

## Literary History

— A Comment on Some Problems in Literary Historiography with reference to Anna Balakian, ed., *The Symbolist Movement* (1982).

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It cannot be denied that the large histories of literature, written by single authors and encompassing literary production from its very first manifestations up to contemporary times, belong to the past, and most probably will not make a come-back. Apparently the age of Gervinus, Taine, De Sanctis, Symonds, Lanson and Te Winkel is over.<sup>1</sup> There are various reasons why this kind of historiography has been abandoned, and they are interesting enough to be discussed in some detail.

1. By far the most important reason seems to be a change in the conception of the object of literary history, the very material to be examined, and, as a corollary, doubts about the validity of scientific explanation with respect to literature. The concept of the text as a "document" (as defined by Taine),<sup>2</sup> was qualified by Lanson, who insisted on distinguishing "the literary monument from the historical or philological document"<sup>3</sup> and finally superseded by the notion that the literary work be considered a "monument" (first suggested by T. S. Eliot, later endorsed by René Wellek and others).<sup>4</sup> Both in French and English — as well as in German and Dutch — "document" and "monument" are handy labels. The term "document" points to a positivist treatment of the text as an historical fact revealing other facts, whereas "monument" refers to an immanent (*geistesgeschichtliche*) approach of the text as a phenomenon loaded with value but immediately accessible for qualified readers in spite of the historical distance. The dichotomy document/monument, however, has consequences that transcend distinctions with respect to the literary text. It refers also to different conceptions of

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scientific research: on the one hand a scientific (or even scientific) attitude, which does not fear to dissect, analyse and compare, and on the other a search for illumination and aesthetic experience, a respectful "approach" of a unique structure which never can be fully grasped and cannot be divided into parts under penalty of destroying its "essence."

The difference between positivist historiography and the hermeneutic inclination to ignore historical distance entails different positions with respect to scientific explanation. In his essay on the origins of hermeneutics, published in 1900; Wilhelm Dilthey emphasized the individual quality of knowledge in matters of culture, stressing the value of the personal experience in the interpretation of art. He added that the understanding of a work of art is relative only and can never be complete.<sup>5</sup> Dilthey sharply distinguished between the natural sciences which rely on data that can be measured and counted, and the humanities ("Geisteswissenschaften") which in their explanations must appeal to a living spiritual experience ("seelische Lebendigkeit").<sup>6</sup> When he declared that "understanding is an unending task,"<sup>7</sup> he must have foreseen difficulties with respect to the accumulation and transferability of interpretive results, with unmistakable negative consequences for the writing of literary history.

One may wonder why the positivists believed that knowledge of literature could easily be accumulated and exchanged. In fact, the problems they were interested in were quite different from those studied by their hermeneutic successors. They were interested in the genetic aspects of literature, the conditions under which it was produced. Or they investigated literature as a representation of a particular way of life or national glory, as a source of knowledge about the past and other peoples. Hence their many contributions to the discovery and philological interpretation of medieval and oriental literature. Relatively little attention, however, was paid to the literary text as capable of inducing an aesthetic experience. Indeed, the positivists were one-sided in their study of literature, but so were their successors in their exclusive defense of the text as conveying aesthetic value, losing almost all interest in the genesis and sources of literature or its representational function, and separating the aesthetic experience from its historical moment of creation and reading.

Apart from the problem of hermeneutic understanding and the conception of the text as a unique and in the last instance unexplainable structure (1), however, there have been other obstacles to the writing of literary history, such as prejudices against certain aspects of literary

communication (2), problems of selection and evaluation (3), and the dilemma of historicism and presentism (4). These problems are to some extent related to the legacy of hermeneutics. I will finally present some suggestions for a way-out of the impasse (5), and conclude with a discussion of a recent attempt at literary history from an international point of view, *The Symbolist Movement*, a collective publication edited by Anna Balakian (6).

2. As appears from the differences between the positivist and the hermeneutic approaches to literary history, the aspect or aspects of literature that the historian wishes to examine should be clarified before he can set to work. He should explain which parts of literature and literary life have his interest: the sources and production of the text, its structure, the world represented in the text, thematic and compositional conventions (the literary codes), the distribution and reception of the text, the aesthetic effect, the whole process of literary communication, or perhaps other topics. It appears to be extremely complicated to treat all these aspects at the same time; at least I do not know of any literary history that has succeeded in doing that.

In recent times various attempts have been made to boost literary historiography by redefining its object, usually in global terms, as if the validity of the results of historical research depend on the comprehensiveness of the subject-matter to be examined. Some programmes that were developed were either arbitrary in their exclusion of other possibilities, or too general for being practicable. I shall briefly refer to proposals by Roland Barthes, Hans Robert Jauss, and Michael Riffaterre.

In his essay "Histoire ou littérature?" — first published in the journal *Annales* in 1960 — Roland Barthes offered two options to the student of literature.<sup>8</sup> One is that he should deal with the production, communication, and consumption of literature, the various institutions which determine literary life, and the techniques, rules, rites, and mentalities shared by those involved in literature; but he should ignore the personalities, the individuals, the great names. This part of his programme is in agreement with the philosophy of *Annales*, and also fits well into recent tendencies in the study of literature, which emphasize the role of the text in literary communication as well as the examination of codes. It is, however, not specific enough for giving guidance to historical research with respect to literature, and has not inspired Barthes in his own research. Barthes' second option, evidently preferred by himself, is more problematic: the student of literature is to investigate the creative act and the personality of the writer, but should rather neglect the conditions and rules of literary communication. The

literary text is to some extent "trans-historique" and, as such, immediately accessible ("disponible").<sup>9</sup> The two approaches cannot be combined. In the first case the student of literature is an historian and not particularly committed, in the second case he is an overtly committed critic.

Barthes' distinctions are rather artificial. There is no reason why the creative act cannot be studied systematically and by scientific means. Resorting to psychology is not as dubious as Barthes appears to believe. If the creative act by definition is subjective, it does not necessarily follow that it is impervious to scientific exploration. In fact, literary creation can be subsumed under the heading of the production of literature, which is covered by the first part of Barthes' programme. His preference for subjective criticism — notwithstanding its being contained by a structural framework — resembles Dilthey's insistence on a "living spiritual experience." It prevented Barthes from contributing to literary history.

Hans Robert Jauss has redefined the object of literary historiography in different terms. In the revised edition of his inaugural address at the University of Konstanz, now available in English under the title "Literary History as a Challenge to Literary Theory,"<sup>10</sup> Jauss described and criticized both the Marxist and the Formalist views on literary history for being preoccupied with the aesthetics of production and of representation. He argues that "they deprive literature of a dimension that inalienably belongs to its aesthetic character as well as to its social function: the dimension of its reception and influence."<sup>11</sup> The study of aesthetics of reception aims at establishing links between the work of art and the general process of history. Jauss expands the object of literary historiography, but the question should be raised whether this has cleared the way for the writing of literary history.

Like Roland Barthes, whom he quotes,<sup>12</sup> Jauss does not clearly separate the role of reader and researcher in the examination of particular texts. Although critical of his teacher Hans-Georg Gadamer on minor points, he never severed ties with the hermeneutic tradition. On several occasions he professed the belief that empiricism and hermeneutics can be conciliated,<sup>13</sup> but his empirical approach is destroyed by onesidedly relying on his own preferences and taste. The question-and-answer play he wishes to enact is concerned with "my questions about form and meaning," and with answers by other readers, as far as they "confirm or question my aesthetic judgement."<sup>14</sup> Jauss deplors that some professional readers tend to ignore their personal experience of the work of art, and with rhetorical acumen advocates incorporating the experience of "geniessendes Verstehen"

(understanding by way of enjoyment) and "verstehendes Geniessen" (enjoyment by understanding) into the act of interpretation.<sup>15</sup> Dagmar Barnouw's criticism of this hermeneutic legacy, which can be traced back via Gadamer to Dilthey, seems correct.<sup>16</sup>

Jauss, we must conclude, does not want to restrict himself to the first, historical part of Barthes' programme, nor to an examination of conventions, symbols, and myths, as proposed by Northrop Frye.<sup>17</sup> Although shackled by his hermeneutic preconceptions, Jauss is a brilliant interpreter of literary works belonging to the Great Tradition. On several occasions he has shown the virtuosity which Dilthey considered a prerequisite of the interpretation of a work of art, but his hermeneutic bias have prevented him from establishing reception history on empirical grounds. His position resembles that of Roland Barthes. Notwithstanding their differences, both were aware of the impasse of literary history and both were afraid of the pitfalls of positivism. As both, however, remained in the grips of the hermeneutic tradition, neither of them was equipped for the writing of literary history, in spite of their redefinitions of the object of historical research.

Michael Riffaterre has been more consistent, and also more precise in his defining the object of literary history. In order to check the possibility that literary history would "degenerate" into a history of ideas or into sociology, he favours a formal analysis of texts. Moreover he advocates the study of the reception of texts, arguing emphatically, but not quite convincingly that "le phénomène littéraire ne se situe pas dans le rapport entre l'auteur et le texte, mais bien dans le rapport entre le texte et le lecteur."<sup>18</sup> Evidently, Riffaterre is more interested in readers' reactions than in the author's intentions, more in the reception than in the production of texts. One might object that Riffaterre has dealt repeatedly with aspects of text production and point out that our quotation has been taken from a book entitled *La Production du texte* (1979). When Riffaterre, however, discusses text production he usually examines stylistic devices, keeping away from the intentions or psychological motivations of the author. In his *Semiotics of Poetry* (1978), too, Riffaterre maintains unmistakably that "the literary phenomenon [. . .] is a dialectic between text and reader. If we are to formulate rules governing this dialectic, we shall have to know that what we are describing is actually perceived by the reader."<sup>19</sup> The reader's response is carefully analysed by Riffaterre. He distinguishes clearly between a reconstruction of the original meaning of a text as experienced by its first readers, and the reconstruction of the codes of later readers, which will differ more from those of the first readers as the

temporal distance between production and reception of the text increases.<sup>20</sup>

Riffaterre emphasizes that it is only the reader's response that can provide grounds for an explanation of literary facts. Writers, however, are also readers, and their responding to texts may quite well result in the production of new texts. Reception and production are closely interrelated. Riffaterre's emphasis on readers' response, therefore, cannot and does not completely exclude production as an object of examination, and his various studies of intertextuality deal, in fact, with reception as well as certain aspects of production.

The preference of literary historians for particular aspects of literary life is often polemic: that which has been neglected for some time is suddenly emphasized. Such redefinitions of the object of literary history may temporarily have positive results, but never provide a solution if their relative value is overlooked. The study of the reception of texts cannot replace the examination of text production (including the relation between author and text), or of thematic and compositional conventions. Redefinitions of the object of literary history have relative value only. Literary history can never be complete, however much it may include the conditions of literary communication, i.e., general history; neither one particular method, nor one particular focus will yield ever-lasting answers. Trying to overcome this relativism may produce misleading results. We should expect that the historian in explaining his interest — which may be polemical and motivated by private views — accepts the relativity of his particular focus and method, and never claims them as being generally valid.

3. Apart from deciding on his particular interest in literature or literary life, the historian meets the problem of selecting the relevant material. This is most evident when he aims to describe the historical series of literary texts, the evolution of structures in successive literary works. In doing so he may hope to carry out the major part of the programme which Felix Vodička developed in 1942 and which still is one of the most up-to-date statements with respect to literary historiography.<sup>21</sup> The question of how the series of literary texts should be established, however, was not solved by Vodička — he simply posits "the objective existence of literary works" as an historical fact<sup>22</sup> — and forty years after his seminal study was written, it is not easier to solve the problem than in his days. Perhaps Vodička did not even see the problem, assuming that every historian would be able to determine which texts belong to the canon, i.e., the set of highly valued literary works taught in school and referred to in literary criticism. The texts that are said to

belong to a canon, however, have been selected by a particular social group. As such, the canon is a social fact. A complicating factor is that there are various, more or less competing social groups, which each establish their own canons. Of course, these canons may partly overlap. Shakespeare will probably be part of any canon of English literature, but this is less certain with respect to D. H. Lawrence or Virginia Woolf, not to mention Flann O'Brien or John Fowles.

If the historian decides to investigate the evolution of literary structures, he has the obligation to explain which canon (established by which social group?) he has in mind. If the historian has other interests, such as the production or the reception or the conventions of literary texts, he has to solve the problem of selection as well. As soon as he specifies his research as being concerned with *literary* texts, the question of *whose* value judgement is to determine whether or not a text belongs to literature must be answered. With Stanley Fish, one might argue that literature is not found, but made by interpretive conventions.<sup>23</sup> Each semiotic community has its own conception of what is literary. Should the judgement of the critics be decisive? And if so, which critics: the early ones or the later ones, those writing in literary magazines or in the daily press? Or should the judgement of the publishers count? And if so, which publishers? Or of the writers themselves?

In principle, it cannot be excluded that the historian will rely on his own judgement. In the past, he often has done so. I have argued elsewhere,<sup>24</sup> however, that — from an epistemological point of view — separating analysis from evaluation has certain advantages. The interference of the roles of researcher and reader have prevented Barthes and Jauss from establishing their historical investigations on firmly empirical grounds. Whatever solution the literary historian prefers, the problem of selection and evaluation must be settled. Moreover, the historian has the obligation to explain how he has solved the problem. Among other issues, it is the awareness of the problem of selection and evaluation that has been an obstacle in literary historiography.

4. The problem of selection and evaluation has often been discussed in terms of historicism and presentism. For the sake of brevity, historicism can be defined here as an individualizing view which interprets and evaluates the historical phenomena of a certain period on the basis of the norms and in relation to the other historical phenomena of that period.<sup>25</sup> Presentism is the opposite: historical phenomena are described and judged by means of present conceptions and norms, in particular, present conceptions of

rationality and truth.<sup>26</sup>

Like cultural relativism, historicism or historical relativism is not a research method, but rather a moral and/or epistemological position which may influence the scholar in his choice of research methods. Both cultural and historical relativism deliberately abstain from any attempt at appropriation or naturalization of alien subject-matter, whether it belongs to far-away cultures or the distant past. In their extreme appearances, however, both historical and cultural relativism suffer from internal contradictions, as they disconnect successive periods and contiguous regions, whereas the study of historical evolution and cultural diversity aims at connecting and comparing elements from different times and areas. Extreme historicism, as well as extreme cultural relativism produces atomistic results only, and tends to destroy the historian's discourse.

In the last instance, the discussion of historicism must touch on the epistemological problem of the relation between facts and conceptualization, or the interrelationship between the observation of facts and the use of concepts in observing and studying them. The discussion of historicism will finally lead to the problem of induction and deduction.

It is not the place here to discuss these epistemological issues in detail. I only wish to emphasize that the historian never starts out with a completely blank mind. He never studies his material in total naivety, but always begins with certain conceptions or hypotheses of what he may find. This epistemological fact contradicts the claims of extreme historicism, and is another reason why historicism in its extreme form is impossible. It appears that a certain degree of conceptualization will always guide historical research. It would be helpful to know what the initial concepts or hypotheses are that the historian has in mind, what precisely he is going to examine, and what his problem is. To many historians, these questions have been embarrassing; they were an additional reason to halt the flow of literary historiography.

5. So far, a number of reasons were mentioned why the literary historian has become increasingly aware of the complexity of his work. It appeared that the historian of literature is expected to explain in more detail which aspect of literature or literary life he is interested in, and to see the relativism of his particular interest or rather the relation of his interest to other aspects of literary and general history. He also is expected to solve the problem of selection and evaluation, and to translate the choice between historicism and presentism in epistemological terms.

The growing awareness of epistemological problems has led inevitably to the question of why literary history should be written, and the need has been felt to give a more specific answer to that question than the common sense reply that history is to satisfy our curiosity, or Johan Huizinga's suggestion that history is to account for the past.<sup>27</sup> In view of the many problems the historian of literature encounters and the hardly satisfactory results of his labour, the question of why literary history should be written at all acquires a painful urgency. My suggestion — less radical than it sounds — would be to bring all historical research to a halt, unless it is designed to give a specific answer to a specific problem; in other words, to engage in historical studies only, if they are connected with a problem that for scientific or social reasons requires a solution. The concept of a literary history that answers specific questions may save it from the impasse in which it finds itself. Such literary history will avoid the pitfall of the inductive compilation and arbitrariness of extreme historicism, will be able to decide in matters of selection and evaluation, will have little difficulty in determining its main interest, and will accept the relativity of the results as being logically related to the problem under examination (but not to all other possible questions). Most important of all, literary history will cease to be an island; rather, it will become a peninsula connected with problems that confront us in social life, contemporary literary communication, and the creation of models of culture.

6. Before I will turn to a discussion of a recent volume of the *Comparative History of Literatures in European Languages* in the light of the problems we have examined, the difference between history written by a single author and by a group of authors deserves some comment. Collective work in the humanities is usually born out of a necessity dictated by the sheer quantity and variety of the material to be covered. By entrusting the writing of the history of a national literature to a collective body of specialists for different periods and genres, the dangers of second-hand knowledge can be avoided or at least curtailed. Evidently, the collective history of literature must be guided by a certain focus or interest, or, as I would suggest, a certain problem; otherwise it will be merely a compilation of diverging private views, multiplying the weaknesses that adhere to any literary history that is based on assembling material without trying to answer specific questions.

The *Comparative History of Literatures in European Languages*, which is a collective undertaking, however, has a plan. As Henry H. H. Remak argues, it is built on the "premise" that "the writing of literary histories confined to

specific nations, peoples or languages must be complemented by the writing of literary history that coordinates related or comparable phenomena from an international point of view."<sup>28</sup> The premise is not exactly phrased as a problem. The problem that guides the *Comparative History*, however, is to discover the "related or comparable phenomena" that can be studied from an international point of view. A major hypothesis is that these related or comparable phenomena can be found within particular time sections, in movements and currents, with the result that the three volumes of the *Comparative History* which have appeared so far, deal with literary phenomena restricted to a particular period — the transition from Enlightenment to Romanticism, Expressionism, and Symbolism. Other volumes which also focus on certain periods will be published in the near future. It is clear that the major concern of the editors of the *Comparative History* is to establish whether there are literary phenomena that transcend linguistic barriers, and if so, how these phenomena can be described and explained. This is an important question, which pertains to basic issues in literary and aesthetic communication. It is immediately relevant to contemporary literary production, as well as the didactics of literature. It implies other questions such as whether literary phenomena can be distinguished from their linguistic appearance, and, if so, whether literary phenomena can be correlated to a system and analysed systematically.

*The Symbolist Movement in the Literature of European Languages*, edited by Anna Balakian and published in Budapest in 1982,<sup>29</sup> throws some light on these questions. The book focusses on Symbolism as an historical phenomenon in literature, on its beginning in France as well as its international diffusion. Some contributions (L. J. Austin, M. Gsteiger) deal with the production of the new code by single authors such as Mallarmé and George, others with the thematic and compositional conventions of Symbolism (A. Balakian, P. Brunel, L. Forestier, R. Gullón), again others with parallel developments in the other arts (M. Schneider, E. Roditi, Ph. Jullian). Few papers, however, refer to the reception of Symbolism and the critical response, whether negative or positive, although the diffusion of Symbolism is a related subject (M. Szabolcsi, R. Gullón). Reception in a broader sense, such as the degree of assimilation of Symbolist concepts and devices in general discourse — to be studied as an effect of literary communication and a factor in cultural history — is completely ignored. Of course, I am not underestimating the difficulties involved in such reception studies which establish a link between the history of literary communication

and general history.

Various aspects of Symbolism were examined, with some emphasis on sources, and the shaping and diffusion of the new literary conventions. Although the scope of the volume is far from narrow, its focus was clear enough to settle the problem of historicism and presentism: in view of the absence of modern analytical models and the many attempts at historical reconstruction, one may say that the historicist approach predominates. The problem of selection was more complex. The selection of the main Symbolist writers was largely adjusted to an international consensus. Mallarmé, Rimbaud, Régnier, Valéry, Huysmans, Maeterlinck, Yeats, George, Rilke and Blok appear to belong to the core of Symbolism. Less cogent is the decision to include Proust and Eliot among the major Symbolists. Some of the writers mentioned are considered "giants,"<sup>30</sup> but the readers who assumedly are responsible for this evaluation remain in the dark. One wonders whether it is merely the judgement of Anna Balakian and her collaborators, speaking for a silent majority, if not minority, of educated readers.

The strongest contributions are those which investigate the thematic and compositional conventions. In her conclusion Anna Balakian defines Symbolism in opposition to Romanticism. She contrasts the secularized metaphysics of the Symbolists to the religious commitment of the Romantics, the fictional myths of Symbolism to the Christian myth of Romanticism, and the Symbolist cult of ambiguity to the Romantic reliance on supernatural certainties. Claude Abastado recalls Mallarmé's rejection of mimesis. The Symbolists avoided unambiguous descriptions as they preferred mystery. They relied on suggestion and artificiality. They knew, as René Wellek writes, that man is limited and lives in conflict with nature.

This view of life — or, in the words of Anna Balakian, this ontology — has created a new language for poetry. Louis Forestier, Manfred Gsteiger and Ricardo Gullón discuss the code of Symbolism more or less systematically. They analyse the Symbolist preference for certain terms, such as the secluded garden, with its statues, fountains and gates, or for certain colors and flowers, for diamonds, and towers, for mirrors and their psychological analogon: self-reflexion. The myth of Narcissus is at the center of the Symbolist universe. His love of himself is as "unnatural" as the varyingly interpreted, mysterious motivations of Salomé. Louis Forestier, who bears the brunt of this exploration of literary semantics in various languages, does not quite succeed in showing us the system of the Symbolist code, but comes very close to it. At least he demonstrates that Symbolist semantics is characterized by a

preference for the semantic features [+vertical] and [+secluded]. This preference seems connected with the Symbolist suggestion of another, higher world than that of nature and material conditions — a world to be reached by self-reflexion. I believe that this kind of semantic research, combined with compositional and syntactic analysis, can further be developed. It might lead to results which would enable us to *explain* more adequately than we can do now the rise and diffusion of Symbolism.

None of the contributions has related Symbolism to developments in economic or general history. By far most authors have restricted themselves to describing and explaining Symbolism strictly in terms of the literary series. Nevertheless one may assume that the vicissitudes of literary history are propelled — though not determined — by developments outside literature. And, in opposite direction, the rise and spread of Symbolism has influenced cultural and general history. The anti-determinism of Symbolism implied an emancipation from the restrictions of natural and material conditions. Of course, other currents in human thought, both in the European and Asian traditions, have professed similar views, but Symbolism presents its anti-determinism in response to the problems of its own age and with renewed vigour. The Symbolist code attempted to reach for a higher truth than that which we can see and, therefore, was not particularly suited to representation. Being anti-deterministic, as well as anti-mimetic, Symbolism provided mankind with an alternative to the world of appearances, and it did so with so much persuasion and so much effect that its traces are still among us, in contemporary literature, in psychoanalysis, in epistemological theories, in utopian thinking, and even in politics.

This, of course, is hard to substantiate, although in the field of epistemology one may think of the defense of theoretical coherence — instead of correspondence to reality — as a criterion of truth.<sup>31</sup> Politics provides many examples of utopianism; suffice to mention the attempt to break through the determinism of the armaments race. It is extremely complicated, however, and often indeed impossible to demonstrate a link between a literary current and its possible effects on the history of ideas and contemporary culture. I present my views on the larger effects of Symbolism only as an exemplification of the final task the historian of literature, in my view, has. Although he is expected to separate analysis from evaluation throughout the major part of his research, in the last instance he must show the value of his topic. Inevitably, this final linking of the historical subject-matter to contemporary life is an act of evaluation. It marks the difference

between historical analysis and historical judgement. Without the latter, the historian has not completed his assignment.

## Notes

1. I used the following editions: G. G. Gervinus, *Geschichte der poetischen National-Literatur der Deutschen*, 3rd ed. (vols. 1-3), 2nd ed. (vols. 4-5) (Leipzig: Wilhelm Engelmann, 1846-1848, 1843, 1844), first edition 1835-1842; Hippolyte Taine, *Histoire de la littérature anglaise*, 4 vols. (Paris: Hachette, 4th ed., 1877-78), first edition 1863-64; Francesco De Sanctis, *Storia della letteratura italiana*, a cura di Niccolò Gallo, introduzione di Natalino Sapegno (Torino: Einaudi, 1958), first edition 1870-1871; John Addington Symonds, *Renaissance in Italy*, 7 vols. (London: John Murray, 1914-1920), first edition 1875-1886; Gustave Lanson, *Histoire de la littérature française* (Paris: Hachette, 13th ed., 1916), first edition 1894; J. te Winkel, *De ontwikkelingsgang der Nederlandsche letterkunde*, 2nd ed., 7 vols. (Haarlem: F. Bohn, 1922-1927). First edition in 5 vols. 1908-1921.
2. Hippolyte Taine, *Histoire de la littérature anglaise*, 4th ed., 1, IV-V.
3. Speaking of the literature of the Middle Ages, Lanson writes: "Un travail est à faire: dans la vaste production que les spécialistes nous ont révélée, il faut séparer le monument littéraire du document historique ou philologique." Quoted from Gustave Lanson, *Histoire de la littérature française*, 13th ed., p. XI.
4. T. S. Eliot, "Tradition and the Individual Talent" [1919], in *The Sacred Wood* (London: Methuen, 1969), p. 50; René Wellek, "Literary Theory, Criticism, and History," in *Concepts of Criticism*, ed. Stephen G. Nichols, Jr. (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1963), p. 15. For a more elaborate comment on the document/monument dichotomy see the contribution by Elrud Ibsch and myself in A. Kibédi Varga, ed., *Théorie de la littérature* (Paris: Picard, 1981), pp. 29-30, 45-46. The "monument" metaphor is used also by Fernand Baldensperger, "Littérature comparée: le mot et la chose," *Revue de littérature comparée* 1 (1921), pp. 19 and 22, and by Michael Riffaterre, *La Production du texte* (Paris: Seuil, 1979), pp. 7-8, 98; the "document" metaphor also by Roland Barthes, *Sur Racine* (Paris: Seuil, 1963), p. 150.
5. Wilhelm Dilthey, "Die Entstehung der Hermeneutik" [1900], in *Gesammelte Schriften*, 12 vols. (Stuttgart: Teubner, and Göttingen: Vandenhoeck and Ruprecht, 1958-1962), 5, 317-38. Although Dilthey aims at interpretations that have a general validity, he acknowledges the relativity of all understanding: "so bleibt alles Verstehen immer nur relativ und kann nie vollendet werden. Individuum est ineffabile" (p. 330).
6. Dilthey, "Die Entstehung der Hermeneutik," p. 333.
7. Dilthey, "Die Entstehung der Hermeneutik," p. 336: "das Verstehen ist eine unendliche Aufgabe."
8. Roland Barthes, "Histoire ou littérature," reprinted in his *Sur Racine* (Paris: Seuil, 1963), pp. 145-67.
9. Barthes, *Sur Racine*, p. 11.
10. Hans Robert Jauss, *Toward an Aesthetic of Reception*, trans. Timothy Bahti, introduction by Paul de Man (Brighton: Harvester Press, 1982), pp. 3-46. Originally published as "Literaturgeschichte als Provokation der Literaturwissenschaft" in

- Hans Robert Jauss, *Literaturgeschichte als Provokation* (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1970), pp. 144-208.
11. Jauss, *Towards an Aesthetic of Reception*, p. 18.
  12. Jauss, *Towards an Aesthetic of Reception*, pp. 67-70.
  13. Hans Robert Jauss, "Der Leser als Instanz einer neuen Geschichte der Literatur," *Poetica* 7 (1975), 325-44, in particular, 333. For another attempt to combine empiricism and hermeneutics see Jauss's "Esthétique de la réception et communication littéraire," *Proceedings of the 9th Congress of the International Comparative Literature Association* [1979], 4 vols. (Innsbruck: Institut für Sprachwissenschaft, Universität Innsbruck, 1980-1982), 1, 15-25.
  14. Jauss, "Der Leser als Instanz einer neuen Geschichte der Literatur," p. 333. Also quoted by Elrud Ibsch in D. W. Fokkema and Elrud Ibsch, *Theories of Literature in the Twentieth Century* (London: C. Hurst, 1979), p. 176.
  15. Hans Robert Jauss, *Ästhetische Erfahrung und literarische Hermeneutik*, I. *Versuche im Feld der ästhetische Erfahrung* (München: Fink, 1977), pp. 9 and 59.
  16. Dagmar Barnouw, "Critics in the Act of Reading," *Poetics Today*, 1:4 (1980), 213-22.
  17. Jauss comments on Northrop Frye in *Towards an Aesthetic of Reception*, p. 66. See also Northrop Frye, "Literary History," *New Literary History* 12 (1980), 219-25, in particular, 219.
  18. Riffaterre, *La Production du texte*, p. 89. See also p. 98: "La réponse du lecteur au texte est la seule relation de causalité que puisse invoquer une explication des faits littéraires." The way Riffaterre eliminates the author as an object of literary studies is not convincing. Of all six factors of literary communication, he argues, only two are physically present, the message and the reader (p. 9). This is incorrect. In particular in the case of contemporary literature, the physical presence of the writer – however much in the background – cannot be denied. One may also wonder what "physiquement présents comme choses" (ibid.) means. Only the artifact, and not the reader, can correctly be considered a thing.
  19. Michael Riffaterre, *Semiotics of Poetry* (Bloomington and London: Indiana University Press, 1978), pp. 1-2.
  20. Riffaterre, *La Production du texte*, p. 105: "De mon point de vue, la vraie, la seule signification originelle d'un texte est celle que lui donnaient ses premiers lecteurs (qu'elle coïncide ou non avec l'intention de l'auteur)." And p. 98: "Le code linguistique des premiers lecteurs est le même, ou presque, que celui du texte. Le code des lecteurs postérieurs s'en éloigne de plus en plus avec le temps."
  21. Felix Vodicka, "Die Literaturgeschichte, ihre Probleme und Aufgaben," in his *Die Struktur der literarischen Entwicklung*, ed. Jurij Striedter et al. (München: Fink, 1976), pp. 30-86. For an elaborate comment on Vodicka in English see my "New Strategies in the Comparative Study of Literature and Their Application to Contemporary Chinese Literature," *New Asia Academic Bulletin* (Special Issue on East-West Comparative Literature) 1 (1978), 1-7.
  22. Vodicka, "Die Literaturgeschichte, ihre Probleme und Aufgaben," p. 34.
  23. Stanley Fish, *Is There a Text in This Class? The Authority of Interpretive Communities* (Cambridge, Mass. and London: Harvard University Press, 1980), p. 331: "The conclusion, therefore, is that all objects are made and not found, and that they are made by the interpretative strategies we set in motion. This does not, however, commit me to subjectivity because the means by which they are made are social and conventional."

24. D. W. Fokkema, "Comparative Literature and the New Paradigm," *Canadian Review of Comparative Literature* 9 (1982), 1-18.
25. Cf. D. W. Fokkema, "Cultural Relativism and Comparative Literature," *Tamkang Review* 3:2 (October 1972), 59-73, in particular, 59.
26. David L. Hull, "In Defense of Presentism," *History and Theory* 18(1979), 1-15.
27. Johan Huizinga, "Over een definitie van het begrip geschiedenis," *Verzamelde werken*, 9 vols. (Haarlem: Tjeenk Willink, 1948-1953), 7, 95-103: "Geschiedenis is de geestelijke vorm, waarin een cultuur zich rekenschap geeft van haar verleden" (p. 102).
28. Anna Balakian, ed., *The Symbolist Movement in the Literature of European Languages*, A Comparative History of Literatures in European Languages (Budapest: Akadémiai Kiadó, 1982), p. 5.
29. See note 28.
30. Balakian, ed., *The Symbolist Movement in the Literature of European Languages*, p. 13.
31. Nicholas Rescher, *The Coherence Theory of Truth* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1973).

