française prise à part, l'idée du canon se confond avec l'idée de la querelle des Anciens et des Modernes, commencée longtemps avant ce qu'on appelle aujourd'hui "modernité littéraire" ou "modernisme". Quand Barthes écrit *Sur Racine* (Barthes 1963), il est évident qu'il ne conteste pas la présence du nom de Racine dans l'histoire de la littérature française, mais une méthode de lecture et de pratique des textes littéraires (qui est, soit dit au passage, la méthode de l'histoire littéraire proprement-dite, qu'il entend boycotter puisqu'il la juge trop liée à l'être bourgeois). Par ailleurs, il est tout aussi vrai que se dresse, tout au long du XXe siècle, une liste "canonique" d'auteurs subversifs, à commencer par le marquis D.A.F. de Sade, dont l'oeuvre traverse justement la Révolution, et jusqu'à Pierre Guyotat ou encore Mehdi Belhaj Kacem¹, enfants, eux, de l'autre Révolution, celle de 1968. Mais cette liste n'est jamais devenue un "anti-canon" qui aurait eu tendance à remplacer celui en place, ne serait-ce parce qu'en France moderne et antimoderne, tout comme "canon" et "anti-canon" vivent en symbiose. Le canon de la littérature française moderne ne fait que continuer un "canon" incontestable de la littérature française. Aujourd'hui, il y a consensus autour des noms de tous les écrivains français subversifs ou expressément excentriques, d'Antonin Artaud à Bernard-Marie Koltès, puisque le critère d'évaluation ne pose pas de problème, étant le même: celui esthétique.

Pour le cas de la littérature américaine, le débat du canon est brièvement expliqué par une professeure de littérature française qui enseigne aux Etats-Unis:

Le débat sur le canon littéraire (...) opposa les partisans d'un programme traditionnel, tourné vers le passé et les adeptes d'un canon révisé et plus contemporain (et) permet de mettre en avant les

¹ Qui est, mis à part romancier, débutant à l'âge de 21 ans avec le roman *Cancer* (Tristram, 2004), essayiste auteurs de quelques livres culte: *Esthétique du chaos* en 2000 (Tristram) et *Pop philosophies*, entretien avec Philippe Nassif, Denoel, 2004.

deux conceptions antagonistes de la littérature qui animent l'université américaine depuis le début des années 1980. (Loucif 2004:451)

Les enjeux de cette bataille canonique sont aussi bien historiques – et tiennent au rapport entre universalisme et particularisme au sein d'une société qui fonctionne sur la base de principes universels au niveau de la primauté de l'individu, tout en étant très hétéroclite, "multiculturelle" – que économiques, car l'existence de deux idées de canon et de la tension que cette coexistence engendre fournissent plusieurs choix aux universités et offrent dans le même temps une variété de produits culturels sur le marché de l'enseignement universitaire dans le domaine des lettres et des sciences humaines.

2. La "theory". Une poétique et une thématique

La collision entre une "theory" française, issue du mélange entre la poétique (la discipline qu'impose Paul Valéry au début des années 1930), la phénoménologie post-husserlienne (reprise et critiquée par l'existentialisme à partir de la même époque) et la dialectique philosophique et psychanalytique (avec l'influence d'Alexandre Kojève toujours dans les années 1930) et le discours de la philosophie pragmatique et de la pensée politique aux Etats-Unis commence au cours des années 1970, bat son plein dans les années 1980 et 1990 et, en voie de dissolution déjà au début des années 2000, fait percer ses premiers fruits un peu plus tard: ainsi se constitue un objet culturel encore composite, où des pratiques théoriques issues de la pensée française depuis les années 1960 notamment (que des intellectuels américains commencent à apprendre eux-aussi) s'appliquent à des produits artistiques issus de l'industrie multiculturelle américaine (que la culture pop française, multiculturelle *as well*, sait déjà produire elle-aussi). Bref, et en simplifiant les choses: un savoir-faire issu tout d'abord de la culture française de la rhétorique se jette de nos jours sur des objets inventés et promus par la culture pragmatique et populaire américaine. Ainsi, la promotion de la littérature française aux Etats-Unis passe-t-elle par ce que la culture américaine

a pu comprendre à la technique discursive des intellectuels français qui ont commencé à parler, enseigner et publier aux Etats-Unis: une certaine rhétorique heuristique, dans les meilleurs des cas, mais au moins un certain nombre de valeurs gravitant autour de l'émancipation. En retour, c'est l'objet de cette théorie acclimatée en Amérique, c'est-à-dire les produits de l'industrie culturelle américaine à la recherche de nouveaux segments de public, qui viennent remplacer, sur le territoire français cette fois-ci, la place prééminente de l'écrit et de la culture d'élite: c'est ce dont témoignent les trois volumes parus aux éditions Léo Scheer sous le nom de *Fresh Théorie*², qui rassemblent philosophes, artistes, écrivains, spécialistes en sciences humaines de l'espace européen et américain (quoique surtout des Français) dans le but d'enrichir l'héritage de la *French Theory*. La littérature française, moderne ou contemporaine, garde ainsi toutes les chances de rester sur le marché culturel à condition d'acquiescer au compagnonnage des produits culturels industrialisés que les Etats-Unis ont tout l'intérêt à diffuser à leur tour sur le marché mondial, surtout depuis que "America leaped far beyond European thought from the moment we invented Hollywood" (Paglia 1991)³. Elle sera donc vivante tant qu'elle demeurera l'objet de nouvelles techniques de pensées – de théories.

La dé-sorbonnisation (lisez: dé-historicisme) de la littérature française passe aujourd'hui par la *Fresh Theory* – par une génération de philosophes français qui redécouvre la tradition métaphysique et positiviste européenne tout en connaissant à fond la politique culturelle américaine. Ce à quoi on est en droit de s'attendre en

² Parus entre 2005 et 2007, en trois volumes, dont chacun possède une orientation thématique. Le premier se revendique expressément de la *French Theory* et n'annonce pas les deux suivants; le second s'appelle "Black Album" et entend recenser le versant noir de la *French Theory*, alors que le dernier s'appelle "Manifestations" et penche plutôt du côté de la théorie et critique artistique.

³ C'est un pamphlet historique, écrit dans une perspective ultra-conservatoire, contre l'influence de la *French Theory* sur l'université américaine, auquel nous reviendrons. Il fait évidemment pendant au livre de Allan Bloom, *The Closing of the American Mind*, Simon & Schuster, 1987 (en français: *L'Ame désarmée*, Paris: Julliard, 1987).

retour c'est voir la littérature appariée non seulement à la philosophie d'une manière non positiviste, que par conséquent les années du structuralisme triomphant ont fait oublier, au cinéma, mais au domaine plus large de l'urbain et au pop art qui, lui, vient d'outre Atlantique.

2.1. Les défis de la French Theory: le thème de l'impossible

Quelque illisibles que fût le discours des intellectuels français lors de leurs descentes américaines, quelque politiquement engagés qu'eussent été leurs propos avant et après mai 1968, n'y sera compris que ce que le marché américain aura pu en assumer, c'est-à-dire ce qu'ils y pourront reconnaître. En revanche, y sera ajouté tout ce que les oreilles américaines croyaient entendre de plus, qu'il s'agisse d'un engagement politique explicite et net, tel qu'on pourrait en retrouver chez Sartre et Beauvoir, ou bien de références littéraire plus facilement domptables par rapport à celles des penseurs français qui se produisaient lors des colloques aux Etats-Unis: des références qui ou bien mettent en relation directe littérature et politique ou bien, ce qui aboutit au même, articulent culture de masse et culture théorique. *La French theory* – bannière qui englobe, il est vrai, plusieurs "théories" au sens d'orientations thématiques et objectifs poursuivis – ne peut donc être entendue que dans le contexte des échanges entre une certaine culture française et une certaine culture américaine, à partir des années 1960 et de la direction France vers Etats-Unis, après le fameux colloque de l'Université Johns Hopkins de 1966⁴,

⁴ Ce titre apparaît tel quel dans Vincent Descombes 1984: 419. Les travaux de ce premier colloque de 1966 paraissent quatre ans plus tard sous la direction de Richard Macksey et Eugenio Donato, Baltimore, JH University Press, 1970. L'expression "Sciences of Man" est forcée en anglais, comme le souligne d'ailleurs Vincent Descombes dans son texte introductif de la revue *Critique*: "cette dernière expression est inusitée aux Etats-Unis", puisque les Américains distinguent entre sciences naturelles et humanités qui, elles, présupposent l'étude de documents historiques. (Descombes 1984: 420) Elle est tellement forcée que Sylvère Lotringer la remplace, par mégarde, avec "Human Sciences" lorsqu'il fait mention du colloque de

qui compta parmi les invités français Claude Lévi-Strauss, Roland Barthes, Jacques Lacan, Jacques Derrida, Lucien Goldmann, Jean Hyppolite, Tzvetan Todorov, en passant puis par les rencontres qui se multiplient lors de la décennie suivante, où Michel Foucault et Jean-François Lyotard deviennent eux-aussi les noms incontournables de la *French Theory*. Les plus prestigieux de ces intellectuels ont adressé à leurs hôtes un défi à plusieurs niveaux: rhétorique, tout d'abord, et puis énonciatif. Le défi rhétorique demeure peut-être essentiel et il se reproduit au niveau de la compréhension (*meaning*), au niveau du contenu social et politique (les deux attributs se résument dans le "culturel") et détermine durablement la réception de la *French Theory* aux Etats-Unis. Parce que, avant de subir la critique de la gauche marxiste et de la gauche social-démocrate, avant d'être bannie comme fascisante ou mise en demeure pour arrêter l'expression de l'Autre au nom d'un discours théorique lourd, la *French Theory* désigne un langage, ou si on veut bien une écriture, pour ceux qui sont ses lecteurs.

Jacques Derrida participe au volume *French Theory in America* (Lotringer, S., Cohen, S. 2001) avec un texte d'une vingtaine de pages intitulé "Deconstructions: The Im-possible" (Derrida 2001: 13-32). Il s'emploie à y démontrer, tout en conjurant la rhétorique de la démonstration, que la déconstruction n'est pas une théorie dans l'acception commune du terme – telle que les intellectuels américains étaient enclins à la comprendre, c'est-à-dire un set normatif, compact, à appliquer dans les domaines les plus divers:

Deconstruction in the singular does not exist and has never presented itself as such in the present, and the plural signifies first and foremost this: the open set of effects that one can, here or there, in the world and in America, associate with, invest in, love or hate to death under this name. The impossible is already this: identifying

Johns Hopkins de 1966 dans son livre sur la *French Theory in America* (Lotringer, Cohen 2001:140). Un autre fait est significatif: "Sciences of Man" est ici un syntagme sexiste, et il n'est pas alors étonnant que, de la part d'une militante comme Camille Paglia, la *French Theory* soit accusée aussi de machisme.

in the singular something that may present itself, that may be accessible as deconstruction. (Derrida 2001:15)

C'est l'image, si l'on veut, d'un soleil à rayons qui se trouve battue en brèche par Jacques Derrida. La déconstruction n'est pas ceci. Ainsi l'impossible rentre-t-il, chez Derrida, dans une dialectique: la déconstruction n'existe pas au singulier, mais au pluriel, les déconstructions sont tous des effets rattachables mais irréductibles à la déconstruction, car celle-ci n'existe pas; elle n'est qu'un signifiant, si l'on veut, qui n'a d'existence que déclinée. La déconstruction, au singulier, est devenue "pratique", c'est-à-dire une appellation com-mode qui fut transformée en marchandise. Or, ce que les déconstructions font, enchaîne-t-il, c'est inventer. Inventer ne veut pas dire découvrir quelque chose de possible, comme l'actualisation d'une virtualité, une explicitation, mais rendre possible l'impossible.

It would thus be necessary to say that the only possible invention would be the invention of the impossible. But the invention of the impossible is impossible, objects another. Indeed. But it is the only thing possible, it is the only possibility. (Derrida 2001:24)

Pour pleinement profiter de cette démonstration, je ne compte pas seulement sur la perspicacité du lecteur qui aura compris comment, par le langage, on peut arriver très vite à la limite de ce qui peut se dire, et que cette limite n'est pas observable qu'au cours de la pratique du langage. *Mutatis mutandis*, cette plongée liminaire peut être comparée à la sortie de l'être humain sur la touche du monde naturel, dans l'espace extraterrestre, par exemple, comme dans un très beau roman de Jean Echenoz, *Nous trois* (Echenoz 1992). Le cosmonaute ne peut pas y vivre longtemps, mais peut se faire une idée de ce que c'est que la terre justement en cours d'une mission spatiale qui l'en sépare. C'est là le sens de la pratique "déconstructive" du langage. Puisque c'est là le propre de la littérature. Un très bonne illustration de la "possibilité de l'impossible" est offerte dans le premier tome de *Fresh Théorie* par la philosophe Catherine Malabou. Le texte s'appelle "La génération d'après" et figure à la fin du premier tome que Mark Alizart (co-directeur du Palais de Tokyo à

Paris et critique d'art) et Christophe Kihm (curateur, rédacteur à *Art Press*) consacrent à la nouvelle philosophie française héritière de la French Theory (Malabou 2005). Catherine Malabou y entreprend une lecture de "Les Colchiques", poème d'Apollinaire, pour résoudre un problème interprétatif surgi lors des vers suivants:

Ils cueillent les colchiques qui sont comme des mères Filles de leurs
filles et sont couleur de tes paupières

(Apollinaire 1920:33)

Il y aurait trois registres d'interprétation de cette attribution bizarre – des mères qui soient les filles de leurs filles: botanique, théologique ou mystique et symbolique ou formel. La première interprétation doit tenir compte du fait que, chez les colchiques, "ses fleurs apparaissent avant ses feuilles et ses feuilles avant ses graines." Donc, "l'après vient avant l'avant". Prenons le second niveau: Lévi-Strauss cite, dans son livre *Le Regard éloigné* (Lévi-Strauss 1983), Saint-Augustin qui appelle la Vierge Marie "fille de Dieu, mère de Dieu", puisqu'elle a une capacité d'auto-régénération et auto-engendrement qui fait que, en elle, l'avant et l'après se succèdent en quelque sorte alternativement jusqu'à ce que l'avant et l'après ne gardent leurs noms respectifs que pour signifier une origine disparue et le nombre, deux, des entités en question. On arrive en fin de compte au registre formel. A ce niveau, les colchiques deviennent un signe dans la mesure où c'est ici que signifié et signifiant se donnent le change; c'est là le point d'articulation, jamais réalisée, entre deux entités, les mères et les filles, qui se relaient les unes les autres et où ce qui reste permanent n'est que le plan du change, les colchiques. Cette propriété des colchiques, que le poème d'Apollinaire exprime en métaphore – et que, dans un poème, ne peut être que trope, que figure, que supplément – Catherine Malabou appelle plasticité, une propriété dynamique, plus précisément une propriété de la dynamique de tout vivant et, certes, ainsi que du langage. Dans son livre *La Plasticité au soir de l'écriture. Dialectique, destruction, deconstruction* (Malabou 2004), la philosophe trouve d'autres figures de la plasticité, dont le "masque à transformation" qui ne montre jamais, quand on l'enlève, le visage, mais d'autres masques (autrement dit, il ne masque

pas un visage, mais ce sont des formes qui changent et dont l'élément permanent, comme pour les colchiques, qui sont des fleurs, est une forme à remplir – le masque). Ce qui ouvre la porte d'une confession:

Je n'ai, si l'on veut, jamais eu le temps d'être post-moderne, d'entrer dans la déconstitution progressive de la philosophie. "Post" ne signifie rien pour moi. Le sol où j'ai appris à marcher s'est d'emblée présenté et retiré, donné et dérobé. (...) J'ai dû très vite m'habituer à cette forme de visage disloqué, qui s'ouvre sur plusieurs visages et révèle au regard l'incroyable contemporanéité de la philosophie, de sa clôture et de son outre clôture. (Ib. 22)

Or, tout cela tient de l'impossible: "présence en quelque sorte impossible à déconstruire, parce que surgissant de sa propre déconstruction." (Malabou 2005: 549)

Eh bien, il semble que la *French Theory* se donne pour mission aussi de perpétuer, selon les lois de la plasticité linguistique, soucieuse donc du caractère plastique de la langue, le français "révolutionnaire", pour indiquer la présence d'un "sujet pensant" dont ce sont les formes du "penser" qui changent et qu'il faut sans cesse re-inventer, accomoder selon la définition de l'invention comme geste qui rend possible l'impossible. Et il semble que l'effort de synthèse entre un moi qui s'exprime et le sujet surplombant qui le pense soit le propre de la littérature française moderne qui, depuis Rimbaud, ne fait que nouer l'esprit romantique allemand et le volontarisme cartésien pour faire ressortir un sujet universel *et* vivant, comme dans cette trop fameuse prescription adressée à Paul Démeny le 15 mai 1871: "Le poète se fait voyant par un long, immense et raisonné dérèglement de tous les sens." (Rimbaud 1871)⁵

⁵ <http://www.linternaute.com/citation/4427/le-poete-se-fait-voyant-par-un-long-immense-et-arthur-rimbaud/> C'est l'intuition de Camille Paglia qui le confirme: "The 70's French fad was a flight from 60's truths, a reactionary escape into false abstraction and *rationalism*, *masquerading as distrust of reason*." (nous soulignons – Paglia 1991).

2.2. Les défis de la French Theory: le ton conversationnel versus le ton tragique

La manière dont les Américains ont levé le défi rhétorique de la *French Theory* s'est constituée dans une critique de la rationalité discursive (pourquoi les Français tiennent-ils des propos abstraits alors qu'ils pourraient viser directement la société?) relayée par l'affirmation de positionnements politiques qui dénonçaient soit un irrationalisme "fasciste" (Camille Paglia 1991), soit l'enfermement dans une tour d'ivoire spécialisée qui menace de s'écrouler à tout moment. Il est en revanche plus difficile de lever un défi énonciatif – car comment le faire si les armes de l'ennemi ne peuvent être employées que par eux? Pour relever un tel défi, nous allons faire appel à deux textes du numéro spécial de la revue *Critique* qui insère les travaux du second colloque franco-américain de Johns Hopkins, en 1984 (*Critique* no 456, "La traversée de l'Atlantique", mai 1985, avec une introduction de Vincent Descombes, voir Descombes 1985). Il s'agit de la clôture du colloque, le débat Jean-François Lyotard – Richard Rorty. Il y a là comme une sorte de danse animale où les ennemis s'exposent, se flairent avant de décider si cela va finir en combat ouvert ou rester en suspension, et il semble que c'est ce dernier choix qui finalement s'impose. Les discours des deux philosophes ne se rapprochent l'un de l'autre que pour mieux s'en détacher, et cela à travers quatre interventions: un premier texte lu par Jean-François Lyotard, dix pages, est suivi par la réponse de Richard Rorty, douze pages. Puis, Lyotard répond à Rorty en trois pages et Rorty lui répond finalement dans une demi-page. A aucun moment ne se pose pour aucun des deux interlocuteurs le problème d'adopter cette attitude herméneutique visant à "rentrer" dans la peau de l'autre et à parler *dans* sa place. Les deux discours se dirigent en effet l'un vers l'autre mais chacun reste ce qu'il sait être, sans forcer l'accès à l'inconnu de l'autre, quitte à rater la compréhension parce que craignant sa propre dissolution. C'est dans cette *volonté de demeurer* que l'identité de chacun se dévoile, car il s'agit d'un combat où les ressources identitaires doivent être mobilisées d'arrache-pied pour ne pas être consommées par l'autre. Les arguments tendent ainsi, puisque la référence à la danse n'y est pas anodine, à devenir

énonciatifs. Rorty répond à la dernière intervention de Lyotard pour placer la discussion au niveau du concret historique :

Nous avons du mal à comprendre pourquoi des philosophes comme Lyotard ont tellement tendance à prendre des événements historiques particuliers comme la preuve d'une 'banqueroute' des plus anciens efforts de réformes sociales. (...) Une telle volonté d'interprétation des progrès spécifiquement politiques, économiques et technologiques comme des indications de changements décisifs dans le cours de l'histoire, rendra certainement l'idée d'une 'histoire universelle' très douteuse. (...) Les Anglo-Saxons pensent généralement que la détermination d'un sens historico-mondial – décider que Mai '68, ou le développement du microprocesseur, a été un tournant ou n'a rien donné – doit être repoussé au moins un siècle après l'événement en question. (Rorty 1985:579)

Ce à quoi Lyotard répond par une distinction lexicale et puis générique, qui relève de la poétique et atteint la question de l'énonciativité :

Il y a entre Richard Rorty et moi un différend. Je crois qu'il n'y a entre nous aucun litige, car je pense que nous sommes presque d'accord. Mais il y a un différend. Mon genre de discours est tragique. Le sien est conversationnel. Où est le tribunal qui pourra dire lequel de ces deux genres de discours est le plus juste? (...) J'ai noté tout à l'heure qu'il y avait une différence d'accent, ou de genre. J'ai dit: "Il est conversationnel, je suis tragique". C'est peut-être cette différence qu'il faudrait interroger. (Lyotard, Rorty 1985:581 et 583)⁶

Penser à travers le langage et parler à travers la pensée paraissent être ainsi les deux "genres de discours" auxquels Lyotard renvoie le lecteur, et il semble en effet que l'incommensurabilité du discours français par rapport à celui américain s'enracine dans un pli esthétique.

⁶ Notons au passage que Lyotard appelle, et c'est marqué en italiques, ce que nous nommons aujourd'hui, après le livre homonyme de François Cusset, *French Theory* (2003), "the recent French thought".

tique. Puisque *réaliser* la vérité à travers le bruit, la pulsion, la dynamique qu'est le langage, présuppose un effort différent et, j'ose dire, plus intense que de parler *dans la raison*. Il est tout à fait différent, pour reprendre un des enjeux de la philosophie de Lyotard, de parler *dans le beau* ou *dans la raison morale*. Pour les Américains, c'est depuis le Big Bang du langage que tout se sépare et se définit et, que l'on donne des lois ou l'on enchante les oreilles ou encore l'on dise la vérité – c'est toujours *selon des règles*. Au début de *French Theory in America*, Sylvère Lotringer et Sande Cohen expliquent que la *French Theory* venait buter contre

two modes of thought – utopianism, expressed in versions of “American exceptionalism” and which perforce includes “apocalypticism”; and legalism, or reliance on the intellectual pattern of law. (Lotringer, Cohen 2001:1)

Or, le lieu de l'énonciation du discours français, qui est d'ailleurs très bien vu par Vincent Descombes dans son introduction, est une l'absence: la loi qui n'est plus. C'est en quoi le discours français est tragique, et Lyotard n'est pas le premier à l'avoir remarqué et éprouvé. Vincent Descombes cite à ce propos Maurice Blanchot:

Aujourd'hui, c'est en lui-même que l'intellectuel cherche les raisons de son abaissement et peut-être de son renoncement. L'idée universelle ne serait plus sa visée, comme on a pu le croire qu'elle l'était au siècle des Lumières. De même qu'après la Grande Guerre Spengler annonça avec jubilation le déclin de l'Occident, de même on croit annoncer, comme une idée neuve, la fin, la ruine d'une raison valant pour tous et s'imposant à tous – alors que tout le XIXe siècle a cherché, sous des formes subtiles ou sournaises, à lui substituer une déraison qui ne la renverserait pas, mais s'affirmerait comme son fondement (son abîme) (Blanchot 1984:4)

Pour la raison en liberté, pour la raison qui n'est plus la raison morale, *le fondement est son abîme*, car elle n'existe que par le langage qui la révèle tout en l'abîmant, qui lui octroie droit de cité tout en la subvertissant à chaque fois et en la gardant toujours autre car soumise à la plasticité du langage comme signe de sa suspension;

le langage qui est tantôt signifié, comme le voudraient et le pratiquent les Américains (en soumis en tant que tel aux normes sociales), tantôt signifiant (c'est ce qui a fait que l'on soit arrivé à plusieurs "rationalités", dont la *déraison* n'est qu'une). Cette position-là est celle du poète, mais là encore la poésie ne suffit pas, pour dire et pour comprendre ce qu'est le discours de la *French Theory*. "Le poète se fait voyant": il n'est de poète (moderne) que voyant (en contradiction avec la typologie de Marcel Raymond dans *De Baudelaire au surréalisme*, qui distingue les *artistes* et les *voyants* – voir Raymond 1940:11), et ce n'est qu'à ce titre, de voyant, que, après un long travail raisonné, *j'arrive moi-même à distinguer un moi, celui représenté, d'un autre, invisible mais sensible, qui est celui du et dans la parole.*

3. Le différend infini: langage ordinaire versus langage littéraire ou deux littératures à la recherche du canon

On s'accorde donc à observer qu'un certain discours philosophique, ou ce que outre-Atlantique s'appelle "théorie" – chez Stanley Fish par exemple (Fish 1985) – n'a pas le dernier mot ni aux Etats-Unis, du moins pour les "antifondationalistes" qui sont aussi pragmatistes et croient que le banc d'essai de la philosophie c'est le langage ordinaire, ni en France, où les littéraires relèguent toujours la philosophie après la littérature, en assignant à celle-là la condition secondaire pour en dénoncer à tout instant l'illusion de pureté. Le "langage ordinaire" est pour la philosophie pragmatique américaine ce que la "littérature" l'est en France et, d'une certaine manière, dans l'Europe littéraire de la modernité. Et ainsi se fait-il que ce qui pourrait en fin être tranché, c'est-à-dire la querelle de la *French Theory*, se retrouve bel et bien à la case départ.

Les "antifondationalistes" américains et les théoriciens français, relayés par les "fresh théoriciens" de tout poil, sont tous aussi des littéraires. Aujourd'hui, ce sont eux qui participent, parfois peut-être à leur insu, au maintien du canon et ceux qui, demain, plus tôt que l'on ne s'imagine, alors que le canon littéraire aura été relégué dans

la case à sujets strictement universitaires, feront parler encore et autrement de la littérature.

Leurs démarches ne se ressemblent pourtant pas. Qu'est-ce qui distingue langage littéraire et langage ordinaire? Eh bien, du faisceau des différences qui peuvent bien les distinguer, je crois qu'il faut choisir deux: la *rationalité* et la *publicité*. Le langage ordinaire est une version de langage naturel. On dirait que la philosophie se produit, comme le miel à partir du pollen, comme travail réfléchi du langage ordinaire, alors qu'elle s'en prend traditionnellement, après coup, contre la littérature, en la rejetant justement en ce que la pensée qu'elle contient n'est pas "rationnelle". Le langage ordinaire est également public ou du moins publiable, alors que celui littéraire requiert une participation affective et imaginative qui suppose ou traduit la grâce, et que la publicité peut dérouter ou laisser en suspens. Ce dernier ne peut être porté qu'au pinacle, et toutes les places publiques ne sont pas honorées de bâtiments à pinacle. Le langage littéraire possède encore une histoire que le langage ordinaire n'a pas, et c'est là l'autre raison de l'impublicité du langage littéraire. Néanmoins, le langage littéraire peut puiser dans le langage ordinaire, dans les situations ordinaires et c'est là toute une littérature qu'affectionne un intellectuel comme Richard Rorty – son amour pour la prose de Milan Kundera en est la preuve. En revanche, pour le "théoricien" français, le langage ordinaire ne vaut que s'il est démantelé et, par métamorphose, élevé au rang de "littérature", c'est-à-dire que s'il devient objet de recherche à partir du moment où il devient l'enjeu de la tension entre le moi qui s'exprime sans savoir ce qu'il dit et le moi universel, l'autre, qui le repêche dans la raison, tout en sachant qu'il ne réussira pas à transformer cette béance en division par deux qu'au prix du silence. Depuis Villon, en passant par Montaigne, mais surtout dans la modernité, à partir de Flaubert et de Baudelaire, "littéraire" veut dire langage du déchirement – réflexivité et immédiateté dans le même temps. Antonin Artaud, Pierre Guyotat, Valère Novarina, ce sont eux les martyrs de la littérature et non Milan Kundera. Depuis le perspective de l'intellectuel américain, le langage littéraire, singulier, ne peut être assimilé à l'échange qu'au prix de la réification et de la mise en signe: la littérature devient dès lors sa propre simulation. Cela peut être

interprété de deux manières. La première, on la connaît, elle est critique: puisque vous faites de la littérature plutôt que de la philosophie, puisque votre “théorie” est imprenable et vouée à l’échec – car quoi que vous disiez, toute théorie s’appuie sur le langage ordinaire qu’elle ne fait que prétendre d’englober (Fish 1985) alors qu’il ne cesse de se dire toujours autre – vous ne pouvez pas de fait reconstruire la société avec votre critique; vous êtes incapable de combattre les fléaux que vous ”déconstruisez”, vous ne pouvez pas enseigner quels sont les meilleurs choix dans la société où nous vivons tous et sur le marché où nous travaillons tous (Spivak 1998: 127–138)⁷.

La seconde en est peut-être plus intéressante, mais les intellectuels américains ont du mal à l’entendre et à la pratiquer: le langage littéraire est un permanent “back-up” pour tous ceux imaginent l’homme et le monde unidimensionnels. Le langage littéraire, tel qu’il est analysé dans le livre de Laurent Dubreuil (Dubreuil 2009), mais surtout tel qu’il est pratiqué par les penseurs de la *French Theory* avant d’être “reframed” sur place, est aussi *philosophique* en ce qu’il apprend la sagesse en rappelant toujours l’histoire. Et il s’agit là de l’histoire telle que la présente Jean-François Lyotard à la fin de sa réponse adressée à Richard Rorty lors de leur dialogue, une réponse dont il vaut la peine de citer *in extenso*:

Je dirai seulement, sans développer ce point, que nous Français nous n’arrivons à penser ni la politique, ni la philosophie, ni la littérature, sans nous souvenir que tout cela, politique, philosophie, littérature, a eu lieu, dans la modernité, sous le signe du crime. Un crime a été perpétré en France en 1792. On a tué un brave roi tout-à-fait aimable qui était l’incarnation de la légitimité (...) Cela veut dire que lorsque nous cherchons à penser la politique, nous savons que la question de la légitimité peut être posée à tout instant. (...) Il

⁷ C’est un argument qui est largement partagé parmi les “culturels” américains de gauche: voir par exemple les derniers deux essais (“Culture and Finance Capital” et “The Brick and the Balloon: Architecture, Idealism and Land Speculation”) mais aussi “The Antinomy of Postmodernity” in Fredric Jameson, *The Cultural Turn. Selected Writings on the Postmodern*, 1983–1998, Verso, 1998, 2009.

en va de même pour la littérature. La difficulté que les Américains, et aussi bien les Anglais ou les Allemands, ont à comprendre ce qui chez nous s'appelle écriture est lié à cette mémoire du crime. Quand nous parlons d'écriture, l'accent est mis sur ce qu'il y a de nécessairement criminel dans l'écriture, chose qui est oubliée dès l'instant où l'on se met à parler de la littérature en termes purement académiques. (Lyotard, Rorty 1985:583-584)

Sous le signe du crime – déjà intériorisé, outrepassant toute tentative de rendre justice, devenu en catimini fondateur, et, en tant que fondateur, terrorisant la conscience de tout “fondationaliste” français qui, à son tour, est du coup en danger de devenir un écrivain “terroriste” – le philosophe ne peut qu'interroger, conjurer et préparer le chemin à une sagesse qui ne pourra être que personnelle, à distance du collectif coupable et feignant l'oubli. Saisie du sentiment du devoir ou d'un désir de justification ou encore d'adoration reprise au corps coi du “brave roi”, cette sagesse s'adressera toujours à l'autre pour lui transmettre non pas un message, et se fera écouter non plus pour le souci de la connectivité, aujourd'hui tellement lucrative. Cette sagesse est en dernière instance la littérature; elle a été hier la *French Theory* et aujourd'hui son héritage, mais jamais *theory* de quoique ce soit. Ce que Lyotard nomme “ton” – et l'opposition entre le “tragique” et le “conversationnel” reste au moins la source d'une nostalgie préoccupée – est ce qui explique peut-être le lien entre terreur et clarté que fait Dionys Mascolo:

La terreur, l'oppression, on sait mieux aujourd'hui qu'elle était la clarté qu'elles jetaient sur les choses, on le sait au sentiment d'être privés d'elles que nous en avons éprouvé ensuite. Nous nous sommes vus un beau jour en deuil de la tyrannie disparue. Il est aisé de vivre à ces époques de simplification générale où vous pourriez à chaque instant nommer la chose pour laquelle vous avez trouvé à vous conduire comme s'il vous était égal de mourir. (Mascolo 1993:56)

De retour à la question institutionnelle, on pourrait la résumer ainsi: le canon littéraire comme sujet d'un débat de principes formulé et mené par la culture américaine, est en passe d'escamoter le "langage littéraire" que pense et pratique la culture française. Et ce, à l'avantage des deux directions fondamentales dans la culture humaniste aux Etats-Unis. La première est celle des fondationalistes, pour lesquels le langage ordinaire doit être le langage de la tradition que tout le monde est censé savoir et garder par devoir avant tout, et on parle alors du Canon occidental classique, à la manière de Harold Bloom. Elle subsiste aussi en France, où le canon classique n'a été en fait jamais révoqué en doute, et où elle est l'apanage de l'historicisme, révoqué en doute après la parenthèse de l'ère structurale:

Certes, la discipline (l'histoire littéraire) est plus prospère que jamais et les contestations structuralistes et formalistes des sixties ont fait long feu, auprès du public comme au sein de l'institution universitaire. (...) L'histoire littéraire paraît s'être remise en route, comme si rien ne s'était passé. C'est le grand retour à la tradition: l'érudition, le biographisme, l'édition savante. (Alain Vaillant 2010:4-5)

La seconde est celle qui lit le langage ordinaire à travers la lentille ethnologique, où la littérature et les arts en général sont entendus comme les véhicules qui peuvent et doivent dé-ghettoiser des communautés minoritaires dont les expériences ordinaires ne le sont pas pour tout le monde et ne peuvent être partagées qu'une fois transformées en histoires. Il est évident que ce que les penseurs français ont écrit et dit à l'intérieur de ce qui est aujourd'hui le corpus appelé "French Theory" ait été tout d'abord une critique du langage (philosophique) par sa mise à l'épreuve littéraire qui opère une ouverture – qui est aussi une dénonciation (du crime) ou un abîme (de la raison) – vers ce qui est, par le langage "commun", réprimé, rappelé à l'ordre et rendu communicable. Et il est évident que, dans la French Theory et, sur ses pas, dans la "fresh théorie" des années 2000, "la littérature parle après la philosophie" (Dubreuil 2009) et aussi après le langage ordinaire pour autant qu'elle lui pré-existe de la même manière que la lès-majesté confirme le sacre du

roi. La littérature est ainsi une origine que le langage commun devrait, communément, traduire en victoire de l'émancipation, sous le poids de laquelle la mémoire du crime se serait effacée.

Or, le canon de la littérature française aux Etats-Unis est un canon américain, construit selon les deux axes esquissés ci-dessus: des oeuvres classiques au sens du classicisme moral que le XVII^{ème} siècle a si bien su faire parler, et, pour l'époque moderne et contemporaine, des oeuvres et des auteurs minoritaires, des femmes plutôt que d'hommes et des francophones plutôt que de Français, ce qui illustre le récit émancipatoire que les Américains ont redécouvert par ce qu'ils ont voulu et pu comprendre à la *French Theory*. Pour la culture américaine, ce récit n'a pas besoin, du moins en ce qu'il fonde les études littéraires et culturelles, d'être révoqué en doute, car ici la légitimité n'a jamais été incarnée par un brave roi aimable dont le meurtre expulse la conscience individuelle dans un monde à refaire. En Amérique, la légitimité est immanente au corps civil soumis à la loi. Cela fait que l'accès à la représentation, dans un pays qui n'a jamais eu de roi ou, autrement, dans un pays (le Royaume Uni) dont la reine n'a jamais eu à être renversée puisqu'il a suffi d'en faire un signe, n'ait jamais été un problème à penser; point besoin de sonder la transcendance du langage pour trancher sur sa légitimité. La prééminence de la loi et de la raison dans la culture américaine fait que la littérature, quand elle n'est que pur signe et objet d'échange, en soit la casuistique. C'est pourquoi, si la *French Theory*, forgée aux Etats-Unis à partir du prestige d'une littérature nationale toujours reconnue pour son excellence, a contribué à renouveler l'intérêt pour la littérature française contemporaine de la part de l'enseignement américain, a ouvert *contre son gré* la voie à la lecture non-littéraire des textes littéraires et imposé des auteurs et des oeuvres qui ne sont pas étudiés, à quelques exceptions près et pour d'autres raisons, en France, justement pour la précarité de leur substance "littéraire". La littérature qui, en France, pose le problème de la légitimité (du dire et du parler littéraire en général) ou/et (dans le même temps) apprennent la sagesse (comme le fait la "littérature minimaliste" des éditions de Minuit), sont remplacés aux Etats-Unis – au nom d'une prise de conscience de l'importance de la littérature que la *French Theory* a réussi, du moins dans les

interprétations plus récentes que l'on a vues se développer dans le recueil dirigé par Sylvère Lotringer et Sande Cohen –, par une série d'auteurs et de textes affichés comme minoritaires qui peuvent être retrouvés par exemple dans le très exact article de Sabine Loucif "Le Roman français aujourd'hui aux Etats-Unis: panorama d'une réception singulière". Sabine Loucif y constate l'intérêt de la part de l'Université américaine pour "l'expérience des femmes, celle des homosexuels, celle des victimes de la colonisation et de l'impérialisme et celle enfin des victimes de l'Holocauste" (Loucif 2004: 452).

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*The Battle between the Aesthetic and
the Culturalist Perspective
in Studying Literature
(The Particular Case of the Romanian History
of Literature in the Recent Years)*

In 2008 Nicolae Manolescu, the most famous Romanian literary critic and historian of literature published his *Critical History of the Romanian Literature*, a monumental work of over 1500 pages. This work was eagerly awaited for different reasons. Manolescu is one of the central personalities of Romanian cultural life. He had an exceptional career as a literary critic, starting in *Contemporanul* in 1962 and ending in *România literară* in 1992. In three decades Manolescu “sailed” through the troubled waters of communism trying to make no compromise to the literary works that had no aesthetic value. After the Revolution, Manolescu has become the leader of the Civic Alliance Party, and a senator. In 1992 he was close to be nominated the candidate of the Democratic Convention for the presidency of Romania. A cultural personality before 1989, Manolescu has become a public personality after the Revolution. Nowadays, he is Romania’s ambassador at UNESCO. Manolescu’s public visibility explains, from the point of view the public, expectations for his history. The second reason for these high public expectations is the story of his *History* in itself. The first volume of the book was published in 1990, immediately after the Revolution. It analyzes the period of birth of the Romanian literature till the époque of the Grand Classics. So, all the interested public waited for the next volume. And the next volume was expected till 2008, when Manolescu decided to publish his entire history. The third reason of these expectations is connected to the prestige which literary histories have in Romania, in particular

The History of the Romanian Literature from the Beginning to Present by George Călinescu, published in 1941. George Călinescu was together with E. Lovinescu the referential critic for Romania between the two world wars. But the huge prestige of the critic was doubled by the fate of the book itself. Published in time of war, Călinescu's *History* became, during communism, a legend. Not re-edited till 1982, the book was, for example, viewed in our small group of pupils like the forbidden fruit. Our teacher of Romanian in the high school became all emotional when recalling the book. It was proper during communism to think of these forbidden or half forbidden books as if they contained deep, hidden, essential truths. Even when republished in the last decade of communism, the book maintained its aura. It was, as we felt it, a document of old beautiful times. Why those times were beautiful we heard from our grandparents but they were still mysterious. I think Călinescu's *History*'s enormous prestige also deepened the expectations for Manolescu's one. More than this, Nicolae Manolescu has been considered the symbolic inheritor of Călinescu. These are some of the reasons why *The Critical History of Romanian Literature* became not only the editorial event of 2008 but also a bestseller. It is worth mentioning that at the first presentation of the book at one of the two National Book Fairs, Paralela 45 publishing house sold 3,000 books in three days, starting to make lists with the name of the people who could not buy the book in order to send it by mail. Thinking of the prize, around 50 Euro and of the fact that it is, however, a book of history of literature, the success was really huge. I do not think that there is a book of any kind after the Revolution to have created such a stir.

After its publishing, *The Critical History of Romanian Literature* has become the object of a national debate in the written media, basically in the cultural magazines. The book has been highly appreciated but also harshly contested. The controversies are, when I write these pages, still vivid.

The end part of Manolescu's *History* is entitled *The Nostalgia of the Aesthetic* and it is representative of the essence of Manolescu's critical thinking. For Manolescu (2008: 1446), "The history of literature, based on the aesthetic critique, is the royal road of knowing ourselves, as moral and historical subjects." As can be seen both

from the title of its last chapter and also from this conclusion, Manolescu is a defender of the aesthetic critical perspective. To strengthen his standpoint, the author quotes Alain Bloom and Harold Bloom and two of their famous books: *The Closing of the American Mind* and *The Western Canon*. Proposing this conservative attitude when reading Romanian literature, Manolescu discovers and debates three forms of aggression against literary critique and history. "The first one is situated in the first hours of the Romanian communism, at the end of the 5th decade and in the entire 6th decade and is the expression of violating the literary facts by the Marxist-Leninist doctrine" (2008: 1447) The second aggression takes place "ten-fifteen years later from a certain scientific spirit which was against diachrony. Its expression was structuralism on the linguistic basis and the semiotic which developed for decades. (2008: 1448) Finally, the third aggression, on which I shall insist more is "the strongest one and it took place" after 1989, when everybody hoped for a definitive return of the critic and of the literary historian to his tools. (2008: 1450) The danger is, in this area, what Nicolae Manolescu calls "the Americanization" of Europe, and, of Romania as part of Europe. *The Nostalgia of the Aesthetic* connects the idea of "Americanization" with the changes in universities: "The disappearance from the university curriculum or the reduction of the number of classes of history of literature seemed to be a consequence of the lack of interest for reading of the pupils both in the secondary school and in the high school" (2008: 1452). Indeed, the number of classes of history of literature is lower in 2009 than in 1990 and the curriculum in the Romanian Faculties of Language and Literature was reduced being too extensive or because of economic reasons. More than this, the Romanian History of Literature is, together with the Romanian Contemporary Language the basic discipline of specialty in the curriculum. Another effect of what Manolescu calls "Americanization" is "a new concept of culture, generated by the universities, called cultural studies. It debates more contexts than texts, and when discusses texts, it makes unspecific observations and analyses regarding the sociology of the fictional world or to the psychology of its characters, to the political ideas of the author, to its feminist or sexist beliefs." (2008: 1454) Is this "aggression" strong in Romania?

Is the aesthetic study of literature threatened by the presence of the cultural studies? Starting from the point of view of what is going on in the universities at the first level of learning, BA, we shall underline that, beginning with 2005, Cultural Studies is, like Language and Literatures, a separated field in the Humanist Sciences domain.¹ It is interesting to note that the domain includes Cultural Studies, American Studies, Judaic Studies but not Romanian Studies. At this level, no Romanian University has turned the programme of Romanian Language and Literature into Romanian Studies. More, there is no institutional wish to develop a license of B.A. in Romanian Studies. I started the paper talking about Nicolae Manolescu's prestige. His attitude, together with the one of another famous Romanian critic and literary historian, Eugen Simion, former president of the Romanian Academy, were very important for the stability of the study of Romanian. At this level, their ideas meet the points of view of the majority of the teachers of history of Romanian Literature in the country. Remaining at this institutional level, I want to make several remarks regarding the situation in the field of research in literature. There is a certain gap between the idea of aesthetic study of literature and the financed research for the universities. Even if they say that the fundamental research is encouraged, the large majority of financed programs are the ones that point out clearly the public usage of the results of the research. So, the research financed programmes our chair of Romanian at Transylvania University of Braşov won were all interdisciplinary projects, some of them set at the intersection of literature and the didactic of literature or being cultural studies like in the project which had as a result the book *Dea Munera*. In fact, the teacher of history of literature is now, like in one of the jokes with the bear and the rabbit, forced to take on more and more tasks, never being able to finish all of them.

Nicolae Manolescu's conservative vision is also a part of a polemic with Sorin Alexandrescu. Former professor in Amsterdam and a renowned specialist in the field of culture, Alexandrescu

¹ *The Humanist Science* fundamental domain includes, in a law from 2007, at different positions both *Languages and Literatures* in a two languages and literatures combination and *Cultural Studies*.

(1998) wrote in one of his books that: “the aesthetic canon will have a quick ending”. In the article dedicated to Alexandrescu in his history, Manolescu associates his ideas with the one of the two Romanian theoreticians of postmodernism, Ion Bogdan Lefter and Mircea Cărtărescu whose works advocate a plural canon (2008: 1451). Manolescu admits that the literary canon can be contested because it is “unique and exclusionist but not because it is aesthetic” (ib.). However, concludes the literary historian: “In literature, the canon, pluralist or not, cannot be but aesthetic” because “of the massive, strong, unforgiving attack which is caused by the disappearance of the criteria of value and of ranking, consequences of consumerism, of the “canon battle” of the American type and of the attempt to abolish the critical spirit” (2008: 1451).

Beyond this polemic dialogue in the Romanian culture I want to stress the idea that Manolescu’s reluctance to embrace changes in the field of studying literature had another strong argument. As a person who lived his life for a long time in communism, Manolescu is against any idea coming from the leftwing ideological landscape. Perceived as American liberal tendencies, concepts like “cultural studies” are also rejected for their political connotations. Manolescu is an elitist spirit and he perceives the cultural “Amercanization” as an enormous danger. As an argument we can use the objection the author makes regarding Sorin Alexanderescu’s point of view in discussing Manolescu’s book *Noah’s Ark* (Arca lui Noe). “My objection” is that Alexandrescu deals with my ideas using a “left”, “non-liberal” attitude, reminiscent more of “Zeletin and Bourdieu than of Popper and Hayek” (2008: 1246).

Instead of conclusions, I prefer to ask several questions: How can we explain in 2009 the success of any literary history? Is it only a matter of the Romanian cultural tradition? Are the aggressions named by Nicolae Manolescu real? Are the ideas of professor Manolescu old-fashioned? And if so, what new ideas do we have to protect our domain of study? What are our arguments to teach history of literature in the faculty? Does literature and particularly history of literature need protection, or can we trust the free market in this respect, too? How can we fill the gap between the study of literature and the more and more pragmatic way in which education

is seen? How can we make our scientific intentions, as literary historians, compatible with the objectives of the financed research?

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*A Hundred Years of an Unvanquished Canon:
F. R. Kreutzwald's Kalevipoeg in Estonian Literary
Histories and School Text-Books*

A hundred years would be a small segment of time for any major tradition of world literature, but in the case of Estonian literature it means almost its entire history. Literature created in the vernacular Estonian language by the Estonians themselves does not go back much farther than the start of the 19th century, when Kristian Jaak Peterson (1901–1922), inspired by ancient Greek poetry, but also by some German authors (perhaps F. G. Klopstock, in the first place), wrote first Estonian poems which have aesthetical value.

However, at that time Estonia as a nation did not exist as yet. It gradually started to take shape from the middle of the 19th century – when Peterson was long ago dead – in the process of the so-called national awakening. It coincided with the creation and publication by Friedrich Reinhold Kreutzwald (1803–1882) of an epic in twenty songs, *Kalevipoeg* (The Son of Kalev, 1861), a major work which gradually acquired the fame of a “national Estonian epic”. Already in his lifetime Kreutzwald became to be honoured as the “father of the song” and the founder of Estonian literature.

A literary canon of a small nation, like the Estonians, whose number has not been much greater than a million people, is very much determined by the linguistic factor. The canon is established almost exclusively from “inside”, i. e. from within national culture. Foreign scholars, critics, intellectuals and general international public do not have access to it. It means a substantial difference as compared with literary canons established in major Western languages. Suffice to mention the fact that the basic canon of Western literature was first and foremost established by philosophically

mind German romantic writers and intellectuals – Herder, Goethe, the Schlegel brothers and others – from “outside” or “border”.

More than often in the history a vision from “outside” or “border” has been indispensable in distinguishing the peculiar individual quality and importance of a literary or artistic work. Translations of a literary work into other languages are part of the “outside” or “border” vision. Speaking of the importance of a work, literary histories usually do not fail to mention that the work has been translated into such and such languages. The language into which a work is translated, may have strong ideological connotations. It is especially true of literary histories elaborated in totalitarian states. Thus a year after Stalin’s death the authors of an Estonian school textbook (for 7th form) claimed that while *Kalevipoeg* had been translated into a number of languages, “the translated edition in Russian (1950) is the best of all”.¹ (Sögel, Taev 1954: 40)

Setting up a canon from the “exterior border”

In the case of Kreutzwald’s *Kalevipoeg* it was impossible to establish it in Estonian literature from “inside”, because Estonian national literature and culture did not exist at the time when *Kalevipoeg* was published. The intellectual sphere in Estonia was still strongly in the hands of the Baltic-Germans who had ruled the country since the late Middle Ages. The German language prevailed in learned circles. The German role was at the same time ambiguous. On the one hand some alert Baltic-Germans, like for instance Georg Julius Schultz-Bertram (1808–1875) were enthusiastic about vernacular Estonian folklore and trying to revive ancient popular myths. It was, in fact, Schulz-Bertram’s idea that learned Estonians should create their national epic, based on old legends, and stir up national sentiment. (Annist 2005: 428–436)

On the other hand, times had changed. The scientific turn had started. When Kreutzwald, after taking over the task from his friend

¹ Here and in the following quotations from works in Estonian translation is mine. *J. T.*

Friedrich Robert Faehlmann (1798–1850) indeed managed to make the epic *Kalevipoeg* reality and it was published in the *Verhandlungen der Gelehrten Estnischen Gesellschaft* (1857–1861), Schultz-Bertram and other Baltic-Germans started to criticize it on the basis that Kreutzwald's epic was too modern, not authentically folkloric. (Ib. 525–526, 533–534)

While the “inside” Estonian cultural vision did not exist as yet, the immediate Baltic-German “interior border” view did not prove to be sufficient either. More distance was needed. Support for Kreutzwald came from “outside” Estonia, or to be more exact, from the “exterior border”: first, from the capital of the Tsarist Empire, St. Petersburg, and, secondly, from the more liberalized periphery, Finland (which too was part of the tsarist Russia, but unlike Estonia enjoyed a considerable autonomy). By the time of writing his epic, Kreutzwald had established contacts with several members of St. Petersburg Academy of Sciences (Nirk 1966: 78–86). Among the St. Petersburg academicians, especially helpful were Ferdinand Johann Wiedemann, who in the 1860s visited Kreutzwald repeatedly in Võru (a provincial South-Estonian small town, where Kreutzwald worked for forty years as a medical doctor) and Franz Anton Schiefner, who was born in Reval (Tallinn) in a German-speaking family, but became known as a Russian linguist and tibetologist. These men were by no means just “outsiders”, as regards Estonia. Wiedemann was born in Haapsalu, Estonia, in a German-Swedish family and his chef-d'oeuvre is *Ehstnisch-deutsches Wörterbuch* (1869), a major source of older Estonian language for modern times. Schiefner provided Kreutzwald contacts with Finnish literary men and arranged the printing of *Kalevipoeg* in Kuopio, Finland, where censorship was milder than in Estonia, in 1862. Even before the publication of the epic in Finland, in 1859, Sven Gabriel Elmgren, a Finnish librarian and intellectual, pronounced in Helsinki a speech in praise of Kreutzwald's *Kalevipoeg*, considering it equal to Lönnrot's *Kalevala* (Annist 2005: 533–534).

Perhaps the most important fact in making *Kalevipoeg* visible from the “exterior order” was that Wiedemann and Schiefner wrote a review on *Kalevipoeg*, on the basis of which Kreutzwald was awarded the Demidov prize of St. Petersburg Academy of Sciences

even before the epic was finished (!), in 1860. In their review, Wiedemann and Schiefner claimed that Kreutzwald had offered to his people a capital work comparable to *Iliade* given by Homer to the Greek. (Metste, Laak 2003: 31)

Another weighty factor in establishing *Kalevipoeg*'s as the great founding work of Estonian literature was that the work published in *Verhandlungen der Gelehrten Estnischen Gesellschaft* had a parallel translation in German, by Carl Reinthal. (The last five tales were translated by Kreutzwald himself, with the help of Schultz-Bertram). Thus, from the very beginning, *Kalevipoeg* was a "border-work" in the sense that at least to some extent it was accessible to the outside. In 1881 a new German translation, this time by Ferdinand Löwe, appeared in *Verhandlungen der Gelehrten Estnischen Gesellschaft*.

After that pioneering activity in the "exterior border", Kreutzwald's epic gradually became recognized also in Estonia itself, in the autochthonous community, or "inside". Several leading personalities of the "national awakening" (in the 1860s and 1870s), above all Carl Robert Jakobson, found in *Kalevipoeg* a major source for stirring up and expanding national-patriotic sentiment, in opposition to the Baltic-German nobility which had ruled in Estonia for centuries. It is also an important fact in 1875 *Kalevipoeg* was published in Estonian in a popular edition, accessible to the wider public much more than the previous two editions. As August Annist mentions, the men of "national awakening" like Jakobson, Juhan Kurrik (who in a work in 1886 compared *Kalevipoeg* with the German *Nibelungenlied*) and Juhan Kunder (who after Kreutzwald's death published a prose adaptation of *Kalevipoeg*, 1885), idealized *Kalevipoeg* (Annist 2005: 37). They believed that it contained authentic folksongs, thus complying with all requisites, inherited from romanticism, of an ideal folk-epic. Annist adds that even Kreutzwald himself could not shake the belief or myth, once it had been put into circulation. (Ib.)

The nationally minded Estonian clergymen who were in direct contact with peasants, had a deep respect for *Kalevipoeg*. It is well summarized in a longer treatise about Kreutzwald by Villem Reiman, published in 1907 (reprinted in Reimann 2008). Reiman, an enlightened pastor and humanist, claimed: "With his *Kalevipoeg*, Kreutzwald has laid the foundation of Estonian self-conscience;

words taken from folksong have melted together with the writer's own utterance and heart... [---] In the same way as Homer's songs awakened the Greek people, Kreutzwald in his *Kalevipoeg* gave birth to the Estonian nation." (Ib. 81).

In an early history of Estonian literature, *Eesti kirjanduse ajalugu esimesest algusest meie ajani* ('A History of Estonian Literature from the Beginnings till Our Time'), written by Karl August Herman, a linguist, journalist and composer, the author asserted in the chapter on Kreutzwald that the creator of *Kalevipoeg* "had invented nothing from his own head, but had relied in everything on folkloric material" (Herman 1898: 394).

Kalevipoeg between science and fatherland

The "scientific turn" reached Estonia only a little later. It coincided with the emergence of the "Young Estonia" (Noor-Eesti) movement in Estonian literature. In the introductory essay of its first almanac (*Noor-Eesti I Album*, Jurjev, 1905), Gustav Suits claimed that the main goals of the movement were science and love to the fatherland. A number of those young men comprising the movement indeed became quite rapidly Estonia's leading intellectuals and writers. Turning their back to the German heritage, they looked to France as an ideal cultural pattern, being inspired especially by symbolism. In parallel, it developed under the philosophic influence of positivism. However, as Estonian conscious culture was just in a budding shape and also the Estonian language was still in a very rough and hesitant state, it was also the time of establishing rules in the vein of neo-classicism.

In this background, some leading Young Estonians, especially the writers Friedebert Tuglas and Villem Grünthal, as well as the linguist, a great renovator of the Estonian language, Johannes Aavik, became increasingly hostile to Kreutzwald's *Kalevipoeg*, not only reproaching its author for the lack of authenticity in the epic's folkloric basis, but also for all kinds of stylistic, metrical and linguistic failures. (Annist 2005: 40–42). Also in more recent times, the point of view of Tuglas and Aavik has been shared by some of Estonia's

renowned folklorists (Talvet 2009). Even though the radicalism of Tuglas and Aavik was attacked and ridiculed in its turn by some contemporary intellectuals, like Juhan Luiga (1995: reprint of his article published in 1917) it is likely that Tuglas's growing intellectual authority would have prevailed longer had not a split occurred among the Young Estonians themselves.

The split is between science and the fatherland. It is not at all an insignificant fact that the inaugural Young Estonia's almanac (1905) had a portrait of Kreutzwald (by H. Laipmann = Ants Laikmaa) on its opening page. While Tuglas soon after it started to be harshly critical of Kreutzwald's *Kalevipoeg*, the other key figure of Young Estonia, Gustav Suits, instead of joining Tuglas in his criticism, from the start of the 1930s took up researching in a great detail Kreutzwald's life. He first published the fruits of his research in the journal *Looming* (9/1931, 4, 6, 7–8/1933, 5, 9/1934). After the war, in exile, Suits published a monograph in Finnish, *Nuori Kreutzwald* (Young Kreutzwald, Helsinki 1953), which later was adapted into Estonian (*Noor Kreutzwald*, Lund, 1983; Tallinn 1984). In fact, his monograph on Kreutzwald was among the weightiest contributions to the research of Estonian literature. There could have been a hidden rivalry between Tuglas and Suits within Young Estonia and later as Tuglas's prestige and authority grew rapidly and considerably after his two monographs on Juhan Liiv (1914, 1927), supported by two important anthologies of Liiv's poetry (1919, 1926). Suits might have aspired to do something similar with Kreutzwald. Yet he was at that task slower and less skilful than Tuglas. While Tuglas became well-known by his strongly biased and eloquently expressed personal opinions, Suits tried to follow a kind of positivist neutrality and academic "objectiveness". He was meticulous in facts, but sparing in his evaluation of Kreutzwald's work.

However, among the pre-war leading Estonian intellectuals, Suits was not alone in his tacit support of Kreutzwald. From the middle of the 1930s August Annist (1899–1972), who was to become a major figure in Estonian folklore studies, defended his doctoral dissertation on folkloric motifs in Kreutzwald's *Kalevipoeg* (1935) and published subsequently a number of monographs on the same subject. His life-long work on Kreutzwald's *Kalevipoeg* (Annist 2005), comprising

more than 900 pages, was published posthumously. Without any doubt, Suits and Annist, above all, secured and expanded in the pre-war Estonia Kreutzwald's canonical position as the founder of Estonian literature and the author of a major epic.

Kalevipoeg in Estonian Pre-War Literary Histories and School Textbooks

The literary histories published in Estonia in the early 20th century and in the Estonian Republic between the world wars cautiously avoided extreme views. Their authors were certainly not canon-founding personalities, but they had an important role in reflecting the predominating viewpoint of criticism. Thus Mihkel Kampmaa in his *Eesti kirjandusloo peajooned* ('Main Features of Estonian Literary History', 1912) dedicated nearly thirty pages to Kreutzwald (60–89). In the general framework of a positivist approach, with literary currents providing the contours for individual phenomena and stylistic devices occupying the descriptive foreground, Kampmaa admitted that Kreutzwald's folkloric material in creating *Kalevipoeg* was scarce and that there were some parts of the epic not having much to do with the main story. However, in his general opinion Kampmaa relied on what was already claimed by Reiman (including the quotation from Reiman's 1907 essay, cited above in the present article) and concluded on his part that "[n]o other book has exercised such a strong influence on the independence and development of our nation as *Kalevipoeg*." (Kampmann 1912: 89).

Kampmaa's historical overviews of Estonian literature in several volumes we reprinted a number of times during the pre-war Republic (1913, 1921, 1933). They constituted the backbone for school textbooks on literature and were by no means ignored in the later attempts to write literary histories. Even Tuglas, the main defying critic of Kreutzwald, grudgingly admitted in his *Lühike eesti kirjanduslugu* ('A Short History of Estonian Literature') that "[e]ven though *Kalevipoeg* was not a traditional folkloric epic, it was

definitely a national epic. By creating it, Kreutzwald had risen to be among the greatest Estonians." (1936: 43).

Preparing textbooks of Estonian literature for schools was a longer task. Kampmaa's role was also important in compiling first commented anthologies of Estonian literature for schools (thus, *Kooli lugemiseraamat, I–II*. Tartu, 1905–1907, later developed into *Eesti lugemik* which in its final form included five volumes and underwent a great number of reprints in the pre-war Estonian republic). It is but natural that samples of Kreutzwald's work were worthily represented in Kampmaa's anthologies.

In the first textbook particularly meant for schools its author Karl Mihkla concluded at the end of an extensive chapter on Kreutzwald (117–161): "*Kalevipoeg* is a monumental work in our literature. It laid the basis for national-romantic literature and encouraged the gathering of folklore. Kreutzwald's *Kalevipoeg* gave rise to our people's national self-consciousness", and quoting Gustav Suits (in the journal *Eesti Kirjandus*, 1911, pp. 453–458), added: "without *Kalevipoeg*'s witchcraft the national movement of Estonia could never have emerged with such a force" (Mihkla 1935: 152).

Canon maneuvers in unmaneuverable times. Kreutzwald's *Kalevipoeg* in literary histories and school textbooks under the German occupation and the Soviet regime

Since Estonia lost its independence as a state, in 1940, its culture came to be firmly directed by a strongly tendentious ideology, which is natural under whatever totalitarianism. The wartime initial Soviet occupation (1940–1941) and the following German occupation (1941–1944) were too short to bring about any substantial changes. However, the evidence of censorship is the clearest marker that culture could no longer function under peacetime liberal conditions. Thus, in Bernard Sööt's *Eesti kirjanduslugu gümnaasiumile. III. Viies klass*. Tallinn: Eesti Kirjastus, 1943, which also comprises a selection of foreign literature, two poems of Paul Verlaine ("Chanson d'Automne", "Art Poétique") were published without

mentioning their translator. (While Gustav Suits was mentioned, as the translator of Verlaine's poem "La Lune Blanche"). (pp. 151–152) The first two poems were translated by Johannes Semper, a key intellectual in the pre-war Estonian republic, a poet, novelist, essayist and translator, who in the first Soviet occupation sided with the left-wing and the communists.

The same practice of omitting the names of undesirable intellectuals was widely adopted in the Soviet period. One who above all suffered from it was Ants Oras, a major translator of English literature and critic who fled Estonia during the war. Thus in the 1946 edition of three translated classical tragedies of Shakespeare (*Julius Caesar, Antony and Cleopatra, Coriolanus*) Oras's name, as the translator, was omitted. His name could not be found with his translations of the poems of Leconte de Lisle and Baudelaire as late as 1969, in an anthology of world poets, published by Tartu University (*XIX–XX sajandi väliskirjanikke. III. 3rd Print. Tartu, 1969*).

During the German occupation, older Estonian literature was treated in a textbook for secondary schools, *Eesti kirjanduslugu gümnaasiumile. I. Kolmas klass*. ('History of Estonian Literature. I. 3rd Form'), written by O. Parlo, J. Aavik and K. Mihkla. Although the authors of its particular chapters are not identified in the textbook, it can easily be recognized that the chapter on Kreutzwald was written by Johannes Aavik who already in the years of "Young Estonia" movement was the main ally of Tuglas in the latter's criticism of *Kalevipoeg*. The same accusations can be heard now: it is not a genuine folk-epic (Parlo, Aavik, Mihkla 1944: 105–106), the epic's composition is fragmentary, lacking unity (ib. 110), the songs are loosely connected (ib. 111), Kreutzwald's melancholy and subjectivity do not correspond to the genuine spirit of ancient folk-epics (ib. 112), it has a lot of stumbling in its language, style and metrics (ib. 114–116) and, finally, the epic is romantic in its taste and as such, full of a yearning for the past (ib. 120). It is almost humorous that among the few positive features of the epic, Aavik mentions that Kreutzwald warned Estonians against too light-mindedly migrating to Russia...(ib. 114).

The biased character of Aavik's criticism of *Kalevipoeg* is best of all revealed in a short history of Estonian literature published in 1954

in Stockholm by Karl Ristikivi, a major Estonian novelist who like many Estonian intellectuals, Aavik and Suits included, fled during the war to Sweden. Ristikivi writes in his *Eesti kirjanduse lugu* ('A History of Estonian Literature'), published in 1954 in Stockholm:

Scientists have found that it is a falsification of folksong. And literary critics have found that the falsification has not been made with a sufficient skill, that the work has metrical and aesthetic drawbacks. However, *Kalevipoeg*'s exceptional importance in our cultural history cannot be denied, as its role in elevating national self-conscience, and also the fact that even purely in the artistic sense it towers high over all the rest of its contemporary literature. [...] Kreutzwald's *Kalevipoeg* belongs to those works, whose importance of their very existence is by far greater than the profit one gains by reading them.

It was by no means difficult to adapt Kreutzwald's *Kalevipoeg* poetry to those works of the past that supported the new socialist canon of culture and literature glorified by the official ideology of the Soviet Union. Simple people's culture and folklore, as well as peoples' just fight for freedom in the world, against exploiters – the upper classes – were the main pillars on which official Soviet ideology was built up. As *Kalevipoeg* relied importantly on folklore and had as its leitmotif the dream of the awakening and liberation of the Estonian people, it responded perfectly to the conception of an ideal work of the past. Besides, the epic's pathos was indeed directed against the Germans who had introduced serfdom in Estonia and under whose rule Estonian peasants lived for many centuries. In the introductory song of *Kalevipoeg*, Kreutzwald makes an explicit bow to the tsarist government:

Such was old Estonia's lot
before the rise of Russian rule
the clement care of the eagle's
wing.

(*Kalevipoeg* 2007: 18)

I do not suppose at all that while stressing those features in *Kalevipoeg* Estonian literary scholars were seeking to flatter the official Soviet system. With a few exceptions, they rather knew that it was an almost unavoidable maneuver by which our fundamental authors could survive in hard unmaneuverable times. It was not necessary to speak in public about the deeper patriotic sentiment in *Kalevipoeg* or in Juhan Liiv's poetry, rejecting *any* slavery and foreign domination. It was understood by people anyway.

In the Soviet Estonia, the task of preparing a substantial multi-volume history of Estonian literature was delegated to a group of scholars of the Institute of Estonian Language and Literature, established as a section of the Academy of Sciences of the Estonian S.S.R. As the process was slow, school textbooks on Estonian literature, often written by university professors, assumed the role of granting a continuation to the history of Estonian literature. There is no need to say that school textbooks circulated among the wider public, not only schoolchildren, copies were kept at home and consulted beyond their strictly pedagogical purpose. In parallel, anthologies of literary texts, destined to different school forms, were published. The virtual literary history was complemented by book editions which nearly always contained larger prefaces or introductory essays.

There were a number of new editions of *Kalevipoeg* in the Soviet period. August Annist, the best Estonian connoisseur of Kreutzwald's work, having remained after the war in Estonia, took part in the preparation of several of these editions. Thus, the most complete academically prepared edition of *Kalevipoeg*, with Annist's introduction, appeared in two volumes, in 1961–1963. The first Soviet era edition was in 1946 (with an introduction by Oskar Urgart), to be followed by the 1951 edition (introduced by Eduard Laugaste, a well-known folklorist) and the 1961 edition, for which Endel Nirk, a leading literary scholar, wrote an introduction. A richly illustrated edition (with drawings made in the 1930s by Kristjan Raud) came out in 1975, containing Annist's commentaries and Nirk's afterword. It is also noteworthy that in exile, *Kalevipoeg* was re-edited twice (1947 in Vadstena, Sweden, with Annist's introduction, and 1954 in Toronto).

For a present-day reader, the first after-war school textbooks sound quite humorous, as black-and-white ideological appreciations prevailed. The pre-war criticism by Tuglas and Aavik of *Kalevipoeg*, extended to the 1944 textbook by Aavik's negative appreciations, was now claimed to be an attack against the working people. (Vihalem 1952: 209) Other authors (Sögel, Taev 1954) assured their young readers that Kalevipoeg's battle in Kikerpära marsh (10th Tale) symbolized the fight of the people's hero against the enemies of the people (ib. 43), while the episode with Kalevipoeg bringing timber from Russia wading through the Lake Peipus meant symbolically a peaceful friendly cooperation between Estonians and Russians (ib.). One of the textbooks (Alekörs, Teder 1951) in which Adam Peterson's poem "Munamägi" is characterized, the reader is left with the impression that Alevipoeg (one of the companions and allies of Kalevipoeg) had come from Russia to help the Estonian hero (153–154): "from the East, dear Alev / comes to help the Estonian people" (ib. 153–154).

As for the final episode of the epic, in which the author announces Kalevipoeg's return one day to his country, to redeem his people, the authors of the textbook claim that this dream of Kreutzwald had become true after the establishment of Soviet power in Estonia and the liquidation of the exploiters' class (ib. 55). Older Estonian literature was taught nearly always in the first forms of the secondary school. The new element was that some of these manuals contained at the same time chapters on Estonian and Russian literature. Thus in the textbooks *Eesti ja vene kirjandus V klassile* ('Estonian and Russian Literature for the 5th Form') and *Eesti ja vene kirjandus* ('Estonian and Russian Literature'), extensive samples of *Kalevipoeg* were presented (to characterize the hero's attitude to work, people and enemies), in parallel with chapters on older Russian authors like Pushkin, Turgenev, Tolstoy, Chekhov, and even newer Soviet authors, like Gorki and Mayakovski.

Bulky school anthologies of Estonian literature have a special value. It is a general rule that in times of ideological pressure under totalitarian systems, the value of metatexts (commentaries, criticism, introductory treatments) is notably diminished. Thus, the significance of literary works (original texts) themselves grows in such

conditions, they can contradict metatexts and stimulate the reader, in opposition to the official interpretation, to find out hidden meanings and messages. Especially in the case of school anthologies, the choice itself of literary texts could often guide the reader and compensate for the deficiency of an official (written) interpretation presented in the manuals.

In the after-war school anthologies, Kreutzwald's *Kalevipoeg* was always worthily represented. Thus in *Emakeele lugemik VI klassile* ('Estonian Reader for 6th Form', Selmet 1948) samples from seven songs of the epic can be found (11–39). Also in the anthologies destined to the last forms of the secondary school (in those times, forms XVIII–X, or the secondary school), *Kalevipoeg*'s is a constant presence. Extensive excerpts from all twenty songs of the epic, on nearly seventy pages (128–195), were included in Karl Mihkla's textbook *Kirjanduslooline lugemik VIII klassile* ('Reader of Literary History', Mihkla 1948). Mihkla's thorough anthology had not only value for schools, but for a much wider public. In fact, the book is a wide and well intended selection of all older Estonian literature, since ancient folksongs and folktales. It is likely that Mihkla prepared his book relying extensively on his research activity before the war. In *Eesti kirjandus. Lugemik IX klassile* ('Estonian Literature. A Reader for 9th Form; Alekõrs, E. Sõgel, L. Vihalem 1957) samples from Kreutzwald's work occupy the main part of the book's volume (pp. 3–150, excerpts from *Kalevipoeg*, pp. 70–150).

Since the ideological atmosphere became more relaxed from the 1960s onwards, it was possible to discuss more openly the canon of Estonian literature of the past and include opinions and facts that were silenced during the harsh Stalinist years. The virtual literary history, importantly sustained by school textbooks, now secretly relying on the experience of the pre-war republic, now on the introductory essays of book editions, was substantially complemented by a real literary history, prepared in a solid academic fashion by a group of scholars of the Institute of Language and Literature of the Academy of Sciences of the Estonian SSR: *Eesti kirjanduse ajalugu* ('A History of Estonian Literature'). Its volumes treating contemporary literature remained tendentious, but its merit in gathering and providing fundamental knowledge about the canon of the past cannot

be denied. Kreutzwald's work was treated in a large chapter (pp. 60–127) of Volume 2 by the volume's editor, Endel Nirk, a doctor of philology and one of the most competent Estonian literary scholars during the Soviet period. Nirk provides a detailed account of the formation of Kreutzwald's epic, its different editions. He admits that "*Kalevipoeg's* versification is by no means coherent, Kreutzwald's imitation generally is not capable of reaching the level of folk-poetry, also a number of incorrect linguistic turns have been used" (Nirk 1966: 94). However, Nirk does not fail to emphasize the epic's role in stirring national sentiment (ib. 87) and echoing people's fight against the forces of the evil (ib. 88–90). He mentions that *Kalevipoeg* was enthusiastically welcomed by the small Estonian intellectual elite in formation (Jakobson, Koidula, Hurt, Veske, ib. 95) and that the early German translation of Kreutzwald's epic favored its broader reception (ib. 96). To demonstrate the great importance attributed to Kreutzwald's work by the Soviet regime, Nirk makes stand forth the fact that Kreutzwald's name was conferred to the Museum of Literature and to the State Library (ib.124) To contrast it with much poorer advances in the same sense in the pre-war republic, Nirk mentions that Kreutzwald's memorial museum was installed in Võru in a house that before the war was a simple inn (ib. 123).

Nirk was growingly more eloquent in the subsequent treatments of *Kalevipoeg* in his monographic overview, first published in English: *Estonian Literature* (Nirk 1970), of which an adaptation in Estonian appeared in 1983 (Nirk 1983). Thus he writes:

It was the first work which spoke openly of the nation's determination to win freedom. Its theme was the struggle of the people against slavery and oppression, and it proclaimed the patriotic idea of selfless devotion to the fatherland. The legendary age of *Kalevipoeg* was represented as a period of freedom and prosperity, sharply counterpoised to the succeeding centuries of tyranny, violence and suffering. (Nirk 1970: 73; trans. A. R. Hone)

In his epic *Kalevipoeg* Kreutzwald convincingly demonstrated the efficiency of his conception of literature and revealed the rich possibilities latent in the free adaptation and creative elaboration of authentic folklore. He made full use of the stylistic devices of folk

poetry, and his text is richly interspersed with genuine folk songs and fragments of folk songs." (Ib. 73–74; trans. A. R. Hone)

This monumental poem of the heroic past [...] was to rouse the national consciousness, as yet dormant, of the masses of the people, and at the same time to demonstrate to the world the rich poetic heritage of Estonian folklore. (Ib. 71; trans. A. R. Hone)

The academic and school literary history overlapped importantly, as academicians and university professors extensively contributed to the writing of school textbooks. Since the start of the 1980s until the new political liberation of Estonia, the schoolbooks of which annually reprints were made, continued to be the main support of a national literary history. The classical part of its canon was kept unchanged, though some of the earlier simplifications were skipped and some new bolder accents, in the national-ideological sense, were introduced. Thus in *Eesti kirjandus. IX klassile*. ('Estonian Literature. 9th Form', Puhvel 1982) the editor in his interpretation of *Kalevipoeg* omits the claim of the epic's anti-religious stand and its spirit of friendship with Russian tribes, still present in the 16th reprint of an earlier prepared textbook (Mihkla, Tedre 1980: 84–85). Puhvel is also convinced of *Kalevipoeg's* belonging to the greater canon of world literature (Puhvel 1982: 77). Puhvel's interpretations of *Kalevipoeg* were subsequently carried on by reprints of the textbook until the very eve of the new political independence of Estonia (Puhvel 1990).

The Latest Developments around the Canon

Estonia's new political independence conditioned an urgent need to reevaluate national history as well as the canon of national literature. Since the early years of the 1990s, there have been significant changes. They concern above all literature created in Estonia itself and in exile after the tragic events of WWII. The effort to summarize the main features of all Estonian literature since its beginnings till our days in *Eesti kirjanduslugu* ('A History of Estonian Literature', Annus *et alii* 2001) should be duly appreciated, as it indeed managed

to include all what had been forbidden, omitted, neglected or mistreated in the Soviet period (exile literature, a number of pre-war writers who were considered decadent or reactionary by the Soviet regime). The volume comprising 700 pages gathers a variety of newer views in the reception of literature and also provides rich and valuable visual material.

However, a closer look at the volume would reveal an imbalance in the structure, as well as serious omissions. Especially against the background of its extensive treatment of several exile writers as well as of a number of younger authors, born in the 1960s and after, it looks almost grotesque that Kreutzwald's *Kalevipoeg* has deserved only a brief mention on a couple of pages (68–70). In such an imbalance I do not suspect any malicious intent. The reason for the book's insufficiency should be rather sought in the fact that the need to write a new literary history caught Estonia's literary academy at an utterly unfavourable moment: with the new republic, the former Institute of Language and Literature was reformed, the task of literary research being attributed to the Under-Tuglas Centre of literature, comprised mainly of younger scholars. The older elite of literary researchers had either passed away or had exhausted their writing energy. Estonian literature at Tartu University was left for a number of years without a chair.

Under obvious pressure of time, also new school textbooks were prepared. Compared with the above mentioned *Eesti kirjanduslugu*, the treatment of *Kalevipoeg* (pp. 56–58) in *Vanem eesti kirjandus* ('Older Estonian Literature', chapter authors unidentified; Epner *et alii* 2005) is somewhat worthier, but it is still restricted just to a summary of the epic's main episodes. As for *Kalevipoeg*'s importance, the textbook at least contains a quotation from an article by Antoine Chalvin, the French translator of *Kalevipoeg* (Gallimard, 2004): "Those who in France are interested in Estonia, can now read *Kalevipoeg* as a cultural document, the main pillar of Estonian literature and a substantial element in Estonian identity." (Epner *et alii* 2005: 77, originally published in Tamm 2004: 1723).

An effort to renovate traditional treatments and structure of Estonian school textbooks was undertaken in the 1990s by Märt Henno, a younger scholar, specialized in didactical writing. In his

Väike eesti kirjanduslugu. ('A Brief History of Estonian Literature' Hennoste 1997) he has included in parallel with samples of Kreutzwald's *Kalevipoeg*, their stylistically "corrected" version made by J. Aavik (Hennoste 1997: 56–57). In the vein of Aavik's criticism of *Kalevipoeg*, there is also a hint at the insufficiency of Kreutzwald's versification and poetic language (ib. 55).² In his *Eesti kirjandus tekstides* ('Estonian Literature in Texts', Hennoste 1996) Hennoste presents Kreutzwald's poetry only by samples of lyrical poems and Kreutzwald's foreword to the first unpublished version of *Kalevipoeg* (ib. 33–34).

Conclusion

To sum up, the most recent stage in the Estonian literary histories as well as in the canon reveals above all confusion and hesitation. Postmodern theories have rushed in. As they have been envisaged from the "centres", their adaptability to the "periphery", with its completely different cultural and historical situation, is dubious. In a small country, with relatively few capable literary scholars active in the field, besides, everybody with his / her passion and fashion (autobiography, postcolonial theories, narratology and, in any case, theory prevailing over history) there seems to be little hope that in the coming decades a new fundamental history of literature could be published in Estonia. In all probability, the school "virtual" literary history, which strongly supported the canon until the late 1880s, will likewise lose some of its coherence. The trend to fragmentation and de-nucleation is a general feature. The recent voluminous histories of European cultures prepared under the aegis of the ICLA (like for instance the multi-volume *History of the Literary Cultures of East-*

² Among the the new editions of *Kalevipoeg* after Estonia's regained independence, there is one by Avita, apparently destined to schools (1997), which along with treatments of the epic by Annist and Nirk, also includes Tuglas's early essay on Kreutzwald's work. The intention is apparently to balance the view which as regards the epic has prevailed in the literary histories written in the Soviet period.

Central Europe. I–III. Eds. M. Cornis-Pope and J. Neubauer, Amsterdam-Philadelphia: John Benjamins, 2004, 2006, 2007) contain valuable contributions to the understanding of various aspects of European literary history, but the choice of essays is still far from offering a comprehensive coverage of the broad topic. Individual scholars participating in these projects have nearly all their limitations, their knowledge being restricted to the area of two or, more exceptionally, three languages. It is still very far from producing an authentically comparative literary history.

In a small cultural area, where literature is being created in a minority language, the access of international scholars is especially restricted, while an exclusively national effort from the “inside” generally fails to grasp the wider contexts of a phenomenon. Yet as our story has tried to prove, there is always room for “symbiotic personalities”, as I would call them (i.e. philosophically minded scholars and writers, capable of moving between different language areas), to complement and rethink literary histories in their essays and monographs, as well as to shake the existing canons.³ As ever more women enter the field of literary creation and scholarship, a radical turn in reevaluating literary canons seems to be in the air, aimed to form a symbiotic view of literature, in which a new and more balanced relationship is established between centres and peripheries, the “self” and the “other”. It is very likely that we are positioned at the agonic end of male and centre dominated histories and canons of literature. As for *Kalevipoeg*, I am deeply convinced that in the new turn I am hinting at, its significance will not diminish, but on the contrary, will be ever more completely revealed.

³ In this context, a valuable pioneering effort has recently been made by Cornelius Hasselblatt, a German literary scholar of Baltic-German descent, specializing in Estonian language and culture (see Hasselblatt 2006).

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*Changing the Literary Canon at School:
Between an Authority to Be Challenged and
an Authority to Be Established*

When literary scholars discuss the issues of history of literature, the discussion is usually centred on the ways of moving the discipline forward. The task of historians is to introduce new interpretations of the past, and, to that end, constantly redefine what constitutes a meaningful past and what are the methods best suited to construct a new historical understanding of literature.

Somewhat less attention is paid to histories left behind, so to speak. Once a general agreement has been reached among scholars that one method of historiography is insufficient or outdated, attention is turned to developing new ones and to covering research fields so far left unattended. However, the "old" history does not disappear along with its credibility in the eyes of specialists, who sometimes happily forget that the history that has been constructed has not been constructed only for themselves, but for a larger public who is often reluctant to let go of familiar constructs. Thus, specialists may discover, should they find themselves confronted with the reality of the larger public, that they have a hard battle to fight against their own former beliefs they have considered already overcome.

The reasons for this reluctance to part with old concepts are many and may be amplified by a specific cultural context. In the post-soviet space several factors need to be taken into account. The Soviet period had a sort of desynchronizing or anachronizing influence on literary theory and methodology. While the 1960s were a crucial period for rethinking literary history, the arrival of new concepts was slow and sly in the Eastern block. The Soviet literary system perpetuated the earlier biohistoricist and teleological way of perceiving

the development of literature. Although the system was unable to stop new methods from enriching the field of research, it was much more effective in filtering them out of materials intended for the general public, including school textbooks.

Later, other considerations arose. Linda Hutcheon has noted that rewriting the history of literature is met with the most reluctance in the post-communist countries (Hutcheon, Valdés 2002: 5), where the recent social, political, economical and cultural upheavals have made people grasp for means of reconstructing their national identities. As Marko Juvan has pointed out, the history of world literature has had such a function in the context of Kulturnation, just the same as the history of the nation's own literature (Juvan 2008: 117). In the following examples of historiography and canon formation concerning Estonian high school textbooks on world literature, these responsibilities attributed to and also interiorised by authors of those books should also be kept in mind.

The cases to be discussed concern teaching the 20th century world literature in Estonian schools. Before describing them in detail, one more methodological issue, more specifically related to the subject, must be called to mind. No matter what are considered to be the main objects of history of literature (authors' biographies, the aesthetic evolution of texts, social phenomena related to literary practices etc.), additional problems arise when dealing with the history of foreign literature. János Szávai very justly asks what *is* the literature we are teaching to foreigners, if it is not wholly – or at all – available for reading and if its canonical interpretations depend on cultural and textual references that are unfamiliar to the target group (Szávai 2008). Even though Szávai's point of view is that of somebody teaching his country's literature abroad, the basic issues are the same when teaching foreign literature in one's own country. The historical narrative describing the evolution of that literature contains unknown references and the canon of authors and texts is seldom completely covered by translations.

Writing the history of foreign literature is therefore a task with its own particular difficulties. Although the textbooks themselves look like those that teach literature written in the students' own language, they cannot function in quite the same way. Even in the best of

circumstances they are likely to contain many empty references due to the fact that textbook authors use histories written in foreign countries as source materials. By so doing they import a canon of texts and authors and a narrative concentrated on issues that are not necessarily represented or relevant in the target culture. On the other hand, if the authors of textbooks try to make the most of the resources available in the target culture, their history may construct an entirely different canon and a set of values from those acknowledged in the literary traditions they are trying to introduce.

The actual task of a textbook author consists of working out a compromise between these two positions: it is not possible to ignore either the “original” history of foreign literature or the local tradition of translating, reading and interpreting it. Therefore, a supranational literary canon is a rather abstract phenomenon with a generally acknowledged centre, at best, but with a lot of variable elements in the periphery. In other words, each history of foreign literature contributes to the construction of a local, national version of what is perceived as the supranational canon. These local variants of the virtual supranational canon create a ground for dialogue for readers within one culture and for readers from different cultures. It is the responsibility of textbook authors to provide future readers with tools that serve both purposes: ensure the continuity of the local tradition and enable local readers to understand other cultures.

When foreign literature is concerned, the local tradition itself is also a complex phenomenon: not only does it grow with time in its country or countries of origin, it also grows in its “adoptive” culture, as new translations appear. Thus, some former empty references in textbooks may be filled with actual referents. References that were avoided or minimized, so as not to produce superficial knowledge on texts unavailable for actual reading, can be further developed. Choices that were once made in favour of perhaps less important authors in the supranational canon, whose texts were more accessible, can be reconsidered. All these changes can result in a better, wider understanding of other literatures: as the field of translations opens up to include more authors and works, the school – the most powerful instrument of spreading reading skills and habits – should also broaden its horizons.

However, especially since school does not have unlimited time for teaching any given subject, such developments may be perceived as rather radical and traumatic by teachers. While the literary tradition expands, textbooks cannot do so, they will have to change, at least to some extent. And while for scholars it may be obvious that all history, including the history of literature, is always changing, it is not necessarily that obvious to those less acquainted with the discipline of literary studies. That, as Gottlieb Gaiser points, is unfortunately often also the case of teachers of literature: they often lose contact with research and criticism and keep transmitting to students knowledge they have gathered during their studies (Gaiser 1993: 137–138). That situation (or suspicion thereof) also influences the publishers of textbooks and thereby creates even more demands to define the task of textbook authors.

The two following brief case studies on Marcel Proust and Erich Maria Remarque show how these factors have been, and still are, at work in the creation of Estonian secondary school textbooks on 20th-century literature: how the history of translations and other historical circumstances have influenced canon formation and the histories written to support that canon. Proust and Remarque are chosen partly as random examples, partly for my personal experience with debates concerning their role in the textbook canon.

Proust was first mentioned in Estonia in 1920, by the critic Johannes Semper who announced in the literary magazine *Ilo* that Proust had won the Goncourt Prize for *À l'ombre des jeunes filles en fleurs* (Asm 1920). During the next decades Semper obviously took a great interest in Proust's works: he has published a remarkable essay on it in three different versions (1923, 1934 and 1969). However, the general interests ran a different course at the time: the First World War, followed by the Estonian War of Independence and the early days of independence woke the social responsibility in the Estonian writers who found ideological and aesthetical inspiration in German expressionism rather than Proust. Even Semper, otherwise a prolific translator, did not venture into translations of Proust's works, other than quoting a few paragraphs as examples in his essay.

The first translation, *Un amour de Swann* (Proust 1973), was published in 1973 by Leili-Maria Kask. Today, two more pieces of

Proust's novel *À la recherche du temps perdu* are available in Estonian: the first part and the first chapter of the second part of *Sodome et Gomorrhe* was published in 1995, translated by Tiina Indrikson (Proust 1995), and *Le Temps retrouvé* in 2004, translated by Tõnu Õnnepalu (Proust 2004).

Remarque's works, on the other hand, were already translated during the period of independence between the two World Wars (*Im Westen nichts Neues* in 1929 (Remarque 1929)), reprinted in 1935. After the war and the Stalinist period, the first new translation (*Zeit zu leben und Zeit zu sterben*) was published in 1959 (Remarque 1959), after which each decade gave a new novel, until the 1990s brought about an enormous popularity. Today, there are about a dozen different novels available to Estonian readers, several of them reprinted more than once. The cinema, TV and theatre have also contributed to the popularity of Remarque's works.

In the only pre-war textbook that covered the relevant period (Aavik, Jänes et al. 1937), neither Proust nor Remarque is mentioned. The first post-war high school textbook covering the 20th century was published in 1965 (Leht, Ojamaa 1965). There is no mention of Proust in it, but Remarque is said to be one of the most important representatives of the German "critical realism" (along with Gottfried Keller, Gerhart Hauptmann, Heinrich Mann, Thomas Mann, Bernhard Kellermann, Lion Feuchtwanger and Heinrich Böll), and later on as a representative of "progressive literature", more precisely as an anti-fascist author. In that, he is also likened to the Manns and Feuchtwanger, although Becher, Brecht and Seghers are mentioned as particularly important writers in that field. In this early version of the textbook, however, Remarque does not get any specific attention.

A slightly modified version published in 1970 (Leht, Ojamaa 1970) adds Leonhard Frank and Arnold Zweig to the first list, and also redefines the list as that of representatives of realists – it is not "critical" realism any more, but "realism that developed in very many different directions" (Leht, Ojamaa 1970: 248). In a realism defined in that manner, there already is room for Proust, now mentioned in the list of French authors, as Remarque is mentioned in that of German writers.

A more thoroughly updated version of the textbook was published in 1976 (Leht, Ojamaa 1976), by which time Remarque had died and, maybe partly for that reason, but undoubtedly for others as well, had moved up in the hierarchy and got already a whole passage, which could almost be qualified as a chapter: it is no longer than 23 lines, but has a separate title. The merits of his work are naturally still defined by his social and political views and actions.

However, by that time the restrictions of censorship had somewhat lessened and authors had also grown more skilful in manipulating the restrictions and in finding ways to include writers less suited for the Soviet canon. While Remarque (along with Barbusse, Hašek, Hemingway and Zweig) is presented as belonging to the mainstream of the contemporary literature¹ – a mainstream consisting of authors writing about, and against, the war –, another development in the modern prose is also discreetly introduced. The authors of the textbook point out that some writers reacted to the war by withdrawing into their own inner world, exploring the mechanisms of the human mind and subjective experience, and thus creating the psychological novel. This genre is here described mostly by the notions of the flow of consciousness and of a subjective perception of time. As “one of the first and most famous works in this genre”, Proust’s novel, *À la recherche du temps perdu*, is mentioned, and it is also carefully noted that it is not only a psychological self-analysis, but gives a critical and ironical image of the ways of life and thinking of the late 19th century Paris society (Leht, Ojamaa 1976: 238).

It is obvious that so far the aim of the textbooks is to be as thorough as possible and to provide the students with information about a wide range of authors and aesthetical developments, within the limits of the authorised discourse. The first textbook to be published after the end of the Soviet occupation (Talvet *et al.* 1999) continues with that same objective and, having no more official restrictions to conform with, gives a thorough overview of the 20th

¹ The chapter is titled “Uusim kirjandus” (‘the newest, most recent literature’), and the beginning of this recent period is dated with the October Revolution (Leht, Ojamaa 1976: 232).

century prose. Here, we see the earlier proportions reversed: Proust's role in the evolution of modern prose is discussed at some length (Talvet 1999: 231–232, 235–239), and Remarque is briefly mentioned among the writers influenced by the war (Talvet 1999: 276).

In more recent textbooks, however, the whole purpose obviously changes: those that have been published since 1999 clearly aim for only brief and concise information about a few main characteristics and authors of each period or genre. As far as Proust and Remarque are concerned, all four textbooks covering the 20th century world literature (three for high school, one for vocational schools) return to the earlier canon. Each pays a lot of attention to Remarque, in three cases there is a whole chapter on his life and works (Lunter 2003: 88–93; Kaur 2003; Nahkur 2007: 144–147), in one he is considered as one of the representatives of the “lost generation”, along with Scott Fitzgerald and Hemingway (Rebane 2003: 92). Also, in three textbooks (Lunter 2003, Rebane 2003, Nahkur 2007) Proust is not mentioned at all.

Having participated in writing of one (*XX sajandi kirjanikke* 2003) and in preparation of a new one, a work still in preliminary stages, I have had reason to reflect upon the influence the circumstances and contingencies in the history of literature have upon the canon. On the first occasion there was a debate between authors and the publisher about referring to Proust in a chapter about Beckett: the publisher's argument against it being that an author unknown to teachers and pupils should not be mentioned in the text². On the second occasion, the debate was about leaving Remarque out of the textbook in order to leave more room for other, more recent authors. The argument against this was similar: an author long familiar to the teachers should not be absent from a textbook.

I do not intend to discuss here whether these demands are reasonable or not. Legitimate arguments could be found for both sides. Suffice it to say, and this probably goes without any arguing, that a version of the canon of European literature where Remarque weighs

² Proust is still mentioned in the book (Talviste 2003: 16–20, Lepsoo 2003: 153) and his influence on Beckett is briefly explained (Lepsoo 2003: 155–156).

so strongly over Proust somewhat deviates from the academic canon of European literature. The creation of a new textbook confronts two understandings of the canon: the authors of the textbook, specialists of literature, have their eye on the ever-changing landscape of literary history; the target group's expectations originate more likely from the local tradition. In the case of Proust and Remarque, the local tradition is largely founded on the preferences and abilities of the translators between the two World Wars, and later strongly influenced by the Soviet standards of literary criticism and didactics. It is a result of old contingencies and circumstances slowly transformed into solid tradition, forming a canon in which Proust is not necessarily a name an average reader should have heard, and Remarque is an author an average reader should certainly have read.

Dirk de Geest has drawn the following semiotic square that could be used in describing this process:

what has to be said
what may be said

what must not be said
what does not have to be said

(De Geest 2003: 208)

As he points out, the changes in the canon occur in the lower zone of the square (ib. 209), that is, in the *what-may-be-said* and *what-does-not-have-to-be-said* fields: what is tolerated, can become accepted and desired, then obligatory, what can be absent, can become preferably absent, irrelevant, then prohibited. In our current examples, an author of whom it has been possible to speak has moved up one field and become an author of whom it is absolutely necessary to speak; an author of whom it has long been difficult to speak has come to be considered prohibited. Partly, the non-prohibited and non-obligatory nature of Remarque and Proust, respectively, has risen from extra-literary circumstances, from the function attributed to literature, from the actuality of the content of their work in the Estonian context etc. Partly, it has arisen from the accessibility of texts to translators and, thus, from their availability to readers.

We can thus conclude that, for the general public in Estonia, the canonical foreign literature is largely the literature that the Estonian translators wanted to, were able to or were allowed to translate by

mid-century and that found sufficient approval by the Soviet regime to be included in the earliest post-war textbooks. Since then, new books have been written in the world, new translations have been published and the Soviet criteria for canon-building have lost their relevance. But as the examples chosen in this article show, the old canon stands on its own authority.

This is, of course, to be expected from a canon. The authority it carries allows it to fulfil its function as a provider of cultural continuity and dialogue, and the resistance it offers to attempts of changing it is a natural and undoubtedly necessary reaction that prevents an excess of arbitrary changes. However, the historians of literature know that, to a certain extent, a canon is always arbitrary, especially in its most basic, textbook version. Everything important and interesting in world literature will never fit into a textbook intended for 35 hours of work in class. Since this format cannot change considerably, the contents will have to, at least gradually, as the literature grows and the ways of interpreting it evolve. Acting upon this realisation confronts the authority of scholars with the authority of the canon. Not even necessarily on the scholars' own initiative: the demand for revaluation and renewal of literary history can (and in the cases that served as examples did) actually originate from the public, or at least from the publisher. In the actual work, however, we often encounter the paradox described by Dirk de Geest: people ask specialists for advice and expertise, but as soon as a specialist voices an opinion not confirmed by the obligations and prohibitions of the standing canon, this opinion does not count as valid (ib. 202–203).

Changing the literary canon at school thus means walking a fine line between the respect for tradition and the need for keeping up with the developments in literature and criticism. As the textbook authors of the Soviet time learned to slip canon-renewing information past the official restrictions and demands, we still need to refine the same skills in order to get past the canon's own resistance and to negotiate a place for new authors, problems and values among those already established by the authority of the tradition.

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*Beyond the Literary Canon:
Recontextualisation of Classical Texts
in the Digital Environment*

Literary history is one of the most important, but also the most mysterious carriers of cultural memory. It is a place where a thousand-year-old columns stand side by side with dark labyrinths full of still undiscovered treasures. Hans Robert Jauss attempted to cross a gulf between the monumental, canonical literary history and historical reception of literature, with his theory of reception-aesthetic literary history (see Jauss 1970). I try to take another step forward and find a bridge across the imaginary gulf between the previous tradition of writing books of literary history and the ways of representing literary history in our era of digital media.

Adapting the specific features of digital environment
to literary history

When we remediate literary history in the digital environment, we have to consider the specific properties of this new environment: first of all, the “nonlinear narrative” and “multimedia”. The newest term to be used is “participatory culture”, which means that we have to take into account the active participation of every reader in the creation of both the content and the meanings. Although the explanation of terms is not the subject of the present article, I would still wish to emphasise two new important aspects. First, source materials, which are held in archives and libraries and which had earlier been described and mediated by literary historians, can now be made digitally accessible over the Internet. Second, the digital

environment allows representing these materials through semantic relations, and to link any text with any other text to form new cultural units – semantic threads.

We have tested these possibilities in two projects on Estonian literary history. We started in 1997 with a rather small project on Estonian literary history titled *ERNI. Estonian Literary History in Texts 1924 to 1925* (in Estonian; see Laak 1997, 2001). This is a network-like model of literary history, based on the theoretical ideas of reception aesthetics and reception history by H. R. Jauss (see Laak, Viires 2004a). The conception of this model was mainly based on a hypertextual network of critical texts of one short period, and it opened literary history by highlighting a synchronous reception level – interpretation by the literary critic as a reader. Principally, *ERNI* does not strive to offer its users a ready-made linear narrative; it contains a number of small stories. Its reader/user is offered the opportunity to participate in the process of the reception history and to write his personal interpretation of literary history, using different genres (Laak 2010: 234). Already for a number of recent years we have worked with Estonian materials of the late 19th and early 20th centuries on the project “Kreutzwald’s Century: Estonian Cultural History Web”, where we present classical works of Estonian literary history in their cultural historical context against the backdrop of the works of European literary classics. Canonical Estonian and European writers were introduced into the context of Estonian social and cultural history on five parallel temporal axes. The aim of the project was to construct a cultural historical space based on the macro elements of cultural history narrative (ib. 234–235). The realisation of such large web projects involves the need to solve many specific and technological questions, but I want to stress the fact that in the digital representation, when rewriting or remediating literary history, we first have to face several general and theoretical problems, which I wish to address in more details below.

Contextualisation of the epic *Kalevipoeg*

In creating any literary historical web projects we are, in some way or other, dealing with the “(re)writing of literary history”, but in a new environment and with new tools. In order to find theoretical basis for such “new type of writing” we have, in my opinion, to keep in touch with literary theory, semiotics and the theory of new media, but also with the trends in modern historiography. Recently, I have found supporting ideas in new cultural history – understandably, literary history, as an important carrier of cultural memory, is a part of the wider cultural history. According to French theoretician Roger Chartier, this is not a singular methodological platform but, rather, “a space for common discussions and debates in defence of multidimensional and reflexive history” (Tamm 2004: 119; see also Chartier 2003, Hakapää 2000). Which of the main positions of new cultural history could be suitable and fruitful for studying and (re)writing of literary history? The first major common area is that both of them are based on reception aesthetics and history of reception. Both reception aesthetics and new cultural history emphasise the importance of discussing phenomena (works, events) in their historical situation, starting from the meaning of artistic and literary works in the moment of their creation up to the changing of the meaning of the texts in each new interpretational situation.

The Estonian national epic, Fr. R. Kreutzwald’s *Kalevipoeg*, is a telling example from Estonian cultural history. It is a classical text of Estonian literature; in Jauss’ sense, it is a cultural monument. In its reception, we can clearly see how the ruling ideologies of different periods of time pay increased attention to canonised works and firmly control the interpretation of such works, for example, in school textbooks. *Kalevipoeg* was published in 1857–1861, in the currents of late Romanticism and Estonian national awakening (Talvet 2003 a, b). The text of the epic allows several different interpretations. For example, we can find numerous intertextual relations with its contemporary romanticist literature and the mythical world of Estonians and other European nations. On the other hand, the epic can be examined as an intertextual basic text of many Estonian modernist and postmodernist texts (Laak, Viires 2004b). In the

context of my present subject, it is important to observe how the epic fits into the cultural context of the time of its publishing.

Both the author of the epic, F. R. Kreutzwald, and the modern reception of the epic present *Kalevipoeg* as an epic, gathered piece by piece from the mouths of the people (see Kreutzwald 1862). I have to stress the fact that as such, the epic has never existed! It is an artistic epic, created on the motifs of folklore, a work of fiction authored by F. R. Kreutzwald. But in the Estonia of the period of national awakening in the 19th century, the presentation of the epic as an ancient “people’s song treasure” resounded well in the cultural context of the time, because the Estonian original ingenious culture in its formal richness had persisted for centuries mainly as an oral tradition. Writing and presenting of the text of the epic as the people’s own “song treasure” by Kreutzwald in such an existential period of change had, for the Estonians, the meaning of regaining national spiritual richness and self-respect. The text became a “monument to the golden era of freedom”. This led to an enormous rise in national and cultural self-confidence, the culmination of which could be seen in the proclamation of the Estonian Republic in 1918.

I have studied the periodically changing reception of *Kalevipoeg*, and found confirmation to the views of theoreticians of new cultural history that we have to reject evaluations when writing cultural and literary histories. According to English theoretician Peter Burke each evaluation is unavoidably related with the historical situation of such evaluations (see Burke 2003). Instead of giving evaluations that are valid throughout different eras to classical masterpieces, it is necessary to study their cultural historical relations – the *raison d’être* of a cultural historian is to reveal connections between different activities, phenomena, events and texts.

If this task is impossible, one might as well leave architecture to historians of architecture, psychoanalysis to historians of psychoanalysis, and so on. The essential problem for cultural historians today, as I see it at any rate, is how [---] reveal an underlying unity (or at least the underlying connections) without denying the diversity of the past. (Ib. 201)

Theoreticians of new cultural history have been conservatively critical of the notion of tradition. For example, American anthropologist Roy Wagner called the discussion of the history of arts (and literature) that is based only on canonical works – the so-called history of great canons – the “opera-house” conception of culture:

The contemporary “opera-house” sense of the word arises from an elaborate metaphor, which draws upon the terminology of crop breeding and improvement to create an image of man’s control, refinement and “domestication” of himself. [...] The anthropological usage of “culture” constitutes a further metaphorization, if not a democratization, of this essentially elitist and aristocratic sense. (Wagner 1975: 21)

To counterweight this, Burke points out that when writing a cultural history and explaining the themes, phenomena etc., it is necessary to consider the social context of the time of their creation and to pay attention to aspects that have been neglected in the traditional approach. One of his favourite examples from the literature of the Italian Renaissance is the forceful appearance of the subject of death in art and literature and the epidemics of plague that swept over Europe at the same time, which had been neglected by the earlier literary histories.

Similar examples can be drawn from Estonian literature. For example, in *Kalevipoeg* we can sense many lyrical, tender, and strikingly sad and melancholic tones, and see the subjects of death and mourning:

Studying the fate of *Kalevipoeg* in the contemporary culture, however, one can say in advance, that its impact on its native culture rests still on the possibility to recognize in its deepest layers traces of tragedy or discern under its heroic plot the lyric and melancholy moods of its author that have frequently unleashed a peculiar linguistic madness, an inspiring power of the word that has kindled the inspiration of many later authors in different fields of art. (Laak 2008: 198)

However, the lyrical undercurrents of the epic have sensitively been interpreted in the later Estonian poetry, where we can find numerous new intertextually related threads, e.g. the Harp, Island Maiden, Sword, Father, Journey, Sleep, etc. (Ib. 203). None of the "official" receptions has ever pointed out this aspect. The lyricism and melancholy have never been mentioned in any literary history or school textbook written under official ideologies and the text of the epic *Kalevipoeg* has mainly been used only in the rhetoric of creating a state, freedom, fight or hopes for the future.

How should such discords in the texture of the epic as a "nation-building text" be explained? What could have been the reason for such an internal antagonism in the text? If we examine the author's biography, we can see that the writing of the first version of the text was preceded by the death of Kreutzwald's most beloved daughter Marie Ottilie in 1851. Before that, Kreutzwald's best friend F. R. Faehlmann had passed away in 1850, and Kreutzwald continued the work of writing the epic that Faehlmann had started. The epic opens with the theme of death and it becomes one of the central intertextual thematic threads of relations. For example, in the first song of the epic, Kalevipoeg's mother Linda mourns her husband, king Kalev; in the following songs, the central theme and axis of events is the mourning of his mother Linda by Kalevipoeg. The theme of mourning is intensified by cyclically repeated archetypal scenes of young Kalevipoeg visiting his father's grave. This strange thread of mourning in the text of the epic is completed by the protagonist's tragic death caused by his own sword at the end of the epic, when Kalevipoeg was deeply mourning the deaths of his friends, who had been killed in a battle. Thus, mourning becomes one of the central semiotic signs in the text of the epic.

Another telling example of the ideological and political use of canonical texts is a school textbook, *A Reader of Literature for Secondary School*, published in Moscow during WWII, in 1943. The reader opens with "Comrade Stalin's radio speech of 3 July 1941", urging the population to subject everything to the interests of the front line, to send the harvest and the cattle to the rear, and to model one's life after Bolsheviks' example. This is followed by an address to Estonian readers according to their social class:

Estonian intellectuals! Teachers, workers in the fields of sciences, literature and arts! [---]/ Fight side by side with workers and farmers [---] for the liberation of our homeland! (Seilenthal, Andresen 1943: 13)

This reader contains a selection of texts from Soviet Russian literature (M. Gorki, A. Tolstoi, N. Ostrovski, A. Fadejev), earlier classic works of Estonian literature (C. R. Jakobson, E. Bornhöhe, A. H. Tammsaare, F. Tuglas, A. Kirzberg, E. Vilde, O. Luts, A. Jakobson, L.Koidula, A. Reinvald”, J. Liiv, G. Suits, M. Under) and contemporary Soviet Estonian literature (P. Keerdo, J. Madarik, J. Barbarus, J. Semper, J. Kärner, M. Raud, H. Angervaks, K. Merilaas) – made on the basis of the subjects of bravery, enmity, fighting, war and battles, blood, death, graves, etc.

Among others, the reader contains the songs from *Kalevipoeg* that call people to fight the invading enemy, e. g. 17th tale (“The battle at Assamalla”)

Kallis Kalevide poega
 Sõateeda sõitenessa
 Jätis jälgi murudele,
 Kabja tähti kaljudele
 (Kreutzwald 1862: 205–206)

Dear good son of the Kalev Heroes
 Riding on the paths of war
 Left his traces in the grass,
 Hoof marks on the rocky cliffs.
 (Trans. Triinu Kartus, manuscript)

We can confirm that in each new cultural and social situation, just such specific meanings are pointed out in the text of the epic that respond to the ideologies, and the environments of representation and interpretation of certain historical situations. But as the previous drastic example showed, a number of new international contexts can be added to national interpretations, and the text may be opened from an entirely new aspect.

Towards a new cultural history?

New cultural history asks the question about the age and origin of traditions. It is realised that many customs that are thought to be old (classical), have been born much later, for example, to counter-balance social changes and the needs of national states (Hobsbawn, Ranger 1983: 163–307). Thus the origin of “classic works” depends on the needs that have arisen at certain historical periods and only such texts survive that can adapt to new situations. In his article “Unity and Variety in Cultural History” Peter Burke asks “whether historians would not be better off if they abandoned the idea of tradition altogether” (Burke 1997: 189). In his opinion, it would still be impossible to write cultural history without this notion. At the same time, we should not believe that the meaning of classic works is universal and that everything that is passed on from generation to generation would preserve its unchanging meanings. Burke proposes that the traditional understanding of “tradition” should be rejected and that this notion should incorporate also the terms “adaptation” and “reception”. Taking into account reception as well, would help to overcome the conflict between the selections of classic works and the changing interpretational situations (Heestermann 1985: 10–25).

Second, new historiography attempts to re-evaluate the notion of “classics” in its criticism of the classic, “old” cultural history. The use of the latter in the modern multicultural world creates uncomfortable moments: “Classic cultural history emphasized a canon of great works within European tradition, but the cultural historians of the late twentieth century are working in an age of decanonization” (Burke 1997: 190). A paradoxical situation has developed, where the power and unavoidability of traditions and classic works are seen, but at the same time, it is denied in the global context. I believe that the solution to this paradox, offered by new cultural history, would prove to be fruitful. Discussions of new cultural history have changed the focus of research, and they are more centred on shedding light to the ideas of those who make canons than to the ideas of those who have been canonised (ib. 190–191). The process of canonising and its social and political backgrounds have become the subject of new cultural history. Or, to put it in other words – the

new cultural historical literary history examines temporal changing of the meanings of classic texts.

Transferring the viewpoints of new historiography to literary history, we should pay attention to the reception of classic works and take into account the fact that the interpretation of classic works, like the whole literary historical writing, each time needs to adapt to new situations of reception. It is important to realise that traditions do not continue by themselves, the passing on of traditions takes much trouble. Thus, "reproduction" forms the second half of the notion of tradition (see Bourdieu, Passeron 1977). Paraphrasing the words of French new historian Michel de Certeau, the traditional, passive reception should be replaced by "creative adaptation" of the tradition of literary classics (see Carteau 1984).

In conclusion we could say that, regarding reception, the tradition and classics are not unchanging. A cultural transferral occurs in the alternation of sociocultural contexts, where the meaning of the transferred classic work changes, just like in the process of translation: whenever something is received, the process occurs by the customs of the receiver and it is impossible to transfer unchanging meanings (see Jauss 1974; Ricœur 1998). Although the past does not change, history needs to be rewritten from generation to generation in order for that past to continue to be intelligible to a changing present" (Burke 1997: 190). It has been valid for literary history as the history of written literature. Each new rewriting is connected with the time the writer lives in.

The environment of new media brings along exciting paradoxes. In the fundamentally new cultural situation of the digital environment and the Internet, much has been talked about the disappearance of centres and marginal areas and even about the levelling of culture, art and literature. Relations between the works presented in the digital environment are not hierarchical any more but, due to the specifics of the environment, levelled – everything is equally accessible. How does the spread of the Internet affect literary history and the canon of classical works?

When examining the processes accompanying the Internet, we arrive at surprising results – the general rules or phenomena are not valid for literary history. There is a simple reason – classical works

are taught at different academic centres all over the world, and at almost all of them, web pages and small libraries have been created introducing biographies of these writers and discussions of their works. When a “reader” is searching for web pages on some classic author, he or she may find hundreds of them devoted to Goethe or Shakespeare, but only very few on the authors outside the canon. I call such phenomenon, accompanying the Internet, “hypercanonisation”. Here, the Internet has become an opposite to itself and recorded the Great Western Literary Canon into the globally circulating digital literary history “book” more firmly than it had been in the most respected printed books of literary history (Browner at al. 2000: 34–114) . Literary canons have become the highlights of theoretical discussions for various reasons. These long-time traditions contain power that cannot be ignored and in order to preserve cultural memory and mentality, they have to be constantly rewritten (see also Talvet 2010).

The case of Kreutzwald’s Century

The idea to rewrite the new cultural history has had a great influence on our project *Kreutzwald’s Century: Estonian Cultural History Web* started in 2004 (see Laak 2004). The project was intended as an interactive environment joining a new user-friendly interface and the content-based selections of cultural sources. For this project, we digitised the sources held at the archives and library of the Estonian Literary Museum and also added a lot of supplementary information. The digital environment *Kreutzwald’s Century* presented the 19th century of the Estonian literary canon in the context of cultural history. Cultural historical persons and writers were introduced in the context of Estonian history and European literature on parallel temporal axes. Biographies of cultural historical persons are related with their photos in the Estonian Cultural History Archives, literary texts and books. The project used unique software tools which enable to construct the historical content environment with internal semantic relations (Laak, Pruulmann-Vengerfeldt 2010; Laak 2010: 234–235).

Conclusion

The question of the historiography of literary history with its new possibilities and theoretical questions is in focus again. I attempted to offer a possibility, in the vein of new cultural history, for studying literary history through the interrelations of different types of texts. In the digital environment we can visualise and, via semantic relations, display archival sources of cultural heritage (e.g. documents, manuscripts, literary texts) which could play a meaningful role in the creation of literary memories in different periods. We can pose the question: will the computational media become the new basis of the 21st century historiography? We can conclude that rewriting the literary past and reinterpretation literary canon in the digital era requires deconstruction of the "traditional" image of the classics in order to show smaller units (such as events, objects, persons, texts), and by using these units, represent the past in a new way, integrating the possibilities of the computational media and also the general idea offered by new cultural history.

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Contemporary Lithuanian Literature between the Western and Eastern European Tradition

The discussion about the place and time of origin of contemporary Lithuanian literature has been taking place in Lithuanian culture and literature for about a century. It began in the period of the first Lithuanian independence and has not yet come to a stop to this day. One of the first initiators of this discussion – the authoritative Lithuanian modernist Kazys Binkis (1893–1942) – had called the patriarch of Lithuanian poetry, Maironis (*real name* Jonas Mačiulis (1962–1932)), to an ideological duel. Discussion began with bitter poetic lines proposing to kick Maironis' poetry aside and accept the challenges of the art of the modernist epoch. "Enough to sweeten the hearts / And to the sore places / Lay the packages of compromises" (Binkis 1955: 72), told Binkis in a poem "Salem Aleikum". It seemed important for Binkis and his followers to participate in the movement of modern European art, to respond to its challenges, and we couldn't say that they were not successful. Maironis the Lithuanian patriarch almost did not participate in that discussion, just in several poems a sore state of an unappreciated poet is felt. Maironis felt his position in Lithuanian literature, so he did not argue with the young. Maironis' lyrics yesterday and today are perceived without dispute as a code of contemporary poetry, a category of classics.

Binkis' position was supported by a poet, dramatist, reviewer Balys Sruoga (1896–1947) who continually critically disputed not against the outworn or conservative form of Maironis' poems but more against the content. Sruoga was puzzled by the fact that by filling and re-releasing the same-named selection of poems ("Spring voices" 1895) for twenty five years he gained an uncountable number of followers and worshippers: "Listen to the arguments of young schoolgirls or speeches of old intellectuals – you will certainly

hear the name of Maironis and compliments to him. Read the editorial office answers to young poets – and they will suggest you read verses of Vaičaitis and Maironis... Note the jingle of a villager in the evening dusk – you will mostly hear Maironis' lyrics". (Sruoga 2001: 34). And although Sruoga likened his and Binkis' generation's posture towards Maironis' works to the unfolding of the spirit of the nation, Sruoga rated that spirit only as an argument of national regeneration. Sruoga was sure that Maironis' lyrics cannot sound so moving to an educated intellectual.

Binkis' posture was maintained by Binkis' generation which was starving for a lively literary life, city and civilization; it wrote manifestos, articles, published magazines, wrote works in which the movement of chrestomathic art of avant-garde of the-then Europe is recognized. Maironis stood for the static conservatism and outworn idealism for that generation. And we cannot say they were not successful. Lithuanian literary life brightened, gained a status of process. But it is exactly the romantic idealism of Maironis' creation, even conservatism that was probably the only engine of such a process. Lithuanian symbolist Vincas Mykolaitis-Putinas, an apprentice of Maironis' poetical school, came back to that discussion after a while. He defended the value and standing of classics in the culture of a little country.

Lithuanian exodus poet Alfonsas Nyka-Niliūnas (born 1919) estimated this process in s perspective of at least six decades and wrote: "Each new literary movement considered it a sanctity to begin its campaign by the ritual dissociation from Maironis." (Nyka-Niliūnas 1996: 4–5) Maybe we can look at this endless discussion from a wider perspective. It would be difficult today to find a researcher of literature or a philosopher who has not touched upon Maironis' phenomenon in some way. Is it determined by repetitive events of regeneration of Lithuania or maybe by more difficult intellectual motives intended to conceptualize the spirit of the nation, the structure of mentality. Maybe that spirit found a clarification in the cultural life of Lithuanians in the form of realistic representation, or maybe it testifies to a hellish jam of Lithuanians, because names of talented creators – Binkis and Sruoga – are rarely mentioned. The

famous researcher of Maironis's phenomenon Vanda Zaborskaitė has said:

The meaning and standing of Maironis in Lithuanian literature was realised not at once. A perspective was needed not only to overlook the entirety of his creation but also to recognize the content and direction of whole literature. Of course the objectivity of decisions was conditioned by the literary and social attitude of estimators, and the methodology of researchers. The history of Maironis' evaluation reflects many substantial shifts of literary critics and science of Lithuanians.

(Zaborskaitė 1987: 408)

Those shifts are earnestly self-analyzed only in the most recent years, and relatively gingerly, because the literary historiographic clichés and habits of thinking are to be recognized, not only achievements.

The Soviet time hindered that spontaneous discussion, and only in about the 1970s there arose such figures like Just. Marcinkevičius (b. 1930; an adherent of Maironis' classicism), E. Mieželaitis (1909–2005; a lover of pre-war avant-garde), A. Žukauskas (1912–1985; an initiator of etnolinguistic experiments), and subsequently, M. Martinaitis (b. 1936), T. Venclova (b. 1937), J. Vaičiūnaitė (1937–2001), S. Geda (1943–2008). Naturally, Lithuanian literary diaspora splits into two parts in a tumble of post-war political upheavals, but the exodus literature had its own relations with Maironis' poetry: the representatives of Lithuanian existentialism had already graduated from Maironis' school by their neo-romantic poetic experiments and wanted to discover something more adequate for their generation, and a big part of epigones, left without education, remained not leaving the orbit of a classic and not creating anything distinctive. So we could think of Maironis' influence on Bernardas Brazdžionis' (1907–2002) and Kazys Bradūnas' (1907–2009). Yet Maironis remained more topical in Lithuania through his centripetal power. It is difficult to trace the connection of classics and avant-garde in their work because the Soviet environment did not provide chances to art programs or manifestos. We could claim that contemporary Lithuanian literature returned through the back door in the Soviet

period while the official criticism looked after the utopian schemes of socialistic realism.

Today the discussion of a similar complexity cannot be either that acute or topical, but is substituted by other topical questions of a lively literary process. Meanwhile the question of the development of modernism in Lithuanian literature remains unanswered and topical to researchers. And it involves not only the spectrum of literature, culture and art, but transfers to the space of literary theory, translation and evaluation. On the one hand, it is questioned whether the development of culture and literature in Lithuania is genuine and original, on the other hand, are we constantly only running after the West? On the one hand, the orientation and competence of the Lithuanian literary orientation towards the West is questioned, on the other, it is realized that the core of literature is its distinction.

The followers of Greimas' semiotics, like Kęstutis Nastopka, Saulius Žukas, Dalia Satkauskytė, Nijolė Keršytė, Dainius Vaitiekūnas have implanted the Western competence mainly by translations of French researches of literature, culture and art, distancing themselves from the figures and methods of literary criticism of the Soviet time. However, in the mainstream of researchers of semiotics, the works of the Estonian-Russian Yuri Lotman and the French-Lithuanian Algirdas Julius Greimas have had a great impact. Our specialists of semiotics met the new independence having a clear methodological school and creditable perspectives of development. Today this perspective can be associated with Greimas' centre in Vilnius University and a quite emphatically defined tradition of semiotic science. Not everyone can master it, that's why Lithuanian researchers of semiotics feel pretty proud. But this pride, vouching for a feeling of prestige and rallying a sort of ordained-to-science circle, does not grant a growth of the number of semiotic researchers in a wider environment of Lithuanian literary science. There are some doubts about its full-valued continuity.

The sharpest distinction in contemporary Lithuanian literary science lies between Lithuanian leading figures of semiotics and the sensual, subjective phenomenological literary school, which spontaneously matured in the Soviet period without theoretical programs and manifestos. The best known representative of Lithuanian

phenomenology is Viktorija Daujotytė, professor of Lithuanian literature at Vilnius University. In 2003 she published a study called "Literary phenomenology". She has published more than fourteen major works since 2001, and their dominant mark is immanent analysis of writing. Rita Tūtlytė, an associate professor of Lithuanian literature at Vilnius University, distinguishes a subtler model of literary criticism practiced in the Soviet period from a vulgar sociological monolith. Reviewing the texts, written in the Soviet period, of Vanda Zaborskaitė, Vytautas Kubilius, Donatas Sauka, Viktorija Daujotytė, Kęstutis Nastopka, Albertas Zalatorius and even the philosopher Arvydas Šliogeris, she finds symptomatically recurrent names of the German and Swiss tradition – E. Staigner, M. Heidegger, W. Kayser, L. Spitzer (Tūtlytė 2000: 19). German texts reached the Lithuanian literary researchers easier because of tighter connections with Germany. As for the position of Lithuanians, one could get confused, for example in the case of an eminent American researcher of Russian literature, Rimvydas Šilbajoris, because Šilbajoris successfully combined semiotics, the New and immanent critics in his works.

Thus, polemic tension is present between Lithuanian researchers of semiotics and phenomenology. It has to do more with the political sphere of influence than with an open discussion. Both poles would desire to consolidate their power over institutions neighbouring academic spheres (universities, ministry, the content of school manuals). It is in turn sometimes hard for a reader not involved with the French semiotic school to understand the semiotic vocabulary. Lithuanian figures of semiotics, with their competence in the field, are truly equal participants of a European theoretical discussion. On the other hand, their opponents are very much appreciated by the Lithuanian reader. Being genuine and authentic at the same time, they do not publish their works in international journals, but rather limit themselves to discussions among their followers in Lithuania. The leading role here is once again performed by the authority of Viktorija Daujotytė, her very forcible style and capacity of intuitively developing a school of her apprentices. According to the most rational contemporary Lithuanian literary theoretician Aušra Jurgutienė, such intuitive phenomenological research had its roots in

Soviet literary scholarship, the cultural-historic, humanistic and aesthetic tradition inherited from the interwar period (Jurgutienė 2006: 7). However, in the presence of a strong and vulgar sociological trend that tradition was levelled to psychological and emotional empathy, and it was not easy to rise to a higher theoretic level (ib.).

All questions about the origin of the discussions in Lithuanian literature lead us back to poetry, which was a dominant genre for a long time, or to poetic prose, excelling in the field of a good literature in the present day. Poetry means in the first place Maironis and only then, Binkis, because the Lithuanian reader would recognize not only his national character but also European individuality in Maironis' work. Binkis gave us the sensation of literary experiment, game and risk, but Maironis unfolded a deeper world-view, the Baltic spirit, Christian ideology. Indeed, his world-view is an offspring of late romanticism, yet it is precisely from Maironis' poetry that we perceive this world-view as an organic formation. By going deeper into the sources of such spirit and ideology we necessarily approach the original sources of Lithuanian culture: a world-view based on earth and nature (fecundity), the mythology and religion of the ancient Lithuanians. Virtually in relation with Maironis' poetry the foundations of the immanent and phenomenological school were laid.

When reflecting upon the ideology of national world-view and the dominant canon of Lithuanian literature, it is important to emphasize its earthly dimension: the ideology of earth, water, dying and regenerating nature. The matricentric image of the earth-mother dominates Lithuanian literature. The earth-mother is always full of fecund womb waters from which nature and human world is constantly resurrecting in Lithuanian poetry. This is a sensual Lithuanian lyric proto-world which was easiest to be explained by psychological empathy and recognition. Structural, semiotic analysis does not contradict it, but it introduces distance, logic, scepticism. It is topical in the work of the youngest Lithuanian poets. We can speak about the world of water, night, the dark and the earth, which according to the mythologists and researchers of religion, associates with the European origins. To quote Gintaras Beresnevičius: "It is a

quite easily graspable religious mythological base, and apparently we see that ancient Lithuanian religion and mythology are in the very centre of Europe; this array extends from Celtic / Germanic religious thinking to Iranian (Alan, Scythian), even Iran and India. The Lithuanian / Baltic religious system interjects between the Celtic / Germanic and Iranian ones as an intermediate link, but occupies centric rather than peripheral position on both aspects and transmits the Iranian-Caucasian influences to the Finno-Ugric (Estonian, Finnish, Mordvins) tribes. Practically the Lithuanian/Baltic mythological religious tradition is in the middle and this can be explained in two ways: either it is the most relict, or it is a node of an effective dialogue of religions. In other words, it has so much functions of intermediation either because there was no such communication while Lithuanian tradition and their ancestors simply kept the oldest peculiarities of Indo-European proto-religion and, accordingly, what Celts knew and what Iranians knew long before." (Beresnevičius 2008: 10).

Sure there are traces of god of fire, light, day and song (traces of masculine, late, patriarchal mentality) in Lithuanian literary self-awareness, yet there are more traces of passive, dark, feminine thinking, even to this day. And those signs are convenient for immanent critics in principle. Intuitive insights and psychological exploration favours a sensual dialogue with the reader. Meanwhile, the reader of Maironis has been exceptional for more than a century from a standpoint of the whole epoch: it is the whole nation. Maironis was the first to evoke the multi-layered past of the Lithuanian culture by his poetic images. It is beyond doubt that Maironis' Christian theology can be interpreted not only by traditional keys of neo-romanticism and realism, but also by the images of natural religions (Baltic, Veda). The outcome of our late Christianization is an incredibly contradictory world-view of the contemporary Lithuanians: catholic ceremonies become matched with ancient rituals and superstitious beliefs. The enthusiasts perform their ceremonies and propagate the old beliefs without much ado. They are often well-educated, talented artists and popular culture propagators, persons of the old (renewed but not genuine) belief. These phenomena sometimes would be hard to understand and could be ascribed to mass

culture. At the same time it is the formation of our elite culture, an outcome of long decades of reconstruction of inner content (when it was forbidden to do otherwise and it was as it was). It should be noted that the persecution of Christianity and limited freedom of belief during Soviet time highlighted the form and contents of the old Lithuanian religion. The movement of folklorists and researchers of national heritage all over Lithuania and the rally "Romuva" were among the most important factors sustaining the national Lithuanian self-awareness during the Soviet period.

The generation which was born at the beginning of the 1960s and the influential literary authorities of today (the poets D. Kajokas, N. Miliauskaitė, K. Platelis, G. Cieškaitė, O. Baliukonytė, the fiction writers R. Gavelis, A. Ramonas, V. Juknaitė) are very different and reflect their experience intellectually and creatively in different ways. They reflect religious and philosophical aspirations in the first place and are open to the ideas and practices of Eastern religions. In fact Maironis was the forerunner also in this sense. Not only older writers, like V. Bložė took interest in Buddhism and Zen, but also the subtle lyrical poet N. Miliauskaitė, the contemporary favorite of the youth A. Marčėnas, as well as Geda, L. Gutauskas and G. Cieškaitė have explored the beginnings of the Lithuanian myth, founding links with cultures of India, Sumerian, Babylon. K. Platelis has studied the Vedas, while J. Vaičiūnaitė and O. Baliukonytė have been attracted by Egyptian mythology.

Starting from the creation of the generation born in the 1950s Lithuanian literature meditates upon its European identity and finds remarkably many links with the East. It is interesting to note that a question of cognition of the Orient is alive in contemporary Lithuanian literature. It was always fashionable to explore the East in Europe, but that fashion came with its own geopolitical pretexts. In Lithuanian literature by contrast there has been a strong demand to master intellectually not only fashionable (the case of Jurga Ivanauskaitė), but also truly complex phenomena of the Eastern world.

The most interesting is the fact that the generation born in the 1950s restored the sense of authentic canon and modernism in Lithuanian literature, even though their work was the most affected by the question of the East. Moreover, that generation approached

some parameters of Christian Europe. One of them was neoclassicism, which became topical in Polish literature after the manifestos of Jaroslaw Marek Rymkiewicz and Ryszard Przybylski. Polish theoreticians perceived classicism as a conception of the historical past and related it to the sources of Polish-European self-perception, with Mediterranean myths that nurtured Greek art and Christianity. The Poles enjoyed somewhat more political freedom during the Soviet period than the Lithuanians, and opened themselves to a systematic reflection on their literature. Lithuanians did not have such a systematic image and reached it more sporadically and intuitively, without manifestos. Still, the Polish examples of neoclassicism, the name and authority of Czeslow Milosz especially and his links with Lithuania provided additional impulses for understanding our proper European identity. The restoration of the Old European identity became a canon in the creation of the generation of writers born in the 1950s.

The discussion and the search for literary dynamics for Binkis' generation ended in the Soviet period, because history had become related to ideological sham and had become perverted. The generation born in the 1950s, with its meditative and nature-orientated verse brought us back to the Orient with an experience of urban civilization and history. Lithuanian creators learned more of the old, intellectually restored European foundations in their historical experience. It is an image of a passive, matricentric world, the prehistory of Christianity. It was not an exclusive text. Lithuanians mastered the experience of urban civilization and history in parallel, and the influence of Polish new classicism favoured that trend.

An uninterrupted connection with earth, water, moon, woman, life and death lies in the centre of Lithuanian poetic imagination. Lithuanian literature is substantially of rural and agricultural order. Echoes of city, civilization and history reach us through a sophisticated meditation on nature, more like a contextual life experience than a lifestyle which is explained by narration and action. Maybe that is why phenomenology seems topical and more touching than semiotic strategy of world clarification in literary experience. Thus, the national school of phenomenology responds to hermetic reflection departing from its own vital and existential experience. It

is much more modest in assimilating the international experience of literature research. Quite surely the Soviet hermetism and national self-defence provided a background for that. Differently from more Western orientated Poles and Czechs, Lithuanians have not yet found appropriate conceptions to name their own literary phenomena. In some cases, the Shinto-Japanese conceptions would suit Lithuanian literature better than the Western ones, for example, *mono no aware* (which means deep feelings that transcend the limits of individual perception of beauty).

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History of Literature by Voldemārs Damberg.
“The Twentieth Century in Latvian Literature”
in the Context of Latvian Literary History
Publications

Processes of the formation of Latvian national literature occurred rather late as compared to other parts of Europe, and this accounts for the fact that the necessity of defining the processes of literary history arose comparatively late as well. The first reflection titled as a history of Latvian literature is *Mēģinājums latviešu literatūras vēsturē* (An Attempt at the History of Latvian Literature) by the author of German origin, Ernsts Cimmermanis, published in 1812. The content of this book only partially matches the intention of defining the history of Latvian literature that has been indicated in the title of the book. It extends the notion of literature to sermons and sacred speeches by German priests and similar written texts that have been produced in the 16th–19th centuries. The first attempt at writing the history of Latvian literature by an author of Latvian origin occurred in *Latviešu rakstniecība* (Latvian Literature) published in 1860 and three works published in 1893 that may be defined as reviews of the history of Latvian literature. These issues do not provide an exhaustive review of Latvian literature, as at that time Latvian literature was still at its very early stage. Neredzīgais Indriķis (the Blind Indriķis, 1783–1828) was the first poet of Latvian nationality and Ansis Leitāns (1815–1874) was the first prose writer. The time of the birth of autonomous Latvian literature is associated with the 1850–60s and the movement of ‘Young Latvians’ that gave rise to the national identity awareness. Latvian national epic *Lāčplēsis* (Bearslayer) was written by Andrejs Pumpurs in 1888. The very end of the 19th century may be considered the time when mature

respectable works of national Romanticism and realism appeared along with the first samples of autonomous Latvian literature. Thus, the tendency of defining the historiography of Latvian literature processes gains an objective ground and systemic character just in the early 20th century. That was the time when Latvian literature had accumulated a certain experience and drawn closer to the rhythm of European literary processes.

The turn of the 19th and 20th centuries was a period of diverse literary expression with the prevalence of realist and naturalist tradition that was affected by significant European literary figures, e.g. Ibsen, Tolstoy, Zola. At the same time, the romanticist tradition including the national romanticist one initiated in the 1880s continued. In the late 19th–early 20th century, the publication of translations of the world literature into Latvian was greatly extended. A significant part of these translations is constituted by authors and works of Modernist stance, e.g. F. Nietzsche, Russian Symbolists, S. Pszybyshevsky, K. Hamsun, M. Maeterlinck, O. Wilde, etc. Due to the impact of the process of adaptation of foreign literary samples, it is hard to speak of a single dominant trend in the texts by Latvian writers; rather there was a ‘co-existence’ of literary trends. This kind of synthesis in the early 20th century Latvian literature is observed in the form of overlapping of the poetics of diverse trends in one author’s writing as well as coexistence of literary types in Latvian literature on the whole; this may be accounted for by the fact that the literary trends that had replaced one another in the European culture space at the end of the 19th century entered Latvia almost simultaneously. The synthesis of literary trends created the early form of ‘Modernism’ characterized by the existence of individual modernist features instead of a complex scope of modernist aesthetics. It is marked by nuanced challenges of content and form. Modernism developed along with other literary trends.

The major criteria of the modernist expression of the early 20th century are subjectivity, individualization, and search for untraditional poetics. Against the common background of Latvian literature, modernists’ searching was the most radical and poetically expressive one. Modernist writers completely changed the traditional world model and desacralized the former values. Expressive images, indi-

vidualism, subjectivity, outsiderism, sensuality, emotionality, more profound aesthetic and aestheticist studies became the most distinct features of the early modernist style.

World War I almost brought to a standstill the rhythm of culture life. Yet the foundation of independent Latvian state in 1918 gave rise to differing politico-cultural tendencies and changed the content of aesthetic search in literature. Awareness of the national space and construction of identity inspired literary historians to take up describing and classifying the preceding literary processes with a new zeal.

The issues of literary history published up to the present bring out diverse ways of producing the history of literature:

- History of national literature that is produced in a close relation to the history of national identity development.
- Chronological history of literature that is based on a systematic diachronic perspective on the literary process.
- History of literary genres and forms that treats aesthetic and poetic issues in the processes of literary evolution.

In the *interbellum* period in Latvia there were many publications of literary history compiled by different authors (some of them were also significant Latvian writers). They were basically produced according to the first two principles – as the national and/or chronological history of literature. Hence, the reviewers of these publications first of all discerned and criticized the shortcomings of periodization or their chronological aspect, as the compilers and authors of the literary histories considered their main task to produce a chronological description of Latvian literary processes, the analysis of literary phenomena in the context of history, integration of social processes in literature, reviews of individual authors' writing and analysis of their major works. Hence, literary historian Teodors Zeiferts in the foreword to his *Latviešu rakstniecības vēsture* (History of Latvian Writing) (1922) points out his conceptual standpoint aimed at actualizing sources of Latvian literature, e.g. folklore and the role of Baltic German literature in the development of Latvian writing, paying major attention to the literary processes of the recent past:

... Preparing the history of writing for publication we had to acknowledge that it is impossible to provide a completely finished volume as concerns either its material or explication. Day after day new studies of literature appear inciting the issues to be solved in the future. The volume of the material and its explication needs to be limited also to avoid difficulties in publishing and using the book. First of all we focused on the living Latvian writing, both the old and the new one. For this reason the old writing was attributed rather scarce limits by means of literary historical facts briefly denoting its relations with the world literature and efforts for the sake of Latvians. (Zeiferts 1993: 6).

A secondary role in the *interbellum* literary histories has been attributed to the aesthetic aspects of the literary process – the coexistence or change of literary trends, their recurrent manifestations, national specificity, typology, e.g. the peculiarities of the formation and development of realism or Modernism in Latvian literature. Teodors Zeiferts with his book (*Awakening of our National Poetry*) (1893) made the first attempt at providing a review of the literary process concerning the genre of lyric.

A particular theoretical perspective has been selected by the writer Voldemārs Dambergs for his publication of the literary history *20. gadusimtenis latviešu rakstniecībā* (*The Twentieth Century in Latvian Literature*) (1932). The author focuses on the manifold and nuanced processes of the early 20th century Latvian literature. Dambergs has produced reviews on individual writers' work characterizing them in the context of philosophical and aesthetic processes instead of marking the historical or social aspects in the analysis of literary process.

Voldemārs Dambergs (1886–1960) was one of the founders of early Latvian Modernism in Latvian literature; he was carried away by Impressionist experiments and search for original poetics. Therefore he focuses his strategy of the literary history in “*The Twentieth Century in Latvian Literature*” on the characteristics of the aesthetic principles that he had used himself in his own fiction. He analyzes twentieth-century literary processes through the prism of Modernist features. The thematically focused literary history by Dambergs foregrounds different writers and literary events as compared to those of

many other literary histories of the *interbellum* period. If we are looking for the reason why there was no wider tradition of such focused literary history publications, the answer lies in the culture ideology of the epoch. Hence, J. A. Jansons points out in his publication *Latviešu literatūrvēsturnieka uzdevumi* (Tasks of Latvian Literary Historian) (1936) that each writer has a national spirit. Further and more important task of investigating monographic literary history works is to realize how in the writer's ideology the strivings of Latvian spirit are synthesized with generally human values. This kind of studies are necessary for Latvian literary history. The task of literary historians is to write a national Latvian literary history. J. A. Jansons' appeal clearly expresses the idea of the necessity of a nationally oriented Latvian literary history and marginality of other approaches.

Dambergs' literary history does not make use of synthesizing the literary historical material in the ideological discourse; instead it regards the literary process in its form and content, personalities who break old traditions (Dambergs 1932: 3). The starting point of Damberg's book is motivating the chronological landmark mentioned in its title, "the transition epoch the early twentieth century holds dissatisfaction with the existing, longing and striving for the new, for the worlds hidden in the mist of distance, inner unrest, many dreams and instigations" (ib.; here and in the following my translation – M.B.)

Analyzing the writing of Latvian writers that is close to Modernist poetics, Damberg's each time points to their relation with the Western European tradition of the humanities and its resonance in Latvian writers' works. Hence, as concerns the writer Jānis Poruks (1871–1911), it is mentioned that he "... was carried away by Richard Wagner's novel ideas in music, studied Goethe's works rooted in the tradition of Antiquity and Nietzsche's symbolist philosophy, got to know the philosophical systems of Kant and other thinkers" (ib. 4).

Beside the crystallization of contemporary sources, Damberg's turns to regarding the crossing points of the traditional and innovative aesthetics in writers' works. He points out the overlapping of realist and Modernist poetics in Latvian literature of the turn of the

19th – 20th centuries or ‘the transition period’ (*pārejas laikmets*) (ib. 7). A number of new forms of literary expression appeared within it, e.g. the ‘social direction in literature’ affected by the social thematic and naturalist expression. It was debated by Decadence with its cult of individualism, sensuality, and beauty. Viktors Eglītis (1877–1845) was one of the first to take up the experimental expression of Modernism including elements of Decadence in the first decade of the 20th century. The writers who were close to his manner were called by Dambergs ‘Viktors Eglītis’ group’ or ‘the school of Decadence’. Dambergs considered himself a representative of this school as well and he defined the use of novel devices of form and style as their priority task. Symbolism constitutes a significant segment of the twentieth-century Modernism. Dambergs provides an account for the notion of symbol, pointing out its origin in the world literature and first manifestations in Latvian literature.

Dambergs’ particular characteristics of the early twentieth-century Modernism regard this trend as a complex phenomenon citing the preceding culture types. Dambergs has made a judgement of those writers who, according to his statements and the classification of that time, ‘stood by’ (*stāvēja nomaļus*) (Dambergs 1932: 7) as they applied the poetics of Romanticism, that sounds very present-day. He points out that Romanticism of the early twentieth century is not a direct transfer of the 19th century tradition, but is associated with using romanticist imagery and enriched by allusions to the elements of transcendental cognition.

Defining the early 20th century in relation to periodization, Volde-mārs Dambergs does not associate it with major socio-historical events, e.g. World War I or the foundation of Latvian Republic in 1918, but only and exclusively with new searching of poetics and form: “Around 1915 the ‘Sturm und Drang’ epoch of our literature came to an end as it entered the epoch of the rule of classical principles and creative methods” (ib. 6).

In the conclusion it must be noted that literary histories dedicated to particular periods or phenomena of literature provide a theoretically historical interpretation apart from the chronological or biographical overview of history. Voldemārs Dambergs in “The Twentieth Century in Latvian Literature” put a particular emphasis

on the origin of Modernism in the early twentieth-century Latvian literature. This was facilitated also by the personal experience of the author of this literary history. "The Twentieth Century in Latvian Literature" is one of the few works with this kind of strategy on the development of Latvian literary history. It includes significant supplements to the accepted fundamental investigations of the history of literature.

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The Modernist Opening in Latvia and Aesthetic Tension as a Catalyst for Change

My observations in this article start with the assumption that at each particular historical moment there is a tension between published histories of literature on the one hand, and contemporary literary processes on the other.

I will focus on one such moment in the history of Latvian culture and will try to show precisely how this tension provided a driving mechanism for development and to prove that this is characteristic of epochal changes in the overall spiritual climate of a culture.

For general background, I will first draw on some observations taken from *History of the Literary Cultures of East-Central Europe: Junctures and Disjunctures in the 19th and 20th Centuries* (2007) edited by Marcel Cornis-Pope and John Neubauer, specifically the classification of literary institutions provided in the introductory article to the third volume of this work.

Professor Neubauer proposes the division of the development of the cultures of East-Central Europe during the last two centuries into three basic periods: 1) 1800–1890, the national awakenings and the institutionalization of literature, 2) 1890–1945, the literary institutions of modernism, 3) 1945–1989, the radical reform of the existing institutions under the communist regimes. (Cornis-Pope, Neubauer 2007: 1)

In the same introductory article, the editor stresses that there are variations within this rather strict (but indeed useful) periodization, e.g. the development and establishment of national institutions could only be completed after national states had been established; in the case of states that came into being later, the first two periods actually overlap at the turn of the 20th century.

In my article I will deal with the period during the late 19th- and early 20th-centuries, roughly covering the years between 1890 and

1918 with particular focus on the decade between 1905 and 1914. According both to Neubauer's scheme and the exceptions he allows, this period clearly had a Janus-faced character for the Baltic cultures.

On the one hand, the continuation of the 19th-century trends leading towards the consolidation of the national values¹ was clearly apparent; on the other hand, there was a turn towards topical modernist aesthetic ideas. We will examine both the late aspirations of the nation builders, as well as the new modern trends in art and their reception. The literary career of the Polish writer Stanisław Przybyszewski and the reception of his works and his ideas in Latvia will serve as a paradigmatic example for the latter point.

Returning once more to the notions used by Neubauer, we can familiarize ourselves with his two-part typology of the national awakening (ib. 3–4):

Modes of Social and Material Construction

1. Founding journals and newspapers in the vernacular
2. Establishing publishing houses
3. Founding literary and cultural societies
4. Staging plays in the vernacular
5. Building National Theatres and Opera Houses
6. Establishing National Academies
7. Establishing National Libraries
8. Establishing university chairs for the vernacular language and literature
9. Including the vernacular language and literature in the school curricula

¹ One manifestation of this trend was the writing of literary histories; it is important to remember that national literary histories serve a double purpose of describing the aesthetic as well as politically encouraging the historical development of each respective nation (in a certain sense participating in the creation of the history of the nation). It is this double function that has been at the core of the fact that national literary histories have had much broader dissemination than trans-national ones, even if both trends can be deciphered already at the birth of the modern institutionalized philology in the 19th century.

Modes of textual construction

1. Language revival
2. Translations into the vernacular
3. Writing lyric poetry in the vernacular
4. Collecting and publishing oral poetry
5. Editing and republishing older texts
6. Writing new national epics
7. Writing historical fiction
8. Canonizing national poets
9. Writing national literary histories

At the very end of the second list the notion of literary histories appears. These literary histories shine a light on the characteristic developmental mechanism for the aesthetic of a dawning era. And it is in this area where we discover attempts to canonize earlier writing, attempts which continue well into the period of the new modern aesthetic priorities in a parallel effort.

In Estonia, in the years preceding the First World War literary history, which summed up earlier efforts, was provided by Mihkel Kampmaa. In Latvian culture of the same period, we face a number of new literary histories, most (but not all) of which were written (like Kampmaa's volumes) for the purpose of teaching. To name only some, we have:

Teodors Zeiferts, *Latviešu rakstniecības hrestomātija*, 1905 – 1907

Jēkabs Līgotnis, *Latviešu literatūra*, 1906; *Latviešu literatūras vēsture*, 1908

Roberts Klaustiņš, *Latviešu rakstniecības vēsture skolām*, 1907

Vilis Plūdons, *Latvju rakstniecības vēsture*, 1908 – 1909

Andrejs Upīts, *Latviešu jaunākās rakstniecības vēsture*, 1911

It is especially striking that several of the histories that embodied the task of canonizing the national tradition had been created by writers who themselves at least partly belonged to the new generation of modernists, Plūdons being the most indicative example. The presence of this literary generation was especially influential after the 1905 uprising in the Russian Empire was put down. In their own

creative writing, these authors were looking towards a different set of values – let's call them European values – and making resolute attempts to break with tradition. It is mainly because of this desire to break with tradition that these young writers were labelled decadent and accusations of blasphemy and the like were commonplace.

This was not the first time in the history of East-Central Europe that political crisis provided inspiration for artistic innovation. One of the first such occasions was the development of Polish romanticism in the early 19th century. The Young Poland movement, which preceded similar aspirations in neighbouring countries, was triggered by an unsuccessful uprising in the Russian-dominated area of Poland in the middle of the century. Similarly, the modernist opening in the Baltic countries was linked to the 1905 uprising in tsarist Russia, which turned out to be a catalyst for radical transformations in the aesthetic priorities of young writers.

In this context, it is interesting to evaluate how these tendencies in Latvian culture were reflected in the impressive presence of the Polish modernist author Stanisław Przybyszewski who was at his most influential during the decade preceding the First World War. To illuminate the specific importance of Przybyszewski's writing we must sketch the historical context of his literary activity and mention the places in which the impact of his writing was felt. The first of these places was Germany.

Born in Poland in 1867, the young Stanisław Przybyszewski went to Berlin to study in the early 1890s. There he became both a renowned public figure and a leading member of the circle of young artists, predominantly of German and Scandinavian origin, who gathered in the "Black Piglet" tavern (*Zum Schwarzen Ferkel*). Among the most important personalities of this group were Edward Munch and August Strindberg. Przybyszewski also met the Norwegian woman Dagny Juel there, who later was to become his wife. These personal ties and Przybyszewski's own studies resulted in highly personal essays on philosophy, art, and artists (Nietzsche, Chopin, Munch and Vigeland among others) that soon brought the Polish author recognition in the German literary milieu. His early essays and novels were written in German, thus enabling direct contact with his local audience.

The next place where Przybyszewski's impact was felt was in Scandinavia when he spent some years in the mid-1890s in his wife's homeland, Norway. Although he remained relatively isolated from the literary and artistic life there, his opinions became increasingly well known to the Norwegian artistic community through his published discussions of the works of contemporary authors and artists, including many Scandinavians.

The next step in development was marked by Przybyszewski's return to his native Poland where he settled in Cracow and from 1897 became the editor of the most important modernist journal of that time, *Życie (Life)*. Even before his return to Poland, Przybyszewski had established a close co-operation with the Czech modernist publication, *Moderní revue pro literaturu, umění a život (Modern Review for Literature, Art, and Life)*, published in Prague beginning in 1894 by Arnošt Procházka in co-operation with Jiří Karásek. Through these publications Przybyszewski made a strong impact upon the late 19th- and early 20th-century Slavic and East-European cultures, including the vast Russian culture. Latvia is also squarely on this list.

However, the question we have set for ourselves is this: What was the impact of the strong presence of Przybyszewski's ideas on the Latvian literary scene? How can this be explained and what consequences were derived from it?

In the European context, the Polish author belonged to those writers who made the strongest arguments for the independence of the creative personality. Among other often-quoted expressions, it was Przybyszewski's idea of the "naked soul" of an individual (Nowakowska-Sito 1996: 27), which he constantly expressed in his essays and literary works from the beginning of the 1890s that appeared again and again in Latvian periodicals around and after 1905. For example, the manifesto of the Latvian modernist writers, published in the journal *Dzelme (The Depth)* in 1906, demonstrated direct opposition to the tradition of earlier nationalist writing by explicitly defining art's true purpose as delving into the "soul of the individual", which is like "a lake created by gods". Another manifesto was published even earlier, in 1905, in the foreword to Haralds

Eldgasts' novel *Zvaigžņotās naktis* (*Starlit Nights*) – a book that emulates Przybyszewski's 1896 novel *Homo sapiens*.

But the paradoxical nature of Przybyszewski's impact is brought home to us when we remember that he himself was the representative of a divided country where only the small area under Austrian rule was culturally open and self-reliant. So even in the case of Polish literature the notion of the "naked soul" of an individual was in direct contrast to an earlier national idea. Such an aesthetic was promoted by the nationally-oriented literary historian Bronisław Chlebowski who saw "the historically analyzed content of the *national soul*" (Cornis-Pope, Neubauer 2007: 347) in his own work.

So we can conclude that, if there still is a form of resistance to be discovered in Przybyszewski's writings, it is now completely relocated from the political to the aesthetic realm.

For Latvian literature, which thus far had taken its inspiration mostly from the so-called great cultures, this was an important additional signal for change and re-orientation. Change in aesthetic orientation followed rapidly through the promotion of more intense contacts with other cultures, including contacts with neighbouring countries Estonia and Lithuania.

It is also possible to locate this trend in the wider context of colonial resistance. For example, Elleke Boehmer's book *Empire, the National and the Postcolonial 1890–1920: Resistance in Interaction* (2002) provides several clues for relating the notions of postcolonial criticism and colonial relationships to the Baltic situation of the early 20th century.

First, Boehmer reminds us of the concept of "alterity", in which "the other – here, the brother or sister nation elsewhere in the empire – is simultaneously recognized as being distant and unknowable, yet as an entity pre-eminently to be taken into account, to be signalled towards". (Boehmer 2005: 19) Along with the works of other important literary figures, Przybyszewski's writings were such an anti-colonial signal for the Latvian cultural scene of the early 20th century that was still under the thumb of the Tsar. They were also a testimony to the fact that the self-manifestation of an artist can take not only the form of direct political resistance or promotion of

national ideology, but also that of individual self-fulfilment – a new aspect at the time.

It means that here we can add the observation that diverse forms of resistance stay interconnected under the specific circumstances of colonialism. As Boehmer puts it, “anti-colonial nationalisms [...] took over the premises of modernity (individualism, state-organized politics, and social improvement), yet adapted or married these to both native and other important forms of knowledge for anti-colonial purposes”. (Boehmer 2005: 7)

It is in this context that Przybyszewski’s personality and writing acquire their particular importance as directional signals for a newly distinct “modern culture” that must still establish itself as equal among the other familiar “national cultures” out of which it has arisen, while simultaneously treating the familiar aesthetic norms as targets for change in the modern world.

To conclude, the tension between the canon-creating national literary histories on the one, and modernist trends in art on the other hand, fit neatly into the overall pattern of change during this time period. A developmental dialectic between the “nation” and the “individual” was taking place in which both were moving through the same self-reflective, self-defining processes towards their, by necessity, separate goals.

The next step, which remains outside the scope of the present article, would be to argue – and perhaps to prove – that a similar mechanism might also be discovered at other specific historical turning points when historical evaluation (writing/publishing new literary histories) and aesthetic innovation simultaneously move to the fore as important issues. For the Latvian culture, such turning points in the 20th century could presumably be located in the 1930s, the late 1950s and the 1990s. Quite conceivably these processes would be interrelated with the developmental processes of the other East-Central European cultures.

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*Le canon littéraire entre formation,
transmission et réception. La collection des
«Grands Écrivains Français» (1887–1913)*

En tant que discours constitutif de la littérature, un discours qui se caractérise, selon la vision foucauldienne, par des inclusions et des exclusions multiples, le canon littéraire a occupé une grande partie des débats des trente dernières années. Sa constitution, ses fonctions de représentativité ont été et se retrouvent toujours au cœur des controverses sur le sens du mot «littérature» et sur son rôle dans le monde d'aujourd'hui. Le texte qui suit, en se donnant pour objet une collection éditoriale formée de monographies sur «les plus grands écrivains français» et parue à la fin du XIX^e siècle, se propose de tirer profit de deux tendances de la recherche qui, bien prises en compte, peuvent offrir de nouvelles réponses, plus adéquates à cette question qu'on ne cesse de (se) poser: qu'est-ce que le canon littéraire?

La première de ces tendances, manifestée sous diverses formes et dans divers milieux scientifiques, peut être résumée comme le remplacement progressif d'une vision uniquement discursive des faits culturels (telle qu'on la retrouvait dans le structuralisme français ou le *linguistic turn* américain) par une vision qui de la culture comme une articulation de pratiques et de représentations. Il y a aussi du hors-texte, pour reprendre une expression célèbre, et, comme William Sewell Jr. le disait dans un texte de 2002, le défi n'est plus de choisir entre une pensée textuelle et une pensée non-textuelle de la culture, mais de trouver la solution pour articuler les deux. Pour anticiper sur l'analyse qui suit, le canon littéraire n'est pas seulement une liste de noms (qui sont, dans ce cas, autant de titres de livres consacrés aux plus grands écrivains), mais aussi le résultat d'une pratique éditoriale, parue au XIX^e siècle, celle d'organiser les livres

dans des collections, en leur donnant des caractéristiques communes. Sans prendre en compte ce deuxième volet, on risque de tomber dans le piège de l'anachronisme, qui dans ce cas est de croire que le canon littéraire tel qu'on le perçoit aujourd'hui a existé sous cette forme depuis toujours. C'est à ce défi que cette nouvelle tendance de la recherche (qu'on l'appelle histoire culturelle, à la française, ou *new cultural history*, à l'américaine) veut répondre, et c'est cette vision que la recherche en littérature doit prendre en compte pour qu'elle puisse garder sa pertinence aujourd'hui.

La deuxième évolution, correspondante à la première, consiste dans la reconsidération du livre comme objet de recherche, et la forte poussée de l'histoire du livre comme moteur du renouveau épistémologique produit par l'histoire culturelle. Cette reconsidération est soucieuse de retrouver non seulement le sens des textes qui sont véhiculés par les livres, mais aussi le sens des formes matérielles des livres, des conditions dans lesquelles ces textes arrivent au lecteur. C'est ainsi que la notion d'appropriation est considérée comme l'essence du fait culturel et qu'elle est devenue le fondement de cette nouvelle histoire culturelle du social. Selon Roger Chartier,

L'appropriation vise une histoire sociale des usages et des interprétations, rapportés à leurs déterminations fondamentales et inscrits dans les pratiques spécifiques qui les produisent. Donner ainsi attention aux conditions et aux processus qui portent les opérations de construction de sens (dans la relation de lecture, mais dans bien d'autres également) est reconnaître, contre l'ancienne histoire intellectuelle, que ni les intelligences ni les idées ne sont désincarnées, et contre les pensées de l'universel, que les catégories données comme invariantes, qu'elles soient philosophiques et phénoménologiques, sont à construire dans la discontinuité des trajectoires historiques. (Chartier 2009: 83)

De ce point de vue, le livre ou, dans notre cas, la collection de monographies retrouve son importance dans l'image que le lecteur se fait de la littérature et du canon littéraire. Et c'est cette perspective qui nous autorise à voir le canon littéraire non plus comme un discours figé (et imposé par le haut), et à le questionner non plus seulement du point de vue de ses inclusions et exclusions, mais à essayer de le

penser comme un processus de circulation des idées, dont le sens est à retrouver dans toutes les formes et les conditions de son existence.

D'abord, la formation, c'est-à-dire le projet éditorial initial, son «auteur» et le rôle qu'il a pu jouer, par sa formation, par ses relations et par son travail effectif en tant que directeur de la collection. Ensuite la transmission, c'est-à-dire les conditions matérielles dans lesquelles ce discours est arrivé aux destinataires et les modalités par lesquelles ces conditions ont pu agir sur le sens des textes qu'elles véhiculaient. Enfin, la réception, c'est-à-dire les diverses appropriations dont ces textes ont été l'objet dans l'esprit des lecteurs de l'époque, compte tenu de leur horizon d'attente. Ce n'est donc pas une histoire de la critique ou de l'histoire littéraire, telles qu'elles étaient pratiquées à la fin du XIX^e siècle, qui nous préoccupe (ces monographies seraient considérées sans grande importance dans une telle perspective parce qu'elles ne sont pas... «canoniques»), mais une histoire des formes et des conditions d'existence de ce discours qu'on appelle canon littéraire à une étape essentielle de son existence, le moment de son entrée dans la culture de masse.

Création de la collection

La création de cette collection est liée intimement à la personnalité de Jean-Jules Jusserand, homme de lettres et diplomate de la Troisième République, qui, tout en menant une activité politique au service de son pays (voir aussi Young 2009), a consacré une grande partie de sa vie à la réalisation de son rêve de jeunesse. La naissance du projet est racontée par l'éditeur dans l'introduction au dernier volume de la série, le *Ronsard* de 1913, volume dont il est aussi l'auteur. Dans un récit aux allures romanesques, Jusserand présente son entreprise comme l'accomplissement d'une quête moderne:

Il y a vingt huit ans, comme je gagnais, avec Gaston Paris, un lointain petit bourg qui couronne de ses vieux murs un rocher surplombant le val de Loire, nous passâmes la nuit ensemble sur une de ces lignes ferrées où le luxe des couchettes demeure ignoré. Pour occuper le temps, du soir à l'aube, nous reprîmes un sujet

plusieurs fois discuté entre nous, celui d'une collection à créer de monographies, brèves et simples, qui rendraient plus familière aux Français d'aujourd'hui la connaissance de leurs ancêtres, penseurs, poètes, lettrés. (Jusserand 1913: 5)

Jusserand a eu un modèle pour son projet, un modèle qu'il a connu dans ses années d'élève consul à l'ambassade française à Londres. La série des «English Men of Letters» qui était publié par la maison Macmillan, sous la direction de John Morley, avait sans doute attiré l'attention du jeune diplomate et il avait très bien compris la nécessité d'une telle entreprise dans son propre pays. La série de Morley, vue aujourd'hui comme «un monument de la critique littéraire victorienne» (Korsten 1992), a été un important facteur de la constitution du canon littéraire anglais, un canon qui était à l'époque le résultat d'une vision particulière de l'histoire du pays. Dans une des contributions les plus intéressantes à l'histoire de l'esprit public dans la période victorienne, l'historien Stephen Collini situe la série des «English Men of Letters», avec le Grand Dictionnaire Biographique, comme les expressions d'une «interprétation whig de la littérature anglaise» (Collini 1991). Cette interprétation consisterait en une vision unificatrice et consensuelle d'une histoire qui n'avait pas connu une révolution qui divise l'opinion publique et une défaite qui attise les passions nationales. Mais transposée et adaptée pour l'espace français par Jusserand, l'idée de Morley allait rencontrer un paysage bien plus conflictuel, dont l'expression la plus connue dans l'histoire des idées est le débat entre les images mémorielles de Bossuet et de Voltaire, l'un représentant du héritage absolutiste du Grand Siècle et l'autre incarnation de l'idéal démocratique des Lumières (Jey 1998, 2008¹).

¹ Un exemple pour la réception complexe de la littérature française à l'époque de la Troisième République est le cas de la littérature des Lumières: "The regime's relationship to the Enlightenment was the product of divisions between a generic classification and a mode of analysis that exalted and reconstructed seventeenth-century literature on one hand, and text which in certain respect called this traditional framework into question on the other." Martine Jey, *The Literature of the Enlightenment, An impossible legacy for the Republican School*, *Yale French Studies* 113, 2008, p. 58.

La manière dont Jusserand va répondre à ce défi relève des caractéristiques du projet en tant que tel. Censée fournir une image glorieuse du passe national en même temps qu'une description unitaire du panthéon national, la collection réussit à rassembler tous les grands écrivains du passé, qu'ils soient «absolutistes» ou «républicains», «laïques» ou «religieux». Le but est accompli par le choix des collaborateurs de la collection. L'exemple qu'on peut évoquer dans ce cas est celui du volume sur Voltaire, une des figures les plus controversées de l'histoire de la littérature française à l'époque de la séparation de l'église et de l'état. Au début, la monographie était annoncée comme la tâche du critique Ferdinand Brunetière, grand critique et historien littéraire de l'époque. Le contrat de publication pour le «Voltaire», entre la maison Hachette et Brunetière, avec la médiation de Jusserand, a été signé le 2 juin 1887, presque en même temps que les contrats de publication pour quatre autres volumes qui allaient ouvrir la série (*Victor Cousin* par Jules Simon, *Madame de Sévigné* par Gaston Boissier, *Montesquieu* par Albert Sorel et *George Sand* par E.-M. Caro). En dépit des insistances et des appels de Jusserand (notamment à l'honneur de l'auteur qui devait respecter son contrat²), Brunetière ne va pas écrire sa monographie d'un écrivain qui, «en faisant de la tragédie un instrument de propagande philosophique, a compromis ses qualités d'invention dramatique» (Brunetière 1898: p. 299) à une époque de «déformation de l'idéal classique». Ce n'est qu'après deux décennies, en 1906, que le volume va être enfin publié, écrit par Gustave Lanson, un ancien disciple de Brunetière, devenu professeur à la Faculté des Lettres de Paris et réformateur de l'histoire de la littérature française. Cette contextualisation qui prend en compte une des pratiques spécifiques (la direction de collection) de l'entreprise éditoriale relève les modalités de l'existence du canon par les choix, les décisions et les actions de ceux qui l'ont réellement fait.

² Scrisoare 11 martie 1888 «Cher ami, Nous voila au 11 mars & le Voltaire si impatientement attendu continue de rester à Paris au lieu de rentrer dans le faubourg St Germain qui lui était si familier & où il va trouver un renouveau de vie. Je vous en prie, par tout ce que l'amitié a de plus sacré, hâtez l'achèvement de votre travail, si tant est qu'il ne soit pas entièrement terminé & envoyez au Hachette votre manuscrit.»

Puisqu'il s'agit de la direction de la collection, Jean-Jules Jusserand est parmi les premiers à exercer cette fonction, dans le sens qu'elle porte aujourd'hui, dans le monde littéraire français. On pourrait citer comme précurseur Adolphe Regnier, directeur d'une autre collection prestigieuse de la maison Hachette, celle des éditions critiques des «Grands Ecrivains de la France», publiées à partir de 1862. Le cas de Jusserand est pourtant plus proche de ce qu'on comprend aujourd'hui par cette fonction, parce que sa tâche ne supposait plus un travail philologique comme celui de Regnier qui annotait les lettres de Mme de Sévigné, mais un travail qui le place dans la position d'un «homme double» (Charle 1992). A une époque de changements opérés par l'apparition de la culture de masse, le directeur de collection garde certes les compétences du philologue (Jusserand est docteur ès Lettres, spécialiste de la littérature anglaise), mais il doit être surtout un médiateur entre plusieurs mondes, comme l'édition, les universitaires, les critiques littéraires, les journalistes et celui qui dans la logique du projet est le plus important, le grand public. Ayant établi le plan de la collection, Jusserand doit trouver des collaborateurs et les accompagner dans leur travail; dans la plupart des cas, il doit insister pour l'observation des délais et, comme on vient de le voir, ce n'est pas la tâche la plus facile. Raison pour lui de s'en plaindre dans une lettre à Gaston Paris («ces auteurs manquent tellement de parole!»). Il lit tous les manuscrits («pendant trente-cinq ans, sous une variété de climats et circonstances», Jusserand 1933: 79) et fait des suggestions aux auteurs (en les obligeant notamment à observer la spécificité de la collection, qui ne devait pas être une entreprise philologique, pour les spécialistes, mais une entreprise de vulgarisation, destinée au grand public). D'ailleurs, c'était le contrat avec Hachette qui définissait de manière très explicite toutes ses tâches: «recueillir les adhésions des différents collaborateurs, à leur réclamer leur copie, à revoir et à corriger au besoin leurs manuscrits. Il relira de plus une épreuve en page de chaque volume.» (Contrats Hachette 1887). Il s'intéresse aussi à la réception des volumes et essaie de tenir compte de l'avis de tous ceux qui le lui donnent, bien qu'au début personne n'ait voulu assumer la charge de diriger la collection. La position de Jusserand

est caractéristique de ce que sont les médiateurs dans cet espace culturel. Selon Christophe Charle,

La fonction de ces intermédiaires à part peut être comparée à celles de miroirs sans tain situés entre les producteurs en première personne et leur éventuel public. Pour le public, ils sont censés refléter apparemment à travers leurs critiques, leurs classifications, leurs choix d'exposition, de mise en scène ou de publication les tendances nouvelles qui émergent dans la culture. Face aux producteurs, ils résument, enregistrent, indiquent ou suggèrent les tendances, les goûts, ce qui est acceptable ou inacceptable pour le ou les publics auxquels ils sont supposés s'adresser en fonction de leur position dans le champ culturel. (Charle 1992: 74)

Mais dans une époque de changements déterminés par l'apparition de nouvelles pratiques culturelles, Jusserand est même plus qu'un «homme double», il est un «homme multiple» (Prochasson 1999). Ambassadeur (avec tout ce que cela implique comme devoirs diplomatiques), philologue par passion, (sans avoir jamais été professeur il a écrit des livres et des articles sur l'histoire de la littérature anglaise), directeur de collection chez Hachette, il agit dans plusieurs espaces et parfois il «mélange les genres» (notamment lorsqu'il invite ses collègues du Ministère à contribuer avec des volumes pour la collection). Quel est alors son rôle dans la formation du canon? On a affaire ici avec une nouvelle signification de la notion d'«auteur». Si lorsqu'on considère des histoires de la littérature ou des ouvrages critiques qui constituent le canon littéraire, on doit prendre en compte les choix et les opinions des auteurs individuels, dans le cas d'une collection comme celle-ci, la responsabilité auctoriale est partagée entre les différents auteurs et le directeur de la collection. Les auteurs, tout en donnant leur propre opinion sur les sujets qu'ils traitent, doivent respecter les indications de Jusserand qui est l'intermédiaire entre eux et la maison d'édition. Ces indications relèvent autant de l'orientation générale du livre (telle qu'elle a été établie par le texte-programme de la collection), que d'aspects plus concrets comme le sommaire ou le nombre de pages. Si on la prend en compte de manière individuelle, la monographie a certes un seul auteur, identifiable sur la page de titre, mais comme partie d'une

collection plus grande, une collection dont les intentions sont exprimées dans le contrat de publication et dont les contraintes sont respectées dans la relation auteur-directeur de collection, la monographie a aussi un deuxième auteur, qui est pour tous les 57 volumes, le même Jean-Jules Jusserand. C'est ce deuxième auteur qui donne la cohérence de l'entreprise et impose par plusieurs modalités d'intervention le respect de l'intention originale, celle de produire des ouvrages destinés au grand public. C'est ainsi que, lorsque l'on veut parler par exemple de l'image de Voltaire dans la monographie de Lanson de 1906, il est essentiel de tenir compte que Lanson n'est pas le seul à avoir la fonction d'auteur pour ce volume.

L'intention de la collection a été exposée par Jusserand dans un texte-programme reproduit par la suite à la fin de chaque volume et repris aussi dans les catalogues de la maison Hachette. Cet exposé présentait le poids de la mémoire des grands écrivains dans l'esprit des français de la fin du XIX^e siècle, le rôle que cette mémoire devait accomplir et les modalités par lesquelles son projet allait s'acquitter de ce devoir.

Tout en remarquant que beaucoup d'ouvrages ont été consacrés à ces «hommes fameux», Jusserand constate pourtant que leur présence dans les esprits des contemporains est assez faible. Les causes en sont selon lui les difficultés que rencontrent les lecteurs dans leur commerce avec ces «grands écrivains». Pour le public moderne, dont la vie s'est accélérée et «qui est habitué maintenant à ce que toute chose soit aisée», les anciens traités de littérature et les éditions critiques en beaucoup de volumes, avec appareil scientifique, sont bien sûr «vénéreées, mais rarement contemplées». Ainsi,

L'objet de la collection est de ramener près du foyer ces grands hommes logés dans des temples qu'on ne visite pas assez, et de rétablir entre les descendants et les ancêtres l'union d'idées et de propos qui, seule, peut assurer, malgré les changements que le temps impose, l'intègre conservation du génie national. (Jusserand³ dans Boissier, 1887)

³ J'utilise ici et dans ce qui suit le texte de présentation de la collection écrit par Jusserand et reproduit dans tous les volumes de la série.

Deux observations s'imposent à propos de l'idée que Jusserand formule dans son programme. D'une part, il faut noter qu'il s'agit là d'une nouvelle occurrence d'un *topos* de l'histoire de la littérature telle qu'elle existait au XIX^e siècle, celui des «grands écrivains» comme expression de l'esprit national ou du «génie» du peuple. Dans l'espace français, à partir de l'*Histoire de la littérature française* de Nisard (1844–1856), tous les traités reprenaient cette idée qui devenait le principal critère axiologique pour la littérature du passé. On peut donner aussi l'exemple de l'*Histoire* de Gustave Lanson (1894), une des plus vendues aussi dans la première partie du XX^e siècle, pour qui «la littérature exprime toutes les modifications de l'esprit français» et «le génie de Molière n'est que les qualités françaises portées à un degré supérieur de puissance et de netteté.» (Lanson, 1894: 530). Cette pensée hégélienne de la littérature, qui dominait toutes les historiographies nationales du XIX^e siècle, se superposait à une autre *forma mentis* qui elle non plus n'était pas spécifiquement française, «le culte des grands hommes» (Bonnet, 1998), avec des racines dans l'oeuvre de Plutarque et une expression plus claire à l'époque des Lumières. Dans ce contexte, la volonté de Jusserand de donner «des renseignements précis sur la vie, l'oeuvre et l'influence de chacun des écrivains qui ont marqué dans la littérature universelle ou qui représentent un côté original de l'esprit français» réussit à exploiter un terrain déjà préparé par l'horizon d'attente de son public. Il faut remarquer aussi qu'en 1887, lorsque ce texte a été écrit, Jusserand identifiait (et obligeait les collaborateurs à les respecter) les trois directions dans lesquelles se développera l'histoire littéraire française dans la première moitié du XX^e siècle, cette pratique «lansonienne» qui cherchait à étudier la vie, l'oeuvre et l'influence de chaque écrivain et contre laquelle s'élèvera Barthes dans les années 1960.

L'autre idée importante qui traverse le texte de Jusserand est l'idée du «rapprochement», c'est-à-dire la volonté d'amener plus près des lecteurs ces grands hommes qui «semblent trop lointains, trop différents, trop savants, trop inaccessibles». C'est en fonction de cet objectif que la collection va se développer, c'est cette volonté qui dirigera l'élaboration des volumes et les rapports que le directeur de la collection entretiendra avec ses collaborateurs. Une contextua-

lisation de ce projet nous fait remarquer qu'il se situe dans une époque que Dominique Kalifa met sous le signe de «l'entrée dans la culture de masse» (Kalifa 2001). Dominée par l'apparition de produits culturels dont la vocation proclamée était de toucher le plus large public, cette période (dont le symbole pourrait être la gravure de Vallotton intitulée «l'âge du papier») voit un accroissement du nombre des imprimés, un rôle de plus en plus grand accordé à l'image, de nouvelles pratiques et formes de consommation, en somme un «régime culturel inédit» qui change fondamentalement la société. L'entreprise de Jusserand est un exemple typique pour ce genre de nouveaux produits culturels, qui brouillent les frontières entre la culture des élites et le grand public, et qui sont destinées à renouveler dans la mémoire des lecteurs le souvenir de ces grands ancêtres, «majestés muettes», trop souvent oubliées.

Transmission

Prendre en compte cette réalité nous permet de retrouver le sens que les volumes de la collection ont pu avoir lors de leur publication et d'identifier les dispositifs (stratégies et pratiques éditoriales) qui ont régi leur publication. La transmission devient ainsi une étape dont l'importance dans la formation du sens est tout aussi grande que celle de la production, de la «création». C'est le moment de rappeler la formule fameuse de D.F. McKenzie, «Forms effect meanings», que Roger Chartier explique:

Pour s'en tenir à l'écrit imprimé, le format du livre, les dispositions de la mise en page, les modes de découpage du texte, les conventions typographiques sont investis d'une fonction expressive et portent la construction de la signification. Organisés par une intention, celle de l'auteur ou de l'éditeur, ces dispositifs formels visent à contraindre la réception, à contrôler l'interprétation, à qualifier le texte. Structurant l'inconscient de la lecture, ils sont les supports du travail de l'interprétation. (Chartier 2009: 306)

Il ne faut donc pas s'étonner que Jusserand ait accordé une grande importance à tous ces aspects matériels, qu'il mentionne aussi dans le texte de présentation de la collection. Le nombre de pages, le format, le papier, l'impression, l'importance du frontispice sont autant d'éléments dont il faut tenir compte dans l'appréciation de ces ouvrages et qui nous préservent des fautes de perspective (comme dans le cas d'un récent colloque sur Voltaire, à la Sorbonne, où on a reproché à Lanson de n'en avoir donné qu'un «un petit livre» sur l'écrivain en question.)

Le nombre des pages de ces volumes est un point important dans le projet de Jusserand. Il traite le sujet deux fois, dans son texte de présentation. D'abord, de façon indirecte, lorsqu'il critique les éditions en beaucoup de volumes qui ne réussissent pas à atteindre le public moderne. Celles-ci (on peut deviner qu'il pense aux gros volumes de la collection des éditions critiques de Hachette) ne sont plus adaptées au nouveaux lecteurs ou bien à cause du manque du temps («l'heure qui s'ouvrait vide s'est déjà enfuie»), ou bien à cause des souvenirs scolaires qu'elles peuvent ranimer («le vague souvenir du collège, de l'étude classique, du devoir juvénile, oppriment l'esprit»). Ensuite, de façon directe, lorsqu'il écrit «Les livres seront courts, le prix en est faible; ils sont ainsi à la portée de tous». La volonté de toucher le plus large public par des livres qui ne doivent pas l'intimider est plus importante que la collaboration avec tel ou tel auteur. Dans une lettre adressée à son ami Gaston Paris, il raconte le problème qu'il rencontre lorsqu'un collaborateur ne respecte pas le nombre des pages:

Ainsi d'accord avec les Hachette je lui ai écrit une lettre aussi polie que j'ai pu pour lui dire qu'il avait été visiblement gêné par le cadre trop étroit de la collection (il n'avait cessé de s'en plaindre) & que s'il voulait bien donner à son travail le développement qu'il avait souhaité dès le début, les Hachette se feraient un plaisir de le publier dans leur bibliothèque jaune à 3.50 où il avait une bonne compagnie & à côté de Lamartine lui-même. (Lettres à Paris 55)

D'ailleurs, le nombre de pages du volume est mentionnée aussi dans les contrats que Jusserand et les collaborateurs de la collection sig-

naient avec la maison Hachette. («Chaque volume de format in-16, conforme au spécimen adopté, devra comprendre de cinq à six feuilles d'impressions. Cependant, M. Jusserand se réserve de porter à sept le nombre de feuilles pour cinq volumes à son choix.») On peut voir ainsi comment cette contrainte matérielle imposée à l'auteur du livre peut influencer ses choix et l'organisation de son ouvrage.

Une autre restriction que le directeur de la collection impose aux collaborateurs est de ne pas faire des ouvrages pour spécialistes. Pour cela, il critique «l'idée d'édition en beaucoup de volumes, avec les notes qui détournent le regard et l'appareil scientifique qui les entoure.» Même s'ils donnent «le dernier état de la science et par là ils peuvent être utiles même aux spécialistes», ces volumes sont destinés à un public non spécialiste, voire populaire, ils doivent offrir l'expérience la plus directe des grands maîtres du passé et rien ne doit distraire le lecteur de ce contact. C'est pourquoi des historiens célèbres comme Gaston Boissier disent ne pas se soucier de ce qu'on avait écrit avant sur leur sujet: «Après avoir relu les lettres de Mme de Sévigné, je dirai tout simplement l'impression qu'elles m'ont laissée, sans me demander si je ne répète pas ce qu'on a dit avant moi: voilà toute la méthode que je suivrai dans cet ouvrage.» (Boissier 1887: *Avertissement*)

Une autre intervention matérielle de Jusserand dans sa collection relève de l'utilisation d'un dispositif du livre ancien, l'image-frontispice. Technique qui orientait la lecture des livres classiques, l'usage du frontispice passe par un renouvellement au XIX^e siècle, avec l'invention de nouvelles modalités de reproduction des images qui ont abouti à la photographie. C'est une époque où «toute une rhétorique de l'image se met en place, faite d'emphase et de répétition, de tension et de simplification, et dont le développement accompagne l'édition et la lecture de grande diffusion» (Kalifa 2001:56). Ainsi, explique Jusserand, «une reproduction exacte d'un portrait authentique permet aux lecteurs de faire, en quelque manière, la connaissance physique de nos grands écrivains.» La connaissance par l'image est une connaissance sensorielle plus proche de ce que Jusserand avait l'intention de faire éprouver à ses lecteurs («resserrer les liens et ranimer la tendresse qui nous unissent à notre passé

littéraire»). Le renforcement de la «communauté imaginée», du lien qui existe entre tous les membres de la société passe non seulement par le partage d'une mémoire commune, mais aussi par le partage d'expériences de lecture communes, comme celles des images des grands écrivains du passé.

L'image de l'écrivain qui allait figurer sur la page en regard avec la page du titre est très importante pour Jusserand comme on peut le voir dans un échange épistolaire avec Gaston Paris quand ils devaient résoudre le problème d'un volume où justement ils n'avaient pas d'image puisque aucune image de l'écrivain en cause n'existait. Il s'agit de François Villon, et Jusserand, qui était à l'époque ambassadeur à Copenhague, offre à Gaston Paris quelques options pour combler le manque de portrait de Villon: «si vous ne trouvez pas le cloître St. Benoît et que Montfaucon vous déplaît, je vous signale comme alternatives possibles: 1) une statue de Villon érigée (que je crois) square Monge, à côté de Polytechnique. Sans doute ce n'est pas son portrait mais cela fait partie de l'histoire de sa renommée [...]. 2) Reproduire une vue du cimetière des Innocents. Le Carnavalet possède un tableau [...]». Finalement, le volume *Villon* apparaît avec une image représentant de «jeunes gens et clercs du temps de Villon» tirée du manuscrit 17 de la Bibliothèque Nationale et, dans une note additionnelle, l'auteur Gaston Paris présente toutes les options qu'il a eues et les raisons de son choix: comme tous les portraits existants étaient «de pure fantaisie», «fictives ou erronés», images «passe-partout», en désespoir de cause il s'était rabattu sur une représentation du temps, qui assurait par son ancienneté au moins l'authenticité d'un rapport avec l'époque pour le lecteur.

Le recours au portrait-frontispice apparaît aussi dans les textes par des références que les auteurs font pour argumenter leurs propos. Ainsi, Gaston Boissier, dans son livre sur Madame de Sévigné

Seul, le pastel de Nanteuil, qu'on a reproduit en tête de cet ouvrage, paraît être d'une authenticité incontestable; mais il a l'inconvénient de représenter la marquise quand elle n'était plus jeune. C'est une bonne figure, large, animée, souriante, où se reflètent la bonhomie et l'intelligence, mais ce n'est pas tout à fait une jolie femme. On ne

peut s'empêcher d'être surpris, en la regardant, qu'elle ait eu tant d'adorateurs. (Boissier 1887: 3)

Et, si on avait encore besoin de voir quelle était l'importance de ces portraits pour les hommes de l'époque, il suffit de voir que même dans le compte-rendu d'un volume de la collection, le dernier, celui écrit par Jusserand lui-même sur Ronsard, le jeune Albert Thibaudet se réserve une grande partie de l'article pour commenter les différentes images de Ronsard qui existaient et le choix qu'avait fait l'auteur pour le frontispice du livre. Cela en dit long sur le rôle des représentations des écrivains dans un discours sur la littérature à une époque où elle n'était pas encore entrée dans l'âge textuel. D'ailleurs, Isabel Archer, l'héroïne du roman de Henry James, ne dit-elle pas choisir ses livres sur le critère de la présence de l'image-frontispice?

Réception

Les études sur la réception qui ont vu un essor considérable dans ces dernières décennies (notamment avec les travaux de Jauss et Iser pour le domaine de la littérature) ont dû répondre à un défi qui n'apparaissait pas dans les recherches antérieures: quelles sources peut-on employer pour rendre compte de l'appropriation, toujours plurielle et différente, des produits culturels? Où peut-on identifier les traces concrètes, quantifiables, analysables d'une réception qui, par définition, est personnelle et unique avec chaque récepteur? L'étude des «textes-source» peut se révéler utile, mais quand on arrive dans une situation comme celle décrite par Michel de Certeau, où toute réception, tout acte de consommation constitue à son tour une nouvelle création, la tâche devient presque impossible.

Dans ce contexte, la réception de la collection des «Grands Ecrivains Français» et donc, du discours canonique qu'elle propose, peut être vue de trois points de vue: le premier est celui qu'on pourrait appeler «l'accueil institutionnel» et relève de la reconnaissance que la collection acquiert dans le champ littéraire, le deuxième est celui des tirages et des ventes; qui donnent une idée de

l'accueil fait par le grand public, et le troisième est celui qui est le plus évident, la réception critique, par les recensions et les comptes-rendus des spécialistes.

La reconnaissance institutionnelle de la collection de Jusserand est visible lorsqu'en 1894, sept ans après la publication du premier volume de la série, l'Académie Française lui offre la médaille du Prix Botta, un prix qui n'était d'habitude accordé qu'à des ouvrages individuels. La justification de cette distinction relève de l'importance que le jury reconnaît à l'entreprise de Jusserand: «Cette importante publication ne rentrait pas entièrement dans les conditions du programme, mais elle méritait un témoignage particulier d'estime et de sympathie. L'Académie le lui donne en décernant une médaille d'honneur à son directeur, M. Jusserand, qui lui a consacré tous ses soins.» Ce prix de l'Académie fait passer Jusserand et sa collection par «l'épreuve de la grandeur» (N. Heinich) et le directeur de la collection n'oubliera pas de rappeler dans les volumes suivants, à la fin du texte de présentation, ce prix qui le mettait au rang des producteurs (et des produits) culturels d'élite.

La deuxième possibilité d'évaluer le succès de l'entreprise de Jusserand est le tirage et le nombre d'éditions de chaque volume. Le contrat prévoyait un premier tirage à dix mille exemplaires, mais beaucoup des volumes ont vu plusieurs éditions. Parmi eux, le volume le plus vendu est la monographie de Gaston Boissier sur Madame de Sévigné. Publié le premier dans la collection, en 1887, le livre a vu jusqu'en 1914 8 éditions, ce qui lui a valu selon les mémoires de Jusserand 27 000 exemplaires, «ayant autant de lecteurs que les romans». D'autres volumes ont eu eux aussi plusieurs éditions comme le *Musset* d'Arvède Barine (6 éditions avant la Grande Guerre), le *Victor Hugo* de Mabileau et le *Pascal* de Boutroux (5 éditions).

Les chiffres des ventes sont aussi un indice pour les écrivains qui ont eu le plus grand succès auprès du public. La réussite de *Madame de Sévigné* est assez étonnante si on pense que les écrivains les plus controversés dans les textes d'histoire littéraire étaient Voltaire, le symbole des Lumières, et les grands classiques du XVII^e comme Molière, la personnification du bon sens gaulois, Corneille qui symbolisait la bravoure de la nation française et Bossuet, «le

représentant» de la pensée religieuse et absolutiste (Compagnon 1983, Jey 1998). De possibles explications pour la fortune de *Madame de Sévigné* chez les lecteurs de ces décennies avant et après 1900 peuvent être l'image qu'on s'est fait d'elle tout au long du XIX^e siècle, celle d'une mère modèle qui avait les conseils les plus sages pour sa fille ou le développement de l'enseignement pour les jeunes filles qui marque la période où le livre a été publié. Mais le fait reste comme un exemple de la différence qui peut exister entre les modèles canoniques qu'on essaie d'imposer par en haut, qu'ils appartiennent au canon laïc ou au canon religieux de la littérature, et les options des récepteurs, du public, qui ne répond pas toujours selon les mêmes critères et aux mêmes questions.

La dernière source pour évaluer la réception de la collection est aussi la plus évidente: les articles et les comptes-rendus qui expriment les opinions des critiques et des historiens de la littérature sur telle ou telle monographie. C'est une réception qui se situe du côté des spécialistes et on pourrait deviner que, la collection n'ayant pas de visée philologique ou scientifique, les opinions n'ont pas été tout à fait favorables. Ainsi, le jeune critique Albert Thibaudet dans un numéro de la *NRF* de 1913, traitant de manière assez condescendante la collection dans un article sur le dernier volume de la série, le *Ronsard* de Jusserand:

Ces monographies sommaires sont un peu inégales, et je ne serai pas embarrassé pour y signaler quelques rédactions écolières qui ne valent absolument rien. Le *Victor Cousin* de Jules Simon était pourtant un merveilleux départ. M. Jusserand, lui, a écrit un des plus agréables volumes de sa collection et, sur Ronsard, le livre d'un lettré, d'un honnête homme. (Thibaudet 1938: 18)

Les remarques de Thibaudet son aussi le signe de l'entrée du discours sur le passé littéraire dans un âge de spécialisation et l'histoire littéraire, avec sa critique des sources et ses fiches, était la seule discipline qui avait le droit d'en parler. En même temps, l'époque des grandes entreprises collectives comme celle de Jusserand était passée, la maison Hachette inaugurant avant la Guerre une collection similaire cette fois confiée à un seul historien, devenu un

des plus importants aussi par les livres qu'il avait publié chez Jusserand, Emile Faguet.

L'opinion de Thibaudet a été partagée aussi par ses successeurs, au XX^e siècle, qui se sont plu à ignorer le projet de Jusserand («la mort de l'auteur» rendait impossible de penser la littérature comme une succession de grands écrivains) ou à critiquer les monographies sans opérer l'historicisation nécessaire, tout en travaillant à l'ombre d'un panthéon que Jusserand aussi avait contribué à créer. En utilisant des suggestions venues non seulement de l'histoire littéraire mais aussi de l'histoire du livre et de la lecture, et de l'histoire de la culture de masse, ces quelques pistes de recherche que cette contribution propose essaient de voir la littérature et l'existence du canon littéraire dans une autre lumière que celle «canonique» qu'on jetait d'habitude sur le passé.

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*Semantic Perspective of Semiotics of Silence
in Poetry of Modern Ukrainian Authors
(the End of 20th – Beginning of the 21st Centuries)*

Ukrainian disengagement from the colonial influences in 1991 was a principal incitement for the changes in the cultural sphere. Retreat from the mono-semantic social-realistic modes in writing became the basic thesis for the young literary generation including Yuriy Andrukhovych, Ivan Andrusiak, Sergiy Zhadan, Viktor Neborak, Stepan Protsyuk, Oleksandr Irvanets, Volodymyr Tsybulko, etc. They started to re-think critically the traditional order of things and total irony, deconstruction of stereotypes, word games, parody, carnival, and distancing from a direct dialogue with the reader become main features of these writing practices (Gundorova 1995).

Decentralisation and vanguard aggression against the previous cultural tradition posed a question about non-verbal categories in literature as an aim for modern literary critique in the Ukrainian cultural space. A lively discussion was commenced by the scandalous speech by Volodymyr Tsybulko, a leader of the new generation (born in 1965, published poetical books from 1988), at the Ukrainian writers' congress in Kiev, 1991: he accused the old literary generation of continuing an antiquated writing tradition, refused to speak with "old words which became empty" (Tsybulko 2000: 63–79) and proclaimed NOVOLITERYSM as a search for a modern form of new art expression in the independent Ukraine (ib.).

In the reviews of literary critics and press, he is marked as a "charismatic person in the environment of Kiev pop-bohemia" (Tarnavskij 2001: 4), and as an "art politician, and who doesn't care, and is a cynic, and at the same time holds a flower in his arms" (Ryabchuk 1997: 15), and as a "dreamy poet" (Zhezhera 2003: 24). He lives in Kyiv and Lviv, is president of the art association "New

Literature” and author of numerous poetical books, such as *Піраміда* (Pyramid, 1992), *Ангели і тексти* (Angels and Texts, 1996), *Ангели в піраміді* (Angels in Pyramid, 1996), *Майн Кайф* (Mayn kef, 2000), *Видране. Вигране. Вирване. Випране* (Torn-out. Chosen. Plucked-up. Washed, 2003), *Книга застережень* (Book of Warnings, 2003), etc.

It has been proposed to use semiotic, hermeneutic and psycho-semantic methods with methodological bases of other scientific disciplines (together with an interdisciplinary approach, deeply connected with transitional studies in the sphere of culture and literature) for reading such poetical texts. Furthermore, the interpretation of the silence phenomenon in the intellectual traditions to which semiotics (Barthes 1989, Krejdlin 2004, Eco 1998, Jakobson 1996, Lotman 1998, Poyatos 1992, Virolainen 2003), cultural studies (Bogdanov 1997, Peters 2004), hermeneutics (Gadamer 1991, Heidegger 1993, Ricoeur 2002), psycho-semantics (Leontjev 1999, Luriya 1979, Spivak 1986, Zhinkin 1982) belong, allows us to read texts written by V. Tsybulko, I. Andrusyak, A. Bondar quite differently, providing them with a concrete sense, a concrete purpose and to see that the writers’ addressing the non-verbal categories is not accidental. It addresses the Ukrainian literary evolution, proposing silence as a serious alternative to a dialogue with the reader.

The necessity of change for a traditional communicative process is reflected in the declaration of a Ukrainian critic and poet regarding the emaciation of the modern verbal form: “We want to live in the world without connotations, where a great number of ideologies are hidden. Words, which were greened with senses and meanings, nowadays became yellow and peeled off” (Moskalets 1999: 11). It has been developed in the article “Minute of Silence” by his Belorussian colleague A. Hadanovich, underlining that impossibility to say something atypical by means of customary words forced the authors to be in the steady search of the new form of art expression (Hadanovich 2002: 18). Since writers mentioned that “*слова за себе вже не говорять/ за них контекст говорить більше, ніж самі слова* (“words do not speak by themselves/ context says more than the words”) (Tsybulko 2003), “*в ідкім повітрі слів відлунює вода*” (“the noise of water is in the poisoned

air of words”) (Andrusyak 1996), it is an obvious requirement for the Ukrainian literature to appeal to the non-verbal sphere – to silence.

It has been claimed that silence is a kind of speaking: it should be heard and commented upon. This claim becomes significant for the new generation: utilizing fabulist allegories and experimenting with language polysemy, writers do not articulate all they mean. Moreover, the language deconstruction becomes the most spread principle for silence transmission in the literary text. Since “the colonial language is not able to supple the postcolonial art” (Hadanovich 2002: 17), dynamic linguistic experimenting is converted into a significant one for V. Tsybulko and his colleagues; that is why a semiotical sign of silence can be interpreted as the pathology of consciousness in the poetical books *Ангели і тексти* (Angels and Texts, 1996) and *Видране. Вигране. Вирване. Випране* (Torn-out. Chosen. Plucked-up. Washed, 2003), written by Volodymyr Tsybulko; as a painful numbness in *Отруєння голосом* (Poisoning Voice 1996) by Ivan Andrusyak; and as a wordless Otherness in *Примітивні форми власності* (Primitive Forms of Property, 2003) by Andriy Bondar.

Bogdanov in his monograph *Очерки по антропологии молчания. Homo Tacens* (Essays on the Anthropology of Silence. Homo Tacens, 1997) analyses various forms of silence from the sociological (as inability to speak, aphasia), artistic (pauses and fragmentariness of text), philosophical-religious (experience of isikhazm and Buddhism) aspects and marks that silence is a text which testifies unuttered knowledge) (Bogdanov 1997). Moreover, as notices Poyatos, “...the ultimate goal of non-verbal semiotics (whether it will be the analysis of processes of code of human or animal communication, description of verbal representation of nonverbal signs in separate message, whether explanation of communicative aspects of the punctuation system is in printing artistic texts) always is a culture, and these aspects only help to understand it different displays” (Poyatos 1992: 232).

Impossibility to say today something new by a word forces authors to search for other artistic forms of expression: for the poet, “...важко говорити простими словами про непрості речі”/ it is difficult to talk in simple terms about not simple things; “яка ця

лекстико втомлена” (how this vocabulary is tired) (Tsybulko 1996); that is why there is one way – to submerge in silence. The need for changes in the steady communicative system is highlighted by A. Bondar, writing about the inability to use metaphors in poetry: “я більше не можу собі дозволити писати метафорами/ загравати з традицією і писати про равликів” (I can no longer afford to write metaphors/ flirt with tradition and write about snails) (Bondar 2003). Consequently, metaphor as a categorization of linguistic reality turns into a continued threat on the part of totalitarianism and this perception of metaphorical phrases indicates the loss of “existential content of speech” (Kobylin 2002). Andrusyak in his *Отруєння голосом* (Poisoning by voice, 1996) forms the image of the damaged parts of articulation, whose interaction makes the process of speaking difficult and painful (“пересохле горло/ throat which became dry”; “побілілий шматок язика/ pale piece of tongue”, “губи вусатих ям/ lips of moustached pits”, “задуха в легенях маленької хати/ breathlessness in lung of small house”, “крига слів розкололась/ ice of words is split”, “хтось тихо виплює – люблю/ someone will spit out quietly – love you”) (Andrusyak 1996).

Verbal description of voice-word-silence relationships underlines the role of silence as a special code which is correlated with a message – it is silence on a background expectation of new word. The description of results of colonial influences on people’s mind in poetry in the case of these Ukrainian authors is carried out in the technique of “theater of the absurd” (*The bold soprano* by Ionesco, *Waiting for Godot* by Becket) which includes collage, reflection of stream of consciousness, collision of oppositions; the language of surrounding space as main character of their texts are destroyed and emphasizes in this case the problem of human incommunicability; there is outstanding attention to the analysis of destructive influences of totalitarianism on the human consciousness, what appears in the loss of personality and also the predetermined absurdity of human existence; deep philosophical problems are being resolved in farce forms (See: Klyuev 2002; Narchynska 2005).

Yakobson defined silence in terms of psycholinguistics as a sign of illnesses in tongue-articulatory vehicle: division of words into

pieces, breaking their logical structure and literal perception of metaphorical values make a cause for aphasia and the disintegration of the communicative structures (Yakobson 1996: 30–38). Representation of the absurd model of utterance (Narchynska 2005; Narchynska 2007) in poems by Tsybulko, Andrusyak and Bondar, according to scheme of consciousness proposed by Spivak (Spivak 1986: 85), allows us to talk about the presence of two types of Consciousness in the poetry of these authors: Pathological (Changed) Consciousness and Normal. Therefore, Pathological (Changed) type of poetical narrative in the texts of these authors should be perceived as a mark of the Ukrainian space, infected with aphasia – it is just a stream of consciousness of the nation, infected with the inability to speak (Narchynska 2007) and with the damaged state of the individual consciousness, called in poetry “*місце, де сто – це в першу чергу грам!* a place where 100 means at first 100 grams of alcohol” (Tsybulko 1996), “*при родах вмерла покритка поезія!* poetry, who, born a bastard, died during childbirth” (Andrusyak 1996).

Consequently, if absurd language in the texts of Tsybulko, Andrusyak and Bondar is a language of described Ukrainian space, silence becomes a key for the creation of expression for writers: showing a subject, narrator keeps silent and addresses the attempt of giving voice to his motherland – as a method of overcoming the inability to speak, according to Gadamer’s statement that “it is possible to treat inability to the talk with nothing other, as with an other talk” (Gadamer 1991: 89–90). We can see that the author fulfils the function of a doctor: he silently watches the process of overcoming the inability to speak and only for an moment parts the curtains, to comment on the grave condition of the patient.

The appeal to silence should be perceived as an attempt to create a new type of reader for Ukrainian modern literature. As a fact, the Soviet government proclaimed a project called “mass literature” for increasing the literacy level among blue-collar workers, but really requirements “to write with the right words about right things” was aimed at realizing the concealed policy of transforming the readers of mass literature into “an obedient slave-executor” unsuitable for independent thinking (Yavorska 2001: 11). Moreover, the monograph *Speaking into the Air* by John D. Peters, a modern American

historian, explains the structural role of the author's silence in communication with the reader. Peters underlines that silence as an idea ignores direct dialogue and is based on "ironic playing with word semantic"; it produces the necessary space for the intellectual reader's search: the sense of considered communication consists in ambition to make a perceiver self-made active (Peters 2004).

In this case, silence of modern Ukrainian authors grows into an author's special strategy, while it is possible to perceive "alogical" writing in poetry as no author's voice. That is why, distancing themselves from the colonial tendency to simplify and veracity in art, writers of independent Ukraine select *image and sign of silence* as a rebellion against mass literature through dodging direct answers, playing with allusions, and creating ironic context (See Narchynska 2007). As a result, instead of the passive listener, a generation of Ukrainian authors in the 1990s proclaims the orientation to a new type of the reader, an active participant in conversation with the author and his text.

For instance, paralinguistic semiotics allows us to read the poetry of Andrusyak, Bondar, Tsybulko in oppositions of voice and silence. Their search of new communicative forms, which would draw a borderline between the author and the parodied Ukrainian canon, emphasizes aphasia as an illness of the communicative apparatus of Ukraine through the violation of logical semantic-syntactic connections in a poetic text, and presents *silence as a image* of pathological consciousness, which determines the diagnosis of time of the Soviet times.

Therefore, a critical attitude to the claims about silence as a new form of art expression in poetry of some authors in independent Ukraine should be considered quite seriously: there are significant historical and cultural reasons for its existence. Firstly, the obvious requirement for Ukrainian literature to appeal to the non-verbal sphere was caused by the state's disengagement from the colonial influences and renouncement of the social-realistic modes in writing of the youth literary generation in the 1990s (Yurij Andruhovych, Ivan Andrusyak, Andriy Bondar, Olexander Irvanets, Viktor Neborak, Volodymyr Tsybulko, etc). Secondly, the proposal of silence for independent Ukrainian literature represents a type of

modern art expression coinciding with European literary experience. Thirdly, silence as a kind of literary speaking is a special art strategy addressing Ukrainian literary evolution: it has been proposed as a serious alternative communicative form between the author, the text, and the reader, and aimed at intellectually developing the audience.

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The History of Albanian Literature after World War II. Some Facts toward Its Revision

Albanian Literature after World War II may be considered *sui generis* when analyzing specific features that it manifested. It can be defined of a stumbling relation with literary tradition, an imposition of creative literary method from politics and a complete isolation from the developing world-wide literature. The main features that shaped its specific character are:

I. Literature written inside the borders of the Albanian state was separated from literature written by Albanians living in Kosovo, Macedonia and elsewhere in the Diaspora. As a result of the total isolation of the country, literature suffered its tragic fate too. It was treated as a singled out entity, without retaining any relation at all to literature written by authors living outside the Albanian political border. Albanian writers, tragically, were not able to communicate with Albanian readers in Kosovo, Macedonia and the Diaspora. The impossibility of tracing literary development in those language-related areas reduced chances to maintain further contacts with European and international literature. The communist politics dictated the countries to retain contacts within "legal" relations, "acceptable" influences and the writers whose works could be translated into Albanian departing from non-literary criteria. As a result, there were many translations of Russian writers (because of a certain affection for the origins of communism). A small number of classics were published even though the censorship hardly truncated them. The lack of connections with the international trends of literature turned Albanian literature into a desolate island, having no contacts at all with the outside world.

Even though it has developed in geographic and ideological isolation, contemporary Albanian literature should be analyzed in a broader geographic concept, beyond the narrow national framework.

The main features of literature written in Kosovo were: dissociation from “mother” literature and a part of its literary tradition; lack of information of what was going on in literature on the other side of the border. Before the war, works of some writers from the 1930s could have been brought to Kosovo by students obtaining their education in Albania. After the war, in the 1950s, there was a total blackout of contacts because of the establishment of an oppressive dictatorship in Albania. Though it was stuck between two evils, invasion on the one hand, and the Yugoslavian communist dictatorship on the other, Albanian literature in Kosovo was more receptive to the literary “winds” blowing across the world.

The development of literature in Kosovo suffered no rigid ideological restraints quite contrary of that in Albania. Early emigration helped to increase contacts with the world providing so the convenient ground for the written word to develop in a more cosmopolitan way. Authentic literature in Kosovo felt like being more experimental and reached the readers in many different styles, themes and ideas (Elsie 2001: 203).

A fast developing genre in Albanian literature in Kosovo was poetry. Starting at about the end of the 1950s, writers like Din Mehmeti, Fahredin Gunga, Rrahman Dedaj, Enver Gjerqeku, Azem Shkreli, Ali Podrimja, Besim Bokshi, Eqrem Basha, Sabri Hamiti, among others, gave to literature specific features, quite different from literature written in Albania. In prose fiction, Anton Pashku, Ramiz Kelmendi, Azem Shkreli, Nazmi Rrahmani, Rexhep Qosja, Mehmet Kraja, Musa Ramadani, etc., stood forth.

Many writers in Kosovo were sadly incarcerated, deported, or obliged to live as fugitives away from their motherland. Serb invaders exercised cruellest violence against the intellectuals who used the power of words to affirm Albanian national values. Generally, Albanian writers in Kosovo were free to choose the formal elements like language means, metric, figure of speech (unlike writers living

in Albania), but they had to be very careful in the usage of patriotic and national topics.

Along with Albanian literature written and published mainly in Prishtina, new features could be observed among the Albanians in Macedonia, especially in the fiction and poetry of Murat Isaku, Abdylazis Islami and, later, in the literary works of Resul Shabani, Adem Gajtani, Agim Vinca, Din Mehmeti, Luan Starova, among others.

II. The unnatural dissociation of Albanian literature from an important part of its tradition. The valuable experience of the past was submitted to two contrary processes: the negation of the real values of the writers, literary works and literary trends, on the one hand, and the overestimation of certain authors and literary movements, on the other.

Literary works of the Bejtexhinj writers (*Alhamiado literature*) whose works mark the transition from religious literature of prophetic writers into meditative intimate literature, or entirely laic, were considered “pure means of ideological manipulation (...) through which the invaders intended to shatter ethnic features of peoples, to dislocate language and traditions and even their total assimilation” (Akademia e Shkencave 1983: 59).

A similar negative attitude was held to literature written during the 1920s and 1930s. This literature grew rapidly, detaching itself from the national renaissance, during which the writing of literary works was considered to be “just a literary act to confront the cultural hegemony of the invader” (Elsie 2005: 93). “Catholic educational institutions established by Franciscans and Jesuits in Shkodra, around the second half of 19th century, were efficient during the 1920s and provided the opportunity to create a new intellectual elite in Albania (ib.). Authors like Gjergj Fishta, Shtjefën Gjeçovi, Vincent Prendushi (Çabej 1936) stand close to others, as Leonard De Martini, Pashk Bardhi, Martin Sirdari, Anton Harapi, Justin Rrota (Koliqi 1941), Bernardin Palaj, etc.

Literary works published during these years are evidence of a rapid development of literature. Influence of creative literary directions and trends started to penetrate the work of gifted authors.

Talented writers such as Konica, Noli, Poradeci, Koliqi, Migjeni, Kuteli, and others, became a landmark in the history of literature. Precious contributions to the development of the literature were made by the clerics, who were familiar with tradition and novelty of international literature as a result of their education accomplished in Europe.

The talented generation that gave a new dimension to Albanian literature faced enormous difficulties during the first years of the communist dictatorship. There were direct threats to the lives of the writers who with their work opposed the mechanisms of one of the cruelest regimes in Europe.

Even the most prominent works of Albanian literature could not escape the claws of communist censorship. A new and artificial ideological outlook on reality turned their role into as peripheral as possible or, even worse, effaced them all from history.

Fishta, a distinguished and most influential figure of the first half of the 20th century, who more than any other writer gave to the soul an artistic touch in search of an independent Albanian nation, sank into the abyss of oblivion. After the communist regime was established, Fishta, a Franciscan cleric with a deep knowledge of theology, philosophy, foreign languages (Latin, Italian, Serbo-Croatian), the founder of several literary organizations, secretary-general of Albanian delegation in the Peace Conference held in Paris, vice-chairman of Albanian assembly, decorated by different institutions – *Ritterkreuz Order*, *Al merito* from Pope Pius XI, *Fenix Medallion* by the Greek government, *Lector jubilatus honoris causae*, member of Italian Academy of Arts and Science (considered a “national poet of Albania” and “Albanian Homer” during his lifetime), was condemned post-mortem.

However, oblivion could not totally erase all the deep marks Fishta had already left in Albanian culture. These marks worked against the state machinery of communist ideology. He was charged with treason of the motherland, being an accomplice of the enemy, etc. Finding it impossible to erase his heritage, communist necrophilia went as far as disinterring his bones from the grave and throwing them in the river Drin. It was meant to erase his memory but instead, symbolically through river Drin, Fishta voyaged across the country

and his memory is still alive even outside political borders of Albania, in all countries speaking the Albanian language. *Lahuta e Malcis*, considered the soul of patriotism even though it was banned from being published, became an epic hymn sung in all Albanian-speaking territories.

Other clerics who devoted their lives and knowledge to the national cause, shared Fishta's tragic destiny. Gjon Shllaku, for one, considered as the most accomplished professor, the most outstanding figure of Albanian culture (Pllumi, At Z. 2006: 152), an ardent opponent of the pro-fascist philosophy of Gentile, was arrested while teaching and was executed in 1946 in the same way as his many fellow-countrymen in the years that immediately followed.

Faik Konica and his work suffered the same fate. He is considered to be "probably the most discussed writer in the Albanian history, considered as a pioneer of Albanian modernism, the fiercest critic of the Albanian world, often turned into a myth, especially in the works of romantic writers. He criticized bluntly in his own language the Albanian phenomena of the time and presented to the world in other languages the refined Albanian cultural values: literature, arts, ethnology and history". (Hamiti 2000: 35) The combination of literary talent with his cultural and patriotic activity (the contribution for the establishment of a common alphabet, ambassador and advocate of Albanian issues in the USA, founder of Vatra Society, Albania newspaper, etc.) made him a unique personality in Albanian literature and culture. Appreciation by Apollinaire as a "moving encyclopedia", "an erudite, a polyglot, an active participant, at least for two decades in the activities of European aesthetic avant-gardes" (Lizarrade 2008: 58), is testimony of his universal character.

However, an anti-conformist like Konica could not avoid suffering from the consequences of misinterpretation of his works. He writes in his will "I will not rest in peace if you my lord Noli (Fan S.Noli) and you my little Lame (Sejfulla Malëshova) or any of all those who consider themselves Albanian will not take my corpse to rest in my motherland ..." (Hamiti 2000: 37), but unfortunately his bones were brought to his country only in 1995, at a time when the senseless hatred of the communists for him had faded.

Ernest Koliqi, another distinguished writer, “the intellectual filter through which he passed the Albanian human reality was the filter of a man who had West European concepts of civilization and development” (Suta 2004: 22). A writer with modern symbolist tendencies could not go unnoticed by the strict eye of censorship that considered such tendencies heresy. The follower of “Neo-Albanianism” (a movement aiming at highlighting the special qualities of the Albanian “race”) was accused of being a traitor of his country and his work was left in oblivion for half a century.

Lasgush Poradeci, an emblematic personality, regarded as “one of the paradoxes of Southeastern European literature” (Elsie 2001: 312) – because according to Rexhep Qose “he feels as a romantic, thinks as a classicist, is lonely and spiritually isolated as a symbolist and cautious and fanatically adhered to verse forms as a Parnassian” (Qose 1979: 144) – could not fall prey to the communist clichés, so he ceased to write. The rigid rules of socialist realism could not turn into a slave the only remaining Albanian lyrical writer. He decided to die as a hardy old man who does not recognize and submit to other laws except those of the soul’s freedom.

Fan Stilian Noli, a poet – “innovator in his language and of high inspiration, a playwright, essayist, polyglot and memorable translator” (Lizarralde 2008: 43) – continued to create throughout Europe and America, but was totally isolated from the literary process in Albania and had no influence on it. Although he is acknowledged for his contribution to politics (Noli led the Democratic June Revolution for the replacement of the tyrannical monarchy of king Zog by a parliamentary republic), his works were published years after his death.

Meanwhile, the work of some other writers was misinterpreted. One of them was Millosh Gjergj Nikolla (Migjeni), the writer who distanced Albanian literature from national romanticism and started a completely new path, that of critical realism. Regarded as an individualistic voice of a real social revolt, one of the few authors of the 1930s whose works were considered “worth studying”, he was considered by the post-war Stalinist critics as “a forerunner of socialist realism” (Elsie 2001: 313). Features such as Schopenhauer’s pessimism, his appreciation for the West, his oppressed sexuality and

Nietzschean elements found in his poetry, were suppressed in the post-WW II publications. In spite of misinterpretation, Migjeni “was not a socialist or revolutionary poet in the political sense of the word, despite the clenched fist he occasionally shows. As a consequence, he lacks optimism and a kind of feeling of involvement in political activities.” (Ib.)

On the other hand, the works of the national renaissance writers were overestimated on the basis of non-literary factors such as an open patriotic bias of their writing. Literary studies concentrated on the activity of such writers as Naim Frashëri, Pashko Vasa, Asdreni, Çajupi, etc., in whose works thematic reference function and not the poetic one prevailed. To understand that the treatment of facts and literary personalities was imposed by the political ideology, it is sufficient to mention that in the *History of Albanian Literature* published by the Academy of Sciences (1983) 56 pages are dedicated to the writings of the “National Poet” Naim Frashëri, whereas only a few (to be sure, negative) comments are dedicated to the titanic work of Faik Konica III.

The third feature of the literature of that period is the imposition of the “method” of socialist realism on the majority of writers. This method, fabricated by the ideologues of communism, was applied for about half a century in Albania. Turning socialist realism into a mainstream of artistic creativity is mostly connected with the harshness of the communist dictatorship in Albania. The influence of this method extended not only into literature, but into all branches of art, including painting, sculpture, cinematography, etc. “Although it was considered as a literary method, in reality it incarnated the rules of censorship” (Kuçuku 2008: 194). As its noticeable features, one could mention the presence of the communist party partisanship and class struggle, the portrayal of the positive hero, the historical-revolutionary tendency, etc. Thematically, literature focused on the glory of the freedom gained by the National Liberation War, and new achievements in the development of the country. Regarding writing experience, literary works of that period always mix the language of literary narration with a kind of ideological propaganda.

This is mainly characteristic of novels published in the 1950s.

The method of socialist realism, which started to be processed, exerted and spread in the Albanian environment since 1945, despite the great impact it had on literature, in its essence it was not a real literary trend, also due to the simple reason that it was not the fruit of the writers but of the party ideologists, who deliberately or not, made it obligatory for them. It was interference, an alienation aggression against literature. Its content, function and goal is more clearly seen in the congresses and the meetings of the Writers and Artists Union, where literature, by writers as well, was assessed through the political-ideological eyeglass. (Ib.)

It was due to these notorious congresses that, upon the decision of the Union of Writers, capital punishment was provided for writers and works whose work revealed inconsistencies with the rules of socialist realism. Even inside the same group that kind of malevolence would make Mitrush Kuteli state that: "Professionalism in literature, in our country, is for the time being a path of suffering, its bread is bitter. I say it is bitter, for the one who does not know tricks and hypocrisy. The terrain of literature is a land where snakes thrive. You are killed by your friends as you overdo them. If not, it means you are not capable of literature" (Plasari 1995: 122)

For almost half a century, the violence of the dictatorial state was harshly felt by those intellectuals who dared to object to it either through declarations or press articles or by means of their literary works. Numerous writers suffered from harsh state censorship. Writers were either shot or imprisoned for several years, unless they managed to escape and spend their lifetime in exile.

It is sufficient to mention the case of Kasëm Trebeshina in order to understand the harshness of the communist dictatorship in Albania. His data are apparently contradictory. On the one hand, he is "an early communist, the best commander of the partisans files and on the other hand he is the greatest opponent of the dictatorship, the most courageous and uncompromising intellectual towards the principles of human and intellectual freedom" (*Trebeshiniana* 2001: 48). He is the dissident who wrote in 1953 the minutes addressed to Enver Hoxha and with the same courage he withstood the sentence for the internment, imprisonment in the most notorious communist prisons, and capital punishment. The numerous difficulties in his life

did not have any influence on his writing activity which can be considered an isolated island having nothing in common with the socialist realist stereotype of literature. His works (18 volumes of poetry, 42 plays, 22 novels, novellas, pieces of writing, etc) were not influenced by socialist realism (...) "neither in the form of obsequiousness, conceptions and fear of power, nor as a schematic counteraction of this power. He was self-protected "by finding the path of the writing activity solely through world legacy in art". (Ib. 7). Although his first work, *Artani dhe Minja* appeared in 1959, none of his other works were published until the 1990s.

Arshi Pipa, Sejfulla Malëshova, Musine Kokalari, Trifon Xhagjika, Bilal Xhaferi, Pjetër Arbnori, Astrit Delvina, Frederik Rreshpja, Visar Zhiti were among the writers who shared Trebeshina's fate. They spent a part of their life in the communist prisons and their work was published only after the fall of communism.

One the other hand, such writers as Petro Marko, Vedat Kokona, Shefqet Musaraj, Fatmir Gjata, Sterjo Spasse, Nonda Bulka, Dhimitër Shuteriqi changed their literary style and attitude during their creative career. While at the beginning some of them could have been labelled realist writers, as a consequence of the huge pressure from political reality of the time (censorship and auto-censorship), their works acquired the characteristics of the method *en vogue* of socialist realism. "We need humanistic literature," Nonda Bulka (Bulka 2000: 241) stated, but the humanist ideal was often replaced in the works by the communist stereotypes of a warrior and a worker.

At the end of the 1950s and especially at the beginning of the 1960s one can observe the first steps taken to distance Albanian literature from the stereotype of socialist realism. The publication of the novel *Hasta la Vista*, by Petro Marko brings in a different atmosphere and sensitivity. Two years later his novel *Qyteti i fundit* was published (the only uncensored novel of this writer) aiming at avoiding schematics. Later on Ismail Kadare published his novel *General of dead army* (1962), which along the path anticipated by the novels of Petro Marko, would rise to an international level. (It was to be the first Albanian work to be translated into French in 1972.)

Following the novels by the above-mentioned two writers, during the 1960s a number of writers would consolidate the new tendency in the Albanian novel, looking for other ways of mirroring the Albanian world. In the field of prose fiction, such writers as Jakov Xoxa, Dritëro Agolli, Dhimitër Xhuvani, Ali Abdihoqha, Skënder Drini, Sabri Godo, and Vath Koreshi could be mentioned, whereas the peak of lyric poetry was achieved by Fatos Arapi, Ismail Kadare and Dritëro Agolli, followed by a new generation of talented poets. Notwithstanding the strict ideological circumstances, quite a number of outstanding books were published. As Kadare explains: “We propped each other up as we tried to write literature as if that regime did not exist. Now and again we pulled it off. At other times we didn’t. The idea we could create a few mouthfuls of spiritual nourishment for our imprisoned nation filled us with the joy” (from the speech that Kadare held in the ceremony where he won The Man Booker International Prize, 2005).

Contemporary modern features in Albanian literature started in the 1950s and developed gradually at a time when European literature revealed processes which came to be called postmodernism. Contemporary modernism was not clearly expressed in Albania until the 1990s, because a huge part of literary works remained unpublished as a consequence of the communist censorship or the auto-censorship of the writers themselves. The aforesaid is exemplified by Kasëm Trebeshina’s *Odin Mondvalsen* (written in 1956, published in 1992), Kadare’s *Qorrfermani* (written in 1984, published in 1991), *Ëndrra mashtruese* (written in 1985, published in 1991), Primo Shllaku’s *Lule nate* (written in 1970–1990, published in 1994), *Edhe fjalët shkajnë në ferr* (written in 1970–2005, published in 2005), etc. On the other hand, after the 1990s, a considerable number of works published in Kosovo and Macedonia penetrated Albania thus complementing the image of modern Albanian modern literature: A. Pashku’s novel *Oh* and the volumes of his short stories *Kulla* and *Kjasina*, R. Qose’s *Vdekja më vjen pej syve të tillë*, M. Camaj’s *Karpa* and *Palimpsest*, Ali Podrimja’s *Dhimbë e bukur*, *Lum-Lumi*, *Torzo*, *Ishulli Albania*, Azem Shkreli’s *E di një fjalë prej guri*, *Bibla e heshtjes*, *Nata e papagajeve*, *Lirikë më shi*, etc.

We can conclude from the above-mentioned facts that the History of Albanian Literature has to be necessarily revised with maximum objectivity.

The Re-writing of History of Literature must not be done only for ideological motives, as pretended by some who are not real historians of literature, but for a range of scientific motives. Therefore, the limitations of the inherited History of Literature include, in their extreme ideology, a deformation of the historical flow of the literary production, thus a missing professionalism. (Dado 2008: 166)

The filling of the gaps in the “Mendeleevian” table should represent the totality of periods and creative personalities in the field of literature and the total analysis of the evaluation of the creative literary work of the post-war period and its re-evaluation on the basis of the most advanced of the contemporary world studies on literature (Neziri 2004: 10)

The threat to ethnic values due to the alienation of facts is an evil that has accompanied the past of Albania. It is sufficient to mention such facts as the change of borders, the efforts to appropriate historical characters, false myths of the late influxes of Albanians into the Balkans, massive cleansing campaigns in the ethnic lands, assimilation, etc. However, when danger derives from the self-alienation of historical facts, the consequences become even graver: a nation with a fabricated history is always prone to be misunderstood.

Therefore, the necessity to re-write the history of a nation is an obligation to oneself, in order to clarify the “mirage” that inhibits the recognition and understanding of the values of Albanian literature.

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*Portuguese History of Literature:
The Memory of a Nation's Cultural Identity*

Modern historiography has shown that the discourse of history, because it gathers in itself so many other discourses, is highly complex and subjective. If we add to it the need the historian has to use his imagination to fill in the gaps left by history, we can easily understand the proximity between the history discourse and that of fiction. Therefore, the configuration of a given historical situation results from the production of a plot, of its explanation and consequent political interpretation, which, in its essence is a discursive operation. This same discourse, be it more directed to the social history or to the literary history, depends, to a great extent, on the ability expressed by the historian to remember and select the historical moments that he decides to express in his texts. While undergoing this selection, the historian engages in a compromise between what he decides to remember and what he chooses to forget, which imprints in the historical discourse a subjective and selective character. It is in this context of production and fixation of pasts that societies reinvent themselves in their own identity as imagined societies, especially in the creation of what is known as the literary spaces of tradition, or, to use Pierre Nora's expression, the "lieu de memoire". This space allows the construction of a cultural memory, which, ultimately, determines the cultural identity of a whole nation.

This memory expresses the way multiple images of the past are communicated and shared by the members of a community when they engage in public acts of remembrance, or when the available means of communication establish the connection between the event and its audience. In his groundbreaking 1988 essay "Kollektives Gedächtnis un Kulturelle Identität", Jan Assmann presented a definition of cultural memory as

the characteristic store of repeatedly used texts, images and rituals in the cultivation of which each society and epoch stabilizes and imports its self-image; a collective shared knowledge of preferably (yet not exclusively) the past, on which a group bases its awareness of unity and character.¹

Literature is a privileged means of mediation and a powerful contribution for the circulation of cultural memory given that, every time we talk about human memory we are referring to a verbal or textual construct. Recollection has as its most privileged means of transmission the written word. While looking into the past, we do it searching for a lost time, a time that corresponds not so much to the lived past, but to a past that is idealised from the present. This process of historical inversion corresponds to a projection into the past of an ideal that is not lived in the present. Usually, that ideal is not lived because the subject is not able to do so. The memorisation of a past crystallised in important and huge impact moments makes us forget much of what actually happened and engage in a distorted memory conditioned by the desire and by the constant reorganisations that memory is subject to.

In a culture that is more and more obsessed by memory, understanding that the process of remembrance is a process of subject constitution may help us understand the need to produce so many editions of Literary Histories of a culture or a country. Through this process of memory we are able to simultaneously participate in the past and in the present and, frequently, understand the future implications of what we remember.

As Pierre Nora underlines, the modern age is witnessing the omnipresence of memory in its vocabulary, in its collective gestures, alas, in the mental geography we inhabit the world with. In the last decades every nation and every family, social or ethnic group has suffered a change in the relation that they traditionally kept with the past. This change can assume and, in fact has assumed, a diversity of

¹ Herbert Grabes. 2008. *Cultural Memory and the Literary Canon*. – Nunning, Ansgar and Erll, Astrid, *Cultural Memory Studies*, Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, p. 311.

historical fulfilment: the critic of the official versions of history and the recovering of former suppressed areas, the recollection of once forgotten past signs; the growth of interest in one's roots and in the genealogical research, as well as all kinds of celebratory events of historical dates and new museums and archives. This intricate web of mnemonic worries has made our feeling of belonging more complex, and has set as a collective purpose the establishment of our individual and collective consciousness. I believe it is fair to conclude that this omnipresence of memory is closely tied to a kind of "historical acceleration": indeed, the most prominent characteristic of the contemporary world is no longer continuity, the permanence or the ontological safety, but rather a liquid post-modernity that throws us into a past that is more and more suffocated by the storm of progress that, in turn, has clashed with the unity of the historical time.

The representation of Portuguese literature in a historical perspective through the several editions of *Histories of the Portuguese Literature*, besides contributing to the edification of the national cultural memory, is also a way of establishing a strong connection between the valuable number of past items and the myths and the legendary narratives, thus creating and keeping the national canon. The collective canon widely determines, after all, what remains in a society's cultural memory, and this again influences the view of the present and the future. (...) Harold Bloom in his apocalyptic vision of the future of the "Western Canon" frankly admits that "canons always indirectly serve the social and political, and indeed the spiritual, concerns of the wealthier classes of each generation of Western societies".²

Since Portugal lived a long and troubled period under a dictatorship that strongly conditioned the way that, through decades, literature was produced and analysed, I considered thoughtful to carry on an analysis that would evaluate how literature was looked at by critics and historians, as well as the influence that a politically moralising discourse had on the structure and the register used to build several editions. For the purpose I analysed all the volumes

² *Ib.* 312.

published between 1960 and 1985. In these volumes I focused on the chapters concerning the medieval period and, more precisely, the work of Fernão Lopes, one of the most prominent chronicle writers of the period. This author was chosen because he is one of the canonical authors of Portuguese literature, and because he described in his chronicles the 14th century that comprised periods of political and social instability which culminated in a civil war, but also periods of great popularity and prosperity, such as the Discoveries. Being the chronicle writer nominated by the king, while writing the chronicle of King John I, Fernão Lopes not only makes use of narrative and fictional devices, but he chooses as a hero not a king or a nobleman, but the collective hero known as people.

It is therefore a very interesting author, as an historian he writes as a novel writer, as a king's protégée, he chooses the people as historical and fictional heroes. Besides that, he was also the influence of many novel writers, particularly during Romanticism.

I found 42 editions of Histories of Portuguese Literature. These editions correspond to the work of 15 authors. Of these, António José Saraiva and Oscar Lopes are the two that wrote most editions (18). The other excelling author is António Barreiros (7). To these I added two other editions that correspond to another period of publication but which allowed me to verify, in a compare and contrast exercise, the main structural and discursive differences between the study group and a more recent approach to the Literature History. I am referring to an edition of 1987 by Saraiva and Lopes and the Critical History of Portuguese Literature, the volume on Medieval Literature by Aida Dias, from 1998³.

The analysis of these editions aimed at verifying the following premises:

- i) Find evidence of a patriotic political discourse, typical of a dictatorship, as the one lived in Portugal from 1933 to 1974;

³ The bibliographic sources under analysis will be referred to by means of letters as source A, B, C, etc. To make the correspondence easier, the correspondence can be found next to the general bibliographic list at the end of the text.

- ii) As a contrast, find evidence of a discourse based on freedom of expression, especially in the editions around the period of the revolution that set the beginning of the democracy, in 1974;
- iii) Editions that would show themselves more compromised with issues of political nature more than with aspects of historical or literary nature;
- iv) Some clues that might corroborate the initial thesis that these texts may work as vehicles of national politics and legitimisers of “useful pasts”.

The seven editions by António Barreiros keep a structural and discourse balance and are quite uniform. From the first edition in 1965 to the last in 1974, there are no significant differences in the way data is presented. There is an introduction section, before the chapter that focuses on Fernão Lopes, which sets the period context and refers to historical issues and some minor issues concerning the Portuguese language. As for the chapter itself, it is mostly of a didactical nature. Occasionally, it includes some guidelines as to how to use the information in class situation, referring for that purpose to the national curriculum of Portuguese language. It establishes as target reader, students and teachers. The type of language found in these editions is a moralising language that intends to influence a patriotic behaviour, in defence of the country and of the values that, in the past, made of Portugal an important nation. It is interesting that, aside from excerpts in which the defence of the nation is made, there is a section devoted to the topic of “Nationalism”. Some passages that can be given as examples of this type of discourse are:

The mother homeland that generates and defends all its inhabitants is a society that provides shelter, protection and salvation as the Church does. (C3: 225)

The collective salvation, that gathers itself to the life of the nation, is above parents and brothers, above all personal interests. It only obeys an imperative: the common wealth. (Ib.)

For the first time the Nation belongs to all. It has gained consistency and from now on it is no longer the nation that belongs to a king but a king that belongs to a nation. (C3: 226)

The nationalistic awareness of the Portuguese people that had been developing for a long time, had now reached its top. (C2: 206)

For the first time the nation belongs to everybody... (C4: 226).

The excerpts presented follow a chronological order that starts in 1965 and ends in 1973. It is interesting to verify that, in spite of a certain balance in the use of vocabulary and register, there is a change of approach when it comes to the treatment of the concept of nation. Even though the term is used in all the editions, it acquires a more democratic meaning in the editions close to the revolution period. Nevertheless, there is contention in the strategy because the last edition was still subject to censorship.

Most of the other authors kept to the same strategy and brought no innovation to this field of writing. The language they used reflected the political rules of the period and showed a rather innocuous attitude towards the implications that their texts might have had. However, the mentioned duet, Saraiva and Lopes, who published a new edition of the History of Portuguese Literature almost every year (from 1960 to 1985 we find 18 reeditions) show a concern in keeping their material updated and in providing more and more information on the subject. The purpose of these editions also varies because the targets are no longer only the students and the teachers but a more general audience that cares about issues of literary nature. More than creating a didactical instrument, the authors aimed at creating a publication which could not only organise and present the national canon but also determine it.

Therefore, it is possible to observe an evolution in the discourse used as well as in the approach to the author (Fernão Lopes) and his work. It seems clear from the first edition that the authors were aware of the importance of their work. They knew that they were writing a book that would be fundamental for the determination of the national literary canon. Simultaneously, and rather contro-

versially, there is independence between the discourse used and the period of publication. Although the editions analysed were published mostly in the dictatorship period, therefore, object of censorship, they managed to keep the necessary distance and maintain a non-politically committed discourse which provided them the necessary modernity to make of themselves a reference in the field of literary studies.

There is an evolution from the first editions, mainly focused on the author and the last more interested in evaluating the importance of the works and in their literary and historical validation. Let us focus on some of the passages:

Fernão Lopes exceeds the medieval historian. If it is true that some of his work is a compilation of former memories, it is also true that the other part is the result of an original and critical research. (F3: 116; F7: 124)

The greatness of Fernão Lopes as an historian rests, mostly, in his multiple vision of the events and the facts. (F3: 120; F5: 131)

The communion of the author with the ethnical group (which is also a social group), in a destine and in an historical reason, is what makes the chronicles, more than a simple narration, more than a simple romantic history, a true poem – something that translates the feeling of a meaningful totality (F7: 136; F8: 140).

It is possible to verify that there is a concern in exhorting the work produced by the author. There is a clear intention in assuring a canonical place for Fernão Lopes. For his work, and for his exceptional characteristics as an historian, Lopes accomplishes the perfect symbiosis between recounting the history and the creative ability of an epical poet. With the purpose of showing this evolution in the approach chosen by the writers from an author based approach to a work analysis approach, I would like to share some passages from the edition of 1987.

With this material it was possible for him to make a correction and to be critical about the existent memories, using a method that anticipates the one to be used two or three centuries later.

His interest focuses on the people that make things move rather than on the things themselves. (F9: 124)

He can be considered the first Portuguese historian, the first that more than compiling historical material gathers information about the data sources and analyses them critically. (F9: 125).

It seems clear that the foci of the authors are issues of critical nature about the notion of historian, using for the matter, a less compromised and emotional language. The point is to make the reader concentrate on the analysis of the literary work and not in producing judgement evaluations. It is interesting as well is to note that the section about the nation that was present is almost all the editions from the other authors now disappear. The focus is now on the analysis of stylistic and genre issues closely related to the classification of the chronicles as epical works.

Even though I did not find an explicit moralising political discourse, it became clear that through the description and the exhortation of a troubled period of the Portuguese history, through the acclamation of its hero, the people, the studied authors were interested in making the reader aware of a need to change. In spite of being a common strategy, it becomes more explicit in the school editions. As Gabriel Núñez Garcia refers in his article “Las Historias de la Literatura y la Enseñanza Publica”⁴:

It is always school that determines the advances of literary research and, on the other hand, it is through teaching that literature, with its critical component, influences more people.

I can though conclude that the analysed editions are part of a traditional approach to literary history that has the goal of maintaining some style and convention as far as literary creation is regarded. The repetition of a

⁴ In Leonardo Romeo Tobar (ed.). 2004. *Historia Literaria/ Historia de la Literatura*, Zaragoza: Prensa Universitaria de Zaragoza, pp. 303–312.

structure and of linguistic forms, with the aim of restricting and institutionalizing the description of the past are good examples.

By using a prescriptive approach, these editions try to determine in the present what is to be written about the past, and they do it by establishing a selective construction of that same past.

Mario Martín in "Historia de las Culturas Literarias: Alternativa"⁵, says that the hermeneutic approach to the history of literature determines that the historian should be able to discern between those that are the declared intentions of the human agents, the recognition of those intentions in the text, and its intention as a cultural artefact. In other words, the historical truth is not found either in the representation of the author or of his intentions, or the detailed analysis of the text. It is found in the dynamical movement between one and the other. It being so, it is possible to evolve from a traditional historical-literary traditional approach to an effective historical-literary approach. In this perspective, the *Critical Literary History* by Aida Dias is the one that comes closer to this effective approach. Using a structure that differs completely from the rest of the analysed editions, this one concentrates on the movement between author and the text searching, through the contribution of several literary critics, for the many voices and the many possible analyses. While doing it, we lose the doctrinaire and formative voice that was present in the older editions, but on the other hand we gain, because we establish a reciprocal relationship between a contextualised literary past and the awareness as readers that we are being influenced by that same past. There is a national legitimacy that is being consolidated and that, in time, will become part of our cultural identity.

These texts, besides conveying messages that, either by comparison or explicit compromised messages try to modulate and influence social attitudes, are fundamental for the selection and presentation of useful pasts. Although I did not come across texts of propagandistic nature or that openly defended a political regime, it became clear that by describing the noble deeds and the social ideals of the end of the 14th century, these texts clearly contribute to the determination of our cultural memory and, consequently, of our cultural identity.

⁵ Ib. 123–218.

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