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UNDERSTANDING LITERATURE

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INTRODUCTION

Literature, as verbal art, forms an inseparable part of human lives. To read it and to be acquainted with its national or world history belongs to the education not only of literary critics and scholars, but of common people as well. The goal of this book is thus to look at literature from a double perspective: not only to provide basic terminology and knowledge for the students of English in their introductory courses, i.e. the future professional teachers, critics, or translators, but to try to explain the nature of literature in general, which might be found useful also for those who read it for pleasure – for we strongly feel that to know more about something enhances its deeper appreciation.

The book is an amended revision of the textbook *Focus on Literature* by the same authors (published in 2004). Compared to the first edition, we excluded partial lists of discussed literary terms, exercise sections, and "check-yourself" sections. We also rethought and reworked individual chapters, added new information and interpretations, hoping that it will provoke students to discover and explore various ways of "understanding literature," through their independent work in the libraries, on the Internet, or by consulting other resources, all of which can significantly improve their appreciation and grasp of literature and its context.

We would like to express our gratitude to all those students and colleagues who inspired us to write and continually update the book. We also thank to prof. Steven Ekema Agbaw, prof. Mark W. Lencho, doc. PhDr. Jaroslav Kušnír, PhD. and doc. PhDr. Dana Petríková, PhD. for their help and useful notes in their reviews.

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Literature and Its Study

Anton Pokrivčák

The Nature and Functions of Literature

Literature is one of the words familiar to almost everyone and used by many people on a daily basis. It appears in various discourses, on various levels, in various social groups as well as historical periods. Its frequency of use has enriched it with multiplicity of meanings and definitions.

In the English speaking world, the most "classic," as well as the most extensively referred to, definition of literature is the one provided by Wellek and Warren in their influential *The Theory of Literature* (first published in 1949, our further references are based on its 1985 edition[1]). They put forth essential distinctions and conceptualisations which, in our opinion, have not been significantly challenged until the present, and, in spite of the fact that their work is not a recent one, it still seems to be the most practical point of departure for the purposes of an introductory course.

In Wellek and Warren's understanding, the concept of literature comprises the following basic meanings: 1) *all written texts* (anything in print – great novels, poems, textbooks, instructions for use, a music poster, a train ticket, etc.); this is the widest, but, as they claim, for the purposes of serious study, insufficient concept of literature; 2) *a sum of great books* (although narrower, the concept is not sufficient either, since, as they maintain, it is based on a value judgement, rather than on serious formal and thematic distinctions);

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[1] Wellek, R. – Warren, A.: *Theory of Literature: A seminal study of the nature and function of literature in all its contexts.* London: Penguin Books, 1985.

3) *imaginative literature* (the art of letters or *verbal art* which uses words to evoke aesthetic feelings as opposed to *utilitarian* literature, which rather aims at passing on practical information, as well as to other arts using other communication codes (shapes, colours, tones, etc.). By narrowing down the concept of literature to imaginative texts with aesthetic value, Wellek and Warren, drawing on European formalism and structuralism, made it an object of independent study and research. Their *Theory of Literature* thus became one of the first systematic articulations of the necessity to study literature as a unique phenomenon, not as merely a part of philological study (as it was practiced, for example, at American universities until the beginning of the twentieth century).

The "narrowed" concept of literature will become the object of our theoretical reflections in further chapters as well. However, by acknowledging the "independence of literature" we also acknowledge the fact that it is part of human sciences and that the meaning the literary works "produce" cannot exist in isolation, but has to be related to other – non literary phenomena as well. After all, a literary work is made up of verbal signs, which means that, if it is to have significance for human beings, it has to communicate a message and that this message is usually very complex, involving various aspects of human reality.

Before embarking on an analysis of the ways in which literature addresses human reality, it is necessary to stress that even if the word literature (littera – "letter") suggests close association with written literary texts – manuscripts, books, and, most recently, electronic documents – it cannot be limited only to them, because in earlier historical periods a literary word was primarily a "spoken" one. Many great works were originally told, sung, or chanted, and only later on written down, including even such world cultural heritage texts as Homer's epic poems Iliad and Odyssey, the Old English Beowulf, Russian byljiny as well as famous "postcolonial texts" told by aboriginal peoples in the USA, Australia, and Latin America. This fact makes it clear that it is not a letter, but a word in its various manifestations (spoken, written, coded in electronic texts), which should be taken as a main medium (in Aristotelian terms) of literature.

Having narrowed the concept of *literature* into a verbal art, one can proceed to ask further important and unavoidable questions: "1. what need is met by literature; 2. how does literature originate; 3. what form of the spirit is it which fashions it?"[2] Although the questions are "Crocean", the answers will be ours – selected from among the multiplicity of theoretical discussions of literature and its study emerging over the centuries.

Perhaps the oldest answer to the above queries was provided by an ancient Greek philosopher Aristotle in his *Poetics*: "Epic poetry and Tragedy, Comedy also and Dithyrambic poetry, and the music of the flute and of the lyre in most of their forms, are all in their general conception modes of imitation. They differ, however, from one another in three respects – the medium, the objects, the manner or mode of imitation, being in each case distinct."[3] According to Aristotle, literature fulfils men's need for pleasure and learning through imitation (*mimesis*).

After Aristotle, the idea of art as imitation has gone through different manifestations within particular historical periods (Neoclassicism, Realism), resulting in the modern concept of *fiction*. As Danziger has it, "for though the work is usually, in one way or another, a reflection or recreation of the world and of life – what earlier critics called an imitation – we are certainly aware of the fact that it is not, after all, the world and not real life"[4]. What is fictional does not, naturally, exist in reality. It cannot be said, however, that it does not exist at all, for fictional existence is a unique form of existence. In this sense we could say that fiction is something that is and, at the same time, is not. Although fictional worlds created by writers are not real worlds, they cannot be considered to be false either. Their power lies in suggestion, in the ability to "materialize," through authors' imagina-

2   Croce, B.: "Poetry, the Work of Truth: Literature, the Work of Civilization". In: Lipking, L. I. – Walton Litz, A.: Modern Literary Criticism. New York: Atheneum, 1972, p. 410.

3   Aristotle: *Poetics*. http://classics.mit.edu/Aristotle/poetics.1.1.html. 23. 11. 2003 A Slovak reader may also choose from several Czech translations (e.g. Aristoteles: *Poetika*. Praha: Orbis, 1962), or a Slovak translation: Aristoteles: *Poetika – Rétorika – Politika*. Bratislava: Tatran, 1980.

4   Danziger, M. K. – Johnson, W. S.: *An Introduction to the Study of Literature*. Boston: D. C. Heat and Co., 1966, p. 13.

tive and creative capabilities, human longings, desires, fortunes and misfortunes, happiness and tragedies. This *power* of literature leads to its many conflicting *theories*.

Another approach is to regard literature in terms of its affective power on readers. Since here the main focus lies in literature's affecting readers' everyday lives, the approach is called *affective* ("affect" in psychology means emotion, feeling, or mood), or sometimes pragmatic. Its essence may be best described by quoting Leo Tolstoy's definition of art: "Art is a human activity consisting in this, that one man consciously by means of certain external signs, hands on to others feelings he has lived through, and that others are infected by these feelings, and also experience them."[5] As he further claims: "The stronger the infection, the better is the art."[6]

Like imitation and fiction, the concept of literature as *affective art* has taken on many different forms throughout the history, beginning with Plato's crediting art with a subversive power, through to contemporary reader response theory.

In addition to literature's undeniable power to affect the feelings of the readers, i.e. its "receivers", it also "meets the need" of its "producers", the authors of literary works, for expression. What is it that the writers want to express? According to Plato, poets are possessed speakers of divine truth "inspired to utter that to which the Muse impels them."[7] In addition to divine knowledge, truth and sensations, there are also other phenomena poets can strive to express. One of the strongest concerns with expression can be found in Romanticism and its outbursts of strong human heart. For the English Romantic poet William Wordsworth, for example, poetry is a "spontaneous overflow of powerful feeling: it takes its origin from emotion recollected in tranquillity. The emotion is contemplated till, by a species of reaction, the tranquillity gradually disappears, and an emotion, kindred to that which

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[5]   Tolstoy, L. N.: "What is Art?" (1898). In: Bate, W. J.: *Criticism: The Major Texts*. New York: Harcourt, Brace and Co., 1952, p. 516.

[6]   ibid., p. 515.

[7]   Plato: *The Republic*. In: Bate, W. J.: *Criticism: The Major Texts*. New York: Harcourt, Brace and Co., 1952, p. 43.

was before the subject of contemplation, is gradually produced, and does itself actually exist in the mind"[8]. A vitality and strength of this sense of literature can be demonstrated by *Expressionism* (emerging in the early twentieth century) whose aim was to "achieve a psychological or spiritual reality rather than record external events in logical sequence"[9]. Given their variations, this group of approaches (for the expression-based understanding of literature is by no means limited to the mentioned two movements) can be generally characterised as seeing the fictional world through the eyes of the author, taking it to be a unique product of a unique poet, dramatist, novelist, and a unique form of a unique talent or craft.

Values expressed by literary works are, naturally, quite varied. While some historical periods emphasised, for example, the values of objectivity and universality, others reflected subjectivity and particularity. On the whole, however, it could be said that literary works written during a particular period usually tend to express similar values. Thus in antiquity we find works which addressed mostly universal themes – good and evil, man and nature, man and God, reality and transcendence – and, on the contrary, in Romanticism works which stressed particularity, subjectivity, individualism, nature, etc. There are many common readers and literary scholars who consider objectivity of values and meanings attributed to the so-called canonical literary works (that is, works which are considered to be traditional and most representative for a particular national literature or culture) a fundamental and constitutive sense of literature, as well as many critics who think the opposite holds true, seeing literature's sense in its ability to subvert all past, present and future claims for universality. While the first approach could be found in various formalist and structuralist movements (see New Criticism's qualification of a literary work as an objective artefact), the second is clearly demonstrable in current postmodern approaches, especially in cultural studies.

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[8]   WORDSWORTH, W.: Preface to the Second Edition of the *Lyrical Ballads*. In: BATE, W. J.: *Criticism: The Major Texts*. New York: Harcourt, Brace and Co., 1952, p. 344.
[9]   http://www.encyclopedia.com/html/section/expressi_InLiterature.asp; 16. 1. 2004

Moreover, in their works, writers try to express not only their aesthetic feelings, but also other aspects of the world they live in. In recent times, for example, we get works treating topics which had previously been "taboo", "forbidden", or simply considered unworthy of literary expression (addressing women's issues, problems of national and ethnic minorities, postcolonial issues, etc.). As a result of the need to address alternate, other than officially accepted and fostered, meanings, there emerged *cultural studies* (see *Other Critical Approaches*) analysing cultural differences in production, distribution and consumption of artistic works among different kinds of audiences (differentiated along possible "interpretive groups" based on gender, ethnicity, and other principles). Cultural studies scholars very often search for non-traditional meanings of literary works in non-traditional areas (outside the scope of what they consider "narrow" textual analyses), using practices and procedures of other, non-literary disciplines and often highlighting other than largely aesthetic problems and issues (social and historical inequalities, feminism, ideology, etc.).

Last but not least, in many contemporary opinion polls people say that they read books for other than aesthetic reasons as well: to escape from everyday boring life with its stress and problems, to relax after a hard work, to experience foreign settings and life styles, etc. The books which treat such topics or problems usually address masses of readers and sell well on the markets. You may find them not only in bookstores, but in bus or railway station lounges, airports, etc. Since they meet current mass interest in uncomplicated entertainment, they are most frequently referred to as *mass* or *popular literature*. In "high-brow" literary critical circles, *popular literature* has been traditionally "looked down at" as superficial and not as valuable as the so-called *serious* literature. Most recently, however, its status has been reconsidered, especially by postmodern critics who attempt to elevate it to the level of serious literature, or, in other words, to "close the gap" between the traditional understanding of what is "high" and "low".

The study of literature

So far we have established that literature is a complex artistic phenomenon, meeting different needs and serving different purposes. Analogically complex and complicated is its study. *The study of literature (or literary study)* is a branch of scholarship exploring literary texts and culture. It can be seen as part of general study of arts and aesthetics, consisting of four basic components (or theoretical disciplines): *literary theory*, *literary criticism*, *literary history*, and, most recently, *critical theory* or simply *theory*. Although each of them explores literature from a slightly different aspect, their common goal is to allow the reader to experience a literary work more deeply and precisely, either through providing more knowledge about its background, author, or by offering an informed view of the complexities of a work's meaning.

Literary theory is the study of basic principles of literature, its categories, and criteria[10]. It is concerned with the analysis of general literary or aesthetic categories, common for more works of literature, such as the relationship of literature to other arts or other areas of human knowledge, the ontology of a literary work[11], composition (theme, plot, character, setting, point of view, etc.), and literary style (diction, rhythm, rhyme, tropes, etc.). Literary theory is sometimes taken to be superior to the other two disciplines, especially because it serves as a common denominator for theoretical as well as critical activities.

Literary criticism is the analysis, evaluation or interpretation of the works of literature, mostly performed by literary scholars or critics. It is focused on the clarification of meaning of a concrete, particular work, unlike literary theory, and uses synchronic methods of interpretation (see *Literary Criticism*). In some American traditions, literary criticism stands for literary theory as well, although this conflation has been challenged.

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[10] Wellek, R. – Warren, A.: *Theory of Literature*. London: Penguin Books, 1985, p. 39.
[11] see Miko, F.: Ontológia literárneho diela. In: Miko, F.: *Aspekty literárneho textu*. Nitra: PF, 1989, p. 124 – 148; Pokrivčák, A.: *Literatúra a bytie*. Nitra: UKF, 1997.

Literary history approaches literature (a concrete work of art, a period, movement, school, or a theoretical category) from a historical, diachronic point of view, tracing its development over a longer period of time (see *Literary History*). This approach has been enriched by versions of *critical theory*.

Critical theory, or simply *theory*, is a result of significant challenges to the status of the literary work occurring in the late twentieth century, when *the literary*, traditionally a constitutive feature of the ontological uniqueness of the literary work, has been spread out to other, non-literary fields, such as history, philosophy, law, or anthropology. While in the past these fields were seen as contributing to the accumulation of human knowledge of the real world, in the late twentieth century they are frequently taken as being only different manifestations of a semiotic, textual, construction of reality. According to Jonathan Culler, *theory* "has come to designate works that succeed in challenging and reorienting thinking in fields other than those to which they ostensibly belong because their analyses of language, or mind, or history, or culture offer novel and persuasive accounts of signification".[12]

Literary theory, criticism or literary history with their methods cannot be used in isolation. They usually interrelate, sometimes even conflict, but definitely through this enrich literature. It is impossible to analyse a historical movement or work without familiarity with general literary principles, as it is equally impossible to analyse a literary or historical or theoretical category without drawing on particular literary works as carriers of such categories. Last but not least, it is impossible to ignore the literary work's relation to other "non-literary" areas of human and social life as well.

In addition to the above division of scholarly approaches, one may also look at literature through a perspective of other categorisations. Thus we can mention the concept of *general (universal) literature*, which involves the study of literary movements, schools, and fashions identified in larger geographical areas, transcending regional or national lines (e.g. the study of the development and poetics of magical realism across several national

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12 Culler, J.: *Framing the Sign: Criticism and its Institutions*. Norman and London: University of Oklahoma Press, 1988.

literatures after the World War I.). The *general literature* is often referred to as *world* or *comparative literature* as well. Within *world* or *comparative literature* interrelationships between two or more *national literatures* (e.g. comparing poetic techniques of magical realism used in English and American literatures) can be examined.

National literature is one of the most frequently used terms in the field of literary scholarship, though, paradoxically, very difficult to define properly. The core of the problem lies in the fact that national literatures are usually distinguished by means of linguistic criteria (one national language – one national literature). Such approach is, however, not sufficient in the case of English, American, Irish, Australian literatures, or literatures of some parts of Africa or India, since they are all Anglophonic. Defining national literature using geographical criteria (one country/land – one national literature) is questionable as well, for example in the case of American literature with its Jewish, Latino-American, African-American, and other "ethnic" or "minority" literatures. To apply an author's national consciousness poses a problem when dealing with the so-called "international" writers, such as Milan Kundera (a Czech living and writing in exile in France and his works becoming an integral part of French literature), or T. S. Eliot – born in the USA and becoming a British citizen.

Traditional divisions into *world*, *national* and *comparative* literatures have recently been enriched by concepts introduced within poststructural perspectives and efforts. Thus we can often come across divisions along ethnic lines (literature of ethnic minorities in the USA, but also in Slovakia), gender lines (*feminist* or *gay* and *lesbian* literatures) as well as political and geographical lines (*postcolonial* literature).

As in the case of literary *theory*, *criticism*, *history*, and *critical theory*, the concepts of *general* (*world*, *national*, *comparative*, as well as perhaps the newly emphasised *ethnic* or *postcolonial* literatures) implicate each other, i.e. it is impossible to study *national* literatures without a background knowledge of certain universal tendencies and developments, or, in reverse, to explore *world* literature without partial reference to *national* literatures, or

to examine literature of ethnic minorities without reference to the so-called "majority" literature.

Literary text in context

> *Confounding the realist agenda that "art imitates life", intertextuality suggests that art imitates art. Oscar Wilde (typically) took this notion further, declaring provocatively that "life imitates art".*

<div align="right">

Daniel Chandler

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So far we have considered literature in terms of its relation to "reality". Unique meanings of many literary works, however, emerge from one work's text specific relation to another work's text. This could be very well explained by pointing to one of the most famous works of world literature – a highly experimental novel by James Joyce entitled *Ulysses*, in which the author covers one day in the life of Mr. Bloom in Dublin. Mr. Bloom's walking through Dublin reminds the informed, or well-read, reader of the journey of an ancient Greek hero Odysseus to Ithaca. Such "reminders" of other works in literature are called *allusions*. They form, together with direct or indirect quotations from previous works, symbolic parallels and echoing motives, basic intertextual techniques. Literary texts influence each other; they "talk" together and are "in dialogue". Such process of mutual influence and continual dialogue between literary texts is called *intertextuality*. *Intertextuality* stresses that any literary text must be (and actually is) read in the context of other texts.

The term *intertextuality* is derived from the Latin *intertexto*, which means "to intermingle while weaving". It was first introduced by the French semiotician Julia Kristeva in the late sixties who advanced the ideas about the "dialogic nature of literature" introduced by the Russian scholar Mikhail M. Bachtin[13]. Julia Kristeva claimed that a literary work is not just a product of a single author, but of its relationship to other texts and to the structures of language itself: "[A]ny text is constructed of a mosaic of quotations; any

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[13] Bachtin, M. M.: *Román jako dialog*. Praha: Odeon, 1980, p. 81.

text is the absorption and transformation of another"[14]. She understood literary texts in two axes: a *horizontal axis* (connecting the author and reader of a text) and a *vertical axis* (connecting the text to other texts)[15].

The idea of intertextuality subverted the New Critical and the structuralist visions of the text as a self-sufficient unit as well as the status of "authorship". Intertextuality posits the author more as the text's "orchestrator" than originator[16]. "A text is... a multidimensional space in which a variety of writings, none of them original, blend and clash. The text is a tissue of quotations... The writer can only imitate a gesture that is always anterior, never original. His only power is to mix writings, to counter the ones with the others, in such a way as never to rest on any one of them".[17] In this view, a literary text is in fact a *palimpsest* (from Greek word meaning „again-scraped"; palimpsests were originally parchment manuscripts which were over-written several times mixing previous and the later texts[18]).

Because of its relative novelty, the concept of intertextuality, as each of the concepts relatively recently entering the literary theory, suffers from a typical "children's disease" of human sciences – the terminological fragmentation. In addition to the above mentioned Julia Kristeva, there are many other understandings and definitions of the concept. According to Micahel Riffaterre, an American theoretician of intertextuality, the *intertext* is "the reader's perception of the relation between a text and other texts which have already originated or will originate in the future"[19]. This widens the traditional (Kristeva's) understanding of intertextuality by one important aspect – the readers' experience, perception. Other authors invent their own typologies which make intertextuality more complex, many times even confusing. The year 1982 brought one of such complex, though, confusing

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[14]   Kristeva, J.: *Desire in Language: A Semiotic Approach to Literature and Art*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1980, p. 66.

[15]   Ibid., p. 69.

[16]   Barthes, R.: *S/Z*. London: Jonathan Cape, 1974, p. 21.

[17]   Barthes, R.: *Image-Music-Text*. London: Fontana, 1977, p. 146.

[18]   http://www.viterbo.edu/personalpages/faculty/RSamuels/palimpsest.html

[19]   Riffaterre, M.: "Intertextuality v. Hypertextuality". *New Literary History*. Vol. 25, Autumn 1994, No. 4, p. 779 – 788.

works, Gérard Genette's *Palimpsests*, although it came, paradoxically, from the author's attempt to overcome the confusion in the field of intertextuality, especially by an introduction of his own terminology.

Based on Kristeva's and Gennete's theories and classifications, the following subtypes of intertextuality may be identified: *a) intertextuality* – includes quotations, plagiarisms, and allusions, *b) architextuality* – the relation between the text and other texts of the same genre, that is, determination of a text as part of a genre, *c) paratextuality* – the relation between a text and its "surrounding", for example a title, preface, acknowledgements, footnotes, illustrations, annexes, etc., *d) metatextuality* – an explicit or implicit commentary of one text on another text, *e) hypotextuality* (earlier *hypertextuality* but the original term has obtained a radically different meaning under the influence of electronic texts) – the relation between a text and its "predecessors", or hypotexts, i.e. texts which are adapted, transformed or modified by later works (including translation, TV adaptation, parody, etc.), f) *hypertextuality* – the relationship between computer-based texts, breaking the traditional linearity of the text and enabling an interactive reading[20]. To make things simpler, it is possible to use the term *intertextuality* for all relations which texts or their parts enter into. *Intertextuality* would then be a root term for other "textualities" (introtextuality, paratextuality, metatextuality, hypertextuality, etc.). Such understanding of intertextuality accords with its first use in Julia Kristeva's works and corresponds with Genette's concept of *transtextuality*, which he characterises as everything that brings a text into a relation, hidden or manifest, with other texts[21].

The most obvious techniques to build intertextual networks of literary texts include *direct reference, allusion, quotation, echo, plagiarism, collage, mosaics, palimpsest,* and others. Intertextual networks are also generated by cultural discourses and the media.

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[20] c.f. Douglas, Y. J.: *The End of Books – Or Books Without End? Reading Interactive Narratives*. Ann Arbour: The University of Michigan Press, 2000.

[21] Genette, G.: *Palimpsests. Literature in the Second Degree*. Lincoln and London: University of Nebrasca Press, 1997, p. 2.

LITERARY HISTORY

Anton Pokrivčák

In order to better understand literary works, they are usually grouped according to various criteria (language they are written in, genres, poetic characteristics, and a literary period they emerged in). It is a common knowledge that such groupings enable students and literary scholars to uncover distinctive characteristics of a particular literary work. Grouping literary works according to the time of their origin and poetics prevalent in that time is one of the most frequent classifications used in literary studies (it is used, for example, in many university courses). Drawing on the approach to the study of literary works from the aspect of individual historical periods, *literary history* is then (along with *literary criticism*, *literary theory*, and, perhaps, *critical* theory) one of the main branches of *literary scholarship*. It is based on the assumption that a particular historical culture within which the text was created is crucial for its comprehension. Thus to understand the historical meaning of a literary text, literary historians claim that it is necessary to know the cultural background within which the text was produced, or, in other words, the cultural dominant of a particular historical period – for there is no doubt that every historical period has its own unique dominant which is, in a hidden or open way, manifested in the work as its particular philosophical, religious, and scientific perspective. Moreover, each text was written in specific social and economical circumstances which may also have had a significant influence on the work[22].

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22 PATTERSON, A.: "Historical Scholarship". In: GIBALDI, J. (ed.): *Introduction to Scholarship in Modern Languages and Literatures*. 2nd ed. New York: The Modern Language Association of America, 2000, pp. 183-200.

In the context of *literary history*, the reciprocal relationship between a particular culture within which the text was created and a particular culture within which the reader exists is an important subject for a comparative literary analysis.

Periods of literary history

In literary history, as well as in general history of arts, the following periods are traditionally distinguished:

Ancient literature is a term usually indicating literatures of the oldest civilisations and cultures (Egyptian, Syrian, Indian, Chinese, Japanese, Hebrew, etc.). For the development of European literatures, of a crucial importance is the history of Greek and Latin literatures. They are traditionally dated to the period between approximately 500 B.C. and 500 A. D. and thought to exhibit, among other things, the following features: a young and beautiful human body as an ideal of beauty, natural love, *kalokagathea* – a sense of harmonious development of the soul and the body. The fact that literary works (poems, songs) were spread orally had important consequences for their poetics (frequent and petrified rhetoric figures). As for genres, the ancient times were typical for the popularity of tragedy, the lyric (odes, hymns, and bucolic) as well as epic poetry. No fictional genres in the modern sense of the word existed in that time. They only developed later on from epic poetry. Famous ancient authors include, to name just a few of them, Homer, Virgil, Horace, Ovid.

The rise of Christianity in Europe brought important changes not only in political and social spheres, but also in culture and arts. A strong influence of Christianity can be seen in *medieval literature*. The term „medieval" (referring to the *Middle Ages*) is a translation from Latin *medius* (middle) and *ævum* (age). It names the period between antiquity and the Renaissance, i.e. 5th – 15th centuries (the fall of Constantinople in 1453 is traditionally mentioned as an ending date) and can be considered only in the context of European literature and arts. Its basic characteristics include: Latin as a

universal language of literary works around Europe, strong poetic relationships between literary texts and the *Bible* as the most respected source of knowledge, priority of religious characters, motives and topics in any literary texts. The ideal of beautiful young human body was replaced by the characters of saints forgetting their bodies and living in desire of death and physical ascetics.

The typical features of medieval poetics include strict norms of writing, rhetoric of religious pathos, allegories, and symbols. Poetics was strongly influenced by the fact that texts were anonymous and rewritten several times which led to petrified rhetorical forms, as well as to many mistakes and deviations in manuscripts. The genres of *medieval* literature were the same as in *ancient* literatures, that is, the lyric and drama (there was, however, also a strong stream of the epic, such as Arthurian legends, Alexandreis epics, versified romances, etc.). Unlike ancient tragedy, however, medieval drama assumed mostly the form of religious *mystery* and *morality plays*. Romances and various epic poems sung by folk singers were also popular and influential in vernacular literature (oral and written). The canon of English medieval literature, for instance, includes the Germanic epic poem *Beowulf* (8th century), the anonymous *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* (written in the late 14th century), and the written text *Canterbury Tales* (1476 and 1483) by Geoffrey Chaucer.

The period of European artistic and philosophical history following the *Middle Ages* is called *Renaissance*, meaning "rebirth" in French, since it is characterized by the revival of interest in classical antiquity. Its beginnings can be found in Italy in 14th century and the movement continued through the 15th and 16th centuries in the most developed countries of Western Europe. The *Renaissance* can be understood as a revolt against medieval scholasticism and sterility, while looking for sources in the "pagan" (Greek and Roman) ideals. The famous Renaissance authors, including Dante (1265- 1321) and Petrarch (1304-1374), imitated the Roman poets and their works with typical composition (e.g. Petrarch's poems were written in Latin hexameter). The second period of the Renaissance was marked by the development of *Humanism* which had spread to many European countries

and deeply influenced science (Copernicus, Galileo, Kepler and Newton), fine arts (Raphael, Leonardo, Bellini, and Michel-Angelo), works of contemporary philosophers (Thomas More, Campanella, Bruno, Ronsard, Erasmus, and Copernicus), and even religious politics (Martin Luther and his Reformation). The new philosophy with its passion for knowledge and exploration also led to great geographical discoveries of new continents and lands (America was discovered in 1492)[23].

Within Renaissance literature, two interrelated streams can be recognized: the officially valued or "patronised" literature of lyric poetry, political and philosophical prose, and drama (tragedy and comedy), and the carnivalesque and grotesque writings "turning the world up-side-down", e.g. famous *Gargantua and Pantagruel* by F. Rabelais and *Don Quixote* by Cervantes[24]. English Renaissance began in the late 15th century with works of Sir Thomas More and Sir Thomas Wyatt, and it is usually divided into four sub-periods: the Elizabethan Age, the Jacobean Age, the Caroline Age, and the Commonwealth Period (also the Puritan Interregnum). Important Renaissance authors include William Shakespeare, Christopher Marlowe, Edmund Spenser, Sir Walter Raleigh, Ben Jonson, Francis Bacon, and John Milton.

Following the logic of alternation of antitheses, the *Post-Renaissance* or *Baroque* period refused the classical principles and ideals of the Renaissance and drew on traditional and conservative values of the Roman Catholic Church. The origins of the Baroque (the term being derived from the Spanish word for a pearl that is roughly shaped) date back to Rome around 1600. The main aim of Baroque literature and art in general was to awake the audience's wonder, astonishment and sensitivity by using rich metaphors and spectacle. The Baroque style is traditionally marked as monumental, decoratively allegorical, preferring external forms to content. In literature, the style employed classical forms and genres of the Renaissance, but adapted them to achieve grandiose, energetic, and highly dramatic effects. New

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[23] for more information on literary Renaissance see also:
http://www.luminarium.org/renlit/renaissanceinfo.htm

[24] cf. Pokrivčáková, S.: *Karnevalová a satirická groteska*. Nitra: Garmond, 2002.

forms and genres were developed as well, for example the romanzo, which is sometimes considered to be a predecessor of the novel. Famous Baroque authors include Torquato Tasso (*Gerusalemme Liberata*, 1584) and John Milton (*Paradise Lost*, approx. 1650-1660); it has to be noted, however, that English literary historians are somewhat reluctant to apply the term to the 16th century English literature.[25]

In the late 17th century a new cultural period, *Neoclassicism* (*The Age of Reason*, *The Enlightenment*), was on the horizon. The European societies were strongly influenced by industrialisation and important mechanical inventions (the steam engine, telescope, thermometer, Newton's law of gravitation). This period also saw the rise of cities and the middle class. The arts reflected important changes in science and philosophy. Typical characteristics of literary Neoclassicism can be formulated as follows: emphasis on powers of mind ("I think, therefore I am," wrote René Descartes), strong traditionalism, distrust toward radical innovations, respect for classical writers, strong rationalism (see for example N. Boileau's *L' Art poétique*). According to W. J. Bate, "the foundation of the classical tradition is its confidence in a rationally *ordered and harmonious universe*, working according to fixed laws, principles, and forms".[26] As he further claims, "universal forms and principles constitute the essential character of nature"[27] and "art, as an *imitation of what is essential in nature*, is therefore concerned with *persisting, objective forms*"[28]. "Of the new elements that enter into the neo-classic reformulation of classical values, at least three may be briefly noted: the influence of religion, the deliberate emphasis on tradition and past examples, and the influence of philosophical rationalism. The moral fervour of the Christian church sharpened and made more specific the traditional classical principle that art is formative and therefore moral"[29]. Literary genres were rationally

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[25] For more on the spread of the term *baroque* in European literatures as well as in the USA, see Wellek, R.: *Concepts of Criticism*. New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1963.

[26] Bate, W. J.: *Criticism: The Major Texts*. New York: Harcourt, Brace and Co., 1952, p. 4.

[27] ibid. p. 4.

[28] ibid. p. 4.

[29] ibid., p. 8.

divided into high (e.g. hymns, odes, and tragedies describing the life and conflict of higher social classes using their "noble" language) and low (comedies showing lives of low classes and using their "vulgar" language). Probably the most representative author of neoclassical theatre was Molière.

English *Neoclassical Period* (1660-1770) can be divided into three stages: the Restoration (including works of John Milton, John Dryden, John Wilmot 2nd Earl of Rochester, and John Locke), the Augustan Age (Jonathan Swift, Alexander Pope, and Daniel Defoe), and the Age of Sensibility (Samuel Johnson and Henry Fielding). Similarly, "popular" and "canonical" literature intersects e.g. travel narratives.

European *Romanticism* as an artistic and intellectual movement in English literature originated with the publication of Coleridge's and Wordsworth's *Lyrical Ballads* (1798) and lasted through the first three decades of the 19th century. It stressed strong emotion, imagination, spontaneity, freedom, rebellion against social and artistic conventions, and exploration of nature and the supernatural. Romanticism favoured innovation instead of traditionalism, common language, and inspiration from folklore motives and genres (ballads, folk tales, etc.). Romanticists preferred the exotic, the mysterious, the occult, and the monstrous. An ideal Romantic hero was an isolated rebel avoiding the company of other people. Famous Romantic authors include V. Hugo, J. W. Goethe, A. Pushkin, K. H. Mácha etc. English Romanticism is represented especially by works of Samuel Taylor Coleridge, William Wordsworth, Lord Byron, Percy Bysshe Shelley, and John Keats. In American literature, the influence of Romanticism was manifested in works of Ralph Waldo Emerson, Henry David Thoreau, Edgar Allan Poe, Herman Melville, and Nathaniel Hawthorne. The contested "revolts" of Romanticism against Classicism, against the Baroque – and its emphases on new forms of "subjectivity" – are rich areas for theoretical and historical study.

In the nineteenth century, the sensitive Romantic was replaced by its counterpart – the rational Realist who tried to reflect life without romantic idealization and subjectivism. Realist writers were interested in the everyday life of middle and lower classes, where the character is understood and shown as a product of social factors and environment (typical characters in typical

circumstances). As a consequence of the dominance of *mimetic* principle (the subject is represented in such a way as to give a reader the illusion of actual and ordinary experience) and the use of middle-class language, realistic literature was the first period in which prose genres (a novel, a short story) were preferred. Important representatives of literary realism include Flaubert, Balzac, Dostoevsky and Ibsen (in drama).

In English literature, the period of *Realism* is connected with the Victorian Period[30] (George Eliot, Alfred Lord Tennyson, Elizabeth Barrett Browning, Matthew Arnold, Charles Dickens, Charlotte Brontë, George Eliot, and Thomas Hardy), the Edwardian and the Georgian Periods (George Bernard Shaw, H. G. Wells, William Butler Yeats, Joseph Conrad, Rudyard Kipling, Henry James, and E. M. Forster.)

The Realistic Period in American literature was characterized by the works of Mark Twain, Henry James, Bret Harte, and Kate Chopin, including the works of Naturalists – Stephen Crane, Jack London, and Theodore Dreiser. Even though it may seem that Realism as a literary movement exhausted itself in previous decades, many inspirational streams within the realistic tradition or independent literary works have still been under way[31].

The beginning of the 20th century was marked by (up to that time) the worst war conflict ever – the World War I. It influenced contemporary philosophy and art, since the war was considered a complete failure of Western civilisation and culture. It led to the refusal of all traditional values, including those of traditional artistic forms. The conditions for the emergence of "high modernism" were cast. Its nature was expressed by T. S. Eliot when he stated that the stable world view, as presented in the nineteenth century literature, could not correspond to "the immense panorama of futility and anarchy which is contemporary history".[32] Modernism, on a philosophical basis, tried to break the rules of bourgeois morality, Victorian optimism,

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[30]   for more details see also: http://www.victorianweb.org/

[31]   for an overview of contemporary development in realistic writing see the conference proceedings Pokrivčáková, S. – Pokrivčák, A. – Leo, J. R., – Rákayová, L. (eds.): *Realizmus a antirealizmus v literatúre*. Nitra: UKF, 2004.

[32]   Eliot, T. S.: "Ulysses, Order, and Myth". Rev. of *Ulysses* by James Joyce. In: *The Dial* 75.5 (Nov 1923), p. 483.

and, in general, drew a pessimistic picture of a culture based on apathy and moral relativism. One can say then that literary modernism conceals an intellectual revolt against traditional 19ᵗʰ century literary forms. It tends toward a radical experiment with new forms and techniques (anti-realism, individualism, intellectualism, disordering of structure, motives based on myths and archetypes, breaking up a narrative continuity, radical disruption of linear flow of narrative and a coherent plot and character, violations of traditional syntax through stream of consciousness techniques, emphasis on expressionism, surrealism, and avant-gardes). Modernist trends work differentially across nations and cultures. They are also inherently contradictory and, one may say, some of them in fact extend older traditions.

In English literature famous "modernist" works were produced by J. Joyce, D. H. Lawrence, V. Woolf, W. B. Yeats, T.S. Eliot, Dylan Thomas, and Seamus Heaney. American modernist authors include Robert Frost, William Carlos Williams, e. e. cummings, William Faulkner, John Steinbeck, John Updike, Eugene O'Neill as well as writers of the so-called Jazz Age (F. Scott Fitzgerald), the Harlem Renaissance (Langston Hughes and W. E. B. DuBois), and the Lost Generation (Gertrude Stein, T. S. Eliot, Ezra Pound, Ernest Hemingway, F. S. Fitzgerald, H. Miller and others).

The term *postmodernism*[33] has been introduced in late 20th century. It appears originally in architecture and later on in all branches of culture and arts. Literary critics (mostly Irving Howe, Leslie Fiedler, and Ihab Hassan) began to use it in the 1960s to mark the new wave of experimental fiction spread after the 1950s which was rather different from modernist classics. While modernist literature was a pessimistic reaction to human disasters of World War I, postmodernism is, among other things, a reaction to events of World War II (fascism, the holocaust).[34] In its literary forms, postmodern literature represents an anti-hierarchical, anti-dogmatic ("anything

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[33] See also: http://www.colorado.edu/English/ENGL2012Klages/pomo.html; http://carbon.cudenver.edu/~mryder/itc_data/postmodern.html

[34] Despite a great frequency of occurrence and relatively well elaborated distinguishing features, the concept of postmodernism is still challenged by traditionally-oriented critics who consider it to be just a second stage of modernism

goes") and highly subversive mixture of everything from previous periods (intertextuality)[35]: popular culture, literature, and other media. Analogically, literary forms and genres are mixed as well, as expressed by the famous Fielder's motto: "Cross the border, close that gap[36]." The list of outstanding postmodern authors includes Thomas Pynchon, Kurt Vonnegut, Vladimir Nabokov, John Irving, Robert. Brautigan, and others.

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[35] For a detailed analysis of this feature of postmodern literature, see Kušnír, J.: *American Fiction: Modernism-Postmodernism, Popular Culture and Metafiction.* Prešov: Impreso, 2003.

[36] Fiedler, L. A.: *"What Was Literature?"* In.: Fiedler, L. A.: *Class Culture and Mass Society.* New York: Simon and Schuster, 1982.

LITERARY CRITICISM

Anton Pokrivčák

Interpretation

Literary criticism (either in its narrow or broad aspect) draws on a process called interpretation, which is one of the most comprehensive ways to search for the meaning of a particular literary work. Literary meanings are not easily identifiable, not easily susceptible to a straightforward expression. The reason for this is the fact that, through literary works, writers usually try to say something significant about human life, love, hate, happiness, and suffering, i.e. about things which are not material facts, which cannot be relatively well described and defined, but which are of spiritual, sensual, intellectual nature, impossible to be counted, measured, or weighed. Such phenomena cannot be expressed in clear and precise language, but almost always only by means of indirect hints or images. Then, if readers want to discover what these hints or images possibly mean (and they always want to do that because the meaning is the purpose of their reading), they have to think about them. This "thinking about" a work is perhaps the simplest definition of interpretation. There are, of course, at least two levels of interpretive activity: 1, *natural* or *non-professional* (performed by average readers during the reading of a work and thinking about it), and 2, *scholarly* (performed by literary scholars trying to capture the meaning of a work in scholarly language, concentrating on the work's language, composition, theme, characters, etc.) and transfer it to other scholars, students of literature or other professional public. The "scholarly" interpreter is thus "a mediator between the two parties, interpreting to one of them what the other

one says, either by explanation or translating into its language"[37], or, to put it more simply, the person who "helps someone understand the meaning of a text."[38]

As far as the extent of its application is concerned, interpretation is broad and narrow by nature. According to Abrams, "In the narrow sense, to interpret a work of literature is to specify the meanings of its language by analysis, paraphrase, commentary; usually such interpretation focuses on especially obscure, ambiguous, or figurative passages. In the broad sense, to interpret is to make clear the artistic purport of the overall literary work of which language is the medium; interpretation in this sense includes the explication of such aspects as the work's genre, structure, theme, and effects."[39]

Characterising scholarly interpretation as a basic means for an identification, abstraction, explanation, and, finally, transfer of other, coded meanings by scholars to the readers calls for an inevitable question: Why do scholars do it? Why do they interpret? One of possible reasons for practicing interpretation in literature is that it is a natural element of literary communication. By writing a poem, a novel or a dramatic piece, writers express something that they expect, consciously or subconsciously, to be passed over to others, to the outside world. That something is usually a message of various levels of complexity, clarity or ambiguity, usually resulting from a complicated relationship of the author's personality with the world. In some works the message is obvious; it can be very easily derived from the words which are used primarily in their denotative sense and thus do not require any activity to decipher it. Such works tend to be considered didactic, not artistic enough. In other works, however, the message is more complex, not lending itself to be put forth straightforwardly, but having to be pointed to through interpretation of all the factors which can problema-

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[37] Souriau, É.: *Encyklopedie estetiky*. Praha: Victoria Publishing, 1994, p. 374.

[38] Marshall, D. G.: "Literary interpretation". In: Gibaldi, J. (ed.): *Introduction to Scholarship in Modern Languages and Literatures*. New York: The Modern Language Association of America, 1992, p. 159.

[39] Abrams, M. H.: *A Glossary of Literary Terms*. (5th edition). Austin: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1971, p. 85.

tise it. Such works therefore demand from literary scholars greater concentration, sophistication and clarification power.

What is the nature of the meaning artists express and literary scholars explain, and where does it come from? By answering this question one gets to the essence of art and its interpretation. The most obvious source of the art's "truths" would be its immediate or historical reality – the individual and social environment of the writer and the reader. Sir Philip Sidney, for example, claims that "there is no art delivered to mankind that hath not the works of Nature for his principal object"[40]. Using this perspective, a literary text can be defined as more or less faithful representation or, as Aristotle has it, *imitation* (*mimesis*), of reality, something which comes from what we consider reality, but is not identical with it. The (non)identity of the text's world with a real world is referred to as fictionality. The fictional world is governed not by the principles of physical nature, but by the principles of imagination. It is made up of *images* (e.g. *figures of speech*, *tropes*), and its meaning, or message it proposes to the reader, is almost always very difficult to establish (note the original Greek meaning of the word *trope* as *tropos* "turn, direction, figure of speech"). To do it, it is necessary to analyse the work from different points of view. A text's meaning is thus a result of a complex relation between real and fictional elements, played out at the background of the multiplicity of other conflicting forces (individual, social, historical, religious, philosophical, etc.). Because the relation between what is considered *reality* and *fiction* has been one of the most difficult problems to solve in *literary theory* (throughout the history it has even constituted an important principle differentiating individual periods or movements – *romanticism*, *realism*, *symbolism*, etc.), the meaning of literary works still remains one of the most elusive, relative, but nevertheless fascinating notions in literary studies.

The elucidation of meaning through interpretation is not restricted only to literary studies, but is significant for other human or social sciences as well. As Marshall has it: "Since the early nineteenth century, philosophers

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[40] SIDNEY, P. Sir: "An Apology for Poetry". In: BATE, W. J.: *Criticism: The Major Texts*. New York: Harcourt, Brace and Co., 1952, p. 85.

of interpretation have pointed to three closely related 'hermeneutic disciplines', each centred on the problem of interpreting texts: law, religion, and literary study. Each of these has a long and complex history, and the nature of legal and religious interpretation continues to be vigorously debated. More recently, the importance of interpretation in anthropology, sociology, history, and other disciplines has been recognized."[41] These other "interpretations" differ from interpretation in literary studies mostly in the fact that they involve much more straightforward relation to the real world. Thus, for example, in law the meaning "becomes concrete only when it is applied in a particular set of circumstance – a 'case' – by those who regard themselves as under its jurisdiction."[42] A similar fact holds true for religious interpretation where "meaning is an act to be performed rather than a mere idea to be disclosed".[43]

Speaking about the relation of literary interpretation to interpreting activities in other disciplines, it must be said that one of the most important events occurring in social and human sciences in the second half of the twentieth century is their increasing interconnection. As a result, the previously more or less clearly marked distinctions between "interpretations" have become vaguer, creating conditions for the emergence of more general methodological approaches seeking to identify common mechanisms of signification across several (human, social, and even natural) sciences. In literary studies, this tendency was manifested by attempts to return to interpreting literary works through other, non-literary disciplines (psychology, philosophy, sociology, etc.). Similarly, scholars working in non-literary fields considered literary signification a universal signification identified in all human, social, and even natural sciences. These new tendencies, however, brought some, rather more traditionally-oriented, literary critics to claim that such "rule of interdisciplinarity" deprived literary interpretation of its uniqueness. In the last decades of the twentieth century, the clash of ideas resulted in an unhealthy "polarisation" of values and even in "culture wars" (especially in the USA).

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41   Marshall, D. G.: op. cit., p. 160.
42   Ibid., p. 160.
43   Ibid., p. 160.

Theory and criticism

As suggested above, interpreting literary works is a complex activity requiring critics to take into account many different phenomena and aspects of the literary process. Leaving out from our considerations the natural approach to literature[44] (mostly adopted by common, non-professional readers), it can be said that, historically, professional scholars have approached criticism from various points of view. Most commonly, the critical, interpreting activity has been associated with the discussing of particular works and writers. Critics usually employed, consciously or subconsciously, different methods or responded to different aspects of a particular work. When relating primarily their feelings, arising from a particular passage or a whole work, and expressing the responses the work evoked in them, they practiced the so-called *impressionistic criticism*. The opposite of impressionistic criticism was sometimes referred to as *judicial criticism*. A judicial critic used his/her individual judgement to explain and evaluate effects or the meaning of a work. If the meaning of discussed works was traditionally derived from, or related to, the circumstances of the author's life or a particular era, we have the *historical-biographical* criticism. According to Wilfred L. Guerin, such criticism "sees a literary work chiefly, if not exclusively, as a reflection of its author's life and times or the life and times of the characters in the work."[45] As examples of the reflection of events the author lived through in his/her work Guerin mentions, among others, such well-known works as William Langland's *Piers Plowman*, Milton's sonnets, Walter Scott's *Ivanhoe*, or John Steinbeck's *Grapes of Wrath*. In addition to *historical-biographical* considerations in interpreting literary works, critics could also approach a work through the discussion of its moral and philosophical undertones. As Guerin has put it, "the basic position of such critics is that the larger function of literature is to teach morality and to probe philosophical issues."[46] From among the commentators, critics, philosophers and writers, the names frequently mentioned in this regard include Plato, Horace, Samuel

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[44]   Guerin uses the term „precritical".
[45]   GUERIN, W. L. et al.: *A Handbook of Critical Approaches to Literature*. (4th edition). Oxford: Oxford UP, 1999, p. 22.
[46]   Ibid. p. 25.

Johnson, Alexander Pope, Nathaniel Hawthorne, Matthew Arnold, Jean-Paul Sartre, etc.

The increasing identification of literary studies as an independent discipline in its own right has cause, however, that the discussions of literature became much more sophisticated and specialised. The twentieth century brought a gradual shift from the use of general stylistic and essayistic skills, commenting on broad questions of taste, value-judgement, or general historical or social issues, to looking at a work from a more specialised, "technical" point of view (using either a newly invented specific literary terminology, or, in the late twentieth century, borrowing terminology from other social and human sciences). The increasing use of "technical language" resulted in the emergence of *critical approaches* which freed literary studies from its traditional outfit (characterised by the prevalence of historical, philological, moral, humanistic, and other similar considerations) and shifted the focus of critical activity to the literary itself.[47]

In further chapters we will discuss the critical approaches which are considered to have most contributed to the changing attitudes to literary studies in the twentieth century. We will begin with what is considered to have been the most articulated shift in literary studies, i.e. the early twentieth century turn to texts as primary objects of critical attention. Of the text-centred approaches, we will focus especially on Anglo-American *New Criticism* and *Deconstruction*. The two approaches were selected because they represent, especially in English and American critical practice, two temporal stages of text criticism – a structuralist and poststructuralist one. Naturally, concentrating on *New Criticism* does not in any way underestimate a founding role of two prominent European critical schools and movements, i.e. the *Russian formalism* and Czech and French *structuralism*. In addition to text-based approaches, the twentieth century has been characterized by

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[47]   It has to be noted here, however, that the shift to the literary has never been clear-cut and well demarcated. In addition to several approaches and critics using both literary and extra-literary principles and procedures (i. e. psychological, archetypal, or psychoanalytical approaches), the late twentieth century saw return of the extra-literary in the form of post-structural approaches.

its deeper interest in factors of literary communication related to the author (a literary work being judged according to its ability to authentically express the poet's feelings, his/her state of mind)[48] as well as to the reader. The most important factor for the reader-based criticism is the study of an effect of a work of art on the reader.[49]

New Criticism

The movement of New Criticism (if one can speak about the movement at all, since the critics have never made up a coherent group) has been selected for a more detailed discussion especially because it forms, more or less, a hidden subsoil on which "stand" many players in the current American literary game. The origins of New Criticism could be traced back to the situation in England, when Victorian trends with their characteristic historicity, emphasis on the role of the literary character and critical judgements of an essayistic nature based upon taste and ethical-philosophical reflections, come to an end[50] and, instead of them, a new modernistic sensibility emerges. According to Martin Hilský, New Criticism was a refusal of all the principles of Victorian criticism and its cult of paradox and irony "was an expression of the intellectual climate of the period and was internally related with the general emphasis on the disparate experience and relativisation of all existing human and aesthetic values."[51]

One of the first "new critics" in English literary studies was I. A. Richards and his psychology-based theories of meaning (especially the *The Meaning of Meaning*, 1923, and *Practical Criticism*, 1929). Much clearer focus on what will later become basic imperative of the American New Criticism

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[48] Critics usually attempt to identify in the work evidence of the writer's experience. One of the most significant approaches within subjective, expressive criticism is made up by the so-called *Geneva Critics*, or "the critics of consciousness" whose aim is to "look" into a writer's phenomenological world and to identify the processes of his/her consciousness by means of a text.

[49] See, for example, the work of Wolfgang Iser who claims that the author only pre-structures the work for the reader who then creates the meaning, or that of Stanley Fish for whom the text and the reader are just products of interpretive conventions of a certain period.

[50] HILSKÝ, M.: *Anglo-americká „Nová kritika"*. Praha: Univerzita Karlova, 1976, s. 13 – 14.

[51] ibid., s. 14 – 15.

can be found in the work of Richards's disciple W. Empson, mainly in his most famous *7 Types of Ambiguity* (1930) – despite the fact, though, that Richards's influence was stronger and more stable. In addition to Richards and Empson New Criticism was also formed by the work of one of the greatest personalities in English and American literary studies – T. S. Eliot. Even though Eliot himself expressed doubts about such "formational" influence of his work on other critics, one cannot leave unnoticed direct relations especially between his early works and what later crystallised as main principles of New Criticism – i.e. the hypostasising of the text as an objective artefact (living its own life, not dependent on the personality of the author or the recipient) and generating the meaning primarily through its linguistic component parts. Thus in his famous essay *Tradition and Individual Talent* Eliot claims that "Honest criticism and sensitive appreciation is directed not upon the poet but upon the poetry."[52], and further, "Poetry is not a turning loose of emotion, but an escape from emotion; it is not the expression of personality, but an escape from personality."[53] In the same essay he mentions the combination of positive and negative emotions and their balance[54], what actually foreshadows the new critical "ambiguity" of the literary work's linguistic structures.

Moving from England to the USA, one has to emphasise the fact that theoretical activities of the American New Critics were never separated from general social situation, as it is sometimes presented in current studies, but were part of the overall critical potential affecting social sciences in those times. First of all, it was the disagreement with the rise of modernistic, industrial society which was in the USA associated with the industrial North. All founding members of New Criticism, John Crowe Ransom, Allen Tate and Robert Penn Warren were southerners and felt the need for an alternative against the dominant material culture of the capitalistic North. They published their ideas, together with 9 other Southern authors, in the collection of studies *I'll Take My Stand* (1930). From the late 1930s,

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[52]   Eliot, T. S. : "Tradition and Individual Talent". In: Stallman, R. W. (ed.) *Critiques and Essays in Criticism*. New York: The Ronald Press Company, 1949, p. 380.

[53]   Ibid., p. 383.

[54]   Ibid., s. 382.

however, their attention gradually moved more specifically to literary issues, resulting in the publication of several works which were clearly established as part of formalist and structuralist thinking about literature. They included *Understanding Poetry* (1938) by Cleanth Brooks and Robert Penn Warren, *The New Criticism* (1941) by John Crowe Ransom, *The Well-Wrought Urn: Studies in the Structure of Poetry* (1947) by Cleanth Brooks, and, later on, *The Verbal Icon* (1957) by William K. Wimsatt and Monroe Beardsley. In them, they elaborated what became the characteristic contribution of this Anglo-American theoretical movement to the world literary studies, the location of the work's aesthetic value and meaning primarily in its language (full of ambiguities, paradox, irony, verbal connotations and images), and its revealing by the critic in the process of "close reading".

One of the first statements of this principle appeared in the prefatory letter "Letter to the Teacher" of the abovementioned *Understanding Poetry: An Anthology for College Students*:

> *"This book has been conceived on the assumption that if poetry is worth teaching at all it is worth teaching as poetry. The temptation to make a substitute for the poem as the object of study is usually overpowering. The substitutes are various, but the most common ones are:*
>
> *1. Paraphrase of logical and narrative content;*
> *2. Study of biographical and historical materials;*
> *3. Inspirational a nd didactic interpretation.*
>
> *Of course, paraphrase may be necessary as a preliminary step in the reading of a poem, and a study of the biographical and historical background may do much to clarify interpretation; but these things should be considered as means and not as ends. And though one may consider a poem as an instance of historical or ethical documentation, the poem in itself, if literature is to be studied as literature, remains finally the object for study. Moreover, even if the interest is in the poem as a historical or ethical document, there is a prior consideration: one must grasp the poem as a literary construct before it can offer any real illumination as a document."*[55]

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[55] Brooks, C. – Warren, R. P.: *Understanding Poetry: An Anthology for College Students.* New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1950. Available at http://www.writing.upenn. edu/~afilreis/50s/understanding-poetry.html. 11. 09. 2006.

The idea that the meaning of a literary work has to be determined from the work itself, not from its author's intention or perhaps from its impact on the reader, was offered later on in a more sophisticated manner in two essays from the *Verbal Icon*: "The Intentional Fallacy" and "The Affective Fallacy". If one were to choose a work which would, however, most representatively embody the "new critical" attitude to literature, one would probably choose Cleanth Brooks's *The Well-Wrought Urn: Studies in the Structure of Poetry*. As the name suggests, Brooks's book is a fine example of the "new critical" power of close reading. Instead of extra-literary considerations, Brooks says that "the language of poetry is the language of paradox"[56] and demonstrates it in several brilliant interpretations of selected individual poems.

Naturally, the focus on the complexities of the discussed literary text's language has brought accusations of the "new critics'" supposed un-historicity. In the following I would like to use the work of Allen Tate (another prominent member of New Criticism) to demonstrate that these views were, and still are, distorted and not based on a careful reading of their texts. In the essay "The Man of Letters in the Modern World" (from the collection of essays of the same name), Tate claims that in times when languages are devalued by mass-control, the man of letters "must discriminate and defend the difference between mass communication, for the control of men, and the knowledge of man which literature offers us for human participation".[57] He sees the task of the man of letters in the overcoming of the fragmentation of Western thinking, of the Cartesian dissociation of thinking from the whole human being, in fostering human participation at the expense of mere communication. The man of letters must not support the illiberal specialisation of the nineteenth century spreading out in the modern world, "in which means are divorced from ends, action from sensibility, matter from mind, society from the individual, religion from moral agency, love

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[56] Brooks, C.: *The Well-Wrought Urn: Studies in the Structure of Poetry*. San Diego, New York, London: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, Publishers, 1974, p. 3.

[57] Tate, A.: *The Man of Letters in the Modern World: Selected Essays 1928-1955*. Cleveland and New York: Meridian Books, 1964, p. 11.

from lust, poetry from thought, communion from experience, and mankind in the community from men in the crowd."[58]

The substance of Tate's anti-rationalist vision of society gets most strongly manifested in his interpretational probes to several great works of world literature and criticism. I use the word "probes" because Tate does not analyse here (as one, influenced by the signifying views of New Criticism, might expect) the general formal and thematic outfit of the work, but concentrates on the essence of artistic imagination, that is, on the philo- sophical and aesthetic dimensions of the work resulting from the nature of social sensibility in a historically concrete point of development (which subverts another myth – that of an unhistorical nature of New Criticism), and on the quality of individual being.

Perhaps the most striking intellectual performances in this collection are essays on symbolic and angelic imagination – "The Symbolic Imagination: the Mirrors of Dante" and "The Angelic Imagination: Poe as God". Both are responses to the mentioned Cartesian dissociation of thinking from being. An example of symbolic vision for Tate is Dante's *Divine Comedy* in which its author managed to render „spiritual truth in its physical body"[59]. Tate claims that a final reason for the existence of the poem is not image as a trope of essential knowing, but a dramatic image, an image of actuality which, however, "must always remain beyond our reach".[60] While in Dante Tate sees an artist who through symbolic imagination managed to show spirit in a simple thing, Poe was seen as an artist who ran away from natural things to the realm of exaggerated rationality and feelings. He calls Poe's imagination *angelic* because he could not manage to overcome the Cartesian disruption – of rationality from feelings and moral sense. Dante's Triune Circle is a light which can be seen by the finite consciousness only in what is seen by means of it. The centre of Poe's imagination is located in the place where, in Dante's language, "the sun is silent". "Since he [Poe] refuses to see

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[58]   Ibid., p. 20.
[59]   Ibid., p. 99.
[60]   Ibid., pp. 107 – 108.

nature, he is doomed to see nothing"[61]. Drawing on Poe, Tate claims that imagination can reach only to the extent to which it is supported by sensible world. If we get rid of this world, we are doomed to see nothing. As was the case of E. A. Poe.

Attentive reading of Tate's essays betrays a critic who is miles away from reductionism, unhistoricism and mechanical, spiritless, formalism. His interpretations present works of art in relation to the whole being of man and society. Even if his concept of being is modernistic, attempting to overcome fragmentation and specialisation, it is not a rigid one, for the critic is able to identify the main future tendencies of social sensibility and critical thinking which would eventually take over many features of Tate's *angelic imagination* – superficiality, loss of sensual depth, and constant elusion of the meaning being most important of them. It is, however, necessary to point out that Tate considers the tendencies as negative and tries to struggle with them. Unlike this, the postmodern thinking would consider the *angelic imagination* as a highly positive element in the struggle with earthiness, naturalness, and the knowable reality. Also the postmodern treatment of the concept of fragmentation and univocity is different from the new critical one. J. F. Lyotard, for example, identifies in the society the effect of similar material, technical and technological forces, including the importance of language, but his recommendation is rather different. Instead of a desire for the unification of man and nature, he proclaims a war on objective and deeply rooted values and calls for the contradictions and relativity.[62] Despite this difference, there are frequent opinions that there is one point in which the New Criticism does not differ from postmodern critical theories – the intensive concentration on a literary work; its *close reading* is a predecessor of the deconstruction's verbal equilibristic.

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[61]   Ibid., p. 131.
[62]   See Lyotard, J. F.: *The Postmodern Condition*. Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1984.

Deconstruction

While the New Criticism draws, above all, on the formalist-structuralist procedures and understanding of literature as an autonomous activity resulting in the creation of a specific, uniquely literary meaning, deconstruction is part of poststructuralist tendencies with their struggle against the autonomous nature of the literary meaning. Its aim is to "subvert" or "undermine" any claim of a text, be it literary, philosophical, or even scientific, to an "objective" meaning. Philosophically, the approach is based on the effort to "subvert" western metaphysical tradition and its hierarchical oppositions: subject – object, idea – matter, form – content, centre – periphery, to name just a few, and show that there is no origin and end, and that the ruling principle in the world is that of *indeterminacy*.

In literary study, deconstruction uses a "close reading" of canonical literary texts, playing on verbal ambiguities, connotations and etymology of their elements. It treats literary works not as works, with the elements arranged into a hierarchical structural whole, but as texts based on intertextuality, citationality and relativity of their elements, claiming that the meaning of any text is an absolutely relative entity, radically open to contradictory readings[63]. The most important representatives of deconstruction include Jacques Derrida, Paul de Man, J. Hillis Miller, and Barbara Johnson.

To illustrate the shift in values between New Criticism and Deconstruction, i.e. between structuralism and poststructuralism, we will concentrate on deconstruction's "handling" of one of the central New Critical principles – the autonomy of a work of art. According to Jonathan Culler „For New Criticism an important feature of a good poem's organic unity was its embodiment or dramatization of the positions it asserts. By enacting or performing what it asserts or describes, the poem becomes complete in itself, accounts for itself, and stands free as a self-contained fusion of being and doing."[64] Culler focused especially on Brooks' introductory essay "The

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[63] Pokrivčák, A.: "Cez prizmu dekonštruktivizmu". In: Pokrivčák, A: *Literatúra a bytie.* Nitra: UKF, 1997, s. 27-34.
[64] Culler, J.: *On Deconstruction: Theory and Criticism after Structuralism.* Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 1982, pp. 200 – 201.

Language of Paradox" in which he analyses a well known poem by John Donne "The Canonisation". In the essay Brooks claims that paradox is the essence of poetic language. It is the main device through which a poem acquires its effect. The poem is about lovers who by rejecting the world find a much richer world in each other. Culler criticises especially Brooks' interpretation of the following stanza:

> We can die by it, if not live by love,
> And if unfit for tomb or hearse
> Our legend be, it will be fit for verse;
> And if no piece of chronicle we prove,
> We'll build in sonnets pretty rooms;
> As well a well-wrought urn becomes
> The greatest ashes, as half-acre tombs,
> And by these hymns, all shall approve
> Us canonized for love;.[65]

Brooks identifies one of central paradoxes of the poem in the comparison of a tomb with an urn. The lovers are content if after their death their legend will be preserved in verses, because as a well-wrought urn is more than a half-acre tomb, the poem is more than a worldly legend. Singing out the power of love in verses and comparing verses to an urn, Donne, according to Brooks, created such an urn. The poem is a well-wrought urn. "The poem is an instance of the doctrine which it asserts; it is both the assertion and the realization of the assertion".[66] However, according to Culler, such statement is impossible, because, mathematically, there can be no statement about itself – each statement about an X must be in a higher logical category than X. Similarly, "an assertion about poems is decreed to be of a different logical type from the poems it is about."[67] Following the method of deconstruction to find a weak chain in the text and then to take it apart *ad absurdum*, Culler developed this relatively understandable sentence into a tirade of speculative logical operations which supposedly proved that the poem is an example of infinite self-referential aberrations.

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[65] Donne, J. „The Canonization". [online]. [Cited on 10 August 2005]. Available at http://www.luminarium.org/sevenlit/donne/canonization.htm»
[66] Brooks, op. cit., p. 17.
[67] Culler, op. cit., p. 202.

Culler's deconstruction of Brooks was sharply criticised by R. V. Young who claimed that Culler did not understand a difference between the literal and the metaphorical (because the urn for Brooks was not a material fact, but a metaphor – long before Culler noticed it). Moreover, he maintains that the concept of self-referentiality is imposed on Brooks without any reason, since the Brooks' statement that the poem is "both the assertion and the realization of the assertion" means only that the "Canonization" refers not to itself, but to the speech of a fictive character. R. V. Young ended his anti-deconstructive thrust with the following statement: "The deconstructionists are quite the cleverest people around the English department these days, but occasionally they resemble the dullest undergraduates in their inability to distinguish between figurative and literal language-or between poetry and pottery."[68]

It seems to be quite a hard statement, but in some aspects a true one. The current American literary criticism is full of such subversions of basic, in a Derridean language, hierarchic oppositions of western metaphysics, wiping out the borders between the reality and its textual representation.

Other Critical Approaches

The above-discussed critical approaches are two examples of what has been going on in literary criticism since the beginning of the twentieth century. The scope of this textbook does not, naturally, provide enough space to cover most them in some kind of sufficient detail. This is the reason why this chapter attempts to at least mention some other critical tendencies, and thus to make the picture a little bit more complex.

As suggested above, the beginning of the twentieth century is associated with the birth of text-centred approaches to literary criticism. One of the most prominent of such approaches is Russian Formalism, or "Russian Formal School", as it has always been referred to. The movement originated in 1910s and ended in 1930s as a result of unfavourable political circum-

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[68]   Young, R. V. : "The Old New Criticism and its Critics". *First Things* 35, August/September 1993, p. 44.

stances in the then Soviet Union. Russian Formalists revolutionised literary studies by insisting on the need of the scientific study of literature, consisting in the search for general or universal principles of literature, characteristic for every literary text. According to Roman Jakobson, one of such principles would be literariness, i.e. what differentiates a literary text from other texts. A key quality of a text's literariness is its ability to produce the effect of defamiliarisation. As Victor Shklovsky, one of the leading members of the Russian Formal School has put it, "The technique of art is to make objects 'unfamiliar,' to make forms difficult, to increase the difficulty and length of perception because the process of perception is an aesthetic end in itself and must be prolonged. *Art is a way of experiencing the artfulness of an object: the object is not important.*[69] In addition to *literariness* and *defamiliarisation*, Formalists can also be credited to the elaboration of other terms, such as motif, theme, fabula, sujet, etc.

After the forced disintegration of the "Russian formal school", some of its members moved to Prague where they contributed to the work of the Prague Linguistic Circle. The Circle consisted of scholars whose aim was to discuss various issues related to linguistics and literature. Its members included, among others, Vilém Mathesius, Nikolay Trubetzkoy, Jan Mukařovský, as well as the ex-formalist Roman Jakobson and René Wellek (they both later emigrated to the USA). In their discussions, the members introduced of the structuralist analysis of literature (the movement is also referred to as Prague Structuralism). As Jan Mukařovský has put in his article "Structuralism in Aesthetics and in the Study of Literature", "a structural whole *means* each of its parts, and inversely each of these parts means this and no other whole".[70] Mukařovský's main contribution to literary theory is, however, his claim that the nature of the aesthetic lies in the aesthetic function. "Although 'there are certain preconditions in the objective arrangement of an object (which bears the aesthetic function) which facilitate the rise of aesthetic pleasure', Mukařovský maintains that 'any object or action,

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[69]   http://social.chass.ncsu.edu/wyrick/debclass/Shklov.htm

[70]   Fokkema, D. – Ibsch, E.: *Theories of Literature in the Twentieth Century: Structuralism, Marxism, Aesthetics of Reception, Semiotics.* London: C. Hurst and Co., 1995, p. 34.

regardless of how it is organised' can acquire an aesthetic function and thus become an object of aesthetic pleasure".[71]

As a method of analysis, structuralism found its fullest manifestation in French social and human sciences. Its beginnings can be traced back to the work of the Swiss linguist Ferdinand de Saussure and the anthropologist Claude Lévi-Strauss whose theories were also transferred to literary studies. Other prominent French scholars who could be termed "structuralists" include Roland Barthes, Jacques Lacan, Jacques Derrida (later on the founder of poststructuralist Deconstruction), Louis Althusser, Tzvetan Todorov, Michel Foucault, etc.

An increased development of psychology at the beginning of the twentieth century in Europe and the USA found its reflection also in literature, especially in what is termed *psychological criticism*. The first psychological critics were actually prominent psychologists – S. Freud and his disciple C. G. Jung. In his landmark "Creative Writers and Daydreaming"[72], Freud characterised art as an "adult" form of play (when people grow up, they cannot continue to use children's games and play, so they take art as a substitute for them) whose aim lies in the wish-fulfilment and prevention of neuroses. Art is a sort of safety valve, being able to free human (readers' and authors') tensions, a form of daydreaming. One of the consequences of a Freudian line of psychological approach is an introduction of psychological terminology into literary criticism (the ego, super-ego, Oedipus complex, Electra complex, the subconscious). A slightly different direction in relating psychology to criticism was taken by Freud's disciple and a founder of depth psychology, C. G. Jung who, in his "Psychology and Literature", considered an artist to be a medium for the channelling of the collective wisdom of humankind, of the so-called collective subconscious. "The artist is not a person endowed with free will who seeks his own ends, but one who allows art to realize its purposes through him. As a human being he

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[71] Ibid., p. 32.
[72] FREUD, S.: "Creative Writers and Day-Dreaming". In: LIPKING, L. I. – WALTON LITZ, A. (eds.): *Modern Literary Criticism: 1900 – 1970*. New York: Atheneum, 1972, pp. 415 – 420.

may have moods and a will and personal aims, but as an artist he is 'man' in a higher sense – he is 'collective man', a vehicle and moulder of the unconscious psychic life of mankind".[73]

In the second half of the twentieth century, psychological criticism was developed into a poststructural version of *psychoanalytic criticism*, drawing on Freud's work, but using also the results of modern psychoanalytic research, especially the work of Jacques Lacan[74], whose main argument is that the unconscious is structured as language. Interestingly, it provided space also to elaborate certain feminist issues (e.g. the topic of "castration complex"). As all critical approaches, psychological criticism has its advantages and disadvantages. While one of its greatest advantages is definitely an increased awareness of the complexity of human inner, irrational life (its instincts and motives), among its greatest disadvantages usually cited by critics is its privileging of human sexuality.

The Jungian stream of psychological criticism developed into *archetypal criticism* which tends to emphasise mythical patterns in literary works (*mythical criticism*). Archetypes signify "narrative designs, character types, or images which are said to be identifiable in a wide variety of works of literature, as well as in myth, dreams, and even ritualized modes of social behaviour."[75] Some well known and frequent archetypes (occurring especially in myths) are: the Promethean rebel-hero, femme fatale, life as a journey, death-rebirth theme (e.g. cycle of seasons, seasons of human life, etc).[76] The most distinguished representatives of this type of criticism are Maud Bodkin (*Archetypal Patterns in Poetry*, 1934) and Northrop Frye (*The Anatomy of Criticism*, 1957).

The late twentieth century witnessed a shift from structuralist to poststruc-

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[73] JUNG, C. G.: "Psychology and Literature". In: LIPKING, L. I. – WALTON LITZ, A. (eds.): *Modern Literary Criticism: 1900 – 1970*. New York: Atheneum, 1972, p. 429.

[74] see, for example, LACAN, J.: *Écrits: A Selection*. New York – London, W.W. Norton & Company, 1977.

[75] ABRAMS, M. H.: *A Glossary of Literary Terms*. (5th edition). Austin: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1971, p. 201.

[76] ibid., p. 202

turalist (or postmodern) critical theories, with their strong emphasis on "cultural aspect". Although varied in their origin and objectives, these theories share a tendency to examine how certain cultural categories, like gender, class, and ethnicity, are governing principles of literary representation, how they help structure interpretive communities and reader responses. The most common topics of the "interdisciplinary" criticism include especially problems of formerly under-represented, or even downright persecuted, minority groups within a particular national or world literature. Thus, for example, there is a strong tendency for feminist, postcolonial as well as lesbian and gay critics to explore writings and voices excluded by dominant culture. We would like to explain the "cultural studies" critical approach by a longer quotation which, unlike complicated theoretical constructions, shows its essence through its practical application:

> "A college class on the American novel is reading Alice Walker's *The Color Purple*. The professor identifies African literary and cultural sources and describes some of the effects of the multilayered narrative structure, moving on to a brief review of the book's feminist framework and its critique of contemporary American gender and racial attitudes. Students and professor discuss these briefly, analyzing some key passages in the text.
>
> A student raises her hand and notes that the Steven Spielberg film version drew angry responses from many African American viewers. The discussion takes off: Did Alice Walker 'betray' African Americans with her harsh depiction of African American men? Did Spielberg enhance this feature of the book or play it down? Are whites 'fairly' portrayed? Another hand goes up: 'Is Walker promoting lesbianism?' 'Spielberg *really* played that down!" the professor replies.
>
> A contentious voice in the back of the room interjects: 'Well, I just want to know what a serious film is doing with Oprah Winfrey in it.' With the professor's guidance, class members respond to the question, examining the interrelationships between race, gender, popular culture, the media, and literature. They ask about the conventions – both historical and contemporary – that operate within novels, on 'The Oprah Winfrey Show', and in Hollywood films. They conclude by trying to identify the most important conventions Walker employs in construct-

ing individual characters and their communities in *The Color Purple*. This class is practicing 'cultural studies.'" [77]

The above quotation makes it very clear that the cultural studies approach is a departure from what has traditionally been taken for literary study, though, in a way, it also draws on some older historical and ethical approaches to literature. First of all, the "cultural studies" critic does not specialise in one specific area, but in his/her interpretation is able to make use also of other theories across human, social, and sometimes even natural sciences. This very frequently provokes attacks from "traditional" literary critics who accuse him/her of the lack of depth in one particular area, saying that nobody can be a good expert in many different fields at once, and thus of producing only superficial evaluations. With the lack of depth is related the second characteristic feature of the new, "postmodern" cultural studies, i.e. its political dimension. Most relevant critics draw their inspiration from the political agenda of the New Leftist orientations reconsidering traditional arrangement of power distribution in the society – alongside political, gender and ethnic lines. Thus for a cultural critic literature is not a universal phenomenon with universal human values, an essential phenomenon in its own right, but is deeply embedded in a particular culture, being just one of the areas making up a person's or group's particular social and political status, which is worth more investigation than universal human values. This brings literature, with its values and tastes, from the high pedestal of modernism's idealism, and perhaps also elitism, down to everyday life with its pragmatic social, political and other problems.

Most political of all the current approaches, more or less related to the cultural studies agenda, seems to be the *Marxist criticism*. However, Western Marxist critics, unlike their colleagues from former Central and Eastern European Communist countries, draw on the presupposition that economics is just one of the elements in the system of relationships within a society. One of the most important American Marxists, Fredric Jameson, considers literary works to be symbolic acts through which people experience and perhaps criticise social relations. As indicated above, another prominent

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[77] GUERIN, L. W.: op. cit., pp. 239 – 240.

interdisciplinary approach to literature has been, at least since 1960's, *feminist criticism*. Its focus is on the factor of sexual difference in the production, reception, analysis and evaluation of the works of literature. Feminist critics believe that literature has traditionally been dominated by male writers exploring typically male themes; therefore they concentrate on literature written by women and about women.[78] The representatives of feminist criticism include Mary Ellmann, Kate Millett, Judith Fetterley, Ellen Mores, Sandra Gilbert, Elaine Showalter, Nina Baym, and others. Broader cultural issues have also been addressed by a critical approach called *new historicism*. Its main principle is to juxtapose literary and non-literary texts and to analyse their interaction. New historicists claim that literary texts are, first of all, cultural productions bearing the signs of the place and time of their origin. They are never only aesthetic artefacts, but always also evidence of political, economic, cultural, or ideological issues.

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[78] Milletová, K.: Sexuální politika: manifest pro revoluci. In: *Iniciály* (Feminismus…ano?), II, 25/1992, pp. 1-4.; Bačová, D.: "Realizmus a feminizmus v britskom divadle". In: Pokrivčáková, S. – Pokrivčák, A. a kol. (eds.): *Realizmus a antirealizmus v literatúre*. Nitra: UKF, 2004.

Language of literature

Silvia Pokrivčáková

Any discussion on literary language and its effects can begin with this story said about Mark Twain:

> One day, there was a blind man sitting on the steps of a building with a hat by his feet and a sign that read: "I am blind, please, help."
>
> Mark Twain was walking by and stopped to observe. He saw that the blind man had only a few coins in his hat. He dropped in more coins and, without asking for permission, took the sign and rewrote it. He returned the sign to the blind man and left.
>
> That afternoon the publicist returned to the blind man and noticed that his hat was full of bills and coins. The blind man recognized his footsteps and asked if it was he who had rewritten his sign and wanted to know what he had written on it.
>
> Twain responded: "Nothing that was not true. I just wrote the message a little differently." He smiled and went on his way.
>
> The new sign read: "Today is Spring and I cannot see it."

The story pertinently illustrates the importance of language and sometimes surprising results that the author may achieve by using appropriate language devices.

In the first chapter we already mentioned that imaginative literature is the art of words and words (understood as language) are the only instrument by which the literary work can evoke aesthetic feelings in readers. Therefore, writers employ special language, procedures and techniques; they employ words and phrases with special sounding; they play with several meanings, deliberately creating ambiguities, using irrational phenomena, etc. The overall texture of these activities is referred to as **literary style.** As

the manner in which a writer expresses what he/she wants to say, literary style is one of the essential elements of each literary work.

An analysis of literary style is usually done within **literary stylistics (poetics),** unlike linguistic stylistics which is concerned more with the style of non-literary texts[79] or style in general.

Literary style can be characterised by the following features:

a) *aesthetic function is dominant* to informative one or to other functions of verbal communication (it is more important for literary works to bring aesthetic experience than to simply inform, persuade, advertise, etc.),

b) *rich inventory of language elements and structures* (including "strange", exceptional words and their combinations, poetisms, idioms, expressive syntax, dialectal elements, etc.),

c) *variability* (based on original combinations of words, semantic shifts, etc.),

d) *ambiguity* (unlike the so-called informative texts where the clarity of meaning, with only limited secondary associations, is important – semantic ambiguities enable literary texts to express more ideas with fewer words, or to aim at expressing "inexpressible", often transcendental, meanings by means of imagery and symbolism[80],

e) *emotionality and expressivity* (literary texts' proper province is human subjectivity, that is, the expression of the author's and the awakening of the reader's emotions).

Literary diction

The concept of *diction* was for the first time defined by Aristotle as "the mere metrical arrangement of the words (…) the expression of the meaning in words"[81]. In most contemporary definitions, it is the writer's choice of

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79   c.f. Miššíková, G.: *Linguistic Stylistics*. Nitra: UKF, 2003.
80   for more see Empson, W.: *Seven Types of Ambiguity*. New York: New Directions, 1966.
81   Aristotle. op.cit.

words. In order to achieve artistic effect, writers decide between various ways of expression, between different kinds of words – common or uncommon, pleasant or unpleasant, dignified or humorous, clear or vague, emotional or neutral, historical or current, archaic or new, standard or dialectal, abstract and concrete, technical and colloquial, etc. In doing this, they aim to obtain the effect of the uncommon, different, strange, "other". Victor Shklovsky, for example, defined the effect of literature as "defamiliarisation", or "estrangement"[82]. Look at the example of "estranged" language taken from Jerome K. Jerome's humorous novel *Three Men in a Boat*:

> Slowly the golden memory of the dead sun fades from the hearts of the cold, sad clouds. Silent, like sorrowing children, the birds have ceased their song, and only the moorhen's plaintive cry and the harsh croak of the corncrake stirs the awed hush around the couch of waters, where the dying day breathes out her last.

> From the dim woods on either bank, Night's ghostly army, the grey shadows, creep out with noiseless tread to chase away the lingering rearguard of the light, and pass, with noiseless, unseen feet, above the waving river-grass, and through the sighing rushes; and Night, upon her sombre throne, folds her black wings above the darkening world, and, from her phantom palace, lit by the pale stars, reigns in stillness.

Very often, however, the effect of the uncommon may be achieved also by the use of common words. Thus William Wordsworth in his *Preface to the Second Edition of the Lyrical Ballads* (1800) explains the choice of words in his poems in the following way:

"The Reader will find that personifications of abstract ideas rarely occur in these volumes; and are utterly rejected as an ordinary device to elevate the style, and raise it above prose. My purpose was to imitate, and, as far as possible, to adopt the very language of men; and assuredly such personifications do not make any natural or regular part of that language."[83]

Wordsworth was not the only artist who aspired to create the strange by means of the common. Ernest Hemingway's short stories, for example,

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[82] Shklovsky, V.: "Art as Technique". In: Lodge, D. (ed.): *Modern Criticism and Theory: A Reader*. London: Longman, 1988, pp. 16-30.
[83] Wordsworth, W.: op. cit., pp. 337 – 338.

are made up of simple words, but contain a complex meaning, hidden in between the lines.

Along with using words from different areas of human activity and of different registers (poetical, colloquial, scientific, official, substandard, vulgar, etc), writers can also choose between **connotative** and **denotative** words. The difference between connotation and denotation is the difference between the primary, dictionary meaning of the word (denotation of *a head* is a part of the human body) and a sum of its secondary meanings coming from the word's power of association and suggestion (connotations of *a head* are "a leader"; "a ruler"; "the top of something", e.g. a head of the stairs; "an upper part of something", e. g. a head of a lake; "a part of a law", e. g. The Head XXII; " a piece", e. g. twenty head of cattle, a cabbage head, etc.). Going beyond the primary, denotative meanings, writers in their works frequently enter the world of ambiguities, allusions, irrationality, sensations, fantasy, and dreams. Secondary or connotative meanings may be generated by various techniques, usually by means of synonyms, homonyms, heteronyms, antonyms, poetisms, affective words, historically determined words and other groups of words.

A wide group of words typically used in literary texts is made up of **affective words**, characterized by their ability to evoke readers' emotions, positive or negative. They include **diminutives** (words marking small objects, e. g. a cub, a bud, a pebble), **hypocoristic words** or laudatives (diminutives of names, e. g. Robbie, Susie), **augmentatives** (opposites to diminutives, usually with negative implications, e. g. using "a paw" instead of a hand, using "knob", "noggin", „napper" instead of a head), **euphemisms** (words that try to soften rough or unpleasant meaning, for example he died = he went away, he went to rest), **dysphemisms** (opposites to euphemisms, words expressing by their unpleasant form the author's negative attitude), **pejoratives** (words expressing negative attitude, e. g. an idiot, a beast, a monster, etc.). In some literary texts an important role is played by **historically determined words.** Some of them are **neologisms** (newly created words, e. g. a clone-baby) and **archaisms** (words of old origin, not frequently used in contemporary everyday speech, e. g. pronoun *thee*, conjunctions *heretofore*, *hereunto*, etc.).

Synonyms are words of different form, with close or nearly the same meaning (for example *delicious*, *tasty*, *appetizing, luscious, delectable; bizarre, foolish, grotesque, insane, imaginary* , etc.), or, to put it differently, words with close (nearly the same) denotations, but different connotations. They occur almost in every literary work as devices refreshing the style and reducing the unwanted repetition of key words.

Homonyms, less frequent than synonyms, are words with the same pronunciation, but different meaning and different etymological origin (for example *mine* – as a colliery, an explosive tool, and as a possessive pronoun). There are two types of homonyms: pure homonyms and homophones, that is, words with the same sound, but different spelling (e.g. *steel* and *steal*). Since the poetical effect of homonyms lies in their potential of verbal ambiguity, writers use them frequently in paronomasia, puns and other word games. There are some examples taken from *Professor Branestawm's Dictionary* by Norman Hunter:

> *Aaron. What a wig has.*
> *abominable. A piece of explosive swallowed by a male cow.*
> *abundance. A waltz for cakes.*
> *allocate. A greeting for Catherine.*
> *allotment. A good deal is intended.*
> *analyse. Ann doesn't tell the truth.*

Similarly rare but important for the style of literary texts are **heteronyms** (homographs), that is, words with the same spelling but different meaning and different pronunciation (for example *lead* as a verb and *lead* as metal material). Since many authors like playing with words of several meanings, homonyms and heteronyms are rather frequent in literary the text, usually as a source of humour.

Antonyms are words that are synonymous except for one feature, for example "good" and "bad" are alike in that they are adjectives representing quality or value of something. They differ in the level of the quality or value, in other words, they reflect their opposite extremes. Antonyms are usually used in oxymoron, paradoxes, antitheses, puns, etc., but they are also good

instruments for expressing deeper philosophical truths, as in Shakespeare's *Sonnet 146*.

Sonnet 146

Poor soul, the centre of my sinful earth,
[...] these rebel powers that thee array;
Why dost thou pine within and suffer dearth,
Painting thy outward walls so costly gay?
Why so large cost, having so short a lease,
Dost thou upon thy fading mansion spend?
Shall worms, inheritors of this excess,
Eat up thy charge? is this thy body's end?
Then soul, live thou upon thy servant's loss,
And let that pine to aggravate thy store;
Buy terms divine in selling hours of dross;
Within be fed, without be rich no more:
So shalt thou feed on Death, that feeds on men,
And Death once dead, there's no more dying then.

The sonnet is built up on sharp contrasts (soul ↔ earth/body; within ↔ outward, large ↔ short, live ↔ death, etc.) illustrating the moral imperative that the human body exists at the expense of the soul and the only way to save the soul for heaven is to neglect the body.

A unique group of words with specific tone and atmosphere, usually newly originated for the purposes of literary texts, and not used in any other style, are called **poetisms** (for example *thou, thee* = you, *thy*=your, *thilke* = that, *brindle* = shake, *slithy* = slimy + lithe).

Literary imagery

One of the functions of literature is to reflect the totality of human experience – in its complexity, variety, heterogeneity. As we can see from the following quotation, most of this experience, if not all, comes to us through our senses: thus the experience „of a spring day may consist of *seeing* blue

sky and white clouds, budding leaves and daffodils, of *hearing* robins and bluebirds singing in the early morning; of *smelling* damp earth and blossoming hyacinths; and of *feeling* a fresh wind against my cheek"[84]. To express such sensations adequately, writers must find means which would represent their intensive sensuality and convey the impressions of seeing, hearing, smelling, movement. Verbal devices which enable the literary texts to evoke sensual effects are called **images**. A complex of sensual images (an image = a verbal reference to something that can be experienced through senses) is frequently referred to as *imagery*.

In spite of the name, imagery is not restricted to pictorial impressions (*visual imagery*), but includes also *auditory* (sounds)*, gustatory, olfactory, tactile* (touch), or *thermal* (temperature) images. Moreover, imagery can be *static*, *dynamic*, *free* (varies from person to person) or *tied* (fixed in some cultural community). A special case is *synaesthetic imagery* which mixes two senses, for example *colour of sound*. The understanding of patterns of images, whether literal or figurative, can enrich readers with new and deeper meanings, either in poetry or prose. Images make literary worlds concrete, familiar and plausible as well as imaginary, strange and surrealistic (see, for example, some of the poems produced by American *Imagists*). The poem by Claude McKay named "Spring in New Hampshire" may be used as a clear example of complex imagery.

> ### Spring in New Hampshire
> ### (To J.L.J.F.E)
>
> Too green the springing April grass,
>   Too blue the silver-speckled sky,
> For me to linger here, alas,
>   While happy winds go laughing by,
> Wasting the golden hours indoor,
> Washing windows and scrubbing floors.

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[84] Arp, T. R. – Johnson, G.: *Perrine's Literature: Structure, Sound, and Sense*. New York: Heinle and Heinle, 2002, p. 566.

Too wonderful the April night,
            Too faintly sweet the first May flowers,
The stars too gloriously bright,
            For me to spend the evening hours,
When fields are fresh and streams are leaping,
Wearied, exhausted, dully sleeping.

In the poem the elements of visual imagery ("green grass", "blue" and "silver-speckled sky", "golden", "windows", "night", "bright stars") are combined with elements of audial ("laughing", "scrubbing", sound of leaping stream), thermal ("wind", "evening", "night") and gustatory ("sweet" flowers) imagery. The result is a rich and vivid reflection of sensual perceptions expressing the special mood of spring.

The study of literary imagery belongs both to psychology and literary theory. While psychology is interested in the processes of the origin of various types of images in human minds, literary theory deals with *verbal imagery* ("pictures made out of words"[85]). According to the level of complexity, theory recognizes three levels of imagery:

1.) the "simplest" level of imagery is formed by **direct descriptions of visible objects and scenes**,
2.) imagery becomes more complicated when, instead of simple descriptive words, writers use **tropes** (simile, metaphor and its subtypes).
3.) The most complex level of imagery is represented by **symbol** and its subtypes (allegory, myth, grotesque) and other multilevel ways of creating verbal images.

Tropes

Tropes are words or clusters of words which, in addition to evoking sensual impressions, can express secondary meanings or, to put it bluntly, something else than what they literally say. According to Wellek, texts made up of tropes produce "the 'oblique' discourse which speaks in metonyms and metaphors, partially comparing worlds, précising its themes by giving them

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[85] LEWIS, C. D.: *Poetic Image*. London: Jonathan Cape, 1947.

translations into other idioms"[86]. Unlike "simple" images, the effect of tropes is more complex, because they use connotation to appeal, in a unique, non-referential way, both to senses and intellect. They are sometimes taken to be synonymous to **figures of speech**; however, in traditional poetics these two means are contrasted, since tropes are understood as affecting primarily the meaning of words, while figures of speech involve also the order or placing of words (for example anaphora, inversion, syntactic devices, etc.).

As the name suggests (trope – turn), tropes are based on the turning, shifting of readers' attention from primary significance of a word or a phrase to their secondary meaning. They are based on analogy, because they always point to some other meaning than the literal one. Virtually all of them consist of *tenor* and *vehicle*. The "tenor" (in Latin 'holder') describes the first, starting, non-figurative denotation of the comparison; the "vehicle" marks the other denotation to which the tenor is compared. In the symbolical comparison by Alfred, Lord Tennyson "*And like a thunderbolt he (the eagle) falls*", the eagle is the tenor, and a thunderbolt is the vehicle. By comparing two dissimilar things (an eagle and a thunderbolt) are connected and the reader's attention is set on their common features – speed, strength, and grace.

For example, Vachet Lindsay´s line *The sun is a red, red joy,* "the sun", in the function of the tenor, is compared to feeling of pure happiness, "a joy" = the vehicle, while this comparison is emphasised by mentioning red colour, which is a real colour of sun in the morning, as well as the symbol of love, life and energy.

Other examples:

Life is tale told by an idiot… (William Shakespeare)

("life", the tenor, is compared to a chaotic and not well organized "tale", the vehicle, as if told by an idiot)

Shall I compare thee to a summer day? (William Shakespeare)

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[86]   WELLEK, R. – WARREN, A.: op. cit., p. 186.

("you" as the tenor is compared "a summer day", the vehicle, which expresses the positive, even love relation of the lyrical speaker to its addressee).

In the history of literary criticism, there have been several schools and authors especially interested in figurative language: e.g. New criticism (W. K. Wimsatt), Russian formalism (Roman Jakobson), deconstruction (Harold Bloom; Geoffrey Hartman), etc.

Any trope is based on comparison, thus perhaps the simplest and most essential trope is **simile**. A simile compares two seemingly unlike things by using explicit means of comparison, words "like" or "as". It serves as a base for all other figures whose poetic effect is often hidden and complex. Many similes have been fixed in an everyday language (e. g. as red as blood, as strong as iron, sly as a snake, etc.). To refresh their texts, authors tend to search for new, original similes, as those in the poem "Wind" by Ted Hughes:

> "*The hills had new places, and **wind** wielded*
> *Blade-like, luminous black and emerald,*
> ***Flexing like the lens of a mad eye**.*"

> "*The wind flung a magpie away and a black-*
> *Back **gull bent like an iron bar** slowly.*"

> "*…The house*
> ***Rang like some fine green goblet** in the note*
> *That any second would shatter it.*"

As a special case, **negative simile** can occur (e.g. in Shakespeare's Sonnet "*My mistress' eyes are nothing like the sun*").

Analogically to simile, **metaphor** compares two seemingly unlike things, but without using "like" or "as", for example *Your words are music to my ears*. The poem The Highwayman by Alfred Noyes incorporates the following set of three metaphors:

The wind was a torrent of darkness among the gusty trees,
The moon was a ghostly galleon tossed upon cloudy seas,
The road was a ribbon of moonlight over the purple moor,…

Very often metaphor is thus referred to as an implicit comparison. In its transfer of meaning, it is based on either obvious or, very frequently, distant, but inherent, similarity in appearance of both objects of comparison – the tenor and the vehicle. The tenor "holds" the first meaning, being the object or concept from which the comparison starts. It is implicitly compared to another object or concept called vehicle. The metaphorical mechanism is completed when vehicle connects the two meanings and, consequently, helps carry human attention to an unexpected flash of the third, poetic and often philosophical, meaning or insight. The above mechanism makes metaphor draw the reader's attention to the implicit correspondences between the things, to the creation of shortcuts to new, fresh, instantaneous, unexpected, surprising, perspectives on things, which would otherwise have to be explained through indirect descriptions. Thus, metaphors show the world in a different way by setting connections between various things.

Gillian Lazar[87] names the following functions of metaphors giving thus explanation why they are so frequent not only in literature, but in all types of written and oral texts: a) they help readers understand and idea more clearly, b) they play with language to create pleasure and a sense of beauty, c) they help create an emotional response to something, and d) they make message more memorable.

Like similes, some metaphors have been used frequently in the everyday language and, as a consequence, lost their poetic tension. They are referred to as **dead metaphors** (*leg of a table*, *back of a chair*, etc.). Considering their frequent occurrence in language, some authors suppose that language, as a whole, is metaphorical (that is, each word and structure are based on metaphor). In his famous "Defence of Poetry" (written in 1821, first published in 1840), Percy Bysshe Shelley even claims that the language of first people originated from metaphors: "Their language is vitally metaphorical; that

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[87]   Lazar, G.: *Meanings and Metaphors*. Cambridge University Press, 2003, p. 7.

is it marks the before unapprehended relations of things, and perpetuates their apprehension, until the words which represent them become through time signs for portions and classes of thoughts, instead of pictures of integral thoughts".[88]

Some metaphors are very old, re-occurring in literature of all nations, thus taking the archetypal meaning. For example, there are many works comparing human life to a journey, to a path, or to a tale; death is often compared to sleep, and woods are used to represent problems:

> **A journey of thousand miles** must begin with a single step. *(Lao Tzu)*

> Every **path** has its puddle. *(Old English proverb)*

> **Two roads** diverged **in a wood**, and I –
> I took the one less travelled by,… *(Robert Frost)*

> **These woods** are lovely, dark, and deep,
> But I have promises to keep,
> **And miles to go before I sleep,**
> **And miles to go before I sleep.** *(Robert Frost)*

The following lines from William Shakespeare's *Macbeth* are great example of **complex metaphor**, which is a multi-level metaphor combining several images in one resulting picture.

> Tomorrow, and tomorrow, and tomorrow,
> creeps in this petty pace from day to day,
> To the last syllable of recorded time;
> And all our yesterdays have lighted fools
> the way to dusty death. Out, out, brief candle!
> Life's but a walking shadow, a poor player
> that struts and frets his hour upon the stage
> And then is heard no more. It is a tale
> Told by an idiot, full of sound and fury
> Signifying nothing.

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[88]   http://eir.library.utoronto.ca/rpo/display/displayprose.cfm?prosenum=6

In the first three lines two metaphorical projections are established: **life is a year** and **life is a journey**. Life is here manifested as both a sequence of days and as a path leading to death. In the fourth and fifth lines, two previous metaphors are combined with a new image of **life as light.** In the sixth, seventh and eighth lines **a man is seen as a player** playing his short insignificant part on a stage (**a stage = world, life = an individual dramatic play** that lasts only an hour). The meaning of life as a dramatic play is supplemented by the metaphor of **life as a story** told by an idiot, which means that human life is seen chaotic, meaningless, not worth of paying attention to.

Metaphorical projection is the basis of all the following tropes (metonymy, synecdoche, personification, epithet, etc.) that many authors consider to be types of metaphors.

While metaphor is based largely on external similarity, **metonymy** capitalises on the existence of certain internal relationship between the involved objects or concepts ("Westminster" as a metonymy of the Houses of Parliament, "Downing Street" as metonymy of the Prime-Minister or his office). Metonymies are, again, used not only in poetic language, but in our everyday speech as well (*I read Shakespeare*, *champagne* as wine coming from the Champagne area, *orange* as colour of a special kind of fruit, etc.).

Synecdoche is usually considered to be a kind of metonymy. It represents the object through its origin (for example *she wears fox* = she wears the coat of fox fur; *I like Shakespeare* = I like plays by Shakespeare), or quantity relationships. In the latter case, two kinds of synecdoche can be recognized: *pars pro toto* (substituting the whole through its parts, for example *Lend me a hand*), and *totum pro parte* (expressing the parts through the whole, for example *The city sleeps* = the inhabitants of the city sleep).

A special type of metaphor called **personification** (*prosopopeia*) which gives human forms and characteristics to an animal, object, or idea, for example *"my little horse must think it queer/ to stop without a farmhouse near"* (R. Frost). Personification is frequent in fables, myths and fairy tales and is related to allegory. Sometimes a metaphorical image can be expressed by

just one adjective or adverb, for example *azure sky*, *gusty wind*, *sweet grass*, *stony eyes*. Such a type of metaphor is named **epithet**. Close to the structure of epithet is **oxymoron,** which is an adjective or adverb of contrasting meaning to the related noun – for example *sweet hatred*, *painful joy*, *lazy bee*, etc. Such connection of two contradictory words brings fresh, expressive effect to the literary text.

Hyperbole is exaggeration of meaning usually with comic, humorous, or satirical effect, for example *She told me ocean of words and said nothing*. Opposite to hyperbole is **litotes** (understatement), i. e. such combination of words that downplays the seriousness of something, usually with comic or humorous effect, for example "*One could do worse than be a swinger of birches*" (R. Frost).

Paradox is a combination of words that creates a witty contradiction that, surprisingly, is truthful upon closer inspection, for example *Never say never*, or *The amount of women in London who flirt with their own husbands is perfectly scandalous*" (O. Wilde).

Allusion is introducing secondary meaning of the word (words) by referring to some work of art or literature, to some well-known story, character, or situation, for example *His love for Tracy was his Achilles heel*.

Periphrasis states a longer descriptive and figurative phrase instead of connotative, and usually shorter expression, for example *the country of bolero, corrida and flamengo* = Spain.

Symbol and other multilevel ways of building imagery

Symbol is a universal term used in logics, mathematics, semantics, semiotics, epistemology, aesthetics, etc. A symbol can be defined as any object that suggests a larger meaning than itself. In such cases symbol often overlaps with trope or figurative language. It has to be said, however, that while figurative language pertains to connotations, symbol involves both denotative and connotative meanings, i.e. it designates itself as well as represents something else, e.g. Moby Dick in Melville's novel is a whale but, at the same

time, it symbolizes nature and its strength[89]. Symbols used in literary works are usually referred to as **poetic symbols.** They differ from, say, abstract symbols in the clarity of reference which is, in the case of poetic symbols, more diffused, heterogenic, indefinite[90].

The complexity of a symbol lies in the fact that, unlike an image, a symbol combines many meanings which are organized in layers (primary, secondary, etc.). For example, in the poem "The Raven" by an American poet E. A. Poe, the raven evokes the sensations of, darkness, horror, death, loss, remembrance, transcendence, depression:

> *And the Raven, never flitting, still is sitting, still is sitting*
> *On the pallid bust of Pallas just above my chamber door;*
> *And his eyes have all the seeming of a demon's that is dreaming,*
> *And the lamp-light o'er him streaming throws his shadow on the floor;*
> *And my soul from out that shadow that lies floating on the floor*
> *Shall be lifted — nevermore!*

One of the most frequent symbols in literature is rose. In William Blake's poem from his *Songs of Experience*, a rose stands as a symbol of vitality which is inevitably destroyed:

> *O Rose, thou are sick!*
> *The invisible worm,*
> *That flies in the night,*
> *In the howling storm,*
>
> *Has found out thy bed*
> *Of crimson joy;*
> *And his dark secret love*
> *Does thy life destroy.*

However, if influenced by a frequent occurrence of a rose as a symbol of love and feminine beauty, some interpreters can view a rose here as symbol-

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[89] Ferber, M.: *A Dictionary of Literary Symbols*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2002.
[90] for more detailed characteristics see Todorov, tz.: *Theories of the Symbol*. Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 1982.

izing a loss of virginity[91]. The ability to interpret symbols is important and even crucial to appropriate understanding of a literary text. Paul P. Reuben (2003) offers some suggestions for identifying and understanding literary symbols[92]:

1. The story itself must furnish a clue that a detail is to be taken symbolically – symbols nearly always signal their existence by emphasis, repetition, or position.

2. The meaning of a literary symbol must be established and supported by the entire context of the story. A symbol has its meaning inside not outside a story.

3. To be called a symbol, an item must suggest a meaning different in kind from its literal meaning.

4. A symbol has a cluster of meanings.

Symbols play very important role in literary language. Symbols are usually used to represent abstract ideas or complicated images to seem more real, more interesting, and better understood. In some literary movements they were of a constitutive nature. One cannot, for example, think about Romanticism or symbolism without an immediate reference to symbols. They play important role also in mythology, where they act as **archetypes,** representing universal human experience (summer = life, full vitality; winter = stillness, death). Using symbols helps authors to express general human experience by means of concrete images and thus communicate ideas which are not fully obvious to the reader.

A literary figure which is frequently compared to the symbol is **allegory**. One of the most famous comparisons of the two terms can be found in Paul de Man's essay "The Rhetoric of Temporality" in which, drawing on Hans

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[91]   Danziger, M. K. – Johnson, W. S.: op. cit., p. 31.
[92]   *PAL: Perspectives in American Literature: A Research and Reference Guide – An Ongoing Project*. Paul P. Reuben: Appendix H: Elements of Drama – A Brief Introduction. http://www.csustan.edu/english/reuben/pal/append/axh.html; 20. 12. 2003.

Georg Gadamer's work *Wahrheit und Methode*, de Man says that "[this] appeal to the infinity of a totality constitutes the main attraction of the symbol as opposed to *allegory*, a sign that refers to one specific meaning and thus exhausts its suggestive potentialities once it has been deciphered"[93]. Put into a simpler language, allegory is based on one-to-one reference (dove representing peace), as opposed to the symbol which uses one thing to point to a multiplicity of diffused meanings (raven representing darkness, horror, death, etc). Because of the mechanism of allegorical representation, literary texts containing allegories are frequently considered less artistic and more didactic. "It makes all the difference whether the poet seeks the particular for the universal or sees the universal in the particular. Out of the former mode arises allegory, where the particular serves only as an instance, an example of the universal; the latter, however, is really the nature of poetry: it speaks forth a particular, without thinking of the universal or pointing to it".[94] Although there are indeed many examples in world literature which would support Goethe's unfavourable claim about allegory, there are as well many examples which would point to the contrary (see, for example, John Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress*, Nathaniel Hawthorne's *The Scarlet Letter*, or George Orwell's *Animal Farm*). In addition to characterising allegorical mechanism of representation, it is useful to mention another distinction: that between allegory as a trope (e. g. dove = peace) or an allegory as a genre (a literary work using many allegories to point to a hidden meaning that was popular especially in times of oppression, when certain things could not be said openly). To conclude, allegory is a very old genre (and figure), occurring in the Bible, medieval *morality plays* (using characters to represent moral values) as well as in modern literature .

Grotesque is a literary trope with a special type of complex image (transformed from fine arts to literature) which is created by paradoxical and disharmonic mixing of human, animal, and plant characteristics, usually

[93]   de MAN, P.: *Blindness and Insight: Essays in the Rhetoric of Contemporary Criticism*. Minneapolis, University of Minnesota Press, 1983, p. 188.

[94]   GRODEN, M. – KREISWIRTH, M. (eds.).: *The Johns Hopkins Guide to Literary Theory and Criticism*. 1997. http://www.press.jhu.edu/books/hopkins_guide_to_literary_theory/johann_wolfgang_von_goethe.html

in exaggerated or even in monstrous forms, by deforming reality, hyperbolization and by understanding the human existence as a part of cosmic harmony[95]. The mixture of heterogeneous elements creates a specific receptive effect. Grotesque as a genre is usually understood as a short prosaic text with dominant grotesque imagery. Examples of grotesque can be found in dramatic works by William Shakespeare and in short stories by Edgar Allan Poe. In cinematography, grotesque is reflected in short movies by Charlie Chaplin, Laurel and Hardy, etc.). In contemporary literature, four types of grotesque can be recognized: a) **fantastic/magical/carnival** grotesque, b) **demonic/tragic** grotesque (e. g. holocaust novels, novel *The Painted Bird* by Jerzy Kosiński or Alexander Solzhenicin's novels), c) **satirical** grotesque represented by Lawrence Sterne and Christian Morgensterne), and d) transcendental grotesque which was theoretically studied by John Ruskin.

Sound characteristics of literary language

Literary texts have characteristic sounding as well. Typical is **auditory imagery**, that is, evoking images of sounds or imitating natural sounds, for example sounds produced by animals, murmuring of water, chattering of leaves, etc. The higher level of sound imagery is called **sound symbolism,** which is the process of using different sounds produced by the speech organs to carry any special meaning.

The most distinguishing element of specific literary sound is **rhythm** that derives from the patterns of stress in words or utterances. Apart from other language styles, rhythm in literature tends to be regular, mostly in poetry. Individual units of rhythm and rhythmical patterns will be discussed in detail in the section on poetry.

A very frequent sound device of literary language is **alliteration**, which is the repetition of speech sounds in a sequence of nearby words, being a characteristic feature especially of Old English and Middle English poetry (such

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[95]   for more see POKRIVČÁKOVÁ, S.: *Karnevalová a satirická groteska*. Nitra: Garmont, 2002.

as *Beowulf* and *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*). Two types of alliteration can be recognized: *assonance*, which is repeating of vowels, and *consonance*, which is repeating of consonants with a change in the intervening vowel (for example live – love; ding – dong; in a summer, what soft was the sun...). Alliteration enables the author to reinforce the meaning of words consisting of repeated sounds, to link related words, and to provide tone colour.

Some authors pay attention to special psychological effects of some language sounds. It is believed, for example, that plosives [d], [g], [b], [m] are dark and their repetition evokes the feeling of fear, sadness, and tragedy. On the contrary, repetition of remaining plosives [p] and [t] brings the effect of energy, power and freshness. The sound [l] is marked as "liquid sound", because its sounding resembles the sound of running water. Similarly, fricatives [f], [v], [θ], [ð], [h], [s], [z], [ʃ], [ʒ] provoke the effect of pulsing energy (sound of streaming air) with both pleasant (freshness) and unpleasant (sound of tearing, smashing, exploding, etc.) connotations. Grouping of short vowels cause quicker tempo of reading; and long vowels determine slower tempo of the text.

If alliteration appears in the end of line or a sentence, **rhyme** is built there.

Euphony is a term applied to passages which sound pleasant and smooth, or musical. It evokes feeling of peace, comfort, pleasure and other pleasant emotions like in the poem "I like to see It Lap the Miles" by Emily Dickinson:

> *I like to see it lap the Miles –*
> *And lick the Valleys up –*
> *And stop to feed itself at Tanks –*
> *And then – prodigious step...*

Cacophony (or dissonance), on the contrary, is the language which sounds harsh, rough, and unmusical. It evokes feeling of discomfort, nervousness, terror or other unpleasant things as in the poem "The Wreck of the Deutschland" by Gerard Manley Hopkins. Cacophony here is built upon

complex consonance of fricatives [ʃ], [θ], [s], [f] combined with "liquid" [l], which emphasises destroying and killing power of war:

> Oh, we lash with the best or worst,
> Word last! How a lush-kept plush-capped sloe
> Will, mouthed to flesh-burst,
> Gush! – flush the man, the being with it, sour or sweet
> Brim, in a flash, full!

Onomatopoeia (or echoism) is applied to a word or a combination of words, the sound of which imitates the sound it denotes, for example *hiss, buzz, rattle, bang, murmur,* "*tap at the pane, the quick sharp scratch*", "*murmuring of innumerable bees*".

One of the most obvious examples of an author's purposeful use of sound qualities is the poem by Robert Browning entitled "Meeting At Night" (1845).

Meeting At Night

> The grey sea and the long black land;
> And the yellow half-moon large and low;
> And the startled little waves that leap
> In fiery ringlets from their sleep,
> As I gain the cove with pushing prow,
> And quench its speed i' the slushy sand.
> Then a mile of warm sea-scented beach;
> Three fields to cross till a farm appears;
> A tap at the pane, the quick sharp scratch
> And blue spurt of a lighted match,
> And a voice less loud, thro' its joys and fears,
> Than the two hearts beating each to each!

In the first two lines, a three-coloured and many-shaped visual image of grey sea, black land and yellow moon is combined with peaceful audial image of the sea at night (seven-time repeating of "liquid l" evokes the sound of calm sea surface, here in combination with repeated "dark" consonant [d] and "low" vowel "o". The "liquid" quality of the first two lines extends to

the third and fourth lines (six more repetitions of [l]), now yet combined with more bright and energetic [p], [t] and [l]. The changed sound of the second couplet imitates the sound of water beaten by oars (metaphor of the waves waken up from their sleep, "fiery ringlets" made after contact of an oar with water, etc.). The audial quality of the second couplet, in contrast to the "calmness" of the first couplet, expresses the eagerness of a man rowing a boat and hurrying up to see his girlfriend. The evidence of the contrast in audial atmosphere is seen also in the pair of rhyming words: land – low; leap – sleep.

The sound of the third couplet is different from the previous two. As a man reaches the beach, no other "l" appears in the couplet. Instead, plosives "p" and "k" prevail here, imitating thus the sound of a boat hitting a shore. The last two words of the couplet, "slushy sand" create onomatopoeical image of a man walking on a sandy beach. Onomatopoeia is again used in the fifth couplet. The man, after rowing the sea, walking a mile on a beach and running through three farms reaches his destination and knocks on the window ("tap at the pane") of his girlfriend who immediately strikes a match (" a quick sharp scratch"), lights up and the romance can start.

The poem is a great example how audial imagery is able not only to enforce the effect of visual images, but also to build the atmosphere of the literary work by itself.

Literary syntax

The poetic qualities of literary styles are recognizable not only on the level of diction, imagery, and sound, but also on the level of sentence structure. Figures of speech play an important role in literary syntax, that is, rhetorical devices based on changes in word order or positions of words within a sentence, as well as by various deformations in sentence structures that bring a syntactic ambiguity to the literary texts.

Although the majority of sentences in literary texts follow the rules of standard from language, there are some structures and constructions which deviate standard language. These deviations are frequently based on breaking grammar rules (inversion, anacoluthon, zeugma, parenthesis, attraction, and amplification), omission or overusing of some linguistic elements (asyndeton, polysyndeton, ellipsis, aposiopesis, proposiopesis), and repetition of words or structures (anaphora, epiphora, and tautology). Such deviations are always obvious, catching the reader's attention and bringing expressive (affective) qualities into the literary texts.

Literary syntax as a means of communicating mood, attitude, or characterization, always has to be analyzed along with other elements of style (diction, imagery). An example can be taken from the favourite nursery rhyme Incy Wincy Spider:

> *Incy Wincy Spider climbed up the water spout,*
> *down came the rain drop and washed poor Incy out,*
> *Out came the sunshine and dried up all the rain,*
> *And Incy Wincy Spider climbed up that spout again.*

The brevity of a tiny, never capitulating spider is emphasized by showing it in the situation when it goes through two basic contracts: going up when sunshine and falling down when it is raining. The key words "up", "spout", "rain", "out" are repeated to make the general image of the nursery rhyme catchier. **Repetition** of words, phrases, lines, even whole paragraphs or stanzas is an important and rather frequent syntactic device of literary language. Along with the effect of increasing importance and putting stress to the repeated words and other items, repetition also helps to keep the literary text coherent and united.

In the above-mentioned nursery rhyme the contrast is emphasized by the reversal of a normal order of words in the second and third lines. Such syntactic device is called **inversion** (also **anastrophe**). By means of inversion the key words "down" and "out" are moved to the most exponent, i. e. initial position in the lines.

Moreover, not only independent words, but even the whole inverted syntactic structure of the second line ("down came the rain", i.e. adverbial – verb – subject) is later echoed in the third line ("out came the sunshine": adverbial – verb – subject). Such repetition of the syntactic structure, built upon the principle of antonymy, is the basis for another syntactic figure called **antithesis.** Opposite to antithesis is **parallelism,** when the structure is repeated to emphasize related or similar ideas, e. g. *"First, I had the great pleasure of reading tales, over and over, to my children. Then, they had the great pleasure – and triumph – of reading tales, faster and faster, back to me".*

Some syntactic devices are assessed as negative in other language styles, but in literary texts they are used to express mental state of characters or to characterize (even to mock) some individuals or social groups. One of them is **tautology**, which is repetition of already conveyed meaning by useless or redundant words. **Zeugma** is a figure of speech in which a word is used to modify or govern two or more words although appropriate to only one of them or making a different sense with each, as in the sentence *Mr. Pickwick took his hat and his leave* (Charles Dickens). **Parenthesis** is a phrase (and usually marked by brackets or dashes) inserted into a sentence or passage with which it is not grammatically connected. The example is taken from Kenneth Grahame's book *The Wind in the Willows*: *"Do you know, I've never been in a boat before in all my life." "What?" cried the Rat, open-mouthed. "Never been in a – you never – well, I – what have you been doing, then?"* Parenthesis is here, as usual, used to express the speaker's emotional state, his surprise and excitement.

Attraction is a change in the form of one linguistic element caused by the proximity of another element, for example *She smiled and leaved*. **Aposiopesis** is the term marking an unfinished utterance. As a usual rhetorical device it has got the form of sudden breaking off the utterance (a sentence, clause) without continuing. Emotional effect of aposiopesis (here together with proposiopesis and ellipses) is well illustrated in the following extract from *It was a Dark and Stormy Night* by Janet and Allan Ahlberg: *"What kind of beach is this? said the chief.*

> "…racing in from the right …and massive sharks churning up the waters of the bay, and…"Antonio cudgelled his brain for more ideas." A crocodile-infested swamp behind them, killer parrots in the palm trees, and… and…" He paused again to catch his breath and work out, if he could, what happened next.

Similar to aposiopesis is **proposiopesis**, which is an utterance without beginning, for example *…and thus he left.*

Both asyndeton and polysyndeton are easy recognizable and emotionally strong syntactic figures**. Asyndeton** is the omission of a conjunction between the parts of a sentence, e.g. *We played, sang, danced.* **Polysyndeton** is the overuse of conjunctions in close succession and in positions they are not strictly necessary, for example *The baby cooed **and** laughed **and** rocked the pram/ When I came in, **and** I was embarrassed* (Seamus Heaney).

Ellipsis (also **eclipsis**) is the term marking the omission of words or parts of sentence. **Anaphora** is the repetition of a word or a phrase at the beginning of successive sentences or clauses. Anaphora is the basic principle of composition in the poem *My Heart's in the Highlands* by Robert Burns.

> *My heart's in the Highlands, my heart is not here,*
> *My heart's in the Highlands, a-chasing the deer,*
> *A-chasing the wild deer and following the roe –*
> *My heart's in the Highlands, wherever I go!*

On the contrary to anaphora, **epiphora** is the repetition of a word or a phrase at the end of a sentence, or clause. Examples can be found in the nursery rhyme *Incy Wincy Spider*, in which the word "out" is repeated at the end of the second and at the beginning of the third line, as well as in the poem *My Heart's in the Highlands* – repeating the phrase "a-chasing the deer" in the second and the third lines.

LITERARY KINDS AND GENRES

Silvia Pokrivčáková

In spite of the fact that each work of art is unique and individual, it also displays features which can be found in other works as well. Such features allow critics to place it into a larger group, called *genre* (from Latin *genus* = type, kind). A part of literary theory studying genres is called *genology*.

As for the content of the concept of *genre*, that is what is understood by the term, there are differences between, say, Slovak and Anglo-American approach. While for the former genres tend to be rather narrower groupings (novels, poems), the latter one views them freely, including the above mentioned novels or poems as well as broader concepts of lyric, epic, and drama, which in Slovak literary theory are referred to as **literary kinds**.[96]

Why do we group literary works into genres? The most obvious reason would probably lie in the fact that readers as well as critics like the idea of ordering and classification, since it puts them on a more secure ground and suggests possible meanings or ways of interpretation even before the reading of a work. If one knows that a work is a short story, one naturally expects a short, relatively compressed text, with a few characters depicted through the language of suggestion. If, on the contrary, a work is a poem, one is able to "get ready" for a different set of qualities – extensive use of tropes, the meaning hidden in connotations, etc.

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[96] cf. WELLEK, R. – WARREN, A.: op. cit., pp. 226 – 237; compare also FOWLER, A.: *Kinds of Literature. An Introduction to the Theory of Genres and Modes.* Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1982 and FINDRA. J. – GOMBALA, E. – PLINTOVIČ, I.: *Slovník literárnovedných termínov.* Bratislava: SPN, 1981.

One of the earliest generic divisions can be traced back as far as to the antiquity and its classification of literary works into dramatic, epic and lyric. Throughout historical development, two of these groupings have undergone a transformation (Aristotle's *lyric* evolved into the present day poetry, *epic* into *prose*), while the third one, *drama*, stayed more or less the same.

In some historical periods, generic divisions were used almost for "ideological" purposes. Such divisions were, for example, very strongly felt in Renaissance and Classicism when some genres were considered to be "high" (tragedy) and therefore more valuable, while some were "low" (comedy) and thus less valuable. In some other historical periods or movements, ideological criteria were substituted for the artistic ones. Thus while Romanticism gave preference to poetic genres, realists made extensive use of prose. Here the differences stem from different views of reality and art as well as different social, technological and philosophical backgrounds for artistic activities. This can be demonstrated also by contemporary attitudes which emphasise interdisciplinarity, lack of strict divisions and limits, and thus naturally "ignore" traditional artistic labelling, introducing, instead of them, many new sub-genres and hybrids.

Although generic "mixtures" are typical especially for the contemporary artistic scene, in fact it has never been simple to strictly define features typical for individual genres, for great literary works have always been complex and resistant to systemising efforts. To decide to which genre a particular literary text belongs is usually a very difficult task, as the numerous genres can overlap and mix and one work can bear characteristics of two or more genres. Despite this, a generic approach to the study of literature is still considered to be useful. The following are the most frequent reasons given by some literary critics to demonstrate this usefulness:

> (1) A genre puts a work into a group of similar works so the readers are able to perceive it in relation to other works (e. g. while reading a novel we compare it with other novels – not poems – we have already read),

(2) Readers can experience pleasant psychological experience caused by reading a familiar literary form.

(3) A genre usually provides a code important for the understanding of a literary work (e. g. reading a comedy we expect a humorous tone).

(4) To work within a framework of an already defined genre can be stimulating for authors who can probe their literary craftsmanship[97].

Unlike the phenomenon of readers' expectations and its facilitation of the process of perception and interpretation, the breaking of generic conventions can have a shocking effect on readers (e. g. L. Sterne's novel *Tristram Shandy* breaking nearly all the rules of narration and novel writing), bringing them to a closer reflection of the work. If, however, the choice of genre does not correspond with the theme, it can result in a comic effect (e.g. A. Pope's mock-epic *The Rape of the Lock*). All in all, it may be worth noting that an insufficient orientation in the system of literary genres can cause some difficulties in understanding the structure of a literary work or in recognizing the significance of some important details.

The systems of genres into which literary works have been classified are numerous, and criteria for such classifications have been highly varied. There has been, however, a tendency to distinguish three main **literary genres** (or, in Slovak terminological language, **kinds**): *poetry* (earlier designated as *lyric*), *prose* (*epic*), and *drama*.

In what follows we will offer the description of particular literary kinds (and genres), drawing especially on their basic compositional characteristics (we believe that composition, construction, of a literary work is considered to be one of its most obvious differentiating features).

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[97] cf. Danziger, M. K. – Johnson, W. S.: op. cit., p. 85.

POETRY	*PROSE*	*DRAMA*
1st person	3rd person	2nd person
eternity	past	present
condensed, highly stylized language	colloquial language	performance
expressing author's inner attitudes, moods, emotions	telling a story (narration)	immediate presence of audience in action

Poetry

Poetic characteristics

The term **poetry**, in Aristotle's terminology *lyric* (from Greek *lyre* = a song), is considered to be probably the most concentrated kind of writing with special "poetic diction". The general aesthetic aim of poetry is not to tell the story, but to express the author's state of mind, his thoughts and feelings. A special emotional effect of poetry is the result of rich imagery, figurative language, rhythm (metre), and often (but not necessarily) rhymes[98].

Being an excellent example of visual imagery, the poem "The Deserted House" by Mary Coleridge describes hopeless physical appearance and strange atmosphere of the house.

The Deserted House (Mary Coleridge)

There's no smoke in the chimney,
And the rain beats in the floor;
There's no glass in the window,
There's no wood in the door;
The heather grows behind the house,
and the sand lies before.

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[98]   for more characteristics and definitions of poetry see:
http://www.4reference.net/encyclopedias/wikipedia/Poetry.html

No hand hath trained the ivy,
The walls are grey and bare;
The boats upon the sea sail by,
Nor ever tarry there;
No beast of the field comes nigh,
Nor any bird of the air.

All visual signs imply that the house was abandoned a long time ago; however, the author does not give the reason. The extraordinary behaviour of animals expressed in the last two lines brings to readers' minds the concept something transcendental, ghostly, and horrific. The power of the poem thus does not lie in precise description of the house or explaining the reasons of its state (in the form of story), but in evoking the strange and scary atmosphere of such a place.

Rhythm in poetry

One of the most obvious poetic features of poetry and, at the same time, an important component of its musical quality is a marked and audible rhythm. Its patterns are not only formal "beats", but help convey the author's ideas and attitudes (what is usually forgotten by unconscious readers).

Rhythm is a regular (predictable) or irregular pattern of beats that is formed by intentional arrangement of syllables of contrasting qualities (e. g. stressed and unstressed syllables, or long and short syllables).

There are several ways (**prosodic systems**) that the rhythm of poetry can be constructed and measured: *accentual prosody, syllabic prosody, accentual-syllabic prosody, quantitative prosody.*

Accentual prosody is rhythm typical for English language. It is characterized by the regular number of stressed syllables regardless the total number of syllables in each line. Many examples of accentual prosody can be found among nursery rhymes (their rhythmical pattern children usually intuitively accompany by clapping the hands in each stressed syllable), e. g.

Baa, baa, **black** sheep,
Have you any **wool?**
Yes, sir, **yes**, sir,
Three bags **full;**
One for the **mas**-ter,
And **one** for the **dame**,
And **one** for the **lit**-tle boy
Who **lives** down the **lane.**

Although the numbers of syllables in individual lines vary (4 – 5 – 5 – 4 – 3 – 5 – 5 – 7 – 5), the number of stressed syllables is in each line the same – 2 (in the text the stressed syllables are written in bold letters).

Syllabic prosody is rhythm created by the same number of syllables in each line, regardless the number of stresses. The example is taken from the poem "Especially When The October Wind" by Dylan Thomas. Here each line contains of 10 syllables:

Especially when the October Wind
With frosty fingers punishes my hair,
Caught by the crabbing sun I walk on fire
And cast a shadow crab upon the land,
By the sea's side, hearing the noise of birds,
hearing the raven cough in winter sticks,…

Accentual-syllabic prosody is a combination of two previous. A decisive criterion for its character is both the regular number of syllables in lines along with the regular number of stresses. In the following example taken from Robert Frost's already quoted poem "Stopping by woods on a snowy evening", there are eight syllables with four stresses (written in bold letters) in each line:

*These **woods** are **lovely**, **dark** and **deep**,*
*But **I** have **promises** to **keep**,*
*And **miles** to **go** before **I** sleep,*
*And **miles** to **go** before **I** sleep.*

Quantitative prosody is rather rare in English literature. Its rhythm is based on regular altering of long and short syllables.

The basic unit of rhythm is **foot** which usually contains one stressed syllable and several unaccented/unstressed syllables.

Traditional poetics distinguishes several types of feet (the pronunciation of particular foot's name usually suggests the rhythm itself):

- *iamb* [aiˈæmb] – unstressed +stressed, e.g. be-low, Ja-pan
- *trochee* [ˈtrəuki:] – stressed + unstressed, e.g. dou-ble, mo-ther
- *anapaest* [enəpi:st] – unstressed + unstressed + stressed,
  e.g. en-ter-tain
- *dactyl* [ˈdæktil] – stressed + unstressed + unstressed, e.g. mur-mur-ing
- *spondee* [spondi:] – stressed + stressed, e.g. pen-knife

As a type of joke, Samuel Taylor Coleridge wrote a poem illustrating five feet and their sensual effect:

> *Trochee **trips** from **long** to **short**.*
> *From **long** to **long** in solemn **sort***
> *Slow **spondee talks; strong foot! yet ill able***
> *Ever to **come** up with **Dactyl** trisyllable.*
> *Iambics **march** from **short** to **long**.*
> *With a **leap** and a **bound** the swift Anapaests **throng**.*

The regular rhythmic pattern (alternating stressed and unstressed, or short and long syllables, in regular intervals) is called **metre** (from Greek word for *measure*). According to the number of feet in a line, the following types of lines can be classified: if there is one foot in a line, it is monosyllabic line, or **monometer**; the line consisting of two feet is called *dimeter;* three feet = *trimeter;* four feet = *tetrameter;* five feet = *pentameter;* 6 feet = *hexameter;* 7 feet = *heptameter;* 8 feet = *octameter*. Lines with higher number of feet are very rare and they are referred to as "nine foot line," "ten foot line," etc.

Some of the most frequent metrical patterns in English poetry are *ballad metre* that is used in ballad stanzas, e. g. the ballad *The Wife of Usher's Well* begins as follows:

> There lived a wife at Usher's Well,
> And a wealthy wife was she;
> She had three stout and stalwart sons,
> And sent them o'er the sea.

Shakespeare wrote many of his plays and sonnets in *blank verse*[99] which consists of unrhymed ("blank") lines of iambic pentameter. The example is from a play *Hamlet*:

> O, what a rogue and peasant slave am I!
> Is it not monstrous that this player here,
> But in a fiction, in a dream of passion,
> Could force his soul so to his own conceit
> That from her working all his visage wan'd;
> Tears in his eyes, distraction in's aspect,
> A broken voice, and his whole function suiting
> With forms to his conceit? And all for nothing!

A special case is *free verse* (in French *verse libre*), which is poetry that has no fixed pattern of metre, rhyme, line length, or stanza arrangement as in the poem „I Dream'd in a Dream" by Walt Whitman:

> I DREAM'D in a dream I saw a city invincible to the attacks of the
> whole of the rest of the earth,
> I dream'd that was the new city of Friends,
> Nothing was greater there than the quality of robust love, it led
> the rest,
> It was seen every hour in the actions of the men of that city,
> And in all their looks and words.

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[99] for more detailed characteristics see
http://ca.essortment.com/blankversepoet_rjwh.htm

Rhyme

Together with rhythm, a special musical effect of poetry is attained also by **rhyme,** that is the repetition of sounds in words that appear close to each other in a poem. The most frequent type of rhyme is *end rhyme* appearing at the ends of lines. End rhymes are usually arranged into a scheme – *rhyme scheme* – that is traditionally designated by letters of the alphabet to each new rhyme (e.g. *aabb* or *abcabc*). The example is from the song by Metallica:

So close, no matter how far	a
Couldn't be much more from the heart	a
Forever trusting who we are	a
and nothing else matters	b
Never opened myself this way	c
Life is ours, we live it our way	c
All these words I don't just say	c
and nothing else matters	b
Trust I seek and I find in you	d
Every day for us something new	d
Open mind for a different view	d
and nothing else matters	b

The position of rhyme is not restricted to the end of a line. There are also *initial rhymes* (at the beginning of sequencing lines) and *internal rhymes* (repetition of sounds in the middle and the end of a line). According to the number and quality of repeated sounds, we can distinguish *perfect rhymes* (both consonants and vowels in all the rhymed syllables are identical) and *imperfect rhymes* (containing some kind of deformation of an ideal, e.g. far – heart). Moreover, *eye rhyme* involves repeating visual signs (letters) without regarding their different pronunciation, e.g. love–move. *Assonant rhyme* is based on repeating vowels while consonants are different (e.g. male – wave), and *consonant rhyme* contains identical consonants with different vowels (e.g. ship – shape, tip – top).

According to the length of rhymed parts of lines, we can distinguish: one-syllable rhyme (*masculine* or *male rhyme,* e.g. new – view, hands – lands – stands), two-syllable rhyme (*feminine* or *female rhyme*, e.g. stranger – danger, master – blaster), or longer three-syllable rhymes and four-syllable rhymes which are very rare in English poetry (e.g. laborious – victorious).

Strophe and stanza

Next point that distinguishes poetry from other literary kinds is a specific graphic appearance of words on the page, being usually arranged in lines and groups of lines (strophes). *Strophe* is the unit of several lines graphically divided from the following and preceding groups of lines. There is no limit in number of lines in one strophe, even the regular metre or rhyme is not necessary. If a strophe consists of a fixed number of lines, with a prevailing kind of metre, and a consistent rhyme scheme, it is called *stanza*.

According to number of lines in a stanza, we can distinguish: the one-line stanza, the two-line stanza (*couplet,* e.g. *heroic couplet)*, the three-line stanza (*triplet,* e.g. *terza rima)*, the four-line stanza (*quatrain,* e. g. *ballad stanza, Sapphic stanza)*, the five-line stanza (*quintet,* e.g. *limerick)*, the six-line stanza (*sestet)*, the seven-line stanzas (*septet,* e.g. *rhyme royal)*, the eight-line stanza (*octave,* e.g. *ottava rima, triolet)*, the nine-line stanza (e. g. *Spenserian stanza)*, longer stanzas (*e. g. sonnet* consisting of 14 lines, *ballade, rondel,* etc.).

Stanza is a form of paragraph in poetry. That means that one stanza should develop one idea. Some exceptions are possible, of course, e. g. when a sentence (the idea) does not end at the end of stanza but it runs on to the following stanza. The "run on verse" is called *enjambement.* If the sentence ends before the end of a line, such a pause is called *caesura.*

The examples of both can be found in the poem „somewhere i have never travelled" by ee cummings

nothing which we are to perceive in this world equals
the power of your intense fragility: whose texture
compels me with the color of its countries,
rendering death and forever with each breathing

(i do not know what it is about you that closes
and opens; only something in me understands
the voice of your eyes is deeper than all roses)
nobody, not even the rain, has such small hands

Genres of poetry

For better orientation, three types of poetry can be distinguished: *lyric poetry* (in which dominance goes to the expression of emotions), *narrative poetry* (which tells a story), and *dramatic poetry* (which is performed by a character).

The most well known genres of LYRIC POETRY, ode and elegy, originated in Greek ancient literature and they were sung and accompanied by a play of the lyre (= lyric). **Ode** is a long, serious in tone poem which celebrates love and life. **Elegy** is, analogically, long and serious poem, but, on the contrary, it is a form of lamentation about any tragic events, life situations, death. Close to ode is **hymn** which is praise to god.

In later periods, one of the most popular and frequent stanzas was a fourteen-line lyric poem called **sonnet**. There are two main types of sonnet rhyme scheme: Petrarchan (Italian) and Shakespearean (English) sonnet. **Petrarchan sonnet** is composed of fourteen lines that are divided into an octave and a sestet. The rhyme scheme is usually *abbaabba + cdecde*, or *cdccdc*. **Shakespearean** or **English sonnet** is composed of three quatrains rhyming *abab cdcd efef* and a final couplet *gg*. Writters were used to connect several sonnets into **sonnet sequences**, or cycles, that are linked by a common theme.

Genres of NARRATIVE POETRY include an **epic poem** (the most famous example is Old English *Beowulf*) that is a long poem describing adventures of great heroes and heroines. This type of poetry later developed into prose.

A very popular genre in Romantic poetry was **ballad**, based on a form of **folk ballad**, written in quatrains of strict rhyme scheme and containing specific themes, usually sad and tragic. Ballad usually contains a **refrain**.

Typical genres of DRAMATIC POETRY are **dramatic monologue** (performed by a single character to an audience), **dramatic dialogue, opera, musical comedy,** etc.

Prose

Poetic characteristics

Prose as one of three basic literary kinds is relatively opposite to poetry, mainly by its language and graphical organization. It is mainly its rather colloquial language (style) that is usually described as ordinary and words as "dull", "boring", "banal", "colourless", "common", "everyday", "matter-of-fact" are mentioned as synonymous to "prosaic".

The **language of prose** is relatively contradictory to poetry, even if it can employ tropical and figurative language and rhythm. As on-line encyclopaedia *Wikipedia* explains: "prosaic writing is simply writing that says something without necessarily trying to say it in a beautiful way or using beautiful words"[100]. It means that language of a prose work is not as "artificial" as language of prose, and it is very close to colloquial style of everyday life. Understandably, some authors use specific, poetic and highly expressive language enriched by rhymes and metrical patterns, as well as by tropes and figures of speech, but this is not a necessary and distinctive feature of prose.

As for graphical organization, the term *prose* is often used for all discourses, spoken or written, which are not patterned into lines and rhythms, although this is also possible.

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[100] http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Literature

Prosaic writing is sometimes synonymously named as *narrative prose*, as narration is one of the most typical features. The term *fiction prose* indicates the made-up plot introduced by the story, which is in opposition to *non-fiction* or *factual prose* (prose based on facts, e.g. essays, biographies, autobiographies, documentaries, etc.)[101].

The basic principle of any narration is **plot** (story), that is a series of events which, in Aristotle's simple definition, "has a beginning, a middle, and an end". Later he adds: "A beginning is that which does not itself follow anything by causal necessity, but after which something naturally is or comes to be. An end, on the contrary, is that which itself naturally follows some other thing, either by necessity, or as a rule, but has nothing following it. A middle is that which follows something as some other thing follows it. A well-constructed plot, therefore, must neither begin nor end haphazardly, but conform to these principles."[102] It means that in narration all elements (events) must be justified, functional and well-arranged. A good plot does not include any irrelevant turns, no false leads, and no misleading information (however, there are some genres based on such techniques, e. g. detective stories, anti-novel, etc.).

The plot is traditionally divided into 5 parts: it begins with *exposition* that introduces characters and conflict and the function of which is to catch reader's attention and curiosity (usually by means of *the narrative hook* = interesting situation or complicated problem). Exposition is later developed to the *rising action* with intensified conflicts. Rising action brings readers to the *climax* that is the point of the highest emotional pitch after which the *falling action* leads action to the logical result (*the resolution*) of narration. This enormously simple schema is then filled by other narrative elements that are unified by theme.

[101] cf. DAVIS, L. J.: *Factual Fictions*. The Origins of the English Novel. New York: Columbia University Press, 1983.

[102] ARISTOTLE: op. cit., http://classics.mit.edu/Aristotle/poetics.1.1.html (15.12. 2003).

Theme is the dominant idea of narration (but logically of poetry and drama, too), and not the "moral" of the story, as many students usually believe. P. Reuben[103] summarized the following characteristics of theme:

- ✓ A theme must be expressible in the form of a statement – not „motherhood" but „Motherhood sometimes has more frustration than reward".
- ✓ A theme must be stated as a generalization about life; names of characters or specific situations in the plot are not to be used when stating a theme.
- ✓ A theme must not be a generalization larger than is justified by the terms of the story.
- ✓ A theme is the central and unifying concept of the story. It must adhere to the following requirements:
    1. It must account for all the major details of the story.
    2. It must not be contradicted by any detail of the story.
    3. It must not rely on supposed facts – facts not actually stated or clearly implied by the story.

The plot is peopled by **literary characters** (the previous term "hero" is not appropriate any more and is used only in the case of ancient tragedies). One of them is usually in more important position than others providing the focus to the action – **protagonist** (*major character*). If there is a character that is in sharp opposition to the protagonist, it is marked as the antagonist. Characters of secondary importance are called **minor characters** (*figures*). The character who tells the story is called **narrator**.

For describing and developing personality of a character, authors usually use several methods of **characterisation**. If a narrator explicitly describes characters' personalities and provides direct statements and evaluation or does it through other characters, he uses *direct characterization*. However, more valued and from the literary theory's point of view more interesting is

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[103] Reuben, P. P.: "PAL: Appendix G: Elements of Fiction." *PAL: Perspectives in American Literature- A Research and Reference Guide*. http://www.csustan.edu/english/reuben/pal/append/axg.html (10.4.2004)

indirect characterization where a narrator characterizes characters by means of their utterances, thinking, behaviour, or dreams.

According to the depth of characterization, characters can be **round** (revealing complex personality, very close to living human beings) and **flat** (there is only restricted set of personal characteristics known to readers, character is like an unloving figure). The special cases are a **stock character** (highly schematized personality, e.g. a beautiful but stupid blonde girl, a cynical detective, etc.) and a **foil** (that is a character existing only to create contrast to another character). Considering a character's development and changes within a plot, characters can be **static** (character remains the same) and **dynamic** (character is under changes).

 In the role of "an engine" that moves plot of narration forward is **conflict,** which is the fight between two opposing characters, forces, ideas. Literary theory recognizes two basic types of conflicts: *external* – if a character fights against another character, society, God, etc., and *internal* – within which a character fights with himself, his own ideas, emotions, attitudes.

Literary characters, analogically to human beings, are influenced by their surrounding (they are in continual and mutual relationship) that is a part of **setting.** The fundamental elements of setting are time and place, creating thus a physical context or background for plot of the story. Setting can be very effective in creating the atmosphere and mood of the story. However, there are some literary works or genres that "resign" on a coherent setting (e. g. absurd drama and antinovel).

The narrator's relationship to the story, **point of view** or perspective, is very important for the composition of a literary work. There are several fundamental types of point of view:

1. A *third-person point of view* is the oldest and most traditional one. The narrator who knows thoughts and emotions of all characters and who is informed about all details from the history, presence and future of the story, provides a *omniscient* point of view. There are some special cases within this category: a *limited* point of view (story is told through perspective of one of

the characters but that character is referred to as "he" or "she") and *camera eye* point of view

2. If the story is told by one character referred to as "I", we speak about *first-person point of view*. Such perspective offers more personal tone giving possibility to look into narrator's mind.

3. Rather experimental is a *second-person point of view*, through which narrator directly addresses the reader.

Genres of prose

Prosaic works are sometimes classified according to their length[104] into *long prose* (usually more than 50,000 words, e. g. a novel), *intermediate prose* (more than 20,000 words, e. g. a novella, and a short story) and *short prose* (up to 20 000 words, e. g. a fable, anecdote, etc.).

Novel is a literary work of prose fiction which tells a long, rather developed and complex, story that is peopled by many characters. The first novel in Europe appeared in 1600 (*Don Quixote* by M. Cervantes) and since those times numerous subgenres have been developed. The earlier forms of novel were the **picaresque novel** (e. g. Cervantes' *Don Quixote*, Defoe's *Moll Flanders*, H. Fielding's *Tom Jones*); the **chivalric or trivial novel** and **the gothic novel** (e. g. H. Walpole's *The Castle of Otrando*, M. Shelley's *Frankenstein*; novels of R. L. Stevens, W. Scott, and E. A. Poe's short stories). Some novels are specific for their technique of writing, among them **the epistolary novel** (written in the form of letters, e.g. Richardson's *Pamela*, Bram Stoker's *Dracula*, H. Fielding's *Bridget Jones's Diary*), **the impressionistic novel** (based on modernist stream of consciousness technique, e.g. J. Joyce's *Ulysses*), **and anti-novel** (breaking all traditional rules of novel writing).

According to the theme, novels can be categorized as the **family novel** (S. Richardson's *Pamela*), **the historical novel** (W. Scott's novels *Waverley* and *Ivanhoe*), **the utopian and dystopian novels** (J. Swift's *Gulliver's Travels*; A. Huxley's *Brave New World*; G. Orwell's *Animal Farm*), **the science fiction**

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[104] cf. Franko, Š.: *Theory of Anglophonic Literatures*. Prešov: Slovacontact, 1994, pp. 126-158.

novel (J. Verne, R. Bradbury, A. Clark, I. Asimov, M. Crichton, etc.), **the adventure novel** (R. L. Stevenson; A. C. Doyle; J. London), **the detective and spy novel** (A. C. Doyle, A. Christie, I. Fleming), **the novel of travel** (e.g. H. James's *Daisy Miller*), **psychological novel** (J. Joyce, V. Woolf), **biographical novel** (I. Stone's *Lust for Life*) and many other sub-genres and their combinations.

Regarding the dominant function of the novel, the following sub-genres can be recognized: **didactic novel** (bringing new pedagogical concepts, e. g. J. J. Rousseau's *Emile*), **buildungsroman** (describing a personal development of a literary character, e. g. H. Fielding's *Tom Jones* and J. Joyce's *Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*), and **the philosophical novel** (introducing philosophical theories).

If dominant tone of narration is recognizable **the humorous novel** (e. g. Dickens's *Pickwick Papers*, Sterne's *Tristram Shandy*), **the satirical novel** (G. B. Shaw's novels), or **the ironic novel** (J. Austin's novels) can be distinguished.

Finally, according to the time of occurrence, we categorize **the sentimental novel** (e. g. books by S. Richardson and Bronte sisters), **romantic novel** (W. Scott, R. W. Emerson), **realistic novel** (Dickens, Galsworthy, Wells, Twain, Whitman, H. James, Th. Dreiser, J. Dos Passos, F. S. Fitzgerald, E. Hemingway, W. Faulkner, J. Steinbeck, J. D. Salinger, J. Jones, N. Mailer), **naturalistic novel** (J. London, Th. Dreiser, J. Dos Passos), **existential novel** (R. Ellison, W. Styron, S. Bellow, R. Wright), **postmodern novel** (J. Irving, V. Nabokov, K. Vonnegut, R. Brautigan).

A genre predecessor of the novel is **the romance.** Romances originally told stories describing adventurous life of knightly heroes and their looking for love. Nowadays, the term depicts also a story that involves some supernatural apparatus, or where the goal is affective.

The short story as a genre is a successor of **the fabliau, the exemplum** and **the legend**. It, similarly to a novel, includes all elements of narration: plot, theme, characters, setting and recognizable point of view but in reduced

measures, i.e. the plot is less complex, developing only one or two conflicts involving less characters than a novel.

The myth and the fable belong among the oldest prosaic literary genres spread in Europe. **The myth** tells the story with the aim to explain repeatedly experienced events. There are numerous myths explaining origin of the earth, planets, gods, natural phenomena, etc. myths created by the particular culture or civilizations are grouped into *mythologies* (a united system of myths). **The fable** is a very brief story with mostly animal characters, the function of which is to teach a moral, that is why a fable is usually considered as "one of the main genres of didactic literature"[105]. The famous authors of fables were Aesop, Jean de La Fontain, Ivan Krylov, George Orwell, etc.).

Another frequent genre with a long-lasting tradition is **a folk tale,** originally an orally spread prosaic genre of a specific structure and usually didactic function, with its numerous sub-genres: **animal, fantastic** (fairy), **realistic, legendary**, and **allegorical** (close to the fable or the parable).

The anecdote (introducing a brief entertaining plot), **the joke, the saying**, and **the proverb**, etc. can be named as frequent representatives of short prose.

Drama

Poetic characteristics

What differentiates **drama** from other literary kinds most is the fact that drama is primarily designed to be performed (and watched), not read (an exception is *closet drama* intended for reading only and represented for instance by Seneca's works, Milton's *Samson Agonistes* (1671), Byron's *Manfred* (1817) and other works. Drama can have the form of both prose and verse (*poetic drama*). The typical metre of poetic drama in English liter-

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[105] Franko, Š.: op. cit., p. 73.

ature is blank verse, though in the Restoration Period the most favourite metre was heroic couplet.

English scholar R. W. Corrigan in his work *The World of the Theatre* [106] formulated so-called Corrigan's Big Three, i. e characteristics that distinguish drama (theatre) from other art forms:

- **Living presence of the actor**: The audience receives the actor equally in both the empirical (a real person) and the symbolic senses (an image being of special aesthetical, usually symbolical, meaning).
- **Perpetual present tense**: In a play while on a stage, everything is happening now, in present time, however, containing its own past. Every performance is different from previous and later ones, as the external circumstances (audience, interaction between actors and audience, psychological status of actors, etc.) changes.
- **Mode of destiny**: Everything in a drama has it purpose, as nothing exists there at random. All events have their motivation and consequences that lead to purposeful conclusion.

The characteristics mentioned are fully adaptable only in traditional plays, as modern drama (in an extreme level the absurd one) tried to break these strict rules.

The term drama is usually interchanged with **a play**, which is in literary genealogy understood as both written works of dramatists and as the complete theatrical performance of such. The text of drama consists mainly of *dialogues* and *monologues*, but *a prologue, epilogue, author's preface and notes, instructions for actors, stage directions*, and *descriptions of scenes* are also its parts.

While the primary "material" of poetry and prose is language itself, drama integrates number of heterogeneous elements, such as: *stage, scenery, lighting, actors, costumes, makeup, sound, audience, publicity, theatre building, house management*, etc

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[106] Corrigan, R. W.: *The World of the Theatre*. 2nd edition. Brown & Benchmark, 1992.

To characterize composition of drama, the same headings as in the case of prose can be useful: characters, plot, setting, etc.

What has been said about **characters** in prose can be fully applied for drama as well. However, characters in drama are in exclusive position, as they are the only mediators of a dramatic text (a play) to the audience. (The special case of drama is represented by the **monodrama** played only by one actor). Actors perform the text in the form of dramatic **dialogues** or **monologues**. If a character is performing its monologue being alone on a stage, such monologue is called **soliloquy** (usually the most important ideas of a play are presented through soliloquies). A special type of dramatic monologue that is presented on the stage as if other characters cannot hear it and an actor is addressing it only to an audience is called **aside.** Aside is one of the element of **dramatic irony**, i. e. situation when the audience knows more than characters in a literary work do.

A drama piece (a play) is usually divided into several formal parts: scenes and acts. **An act** is a part of a play in which the group of actors on stage do not change. An act can consist of one or more **scenes** that is a part of a play in which localisation (on a stage) is changed. Today, one-act plays are extremely popular.

As drama has to catch an audience's attention for several dozens of minutes, its composition is usually tectonic (this composition was a custom for writers of classic dramas till the end of the 19th century). The traditional drama composition (which has been adopted in prose, as well) can be depicted by the „Freytag's triangle"[107] (Gustav Freytag, 1863):

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[107] cit. in Grmela, J. – Grmelová, A.: *Theory of Literature for Students of English: An Introduction.* Prešov: FF UPJŠ, 1983, p. 194-195.
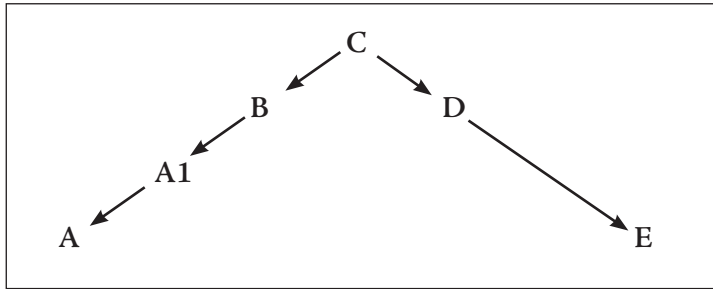
A	Introduction (exposition)
A1	Inciting moment
B	Rising action (collision)
C	Climax (crisis)
D	Falling action (peripeteia)
E	Catastrophe / Resolution

Dramatic genres

Within a literary kind of drama, two basic dramatic genres can be distinguished: tragedy and drama, both originated in ancient Greece (tragedy being even older than comedy) and standing in relative opposition to each other.

Tragedy (a term being derived from the Greek originally meaning "goat-song", as first actors wore goat skins). The origin of tragedy can be traced back to the religious rites of the early Greek mythology. Aristotle's definition of tragedy states that a tragedy is a dramatic genre which is serious and complete, consisting of incidents that arouse pity and fear with the effect of a **catharsis** (emotional cleansing). The language of tragedy is pleasurable, so appropriate to the situations occurring on a stage. The protagonist of a tragedy is always extraordinary ("better than ourselves"), facing to a threating of Destiny and tragic downfall.

In Middle Ages the genre of tragedy was enriched by several sub-genres, such as **miracle plays** (based on lives of saints), **mystery plays** (dramatisations of episodes of the Old and New Testament, e.g. *Wakefield cycle*), and

morality plays (depicting struggles between Christian, i.e. good, and non-believing, i.e. bad, way of life). As a good example of morality play *Everyman* can serve.

In the Period of Renaissance **history plays** (dramatizations of events chronicled in historical records), and **Shakespearean tragedy** were originated. In the English Renaissance literature, the most successful authors of tragedies were William Shakespeare (*Hamlet, King Lear, Macbeth, Othello, Romeo and Juliet* and others), Christopher Marlowe (*Tragedy of Dr. Faustus, Tamburlaine*), and John Webster (*The White Devil*).

In American literature tragedy is rather a rare genre; however, a great American play writer Arthur Miller created several successful modern tragedies (*The Crucible, Death of a Salesman*).

In contemporary drama two more genres can be considered as tragic subgenres: a **problem play** and an **absurd drama**. As a contemporary sub-genre of tragedy **monodrama** (a play of one actor) can be considered, as well.

In the past, any play that ended happily was marked as a **comedy**. The essential difference between tragedy and comedy is in the depiction of human nature: tragedy shows greatness in human nature and human freedom whereas comedy shows human weaknesses and limitations.

Similarly to history of tragedy, along centuries several subgenres of comedy have been developed: **commedia dell' arte** (a form of improvisational theatre originated in the 16th century in Italy and based on a rough situations and stock characters) is a genre forerunner of **situation comedy** that is very popular even today and led to development of other "integrated" forms of drama, e.g. *animated cartoons* and *professional wrestling*. The range of comedy subgenres is wider. We can name older ones, as **burlesque** (based on earthy humour and short turns in action), **grotesque** (based on exaggeration of any of dramatic elements), **masque** (originally played in masks and paying enormous attention to costumes and stage decorations), **farce** (built up the extravagant but still possible situations, mistaken identities, and vulgar verbal humour including puns and sexual allusions), **the comedy of**

manners, satiric comedy, romantic comedy, black comedy, dark comedy, high comedy, sketch comedy, slapstick, cabaret, etc.

Since the clear division of drama genres in tragedy and comedy is not always possible, mixed genres must be considered as well, e. g. as early as in the Elizabethan and Jacobean eras **tragicomedy** as a genre combining tragic and comic elements was very popular.

The special group of dramatic genres is formed by those which combine dramatic language with music (**musical theatre**). They involve **melodrama** (a play with a romantic, sensational plot containing also songs or music as interludes), **opera** (a complex genre combining text – *libretto*, music, visual art and acting), **operetta** (light, comic opera), and **musicals** (since the20th century extremely popular dramatic genre developing traditions of opera through modern dramatic and music elements, such as popular music, and procedures).

Literary Education

Silvia Pokrivčáková

Reading and studying literature is an inseparable part of general curriculum in any country. Reading texts of famous authors and subsequent disputes was the basic educational strategy from the times of Plato's Academia.

Despite the fact that literature is generally understood as a natural and unquestionable part of primary and secondary education, students still keep asking legitimate questions: Why should we study literature? What is its purpose?

The term **literary education** covers two broad areas: learning about literature and learning about life and humankind through literature. The concept is based on the belief, proved also by many researches, that using literature in education (literature-based instruction) helps all students become "better readers, writers, and thinkers"[108] (Tunnel, Jacobs, 1989). The overall aim of literary education is to prepare students for independent reading of literature and to make them critical readers.

 Literature is present in child's education from its very first day at school, or even earlier (bedtime stories, nursery rhymes, and fairy tales told by parents, children's jokes, songs, etc.). At school, literature is an integral part of literacy development, as an ideal material for training basic communication skills. Children go through four phases of early literacy development

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[108] Tunnel, M. O. – Jacobs, J. S.: "Using Real Books: Research and findings on literature-based instruction". In: *The Reading Teacher*, 42, 1989, 7, pp. 470 – 477.

(**emergent reader – early reader – early fluent reader – fluent reader**) which cover the period between the ages five to eight. The goals of this period were summarized by J. J. Pikulski and J. D. Cooper[109] as follows:

- to become both a fluent and efficient reader and writer who can make sense of and convey meaning in written language,
- to become a communicator and thinker able to analyze written information,
- to enjoy reading and writing,
- to feel successful as a user of literacy for a variety of purposes, including reading both non-literary and literary texts.

Along with developing literacy, children start developing their skills as readers of literature, because, as Charlotte Huck has it, "we don't achieve literacy and then give children literature: we achieve literacy through literature"[110].

To become a reader able to understand literature as a language art takes much longer time than entire literacy development. Describing this process, some authors name three types (or stages) of the reader[111]: **a naïve reader** identifies events in the literary text with reality, **a sentimental reader** reads literary stories sensitively, mainly through his/her emotionality, and a **critical (discursive) reader** is able to read a literary text as a sign and to construct its – personally determined – meaning.

The goals of literary education are much wider and broader than goals of literacy development. Many works by the most respected thinkers and educators of previous millenniums, including Aristotle, Quintilianus, Confucius, Augustine, Comenius, Herbart and others, are linked by the common leitmotiv: nothing contributes so much to personal growth and cultivation as the reading and studying literature. Reading literature teaches

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[109] Pikulski, J. J. – Cooper, J. D.: Issues in Literacy Development. http://www.eduplace.com/rdg/res/literacy/, 24.3.2006

[110] Huck, C. S.: "No Wider Than the Heart is Wide". In: Hickman, J. – Cullinan, B. E. (eds.): *Children's Literature in the Classroom: Weaving Charlotte's Web.* Needham Heights, MA: Christopher-Gordon Publishers, Inc., 1989, p. 258.

[111] cf. Žilka, T.: *Vademecum poetiky*. Nitra: UKF, 2006, p. 102.

us about beauty, provokes imagination and creativity (aesthetical development), gives us lessons in ethics and morality, brings relaxation, enjoyment and excitement, or as D. E. Norton wrote[112]: "Literature entices, motivates, and instructs. It opens doors of discovery and provides endless hours of adventure and enjoyment".

Literary texts are good means for the improvement of students' personal integrity. Since literary texts usually deal with serious and notable events in human life, they bring the opportunity for students/readers to confront their personal experience with what they have just read. In other words, there is no better material for the discussions about serious and crucial problems of contemporary life than literary texts.

Last but not least, reading literature fosters one's cognitive skills (understanding chronological order, cause- and-effect relationships, creating overall meaning from parts and comprehending, etc.) and gives the opportunity to examine one's **critical thinking techniques and strategies,** which is "the ability to analyse facts, generate and organise ideas, defend opinions, make comparisons, draw inferences, evaluate arguments and solve problems"[113].

Although teaching critical thinking skills can be successfully applied in a broad range of areas, literature is the subject which, when not approached from a dogmatic perspective, opens space for an almost unlimited application of creative and critical thinking strategies. They are basic constituents of literature's most natural activity – the process of interpretation (see the section on interpretation above) of its works on various levels of intellectual encounter. Moreover, many scholars see literature as a subject that provides the readers with "more opportunities than any other area of the curriculum to consider ideas, values, and ethical questions"[114]. The acts of interpreta-

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[112] NORTON, D. E.: *Through the Eyes of a Child: An Introduction to Children's Literature* (3rd ed.). New York: Macmillan Publishing Company, 1991, p. 2.

[113] CHANCE, P.: *Thinking in the classroom: A Survey of Programs.* New York: Teachers College: Columbia University, 1986, p. 6.

[114] SOMMERS, A. B. – WORTHINGTON, J. E.: "Response Guides for Teaching Children's Books". Quoted in Carr, K. S.: How Can We Teach Critical Thinking? http://www.valdosta.peachnet.edu/~whuitt/psy702/digests/critthnk.dig, 24. 3. 2000.

tion of literary works also demonstrate, more than anything else, the crucial role of the ethical aspect in critical thinking. It goes without saying that this has always been emphasised, since the time of Socrates, as one of the most important dimensions of education. Its importance, however, is strengthened by our movement towards the information age with its alienating, and often dehumanising, technological tendencies.

The application of critical thinking in literature classes is not, however, unproblematic. Having been brought up upon traditional mechanical and objectivist interpretive methods still largely dominating at many secondary schools, most students taking university literature courses expect every literary text to have one "authoritative" interpretation, usually provided by a teacher, which they are to master and consequently reproduce. As J. A. Langer has pointed out, "such traditional views rely on hierarchical notions of complexity, on text-based notions of comprehension, and on the teacher or field as knowledge-holder"[115]. Even if in her article Langer deals with the teaching of literature at American schools, the problems she identified seem to be more universal. In order to tackle the unwanted practice, Langer suggests that literary education be based upon the fostering of a different kind of literary understanding, the exploration of the so-called "horizon of possibilities":

> There is an ever-emerging "horizon of possibilities" that enriches the reader's understanding. Readers clarify ideas as they read and relate them to the growing whole; the whole informs the parts as well as the parts building toward the whole. In literary experiences, readers also continually try to go beyond the information. From the moment they begin reading, they orient themselves toward exploring possibilities -- about the characters, situations, settings, and actions -- and the ways in which they interrelate. Readers also think beyond the particular situation, using their text understandings to reflect on their own lives, on the lives of others, or on human situations and conditions in general. In doing this, they expand their breadth of understanding, leaving room for alternative interpretations, changing points of view, complex char-

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[115] LANGER, J. A.: "Critical Thinking and English Language Arts Instruction." http://cela.albany.edu/critical/index.html, 13. 3. 2003

acterizations, and unresolved questions -- questions that underlie the ambiguity inherent in the interpretation of literature.

To reach such quality of work with the text (not only in literature) is virtually impossible without individualisation, without giving students a space for independent critical reading and reflection on the work read.

Literature in teaching foreign languages

Reading and studying literature plays its role also in teaching foreign languages. Work with literary texts is important for future teachers, translators, interpreters and, naturally, philologists.

The use of literary texts belongs to some of the oldest techniques of the organised language teaching and learning. In the ancient as well as in medieval times, the languages were learned through the reading of famous treatises or literary works written in the target language (mostly Greek or Latin). The teachers strictly adhered to the grammar-translation method. The method consisted of the "direct" reading and memorising of texts, their translation to a mother tongue and a consequent acquisition of grammatical structures and rules through the examples taken from the text.

The influence of the twentieth century's reforming pedagogy deprived the grammar-translation method of its status of the most suitable language teaching method, and, consequently, weakened the position of literary texts as well. The "enemies" of using literary texts in language teaching usually point to a complicated, emotional lexis and frequent morphological and syntactic deformities in the texts' structures. Literary texts, however, regained their lost status, especially through their aesthetic qualities, rich sensuality (visualisation and audialisation), playfulness, fantasy, storytelling, humour, etc. No one would nowadays deny the fact that if teaching is methodologically well organised and carried out, literary texts provide an effective stimulus for the building of vocabulary, fixation of morpho-syntac-

tic phenomena and a purposeful development of all four communication skills: reading, speaking, listening, and writing.

The presence of literary studies in the English language curriculum brings, however, also another important asset – a possibility to teach a foreign language purposefully. Literature helps us realise that the acquisition of a foreign language should not be an ultimate end of language education, but a means for the acquisition of new ideas, for the development of cultural (as well as intercultural) understanding of universal human values. Let us illustrate this by a real experience of a British student[116] who has decided to study Russian. In the course, students were required to read a famous novel by M. Sholokhov.

> "*They were required to ´prepare´ three to four pages of the story each week for the class. During the session, the lecturer would nominate one of them to read a paragraph or two aloud and then to translate it into English. After this, he might ask a question on the content of the story. They never knew, of course, who would have to read next, and so were obliged to prepare all the four pages in great thoroughness. The problem was, the text was rather too advanced in terms of its language level for novice Russian learners such as this group. The weekly preparation took the student hours of work with a Russian/English dictionary, checking almost every other word and then writing the translation, very faintly in pencil, above the text in the book. It was arduous. She did not dare leave any word unchecked, even if she thought she knew it, just in case she got it wrong in class. After two weeks of this, a strange thing happened; the student became so interested in the story, which was of a soldier and his tragic life, that she wanted to read the novella right through to the end as quickly as possible. She worked for hours through the night until she had read the last page, at which point she dissolved in tears, as much from the effort as from emotional response to the story. She thought it was wonderful! She was moved. She wanted to read more of this author.*"

The above extract shows clearly the reason why literary texts should be used in foreign language classrooms: an interesting story attracting the students´ curiosity, their personal sense of beauty, feelings and emotions, makes learn-

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[116] SINCLAIR, B.: "Learner autonomy and literature teaching". In: CARTER, R. – McRAE, J.(eds.): *Language, Literature and the Learner*. London and New York: Longman, 1996, p. 139.

ing much more interesting and effective. A similar view was expressed by J. Collie and S. Slater in their *Literature in the Language Classroom*[117]. They claim that literary texts should be used in the language classroom because they offer not only valuable authentic material and language enrichment, but also *cultural enrichment* and *personal involvement*. Literature can help learners understand and feel into the target culture as well as "gain deeper insights into their own cultures in the same way that the study of another language helps us perceive the structure of our own"[118].

The use of literary texts in teaching foreign languages gives the teacher several more tasks:

- *to select appropriate texts*

- *to organize pre-reading activities* (especially pointing to linguistic deformities)

- *to motivate students to read and think*

- *to activate students' prior knowledge* to involve their personal attitudes, opinions, perspectives and expectations to literary text

- *to present a literary text and its critical study*

  Useful strategies used in literary education to help students learn processes of critical reading and constructing the meaning include:

  Modelling: presenting model texts and their model interpretations, demonstrating response strategies and discussions;

  Scaffolding: an advancing turn from transmission of ready-made knowledge from a teacher to students to learning literature through transaction between the teachers and students. The procedure of scaffolding is as

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[117] Collie, J. – Slater, S.: *Literature in the Language Classroom*. Cambridge: CUP, 1987.

[118] Stern, S. L.: "An Integrated Approach to Literature in ESL/EFL". In: Celce-Murcia, M.(ed.): *Teaching English as a Second or Foreign Language*. Los Angeles: University of California, 1991, p. 329.

follows: from strong teacher's support at the beginning through continual weakening of his/her help to rising students' independence. Scaffolding aims at shifting responsibility from the teacher to students).

Cooperative Learning: reading texts in groups of peers followed by cooperative activities, e. g. by group discussions, etc..

Independent reading and writing

- **to activate students' responses**

There are several ways of responding to literature: outlining, retelling, rewriting, summarizing, mapping, analyzing, generalizing, evaluating literary texts, etc.

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APPENDIX : WRITING ABOUT LITERATURE

Writing about literature is possible only after reading a literary work.

READING LITERATURE

When you read a literary work about which you plan to write, you need to use some **critical thinking skills** and **active reading strategies**: preview the work, highlighting to identify key ideas and cues to meaning; then, annotate it carefully.

As you read and take notes, recognize the different kinds of imaginative literature – short stories, novels, plays, and poems – and the special forms and characteristics of each. Focus on these special concerns of literary analysis, considering elements like a short story's plot, a poem's rhyme or meter, or a play's characters. Then,

– look for *patterns*, related groups of words, images, or ideas that run through a work,

– look for *anomalies*, unusual forms, unique uses of language, and unusual treatments of topics;

– look for *connections*, links with other literary works, with historical events, or with biographical information.

Useful advice

READING FICTION

Plot What happens in the story? What conflicts can you identify? Are they resolved? How are the events arranged? Why are they arranged in this way?

Character Who is the protagonist? The antagonist? What role do minor characters play? What are each character's most striking traits? Does the protagonist grow and change during the story? Are the charac-

ters portrayed sympathetically? How do characters interact with one another?

Setting Where and when is the story set? How does the setting influence the plot? How does it affect the characters?

Point of view Is the story told by an anonymous third-person narrator or by a character, using the first person (I or we) point of view? Is the first-person narrator trustworthy? Is the narrator a participant in the action or just a witness to the story's events? How would a different point of view change the story?

Style, Tone and Language Is the level of diction formal? Informal? Is the style straightforward or complex? Is the tone intimate or distant? What kind of imagery is used?

Theme What central theme or themes does the story explore?

READING POETRY

Voice Who is the poem's speaker? What is speaker's attitude toward the poem's subject? How would you characterize the speaker's tone?

Word Choice and Word Order What words seem important? Why? What does each word say? What does it suggest? Are any words repeated? Why? Is the poem's diction formal or informal? Is the arrangement of words conventional or unconventional?

Imagery What images are used in the poem? To what senses (sight, sound, smell, taste, or touch) do they appeal? Is one central image important? Why? Is there a pattern of related images?

Figures of speech Does the poet use simile? Metaphor? Personification? What do figures of speech contribute to the poem?

Sound Does the poem include rhyme? Where? Does it have regular metre? Does it include repeated consonants or vowel sounds? What do these elements contribute to the poem?

Form Is the poem written in open form (with no definite pattern of line length, rhyme, or meter) or in closed form (conforming to a pattern)? Why do you think this kind of form is used?

Theme What central theme or themes does the poem explore?

READING DRAMA

Plot What happens in the play? What conflicts are developed? How are they resolved? Are there any subplots? What events, if any, occur offstage?

Characters Who are the major characters? The minor characters? What relationships exist among them? What are their most distinctive traits? What do we learn about characters – from their words and actions? From the play's stage directions? From what other characters tell us? Does the main character change or grow during the course of the play?

Staging When and where is the play set? How does the scenery, props, costumes, lightning, and music work together to establish this setting? What else do these elements contribute to the play?

Theme What central theme or themes does the play explore?

WRITING ABOUT LITERATURE

Keep in mind that your task is not to discover the one correct meaning that the writer has hidden between the lines of the work. Do not assume, however, that a work can mean whatever you want it to mean; ultimately, **your interpretation must be consistent with the stylistic signals, thematic suggestions, and patterns of imagery in the text.** When you write about literature, your goal is to make a point and support it with appropriate references to the work under discussion or to related works of secondary sources. As you write, you observe the conventions of literary criticism,

which has its own vocabulary and formats. You also respond to certain discipline-specific assignments; you may:

- analyze a work
- interpret a work
-evaluate a work.

Useful Advice

Use present-tense verbs when discussing works of literature

Use past-tense verbs only when discussing historical events, when presenting historical or biographical data, or when identifying events that occurred prior to the time of the story's main action

Support all points with specific, concrete examples from the work you are discussing, briefly summarizing key events, quoting dialogue or description, describing characters or setting, or paraphrasing ides.

Combine paraphrases, summary, and quotation with your own interpretations, weaving quotations smoothly into your paper.

Be careful to acknowledge all sources, including the work or works under discussion. Also, be sure that you have quoted accurately and that you have enclosed the words of others in quotation marks.

When citing a part of a short story or novel, supply the page number. For a poem, give the line number. For drama works, supply act and/or scene number.

Avoid subjective expressions like "I feel...", "I believe...", it seems to me and in my opinion. These weaken your paper by suggesting that its ideas are "only" your opinion and have no validity in themselves.

Avoid unnecessary plot summary.

Use literary terms accurately (for example do not confuse narrator with author and vice versa).