

INTRODUCTION

A

Changing Approaches to the Understanding of the Literary Text

Historicism was the "Copernican discovery in the cultural sciences"¹ and it had enormous influence. Dogmatic truths were undermined, the horizon was extended in every direction. Research into cultural phenomena was based on historical understanding, and the comprehension of any spiritual reality was held to be contingent upon a knowledge of circumstances of time and place.

Philology began to use history as an auxiliary in ascertaining the correct interpretation of written documents.² In the study of literature in the nineteenth century, the emphasis gradually shifted to the historical aspect; poetics was neglected, every attempt to establish norms in the study of literature disappeared. A science of literature analogous to the

1. E. Auerbach, *Literary Language and its Public in Late Latin Antiquity and in the Middle Ages* (transl. by R. Manheim), London 1965, p. 10.
2. For the survey which follows, see Wellek & Warren, Wehrli, Kayser and the literature cited by them. Also: K. Viëtor, "Deutsche Literaturgeschichte als Geistesgeschichte", *Publication of the Modern Language Association of America*, LX(1945), pp. 899ff; P. Böckmann, *Formgeschichte der deutschen Dichtung*, I, Hamburg 1949, pp. 7-69; W. Milch, *Über Aufgaben und Grenzen der Literaturgeschichte*, Wiesbaden 1950; H. O. Burger, "Methodische Probleme der Interpretation", *GRM*, XXXII (1950-51), pp. 81-92 [=H. Enders (ed.), *Die Werkinerpretation (Wege der Forschung)*, XXXVI, Darmstadt 1967, pp. 198-213]; A. Mulet, "Zur Neubesinnung der Literaturwissenschaft", *ibid.*, pp. 172-177; E. Lunding, *Strömungen und Strebungen der modernen Literaturwissenschaft*, Kobenhavn 1952; W. Rasch, "Probleme der Lyrik-Interpretation", *GRM*, XXXV (1954), pp. 282-298; H. Oppel, "Methodenlehre der Literaturwissenschaft", in: W. Stammler (ed.), *Deutsche Philologie im Aufriß*², Berlin 1957, pp. 39-82; F. Martini, "Poetik", *ibid.*, pp. 223-280; K. May (-W. Höllener), "Zu Fragen der Interpretation", *Deutsche Vierteljahrsschrift für Literaturwissenschaft und*

natural sciences was created.³ Since human behaviour is conditioned by heredity, education, and life experience⁴ it follows that we should interpret the artistic creation on the basis of what the poet derived from his heredity, his studies and his experiences. The whole function of historical research into literature was therefore considered to be to investigate the genesis of the art-work in terms of "influences" and "sources"; to search for similar or analogous motifs and themes in earlier literature; to probe the origins of the political, cultural, and social background of the period or the biographical background of the author — all in order to give a causal explanation of how the work came into being.⁵

- Geistesgeschichte*, XXXIII (1959), pp. 608-644; R. Wellek, *Concepts of Criticism*, New Haven and London 1963; idem, "Poetics, Interpretation and Criticism," *The Modern Language Review*, LXIX (1974), pp. xxi-xxxi; *The Critical Moment — Essays on the Nature of Literature*, London 1963, 1964; F. Hermant, *Synthetisches Interpretieren — Zur Methodik der Literaturwissenschaft*², München 1969; M. Maren-Grisebach, *Methoden der Literaturwissenschaft*, Bern and München 1970; L. Pollmann, *Literaturwissenschaft und Methode*, I, *Theoretischer Teil und Methoden-geschichtlicher Überblick*, Frankfurt a/M 1971; A. Freminger et al. (eds.), *Princeton Encyclopedia of Poetry and Poetics*, enlarged edition, Princeton, New Jersey [1974], s.v. "Criticism, Types", pp. 163-174; "Explication", pp. 265-266; "Modern Poetics — II. 20th C.", pp. 514-527 (with selected bibliographies following each entry); B. Hrushovski, "Poetics, Criticism. Science — Remarks on the Fields and Responsibilities of the Study of Literature", *PTL*, I (1976), pp. iii-xxxv; D. W. Fokkema & E. Kunne-Ibsch, *Theories of Literature in the Twentieth Century: Structuralism, Marxism, Aesthetics of Reception, Semiotics*, London [c.1977].
3. See, for example, W. Scherer: "The same power which brought to life railroads and telegraphs, the same power which called forth an unheard-of flowering of industry, increased the comforts of life, shortened wars, in a word, advanced man's dominion over nature by a colossal step — this same power also rules our intellectual lives: it makes a clean sweep of dogmas, it transforms the sciences, it puts its stamp on literature. Natural science rides triumphantly on its chariot of victory to which we are all shackled" (*Vorträge und Aufsätze zur Geschichte des geistigen Lebens in Deutschland und Österreich*, Berlin 1874, p. 411).
4. "Ererbtes, Erlebtes, Erlerntes"; Scherer's well-known formula, reminiscent of Hippolyte Taine's: "race, milieu, moments" (P. Salm, *Three Modes of Criticism*, Cleveland 1968, p. 18; Hermant, *op. cit.* [note 2, above], p. 24; Pollmann, *op. cit.* [note 2, above], I, p. 105; Maren-Grisebach, *op. cit.* [note 2, above], p. 12).
5. According to Scherer "the exploitation of source materials and of biographical details, for literature like all other intellectual disciplines, is subject to the principles of 'determinacy' of the will and of strict causality in the exploration of spiritual life" (Salm, *loc. cit.* [note 4, above]).

However, by the end of the last century there arose opposition to this approach to the study of literature. Criticism came from different grounds: some was directed against the manner in which the historical method was applied, some against the specific methods used, and there were even basic rejections of the whole method and its very goal.

In this dispute about literature, philosophers played a major role, making the first inroads into the fortress of "historicism". We shall not, however, speak of them here, nor of Nietzsche's opposition to historicism,⁶ nor of the influence of phenomenology on anti-historical attitudes.⁷ We shall limit ourselves to the criticism of the historical approach in the field of literature, and even in this field we shall not attempt a thorough and all-inclusive description. For the purpose of our work is to clarify the exegetical principles by which literature is interpreted in this century from the standpoint of their suitability in Biblical scholarship. We shall therefore choose from the claims and assertions made by those representing the various currents in modern literary study only those which seem to us applicable to the study of the Bible. Even from the accepted conclusions we shall adduce only those which, in our opinion, can be profitably employed in Biblical research.

The first practical step against the genetic theory was Dilthey's demand, at the very height of positivism (in 1883), that the humanities be freed from their subjection to the methods of the natural sciences. His argument was that whereas the natural sciences seek to discover the laws of recurring natural phenomena, cultural research is not concerned with recurrent phenomena but rather with the individual concrete instance, the original and non-repeated reality. The subject matter of the humanities is the creation and expression of man, the value of which lies in its individuality, and to interpret such works we need categories different from those appropriate to the natural sciences. Spiritual relationships can only be understood; they cannot be explained causally or investigated analytically. Poetry is "an instrument for the appreciation of life . . . which is better adapted to probing the unfathomable depths of experience

6. F. Nietzsche, "Vom Nutzen und Nachteil der Historie für das Leben", *Unzeitgemässe Betrachtungen*, 1874 (*Nietzsche's Werke*, II, Leipzig 1906).
7. L. Landgrebe, *Philosophie der Gegenwart*, Frankfurt a/M 1958, pp. 112-125; especially the bibliography on pp. 172-173.

than any rational inquiry or explanation".⁸ As Dilthey asserts, "Nature we can explain, the life of the spirit we understand".⁹ Wellek elaborates further: "The scientist 'explains', looks for causes, the humanist 'understands', enters another man's mind. Dilthey [Wellek adds] later modified his psychological approach. Understanding, he argued, means not merely entering another man's mind but rather interpretation of man's expressions, of the shapes and forms in a tradition of documents and monuments, which he designates with a Hegelian term, the 'objective spirit'. Here is the source of German *Geistesgeschichte*, which must rely on the concept of *Zeitgeist* and emphasize the differences between periods and man's attitudes and conceptions in different ages".¹⁰

We find, then, that even the school of *Geistesgeschichte* in its literary study — according to Dilthey's definition, *Literaturgeschichte als Geistesgeschichte* (the history of literature as the history of the spirit) — falls victim to those dangers that threatened the historical method. It too gets bogged down in historicism, and it too neglects the main subject of inquiry, the poem itself, considering it through categories foreign to its spirit and failing to view the literary phenomenon from appropriate literary perspectives.

Since the second decade of this century, it has been demanded that the study of poetry should concentrate on the poem itself, and should see it as an end and not a means. Russian "formalists" put forth this demand after World War I, in reaction to the one-sided consideration of literature, whether sociological or ideological, and held their ground for a while in the face of Marxist literary criticism.¹¹ Such ideas and theories of the interpretation of poetry as the "art of the word" spread to the study of

8. Viëtor, *art. cit.* (note 2, above), p. 900.

9. W. Dilthey, "Ideen über eine beschreibende und zergliedernde Psychologie", *Gesammelte Schriften*, V. Leipzig-Berlin 1924, p. 144.

10. R. Wellek, "Poetics, Interpretation, and Criticism" (note 2, above), p. xxvi. See also idem, "Wilhelm Dilthey's Poetik und literarische Theorie", *Merkur*, XIV (1960), pp. 426-436.

11. See recently V. Elhlich, "Russian Formalism" in: *Princeton Encyclopedia* (note 2, above), pp. 726-727. On external factors which influenced Russian formalism and similar schools to be mentioned below, see Hrushovski, *art. cit.* (note 2, above), pp. ix-xi. See also W. H. Bruford, *Literary Interpretation in Germany*, Cambridge 1952, pp. 6-10.

literature in Europe and beyond, and some began to flourish independently. They began to be heard in different places in widely differing ideological contexts, their proponents often being unaware of each other. The best-known schools in this new method of literary study — which is best called "intrinsic criticism" — are the Swiss-German School's *Werkinterpretation* (or simply *Interpretation*) which embraces several trends, and the Anglo-Saxon School with its many tributaries, known by the all-inclusive name New Criticism.¹² Members of these schools are opposed to the methods of their predecessors and wish to substitute new demands and approaches in literary research. They are opposed not only to the historic-genetic method¹³ but also to all methods that treat a poetic creation through alien categories, and make it a mere stepping-stone to other disciplines such as philosophy, the history of thought, the social sciences and similar studies. The Anglo-Saxon School does indeed include scholars who have come from diverse disciplines (sociology, anthropology, psychology), but they do not attempt to divert the study of literature from its legitimate confines and make it solely subservient to other sciences. For our purposes, the most important aspect is the criticism directed against *Geistesgeschichte*. Here, New Critics argue not only against determining the nature of the written work by searching for its sources, but also against the idea that the main function of literary

12. F. C. Ransom is the one chiefly responsible for popularizing this term in his book *The New Criticism*, Norfolk, Connecticut 1941. Others call it: Modern Criticism, Scientific Criticism, Working Criticism (S. E. Hyman, *The Armed Vision*, New York 1955, p. 3). On American and British intrinsic criticism see J. F[raser] in: *Princeton Encyclopedia* (note 2, above), pp. 514-518. On a similar method in France, "explication des textes", see W. Blechmann, "Probleme der Explication Française", *GRM*, XXXVII (1957), pp. 383-392; also Wehrli, p. 23; P. de M[an] in: *Princeton Encyclopedia*, pp. 518-523 (there also on this method in Germany). See also *ibid.*, pp. 523-524 on such an approach in Italian literary study by A. S[cagline]; pp. 524-525 on Spanish by A. W.P[hillips]; pp. 526-527 on Slavic by V. S[etchkarer]. [In the following pages, we shall use the all-inclusive "New Critical schools" to refer to New Criticism, *Werkinterpretation*, "explication des textes" and related schools and their approaches to the study of literature.]

13. So argues, for example, Staiger, against the positivists who apply the law of causality of natural science to the artistic creation, and ignore the fact that creativity, because it is creative, cannot be derived from something else (Staiger, pp. 9-10 [= *Die Werkinterpretation*, p. 147]).

research is the discovery of the historical background of the author's period and his biography. In their view, a literary creation is not only a reflection of its time, not merely a document testifying to something external to itself, "no longer a commentary on life or reality, but containing life and reality in a system of verbal relationship . . . existing in its own universe".¹⁴ This view of literature leads to the conception: "Literary study differs from historical study in having to deal not with documents but with monuments".¹⁵ "Literature will yield to the sociologist, or anyone else, what it has to give only if it is approached as literature".¹⁶

Thus, while *Geistesgeschichte* scholars opposed the genetic explanation borrowed from the natural sciences, proponents of *Werkinterpretation* and New Criticism are opposed to the historical, social or philosophic explanation of a literary creation. Dilthey and his school saw the literary creation as a function of psychological, spiritual, social and economic processes or conditions, and as long as they saw it as primarily an expression of something, they considered the "experience" expressed in it, the historical-spiritual "content" communicated through it, or the "problem" revealed by it to be the kernel and essence of the work, the artistic "shell" of which was to be broken and then disregarded.¹⁷ However in the New Critical schools of literary study the creation is considered a unique entity which should be therefore contemplated for its own sake. "Only one who will explain without looking to the right or left, above all without inquiring what is before and what after, only he will fulfill his obligation to the creation, and only he will refrain from undermining the sovereignty of literary study".¹⁸

Truly the importance of these schools is in literary analyses that strive to uncover, beneath thick dusty layers of historical, cultural and linguistic researches, investigation of influences, etc., the work itself with all its hidden wonders. In contrast to the situation that existed up until a few

14. N. Frye, *Anatomy of Criticism*, Princeton 1957, pp. 122, 124.

15. Wellek, *Concepts of Criticism*, pp. 14-15.

16. F. R. Leavis, *The Common Pursuit*, London 1952, p. 193.

17. "No less does *Geistesgeschichte* go astray in that it delivers the literary artistic creation to the philosophers and sees only what any thinker knows better than any poet" (Staiger, p. 9 [= *Die Werkinterpretation*, p. 146]).

18. Staiger, p. 10 [= *Die Werkinterpretation*, p. 147].

generations ago when literary study was only "archaeological, quasi-scientific, and documentary study of the fine arts",¹⁹ the writer's creation has been restored to pride of place and "interpretation" has assumed its rightful place in the study of literature; it is the cornerstone.

The position of the New Critical schools is indeed being currently disputed; in particular it is asserted that their methods are unhistorical since they isolate the literary work from its past and its context. This assertion, however, like others, is based upon the misuse of these methods by inadequately qualified exponents.²⁰ There is therefore nothing in them to call in question the validity of the basic assumptions shared by *Werkinterpretation* and New Criticism with regard to the methods conducive to understanding the meaning of the poem.²¹

19. F. F. Chapman (see L. Trilling, "The Sense of the Past", *The Liberal Imagination: Essays on Literature and Society*, London 1951, p. 181).

20. Enders, *Die Werkinterpretation*, pp. xiv-xv. (See also below.)

21. The "Synthetic Interpretation" proposed by Hermand (note 2, above) as a solution of the "crisis" in literary studies is also based on the interpretation of the literary work along the lines of *Werkinterpretation* and New Criticism. Pollmann envisages three possible methods for a scientific treatment of literature; according to each of them the individual work must be understood in accordance with the principles of *Werkinterpretation* and New Criticism (*op. cit.* [note 2, above], 11). E. D. Hirsch, Jr. maintains that, notwithstanding the attacks, "we must concede that the intrinsic criticism of literature has been and still remains our most powerful programmatic idea" (*The Aims of Interpretation*, Chicago and London 1976, p. 127; see also p. 124). Lately R. Wellek shows that all the accusations against the New Criticism "are baseless". He is convinced "that much of what the New Criticism taught is valid and will be valid as long as people think about the nature and function of literature and poetry" ("The New Criticism: Pro and Contra", *Critical Inquiry*, IV [1978], p. 611).

About the recent method in the study of literature, Structuralism, which derives from Saussure's linguistics and from Lévi-Strauss' anthropology, G. Genette writes: "D'une certaine manière, la notion d'analyse structurale peut être considérée comme une simple équivalence de ce que les Américains nomment *close reading* et qu'on appellerait en Europe, à l'exemple de Spitzer étude immanente 'des oeuvres' (quoted from Pollmann, *op. cit.* [note 2, above], I, p. 85). According to Wellek, "the Structuralists . . . have some affinities with the New Criticism in their concern for a microscopic analysis of texts and a general poetics" (*art. cit.*, p. 622). But together with the common attitude of these schools in regard to actual analysis, there is an important difference between them when it comes to the purpose of analysis: the practitioners of *Werkinterpretation* and New Criticism analyse the structure from the standpoint of their interest in inner logic of the poem, whereas the structuralists

The distinguishing features of the New Critical schools are to be found in their conceptions of: (1) historicism; (2) "intention"; (3) "understanding"; (4) the world in general and the world of the artistic creation in particular.

1. Some proponents of these theories are opposed in principle to the reading of the creation against the background of its period. If proponents of the historical approach saw in the knowledge of the background and the comparison of the work being studied with contemporary works an aid to the understanding of the text, these theorists see in such reading of poetry an impediment which can obstruct a proper reading. For a reading based on a prior knowledge of the conditions under which the work was written, the attitudes prevalent at the time, the beliefs and ideas of contemporaries is liable to narrow the reader's vision, to circumscribe him

analyse a work in the light of their interest in the logic of works of this genre in general — to the extent that they lose sight of the individual work. One of their central concerns is the attempt to write a sort of "grammar" of the narrative, to find, as it were, "deep structures" of specific narrations, and hence to continue by generalising about basic structures of certain narrative genres, and also to arrive at general rules about "the narration" in literary form. The focus of their interest is not in the manner of the narrative, but in the world of the narrative. In their view: "We cannot understand and elucidate something until its appropriate place in its polymorphous and polyvalent universal code has been found, until it is clear which partial system of this general code is to be actualized for its constitution and comprehension" (E. Holenstein, "The Structure of Understanding — Structuralism versus Hermeneutics", *FTL*, I [1976], p. 237). The structuralists believe that once we have succeeded, by means of a process of gradually intensified abstraction and reduction, in revealing the "deep structures" of various kinds of narrative and "the logic of narrative", we shall then be able to describe each individual narrative with the help of a series of transformations of these structures, transformations to be based on a system of fixed rules. The basic essential difference between these schools is, as defined by Pollmann, that whereas in *Werkinterpretation* and New Criticism the interest of analysis is the "sense" ("Sinn") of the text, the structuralists are not in the least interested in mere sense but only in the "significance" ("Bedeutung") of the text (*loc. cit.*). An evaluation of the approach itself may be found in what Roland Barthes, the presiding spirit of the group, writes concerning the first "structuralistic" analyses of narrative: "... extraire de chaque conte son modèle, puis ces modèles nous feront une grande structure narrative, que nous reverrons (pour vérification) sur n'importe quel récit: tache épuisante ... et finalement indésirable, car le texte y perd sa différence" (*S/Z*, Paris 1970, p. 9). See further Cooper's note on two types of "Linguistic Poetics" (in Appendix below, pp. 406-409).

within the limits of that period and its world, and perhaps also to dim the beholder's eyes so that he cannot see the literary creation in all its radiance bursting through the clouds of its period. T. S. Eliot, speaking about the usual way of interpreting Shakespeare against the background of his period and in the light of our knowledge of contemporary playwrights, affirms: "... a study of these dramatists only renders our study of Shakespeare more difficult ... the danger of studying him together with his contemporaries is the danger of reducing a unique vision to a mode".²² Therefore there are those who see as ideal the reading of poems without prior knowledge of their period and the conditions of their creation or even the names of their authors (*Literaturgeschichte ohne Namen*).²³

Others are opposed to the historical approach as the sole method in literary research. According to C. Brooks, the reading of a poem above all as a poem and dealing with it as a poem is the right approach: "For we have gone to school to the anthropologists and the cultural historians assiduously, and we have learned their lesson almost too well. We have learned it so well that the danger now, it seems to me, is not that we will forget the differences between poems of different historical periods, but that we may forget those qualities which they have in common ... those qualities that make them *poems*".²⁴ B. von Wiese understands the attitudes of present-day opponents of *Werkinterpretation*, since: "If the study of literature were completely divorced from historical studies, this could only lead to mere empty formalism".²⁵ True, outstanding literary scholars in our time admit that the study of literature and research into

22. In his Introduction to G. W. Knight, *The Wheel of Fire*, New York 1957, p. xv.

23. I. A. Richards, who is called "the father of the New Criticism" (F. Schlegel in the introduction to his German translation of Richards' *Principles of Literary Criticism*, *Prinzipien der Literaturkritik*, Frankfurt a/M 1972, p. 15), distributed to his students a number of previously unseen poems, and disclosed neither their titles nor their authors. From the students' comments ("protocols"), he came to recognize that different readers understand a text differently, which means that the work of literature is created when it is apprehended by the consciousness of the reader (see his *Practical Criticism*, New York 1929).

24. *The Well Wrought Urn*, New York 1947, pp. 215-216 (italics his).

25. "Geistesgeschichte oder Interpretation? Bemerkungen zur Lage der zeitgenössischen deutschen Literaturwissenschaft", in S. Guttenbrunner et al. (eds.), *Die Wissenschaft von deutscher Sprache und Dichtung*, Stuttgart [1963], p. 245.

poetry need a historical basis. Even a scholar such as B. Croce — who is perhaps the most extreme in his opposition to conceiving of poetry (and art in general) as an expression of anything external (society or the spirit of the age) — does not forgo the assistance offered by a knowledge of the historical background to the understanding of the creation and says: “On the one hand we have the thesis: an artistic creation can be evaluated only after you know the roots from which it grew . . . on the other hand we have the antithesis: an artistic creation should be understood and evaluated purely in its own right . . . the solution of this antinomy is: the value of an artistic creation is certainly intrinsic; but this value is not something simple, abstract, a quantitative unit, but rather complex, concrete, living, organic, whole, composed of parts. If the whole cannot be known except through its parts, the parts themselves can only be known through the whole. The solution, therefore, is that true historical interpretation and aesthetic criticism are identical; they are not a duality but a unity: two that are one or one that is two”.²⁶

In the American school it was even suggested that genetic research is not in itself hurtful to “the experience of truth in an artistic work”. On the contrary, “When you examine an artistic work from its origin, it may take on an added value”. Genetic research adds certainty to literature. Even though literature does not need such certainty and genetic research does not enhance the literary experience, those who ignore the historical approach “forget that the literary work is ineluctably a historical fact, and, what is more important, that its historicity is a fact in our aesthetic experience . . . [Shakespeare] is our contemporary only if we know how much a man of his own age he was; he is relevant to us only if we see his distance from us”. When you analyse a literary creation you must be aware of the historical conditions, and you must also know the difference between its language and our language, otherwise you do not understand the creation.²⁷ As D. Daiches puts it: “Language itself is a phenomenon that manifests itself in history, not something wholly stable and objective, so that it is often necessary to study the ideas and traditions of an

26. “Die Antinomien der Kunstkritik”, *Kleine Schriften zur Aesthetik*, II (ausgewählt und übertragen von F. von Schlosser), Tübingen 1926, pp. 26-27. (See the quotation from Croce below, pp. 50-51, 52).

27. Trilling, *art. cit.* (note 18, above), pp. 184, 186, 190-191.

author's age if we are to see the work he wrote as it really is . . . If the word ‘homely’ means ‘cosily domestic’ in England and ‘ugly’ in America, English readers seeing it in an English poem will misunderstand the poem completely without this background information. This is a simple and obvious example of the kind of scholarship necessary before one can see a work for what it is — and one must see it before one can hope to be able to evaluate it”.²⁸

This view we find also expressed by the Swiss-German school: “Poetry is subject to the category of time, and therefore unmediated understanding is not always possible. Its medium is language and thus it is anchored in the stream of language development. The commentator must therefore pay close attention to the period in which the text was composed in order to understand its language”. Interpretation requires historical study; this link can never be sundered.²⁹ The leading exponent of this group, Staiger, argues: “Who will agree wholeheartedly to forgo all the help extended to him by the biographer and by positivistic philology? Not even one literary commentator can forgo all this — not even the scholar who claims that all the results of biographical and positivistic research do not interest him. Whether we like it or not, the art of interpretation is based on the fund of knowledge which the study of literature has garnered over the past hundred years”.³⁰ In a later article he expresses this view more forcibly: “Anybody who concerns himself more or less seriously with the past knows how difficult it is to understand even the plain text as the author meant it, and how exact one's knowledge of living conditions and cultural and political circumstances must be if the attempted empathy is not to be replaced by pure caprice. This means that any adequate interpretation has to be based on thorough historical study. The better I know a period to which a poem belongs, the less likely I am to go astray”.³¹

But even while we recognise the importance of historical knowledge, we must remember that historical erudition is not itself an interpretation but the preparation for one. Interpretation begins only where historical

28. *Critical Approaches to Literature*, London 1967, pp. 326-327.

29. Kayser, *Vortragsreise*, pp. 51-52.

30. Staiger, p. 18 (= *Die Werkinterpretation*, p. 154).

31. “Time and Poetic Imagination”, in: *The Critical Moment* (note 2, above), p. 135.

research leaves off. "Interpretation", Kayser warns, "is concerned with the text itself, it deals with the poetic aspect and its orientation is essentially different from that of the historic purpose. . . . And this is also our response to the unjustified demand that we should make the transition from our time to that in which the interpreted text was written. This demand cannot actually be fulfilled, nor is it justified theoretically. It is not required of us to be contemporaries of the work insofar as the year of its composition is concerned, but rather to be contemporaries of the work as an artistic creation. The historical aspect of the work is included in its artistic character and this is what enables it to survive its own period".³²

On the use of the fruits of historical research in interpretation Staiger writes: "The first inkling of the meaning of the text as the commentator perceives it and the testing of the correctness of this apprehension — these together make up the hermeneutic cycle. Biographical and philological research can only serve to confirm whether I am on the right track from the standpoint of the period and place. They do not enable me to come face to face with the work of art in its uniqueness. Surely no one is foolish enough to believe that the work is made up of a combination of separate traditions or could be derived from the milieu which conditioned it. It is the inner harmony of the work that I have to prove: the object of my interpretation is its special and inimitable style".³³ According to R. Picard: " . . . the first duty of the literary critic is to focus all his attention on the literary work, which I regard as an end in itself, complete and absolute I believe in studying literature from the inside, concentrating on its intrinsic qualities. Naturally it would be a mistake to neglect the environment and the social conditions: the historical meaning should not be ignored, not that it need necessarily be agreed with. But the critic must always return to the work itself and to the literary universe to which it belongs while still constituting an autonomous and self-justifying unit criticism begins and ends above all as textual elucidation, as explication de texte".³⁴

2. Characteristic of the New Criticism and related approaches is their answer to the question of what is "correct" interpretation of a literary

32. *Vortragsreise*, loc. cit. (note 29, above).

33. Staiger, p. 186 (= *Die Werkinterpretation*, p. 152).

34. "Critical Trends in France", in: *The Critical Moment* (note 2, above), p. 106.

work. Among other literary scholars, the accepted view is that the correct interpretation is that which corresponds to the *author's* intentions as understood by *his contemporaries*. It is true that thinkers in different periods since the time of Socrates³⁵ have disputed this identification of the meaning of the work with the intention of the author. Poets, authors and artists have themselves admitted from time to time that they do not and did not fully know what their intention was in their own creation.³⁶ According to Hofmannsthal, the poet is not the most but the least suited of all his readers to interpret his poem.³⁷ In the middle of the previous century, it was even believed that the creative activity of the artist flows from the unconscious (*das unbewusste Schaffen*) — like "a prophet who knew not what he prophesied" — and this view was even given a philosophic basis by Schleiermacher³⁸ and after him especially by Dilthey.³⁹ They even arrived at the paradoxical conclusion that the function of the commentator is "to understand the artistic creation better than its creator did". If

35. Plato, *Apology*, 22 b-c.

36. I. H. Hassan, "Problem of Influence in Literary History: Notes Towards a Definition", *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism*, XIV (1955-56), p. 70. Kayser mentions that what Goethe had said about his poems all through his life has been collected and published in nine large volumes (*Goethe über seine Dichtung*), but even so they cannot be of help to the commentator. On the contrary; sometimes Goethe's words only increase the confusion; sometimes one has the impression that Goethe, intending to jest, accepted first one interpretation and then another that contradicted it (p. 225). Paul Valéry writes: "I believe that after an author has published his work his interpretation has no more validity than that of any other reader" (quoted by Kayser, p. 226). Similarly Goethe said before him: "The poet presents his poem to the world. It is the reader, the aesthetician, the critic, who must determine what the poet meant by his poem" (Compare Mulot, *art. cit.* [note 2, above], p. 177).

37. According to Kayser, p. 226.

38. F. E. D. Schleiermacher, *Hermeneutik und Kritik*, (herausg. v. F. Lücke), 1838, p. 32. A. Boeckh holds a similar view, arguing: "The author creates according to the laws of grammar and style, but generally unconsciously. The interpreter, on the contrary, cannot explain without a clear conscious knowledge of these laws. . . . hence we deduce that the commentator must understand the author not only as well as but even better than he understood himself. The commentator must bring to consciousness what the author did unconsciously, and thereby things unknown to the author will be revealed to him and made clear" (*Encyklopaedie und Methodologie der philologischen Wissenschaften*, Leipzig 1877, p. 87).

39. *Op. cit.* (note 9, above), p. 331.

the author does not know the intention of his creation, then the legitimate goal of interpretative research is not the author and his "intentions", but the creation itself. However, though this awareness is manifested repeatedly in the theoretical writings of scholars, they were unable to influence the study of literature in practice: here the personality of the author remained a primary category, and the literary-historical scholars sought to discover in the text the answer to the question, "What did the author mean when he wrote what he did?"

Only in recent times has it come to be recognised among wider circles that this is not the legitimate question in interpreting an artistic creation. In both psychology and philosophy,⁴⁰ the demand is voiced nowadays that interest be centred rather on the creation than on the author, and even more vehemently the exponents of the New Critical schools in literature reject the quest for the author's intentions.⁴¹ According to Beardsley & Wimsatt, "The design or intention of the author is neither available nor desirable as a standard for judging the success of a work of literary art".⁴² Kayser notes that the forces of creation well up unconsciously from the fountain of the creator and it is for the interpreter to reveal in the work what the author was unaware of.⁴³ Similarly Knight writes: "'Intentions' are a matter of intellect and memory: the swifter consciousness that awakens in poetic composition touches subtleties and heights and depths unknowable by intellect and intractable to memory. That consciousness we can enjoy at will when we submit ourselves with utmost passivity to the poet's work it thinks to analyse, and, with its army of 'intentions', 'causes', 'sources', and 'characters', and its essential ethical outlook, works havoc with our minds, since it is trying to impose on the

40. Wehrli, pp. 59, 115.

41. See, especially, M. C. Beardsley & W. K. Wimsatt, Jr., "The Intentional Fallacy", in: W. K. Wimsatt, Jr., *The Verbal Icon*, Kentucky [1954], pp. 3-18. Compare O. F. Bollnow, "Was heisst, einen Schriftsteller besser verstehen, als er sich selbst verstanden hat?", *Das Verstehen — Drei Aufsätze*, Mainz/Rhein 1949, pp. 7-33; E. W. Kohls, "Einen Autor besser verstehen, als er sich selber verstanden hat", *ThZ*, XXVI (1970), pp. 321-337. See also the references in notes 53, 54, below.

42. *Art. cit.* (note 41, above), p. 3. E. D. Hirsch, Jr., who supports intrinsic criticism (see note 21, above), discusses the doctrine that literary texts belong to a distinct ontological realm where meaning is independent of authorial will (*Validity in Interpretation*, New Haven and London [1967], esp. pp. 1-23, 245-264).

43. Kayser, *loc. cit.* (note 37, above).

vivid reality of art a logic totally alien to its nature Reference to the artist's 'intentions' is usually a sign that the commentator . . . has lost touch with the essentials of the poetic work".⁴⁴ Thus R. Hoggard is of the opinion: "The ebb and flow of his [the writer's] imaginative power within the work may reveal attitudes and assumptions hidden from the writer himself; 'Never trust the teller; trust the tale'".⁴⁵ And this can be inferred also from H. Mayer's testimony: "I learnt both from literary history and from acquaintances with authors of our own day . . . that any artist's exposition of his own work can play an interesting and essential part in its critical interpretation, but that the critic must not place too much reliance on it. What Thomas Mann aimed to convey in *The Magic Mountain* and what the modern critic finds on reading it are two different things".⁴⁶

Just as the view that the meaning of the work is to be identified with the author's intention has become untenable, so has the view that the meaning is to be found in the testimony of the first readers as to their understanding of the work. It was long ago demanded by Schleiermacher,⁴⁷ and regarded by Boeckh as a main principle of the theory of interpretation, that "a text should not be interpreted in a way that does not conform to the understanding of the early readers of the text, even if the interpretation does not run counter to the meaning of the words".⁴⁸ Thus, according to this view, one of the obligations of the interpreter is to identify himself — as far as possible — with the community of readers for whom the work was written, or with the community of listeners who first heard it. Naturally, even Boeckh admits that even in that first community there were some who had a profound understanding and some whose understanding was superficial, some who penetrated the secret depths and others who understood only the surface meaning. Nonetheless, it is held, the interpreter may certainly identify himself with the *best* of the first readers, and only a comprehension of the text which would have been

44. *Op. cit.* (note 22, above), p. 7.

45. "Why I Value Literature", in: *The Critical Moment* (note 2, above), p. 32.

46. "Critics and the Separation of Powers", in: *The Critical Moment* (note 2, above), pp. 114-115.

47. "Everything in a given text which requires fuller interpretation must be explained and determined exclusively from the linguistic domain common to the author and his original public" (H. Kimmerli [ed.], *Hermeneutik*, Heidelberg 1959, p. 90).

48. *Op. cit.* (note 38, above), p. 121.

beyond *their* grasp is not a suitable, true interpretation of the text but merely the imaginings of the commentator.⁴⁹

This theory is not accepted by members of the schools of New Criticism. It is true that the answer to the question "How did the first readers understand the work?" is of great interest to the historian, or to a scholar tracing the development of ideas, but it cannot help the interpreter of the text. Contemporary readers or hearers of a work, subject to the spirit of the age and its problems, tend to see a poetic literary creation as tendentious and polemical, meant for its time, whereas we later readers, free from the confines of that period, can sometimes see it more accurately, see it as it really is supra-temporally. Scholars in the field of literary history have shown us how dramas and novels, today regarded purely as descriptions of reality and not as suggested solutions or guidance, were understood by contemporaries as tendentious writings, accusations or indictments, demands and expressions of some conscious political or social outlook. The eighteenth century youth found in the Werther novel approval of suicide when frustrated in love, and the district attorney saw in *Madame Bovary* a commendation of adultery.⁵⁰ Now if the artist's creation is beyond the apprehension of his contemporaries, surely they cannot be regarded as authorities for its interpretation. "There are some creations whose true meaning in all its profundity is revealed to us only after many years, when the meaning of their symbols has become clear through the march of time".⁵¹ As an example of this view one may cite H. Friedrich: "Cervantes conceived his Don Quixote as a fool whose extravagances should expose the fatuity of a chivalry that had become a mere romantic convention. Only after a long process of interpretation did it become apparent that he had transcended his aim and had created a symbolic figure to represent the supra-mundane bliss attainable by free-ranging fancy and its proximity to a truth quite different from mere objective fact. Such is nowadays the conviction of all discerning Spanish readers of Cervantes: they understand their author better than he understood himself. But the matter does not end even here: the greatness of

49. J. Wach, *Das Verstehen*, I, Tübingen 1926 (repr. Hildesheim 1966), pp. 204-205.

50. Kayser, p. 227.

51. A. Kariv, *Atara Leyoshna*, Tel Aviv 1956, p. 129.

Cervantes' creation is proved by the fact that no reading of it can ever be final".⁵²

Therefore, New Criticism holds, whoever undertakes to interpret a literary creation should not ask: "What were the intentions of the author in his work?" nor "How did his contemporaries understand it?" but rather: "What is written in the text?"

3. In truth, this view of the task of the interpreter is simply the outcome of a particular concept of "understanding".⁵³ Without dealing at length with this subject, we should note that one of the distinguishing features of modern philosophy is its denial of the unique role of the intellect as the sole basis of understanding.⁵⁴ Intellectual, verbal, historical and psychological understanding is accompanied or permeated by desires and feelings aroused in the reader by the text. Hence his understanding will be a combination of all these factors — not a mechanical combination of different separable "levels of understanding" but an organic unity of comprehension. Or, as Goethe put it very simply: "To understand is to develop another man's words from within oneself".⁵⁵

52. "Dichtung und die Methoden ihrer Deutung", in: *Die Albert-Ludwigs-Universität Freiburg 1457-1957*, II, Freiburg/Brs. 1957, p. 97 (= *Die Werkinterpretation*, p. 296). Compare D. Alonso's words: "Don Quixote was what we would call a work of literature right from the start, but for Cervantes' contemporaries it was a sort of splendid farce. For the eighteenth century . . . it was virtually an all-embracing history of man. The nineteenth century saw Don Quixote and Sancho as symbolising the two planes on which we can live our lives, the quest after an ideal and material necessity. The twentieth century, with Unamuno and Papini, has yoked the immortal pair together beneath the light of the same bright madness" ("Towards a Knowledge of Literary Works" in: *The Critical Moment* [note 2, above], p. 147).

53. E. Rothacker, *Logik und Systematik der Geisteswissenschaften*, München 1947; O. F. Bollnow, "Über das kritische Verstehen", *op. cit.* (note 41, above), pp. 35-69; E. Betti, *Allgemeine Auslegungslehre als Methodik der Geisteswissenschaften*, Tübingen 1967, *passim*, esp. pp. 42ff; A. Lefevre, "The Growth of Literary Knowledge", *PTL*, II (1977), pp. 46-50.

54. I. M. Bockenski, *Contemporary European Philosophy* (transl. by D. Nicholl & K. Aschenbrenner), Berkeley and Los Angeles 1956, pp. 134-135, 159-161; W. A. Alston, "Meaning", in P. Edwards (ed.), *The Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, V, New York and London [1967], pp. 233-241; M. Krielger, "Meaning, Problem of" in *Princeton Encyclopedia* (note 2, above), pp. 475-479; H. G. Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, New York [1975], *passim*.

55. In a letter of Sept. 25, 1820, to Conta; quoted by Friedrich, *op. cit.* (note 52, above), p. 99 (= *Die Werkinterpretation*, p. 298).

This means that instead of the old concept of the scholar and the work which is being studied in subject-object relationship we find the idea of cooperation between the creation and its interpreters. True interpretation is "not so much knowledge of the poem as acquaintance with it".⁵⁶ The interpreter of a poem is not, according to this, like a surgeon who stands with his scalpel over the patient, but rather like a friend who maintains a friendly dialogue with the poem. According to A. L. Strauss, "The reader is indeed bound to the letter of the book; but not only does he absorb it, he also ponders it in order to vivify the meaning of the letter. The relationship of the letters to the living creation is like the relationship of the architect's plan to the completed house. The reader builds only according to the plan, but he builds with the materials of his voice and spirit. Therefore the poem has a fully realized being only when a true reader reproduces it with his voice and spirit".⁵⁷ Thus Betti writes: "Understanding is a recognition and reconstruction of the sense — thus of the spirit which is recognisable by the forms in which it is depicted".⁵⁸

Does not this theory of interpretation involve the danger of arbitrariness, of excessive subjectivity, and of all kinds of anachronisms?

Proponents of this theory do not deny that this danger exists. According to Lunding: "While emotionalism and irrationalism are good breeding-grounds for poetry, they represent a serious danger in the realm of scholarship, and through them subjective outpourings easily come to dominate in literary scholarship at the expense of judicious knowledge, and phraseology affecting deep profundity replaces scientific terminology which strives for normative conceptualization".⁵⁹ Danger threatens the

56. Wehrli, p. 60.

57. *Bedarkhe Hasifrut*, Jerusalem 1959, p. 16.

58. *Die Hermeneutik als allgemeine Methode der Geisteswissenschaften*, Tübingen 1962, p. 12, (italics his). See also: Idem, *op. cit.* (note 53, above), pp. 181ff, 279-280, 491. W. Schadewaldt, in speaking of Homeric scholarship in our days, affirms: "Originally a mere handmaid of the texts and of factual explanation, interpretation has by now become a means of intellectual X-rays enabling us to exhibit the reality created in works of art, as works of thought, with ever-increasingly perfected comprehension and with a degree of accuracy never previously attainable" ("Die Wandlung des Homerbildes in der Gegenwart", *Hellas und Hesperien*, Zürich und Stuttgart 1960, p. 15). See also: "Die Situation der klassischen Philologie heute", *ibid.*, pp. 977ff.

59. *Op. cit.* (note 2, above), p. 7.

literary scholar from both directions. Staiger also noted this fact: "Strange lot that of literary science: he who pursues it ends up either without science or without literature".⁶⁰

Similarly J. Pfeiffer asserts, "Literary interpretation treads a narrow path, with dangers on the right and on the left. It is liable to be burned in the flame of excessive subjective feeling, which makes it oblivious of the text, or it is liable to freeze in the cold of intellectual analysis which destroys the aesthetic experience".⁶¹

On the other hand, however, those critics who stress that they offer an objective interpretation and do not introduce their own thoughts actually forget that what appears to them to be an "objective" interpretation is in fact only the first perception of the interpreter, that primary "feeling" aroused in every potential interpreter and without which there is no possibility of interpretation. But who can assure us that his perception is accurate? And who can say that it does not require the refinement which can only be achieved through deep probing and much hermeneutic labour? Nor is this all: though one may feel that the commentator should approach the creation and his task of interpretation without any preconceptions — does he really think that as the interpreter empties his mind of knowledge, desires and content, his spirit will be more in tune with the spirit of the creation? Is such an approach of an "emptied" interpreter desirable? Even more to the point: is such an approach at all possible?

New Criticism too admits that the commentator is always a prisoner of his own times. However, even once we admit the inescapable influence of his time upon him, and recognise thereby the limits of his capacity, we are not bound to decide in favour of subjectivism and relativism. We must heed the command that every interpretation should be determined by the work to be interpreted and not through the subjectivism of the interpreter. The true interpretation is the outcome of that fortunate occasion when the interpreter does not subjugate the creation but is subjugated by it.⁶² The interpreter must not forget that not only intellectual forces must participate in the task of interpretation, but equally other mental powers

60. Staiger, pp. 12-13 (= *Die Werkinterpretation*, p. 149).

61. *Zwischen Dichtung und Philosophie*, Bremen 1947, p. 5.

62. Kayser, *Vortragsreise*, p. 53. Cf. H. G. Gadamer, "Vom Zirkel des Verstehens", in: *Martin Heidegger zum siebzigsten Geburtstag — Festschrift*, Neske 1959, p. 34.

without which it is impossible to attain to an understanding of the text. He must be no less careful to avoid letting these non-intellectual mental powers interpret the text wilfully, and should not forget what historical research has taught him concerning the text under discussion.

According to literary scholars of the New Critical schools, there is one assurance of a correct interpretation and it is perhaps the only one, or at least the most trustworthy: *the text*. Only deeper absorption in the words and letters of the text can lead to healthy interpretation. Without it interpretation becomes distortion. "... what sorts of evidence are really available for the presence or absence of X [whatever it may be] in the poem? ... the best, if not only, sorts of evidence are fundamentally linguistic — have to do with relations of words and phrases to one another".⁶³

This conviction is the most basic tenet in all branches of the schools of literary study we have been discussing. It is the common factor in the views, elsewhere mutually contradictory, of the Anglo-Saxon and Swiss-German Schools. Among the Anglo-Saxons it is expressed through the phrase "close reading"; the Swiss defined it as the highest aim of philology, "*philology*" itself, that is, *love of the word*.⁶⁴ According to L. Spitzer: "It really seems to me that thorough, attentive reading is the best manoeuvre for penetrating the secrets of literature".⁶⁵ Staiger asserts: "The scholar should concern himself only with the words of the poet; should pay attention only to what is realized in the words of the poem".⁶⁶ Thus the commentator can fulfill this well-known requirement "*sensus non est inferendus, sed efferendus*", when he proceeds, as Staiger recommends: "Any mistakes underlying one's approach to the interpretation correct themselves sooner or later, so long as the subject does not have to be given up as inaccessible. For everything must harmonize with everything else. Any disharmony accordingly demands immediate revision. When finally the unity of the complexity is demonstrated or the complexity developed from an all-determining rhythm, the interpretation acquires a

63. I. A. Richards, "Poetic Process and Literary Analysis", in: Th. A. Sebeok (ed.), *Style in Language*, Cambridge, Massachusetts 1960, pp. 16-17.

64. Th. Spörri, "Über Literaturwissenschaft und Stilkritik", *Trivium*, I, 1(1942), pp. 2-3.

65. *Stilstudien*, II, München 1928, p. 17.

66. Staiger, p. 9 (= *Die Werkinterpretation*, p. 146).

validity which is unprovable, perhaps, but does not require proof".⁶⁷ Similarly Richards, among others, writes: "... the *tests* ... for the correctness of any interpretation of a set of complex signs are its internal coherence and its coherence with all else that is relevant ... When an interpretation hangs together [without conflicting with anything else: history, literary tradition, etc.] we call it correct — when it takes into account all the items, by which it interprets them in the most acceptable manner".⁶⁸

4. The main principles of the New Critical approaches in literary scholarship stem essentially from the view that quality and substance are co-extensive and any distinction between shell and kernel, form and content is the product of analysis and abstraction and not an intrinsic aspect of reality. It does not lead towards reality but away from it. On the other hand, as M. Heidegger defines poetry as "*worthafte Stiftung des Seins*"⁶⁹ ("a verbal representation of *being*"), the world of the poem is a real and immutable world. From this outlook it follows that the only appropriate perception of the poem is as an entity, a unity of thought and image. A dichotomous view, which splits up the poem into "content" and "form" is wide of the mark. After all, form and content are among the "twins whose being is integrated and can exist only while they are in mutual contact. The more you strive to separate these inseparables the more you are certain to destroy one by removing the other".⁷⁰ It is therefore a basic principle in the new literary theory that "The individual style of a poem is neither the form nor the content, neither the thought nor the motif, but rather it is all of these as one, for is based on just this the integrity of a poem, that everything is unified in style".⁷¹ The style of the creation in all

67. "Time and the Poetic Imagination", pp. 134-135. See also Staiger, pp. 18-19 (= *Die Werkinterpretation*, p. 155).

68. "Fifteen Lines from Landor", in: *Speculative Instruments*, London 1955, p. 196.

69. *Erläuterungen zu Hölderlins Dichtung*, Frankfurt [s. a.], p. 43.

70. Sh. Zemaḥ, "Tokhen Vezura", *Adam im Aherim*, Tel Aviv 1957, p. 205.

71. Staiger, pp. 19-20 (= *Die Werkinterpretation*, p. 156). Compare also Alonso: "... style is the work of literature, because for me style means 'everything' — I would stress that: *everything* — 'that gives a literary entity, a book, a writer, an age... its individuality'. 'My efforts have been mainly devoted to trying to redeem 'stylistic' from an exclusive attention to the surface of the work, and directing it towards the conceptual and affective content' (*art. cit.* [note 51, above], p. 149. — italics his).

its manifestations is not only a matter of aesthetics but also a matter of expressiveness.

"It is thus characteristic of poetic form that it comprises within itself the actual content which can be apprehended only as form".⁷² Therefore it follows that any thought that has been expressed in a certain manner can be realized only through these very words in their given order, rhythm, sound pattern and associative context — this order and no other. All these together are of the essence of the written work, not ornaments, not garments in which the creative artist has clothed his thoughts and of which he can divest them without changing the essence of his creation. One cannot compare the relation between the idea and its formulation to that between the body and its clothing or between wine and the container.⁷³ The garment can be changed and the body, though it will look different, will still be the same. Wine can be emptied from one container to another without losing its taste or bouquet. However if you change the wording of a poem by paraphrasing it — you have taken away its soul and put something else in its place. It is no longer that poem. This fact is expressed by Brooks: "To refer the structure of the poem to what is finally a paraphrase of the poem is to refer it to something outside the poem . . . most of our difficulties in criticism are rooted in the heresy of paraphrase. If we allow ourselves to be misled by it, we distort the relation of the poem to its 'truth', we raise the problem of belief in a vicious and crippling form, we split the poem between its 'form' and its 'content' — we bring the statement to be conveyed into an unreal competition with science or philosophy or theology".⁷⁴ "Content determines form and form

72. P. Böckmann, *op. cit.* (note 2, above), p. 12.

73. Compare Richards' determination: "The theory of interpretation is obviously a branch of biology. . . . To remember this may help us to avoid some traditional mistakes — among them the use of bad analogies which tie us up if we take them too seriously. Some of these are notorious; for example, the opposition between form and content, and the almost equivalent opposition between matter and form. These are wretchedly inconvenient metaphors. So is that other which makes language a dress which thought puts on. We shall do better to think of a meaning as though it were a plant that has grown — not a can that has been filled or a lump of clay that has been moulded. These are obvious inadequacies" (*The Philosophy of Rhetoric*, New York 1965, p. 12).

74. *Op. cit.* (note 24, above), p. 201.

does not exist without content" — this saying of Goethe⁷⁵ expresses the very core of literary scholarship. Rather similarly the poet Mallarmé answered the painter Degas when he complained that he was unsuccessful in poetry although he had plenty of ideas, "My dear Degas, poems are not made with ideas but with words".⁷⁶

Hence there is no real critical relevance in indicating that a certain content (theme, idea, plot) appears here or there. After all, what makes the shining sun or a stormy sea or a man writhing in torment and asking for mercy into poetry is not these subjects but rather the verbal expression in which they are presented.⁷⁷

This verbal expression is peculiar to poetry and is different from non-poetic language: "The poet does indeed also employ words, but not as ordinary speakers and writers do. The latter must use up words so that nothing remains of them, whereas the poet gives his words real existence and permanence".⁷⁸ "In daily life and also in science, language conveys meaning and after it has fulfilled this function it is ready to be forgotten as long as the content of the words is remembered".⁷⁹ "In contrast to this, the language of poetry is not ready to disappear (or become dumb) after it has fulfilled the function of conveying a certain content, because it is not only a means".⁸⁰ The word in poetry not only expresses its conceptual content, because it is "used for the sake of the effects in emotion and attitude produced by the reference it occasions";⁸¹ therefore, not only conveys its denotation, but at the same time carries an atmosphere of its synonyms and words similar in sound, wherein mingles the memory of cognate words, even words with a contrary meaning (connotation). For a full and exact interpretation of the poem connotation is no less important than denotation.

The conclusion to be drawn from this uniqueness of the language of poetry is that the meaning of words and expressions in poetry is dependent on the context. The same word if it is used in a different context has

75. "Gehalt bringt die Form mit, und Form ist nie ohne Gehalt."

76. Kayser, p. 240.

77. "Poetry is poetry not by virtue of its subject matter, but by the magic of its form" (Pfeiffer, *op. cit.* [note 61, above], p. 8).

78. M. Heidegger, *Holzwege*, Frankfurt a/M 1959, p. 36.

79. F. Kainz, *Psychologie der Sprache*², II, Stuttgart 1960, p. 222.

80. Strauss, *loc. cit.* (note 57, above).

81. Richards (quoted by W. Sutton, *Modern American Criticism*, New Jersey 1963, p. 7).

a different meaning. So the note A is different when it is played on the piano, violin or organ even though it is always the note A of 435 vibrations, and its "content" is different when it is heard as the tonic in A major or in the chord of the seventh in E major.⁸²

From this follows a basic principle in the study of style: linguistic forms can have many different meanings, and the converse is equally true: a given function can be performed by means of different forms.⁸³ As in the humanities in general, so too in the world of literature there is no place for generalization, for schematic representation. "While physics may see its highest triumphs in some general theory reducing to a formula electricity and heat, gravitation and light, no general law can be assumed to achieve the purpose of literary study: the more abstract and hence empty it will seem; the more the concrete object of the work of art will elude our grasp".⁸⁴

Hence also the objection to determining the intention of a literary work on the basis of the "sources" upon which the creator "drew". The details of the poet's life are irrelevant to an understanding of his poem, because that event in his life which moved him to create is not the source from which it is derived. The source is his spirit, the soul of the author, which transformed that fortuitous event into a creation that in its present form has nothing to do with that event. So, too, that ancient text which gave the push to the artist was at the most some raw material in the hands of the creator but in no sense the source of his creation. This new creation does not spring from the early source, from the ancient theme or motif; it springs completely from the poet's mind and soul. Therefore Knight asserts that the expression "source" is only a misleading metaphor. He writes: "There is, clearly, a relation between Shakespeare's plays and the work of Plutarch, Holinshed, Virgil, Ovid and the Bible; but not one of these, nor any number of them, can be considered a cause of Shakespeare's poetry".⁸⁵ According to R. Wellek: "The reduction of a work of art to its causes is impossible because works of art are wholes,

82. Kayser, p. 126. The New Testament scholar, E. Fascher, illustrates by a similar image the function of the context in determining the meaning of a word (*Vom Verstehen des Neuen Testaments*, Giessen 1930, p. 139). See further below, pp. 76f.

83. Kayser, p. 106.

84. Wellek & Warren, pp. 6-7.

85. *Op. cit.* (note 22, above), pp. 7-8. Compare Staiger, p. 15.

conceived in the free imagination, whose integrity and meaning are violated if we break them into sources and influences".⁸⁶ And according to Allen Tate, "What is the poem after it is written? That is the question. Not where it came from, or why. The Why and Where can never get beyond the guessing stage because, in the language of those who think it can, poetry cannot be investigated under 'laboratory conditions'. The only real evidence that any critic may bring before his gaze is the finished poem. For some reason most critics have a hard time fixing their minds directly under their noses, and before they see the object that is there they use a telescope to scan upon the whole horizon to see where it came from. They are wood cutters who do their job by finding out where the ore came from in the iron of the steel of the blade of the ax that Jack built".⁸⁷

Hence it follows that to grasp the *sense* of a poem the important thing is not to discover the origin of stylistic features borrowed from some impersonal stock but to reveal their new organic function in our author's work — not to indicate sources or parallels but to consider the manner in which they are employed, or rather how they are integrated into the particular poem. The themes, subjects or motifs originally borrowed are, as already mentioned, no more than raw material into which the poet breathes his spirit and from which he creates in his own image, while transforming what he has invented or adapted into a shape that is finally immutable. Admittedly, continuity may help to illuminate discontinuity; a borrowed strain may sound as a counterpoint to the poet's melody. This seems to be the meaning of Staiger's remark: "Interpretation is concerned with the 'head', the study of stylistic changes with the 'heritage' and the process whereby the heritage is acquired. These two methods are not mutually hostile; together they strive towards an understanding of literature as it comes into being and as it is".⁸⁸

If *Geistesgeschichte* scholars were opposed to looking for "sources" to give a genetic explanation of the literary creation because they objected to using an approach foreign to literature, exponents of *Werkinterpretation* and New Criticism are opposed to reasoning by analogy from one

86. "Some Principles of Criticism", in: *The Critical Moment*, p. 44.

87. "Narcissus as Narcissus", *The Man of Letters in the Modern World*, New York 1955, p. 333.

88. "Das Problem des Stilwandels", *Euphorion*, LVI (1961), p. 241.

poem to another because they view the poet's words as having a special character of their own. A "source" or "parallel" may help us to understand the meaning of a text not insofar as it is similar to the text but rather because it is dissimilar.

The interpreter must concentrate on what is unique in the poem: it is not the analogies between it and other poems that are important but the differences between them. "Just as people's faces are unlike, so are their minds"; and the difference in minds is expressed in the difference of form.

These discoveries lead to the methodological imperative to pay close attention to the text, to every word, to the word-order and syntax, to synonyms and metaphors, to unusual syntactical phenomena, to the structure of every sentence and to the structure of the work as a whole. All this must not be done from a statistical perspective, by classifying and counting, not by enquiring into separate elements as such but by examining the function of each linguistic and structural element within the whole work, by answering the question of how all the individual parts are welded to make up the formal unity of the whole. Betti mentions how the Roman jurist Celsus objected to the hairsplitting subtleties of forensic orators: "In civile est, nisi tota lege perspecta, una aliqua particula eius proposita indicare vel respondere" ("It is unreasonable to cite a few details of a statute as grounds for a decision without regarding the statute as a whole").⁸⁹ The axiom contained in these words is basic for the understanding of a literary creation. It is the indispensable hermeneutic rule of the methodology employed by the new science of literature which has succeeded to the ancient theories of rhetoric and has been adapted to the modern doctrine of understanding.⁹⁰ Betti calls this rule "the canon of unity and inner agreement in hermeneutic appreciation",⁹¹ and it has been further described by B. Hernstein Smith: "As we read, structural principles both formal and thematic are gradually deployed and perceived; and as these principles make themselves known we are engaged in a steady process of readjustment and retrospective patterning".⁹² That is, interpretation does not mean the explanation of every detail in the work by itself but rather the explanation of every detail in the light of the whole

89. *Allgemeine Auslegungslehre* (note 53, above), p. 219.

90. See Gadamer, *art. cit.* (note 62, above), p. 24.

91. *Op. cit.* (note 89, above), p. 220.

92. *Poetic Closure — A Study of How Poems End*, Chicago 1968, p. 10.

creation and the explanation of the whole creation on the basis of all its details. "Hermeneutics has long taught us", Staiger affirms, "that we must interpret the whole on the basis of the details and the details in the light of our understanding of the whole work. This is the hermeneutic *circulus* about which we will no longer say that it is a magic circle from which we can't escape but rather we must strive to walk it with care and concern".⁹³

To be precise: "This interpretation does not mean explaining the creation by arguing from the general to the particular or vice-versa, but rather an explanation based on the understanding of all the formal elements which work together to create the unified work".⁹⁴ It is, therefore, essentially based on grasping the creation in its totality, in the same sense as is implied by the concept of "totality" in philosophy.⁹⁵ For this reason we have, following a suggestion of Martin Buber, coined the term "Total Interpretation" to describe the method which seems to us appropriate for the understanding and study of the poetical parts of the Bible.

93. Staiger, p. 11 (= *Die Werkinterpretation*, p. 144). About the history of the principle of the "hermeneutic circle" see Betti, *op. cit.*, pp. 220ff; Gadamer, *loc. cit.* (note 90, above); *Truth and Method*, pp. 235ff.

94. Kayser, *Vortragsreise*, p. 46.

95. "The whole is more than the parts, i.e. the sum of the parts does not add up to a whole; for this we need the arrangement and integration of the parts, presupposing a special, sometimes even a substantial factor which makes the totality possible. Not what the parts could be in themselves is decisive for the character of the whole, but what the whole makes of them — the arrangement and unity, like the architect's plan realised in the completed building. The parts are, of their very nature, subordinate to the whole for the sake of which they exist; this does not exclude the possibility of their possessing, among other qualities, their own importance, separate existence and individual character" (W. Brugger, *Philosophisches Wörterbuch*⁸, Freiburg 1961, p. 97).

B
Changing Approaches in Modern
Biblical Scholarship¹

Biblical study of every generation is a true reflection of the intellectual currents of the environment and age.

Throughout most of the history of Biblical scholarship the study of the Bible was the zealously guarded preserve of religious communities that treated the text as Sacred Scripture. From the very outset, those communities affirmed that interpretation must proceed according to principles and methods. But, since the Bible itself is mute on the question of *how* it is to be interpreted, the world at large was invariably the source of those methods and principles. Thus the Rabbinic Sages developed sets of hermeneutical rules borrowed from the ἐργασίαι of the Greek rhetors;² the Church Fathers employed the literary-critical tools of late antiquity in order to determine the literal meaning of the text;³ Karaite interpretation and Saadia Gaon's controversy against it show the influence of methods

1. For detailed surveys and discussions of the history of Biblical scholarship, see E. G. Kraeling, *The Old Testament Since the Reformation*, London 1955; W. Baumgartner, "Eine alttestamentliche Forschungsgeschichte", *ThR*, XXV (1959), pp. 93-110; J. Muilenburg, "Modern Issues in Biblical Studies — The Gains of Form Criticism in Old Testament Studies", *ET*, LXXI (1960), pp. 229-233; idem, "Old Testament Scholarship — Fifty years in Retrospect", *Journal of Bible and Religion*, XXVIII (1960), pp. 173-181; H. H. Rowley (ed.), *The Old Testament and Modern Study*, Oxford [1951, repr. 1952]; J. Bright, "Modern Study of Old Testament Literature", in: *The Bible and the Ancient Near East — Essays in Honor of W. F. Albright*, London 1961, pp. 13-31; H. J. Kraus, "Zur gegenwärtigen Lage der alttestamentlichen Forschung", *Studium Generale*, XIV (1961), pp. 1-10; idem, *Geschichte der historisch-kritischen Erforschung des Alten Testaments von der Reformation bis zur Gegenwart*², Neukirchen 1969; I. P. Hyatt, (ed.), *The Bible in Modern Scholarship*, Nashville 1965; H. F. Hahn, *The Old Testament in Modern Research*², Philadelphia 1966; R. E. Clements, *100 Years of Old Testament Interpretation*, Philadelphia 1976; H. Cazelles, "Biblical Criticism, OT", *IDBS*, pp. 98-102.
2. See S. Lieberman, *Hellenism in Jewish Palestine*², New York 1962, pp. 47-82.
3. See B. Smalley, *The Study of the Bible in the Middle Ages*², Oxford 1952, pp. 26-36, R. P. C. Hanson, "Biblical Exegesis in the Early Church", in: P. R. Ackroyd & C. F. Evans (eds.), *The Cambridge History of the Bible*, I, *From the Beginning to Jerome*, Cambridge 1970, pp. 412-453.

accepted by many Islamic schools and in legal literature.⁴ Jewish Biblical study in Moslem Spain was thoroughly indebted to Arabic grammatical and poetic theory;⁵ the interaction of Jews and Christians had — directly or indirectly — an effect on the Biblical study of both.⁶

In the period of Humanism, and even more during the Age of Enlightenment, when faith in traditional metaphysics, in the absoluteness of the traditional view of the world and of history, and in the force of the traditional proofs was shaken and gave way to historical awareness, a revolutionary change in the study of the Bible took place. Scholars, even those who continued to see the Bible as Holy Writ, began to view the Bi-

4. See M. Zucker, "Miperusho Shel R. Saadya Gaon Latora", *Sura*, II (1955-56), pp. 313-355; idem, *Al Targum R. Saadya Gaon Latora*, New York 1959, pp. 229-236.
5. See N. M. Sarna, "Hebrew and Bible Studies in Mediaeval Spain", in: R. D. Barnett, *The Sephardi Heritage — Essays on the History and Cultural Contribution of the Jews of Spain and Portugal*, I, London [1971], pp. 323-366 (there also bibliography).
6. See, for example, E. E. Urbach's remarks dealing with the phenomenon of the Tosafot. He calls our attention to the existence of mutual influence between Jews and Christians, who came together in the intellectual sphere and especially in that of Biblical interpretation. Christian scholars met with Jewish not only for discussion and disputation but also because of concern and desire for learning (*Baale Hatsofot*⁴, II [Jerusalem 1980], p. 745). For Jewish influence on Christian Biblical interpretation see K. Grobel, "Interpretation, History and Principles of", §§ 2 d.e. *IDB*, II, pp. 721-722. Urbach, *ibid.*, I, p. 134; II, pp. 745-746. See also, e.g., A. Habib Arkin, *La influencia de la exégesis hebrea en los comentarios bíblicos de fray Luis de León*, Madrid 1966; E. Shereshevsky, "Hebrew Traditions in Peter Cornestor's *Historia Scholastica* I: Genesis", *JQR*, LX (1969), pp. 268-289. Smalley, discussing the study of the Bible in the twelfth century by two disciples of St. Victor, Hugh (*op. cit.* [note 3, above], pp. 103-105) and Andrew (*ibid.*, pp. 154-156), concludes: "Andrew's *Hebraei*, like Hugh's, quoted extensively from the teaching of Rashi". It was interesting to find that, whereas Hugh has parallels with Joseph Kara and Rashbam, Andrew has some strikingly close parallels with the younger scholar, his own contemporary, Joseph Bekhor Shor (*ibid.*, p. 155). Some scholars hold the view that Rashi's method of interpretation was influenced by the spirit of his age (See S. Kamin, *Todaato Haparshanut Shel Rashi Leor Hahaviana Ben Peshat Liderash*, Diss., Jerusalem 1979, pp. 304-305). According to Smalley, Joseph Kara, Rashbam and Joseph Bekhor Shor showed an increasing knowledge of Christian exegesis and an increasing desire to refute it. Eliezer of Beaugency, on the contrary, has no parallels with Hugh or Andrew, and does not refer to Christian interpretation. This makes us wonder whether it may not be possible to trace some connection between Victorines and the schools of Joseph Kara, Rashbam and Joseph Bekhor Shor (*op. cit.*, pp. 155-156).

ble critically and historically⁷ and to make use of the critical-historical ("philological") method which dominated general literary scholarship. Thus the study of the Bible was transformed into a science. As in the study of literature in general, the text and its meaning were no longer the goal: philology was subordinated to history and the text became but a source.⁸ Biblical literature was considered a stage in the history of world literature, as an ancient written document, and its study was modelled after the study of Homeric poetry. The same problems were posed and similar solutions offered in both fields. This situation henceforth became the rule: "In every generation similar concepts and hypotheses prevail at the same time in regard to the Homeric and Biblical problems".⁹ When the

7. A programmatic proposal for an "historical-critical" method in connection with the Bible came first from W. M. L. de Wette in 1817 in the introduction to the first edition of his book: *Lehrbuch der historisch-kritischen Einleitung in die Bibel* (Kraus, *Geschichte* [note 1, above], p. 132).

8. R. Bultmann, "Das Problem der Hermeneutik", *Glauben und Verstehen*, II, Tübingen 1958, p. 213.

9. U. Cassuto, *The Documentary Hypothesis and the Composition of the Pentateuch* (transl. by I. Abrahams)², Jerusalem [1972], p. 9. On the parallel developments in Homeric criticism and Biblical criticism see *ibid.*, pp. 9-12; Y. Reider, "Biqoret Hamiqra Haḥadisha", in: *Hakinnus Haolami Lemadae Hayahadut* (Summer 1947), Jerusalem 1952, p. 171. Actually F. Dornseiff had already pointed out that in the nineteenth century the Torah was dissected by Biblical criticism with the same operating instrument used by classical scholars to dissect Homer ("Antikes zum Alten Testament", *ZAW*, LII [1934], p. 39). Dornseiff writes further that the method of Biblical critics of comparing the Torah to the prophets and concluding from the parallels that the prophets preceded the Torah reminds him of the errors of Homeric criticism and renders the imitation even more striking (*ibid.*, LIII [1935], p. 21; compare J. Heinemann, *MGWJ*, LXXII [1938], p. 15, note 20). And yet, it appears that critics of the Bible make use of methodological criteria that Homeric scholars have long discarded; see E. M. J.amauchi, "Do the Bible Critics Use a Double Standard?", *Christianity Today*, X (1965), pp. 179-182. Baumgartner (*art. cit.* [note 1, above], p. 95) disagrees with Kraus (*Geschichte*, p. 4): It was not Protestant theologians who cleared the way for the critical research on the Bible. It was Lorenzo Valla (1406-1457), the teacher of Erasmus, who deliberately transferred to Biblical research the principles of historical research which were accepted in his time in the field of Greek and Roman literature.

R. de Vaux compares the dispute over the historical value of the Bible with the dispute over tradition in Homer about the Trojan war ("Method in the Study of Early Hebrew History", in: *The Bible in Modern Scholarship*, p. 29, note 30). The methods

philosophy of Hegel began to dominate the intellectual world and was used to explain all human thought, institutions, and history, this outlook also dominated in Biblical scholarship. Similarly, towards the end of the nineteenth century, Biblical research showed evidence of the influence of positivism and evolutionism which were then the generally accepted theories.¹⁰ Within the general historical-critical framework, various new disciplines in the social sciences began to assert themselves and each of these had a decided impact on Biblical scholarship. Anthropology inspired the comparative study of ancient Israelite and other Semitic religions.¹¹ When English anthropologists developed their theory of

used by M. Parry and A. B. Lord in the textual criticism of Homer have been adapted by W. A. Watters to the Bible (*Formula Criticism and the Poetry of the Old Testament* [BZAW, CXXXVIII], Berlin-New York 1976).

10. Hahn, *op. cit.* [note 1, above], pp. 9-10. See also W. F. Albright, *From the Stone Age to Christianity*, Baltimore 1946, pp. 49-60. According to M. Kegel: "Hegel begat Vatke: Vatke begat Wellhausen" (*Los von Wellhausen*, Gütersloh 1923, p. 10). Whereas R. Smend disagrees with this accepted view (see also Kraus, *op. cit.*, p. 239) and argues that it was Wellhausen who liberated the conclusions of Vatke from Hegelianism ("De Wette und das Verhältnis zwischen Bibelkritik und philosophischen System in 19. Jahrhundert", *ThZ*, XIV [1958], pp. 114-115), Baumgartner agrees with Smend in his article (*art. cit.* [note 1, above], p. 97). L. Perlitt has attempted to prove that "it is naive to attribute the concept 'development' — with which Wellhausen is castigated — to Hegel alone, who neither invented this method nor was alone in applying it to the historiography of the nineteenth century". According to Perlitt, Wellhausen the historian "follows the historical school's method of seeking origins and naturally also that of Hegel and Vatke" (*Vatke und Wellhausen*, [BZAW, XCIV], Berlin 1965, p. 172). A. Lods believes that the discovery of the evolution of the Israelite religion derives from the texts themselves and is not based on prior evolutionary assumptions (*Histoire de la littérature hébraïque et juive*, Paris 1950, p. 113). Against him A. Bentzen writes that the whole structure of the history of the Israelite religion erected by Wellhausen is based on that synthesis of positivism and evolutionism that was so characteristic of the nineteenth century (*Introduction to the Old Testament*², Copenhagen 1953, Additions to Vol. II, p. 19). J. E. Pedersen also argues: "Research in the nineteenth century was subject to certain speculative theories, whether the philosophy of Hegel or the theory of evolution. The theoretical conclusions derived only in a small measure from an understanding of the inner structure of ancient cultures. They were imported from the outside. . . . All this made possible through a one-sided emphasis on those aspects of history which corresponded to the European Protestant outlook of modern times" ("Die Auffassung vom Alten Testament", *ZAW*, XLIX [1931], p. 180).

11. See esp. W. R. Smith, *Lectures on the Religion of the Semites*³, London 1927; also T.

"primitive peoples", Biblical scholars immediately applied this to the earliest "layers" in the development of Israel. In the nineteenth century — especially in German scholarship — it was believed that the dynamic forces in history were great men and not the masses; therefore Biblical scholars saw the prophets as having created the spirit of Israel and determined its destiny. However, in the twentieth century, under the influence of sociology, Pedersen, a scholar of the sociological school in Biblical scholarship, inquires into the nature of popular beliefs and the way of life of the masses which were, in this view, the soil from which the prophets grew, and concludes that spiritual faith, which according to the view generally accepted until his day, was the creation of the prophets, never existed in Israel, and is only an image of religious beliefs of Protestant Europe in the nineteenth century.¹² The Form Critical (in German: *Formgeschichte*, *Gattungsforschung*) method as well — and its descendants — which gave rise to the revolution in the methodology of Biblical research, "did not spring from the brain of the scholar but was suggested to him by the whole conceptual tendency which surrounded him".¹³ This too was the result of the sociological approach which found expression not only, as indicated above, in the study of general history, by shifting the emphasis from the ruling personalities to the common people¹⁴ and by attributing the decisive influence in the history of ideas to the concepts and beliefs current in society, but also in the imprint it left on German and classical studies, finding in these literatures not the achievement of individual authors but the product of the collective genius of the people, conventions of literary form, traditional typical formulae of expression, and a style which is not a matter of individual artistry. It is this approach which is responsible for the growing tendency to stress the importance of popular oral "literature", as it is the common man who transmits cultural

O. Beidelman, *W. Robertson Smith and the Sociological Study of Religion*, Chicago 1974.

12. Pedersen, *art. cit.* (note 10, above), pp. 174-180 (see the quotation in the end of note 10). Compare E. Urbach, "Neue Wege der Bibelwissenschaft", *MGWJ*, LXXXII (1938), p. 1.
13. E. Fascher, *Die formgeschichtliche Methode*, Giessen 1924, p. 36. Compare H. Stendhal, "Implications of Form Criticism and Traditions-Criticism for Biblical Interpretation", *JBL*, LVII (1958), p. 35. See our discussion below, pp. 54ff.
14. See, e.g., E. H. Carr, *What is History?* [London 1964, repr. 1972], pp. 31-55.

traditions from generation to generation until they are written down. The study of folklore, chiefly in Scandinavia, had immediate effect on Biblical scholarship and much has been written on the oral traditions which underlie Biblical literature.¹⁵ Furthermore the sociological trend in historical studies at the beginning of the twentieth century also led to the conclusion that the religious literature of the ancient Near East (at first of Babylonia and Egypt, thereafter of Ugarit and Canaan) bear striking resemblance to those occurring in the Bible both in poetical form and language, as well as in their similar social cultic connections, lacking as they do any expression of individual religiosity. The latest trends as well — such as the application of various linguistic theories,¹⁶ the use of computers to identify literary levels, sentence structure and forms,¹⁷ etc. — have all found their way from general literature into the study of the Bible.

And so all the disciplines in the humanities are echoed in the history of

15. See, *inter alia*, E. Nielsen, *Oral Tradition*, London [1954, repr. 1955]; A. C. Culley, "An Approach to the Problem of Oral Tradition", *VT*, XIII (1963), pp. 113-125; B. O. Long, "Recent Field Studies in Oral Literature and their Bearing on O. T. Criticism", *ibid.*, XXVI (1976), pp. 187-198; *Semeia*, V, *Oral Tradition and Old Testament Studies*, 1976; B. Stola & R. Shannon (eds.), *Oral Literature and the Formula*, Ann Arbor 1976; Watters, *op. cit.* [note 9, above].
16. For example, the journal *Linguistica Biblica*, founded in 1970; W. Richter, "Formgeschichte und Sprachwissenschaft", *ZAW*, LXXXII (1970), pp. 216-224; "Formgeschichte als Literaturwissenschaft — Entwurf einer alttestamentlichen idem, *Exegese als Literaturwissenschaft* — Entwurf einer alttestamentlichen Literaturtheorie und Methodologie, Göttingen [1971]; L. Lapointe, "La valeur linguistique du Sitz im Leben", *Biblica*, LII (1971), pp. 469-487; E. A. Nida, "Implications of Contemporary Linguistics for Biblical Scholarship", *JBL*, XLI (1972), pp. 73-89; W. G. Doty, "Linguistics and Biblical Criticism", *JAAR*, XLI (1973), pp. 114-121; W. Schenk, "Die Aufgaben der Exegese und die Mittel der Linguistik", *ThLZ*, XCVIII (1973), cols. 881-894; R. G. Müller, "Die linguistische Kritik an der Bibelkritik", *Bibel und Liturgie*, XLVI (1973), pp. 105-118; Y. T. Radday *et al.*, "The Book of Judges Examined by Statistical Linguistics", *Biblica*, LVIII (1977), pp. 469-499; G. Altpeter, *Textlinguistische Exegese alttestamentlicher Literatur — Eine Dekadierung*, Bern—Frankfurt a/M — Las Vegas [1978]. Compare also Cooper. See also note 51, below.
17. See Ch. Hardmeier, "Die Verwendung von elektronischen Datenverarbeitungsanlagen in der alttestamentlichen Wissenschaft — Neue Möglichkeiten der Forschung am Alten Testament", *ZAW*, LXXXII (1970), pp. 175-185 (there also bibliographical references). See also, for example, Radday *et al.*, *art. cit.* (note 16, above).

Biblical scholarship.¹⁸ This phenomenon is not only intelligible but also quite legitimate from the viewpoint of methodology. It follows logically from the fact that the study of the Bible is a branch of humanistic studies, exactly like the general study of literature which, as noted above, has been greatly influenced by the various other disciplines of the humanities. And

18. Apart from the influences of these disciplines, we find not infrequently that traces of the scholar's time, place, or the Weltanschauung to which he subscribes, are also discernible in his research. As, for instance, on the approach adopted by sceptical critics towards the MT, H. S. Nyberg writes: "This contemptuous attitude (to the traditional text) can be understood only as a reaction against the old ecclesiastical dogma of verbal inspiration" (*Studien zum Hoseabuch — Zugleich ein Beitrag zur Klärung des Problem der alttestamentlichen Textkritik*, Uppsala 1935, p. 14). Nielsen is of the opinion that in the commentary on Genesis by H. Gunkel "the reader is constantly aware of the way in which the 'mature Western European' presents the naïve conception of God etc. It is the 'mature' Western European who is naïve in his feeling of cultural superiority" (*op. cit.* [note 15, above], p. 11, note 1). Against the "oral tradition" and the "traditio-historical" method which is current especially among the Scandinavian schools (see above) M. Z. Segal argues: "If it is true that proponents of the method of the 'Literarkritik' have been influenced consciously and unconsciously by the literary concepts of the modern West . . . as Engnell and his fellow-workers accuse them, it is equally true that Engnell himself was influenced perhaps unconsciously by the history of the poetry and epic saga of ancient Scandinavia which were also transmitted over many hundreds of years through oral bards and were given their final form by bards before they were written in a book" (*Massoret Uvigorot*, Jerusalem 1957, p. 18). On the study of the Bible, M. Smith writes in his article "The Present State of Old Testament Studies", *JBL*, LXXXVIII [1969], pp. 15-35: "The actual situation is unparalleled in the study of any other body of documents from the Mediterranean world. The field is a scene of intense research, resulting in widespread disagreement" (p. 19). Smith sees the explanation for this in the way the Bible has been conceived of by Judaism and Christianity throughout history and in the relationship of the Bible to existing religious institutions. Biblical scholarship has witnessed the development of a "pseudo-orthodoxy" which wants "to save as much of the old positions as possible" (p. 21). Christian, first and foremost Protestant, biases are especially marked in Bible studies. See e.g. Pedersen's remarks above on the conception of the history of Biblical religion prevalent in 19th century scholarship. There are also Jewish scholars who are influenced by their personal view in Biblical research. For example, Y. A. Seeligmann asserts about Y. Kaufmann: "Two basic factors influenced Kaufmann's life work: his love for Israel, and his philosophic tendency and/or the philosophical training he received." About Kaufmann's research, which in respect of its character and content should have been philological, Seeligmann says: "Kaufmann's approach to the text: was that of a thinker, a philosopher and sometimes a dogmatist" ("Batuah Baamito Uveda'at Aherim: Lo

just as in literary study in general, there exist here, alongside those branches in which the Bible is made to serve the humanistic disciplines as means to an end, branches which accept the primary importance and centrality of the literary creation, using the achievements of cultural sciences as aids to close reading, more precisely, to Total Interpretation. While Biblical scholarship, as we have seen, and as becomes clear from a perusal of its several schools and approaches, is most widely characterized by its view of the text as evidence of a period or a society, it has nonetheless — consciously or unconsciously — expressed its acceptance of the method of close reading.

According to M. Buber: "Poetry . . . imparts to us a truth which cannot come to words in any other manner than just in this one, in the manner of this form. Therefore every paraphrase of a poem robs it of its truth".¹⁹ By this definition Buber formulates, independently of the theories of *Werkinterpretation* and New Criticism, the same basic assumptions with

Taluy . . ." in *Al Prof. Yehezkel Kaufmann Z"l — Devarim Shene'emru Lezikhro Beyom Hasheloshim Lifetira . . .*, Jerusalem 1964, pp. 24-25). But while in Kaufmann there was this unconscious, as we may assume, unintentional influence, among other Bible scholars who generally occupy university professorships of theology, we can testify to a pronounced tendency towards the critical study of the Bible — not just for its own sake but also (or even mainly) for educational and practical purposes as, for example, M. Buber, whose contribution to the study of the Scriptures, especially as one of the modern pioneers of the system of close reading, is sometimes quite useful (see below, pp. 36-37). He actually says of himself: "When I have to interpret a text which is sacred to me, my method is that of the high philology and no other; I know no 'pneumatic' exegesis" (in: P. A. Schilpp & M. Friedman (eds.), *The Philosophy of Martin Buber*, London [1967], pp. 703-704). But at the same time he sees "the invocation of the 'intuitively scientific method' as a way of approach to the text as over against what he styles 'speculative theory'" (J. Muilenburg, "Buber as an Interpreter of the Bible", in: *The Philosophy of Martin Buber*, p. 382). No wonder that he "undoubtedly interpreted the Bible in terms of his philosophy of dialogue". Some are indeed of the opinion that "the Jewish Bible was itself a crucial influence upon the development of that philosophy" (M. L. Diamond, *Martin Buber — Jewish Existentialist*, New York 1960, p. 15). In any case "his primary concern is the existential appropriation by the individual of the Biblical event in the present moment. The existential encounter is for him always central and is not subject to historical conditioning (Muilenburg, *art. cit.*, p. 365).

19. "The Word That is Spoken", in: *The Knowledge of Man* (transl. by M. Friedman), New York 1965, p. 118.

regard to the essence of literary creation and the interpretation which it demands. The validity of this principle of "totality" was asserted by Buber with reference to the Biblical literature with even greater emphasis in his words on the message of the Bible: "Nowhere . . . can we extract from the mine of Scripture a 'content'; the content subsists throughout in its own inseparable form . . .; nowhere can we go back to an original something which is expressed in this form but might also have been expressed otherwise. In Scripture every word is a real utterance; in the face of this fact 'form' and 'content' appear as results obtained by a pseudo-analysis. Thus the message, where it is delivered indirectly, cannot be reduced to a note or a commentary. The message pervades the form, determines it, varies it and is transformed by it, yet without the slightest deformation".²⁰

A method of interpretation identical with that employed by all proponents of close reading is also found in the German translation of the Bible by M. Buber and F. Rosenzweig.²¹ This outlook is expressed also in Buber's and Rosenzweig's theoretical articles and interpretations, in their opposition to any consideration of content apart from form, in their serious concern for every single word, and particularly in the importance they — following the Sages — assign to repeated words. These words, whether they occur in the same passages or in different ones, are termed *Leitwörter*, or *Motivwörter* ("key-words").²²

20. "Die Sprache der Botschaft", in: M. Buber & F. Rosenzweig, *Die Schrift und ihre Verdeutschung*, Berlin 1936, pp. 56-57 (= M. Buber, *Werke*, II, *Schriften zur Bibel* [München 1964], pp. 1095-1096).

21. *Die Schrift* — Z. verdeutschen unternommen von Martin Buber gemeinsam mit Franz Rosenzweig, I-XV, Berlin 1925-1937. The last translation in this edition is that of Proverbs which like the translations of Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Twelve Prophets, and Psalms, was made by Buber alone. After an interruption of more than twenty years, Buber completed the translation in Jerusalem; the final volume, beginning with Job, was published in Cologne in 1962. Before his death, Buber revised the entire translation, which was then issued complete in four volumes (Heidelberg 1976-79). On the special quality of the translation see recently E. Fox, "We Mean the Voice — The Buber-Rosenzweig Translation of the Bible", in: *Response* #12, 1971-72, pp. 29-42; S. Talmon, "Martin Buber's Way of Interpreting the Bible", *JJS*, XXVII (1976), pp. 195-209; F. de Meyer, "Buber's Translation of the Bible", *Louvain Studies*, VII (1979), pp. 212-218.

22. Buber's writings on the Bible were collected in his *Werke*, II (note 20, above); in English translation see especially N. Glatzer (ed.), *On the Bible — Eighteen Studies*,

While Buber and Rosenzweig were, of course, not influenced by the modern schools of close reading, they used the hermeneutic principles for minute scrutiny of the text originally characteristic of the Midrash,²³ followed by mediaeval Jewish commentators such as Rashi, Nachmanides and Abrabanel.²⁴ Of course, the motivation of the Sages and mediaeval commentators in scrutinizing every detail in the Scripture differs from Buber's and Rosenzweig's consideration of all the elements of Biblical poetry. Buber and Rosenzweig are less arbitrary and haphazard, and more systematic. Obviously their purpose too is different from that of the Sages and the Jewish commentators in the Middle Ages.

The insistence on precision which is found in the Midrash, and even more in some mediaeval Jewish commentaries in their treatment of the Biblical text, is the basis of Nehama Leibowitz's important didactic work

New York 1968 (British edition entitled *Biblical Humanism — Eighteen Studies*, London 1968). Rosenzweig's articles on Biblical subjects appeared in his *Kleinere Schriften*, Berlin 1937, pp. 124-198.

23. See S. Kamin, "Midarkhe Hamidrash Umidarkhe Hasifrut Befarshanut Hamiqra", *Beth Mikra*, XXII (1976), pp. 71-78. Compare K. P. Bland, "The Rabbinic Method and Literary Criticism", in: K. R. Gros et al. (eds.), *Literary Interpretations of Biblical Narratives*, Nashville [1974], pp. 16-23. On the Sages' attitude towards the Bible in general, see e.g. J. Heinemann, *Aggadot Vetoledotehen*, Jerusalem 1971, pp. 7-15.

24. The mediaeval *peshat* ("literal") commentators often show an acute awareness of subtleties of style and meaning. But their hermeneutic includes a vigorous separation of form and content which, in the final analysis, precludes any real compatibility between their exegesis and modern close reading. Ibn Ezra compares the relationship between the word and its content to the relationship of the body to the soul (*Mevo Lisod Hadiqduq*, and in his commentary on Genesis 5:29; Exodus 12:5, 17:3, 18:21, 20:1; Deuteronomy 5:5; Isaiah 36:1). According to David Kaufmann this notion draws on Arabic sources (see W. Bacher, *Abraham ibn Ezra als Grammatiker*, Budapest 1881, pp. 148, 31 note 1. On the Arabic source of this attitude towards form and content, see W. Heinrichs, *Arabische Dichtung und griechische Poetik*, Beirut 1969, pp. 69-82). Radak too asserts: "It is the manner of Holy Writ in repeating matters to retain the meaning but not the words" (Commentary on Genesis 24:39, 32:13. Compare also Genesis 41:17). The same principle is expressed by Rashbam: "It is the custom in the Bible to repeat matters" (Commentary on Deuteronomy 32:23, etc.). On mediaeval and post-mediaeval Jewish attitudes towards Biblical poetry in general, see Cooper, pp. 150-162; J. L. Kugel, "Some Mediaeval and Renaissance Writings on the Poetry of the Bible", in: I. Twersky (ed.), *Studies in Mediaeval Jewish History and Literature*, I, Cambridge (Mass.) 1979, pp. 57-81; idem, *Biblical Parallelism and its Early Exegesis*, Diss., New York 1977; idem, *The Idea of Biblical Poetry — Parallelism and its History*, New Haven-London [1981], especially pp. 96-109, 172-181.

to which she has devoted her life.²⁵ She has pointed the way to be followed if the plain sense of the Bible is to be understood. The theory and method set forth in her guides, which testify also to her expertise in the New Criticism, are summarized in her classic article (in Hebrew): "How to Read a Chapter of the Bible?"²⁶ She answers her question by providing analyses of Biblical narrative, which are striking examples of close reading.

Among the works of A. L. Strauss, the German and Hebrew poet, literary critic and interpreter of Hölderlin, are analyses of five psalms.²⁷ In these analyses, just as in his interpretation of mediaeval and modern literature, he insisted "that the genuineness of the true poem shows itself in the completed unity of content and form",²⁸ "from the poem and not from what is external to it, whether it is the period or personal biography, spirit of the age or situation".²⁹ Strauss never explicitly mentions the method of *Werkinterpretation* or New Criticism, although he is said to have praised Kayser's *Das sprachliche Kunstwerk* and noted the similarity of Kayser's approach to his own.³⁰ His affinity with these methods is expressed through his efforts to reveal the meaning and the value of the psalms by careful study of structure and syntax of the verses, with precise attention to the sound and rhythm of every word, as well as word-order and imagery.³¹

H. Fisch, the English literary critic, illustrates the understanding of

25. A number of Leibowitz' writings have appeared in English (all transl. by A. Newman): *Studies in the Weekly Sidra*, I-VII, Jerusalem 1958-1961; *Leader's Guide to the Psalms* (New York c. 1971); *Studies in the Book of Genesis in the Context of Ancient and Modern Jewish Bible Commentary*, Jerusalem 1972; *Studies in Shemot <the Book of Exodus>*, Jerusalem [1976]; *Studies in Vayikra <Leviticus>*, Jerusalem 1980; *Studies in Bemidbar <Numbers>*, Jerusalem 1980; *Studies in Devarim <Deuteronomy>*, Jerusalem 1980.
26. "Ketzad Liqro Pereq Batenakh", in: *Nefesh Veshir* (Iyyunim, XIX/XX), Jerusalem 1954, pp. 90-104.
27. Psalms 12; 23; 114; 124; 131, in: *Bedarkhe Hasifrut*, Jerusalem 1959, pp. 65-94.
28. So M. Buber, "Authentic Bilingualism", in: M. Friedman (ed.), *A Believing Humanism — Gleanings*, New York [1969], p. 84. See also Strauss' words on the language of literary creation, cited above, p. 23.
29. N. Rothenstreich, "Al Arye L. Strauss", in: *Nefesh Veshir* (note 26, above), p. 38.
30. See the editorial note in *Bedarkhe Hasifrut*, p. 65 (bottom).
31. Strauss' interpretation of Psalm 114 will be cited and discussed below, pp. 353ff.

Biblical verses and the clarification of Biblical metaphors by applying some of the newer methods of English literary criticism.³² "What a pity", he writes, "that biblical scholars do not . . . learn from their colleagues in the field of Modern Literature, where synthesis and analysis so often go together, both being controlled by a humble attention to the subtleties of language and imagery".³³

At the Second World Congress of Jewish Studies in Jerusalem (July, 1957), we suggested that Biblical poetry ought to be studied along the lines of New Criticism and *Werkinterpretation*, and that such study would supplement and correct the accepted methods of historical criticism. The method we advocated, and subsequently developed, is what we have described above as Total Interpretation.³⁴ We have applied this method to a number of poetic³⁵ and rhetorical³⁶ passages in the Bi-

32. "The Analogy of Nature", *JThS*, VI (1955), pp. 161-173. See also Fisch's remarks on New Criticism in general and as applied to the Bible in his article: "Shinuy Haarakhin Beniqoret Sifrutit", in: *Sefer Barukh Kurzweil* [Tel Aviv 1975], pp. 128-138.
33. *JJS*, IX (1958), p. 206.
34. We have presented and illustrated our approach in the Hebrew edition of this work, as well as in articles mentioned in the notes following, and in our lecture before the Seventh Congress of the International Organisation for the Study of the Old Testament in 1971 in Uppsala (See "Die Methode der 'Total Interpretation' — von der Notwendigkeit der Struktur-Analyse für das Verständnis der biblischen Dichtung", *SVT*, XXII, 1972, pp. 88-112).
35. Psalms 1 ("Darka Shel Hatora Bemizmor 'Ashre Faish'", *Maayanot*, VI [1958], pp. 187-210); 3; 6; 8; 15 ("Al Arba Mizmorim Beseder Tehillim", *ibid.*, V [1956], pp. 73-107); 36 ("Menat Koso Shel Adam — Iyyunim Betehillim L'W", *Haareg*, 7 September 1951, pp. 18-19); 47 ("Pereq Hateqiot", *Amana* 1956, pp. 10-21; "Tehillim Z", *Ammot*, IV [1966], pp. 79-90); 104 ("Barekhi Nafshi [Tehillim QD]", *Maayanot*, VIII, 1964, pp. 221-254); 145 ("Tehilla Ledavid [Tehillim QMH]" in: Yuval Shay, Ramat Gan 1958, pp. 185-209); "Wege der neuen Dichtungswissenschaft in ihrer Anwendung auf die Psalmenforschung (Methodologische Bemerkungen, dargelegt am Beispiel von Psalm XLVI)", *Biblica*, XLII (1961), pp. 255-302 (repr.: P. H. A. Neumann (ed.), *Zur neueren Psalmenforschung (Wege der Forschung, LXCII)*, Darmstadt 1976, pp. 400-451).
36. "Beiqve Metafora Ahat Bamiqra: Hearot Metodologiot Vehearot Parshaniot, Sifrutot Vehistoriot", *Tarbiz*, XXXIV (1965), pp. 107-128, 211-223, 303-318 (see below, pp. 194ff.); "The Pattern of Numerical Sequence in Amos 1-2 — A Re-examination", *JBL*, LXXXVI (1967) pp. 416-423; "Temuna Veqol Befirge Marot Hanevua", in: *Divre Haqongres Haolami Hashishi Lemadae Hayanadut*, I,

ble, and also to several narratives.³⁷ In addition, Total Interpretation has served as the basis for our reconsideration of current scholarly views concerning certain aspects of the history of Israelite religion.³⁸

The other early proponent of the application of literary-critical methods to the Bible was L. Alonso Schökel. At the Third Congress of the International Organization for the Study of the Old Testament (Oxford 1959), Alonso Schökel delivered a lecture on "Stylistic Analysis of the Prophets",³⁹ in which he referred explicitly to Kayser, Wellek & Warren, Staiger, Spitzer, Richards, and other critics of the *Werkinterpretation* and New Criticism schools. Quite independently of us, he recommended the use of those methods in Biblical criticism. He then employed them himself in order to show how sound-values are exploited in prophetic poetry, to discuss aspects of poetic imagery, and to describe the function and significance of composition and technique in prophecy.

Alonso Schökel's methods are also displayed in his other articles on the stylistics of prophecy,⁴⁰ as well as in his analysis of psalms and narratives.⁴¹ The culmination of this phase of his work is his comprehensive *Estudios de poética hebrea*,⁴² where he supplies, along with an exten-

Jerusalem 1976, pp. 91-99; "Ma Ben Hayamim Haele Uven Hayamim Habaim Lefi Amos 9, 13?" *ET*, XIV (1978), pp. 69-73.

37. "Melekhet Hasippur Bamiqra", *Molad*, II (1963), pp. 402-406; "Einiges über die Bauformen des Erzählens in der Bibel", *VT*, XIII (1963), pp. 456-474; "Weiteres über die Bauformen des Erzählens in der Bibel", *Biblica*, XLVI (1965), pp. 181-206; *Hasippur Al Reshito Shel Iyyor (Iyyunim)*, XL, Jerusalem 1968; *The Story of Job's Beginning*, Jerusalem 1983.

38. "Mibaayot 'Torat Hagemul' Hamiqrait", *Tarbiz*, XXXI (1962), pp. 236-263; *ibid.* XXXII (1963), pp. 1-18 (reprinted in M. Weinfeld [ed.], *Likkutei Terbiz*, I, *A Biblical Studies Reader*, Jerusalem 1979, pp. 71-116); "The Origin of the 'Day of the Lord' — Reconsidered", *HUCA*, XXXVII (1966), pp. 29-60.

39. "Die stilistische Analyse bei den Propheten", *SVT*, VII (1960), pp. 154-164.

40. "Tres imágenes de Isaías", *Est. Bib.*, XV (1956), pp. 63-84; "Dos poemas a la paz: Estudio estilístico de Is. VIII, 23-9, IX y XI, 1-16", *ibid.*, XVIII (1959), pp. 149-169; "Is. 10, 28-32: Análisis estilístico", *Biblica*, XL (1959), pp. 230-236.

41. For example, "The Poetic Structure of Psalm 42-43", *JSOT*, I (1976), pp. 4-11; "Psalm 42-43 — a Response to Ridderbos and Kessler (*JSOT*, I [1976], pp. 12-21)", *ibid.*, pp. 61-65 [see note 49, below]; "Erzählkunst im Buche der Richter", *Biblica*, XLVIII (1961), pp. 143-172. On p. 147, note 3, Alonso Schökel mentions that other analyses of Biblical narratives may be found in his book, *La formación del estilo — Libro del alumno*, Santander 1961.

42. Barcelona, 1963. There is a condensed German translation by K. Bergner, *Das Alte*

sive history of the study of the Bible as literature, an "analysis of procedures" and an "analysis of poetic units" (with special reference to selected chapters of Isaiah 1-35).⁴³

Since the pioneering work of the late 1950's and the early 1960's, there has been a veritable explosion in the study of the Bible as literature. In particular, the last decade has witnessed a growing interest on the part of Biblical scholars in the "literary approach", as evidenced in numerous attempts to apply various theories, methods, or principles of modern literary criticism to the Bible.⁴⁴ Nonetheless, as Alonso Schökel correctly stated in his lecture to the Edinburgh Old Testament Congress in August 1974, with respect to the literary study of the Bible, "the present situation is scarcely . . . coherent. There is no systematic program of action nor a solid front of resistance; what reigns is an atmosphere of lack of interest and trust, which is only occasionally broken by already established habits".⁴⁵ Despite this pessimistic outlook, though, by 1976, in the supplement to a standard English-language Biblical encyclopaedia, a scholar could claim that the notion that the Bible must be studied exclusively as literature, with all that such an identification implies, had become a commonplace in Biblical scholarship.⁴⁶

The application of the principles of the New Critical schools to the study of the Bible, though accepted with certain limitations by some

Testament als literarisches Kunstwerk, Köln 1971. — Note should be made of Alonso Schökel's general studies: "Hermeneutics in the Light of Language and Literature", *CBQ*, XXV (1963), pp. 371-386; "Poésie Hébraïque", in: *Dictionnaire de la Bible, Supplément*, VIII, Paris 1967, pp. 47-90; "Hermeneutical Problems of a Literary Study of the Bible", *SVT*, XXVIII (1975), pp. 1-15.

43. The "analysis of poetic units" is only mentioned in the introduction to the German edition of the book (see note 42, above) but not translated.

44. We cannot attempt to list all the works that have appeared. For a concise survey (with bibliography) of recent literary-critical study of the Bible, see E. Robertson, "Literature, the Bible as", *IDBS*, pp. 547-551. Two journals now exist solely for the purpose of presenting experimental approaches to Biblical literature (*Semeia*; *Linguistica Biblica*), and a series of publications on teaching the Bible as literature in high schools and universities has come from the University of Indiana (e.g. K. R. Gros Louis, et al. [eds.], *Literary Interpretations of Biblical Narratives* [see note 23, above]). See further notes 49, 51, below.

45. *SVT*, XXV (1963), p. 14.

46. Robertson, *art. cit.* (note 44, above), pp. 547-548.

scholars⁴⁷ and rejected by others,⁴⁸ has been put forward as a methodological aim, whether in original or modified form, consciously or unconsciously, by many scholars.⁴⁹ Of the studies designed to realize those principles, only a very few extraordinary examples are actually

47. K. Koch, *The Growth of the Biblical Tradition — The Form-Critical Method* (transl. by S. M. Cuppitt), New York [1969], p. 16, also p. 15, note 34; F. Crüsemann, *Studien zur Formgeschichte vom Hymnus und Danklied in Israel*, Neukirchen — Vluyn [1969], p. 3, note; J. P. M. van der Ploeg, "Zur Literatur- und Stilforschung im Alten Testament", *ThLZ*, C (1975), cols. 801-814. — On the reservations about and the opposition to applying the method of close reading to the Bible, see below, pp. 67ff.

48. See, for example, J. Licht, *Storytelling in the Bible*, Jerusalem 1978, where it is established, *inter alia* without any argumentation, as a "mistaken conclusion that repetitive patterns with variations are built as exercises for 'close reading'" (p. 55). In general, advocates of the form critical method in the study of the Bible are opposed to the principle of close reading (see below, p. 67), and of late mainly those scholars who make use of the methods of French structuralism (see note 51, below), for instance: J. Barr, "Reading the Bible as Literature", *BJRL*, LVI (1973), pp. 10-33.

49. Note should be made first of all of the first scholar to follow the lead of Alonso Schökel, his student L. Krinetzki in his articles: "Zur Poetik und Exegese vom Ps 48", *BZ*, IV (1960), pp. 70-97; "Der anthologische Stil des 46 Psalms und seine Bedeutung für die Datierungsfrage", *Münchener Theologische Zeitschrift*, XII (1961), pp. 52-71; "J... ist uns Zuflucht und Wehr — Eine stilistisch-theologische Auslegung von Psalm 46 (45)", *Bibel und Leben*, III (1962), pp. 26-42; "Psalm 30 (29) in stilistisch-exegetischer Betrachtung", *Zeitschrift für kath. Theologie*, LXXXIII (1961), pp. 345-360; "Ps 110 — Eine Untersuchung seines dichterischen Stils", *Theologie und Glaube*, XLI (1961), pp. 110-121; "Psalm 5 — Eine Untersuchung seiner dichterischen Struktur und seines theologischen Gehalts", *Tübinger Theologische Quartalschrift*, CXLII (1962), pp. 23-46; "Zur Stilistik von Jes 40, 1-8", *BZ*, N.F. XVI (1972), pp. 54-69; "Ein Beitrag zur Stilanalyse der Goliathperikope (Sam. 17, 1-18, 5)", *Biblica*, LIV (1973), pp. 187-236; etc. Krinetzki has written a commentary on the Song of Songs according to the principles of *Werkinterpretation*: *Das Hohelied — Kommentar zur Gestalt und Kerygma eines alttestamentlichen Liebesliedes*, Düsseldorf 1964. After omitting from this commentary all non-literary aspects (see his article "Retractions" zu früheren Arbeiten über das Hohe Lied", *Biblica*, LII [1971], pp. 186-189), Krinetzki adapted and republished his commentary, entitled *Das Hohelied — Kommentar zur Gestalt und Gehalt einer alttest. Liebesliedersammlung*, Diss. habil., Regensburg 1971.

In addition to the above studies by Krinetzki, we shall mention but a few of the most recent works in Biblical scholarship which apply the principles of New Criticism: *Inter alia*, M. Kessler, "New Directions in Biblical Exegesis", *Scottish Journal of Theology*, XXIV (1971), pp. 317-325; R. Alter, "A Literary Approach to the Bible",

based on precise observation, close reading and Total Interpretation in the true meaning of the terms.⁵⁰ Most of those scholars who claim to be

Commentary 60:6 (1975), pp. 70-77; idem, "Biblical Narrative", *ibid.*, 61:5 (1976), pp. 61-67; idem, "Character in the Bible", *ibid.*, 63:10 (1978), pp. 58-65; idem, *The Art of Biblical Narrative*, New York [1981]; Y. Zakovitch, *Hadegeg Hasifrut Shelosha-Arba' Bamigra*, Diss., Jerusalem 1978 (repr. Jerusalem 1979); idem, *Hayye Shimshon: The Life of Samson (Judges 13-16) — A Critical Literary Analysis*, Jerusalem 1982; F. de Meyer, "The Science of Literature Method of Prof. M. Weiss in Confrontation with Form Criticism — Exemplified on the Basis of Ps. 49", *Bijdragen*, XLI (1979), pp. 152-188; S. Bar-Efrat, "Some Observations on the Analysis of Structure in Biblical Narrative", *VT*, XXX (1980), pp. 154-173. See further, for example, M. Kessler, "Narrative Technique in 1 Sm 16, 1-13", *CBQ*, XX-XII (1970), pp. 543-554; idem, "Response [to Alonso Schökel, 'The Poetic Structure of Psalm 42-43' (see note 41, above)]", *JSOT*, I (1976), pp. 12-15; Nic. H. Ridderbos, *Die Psalmen — Stilistische Verfahren und Aufbau — Mit besonderer Berücksichtigung von Ps. 141 (BZAW, CXVII)*, Berlin — New York 1972; idem, "Response [to Alonso Schökel (see above)]", *JSOT*, I (1976), pp. 16-21; J. Jackson & M. Kessler (eds.), *Rhetorical Criticism — Essays in honour of J. Muilenburg (Theological Essays Series, 1)*, Pittsburgh 1974; J. P. Fokkelmann, *Narrative Art in Genesis — Specimens of Stylistic and Structural Analysis*, Assen/Amsterdam 1975; idem, *Narrative Art and Poetry in the Books of Samuel, I, King David (II Sam. 9-20 and I Kings 1-2)*, Assen 1981.

The method proposed by J. Muilenburg as an expansion of Gunkel's form criticism which, it is maintained, can do justice to the concreteness and specificity of the individual text, and which Muilenburg calls "rhetorical criticism" (see "Form Criticism and Beyond" *JBL*, LXXXVII [1969], pp. 1-18), has been widely accepted among Biblical scholars in America. According to M. Kessler, Muilenburg mentions "the need for literary sensitivity, a plea likewise made by the proponents of New Criticism and the German Werkinterpretation" ("A Methodological Setting for Rhetorical Criticism", *Semiotics*, IV [1974], p. 26). Richter, in his book *Exegese als Literaturwissenschaft* (note 16, above), also demands that the principle of *Werkinterpretation* be taken into consideration. (But see Alonso Schökel's criticism, "Sobre el estudio literario del Antiguo Testamento", *Biblica*, LIII [1972], pp. 544-556.)

50. From the works mentioned above (note 49), we would single out as particularly noteworthy K. Sacon, "Isaiah 40:1-11 — A Rhetorical-Critical Study", in: Jackson & Kessler (eds.), *Rhetorical Criticism*, pp. 99-116; Fokkelmann's interpretation of narratives in Genesis; Kessler's "Response"; and Zakovitch's dissertation which is even a revolutionary contribution to Biblical study since it deals with a structural pattern in a manner differing from current research on this subject. Rather than identifying the common lines in all appearances of the pattern discussed, Zakovitch determines the separate lines which particularize every one of its expressions in each literary passage in which it appears. Moreover, the work offers a clarification of the intention of each passage, showing how the intention is affected as a result of construction according to the pattern. At times this study also sheds light on these

engaged in the literary study of the Bible in fact make use of more recent approaches which have lately begun to replace New Critical methods in literature,⁵¹ or combine a number of approaches.⁵²

Of all the recent literary methods currently applied to the study of the Bible, the closest to the method of Total Interpretation is that proposed by Cooper in his dissertation on Biblical poetics, in which he advocates a theory of poetry and a method of analysis derived from the structural poetics of Roman Jakobson.⁵³ Cooper argues that literary criticism cannot assume its proper place in Biblical scholarship as long as it is viewed as ancillary to accepted methods of historical criticism. His goal, which is achieved in his studies of several poetic texts, is to arrive at a truly literary understanding of those texts; neither his presuppositions nor his results are in any way tied to historical concerns.

Clearly, then, literary critical theories and methods are playing an increasingly important role in Biblical scholarship. We may view this trend as the latest example of the influence of general intellectual currents on Biblical scholarship. And that influence must not, indeed cannot be resisted; modern scholars are dependent on it no less than the Sages were

passages from the point of view of textual criticism, as well as illuminating historical aspects (e.g. tradition and redaction criticism).

51. Among the various kinds of literary criticism, structuralist methods are particularly well represented in recent scholarship. There are also special issues of journals on structuralism, e.g. *Interpretation*, XXVIII, 2 (1974). For structuralist and/or linguistic oriented general studies in recent years see, *inter alia*: J. Rogerson, "Structural Anthropology and the Old Testament", *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies*, XXXIII (1970), pp. 490-500; F. Bovon (ed.), *Analyse structurale et exégèse biblique*, Neuchâtel 1971; P. Beauchamp, "L'analyse structurale et l'exégèse biblique" *SVT*, XXII (1972), pp. 113-128; F. Bovon, "Le structuralisme français et exégèse biblique", in: R. Barthes (ed.), *Analyse Structurale et Exégèse Biblique*, Neuchâtel 1972, pp. 9-25; R. C. Culley, "Some comments on Structural Analysis and Biblical Studies", *ibid.*, pp. 129-142; idem, *Studies in the Structure of Hebrew Narrative*, Philadelphia 1976; R. Barthes, et al., *Structural Analysis and Biblical Exegesis — Interpretational Essays* (transl. by A. M. Johnson, Jr.), Pittsburgh 1974 (with extensive bibliography, pp. 110-164); A. Zaborski, "Structural Method and Old Testament Studies", *Folia Orientalia*, XV (1974), pp. 262-268; R. Polzin, *Biblical Structuralism*, Philadelphia 1977; B. Jobling, *Structural Analysis of Biblical Narratives*, Sheffield 1978.

52. See, for example, L. Ryken, "Literary Criticism of the Bible — Some Fallacies", in: Gros Louis et al., *Literary Interpretations of Biblical Narratives*, pp. 24-40; Altpeter, *op. cit.* (note 16, above).

53. Cooper (see p. 446).

dependent on the Hellenistic thought that shaped their view of Scripture. The question is not, then, whether a new method should be tested in Biblical criticism, or whether some new approach is applicable to the Bible. The only relevant question is *how* new concepts and methods will ultimately make their impact felt on Biblical scholarship: will they supplant, modify, or merely supplement the old methods?

Surely no one will dispute what E. Souriau wrote: "Scissors are always scissors. But the tailor, the embroiderer, the gardener, and the surgeon must have different kinds. There is no scientific method good in itself. A good scientific method is one well adapted to the kind of facts to be studied. . . . It may be said that certain supposedly scientific investigations of the aesthetic fact give at times somewhat the impression of a surgeon trying to operate on the heart with a gardener's clippers."⁵⁴

This work is meant, therefore, to clarify the contribution to be made by that method of literary analysis which we have called Total Interpretation to Biblical research, as well as its relation to other critical methods. This clarification will be made by illustration, through the study of selected texts, for the reasons E. Auerbach expressed in his *Mimesis*: "I could never have written anything in the nature of a history of European realism; the material would have swamped me; . . . Furthermore, for the sake of completeness, I should have had to deal with them *ad hoc* by reading up on them (which, in my opinion, is a poor way of acquiring and using knowledge); and the motifs, which direct my investigation, and for the sake of which it is written, would have been completely buried under a mass of factual information which has long been known and can easily be looked up in reference books. As opposed to this I see the possibility of success and profit in a method which consists in letting myself be guided by a few motifs which I have worked out gradually and without a specific purpose, and in trying them out on a series of texts which have become familiar and vital to me in the course of my philological activity."⁵⁵

We shall, in like fashion, use our collection of examples to illustrate the uses and limitations of Total Interpretation for illuminating the meaning of Biblical literature. And we have naturally chosen examples that clearly demonstrate our exegetical principles.

54. "A General Methodology for the Scientific Study of Aesthetic Appreciation", *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism*, XIV (1955-56), p. 1.

55. (Transl. by W. J. Trask), Princeton, New Jersey 1953, p. 548.

We shall not, for the most part, engage in theoretical discussion of other methods of scholarly research. Nevertheless, before we proceed to the actual analysis of Biblical texts (Chapters Two to Six), we shall devote a chapter to the relation of Total Interpretation to other modes of interpretation accepted today in Biblical scholarship, paying particular attention to our goal of appreciating the Biblical poem as a literary work.

The chapters on practical criticism are divided according to topic, so that we may explore individual aspects of literary creation in the light of Total Interpretation: words, phrases, images, sentences, sequences, literary units and, finally, the literary work in its totality. Such a division is admittedly artificial, given our assertion that the poem will yield its meaning *only* when it is viewed in its totality. But focussing on details in isolation will facilitate a clear presentation of our method; the effect, we presume, will be cumulative for the reader. And when we have finished, we hope we shall have fulfilled our aim: to prove that the Biblical poem, like any poem, manifests an artistic unity of form and content which can be grasped only through close reading — by the ceaseless endeavour to elucidate the whole work in relation to its parts, and the parts in relation to the whole. In the end, method dissolves into meaning, and we understand the poem.

CHAPTER ONE

External and Internal Approaches to Biblical Study

The work of H. Gunkel will be our starting point for a consideration of current methods of Biblical research. Gunkel was the father of the modern study of Biblical literature, and his approach is still profoundly influential. We must ask whether that approach leads us towards the world of Scripture, or away from it.

We shall begin by considering how Gunkel understands the essential nature of the literary work, and since it is in the area of Biblical poetry that Gunkel's influence is greatest, we shall illustrate his view with the following passage from his *Introduction to the Psalms*,¹ still regarded as basic in the scientific study of the Bible. Writing on the unique character of Biblical verse, which he sees as a hindrance to understanding, Gunkel says: "Ancient Israel was strong in its ideology and in the depth of its emotion, but less talented than the Greeks in the area of logical thought. Now the structure of Hebrew verse causes Hebrew poetry to be written in very short sentences, sometimes sentences of only two or three words. The poet juxtaposes these short sentences without conjunctions or other words to indicate their logical connection. The Hebrew poet will say 'The LORD is my shepherd, I lack nothing'. The Greek would surely explain here that the second sentence is a consequence of the first, whereas the Hebrew refrains from saying, 'The LORD is my shepherd, therefore I lack nothing' and omits any conjunction".²

1. *Einleitung in die Psalmen — Die Gattungen der religiösen Lyrik Israels* (completed by J. Begrich)³, Göttingen 1975 (referred to hereafter as *Introduction*).

2. P. 1. Compare the discussion of L. Koehler ("Psalm 23", *ZAW*, LXVIII, [1956], pp. 227-234). He asserts that the logical connection between the two clauses in verse 1b is made through word order instead of a conjunction. The unusual subject-predicate order of the first clause ("The LORD is my shepherd") shows, according to Koehler, that this clause is subordinate to the following one ("I lack nothing"). The subordinate

So writes Gunkel, the Biblical scholar. Contrast the view of Staiger, the literary critic: "It seems that in lyric poetry language sacrifices much of what it has gained in its development from parataxis to hypotaxis, from the use of adverbs to the use of conjunctions, from temporal to causal conjunctions — all these changes in the direction of logical clarification".³ To illustrate his assertion that poetry tends to forgo logical connectives, Staiger cites, among other examples, a poem written not by a Hebrew poet, but by the Greek poetess Sappho:

Δέδυκε μὲν ἃ σελάννα
καὶ πλειάδες, μέσαι δὲ
νύκτες, παρὰ δ' ἔρχεται ὥρα
ἔγω δὲ μόνα κατεῦδω.⁴

(The moon has set,
the Pleiades too;
it is midnight. Time passes
and I lie alone.)

According to Staiger, "It is not at all appropriate in poetry to adduce reasons and proofs, just as it would not be at all appropriate if the lover were to explain to his beloved the reasons for his love. And just as poetry does not need to give reasons, so it does not attempt at all to clarify a

clause might be either causal or temporal, and Koehler decides, on the basis of the context, that it is the latter ("Solange J' mein Hirte ist. . ."). But this exegesis is based on the assumption that the normal order of the verbal clause ought to be predicate-subject, an assumption which has been disproved by K. Schlesinger ("Zur Wortfolge im hebräischen Verbalsatz", *VT*, III [1953], pp. 381-390). Indeed, Kraus has countered Koehler's argument by suggesting that the subject of the sentence is "my shepherd", and the predicate "the LORD!". E. Pfeiffer has also disagreed with Koehler, arguing that "The LORD is my shepherd" is not an inverted verbal sentence, but a proper nominal clause. Still, Pfeiffer agrees that it is a subordinate clause (*VT*, VIII [1958], pp. 219ff.). We would suggest that the claim that verse 1b is a compound sentence is incorrect; it is, rather, composed of two independent clauses. To be sure, the second is logically consequent to the first, but that consequence is expressed precisely through the juxtaposition of the two sentences without any connective. The phenomenon is well-known in poetry (see below).

3. Staiger, *Poetics*, p. 37.

4. *Ibid.*, p. 39. — The authorship of this poem has been viewed as problematic; see W. Ross, "Abendlieder", *GRM*, XXXVI (1955), p. 300, note 6.

mysterious and indeterminate expression. As long as the spirit of the listener is attuned to the spirit of the speaker, the listener has the key to the understanding of the poet's words, and this is better than orderly reasoning and logical thought".⁵ Hence, the difficulty in understanding the sentence "The LORD is my shepherd, I lack nothing" is not at all the difficulty indicated by Gunkel.

Indeed, the absence of a causal connective — cited by Gunkel as an example of that peculiarity of Hebrew poetry which makes its content difficult to understand — this very detail is treated in Strauss' analysis of Psalm 23 not as a linguistic peculiarity, nor as a "formal" peculiarity that makes it difficult to understand the "content", but rather as an integral part of the psalm, a detail that expresses the spirit of the poem and enables us to experience it properly. Strauss writes: "In the first stanza positive and negative statements are placed side by side: the LORD is my shepherd, I lack nothing . . . the syntactical and rhythmical composition corresponds to the inner composition . . . two very short sentences with an economy of words appropriate to the language of law or command, unadorned by the usual parallelism . . . this characteristic of monumental brevity, the sternness of a linguistic fortress, symbol of an unshakeable confidence . . ."⁶

In Gunkel's opinion another difficulty in understanding Biblical poetry is its vagueness: "... the poet complains about his many enemies, but who are they? He does not tell us. Are they the enemies of his religion, or of his people, or are they his personal enemies? And what is their reason for hating him?" The text hardly reveals anything about these matters. When the poem was written, the answers were all obvious, "since everyone was familiar with the circumstances and the formal language of the poems; today, however, commentators cast about for an answer, sometimes a quite unsatisfactory one, and never one of which they may be certain".⁷ Yet the poem is not in the least concerned with conveying to the reader biographical details about the poet. The task of the comment-

5. Staiger, *op. cit.* (note 3, above), p. 50, see also p. 52.

6. *Bedarkhe Hasifrut*, Jerusalem 1959, p. 68. Note how E. Vogt's inability to comprehend the brief sentences at the beginning of the psalm led him to suggest that the text is corrupt ("The 'Place in Life' of Psalm 23", *Biblica*, XXXIV [1953], pp. 204-205).

7. *Introduction*, p. 2.

ator is not to discover from the poem the identity of the poet's enemy or the nature of his sickness. L. C. Knights directed his arrows against such literary research; his essay against Bradley⁸ and his school is called "How Many Children had Lady Macbeth?". Instead of seeing the characters in the drama and listening attentively to their every word, they invent characters on the basis of what is said in the drama, characters who are neither seen nor heard in the drama itself.⁹

We have already discussed the literary-critical objections to genetic criticism,¹⁰ which seeks to interpret poetry on the basis of the life of the poet or its general historical background. Against Gunkel's view that the absence of biographical details is an obstacle to the interpretation of the Psalms, we again cite Staiger: "Biography is outside the scope of the literary critic. . . . The poem is not, as Goethe thought, tied directly and visibly to the life of the creator. The poem cannot possibly be explained on the basis of biographical facts about the writer. The poet's personality, too, should be outside the area of interest of any literary scholar who knows his task."¹¹ We have expounded this view in our introduction.¹²

We follow this new attitude towards the relationship between the poem and its author's life history (as well as its historical background in general). Croce is certainly right when he says that the correct answer to the question, "What are the historical factors that the commentator must take into account?" is not, as is frequently asserted, that we may not ignore any of them. Nor is it valid to say that many, or some, are important. The correct answer is: "Any of the factors *may* be necessary, but

8. A. C. Bradley, *Shakespearean Tragedy*, New York 1955.

9. L. C. Knights, *Explorations*, London 1945, pp. 15-54. According to R. S. Crane, Knights' attack on Bradley's approach is not really a better or more correct way of looking at Shakespeare, simply because the respective writings of Bradley and Knights were not "answers to the same question about the same object". "Bradley is talking about the plays as reflections of their author's imaginative view of what is tragic in life, whereas Mr. Knights is talking about them as effects in the right reader of certain determinate arrangements of words on printed pages" (*The Languages of Criticism and the Structure of Poetry*, Toronto 1953, p. 16). This is also the opinion of B. Hrushovski ("Poetics, Criticism, Science — Remarks on the Fields and Responsibilities of the Study of Literature", *PTL*, I [1976], p. VIII).

10. Above, pp. 4ff.

11. Staiger, p. 9 (= *Die Werkinterpretation*, p. 146).

12. Above, pp. 9ff. and compare F. Sengle, "Zum Problem der modernen Dichterbiographie", *Deutsche Vierteljahrsschrift*, XXVI (1952), pp. 100-111.

there is none about which it may be said that it is indispensable to the commentator".¹³ The fundamental methodological error of Biblical criticism, in our view, is its failure to recognize the validity of this principle.

It is the accepted view among Biblical commentators (and not only historical commentators, see below) that by understanding the situation in which a psalm was created we can understand the psalm; the situation explains the poem. And since the situation which gave rise to the psalm is unknown, Biblical scholars engage in reconstructing the background on the basis of the psalm, so that the reconstructed background may serve to explain the psalm.

According to Boeckh, one of the four explanatory methods we must employ to gain a full understanding of the poem is the historical method, which does not interpret the text on the basis of what is written explicitly, but rather probes for meanings related to actual occurrences. While he admits the value of the historical approach, he nevertheless reminds the commentator that the text which is being explained may contradict the historical circumstances and conditions under which it was created. Therefore "there is no basis for the hermeneutic rule that the commentator must not introduce into his commentary anything contrary to history, to experience, to the accepted view, to common sense. This is quite incorrect. The writer might have apprehended an historical event in a way contrary to historical truth, and if the commentator, wishing to reconcile the text and the historical truth, explains the former according to the latter, he will explain it incorrectly, arbitrarily. Sometimes the author may deliberately oppose historical reality or transcend it, as frequently happens in rhetoric and poetry".¹⁴

Knowledge of the background may therefore sometimes be helpful to the commentator, sometimes it may offer him nothing, and sometimes it may even lead him astray. For example, were it not for our knowledge of the confrontation between Amos and Amaziah in Amos 7:10-13, we would not fully understand the meaning of the prophecy in verses 16-17. Similarly, if we did not know when Amos prophesied, or if we were

13. *Die Antinomien der Kunstkritik*, Tübingen 1926, p. 27.

14. A. Boeckh, *Encyclopaedie und Methodologie der philologischen Wissenschaften*, Leipzig 1877, p. 119; see also J. Wach, *Das Verstehen*, I, Tübingen 1926, pp. 186, 201-205.

ignorant of the history of that period, we might have been led by the Septuagint version of Amos 3:9 to assume that the original text was not "Proclaim it upon the palaces at Ashdod" but "Proclaim it upon the palaces in Assyria!"¹⁵ However, had we not known that Amos was a shepherd, would we have failed to understand the meaning of "As a shepherd rescues out of the mouth of a lion" (3:12)? And conversely, had we not known that Amos was a shepherd, could we have concluded from this and similar images from the world of the shepherd in his prophecies that he was one? After all, even a poet who does not actually live in a rural environment can use agricultural images, and an urban poet might use them even more just because he is a townsman. It is known that pastoral poetry developed and attained its peak with the withdrawal of the poet (usually a city man) from the village, when a "stroll in the bosom of nature" replaced daily drudgery in field and vineyard.

It seems to us, then, that any attempt to reconstitute the biographical and historical background of a psalm or psalmist from linguistic hints and bits of metaphor (perhaps fossilized remains of a much earlier literary period) is bound to be unprofitable. And even if such an effort could succeed — even if we could obtain all the "facts" that Gunkel seeks about the life and times of the psalmist — the knowledge gained by it would not help us to understand the poet's intentions. For the literary creation is never a mere record of events. "It may well be," writes Croce, "that the poet lived in a stormy period of political wars, perhaps playing an active role in them; yet in spite of that, the form and texture of his poetry might have originated in peaceful quiet, beyond political storms and partisan strife. Perhaps the poet was sickly all his life, but his poems, his spiritual progeny, are healthy and powerful; or, on the contrary, he may be physically and mentally sound, while his poems skirt the borderline of the normal, and his visions reflect morbid fantasies".¹⁶ According to D. Daiches, "Even where there is a close relationship between the work of art and the life of an author, this must never be construed as meaning that the work of art is a mere copy of life. . . . A work of art may rather embody the 'dream' of an author than his actual life, or it may be the 'mask,' the 'antiself' behind which his real person is hiding, or it may be a picture of the life from which the author wants to escape. Furthermore, we must

15. So recently Maag and Amsler; compare also *BH*, *BHS*.

16. *Op. cit.* (note 13, above), p. 26.

not forget that the artist may 'experience' life differently in terms of his art: actual experiences are seen with a view to their use in literature and come to him partially shaped by artistic tradition and pre-conceptions".¹⁷

History, then, does not gain by being "reconstructed" from poetry; what happens is that we lose touch with the poem. Instead of concentrating on every element of the text, instead of listening attentively to every note of the song, we turn aside to look around and behind the poem, for what is not written.

Finally, we will mention another of Gunkel's complaints: "What makes interpretation even more difficult is the ardour of the Hebrew character, which does not shrink from using the most extravagant expressions but rather seeks them. A modern scholar, a man with a sense of reality, moderate and logical, particularly the philological interpreter of Scripture, whose aspiration is 'sober interpretation' stands helpless before these outbursts of the enthusiastic Hebrew. The Hebrew poet dares to write that he descended into the underworld and returned from it; he appeals to God to help him against his personal enemies by passing judgment upon the whole world. He hopes to see his king, the king of poor, small Judea, as king over all the nations. The modern man, who finds all this totally foreign, views such vain words as utterly impossible".¹⁸

These remarks of Gunkel's reveal an elementary misunderstanding of what the criticism of poetry really entails, as well as of the very nature of poetry itself. After all, the main requirement for the interpreter, one may say a pre-condition for the possibility of his interpreting, is a sympathetic reading of what he is to interpret. It is a commonplace that the interpreter must attune himself to the melody of the poem, so that he moves wholly in harmony with it. Now we hear from Gunkel that the sign of the true interpreter is his "sober" reading. Surely, anyone who reads a poem as if it were a business report — wondering at the inexactitude and exaggeration in it, seeing the images and flights of imagination as grotesque and incomprehensible — has excluded himself from the ranks of the readers and interpreters of poetry. He merely proves that he has no share in Hebrew poetry, or, for that matter, in any poetry.

Indeed, Gunkel's views are evidence not only of his failure to comprehend the nature of the literary creation, but also of methodological

17. *Critical Approaches to Literature*, London 1967, pp. 324-325.

18. *Introduction*, p. 1.

fallacy: he attempts to understand the poem not from within but from without, on the basis of preconceived notions of the ancient Israelite and of the poet in particular.

Such a non-literary, even anti-literary notion of interpretation finds full expression in the method of study which Gunkel developed: form criticism, still the dominant mode of Biblical research. Form criticism is an external approach to the Biblical text, which treats the text as an historical datum rather than a literary work of art. It begins with preconceptions about the history of forms of religious expression, which it imposes on the text in order to interpret it; and the conclusions drawn from these interpretations are used to create an hypothetical literary history. Even if we were to concede the validity of the approach and its aims (which we do not), form criticism would still be deficient in two fundamental respects: its outmoded and inappropriate notion of "form", and its skewed perception of the relationship between creativity and tradition.

There is a superficial resemblance between form criticism and the New Critical schools at first glance, since form criticism attributes decisive importance to what it terms the "form" of the literary unit. But the concept of form which is dominant in Biblical scholarship is — unfortunately, we would say — radically different from that of modern literary criticism. It is the latter which we should like to see applied to the study of Biblical literature.

First of all, what is meant by "form" in the term "form criticism" is not "organic form", that is to say, what we shall define below as "structure".¹⁹ "Form", as used by Biblical form critics, refers to what is termed "mechanical" or "abstract form"²⁰ — the external and conventional structure conditioned by the genre. The German term corresponding to "form criticism", *Formgeschichte*²¹ (literally "form-history"), is generally

19. Below, pp. 273 ff. See also Appendix II on form criticism, pp. 410 ff.

20. On the various terms and the concepts they denote, see, e.g., W. P. Ker, *Form and Style in Poetry*, London 1928, p. 141; G. O[rsini], "Form", in: A. Preminger *et al.* (eds.), *Princeton Encyclopedia of Poetry and Poetics*², Princeton 1974, pp. 286-288. German critics sometimes apply the term "inner form" to what we have called "organic form" or "structure". See Kayser's distinction between "innerer Aufbau" and "äusserer Aufbau" (pp. 156ff.); compare also Welck & Warren, p. 141; Wehrli, pp. 66-67, 94.

21. The term "*Formgeschichte*" was first applied to Gunkel's methodology in the title of M. Dibelius' book, *Die Formgeschichte des Evangeliums*⁴, Tübingen 1919 (1961).

used in the scholarly literature as a synonym for the term *Gattungsgeschichte* ("genre-history"), or *Gattungsforschung* ("research into genre"), as the method was designated by Gunkel, who — in tune with the spirit of his time, and affected by the intellectual currents of his day²² — was its pioneer and spiritual progenitor.

According to Gunkel, and the overwhelming majority of form critics down to recent times, form criticism is *genre* criticism. Gunkel maintains that "genre criticism of the Old Testament is absolutely impossible without . . . an examination of the form".²³ At the same time, in his opinion (which is the opinion accepted in form critical schools), "a distinct *linguistic* form" is only one of three factors that together constitute a genre. The others are: "a particular stock of *thoughts* and *moods*" and a

See Koch, *The Growth of the Biblical Tradition*, New York [1969], p. 3; W. Klatt, *Hermann Gunkel — Zu seiner Theologie der Religionsgeschichte und zur Entstehung der formgeschichtlichen Methode*, Göttingen 1969, p. 12, note 3 (and compare p. 56, note 12).

22. According to Kraus, form criticism developed out of late nineteenth-century sociology of religion (*Geschichte*, pp. 293-294). But W. Baumgartner asserts that "Gunkel did not take *Gattungsforschung* over from sociology of religion, but, as he told me himself, he consciously took it over from Germanic and classical philology" ("Eine alttestamentliche Forschungsgeschichte", *ThR*, XXV [1959], p. 107; compare also Baumgartner's "Zum 100. Geburtstag von Hermann Gunkel", *SVT*, IX [1963], pp. 6, 10 [reprinted in the sixth ed. of Gunkel's commentary on Genesis, 1964, pp. CV-CXXIV]). A number of scholars have accepted Baumgartner's view, notably G. Fohrer, *Introduction to the Old Testament* (transl. by D. Green)², London [1974], p. 27; J. Muilenburg, *JBL*, LXXXVII (1969), pp. 1-2. Contrast, however, the bold claim of Klatt, "I consider it . . . out of the question that Gunkel consciously took *Gattungsforschung* over from Germanics" (*op. cit.* [note 21, above], pp. 106-112); similarly, G. M. Tucker, *Form Criticism of the Old Testament*³, Philadelphia 1973, p. 5; W. Richter, *Exegese als Literaturwissenschaft*, Göttingen [1971], p. 23. M. Buss mentions several contemporaries of Gunkel in various disciplines who might have influenced his theories and methods ("The Study of Forms", in: J. H. Hayes [ed.], *Old Testament Form Criticism*, San Antonio [1974], pp. 31-52). And note Buss' statement that "Gunkel's indebtedness to several disciplines is incontrovertible, even though the precise lines of connection cannot always be drawn for him any more than that would be possible for another scholar" ("The Idea of *Sitz im Leben* — History and Critique", *ZAW*, XC [1978], p. 165). [There is a certain irony in the fact that form critics, who determine the *Sitz im Leben* of ancient poems with such assurance, are unable to agree on the *Sitz im Leben* (as it were) of their own mentor in the history of nineteenth-century thought.]

23. *Introduction*, p. 23.

"*Sitz im Leben*" ("setting") which determine both the content and the form, and therefore create a context in which the work can be understood.²⁴

These form-critical criteria for defining the various literary genres are based on the fundamental assumption that the essential forms of Israelite literature evolved at the stage of oral tradition, since oral transmission of traditional subject-matter, based solely on memory, would have been possible only if certain schemata and forms of expression were adhered to. Furthermore, since "in antiquity the power of custom was far greater than it is in the modern world, and besides, like everything connected with religion, religious literature . . . is very conservative",²⁵ it follows that these forms and schemata also influenced literary composition in later times, so that particular ideas would be expressed through particular literary genres in accordance with the writer's intent. The Biblical author "is conditioned by the literary forms, genres, to which he has been educated and which seem to him the natural mode for expressing his thought and feeling".²⁶

"Therefore," Gunkel avers, "a history of Hebrew literature, if it is to do justice to the subject-matter, has comparatively little concern with the personality of the writers. . . , but . . . more with the literary type [=genre] that lies deeper than any individual effort. Hebrew literary history is therefore the history of the literary types [=genres] practised in Israel".²⁷

For Gunkel, then, form criticism is the foundation of Biblical literary history; his method is a "literary-sociological method"²⁸ in that it is based on the hypothesis that "each type [=genre] presents 'sociological data'".²⁹ Each genre arises out of its particular *Sitz im Leben* — some

24. *Introduction*, pp. 22-23; *Die israelitische Literatur*³ (reprinted from P. Hinneberg [ed.], *Kultur der Gegenwart*, 1, 7: *Orientalische Literaturen*², Leipzig 1925), Darmstadt 1963, p. 57. Compare also "The Poetry of the Psalms — Its Literary History and its Applications to the Dating of the Psalms", in: *Old Testament Essays*, London 1927, pp. 124-125.

25. Gunkel, "Fundamental Problems of Hebrew Literary History", in: *What Remains of the Old Testament*, London 1927, p. 59. See also, *inter alia*, *Introduction*, p. 23.

26. *Inter alia*, Gunkel, "Die Propheten als Schriftsteller und Dichter", in: H. Schmidt, *Die grossen Propheten (Die Schriften des Alten Testaments. II/2)*², Göttingen 1923, p. XXXV.

27. "Fundamental Problems of Hebrew Literary History", *loc. cit.* (note 25, above).

28. G. M. Tucker, "Form Criticism, OT", in: *IDBS*, p. 342.

29. Koch, *op. cit.* (note 21, above), p. 27.

specific situation in the life of the people — so that each genre is a formal expression of popular religious belief. The isolation of the genres, therefore, facilitates examination of the popular ground from which religious ideas had sprung, and form criticism, according to Gunkel, is a vital ancillary to the history of Israelite religion.

As he reflected on his work on Psalms: "In the study of the Psalms no question can arise on which we shall not find that the study of the classes [=genres] has some contribution to offer".³⁰ Furthermore, "*The research into genre . . . is the fundamental spadework* without which we can gain no certain knowledge in all other fields; it is the firm ground on which everything else must stand".³¹ Hence Gunkel considers it the function of his commentary on Psalms "to base his interpretation of particular passages upon the research into genre. The first question to ask about any psalm is: *welcher Gattung er angehört* [to what genre does it belong]."³² Once this question has been settled, we can find *counterparts* to the psalm in other examples of the same genre, so as to view it no longer as an isolated phenomenon, but in relation to these counterparts. In this way we can generally arrive at a basic interpretation of the poem; at the same time many *details* hitherto obscure can now be clearly understood. And it may also be possible, where the text is corrupt, to restore at least the sense with the help of parallel passages; often, too, we can establish the *metrical structure* of the poem".³³

C. Westermann clearly asserts the claim of form criticism in the course of his elaboration of Gunkel's classification of the psalms: "This work is built on Gunkel's demonstration that a psalm is to be understood only as *a branch on the tree of the category (= genre)*".³⁴ Form criticism is posited as the main, if not the sole objective method of solving problems of

30. "The Poetry of the Psalms" (note 24, above), p. 142.

31. *Introduction*, p. 8 (italics in the original).

32. Note Baumgartner's reminiscence about his first meeting with Gunkel: "Then I was put to the test: What is the first thing one must ask about in a psalm? With my answer, 'about its date', I naturally failed; I could not know then the right answer, 'about its *Gattung*', as much as I had already read by him" ("Hermann Gunkel", in: *Zum Alten Testament und seine Umwelt*, Leiden 1959, p. 372; compare *SVT*, IX [1963], p. 2).

33. *Die Psalmen (HAT, II/2)*², Göttingen 1968, p. X (italics in the original).

34. *The Praise of God in the Psalms* (transl. by K. R. Crim), Richmond [1965], p. 154 (my italics).

Biblical research — problems not only historical and literary, but also textual, hermeneutical, and theological.

The designation of narrative³⁵ and poetic³⁶ genres begun by Gunkel has been continued and expanded by subsequent scholars.³⁷ New forms or genres have been and are being discovered.³⁸ "There are many disagreements concerning terminology, especially in the definition of genres. Many of these are only quarrels over the choice of words, but some reflect substantive differences",³⁹ which lead to diverse, often contradictory answers, statements, and explanations.⁴⁰ "But," as Klatt observes,

35. See esp. *The Legends of Genesis: The Biblical Saga and History* (transl. by W. H. Carneth, with Introduction by W. F. Albright), New York [1964, repr. 1970] — a translation of the Introduction to Gunkel's commentary on Genesis.
36. See esp. his *Introduction* and commentary on Psalms.
37. See the survey articles in Hayes (ed.), *Old Testament Form Criticism* (note 22, above).
38. See the articles cited in the previous note. There are especially wide divergences among treatments of the Psalms. Note, e.g., G. Castellino, who adopts Gunkel's basic genre criteria, but creates a new division of the genres into two categories: (1) psalms of Lament, Trust, and Thanksgiving; (2) Hymns and related forms, Wisdom psalms and some Prayers (*Libro dei Salmi*, Torino 1955). Westermann combines Gunkel's Hymn and Song of Thanksgiving under the rubric "Praise", and he distinguishes between "descriptive praise" and "declarative" or "confessional praise" (*op. cit.*, [note 34, above], p. 31). Against such a combination of forms, F. Crüsemann advocates several completely independent forms of the Hymn, as well as a number of sub-genres. While he considers the psalm of "Individual Thanksgiving" to be a viable form, he does not concede the existence of the "Popular Thanksgiving" psalm (*Studien zur Formgeschichte von Hymnus und Danklied in Israel*, Neukirchen - Vluyn [1969], p. 209). A. Deissler, like Westermann, recognizes two fundamental categories, psalms of Praise and Prayers, but he also admits the existence of the "Popular Thanksgiving" psalm (*Die Psalmen*, I, Düsseldorf 1963, pp. 15, 19). In the latest, fifth edition of his *Psalmen* (1978), Kraus introduces major form-critical revisions. Expanding the *Gattung* designations of Gunkel, he now distinguishes six genres: (1) Psalms of Praise; (2) Prayers; (3) Royal Psalms; (4) Zion Psalms; (5) Didactic Psalms; (6) Festival Psalms and Liturgies. And so the confusion grows. See, in general, R. Lapointe, "Les genres littéraires après l'ère gunkélienne", *Eglise et Théologie*, I, 1970, pp. 9-38.
39. Tucker, *Form Criticism of the Old Testament* (note 22, above), p. 83.
40. For example, as we have noted, one of the basic presuppositions of form criticism was that the literary genres originated in oral forms of expression. According to R. Knierim, however, "Not every literary typicality can be explained from an oral background . . . We must reckon with a potential qualitative difference between oral and written language. Form-critical methodology must take the literary character

"though we may disagree with Gunkel's views of more than a quarter of a century ago, we are still building up the edifice of which he not only laid the foundation, but which he almost completely erected".⁴¹ *Gattungsforschung* ("research into genre") proceeds to research into the *Sitz im Leben*. For Mowinckel, Gunkel's *Sitz im Leben* became the *Sitz im Kultus*⁴² which, for Scandinavian scholars in particular, is the starting point for "patternism".⁴³ In other words, as we have already noted, the

of our text seriously. The literary versions are the only ones we possess" ("Old Testament Form Criticism Reconsidered", *Interpretation*, XXVII [1973], pp. 457-458). And now S. Warner has demonstrated "that the anthropological presuppositions upon which Gunkel based his theory of the pre-literary development of the Genesis narratives are invalid" ("Primitive Saga Men", *VT*, XXIX [1979], p. 335). Another of Gunkel's claims was that older forms are more pure, and mixed forms are necessarily later. But Weiser has asserted, with respect to Judges 5, that "the mixing of different types is to be found even in the earliest poetry of Israel" (*The Psalms*, p. 33). And Buss writes, "OT form critics have often not seen, as others have, that genres are abstractions ('ideal forms') and that virtually all human experiences involve a combination of categories applied simultaneously . . ." ("The Study of Forms", [note 22, above], p. 53). The same composition, therefore, has not infrequently been assigned to different genres. See K.-H. Bernhardt, *Die gattungsgeschichtliche Forschung am Alten Testament als exegetische Methode*, Berlin [1956], pp. 27-30; idem, *Das Problem der altorientalischen Königsideologie im Alten Testament* (*SVT*, VIII [1961], pp. 37-41). Not one of Gunkel's three criteria for determining genre has failed to arouse controversy — particularly *Sitz im Leben*, which is of decisive importance. For example, Gunkel claimed that the original *Sitz im Leben* of psalmody was the cult; only later, under the influence of prophecy, were the Psalms disengaged from the cult. This hypothesis was carried to an extreme by S. Mowinckel, who argued that of "the psalms transmitted to us, perhaps more than 140 of the 150 of the Psalter, have not only been used as cult-psalms, but have also been composed for that purpose" ("Psalm and Wisdom", *SVT* III [1955], p. 205). But contrast Westermann's remarks: "Gunkel's thesis that the *Sitz-im-Leben* of the Psalms is the cult is here accepted only conditionally. I have pointed beyond that all too common and indefinite word *cult* to the basic occurrence which transpires in 'cult' when men speak to God; the polarity of speaking to God as plea and as praise. This is the real *Sitz-im-Leben* of the Psalms" (*loc. cit.* [note 34, above]). See further below, note 47.

41. *Op. cit.* (note 21, above), p. 259.

42. See note 40, above.

43. Compare P. H. Neumann (ed.), *Zur neueren Psalmenforschung* [*Wege der Forschung*, CXCI], Darmstadt 1976, p. 7; J. H. Kroeze, "Some Remarks on Recent Trends in the Exegesis of the Psalms", in: *Studies on the Psalms — Papers Read at the 6th Meeting of Die O.T. Werkgemeenskap in Suid-Afrika*, 1963, p. 44. On "patternism" see below, pp. 421 ff.

method of form criticism, which dominates Biblical scholarship, is a continuation and development of Gunkel's methodological conceptions.

We do not wish to enter into a general discussion of genre theory, which is a controversial topic in literary criticism.⁴⁴ A few brief remarks on the problematic subject of the genres of Biblical literature will have to suffice.

First of all, insofar as genres are mentioned in Biblical literature at all,⁴⁵ there is certainly none which can be identified by formal criteria.⁴⁶ That

44. See, in general, J. Ehrenpreis, *The "Types Approach" to Literature*, New York 1945; see also the critical discussion of genre theory since the turn of the century by K. W. Hempfer, *Gattungstheorie — Information und Synthese*, München 1973. According to G. von Wilpert, "An individual poem's belonging to a particular genre is less important for its intrinsic nature than for the theoretical business of literary criticism" (*Sachwörterbuch der Literatur*), Stuttgart 1961, s.v. "Gattungen", p. 196. See also G. Olrşini, "Genres", *Princeton Encyclopedia* (note 20, above), p. 308.

45. See Cooper, pp. 3-7.

46. The most persistent attempt to associate particular formal characteristics with a specific genre involves the *qina* ("dirge", or "lament"). The distinctive feature of the *qina* is purported to be the unbalanced line, in which (speaking in terms of accents) the second colon contains one stress fewer than the first. K. Buddé was primarily responsible for elaborating the theory of the *qina*-meter in an influential series of articles ("Das hebräische Klagelied", *ZAW*, II [1882], pp. 1-52; idem, "Ein althebräisches Klagelied", *ibid.*, III [1883], pp. 299-306; idem, "Zum hebräischen Klagelied", *ibid.*, XI [1891], pp. 234-247; XII [1892], pp. 31-37, 261-275); although Buddé claimed credit for discovering the metrical form, he was, as Cooper has noted (p. 23), clearly anticipated by J. Ley (*Grundzüge des Rhythmus, des Vers- und Strophenbaues in der hebräischen Poesis*, Halle 1875, pp. 51-53). In fact, more than a century before Buddé, R. Lowth had noted that the unbalanced line marked "a true legitimate form of Elegy" (*Lectures on the Sacred Poetry of the Hebrews*, [1787], repr. Hildesheim 1969, II, pp. 136-137). For extensions of Buddé's theories, see, *inter alia*, G. Hölscher, "Elemente arabischer, syrischer und hebräischer Metrik", in: *Budde-Festschrift* (*BZAW*, XXXIV [1920]), p. 98; S. Mowinkel, "Zum Problem der hebräischen Metrik", in: *Bertholet-Festschrift*, Tübingen [1950]), p. 384; D. Hillers, "Observations on Syntax and Meter in Lamentations", in: H. Bream, *et al.* (eds.), *A Light Unto My Path — J. M. Myers Festschrift*, Philadelphia [1974], pp. 268-269. Legitimate objections against the *qina* meter have been expressed in terms of both form and content. Already Sievers claimed that Buddé's views "hardly expressed the real situation at all" (*Metrische Studien*, I, Leipzig 1901, §88, p. 121). Compare the remark of T. H. Robinson: "I can find no distinction between the meter of Lam 1 and that of Ps 23" ("Some Principles of Hebrew Metrics", *ZAW*, LIV [1936], p. 34). And as Lowth had already implied (*loc. cit.*), there appear to be laments which show no trace of *qina*-meter (e.g., II Samuel 1:17-27; 3:33-34), while poems other than laments do exhibit that verse form (e.g., Ps 65). Compare G.

such criteria exist in our received texts is entirely a conjecture of Gunkel and the form critics. Second, the form critical-criteria for inclusion in one or another genre are not derived from the observation of pure forms — which are unattested — but merely assumed on the basis of vague "marks of distinction"⁴⁷ (that is, by a process of abstraction and

Rinaldi, "Alcuni Termini Ebraici Relativi Alla Letteratura" in: *Studia Biblica et Orientalia*, I, Rome 1959, p. 151; and recently, Kugel, *The Idea of Biblical Poetry*, (p. 37, note 24), pp. 171ff., 287ff.

47. This criticism has been voiced lately by a number of scholars. Bernhardt, for example, states that "The *Gattungen* of Gunkel and his school are not clearly characterised A clear definition of 'Gattung' or 'Form' is lacking" (*op. cit.* [note 40, above], pp. 28-29). L. Markert sees in the form criticism of prophetic literature "a dis-unified, plainly confusing and diverse terminology, lacking fundamental genre criteria" (*Struktur und Bezeichnung des Schelworts — Eine gattungskritische Studie anhand des Amosbuches* [*BZAW*, CXL], Berlin/New York 1977, p. 279). We might also mention the bewildering array of scholarly attitudes towards that fundamental form-critical category, *Sitz im Leben*. Already Gunkel was prepared to ignore it in practice (contrary to his statement of principle; compare *Introduction*, p. 22), identifying, for example, the "Royal Psalms" and the prophetic *Gattungen* on the basis of literary motives and formal criteria alone. (See W. E. March, "Prophecy", in: Hayes [ed.], *Old Testament Form Criticism* [note 22, above], p. 147; Markert, *ibid.*, p. 27.) When we recall that Gunkel ascribed decisive importance to *Sitz im Leben*, his inconsistency in invoking it is quite extraordinary. Nevertheless, in his standard introduction to form criticism, Koch asserts that "no biblical text can be adequately understood without a consideration of the setting in life of its literary type" (*op. cit.* [note 21, above], p. 33). Now, just what is the *Sitz im Leben*? In its original formulation, the term denoted "setting in life" in the sense of the social/institutional context. But Knierim asserts: "A genre is no longer to be constituted by its societal setting. A potential autonomy vis-à-vis setting can be attributed to generic language." He concludes, then, that "the relationship between genre and setting must remain an open one, so that both can be related to, or kept independent of, one another as the text may require" (*art. cit.* [note 40, above], pp. 438, 449). D. A. Knight meets Knierim's challenge simply by coining new terminology: " . . . as a general term for any kind of environment in which a literary entity may originate, develop and be maintained, 'matrix' is much more appropriate than '*Sitz im Leben*', or 'setting'. And to this general term can be affixed a variety of adjectives that will designate with precision the specific environment most applicable: e.g., *institutional matrix*; *societal matrix* . . . ; *cultural or epochal or historical matrix* . . . ; *intellectual or ideological or theological matrix* . . . ; *literary matrix* . . . ; *linguistic or mental matrix*, etc." ("The Understanding of '*Sitz im Leben*' in Form Criticism", in: *Society of Biblical Literature, 1974 Seminar Papers*, I, pp. 108-109.) Thus Knight is able to deal with Knierim: "It becomes fairly obvious here that Knierim is objecting to an essential coherence between genre and setting or *Sitz im Leben* (understood in the traditional sense of a societal or institutional matrix) — not between genre and matrix *per se*"

generalization) to be indications of genres: "one legitimate form for each genre". The whole concept of genre-classification, of schemata and forms by which genres are isolated, is rendered dubious by the frequent striking differences and contradictions in the results of genre criticism. K.-H. Bernhardt explains the reason for that diversity: "In effect, the present position today is that each exegete who dabbles in form criticism . . . relies on his own particular theory of genres, which is . . . simply taken as axiomatic".⁴⁸

But we have an even more pressing objection to form criticism: even if there were no doubt about the existence in Biblical literature of genres distinguishable by formal criteria, even if "we could attain the most accurate characterization possible of the various literary genres",⁴⁹ even if we could reconstruct the pure form of each genre, and write a lexicon explicating the meaning of each and every form of expression ("only a matter of time", according to Gunkel⁵⁰) — how much nearer would we be to

(*ibid.*, p. 115). In effect, Knierim and Knight have completely obliterated the unambiguous definition of *Sitz im Leben* that lies at the heart of form criticism. Knight's new version is, we might say, undefined, and it is hermeneutically useless in its attempt to encompass "the complex of meanings to which the human being (and thus also his verbal expressions) is oriented" (*ibid.*, p. 109). So also R. Lapointe, who also rejects Gunkel's close connection between genre and setting, and therefore reformulates the *Sitz im Leben* in terms of the linguistic categories of "situation" and "context" ("La valeur linguistique du *Sitz im Leben*", *Biblica*, LII [1971], pp. 469-487). And Buss argues that the form-critical treatment of "setting" has been "onesided and ill-controlled". It is really a multi-dimensional concept, and, according to Buss, scholars "must deal more sharply with process-oriented sociology and with issues of social development" ("The Idea of *Sitz im Leben*" [note 22, above], p. 170). Note, finally, M. Kessler's affirmation that scholars participating in the form criticism seminars of the Society of Biblical Literature have been increasingly reluctant to relate *Sitz im Leben* rigidly to *Gattung* ("A Methodological Setting for Rhetorical Criticism", *Semiotics*, IV [1974], p. 3). When all is said and done, we cannot help but feel that one of the fundamental categories of form criticism — *Sitz im Leben* — has been rendered virtually meaningless by the form critics themselves.

48. *Op. cit.* (note 40, above), p. 25. And compare the judgment of W. Richter: "With this method [i.e., form criticism], the most diverse, even contradictory results have been obtained, so that the state of research seems to resemble a field strewn with the rubble of individual opinions" ("Formgeschichte und Sprachwissenschaft", *ZAW*, LXXXII [1970], p. 216). See also F. Scharbert's remarks in *Theologische Revue*, LXX (1974), col. 5.

49. Bernhardt, *loc. cit.* (note 47, above).

50. *Introduction*, p. 24.

understanding the individual poem.⁵¹ The basic principle of Total Interpretation, as opposed to form criticism, is that the interpretation of poetry is not concerned with external aspects, e.g., genre, *Sitz im Leben*, *Sitz im Kultus*, or pattern, not with what a particular idiom or motif *generally* signifies. The interpreter of poetry must concern himself only with internal aspects, i.e., with what the poet has made of the raw material in the particular poem under consideration.⁵²

The foregoing is not intended to minimize the importance of pre-existent literary patterns. Such patterns might be a treasured cultural heritage, or a matter of momentary fashion. E. A. Curtius has concluded from his study of mediaeval European literature that "Without a configurational scheme hovering before him, the poet cannot compose. The literary genre, the metrical and stanzaic forms, are such schemata".⁵³ Just as the unique, individual language of poetry exists within the framework of non-poetic language; just as the particular language of poetry with all its novelties and deviations from customary usage must always remain inseparably linked to language in general — so too poetic form is not merely an isolated creation, but is rather moulded out of the time-honoured conventions of the poetic tradition.⁵⁴

Nevertheless, in the same way that the process of poetic creation abandons the worn-out, cliché-ridden language of everyday life in order to revive the true significance and expressive power of words,⁵⁵ so the formal devices of poetry, whether obligatory or freely chosen by the poet, are "for language what the stops are for the organ. . . . In the hands of a master, techniques become heightened means of expression. Artifice

51. See our remarks on this subject in *Biblica*, XLII (1961), p. 261. We obviously find little value in the claim that the individuality of any particular work can only be appreciated in relation to the typicalities of its genre. For a clear statement of that position, see later R. F. Melugin, "Mûlenburg, Form Criticism, and Theological Exegesis", in: M. Buss (ed.), *Encounter with the Text* [*Semeia Supplements*, VIII], Philadelphia/Missoula 1979, p. 94. Against this view, see also Cooper, p. 55.

52. On a tendency towards this view and related developments in form criticism, see the Appendix on "Recent Developments in Form Criticism", below, pp. 410ff.

53. *European Literature and the Latin Middle Ages* (transl. by W. R. Trak), London 1953, p. 391.

54. See Ehrenpreis, *op. cit.* (note 44, above), p. 16; also F. Martini, "Persönlichkeitsstil und Zeitstil", *Studium Generale*, VIII (1955), pp. 31-40.

55. Compare E. Betti, *Allgemeine Auslegungslehre als Methodik der Geisteswissenschaften*, Tübingen 1967, p. 387.

passes over into art and is absorbed in it".⁵⁶ The particular, essential character of the poem — its structure — is the end product of the poet's struggle to express his individuality through — or even in spite of — the forms, genres, motives or *topoi* of his age.⁵⁷ Even if a poem were to consist entirely of borrowed material, the unique combination of all the elements would constitute an individual and unique artistic creation⁵⁸ — an entity which would demand its own, particular interpretation. Such an interpretation is the goal of Total Interpretation.

We must assert our belief that, in spite of our harsh critique of form criticism, we hold no brief against the *legitimate* aims of historical criticism. As R. Smend comments, "The purpose of criticism was to do justice to the texts and their authors and to release them from their strait-jackets". The function of Biblical criticism was "to find out the historical truth, not the blind or . . . over-subtle destruction of all possibility of knowledge by slavish adherence to a principle". But Smend is forced to concede that the overall result of Biblical criticism has been "more evident in its negative than in its positive aspect".⁵⁹ H. Gardner's general judgment against the accepted use of the historical-critical method certainly applies to Biblical criticism: "This method seems now to have come to the point where its deficiencies are becoming more obvious than its merit. The keys which have been cut and shaped with such care certainly opened a door; but the door only seems to lead into another room with a door which is locked, and the lock on that door the keys do not fit. And the room we have got into is plainly not the heart of the building, but only another antechamber".⁶⁰

56. Curtius, *op. cit.* (note 53, above), p. 390.

57. See our previous discussions of this point, in: *ThZ*, XXIII (1967), pp. 2-3; *SVT*, XXIII (1972), pp. 95-96.

58. This point is recognized, perhaps surprisingly, by S. Mowinkel. Although practically all the psalms belong to the rituals of the cult, there remains, nevertheless, scope for personal expression: "The personal contribution by the poet consisted, in a way, in finding new variations of the fixed forms, a new turn in the call to praise, another expression for confidence, a new picture of the fury of the enemy and the hardship of suffering. In this way, they created many original, individual pictures of the noblest kind which later became classical" ("Traditionalism and Personality in the Psalms", *HUCA*, XXIII/1 [1950/51], p. 206).

59. "Nachkritische Auslegung", in: *ΠΛΑΠΗΣΙΑ — Karl Barth zum achtzigsten Geburtstag*, Zürich 1966, pp. 222, 228.

60. *The Limits of Literary Criticism*, London 1956, p. 44.

Even in the light of these trenchant remarks, we do not intend to express any opposition to historical criticism (which we prefer to term "philological criticism") *in principle*. There are two points that we wish to make: First, as we have argued, historical criticism *as practiced* is not truly critical because of its unbalanced ideas about the relationship between literature and history. Second, the method of Total Interpretation, far from seeking to supplant historical criticism aims to redress that imbalance.

Virtually all unbiased readers will concede that the large majority of Biblical texts notoriously resist the reconstruction of their historical circumstances. When we look at them critically, their inadequacy as historical documents is self-evident. And when we look at them hermeneutically, we can readily see how the function of the text as Scripture led to "processes of selection and transformation (stripping off the form of the facts and replacing it by a new form)".⁶¹ A text can only be interpreted as far as its inherent potential will allow,⁶² which is to say that the present form and setting of the text set certain limits to critical interpretation.

Similarly, the critical scholar cannot hope to understand the literary work if he fails to account for its literary form. The interpreter does not fulfill his obligation to the poetic text if he attempts to explicate its content without elucidating the form of expression. He must explain the text as written and he must treat it as poetry. The goal of valid interpretation has been well expressed by Betti: "... the significant form must be comprehended in its autonomy, i.e., in accordance with the laws of its own nature, its inner necessity (logic) and reason (ratio) . . . not according to its fitness to serve some external purpose in which the commentator seems to be particularly interested or with reference to some function or assessment which cannot be directly indicated but, is derived from an external source with which it might theoretically be compared".⁶³

We consider Total Interpretation to be fully compatible with the

61. Y. A. Seeligmann, "Mimeziut Historit Litefisa Historiosofit Bamiqra", *Peraqim*, II (1964-1974), p. 274.

62. Compare Smend, "De Wette, etc.", *ThZ*, XIV (1958), p. 112.

63. *Op. cit.* (note 55, above), p. 218.

philological-critical method. We would hardly deny that "a poem is at the same time a linguistic document and an historical source".⁶⁴ From a certain point of view, of course, the literary work "is, after all, an historical phenomenon; it can only be reached by way of history".⁶⁵ We do not, therefore, oppose the historical study of literary works; what we object to is the historical-critical tendency to reduce works of literature to mere "documents". We would insist that, whatever the ultimate goal of interpretation might be, a poem must be apprehended *first of all* as an artistic creation, on the basis of an interpretation which illuminates it from within, as poetic form.⁶⁶

We entirely agree with F. R. Leavis' above-quoted assertion that literature will not serve even a non-literary purpose unless approached as literature.⁶⁷ And, as Kayser has affirmed, "Every evaluation — artistic, historical, functional — requires exact interpretation. First we must know what is written, what is included in the text, and only then can we begin to determine its functional or historical importance. Interpretation is not the alpha and omega of literary criticism, but rather the centre from which beams radiate to the different disciplines. For interpretation itself, all historical scholarship is ancillary; for the philosopher, the historian of literature, and the pedagogue, interpretation is ancillary".⁶⁸ And, we would add, indispensable.

This placement of primary emphasis on what is "*in the text*" is at the heart of both modern literary criticism and philology — and, of course, of Total Interpretation. "The alpha and omega of classical philology, and of all philology [including Biblical philology!], is interpretation, and understanding the text is the ultimate goal of interpretation. Under certain conditions, naturally, the study of additions to the text, investigation of textual reliability, analysis of successive layers and theories of development can also contribute. It should, however, be self-evident that it is possible to begin with all these only after the interpretation of words and

64. H. O. Burger, *GRAM*, XXXII (1950-51), p. 81.

65. M. Wehrli, "Zum Problem der Historie in der Literaturwissenschaft", *Trivium*, VII, 1 (1949), p. 46.

66. Compare Hrushovski's assertion (*art. cit.* [note 9, above], p. XXVIII).

67. *The Common Pursuit*, London 1952, p. 193 (cited above, p. 6, note 16).

68. Kayser, *Vortragsreise*, pp. 60-61. Compare Bernhardt, *op. cit.* (note 40, above), pp. 10ff.; R. Bultmann, "Das Problem der Hermeneutik", *Glauben und Verstehen*, II², Tübingen 1958, pp. 222ff.

subject-matter (not only of isolated passages, but as integral parts of the entire work, in the context of the whole to which they belong) has reached a point from which it is possible to draw far-ranging conclusions with a certain measure of assurance".⁶⁹

The application of the method of Total Interpretation to Biblical research, we suggest, places the literary aspect of the Biblical text in its proper perspective. Far from undermining historical research, Total Interpretation will provide it, at last, with a firm and reliable basis.

There is only one reliable foundation for honest criticism, and it is not to be found in the Procrustean bed of historical-critical speculations and preconceptions. Boeckh has well expressed the goal of scientific philology: "We must build upon a basis of interpretation and criticism of the documents, not on the basis of *a priori* speculations".⁷⁰ We must return to the text, listen to its voice, see it in its own image, and in its *totality*, before we dare to say another word about it.

Some Biblical scholars have objected to the fact that Total Interpretation seeks to apply the concept of the autonomous work of art to the writings of the Bible and the Ancient Near East.⁷¹ It is asserted categorically that "with regard to the Bible (and to ancient Oriental writings generally) . . . the complete individuality of a literary work . . . does not exist".⁷² We no longer need to take such an assertion seriously, since it is patently based on the misguided presuppositions of form criticism.⁷³

Our emphasis on the text — and nothing but the text — does,

69. K. v. Fritz, "Ziele, Aufgaben und Methoden der klassischen Philologie und Altertumswissenschaft", *Deutsche Vierteljahrsschrift für Literaturwissenschaft und Geistesgeschichte*, XXIII (1959), p. 528.

70. *Op. cit.* (note 14, above), p. 259.

71. Crüsemann, *op. cit.* (note 38, above), p. 3, note.

72. Koch, *op. cit.* (note 21, above), p. 46.

73. Compare Crüsemann's vain assertion that the methods of Kayser and others must be subordinated to form criticism if they are to be useful for Biblical exegesis (*loc. cit.* [note 71, above]). Similarly, J. van der Ploeg, "Zur Literatur- und Stülforschung im AT", *ThLZ*, C (1975), p. 814. De Meyer claims to have achieved a synthesis of "old and new methods" (i.e., form criticism and Total Interpretation) in his analysis of Psalm 49, but we do not find his results at all convincing (*Bijdragen*, XLI [1979], pp. 156, 162. Compare Cooper's remark: "Literary criticism of the Bible must develop independently, and not merely as an adjunct to other critical methods" (p. 55).

however, raise two important problems which we shall have to treat at this point. First, can we say that there is a text of the Bible that is reliable enough to be subjected to close reading? And second, is there a legitimate means of defining what we mean by a Biblical "text", that is, of isolating the literary unit to be analysed?

The nature of the Biblical text might be used to argue against the applicability of Total Interpretation. After all, the reliability of the text is a prerequisite for any interpretation, and all the more so in the present case. Is there any text of the Bible which we can confidently claim to be reliable, or original? Can and should we attempt to reconstruct such a text?

The answers to these questions are far more complex than they seemed a generation ago, thanks to advances in the theory of textual criticism, and especially because of the extraordinary discoveries in the Judean Desert.

There is no doubt of the existence of variant texts which contradict the Masoretic witness. "What is clear today, owing to the agreement of Qumran fragments with the Samaritan Hebrew Pentateuch and the G [=Septuagint], is the existence in pre-Christian times of biblical books diverging from the contemporary ancestors of MT".⁷⁴ The proto-Masoretic text, then, was one of several texts, or text-types, which co-existed during this period.

74. M. Greenberg, "The Use of the Ancient Versions for Interpreting the Hebrew Text", *SVT*, XXIX (1978), p. 146. This subject is a rich one, which has accumulated an extensive bibliography. A good selection of articles is F. M. Cross & S. Talmon (eds.), *Qumran and the History of the Biblical Text*, Cambridge, Mass. 1975. See also, *inter alia*, P. W. Skehan, "The Qumran Manuscripts and Textual Criticism", *SVT*, IV (1957), pp. 148-160; Ch. Rabin, "The Dead Sea Scrolls and the History of the OT Texts", *JThS*, VI (1955), pp. 174-182; H. M. Orlinsky, "Qumran and the Present State of OT Text Studies", *JBL*, LXXVIII (1959), pp. 29-33; E. Y. Kutscher, *The Language and Linguistic Background of the Isaiah Scroll (IQIs^a)*, Leiden 1974; R. Weiss, "Hamegillot Hamiqraiyyot Mimegillot Midbar Yehuda Venushat Hamassora"; idem, "Eduyot Al Hamiqra Bapesharim Uvishear Hahiburim Hakittatiyim Shebimegillot Qumran", both in *Mishut Bamiqra*, Jerusalem [1977], pp. 238-277, 277-298; E. Tov, "Hayahas Ben Ede Nosah Hamiqra Leor Megillot Midbar Yehuda", *Beth Mikra*, XXIV (1979), pp. 161-170. Tov's monograph *The Text-Critical Use of the Septuagint in Biblical Research*, Jerusalem 1981, contains a full discussion of the subject, with special reference to the versions. For a very general treatment with bibliography, see D. Barthélemy, "Text, Hebrew, History of", *IDBS*, pp. 882-884.

The relationship among the various texts and ancient translations is exceedingly problematic. As J. Barr writes about the Septuagint, "Where the Greek text gives a sense different from the Hebrew [=MT], the hypothesis that it was translated from a different Hebrew text is only one of a number of possibilities. It may have had the same text, but misread it; or been careless in handling it, or guessed at the sense, or paraphrased, or assimilated it to another passage; or, indeed, it may have sincerely translated the same text in a way which we judge to be 'wrong' and which thus gives us the impression that the text was different. There are many possible relations between what the translators wrote down in Greek and what was on the page in Hebrew. Only when we eliminate a number of these possible relations are we entitled to translate back the Greek into a Hebrew text and say that the translators 'read' this text".⁷⁵

The combination of evidence from Qumran and the versions reveals genuine variants from the received text, but the Qumran discoveries have also necessitated a revaluation upward of the Masoretic text. As M. Mansoor has pointed out, "In the light of Qumran, we may conclude that the process of standardization of the Hebrew text by the rabbis of the second and subsequent centuries rested on ancient Jewish traditions, and the text they adopted as authoritative was one that had already been standardized to a considerable degree at an earlier period. . . . The numerous Qumran biblical scrolls found to be identical with the Masoretic Text is a clear indication".⁷⁶

The critic faces an all but insurmountable task. While he must respect "the conservative nature of the work of the Masoretes and their vigilance in preserving the text",⁷⁷ he must also recognize that MT contains "a wealth of genuine textual errors"⁷⁸ or alterations,⁷⁹ which demand that we

75. *Comparative Philology and the Text of the OT*, London 1968, p. 245. See also Tov's book (mentioned in the preceding note).

76. "The MT in the Light of Qumran", *SVT*, IX (1963), p. 341. See also R. Gordis, "Qadmuta Shel Hamassora Leor Sifrut Haza'l Umegillot Yam Hamelah", *Tarbiz*, XXVII (1958), pp. 444-469.

77. I. L. Seeligmann, *VT*, XI (1961), p. 201 (Hebrew translation in M. Weinfeld [ed.], *Likkutei Tarbiz*, I, *A Biblical Studies Reader*, Jerusalem 1979, pp. 279-295).

78. E.g., incorrect word-division, transposition of letters and words (metathesis), confusion of similar letters, confusion of words which sound alike, omissions for various reasons (homoteleuton, homoiocaton, haplography), addition through dittography. See, in general, J. A. Thompson, "Textual Criticism", *IDBS*, pp. 886-891.

79. E.g., assimilation to parallel passages, conflation or combination of readings, substitu-

attempt to arrive, whenever possible, at a more reliable or uncorrupt text".⁸⁰

The search for a "reliable, uncorrupt text", which has rightly replaced the vain attempt to recover the Biblical *Urtext*⁸¹ as the goal of textual criticism, inevitably leads us back to MT. It is obvious that MT must be the basis of serious critical study of the Bible, not because it is the best text, or the oldest, but because (in contrast to the Qumran texts) it is a complete, standardized text of the Hebrew Bible which has been carefully copied and transmitted. Yet there is no denying that many passages require emendation, and emendation is always a risky, subjective process, no matter how good the ancient evidence appears to be.

The question recurs, then, even more urgently than before, whether close reading is appropriate for Biblical exegesis. And the answer is emphatically in the affirmative, precisely *because* of the situation we have outlined above. Total Interpretation goes hand in hand with textual criticism; both strive to interpret (and, when necessary, to emend) the text on the basis of *exegesis*, while assiduously avoiding *eisegesis*. The inten-

tion, harmonization, removal of objectionable expressions. See *ibid.*, p. 890; also S. Talmon, "Conflate Readings (OT)", *IDBS*, pp. 170-173 (listing his other important monographs on the subject). Seeligmann has categorized the various alterations; see "Meḥqarim Betoledot Nushat Hamiqra", *Tarbiz*, XXV (1956), pp. 118-139 (reprinted in *Likkutei Tarbiz* I [note 77, above], pp. 255-278).

80. Fohrer, *Introduction*, p. 514.

81. The aim of modern Biblical text-criticism has been set forth by E. Würthwein: "to restore the oldest text which can be discovered. This does not mean the recovery of the actual form in which the individual sentences were first conceived, but the form of the text which the OT books had had when they had already attained their present shape, as regards extent and content, and were becoming canonical . . ." (*The Text of the OT — An Introduction to Kittel-Kohle's Biblia Hebraica* [transl. by P. R. Ackroyd], Oxford 1957, p. 70). In a similar vein, see M. Noth, *The Old Testament World*, London and Philadelphia 1966, p. 359; R. W. Klein, *Textual Criticism of the Old Testament*, Philadelphia 1974, p. 102. For some recent opinions on Biblical text-criticism, see D. F. Payne, "OT Textual Criticism — Its Principles and Practice", *Tyndale Bulletin*, XXVI (1974), pp. 99-112; Thompson, *art. cit.* (note 78, above); F. E. Deist, *Towards the Text of the OT*, Pretoria 1978; E. Tov, "Iyyunim Beshitoteha Vehagbeloteha Shel Biqqoret Nosaḥ Hamiqra", in: *Studies in Bible and the Ancient Near East* (Loewenstamm Festschrift), Hebrew vol., 1978, pp. 207-227.

sive focus on the text itself — Total Interpretation — is the only reliable guide for textual criticism. M. Greenberg has emphasized this point in slightly different terms: "To avoid premature text-alteration, *exegesis and text-criticism must proceed together, each illuminating the other. The exegete, whose task is to interpret the text in hand, must work on the hypothesis that every element in his text has significance — contributes to the meaning of its context . . .* While he notes the particulars of the versions, *his focus is the MT*, not because it is the best or oldest, but because it is the only complete text of the Hebrew Bible, and only through it can sound exegesis, interpreting the Hebrew by the Hebrew, be achieved".⁸²

We can now move on to the second important challenge to Total Interpretation, which arises out of the nature of Biblical literature. We seek to clarify the meaning of each detail of the text in relation to the whole work, but the isolation of the "whole work", that is, the literary unit, is often highly problematic. Particularly in prophetic literature, it is frequently difficult to determine the limits of independent units. Even when there are clear signs in the text (such as repetitions or dramatic changes of subject), it is hard to know when they are original and when they are redactional.⁸³ Of course, the text might also contain lacunae or interpolations, so that even determining the extent of the unit cannot guarantee its integrity.

These difficulties need not block the road of interpretation before the scholar, but they do warn him to proceed with caution. The hermeneutic circle which encompasses every literary interpreter confronts the Biblical critic in the particular matter of determining the limits of the literary unit. And this is the "circle": on the one hand, close attention to the details of

82. *Art. cit.* (note 74, above), p. 147 (my italics). Compare the remark of Gerleman: "Stylistic research . . . making use of modern methods, can undoubtedly make a valuable contribution, both to Old Testament *textual criticism* [my italics] and to the understanding of Old Hebrew piety and ways of thought" ("The Song of Deborah in the Light of Stylistics", *VT*, I [1951], p. 169). For an example of close structural analysis which "saves" a difficult text from emendation, see Cooper's study of Nahum 1:10 (pp. 56-93). Another example: M. Kessler demonstrates from the structure of Jeremiah 50 that the words *nāḏū ḥālākū* in verse 3 are not an addition, as generally held (see *BHS*) but original to the text; see "Rhetoric in Jeremiah 50 and 51", *Semitica*, III (1973), pp. 18-35. In Zakovitch's dissertation (above, p. 43 note 49), also, close reading serves as a means to text criticism.

83. See U. Cassuto, "The Sequence and Arrangement of the Biblical Sections", *Biblical and Oriental Studies* (transl. by I. Abrahams), I, Jerusalem [1973], pp. 1-2.

the work (syntactic, stylistic, etc.) in their functional coherence clarifies the whole structure, simultaneously delimiting the unit and assuring its integrity; on the other hand, comprehension of the presumed unit as a whole facilitates the understanding of the meaning and function of the details. The two processes support and sustain each other; each one is both the cause and the effect of the other, and neither takes precedence. Just as there is no escape from the hermeneutic circle, so there is no escape from this one. The critic must always be aware of the limitations of criticism, facing such problems directly.

Errors in interpretation are inevitable, but the best safeguard against error is devoted attention to the text. The critic who refuses to treat the text lightly, who reads in accordance with the demands of Total Interpretation and sound philological-critical method, will not easily go astray.

We must, at the same time, concede that our approach, though relatively safe, is also narrow in scope. If Biblical scholarship were to embrace Total Interpretation, insisting that one should read what is written in the text, all that is written there, and only what is written there, it would soon become clear that many dearly-held "higher-critical" theories are mountains suspended by a hair — utterly lacking textual support. We repeat Kayser's remarks about the historicist approach to literary scholarship: "The arguments against Dilthey's 'Geistesgeschichte' are directed not only against the way it reduces everything to history while neglecting what forms the essence of the artistic creation; nor against doubtful synthetic concepts about cosmology and the spirit of the age, to which it unhesitatingly attributed the spiritual content of the creation. The arguments are directed above all against the carefree way in which it abstracted ideas from the texts so as to associate them with those concepts".⁸⁴

Whoever wishes to understand everything in a text, both its tones and its overtones, what it hides as well as what it reveals, will frequently have to admit that he cannot succeed; even the simplest level of meaning may be hopelessly elusive.⁸⁵ Total Interpretation, which limits us to scrutiny of

the text, often requires us to reconcile ourselves to the limitations of our knowledge and ability. "The judge" — and this applies also to the scholar — "can judge only from what he sees."

In the final analysis, the question of whether Total Interpretation is as applicable to Biblical literature as it is to classical and modern literatures cannot be decided by theoretical deliberation; it can only be tested and proved in practice. If the results it produces appear to be *eisegesis* instead of *exegesis*, then a thorough philological-critical examination of the text should point up the inadequacy and illuminate the source of the error. But if it turns out that all the individual elements of the work elucidate the whole, and vice versa — if every aspect of the form and content of the literary creation becomes diaphanous in the light of Total Interpretation — then the validity of our interpretation is self-evident. According to the adherents of *Werkinterpretation* and New Criticism, on evidence of this kind the truth of literary criticism rests. So also, we would say, the truth of Biblical criticism.

84. Kayser, *Vortragsreise*, p. 61.

85. For this reason, I would say that Song of Songs will probably remain a sealed book from a literary standpoint. Although L. Krinatzki has written a commentary on Song of Songs from the perspective of modern literary scholarship (p. 42, note 49), I doubt that he has provided us with the key to the understanding of the book.