

classical heroes. It is their Baroque concern with the human body which is as essential a part of man as is the human spirit, but with that imbalance that had made the ascetics of the time mistrust the Neoplatonic concept of human love as much as they distrusted Spanish Illuminism.

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**REMARKS ON THE CHRONOGRAPHY  
 OF TRANSITION:  
 Renaissance - Mannerism - Baroque**

**Claus Uhlig**  
 University of Marburg, Germany

It happens most naturally of course that those who undergo the shock of spiritual or intellectual change sometimes fail to recognise their debt to the deserted cause: —How much of their heroism, or other high quality, of their rejection has really been the product of what they reject?

Walter Pater, *Gaston de Latour* (1896)

For quite a while now the human mind has been trying to stem the unbounded tide of becoming in time through principles of order designed to stop time, as it were, and to divide it into readily surveyable epochs. This endeavour is not so much a product of short-lived scholarly fashions as of the temporality of human existence itself, which in passing through its various stages experiences its own history subdivided as it is into epochs<sup>1</sup>. In the same way our understanding seeks insight into history as such, seeing that every individual is imbedded in it. Therefore it would seem necessary and legitimate in every generation to question again our epochal concepts and to re-examine their validity in scholarly discourse<sup>2</sup>. In the following this will be attempted with special regard to the time-honoured discussion of the transition from the Renaissance to the Baroque. What has been achieved so far will have to be presented briefly and with a view to pointing up possible alternatives.

I

Surveying the scholarly literature in the field according to the style of argumentation and the methods employed, one cannot but notice quite disparate results. While older art historians like Alois Riegl<sup>3</sup> and Heinrich Wölfflin<sup>4</sup>, for instance, used to describe the epochal transition in question as one between two

1 Cf. Hans-Georg Gadamer, "Die Zeitanstauung des Abendlandes" (1977), in H.-G.C., *Kleine Schriften*, vol. IV (Tübingen, 1977), pp. 17-33, esp. p. 28.  
 2 Cf. August Buck (ed.), *Renaissance und Barock*, vol. I; *Neues Handbuch der Literaturwissenschaft*, vol. IX (Frankfurt/Main, 1972), p. 2; Alastair Fowler, "Periodization and Interart Analogies", *New Literary History*, 3 (1972), 487-509, esp. pp. 487ff.; and Ulrich Weisstein, *Comparative Literature and Literary Theory: Survey and Introduction* (Bloomington-London, 1973), pp. 66-98, esp. p. 67.  
 3 Alois Riegl, *Historische Grammatik der bildenden Künste* (1897/98), edd. K.M. Swoboda and O. Pächt (Graz-Köln, 1966), p. 58.  
 4 Heinrich Wölfflin, *Renaissance und Barock* (1888), ed. H. Rose (München, 1926), pp. 74-88.

more or less monolithically conceived ages, a marked change has taken place in this respect since the twenties and especially the fifties of our century, initiated above all by the introduction of the term Mannerism<sup>5</sup>. This term, generally applied to the age of transition from about 1530 to 1600 –although for England a time-lag stretching the period to the age of Milton and Marvell must of course be taken into account<sup>6</sup>–, has meanwhile been widely accepted in scholarship and criticism, in spite of the fact that the differentiations effected by it for two thirds of the 16th century should neither make the Renaissance appear more uniform than it was<sup>7</sup> nor try to usurp the terrain previously occupied by the Baroque<sup>8</sup>. Apart from this, the term Mannerism itself is problematic in both theoretical and methodological respects.

From the point of view of theory, more precisely the theory of history, we must first of all note that Mannerism is more often than not defined in a privative sense, that is to say, as decline or even crisis of the Renaissance whose inevitable Indian summer it would thus indicate. Such an interpretation, although by no means always grounded in a sufficiently thought out notion of crisis, is not only brought forward by students of sociology or social history –whose precursors are older than Marx, by the way<sup>9</sup>– but also by aesthetes<sup>10</sup> or proponents of

5 Dagobert Frey, "Probleme einer Geschichte der Kunstwissenschaft" (1958), in D.F., *Bausteine zu einer Philosophie der Kunst*, ed. G. Frey (Darmstadt, 1976), pp. 35-82, esp. p. 72; and A. Buck, *Forschungen zur romanischen Barock-literatur* (Darmstadt, 1980), p. 23.

6 Cf. Wylie Sypher, *Four Stages of Renaissance Style* (Garden City, N.Y., 1955), pp. 104f.; Franzsepp Würtenberger, *Der Manierismus* (Wien-München, 1962), p. 6; and Roy Daniells, *Milton, Mannerism and Baroque* (Toronto, 1963), p. 6.

7 Cf. Johan Huizinga, "Das Problem der Renaissance" (1920), in J.H., *Das Problem der Renaissance - Renaissance und Realismus* (Darmstadt, 21952), pp. 5-64, esp. p. 60; and Thomas M. Greene, "The Flexibility of the Self in Renaissance Literature", in P. Demetz et al. (edd.), *The Disciplines of Criticism* (New Haven-London, 1968), pp. 241-264.

8 Conservative in this sense are scholars who remain unimpressed by the boom of the concept of Mannerism. Cf. Jean Rousset, *La littérature de l'âge baroque en France: Circé et le paon* (Paris, 1953), pp. 161ff., 183-228; as well as Frank J. Warnke, *Versions of Baroque: European Literature in the Seventeenth Century* (New Haven-London, 1972), pp. 1-20, esp. p. 13.

9 Cf. in this context Herbert Weisinger, "The English Origins of the Sociological Interpretation of the Renaissance", *Journal of the History of Ideas*, 11 (1950), 321-338; as well as, with regard to actual interpretation, Arnold Hauser, *Sozialgeschichte der Kunst und Literatur* (München, 1953; repr. 1967), pp. 377-387; idem, *Der Manierismus: Die Krise der Renaissance und der Ursprung der modernen Kunst* (München, 1964), pp. 6-16; Walter Dietze, "Raum, Zeit und Klasseninhalt der Renaissance", in W. Bahner (ed.), *Renaissance, Barock, Aufklärung: Epochen- und Periodisierungsfragen* (Kronberg / Ts., 1976), pp. 72-128; Tibor Klaniczay, *Renaissance und Manierismus: Zum Verhältnis von Gesellschaftsstruktur, Poetik und Stil* (Berlin, 1977), pp. 79-211; and A. Buck, "Der Epochenwandel von der Renaissance zum Barock in den romanischen Literaturen" (1984), in A.B., *Studien zu Humanismus und Renaissance: Gesammelte Aufsätze aus den Jahren 1981-1990*, ed. Bodo Guthmüller et al. (Wiesbaden, 1991), pp. 429-450.

10 Cf. e.g., John Buxton, *Elizabethan Taste* (New York, 1966), pp. 1-38.

biologistic life cycle theories<sup>11</sup>. As for the method in evidence, Mannerism by and large owes its modern physiognomy to the so-called "mutual illumination of the arts", a procedure which, in the wake of Heinrich Wölfflin's *Principles of Art History* (1915), seeks to explore the analogies supposed to exist between works of art and architecture on the one hand and those of literature on the other<sup>12</sup>. The many unresolved tensions ensuing from this approach might well have enriched the very concept of Mannerism in that they structurally stress tendencies towards decentralization and polyperspectivism<sup>13</sup>, but certainly do appear speculative to those who, out of a sound scepticism towards the rhetoric of the humanities, regard mannerism as a mere characteristic of style rather than an epochal phenomenon<sup>14</sup>. Closely related to this view, which would of course ultimately result in historiographic defeatism, is finally the typological interpretation of mannerism as put forward by Ernst Robert Curtius and his pupil Gustav René Hocke, according to whom mannerism is an historical constant by definition transcending any epoch whatever<sup>15</sup>. As if intending to save the term for the discussion of epochs, Arnold Hauser, next to Franzsepp Würtenberger an authority on our subject, uneasily vacillates between the two approaches to mannerism, the epochal and the typological one<sup>16</sup>, for it should be clear how detrimental to the history of art and literature must be an understanding of history which –and already Heinrich Wölfflin's "periodicity of development"<sup>17</sup> creates a contradiction in

11 Cf. only Robert S. Lopez, *The Three Ages of the Italian Renaissance* (Charlottesville, Va., 1970), pp. 62f. and 64f.

12 Cf. W. Sypher, *Four Stages of Renaissance Style*, pp. 1-35, 100-179; R. Daniells, *Milton, Mannerism and Baroque*, pp. 6-50; Mario Praz, *Mnemosyne: The Parallel between Literature and the Visual Arts* (Princeton, N.J., 1970), pp. 90-108; Jost Hermand, *Literaturwissenschaft und Kunstwissenschaft* (Stuttgart, 1971), pp. 16-20; and U. Weisstein, *Comparative Literature and Literary Theory*, pp. 150-166, esp. pp. 155ff. –Critical of this approach are A. Fowler, "Periodization and Interart Analogies", pp. 489-493; and W.K. Wimsatt, *Day of the Leopards: Essays in Defense of Poems* (New Haven-London, 1976), pp. 40-56.

13 Cf. Wolfgang Drost, *Strukturen des Manierismus in Literatur und bildender Kunst: Eine Studie zu den Trauüerspielen Vincenzo Giustis (1532-1619)* (Heidelberg, 1977), pp. 27-40, esp. pp. 32ff.

14 Cf. Hugo Friedrich, *Epochen der italienischen Lyrik* (Frankfurt/Main, 1964), pp. 593-615; Davy A. Carozza, "For a Definition of Mannerism: The Hatzfeldian Thesis", *Colloquia Germanica*, 1 (1967), 66-77; Blake Lee Spahr, "Baroque and Mannerism: Epoch and Style", *ibid.*, pp. 78-100; and Friedrich Gaede, *Humanismus, Barock, Aufklärung* (Bern-München, 1971), pp. 177f.

15 Cf. Ernst Robert Curtius, *Europäische Literatur und lateinisches Mittelalter* (Bern, 21954), p. 277; as well as Gustav René Hocke, *Die Welt als Labryinth* (Hamburg, 1957); and idem, *Manierismus in der Literatur* (Hamburg, 1959).

16 Cf. A. Hauser, *Sozialgeschichte der Kunst und Literatur*, pp. 384, 408; as well as idem, *Der Manierismus*, pp. 355-358.

17 Cf. H. Wölfflin, *Kunstgeschichtliche Grundbegriffe* (Basel-Stuttgart, 131963), pp. 268-271.

terms here— sets greater store by recurrent cyclicity than by irreversible linearity, the very basis of historiography<sup>18</sup>.

If what has been said appears to aim at a metahistorical level of discussion, then for two reasons. First, to remain in keeping with our postmodern age of Neohistoricism<sup>19</sup>; second, to be able to look at the results of previous research in the fields of the Renaissance, Mannerism and the Baroque from a certain distance. To put it differently, what we learn about the mentality and world picture of Mannerism in particular is just as much a projection of the approaches and methods described as it is the signature of an epoch of transition having largely exchanged the stability assumed to prevail during the high Renaissance for ubiquitous lability<sup>20</sup>. More specifically, changes in the general outlook on life are in this context mentioned time and again, changes which are said to be tantamount to a renunciation of Renaissance anthropocentrism without having as yet reached the theocratic order of the Baroque<sup>21</sup>. The doubtful state, nay "metaphysical incompleteness of everything human"<sup>22</sup> that is thus diagnosed is then considered to correspond to a view of life characterized by insecurity, especially manifesting itself in an awareness of the passing of time, the process of ageing, and the oncoming of death, while the transcendental security associated with the age of the Baroque still bides its time<sup>23</sup>.

Among the authors whose texts serve to corroborate these and similar points we have first of all to number Montaigne<sup>24</sup>; furthermore —if it is permitted to restrict oneself to English literature for the moment— Shakespeare, Donne, Milton and Marvell. In this respect it is especially the Shakespeare of the great tragedies and problem plays who is most often laid under contribution<sup>25</sup>, whereas Milton, and that in marked contrast to the arch-mannerist Donne<sup>26</sup>, is

18 Cf. U. Weisstein, *Comparative Literature and Literary Theory*, p. 69.

19 Cf. Arnaldo Momigliano, *Historicism Revisited* (Amsterdam-London, 1974), p. 10.

20 Cf. only A. Hauser, *Sozialgeschichte*, p. 381; *Der Manierismus*, pp. 145-150; and F. Württemberg, *Der Manierismus*, p. 218.

21 Cf. Hiram Haydn, *The Counter-Renaissance* (New York, 1950), pp. 461-551; W. Sypher, *Four Stages of Renaissance Style*, pp. 17-130; A. Hauser, *Der Manierismus*, pp. 44-46, 50-52; and F. Württemberg, *Der Manierismus*, pp. 218ff.

22 Cf. Rudolf Stamm, "Englischer Literaturbarock?", in R.S. (ed.), *Die Kunstformen des Barockzeitalters* (München, 1956), pp. 383-412, esp. p. 404.

23 Cf. instead of many, F. Württemberg, *Der Manierismus*, pp. 222f.

24 Cf. A. Hauser, *Der Manierismus*, pp. 48-50.

25 Cf. R. Stamm, "Englischer Literaturbarock?", pp. 403ff.; as well as A. Hauser, *Sozialgeschichte*, pp. 453-455; *Der Manierismus*, pp. 340-346.

26 Cf. M. Praz, *Mnemosyne*, pp. 97-101; and Murray Roston, *The Soul of Wit: A Study of John Donne* (Oxford, 1974).

said to have attained, after a youthful mannerist phase, a vision of baroque grandeur in *Paradise Lost* (1667 and 1674)<sup>27</sup>.

We shall later have to return to Shakespeare and Milton. Yet what the above survey already suggests as a desideratum now is the need for terminological clarification<sup>28</sup>. On the whole, Renaissance scholarship is quite clear about this<sup>29</sup>, although it still seems to rely too much on analogy, a most precarious mode of argument at the best of times. Already back in 1736 Bishop Joseph Butler, using the method in question for theological purposes in his *Analogy of Religion*, could not but acknowledge that analogical evidence, grounded in verisimilitude as it is, only led to probability, i.e., "an imperfect kind of information", even if he had to depend upon it in his reasoning<sup>30</sup>. Kant and Goethe, on their part, likewise condoned analogy for its open and empirical quality, provided it was used with care and circumspection<sup>31</sup>. By and large, this can be averred for eighteenth-century literary critics working within the tradition of *ut pictura poesis* whose possibilities and limitations they recognized in the study of texts<sup>32</sup>. Thus it would appear that mainly our century has sinned through excess in this respect. If, however, the study of historical epochs wants to advance, at least in the field of literature, beyond the discussion of questions of mere chronology which tend to associate Mannerism at times with the late Renaissance, at times with the early Baroque, it will perhaps have to change its point of view fundamentally. That is to say, spatial categories as applied under the methodological domination of art history might well have to be replaced by temporal categories as would be fitting for the analysis of texts, the primary objects of literary history after all. It

27 Cf. W. Sypher, *Four Stages of Renaissance Style*, p. 106; R. Daniells, *Milton, Mannerism and Baroque*, pp. 19-50, 87-99, 170-193; and M. Roston, *Milton and the Baroque* (Pittsburgh, Pa., 1980). —However, there is no lack of sceptical opinion in this respect; cf. especially Roland Mushat Frye, *Milton's Imagery and the Visual Arts: Iconographic Tradition in the Epic Poems* (Princeton, N.J., 1978), pp. 6 and 17f.

28 Cf. also Ludwig Borinski, *Das Problem der Begriffsbildung in den Geisteswissenschaften*, *Berichte aus den Sitzungen der Joachim Jungius-Ges. der Wiss. e.V.*, Hamburg, Jg. 2, H.1 (Göttingen, 1984), pp. 13 and 20.

29 Cf. e.g., R. Daniells, *Milton, Mannerism and Baroque*, p. 62; John M. Steadman, *The Lamb and the Elephant: Ideal Imitation and the Context of Renaissance Allegory* (San Marino, Calif., 1974), pp. 8f., as well as A. Buck, *Forschungen zur romanischen Barockliteratur*, p. 29.

30 Cf. Joseph Butler, *The Analogy of Religion to the Constitution and Course of Nature*, ed. Joseph Angus (London, n.d.), pp. 1-12, esp. p. 5.

31 Cf. Johannes Hoffmeister (ed.), *Wörterbuch der philosophischen Begriffe* (Hamburg, 1955), pp. 34f., s.v. "Analogie".

32 See on this, with special reference to a single poem of central historical importance, Ralph Cohen, *The Art of Discrimination: Thomsons's "The Seasons" and the Language of Criticism* (London, 1964), pp. 188-193, also p. 521 of the "Index of Subjects", s.v. "analogy".

is along these lines, at any rate, that I wish to move in submitting an alternative to the customary approaches to Mannerism, while concurrently entering a plea for a temporalization of the argument.

## II

The replacement of spatially determined modes of thought which tend to enter scholarly discourse via metaphors –and talking of "transitions" or "ages of transition" inevitably is speaking metaphorically<sup>33</sup>– by temporalized concepts can only succeed if, with Martin Heidegger, one realizes that the mode of thought in question is itself a product of history, i.e., derived from the modern concept of the world as picture, as "world picture" in the interest of subjective disposability<sup>34</sup>. In order therefore to avoid being caught up in an historiographic vicious circle with regard to the epochal transition from Renaissance to Mannerism and Baroque, we should call to mind the structure of time itself. This is all the more necessary since the historical understanding of literary texts we are primarily discussing here and in the following does not only remain subject to time and change on its part<sup>35</sup>, but in view of its objects also presupposes, as we have known since Lessing's *Laokoön* (1766), a relation to time entirely different from that of artworks<sup>36</sup>.

What is more, the actual experience of time to be encountered in literature itself calls for our attention in the present context. Time as the medium of history and thus the foundation of historiography, too, is indeed very much in evidence in literature, both ancient and modern, and that in a variety of shapes. Taking for example one of the oldest literary genres, the epic, one will find there an almost metahistorical conception of time, making it stretch from past to future and thereby overarch any present with significations pointing beyond the passing moment. Such a temporal wholeness, however, was no longer conceivable by the period of the Renaissance, when fragmentation set in and the representation of reality had to allow for the eternal vicissitude of things, mutability constantly threatening to become chaos. As essentially chaotic in character, time then appeared in the experimental novel, above all in Laurence Sterne's *Tristram Shandy* (1759-67), a text that relished juggling with time, establishing a sort of

33 Cf. Alexander Demandt, *Metaphern für Geschichte: Sprachbilder und Gleichnisse im historisch-politischen Denken* (München, 1978), pp. 218-220.

34 Cf. Martin Heidegger, "Die Zeit des Weltbildes" (1938), in M.H., *Holzwege* (Frankfurt/Main, 1957), pp. 69-104, esp. pp. 81ff.

35 Cf. A. Momigliano, *Historicism Revisited*, pp. 4ff.

36 Cf. D. Frey, "Das Zeitproblem in der Bildkunst" (1955), in D.F., *Bausteine zu einer Philosophie der Kunst*, pp. 212-235.

time dialectic between the author, his characters and his readers in order to point not only, in the manner of Locke, to the subjectivity of time and duration but also to the simultaneous co-presence of past and future in the present instant of narration. To elaborate these Shandyan manipulations could, in a way, be considered the purpose of all those later novelists fascinated, like Sterne, by the riddle of time. Here Virginia Woolf with her fictive biography *Orlando* (1928) readily comes to mind. Yet, mingling subjective with objective conceptions of time quite generally is the hallmark of all fiction that, continuing the experimental strain right to our so-called 'postmodern' age, exhibits a polytemporal structure whereby it juxtaposes past, present and future, with no concern for causality and sequence –or, to put it in terms of Vladimir Nabokov's ingenious but necessarily inconclusive "chronographical" speculations about his narrator's projected *Texture of Time*, simultaneously blends memory and expectation into a composite textual medium that defies "chronography and charting"<sup>37</sup>.

Time, then, is anything but uniform. Apart from literature, as indicated, everyday experience also confirms this observation already, while the theory of history, our main concern from now on, accepts a phenomenon like the non-contemporaneity of the contemporaneous –or *vice versa*– without much questioning<sup>38</sup>. Therefore it comes as no surprise to notice that all fields of knowledge confronting the problem of time include multiple temporality among their central axioms. Very much to the point here is Krzysztof Pomian's inquiry into the nature of both "chronographie" as related to the present and "chronosophie" as related to the future, encompassing as it is quite a few areas of thought and resulting in an affirmation of time's plurality<sup>39</sup>. Hence one will likewise have to reckon with a fair number of dualities which are operative in organizing the various branches of knowledge; and in isolating one or two of these oppositions, the structure of time might perhaps become just as clear to us as the problem of literary historiography in the face of epochal change.

37 Cf. Vladimir Nabokov, *Ada or Ardor: A Family Chronicle* (New York-Toronto, 1969), pp. 535-563, esp. pp. 536, 540; idem, *Look at the Harlequins!* (London, 1975), p. 168; also Claus Uhlig, "Current Models and Theories of Literary Historiography", *Arcadia*, 22 (1987), 1-17, esp. pp. 13f.

38 Cf. only Erwin Panofsky, "Zum Problem der historischen Zeit" (1927), in E.P., *Aufsätze zu Grundfragen der Kunstwissenschaft*, edd. H. Oberer and E. Verheyen (Berlin, 1964), pp. 77-83, esp. p. 82; and Siegfried Kracauer, *History: The Last Things Before the Last* (New York, 1969), pp. 139-163, esp. pp. 147ff.

39 Cf. Krzysztof Pomian, *L'ordre du temps* (Paris, 1984), pp. V and 354: "Il existe une pluralité de temps".

As time in literature and the arts cannot be organized either chronologically or annalistically, we might, by way of hypothesis and in the wake of Niklas Luhmann, deem it useful to differentiate from the outset between the time of nature or the world on the one hand and those structures or systems which obey their own temporal logic on the other. World-time, to start with the more general notion, may then be said to exhibit homogeneity, reversibility, chronological determinateness, and transitivity for the sake of comparison between different extensions of time<sup>40</sup>. It is thus independent of tempi of change and, most debilitating from the point of view of history, by no means structured according to caesuras of sense. And no matter which kind of relationship obtains between the past, the present, and the future in world-time, it can only be governed by contingency. Systems, by contrast, possess, with regard to their temporal structuration, exactly those features found missing in world-time. That is to say, they have not forgotten their respective pasts, they have internalized them instead, thus tending of their own accord, whether by expectation or extrapolation, to reach into the future. In short, systems are historical, albeit in a rigorously selective manner<sup>41</sup>.

All this being the case, isochrony should not be expected between world-time and the time of systems; anachrony<sup>42</sup>, rather, is the normal state of affairs, marking the various types of discordance between two differing timetables. In this respect systems ultimately resist history, so long at least as history is conceived in purely chronological terms. Still, however appealing the analysis of systems might appear to the student of genuine history, it must be admitted that systems theory itself has yet to produce evidence of having mastered the theoretical problem of how systems, through generalizing of structures, may create possibilities for, say, change and innovation<sup>43</sup>. If in this context one were to ask about the contribution of Heinrich Wölfflin's heirs Henri Focillon and George Kubler who, as we may recall, agree in stressing the "systematic age" of art forms, the answer would be that they still leave us in the dark with regard to the principles of selection which not only determine the status of prime objects and replicas but also the shape of historical curves from ascent to decline<sup>44</sup>.

40 Cf. Niklas Luhmann, "Weltzeit und Systemgeschichte" (1973), in N.L., *Soziologische Aufklärung*, vol. II (Opladen, 21982), pp. 103-133, esp. p. 111.

41 Cf. *ibid.*, p. 107.

42 For the use of this term, although in a more restricted sense, cf. Gérard Genette, *Narrative Discourse*, trans. J.E. Lewin (Oxford, 1980), pp. 35f.

43 Cf. N. Luhmann, *Soziologische Aufklärung*, vol. II, 114f.

44 Cf. Henri Focillon, *Vie des formes* (Paris, 41955), pp. 80-95; and George Kubler, *The Shape of Time: Remarks on the History of Things* (New Haven, 1962), esp. pp. 39-45 on the "diagnostic difficulties" to be expected in this area of study.

Ascent and decline: add to these progress, decadence acceleration, or retardation, and you have seized upon further phenomena to be observed in the study of any social, political, cultural, or literary system. Ill discriminated they were encountered by us above all in the discussion of Mannerism as crisis. But what can be observed and described on the phenomenological level is not necessarily understood in conceptual terms. For it is important now that the phenomena mentioned should, in the sphere of cognition, be viewed as temporal modes of experience with a history of their own. And it would be the particular task of an historical semantics to elucidate the meaning of these modes of experience for the benefit of scholarly discourse<sup>45</sup>. And such an historical semantics could in turn serve as the basis for a theory of historical times which from the present point of view would appear to be the real desideratum. Its domain, however, as is clear from the above distinction between world-time and systematic time, will not be chronology but chronography.

To illustrate very briefly what is meant here, one of the prime tasks of a theory of historical times conceived along chronographic lines would certainly consist in making intelligible the transformation of the temporal modes of experience mentioned into formal categories of chronography such as irreversibility or asynchrony within apparent simultaneity<sup>46</sup>. It is equally clear that any such attempt could not dispense with the example set by the French *Annales* historians who, by methodically dividing up time into *longue durée*, *moyenne durée*, *temps court* as well as *conjoncture*, have more than once brought out the complications of temporal multi-dimensionality in terms of both theory and practice<sup>47</sup>.

Still, all of this is not yet the last word for the literary historian. For he immediately takes for granted that the system of literature, characterized as it is among other things by recurrent themes and long-lived genres, quite regularly tends to follow its own timetable, thus often coming into conflict with the calendric time of the world surrounding it<sup>48</sup>. In addition to that, he further realizes that texts as smallest units of this selfsame literary system do in fact have a temporal structure of their own.

45 Cf. in this context G.W. Trompf, *The Idea of Historical Recurrence in Western Thought: From Antiquity to the Reformation* (Berkeley-Los Angeles-London, 1979); Reinhart Koselleck (ed.), *Historische Semantik und Begriffsgeschichte* (Stuttgart, 1979); as well as R. Koselleck and Paul Widmer (edd.), *Niedergang: Studien zu einem geschichtlichen Thema* (Stuttgart, 1980).

46 Cf. R. Koselleck, *Vergangene Zukunft: Zur Semantik geschichtlicher Zeiten* (Frankfurt/Main, 1979), pp. 130-143, esp. p. 132.

47 Cf. in this context only Traian Stoianovich, *French Historical Method: The "Annales" Paradigm* (Ithaca-London, 1976), esp. pp. 106-112 on Fernand Braudel's notion of *longue durée*.

48 Cf. Claudio Guillén, *Literature as System: Essays Toward the Theory of Literary History* (Princeton, N.J., 1971), pp. 375-469.

Put more precisely, any present text is embedded in time in a fourfold manner even, since both past and future inform a given text's present in a double sense. Thus the past may first of all surface intertextually in the present through quotation or allusion, whereby a stratum of residual meaning is pointed to. A somewhat more complicated mode of the past's presence in new texts is secondly that of latency which bears upon a future actualization of the past as opposed to the present past just mentioned. Walter Pater seems to have this in mind when in describing his ideal type of character he writes: "A magnificent intellectual force is latent within it" —a force which is then said to operate through reminiscence and anticipation<sup>49</sup>. As for the future in a present text, its most immediate mode of existence would be virtuality. Especially utopian thinkers concern themselves with this form of the future's presence in the present; witness next to Ernst Bloch's well-known "anticipatory vision" ("Vor-Schein")<sup>50</sup> also Mikhail M. Bakhtin's concept of "historical inversion". "Historical inversion", according to Bakhtin, enriches the bygone at the expense of the future by transferring everything desirable into a more authentic past, which on account of its presence in the present must thus add to the latter's fullness of time, i.e., future time<sup>51</sup>. Still regarding the future we may finally point to the potential layer of meaning in texts, a layer which, though often hidden to contemporary readers, will eventually be discovered<sup>52</sup>, so that the future not yet come will one day be in a position to change its mode of existence from potentiality to actuality.

The described fourfold temporality of literary texts in their specific present now does not only throw light on a most complex interaction of past and present to form a multi-layered textual presence but also on the fact that any text's actuality must be regarded as a direct result of its historicity. The textual model introduced may further help us to perceive the difference between the history of literature and the history of events, inasmuch as the latter, provided we can trust the historian J.H. Plumb, is neither interested in the future nor in

49 Walter Pater, "Diaphaneität" (1864), in W.P., *Miscellaneous Studies*, New Library Edition (London, 1910), pp. 247-254, esp. p. 250. As to latent possibilities in literary texts, see also I.A. Richards, *Coleridge on Imagination* (London, 1934), p. 90.

50 Cf. Ernst Bloch, *Das Prinzip Hoffnung*, 3 vols. (Frankfurt/Main, 191978), I, 242-258. For a critique of the utopian concept of "Vor-Schein" as depriving any given present of its own right of existence, see Hans Jonas, *Das Prinzip Verantwortung: Versuch einer Ethik für die technologische Zivilisation* (Frankfurt/Main, 21992), pp. 376-387.

51 Cf. Mikhail M. Bakhtin, *The Dialogic Imagination*, ed. M. Holquist, trans. C. Emerson and M. Holquist (Austin-London, 1981), p. 147.

52 Cf. Arthur C. Danto, *The Transfiguration of the Commonplace: A Philosophy of Art* (Cambridge, Mass., 1981), p. 43; as well as M.M. Bakhtin, *The Dialogic Imagination*, p. 257.

the past properly speaking<sup>53</sup>. If this obviously does not apply to the literary historian, his task does not become any easier for that matter —especially with regard to the problem of epochal change. Seeing, moreover, that *Annales*-historiography has so far been more eloquent on continuity than on change and that systems theory as such has not yet been able to come up with definite results either, we are sharply confronted with the question of how that which is so multi-layered in itself, that is, texts in their full temporality, can possibly become a vehicle or even indicator of such complex historical processes as epochal transitions must be considered to be. More or less thrown back on its own resources the chronographic approach will thus have to prove, albeit in conjunction with the textual model described in the foregoing, whether it can cope with the problem of change.

### III

It is customary to regard change as a dynamic notion and to contrast it with static concepts. But let us from the outset guard against simplistic oppositions such as we still find, for example, in the association of Mannerism with hecticness, supposedly in contrast to the statics of the Renaissance and the dynamics of the Baroque<sup>54</sup>. For in reality change occurs in a great variety of ways since we may, to mention the extremes only, experience it both as formless "continuity-in-mutability"<sup>55</sup> and as catastrophe which all of a sudden reveals life as discontinuous and acts as the caesura dear to historians wanting to give an ordered shape to time.

But does this explain change? "The knowledge of the mechanics of historical change is far more profound than it was two generations ago", affirms J.H. Plumb<sup>56</sup>. Here doubts are warranted. If Wölfflin, for instance, in trying to come to terms with the problem of stylistic change did not succeed during his entire life in reconciling periodic and cyclical with teleological and linear motifs of thought<sup>57</sup>, then it is not surprising to encounter a similar position still held today, especially with those who staunchly believe in a wholly "intra-

53 Cf. J.H. Plumb, *The Death of the Past* (London, 1969), pp. 102-145, esp. p. 144.

54 Cf. W. Drost, *Strukturen des Manierismus in Literatur und bildender Kunst*, p. 173.

55 C.S. Lewis, "De Descriptione Temporum" (1955), in C.S.L., *Selected Literary Essays*, ed. W. Hooper (Cambridge, 1969), pp. 1-14, esp. p. 2.

56 J.H. Plumb, *The Death of the Past*, p. 144.

57 Cf. H. Wölfflin, *Renaissance und Barock*, pp. 74-88; idem, *Kunstgeschichtliche Grundbegriffe*, pp. 266-272; as well as, critical of Wölfflin, Michael Podro, *The Critical Historians of Art* (New Haven-London, 1982), pp. 98-151.

artistic" notion of change<sup>58</sup>. As against this, it is of course not sufficient to emphatically stress external conditions which Hauser invokes to counter Wölfflin<sup>59</sup>; for it is important to see that what is new in any development is not absolutely determined by what went before, but enjoys, by way of addition, evocation or variation, quite a degree of freedom in the face of the past<sup>60</sup>. Nor shall we become any the wiser by conceiving of change in terms of deprivation and decline, for, if anything, this conception betrays –and this ultimately also holds good for Bakhtin's generically employed *chronotope*– nothing but a nostalgia for a lost "spatial and temporal material wholeness of the world" which, as such, probably never existed<sup>61</sup>. Finally, as regards Michel Foucault's much-quoted *épistémè*, it must be said that this methodological concept might well have served its purpose in registering epochal differences –such as, for example, between Renaissance analogizing and baroque as well as classicist representation–, but has so far been unable to explain change<sup>62</sup>.

Thus there seems to be no alternative to description in dealing with the problem of change<sup>63</sup>. Let us take consolation from a statement of Michael Oakeshott's, to the effect that "history accounts for change by means of a full account of change". True enough, but hardly satisfactory for chronographic purposes. And Michael Stanford does not appear to be more helpful either when, writing on change as history's most characteristic attribute, he singles out physical nature, human nature, and rational intention, although not overlooking "the logic of their interactions", as sufficient to explain the processes of change in the historical field<sup>64</sup>. Yet he is nearer the mark when, somewhat later, he comments upon the opposition between the "horizontal world" we live in and the "verticalities of time" that hide the secret of change, not to be uncovered by the traditional narrative of historians, though<sup>65</sup>. Under these circumstances, then, we would perhaps be well advised to go back to Aristotle and remember his

58 Cf. H. Friedrich, *Epochen der italienischen Lyrik*, p. 613.

59 Cf. A. Hauser, *Sozialgeschichte der Kunst und Literatur*, pp. 462f; as well as, in a more differentiating way, idem, *Der Manierismus*, pp. 147f.

60 Cf. M. Podro, *The Critical Historians of Art*, pp. 136-140.

61 Cf. M.M. Bakhtin, *The Dialogic Imagination*, pp. 84-258, esp. pp. 84f., 166, 206-224.

62 Cf. Michel Foucault, *Les mots et les choses* (Paris, 1966), p. 13; idem, *Die Ordnung der Dinge*, trans. U. Köppen (Frankfurt/Main, 1974), esp. pp. 13f. on the problem of causality in the sense indicated; as well as idem, *L'archéologie du savoir* (Paris, 1969), pp. 248-251.

63 Michael Oakeshott, *Experience and Its Modes* (Cambridge, 1933), p. 143; quoted and criticized by Maurice Mandelbaum, *The Anatomy of Historical Knowledge* (Baltimore-London, 1977), p. 110.

64 Cf. Michael Stanford, *The Nature of Historical Knowledge* (Oxford, 1986; repr. 1990), pp. 37-41, esp. p. 41.

65 Cf. *ibid.*, pp. 124f.

insight into the nature of change, whereby an analysis of the phenomenon is said to involve three terms: namely, a subject remaining unspecified, a field, time, and a final term, the result of the process<sup>66</sup>. Since therefore, according to him, "all that changes changes in time"<sup>67</sup> –one of the reasons, by the way, why a temporalization of the argument is called for in our present context–, conceptions of time itself must inevitably enter any discussion of change.

To be sure, in our day and age complex temporal entities are no longer studied by means of holistic approaches but, to use a phrase of Karl R. Popper's, through "piecemeal" ones<sup>68</sup>. This is clearly in harmony with our well-grounded mistrust of monistic views. Thus, wherever we look –and this holds good for the humanities as well as for the natural sciences–, we find pluralistic approaches<sup>69</sup>. Methodologically this often involves the breaking down of complex entities into their constituent parts, whence the investigation proceeds to study the various interrelationships between particularized items. This way new though different and as a rule smaller entities are built up. As for the problem of epochal change, it follows that convincing mediation between the structures of long duration on the one hand, and the events of shorter duration on the other, although envisaged by *Annales* historians already, remains of crucial importance. Now the mediating notion we stand in need of is that of "series"; and since change is never free-wheeling, everything depends on how we define "series". In other words, it is only through the notion of a series of events that, to condense a long and mainly French debate on the exact relationship between structure or system and event<sup>70</sup>, world-time could ultimately become amenable to systematic time, or *vice versa*, so that *longue durée* and *temps court*, by interacting with each other, could simultaneously be said to generate change. At any rate, such a conception is tantamount to transforming a chronological impasse into a well-defined chronographic problem.

66 Cf. Aristotle, *Physics*, VI, 236b5. For this and the subsequent reference, see C. Guillén, "Literary Change and Multiple Duration", *Comparative Literature Studies*, 6 (1977), 100-118, esp. p. 112.

67 Aristotle, *Physics*, VI, 236b20.

68 Cf. Karl R. Popper, *The Poverty of Historicism* (London, 1957; repr. 1974), pp. 64-70.

69 Apart from C. Guillén, as cited above, n. 66, cf. also Julian H. Steward, *Theory of Culture Change: The Methodology of Multilinear Evolution* (Urbana, Ill., 1955; repr. 1976), pp. 11-29; and H. Kalmus, "The Measurement of Biological and Social Changes", in J.T. Fraser et al. (edd.), *The Study of Time*, vol. III (New York-Heidelberg-Berlin, 1978), pp. 237-264.

70 For more detail regarding the debate in question, see T. Stoianovich, *French Historical Method*, pp. 204-231; M. Mandelbaum, *The Anatomy of Historical Knowledge*, pp. 137-142; and R. Koselleck, *Vergangene Zukunft*, pp. 144-157.

For a problem it remains, at least as long as series, justly considered to be temporal systems in their own right, are studied in isolation from the world's larger time scheme still surrounding them. Over against this, it is, I submit, precisely the chronographic approach which should make us see how two or even more segments of different temporal systems intersect with each other. This assertion might perhaps seem less abstract when compared to the process of alloying metals. For, investigating the nature of material structure and structural change, the metallurgist and theoretician of the arts Cyril Stanley Smith has been stressing interaction and compatibility in describing the "mechanics of change". He writes:

One cannot overemphasize the fact that *everything* –meaning and value as well as appropriateness of individual human conduct or the energy state of an atom –depends upon the interaction of the thing itself and its environment. The drive for both stability and change is the minimization of free energy in a physical system and, in a social system, something like unhappiness or dissatisfaction –both summed, not averaged or individually measured. The mechanism of change is by transfer across the interface, each atom making its own choice, and quickly being brought back if not supported by compatible choices on the part of its neighbors<sup>71</sup>.

The precise location of change would thus always be the "interface", which in terms of chronography can only mean the point of intersection between world-time and the time of systems. Yet utmost care has to be taken that the extension or point of time chosen to unite the two for a while does not comprise loosely correlated components but only strictly compatible ones. As a consequence of this, the use of the concept of "crisis" in historiographic discourse above all would have to answer the principle of compatibility which this way could act as a necessary corrective to premature theories of interaction<sup>72</sup>. Similarly, "interart analogies" should be employed with the greatest care seeing that, paradoxically, the more specific they appear to be, the sooner they lead to global constructs like

71 Cf. C.S. Smith, *A Search for Structure: Selected Essays on Science, Art, and History* (Cambridge, Mass., 1981), pp. 358-390, esp. p. 381. For the necessary stress on "interaction", see also T. Stoianovich, *French Historical Method*, p. 222 (quoting Paul Veyne and Arthur C. Danto); as well as M. Stanford, *The Nature of Historical Knowledge*, p. 186.

72 Cf. in this context the differentiations brought to the discussion of the concept of crisis by Rudolf Vierhaus, "Geschichtswissenschaft: Situation - Funktion - Aufgabe", *Wirtschaft und Wissenschaft*, 3 (1975), 17-20. Cf. further Ricuad Wollheim, *Art and Its Objects* (Cambridge, 21980), pp. 150f.

"time-spirit", "epochal mentality", or even, most ambitiously, "architexture" of an era<sup>73</sup>, without transforming analogic juxtaposition into functional correlation.

To give an example: Milton scholarship has tried, and that not only since Murray Roston, to work out parallels between the poet's art and that of the Baroque, referring especially to specific churches in Rome to explain the cosmic vision of *Paradise Lost*<sup>74</sup>. In this context, the problem of how to define the Baroque has been raised again –one of the results being not to rely so much on either monarchic absolutism or Counter-Reformation impulses as on the new cosmology to account for the oncoming of the epoch. Though far from being alone with this thesis<sup>75</sup>, Roston surely has gone further than anybody else when he seeks, for instance, to establish a direct historical relationship between the elliptical paths of the planets as discovered by Kepler and the architecture of Borromini's S. Carlo alle quattro Fontane as well as Bernini's S. Andrea al Quirinale, likewise based on the ellipse<sup>76</sup>. If thus an event in the history of natural science were really to interact with medium-range developments in architecture and the long tradition of the epic which finally culminates in *Paradise Lost*, then change would indeed not only be indicated factually but also understood chronographically. But unfortunately Roston's thesis is not tenable. Quite apart from chronological discrepancies –Vignola's oval dome over an oblong groundplan in S. Andrea in via Flaminia (1552), for instance, antedates Kepler's discovery as published in the *Astronomia nova* (1609) by more than half a century<sup>77</sup>–, any talk of "baroque" or "mannerist infinity" respectively must on the one hand take into account Kepler's metaphysical conservatism<sup>78</sup> and on the other not be oblivious of the fact that Bernini and Borromini were not of one mind with regard to the oval form<sup>79</sup>. What's more, mannerist art theory itself, when dealing with church architecture, either still adheres to the circle of the Renaissance or, particularly with Lomazzo and Zuccari, at least continues to construe the new hybrid of the oval so rich in

73 As to the last term, cf. Mary Ann Caws, *The Eye in the Text: Essays on Perception, Mannerist to Modern* (Princeton, N.J., 1981), referred to by Murray Roston, *Renaissance Perspectives in Literature and the Visual Arts* (Princeton, N.J., 1987), p. 4, n. 3 (on p. 343).

74 Cf. above all R. Daniells, *Milton, Mannerism and Baroque*, pp. 170-193; and M. Roston, *Milton and the Baroque*, pp. 23-25 as well as 29-34.

75 Cf. already W. Sypher, *Four Stages of Renaissance Style*, pp. 134f.; and A. Hauser, *Der Manierismus*, pp. 44-48.

76 Cf. M. Roston, *Milton and the Baroque*, pp. 22-25.

77 Cf. H. Wölfflin, *Renaissance und Barock*, p. 91.

78 Cf. Alexandre Koyré, *From the Closed World to the Infinite Universe* (Baltimore-London, 1957; repr. 1970), pp. 58-87.

79 Cf. M. Praz, *Mnemopsyne*, pp. 136f.



tensions along anthropometric lines in the sense of the preceding epoch<sup>80</sup>. Seeing that it is therefore impossible to associate oval groundplans with Keplerian ellipses, it should be mentioned in the end that Milton on his part vacillates between the old and the new astronomy in *Paradise Lost*, undecidedly speaking of both "centric" and "eccentric" with reference to the movement of the heavenly bodies<sup>81</sup>. Again this does not encourage attempts at monocausal explanations of his universe which is as eclectic as it is spacious.

So much for the refutation of a most stimulating thesis which precisely on account of its questionable nature makes clear that the chronographic compatibility it is necessary to insist upon is defined by the convergence of different segments of time. That is, only through the interaction of systematic time's linearity with world-time's cyclicity will an adequate understanding of epochal changes or transitions be guaranteed.

## IV

In closing, it seems indicated to look at the textual model introduced above in the light of our temporalization of the argument with a view to commenting upon its heuristic value for literary history.

As we have seen, literary texts possess a rather complex temporal structure. Besides, they are vulnerable, and that on account of four basic conditions of language itself: "its historicity, its dialogic function, its referential function, and its dependence on figuration"<sup>82</sup>. Furthermore, while struggling to stand the test of time, they are liable to suffer from opinion and prejudice, two forces that may either admit them to, or exclude them from, the canon<sup>83</sup>, let alone the basic fact that what is made of them depends to a large extent upon "the skill and

80 Cf. Anthony Blunt, *Artistic Theory in Italy 1450-1660* (Oxford, 1940; repr. 1980), pp. 129f.; and F. Württemberg, *Der Manierismus*, p. 84.

81 Cf. John Milton, *Paradise Lost*, III, 575; V, 623; VIII, 83f.; X, 671. Cf. further the relevant commentary in J. Milton, *Complete Poems and Major Prose*, ed. Merritt y Hughes (New York, 1957), pp. 272, 317, 364, 422; as well as in *The Poems of John Milton*, edd. John Carey and A. Fowler (London, 1968), pp. 596, 715, 818, 961. Cf., additionally, Kester Svendsen, *Milton and Science* (Cambridge, Mass., 1956; repr. New York, 1969), pp. 61-79; Marjorie H. Nicolson, *The Breaking of the Circle*, rev. ed. (New York, 1960), pp. 172f.; 182-188; and M. Roston, *Milton and the Baroque*, pp. 29-40.

82 Cf. T.M. Greene, *The Vulnerable Text: Essays on Renaissance Literature* (New York, 1986), pp. 99-115, esp. p. 100.

83 For the issues involved here, see Anthony Savile, *The Test of Time: An Essay in Philosophical Aesthetics* (Oxford, 1982), pp. 60-85, esp. p. 60; as well as Frank Kermode, *Forms of Attention* (Chicago-London, 1985), pp. 65-93, esp. p. 74.

prepossessions of the reader"<sup>84</sup>. If, then, it goes without saying that these circumstances, in addition to their complex temporality, complicate their role as vehicles for epochal characteristics, it might still not be quite clear where exactly, in terms of the chronographic mode of argument, the methodological problem encountered here lies. Provided we are not deceived entirely, the obstacle seems to lie primarily in the fact that literary texts have preserved the stages of their becoming in the form of present strata of being. In order therefore to inquire into their epochal quality yet another transformation is called for, although it will have to differ completely from the "despatialization" of our thought as postulated in the beginning. For what is at issue now has been well put by Roland Barthes when, in writing on the discourse of history, he suggested that we "dechronologize" the linear "thread" of history and restore to time its "spatial depth":

To sum up, the presence in historical narration of explicit signs of uttering would represent an attempt to 'dechronologize' the 'thread' of history and to restore, even though it may merely be a matter of reminiscence or nostalgia, a form of time that is complex, parametric and not in the least linear: a form of time whose spatial depths recall the mythic time of the ancient cosmogonies, which was also linked in its essence to the words of the poet and the soothsayer<sup>85</sup>.

Discarding for the time being Barthes's interest in mythological depth structures, his suggestion cannot, in our present context, but amount to transforming the chronography of historical times into the stratigraphy of texts which comprise the various layers of time in simultaneous presence. For the sake of clarity it should be added, however, that this procedure is sharply to be distinguished from the old Neo-critical concept of "spatial form" as first propounded by Joseph Frank and subsequently criticized on existential, aesthetic, and historical grounds by other scholars more concerned about the temporality of texts than the basically ahistorical modernists whose works had lent support to the concept in the first place<sup>86</sup>. Contrary to this view, it is now precisely time

84 Cf. I.A. Richards, *Coleridge on Imagination*, p. 84.

85 R. Barthes, "Le discours de l'histoire", *Social Science Information*, 6 (1967), 65-75; cited to "The Discourse of History", trans. S. Bann, in *Comparative Criticism: A Yearbook*, 3 (1981), 3-20, esp. p. 10.

86 Cf. Joseph Frank, "Spatial Form in Modern Literature" (1945), in J.F. *The Widening Gyre: Crisis and Mastery in Modern Literature* (New Brunswick, N.J., 1963), pp. 3-62, esp. pp. 54-60. For a critique in the former sense, see William V. Spanos, "Modern Literary Criticism and the Spatialization of Time: An Existential Critique", *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism*, 29 (1970), 87-104; and, for objections on the latter score, see W. Wolfgang Holdheim, "Aesthetics and History: Convergence and Paradox" (1973), in W.W.H., *The Hermeneutic Mode: Essays on Time in Literature and Literary Theory* (Ithaca-London, 1984), pp. 161-172, esp. p. 171.

that is made visible, so to speak, in any given text under scrutiny, albeit in a structurally transformed guise. And to synchronize diachrony in the manner indicated would not only mean replacing the horizontal perspective by the vertical one but further entitle us to view texts as palimpsests<sup>87</sup> to be studied microscopically, decipherable only by what has been aptly called "thick description"<sup>88</sup>.

What this method of "thick description" might be capable of bringing to light could well be a realization that literary texts, in view of their fourfold temporality as outlined above, do indeed, chronographically speaking, not only mark the points of intersection of different systems or segments of time but also stand the tension ensuing from this. Thus, depending on the mode of temporality which is important now, they are to be regarded as stable when in their respective present they comprise the past as only residually present and the future as only virtually so. They tend to become metastable as soon as they, in contrast to these relatively unproblematic modes of presence, lapse into those of latency or potentiality as their dominant temporal form. At this point they also become prone to interact with either adjacent texts within their immediate system or related evidence in compatible systems. In this respect textual change is comparable to linguistic change, insofar as the latter has been accounted for by polysemy<sup>89</sup>. For where there is cumulative meaning or, for that matter, multi-layered temporality, a shift in the direction of metastability becomes inevitable, even if, as a rule, structures or systems will immediately strive for equilibrium again. Should this be slow in coming, we are bound to speak of arrested change which is to be distinguished from completed change like "no more" from "not yet". With all this we have prepared the way –and you have been in the know all the time –for the definition of a mannerist text, seeing that such a text, in view of its temporality, is characterized above all by its dependence upon the immediately preceding past, clinging to it even to the point of missing its own present, without as yet reaching into the future. Since under a temporal perspective latency takes pride of place over potentiality in mannerist texts, they inhabit a space in between which cannot be called arrival but must remain transition instead. What has been said so far might, despite terminological scepticism in

87 Cf. in this context C. Uhlig, *Theorie der Literaturhistorie: Prinzipien und Paradigmen* (Heidelberg, 1982), pp. 87-99.

88 For the notion of "thick description", see Gilbert Ryle, *Collected Papers*, vol. II (London, 1971), pp. 465-496; as well as Clifford Geertz, *The Interpretation of Cultures* (New York, 1973), p. 6; and Geoffrey H. Hartman, *Criticism in the Wilderness: The Study of Literature Today* (New Haven-London, 1980), pp. 300ff.

89 Cf. Paul Ricoeur, *The Rule of Metaphor*, trans. R. Czerny (London, 1978), pp. 116f.

some quarters, be buttressed and rendered more plausible by the academic theories of mannerism itself, especially when, as in the writings of Lomazzo and Armenini, discussing the concept of *maniera* which to all intents and purposes was held to fulfil a retrospective function<sup>90</sup>. Yet true legitimation is, of course, only to be had through renewed exemplification, be it ever so fragmentary for the moment.

Suffice it therefore to glance, by way of conclusion, at Shakespeare and Milton in order to cull from their work some of the features characteristic of texts situated at points of epochal transition. Caught up in the temporal modes of latency and potentiality, such texts tend, as is evident throughout, to more or less refined variations of bygone literary conventions without, however, being the new already. Take for instance Shakespeare's *Hamlet* (ca. 1600), a play indebted both to the tradition of Elizabethan revenge tragedy and the widespread pessimism of the sixteenth century at its close, and you will notice that the dramatist did not make revenge his theme but its absence or delay instead. That way and by an additional mannerist device such as the play-within-the-play of the third act he achieved a spiritualization of the action<sup>91</sup> which on account of the extreme literary awareness it betrays constitutes a manner in the highest sense<sup>92</sup>. Yet another convention drawn upon manneristically by Shakespeare during his career would be pastoral poetry. Having summed up, in *As You Like It* (ca. 1600), the possibilities of this popular Renaissance genre, establishing above all its thematic structure as the contrast between expulsion and reconciliation, he varies it in the tragedy *King Lear* (ca. 1605) by negation, thence proceeding, in romances like *The Winter's Tale* (ca. 1610) or *The Tempest* (ca. 1611), to a final use of a form worn-out through excessive stylization by the time of his last plays<sup>93</sup>.

90 Cf. A. Blunt, *Artistic Theory in Italy 1450-1660*, pp. 154-157, and, for the reluctance to identify *maniera* with Mannerism, see John Shearman, *Mannerism* (Baltimore, 1967), as quoted by David Rosand, "Art History and Criticism: The Past as Present", *New Literary History*, 5 (1974), 435-445, esp. p. 436, n. 3.

91 Cf. here, instead of many, C. Uhlig, *Traditionelle Denkformen in Shakespeares tragischer Kunst* (Hamburg, 1967), pp. 28-36; as well as A. Fowler, *Kinds of Literature: An Introduction to the Theory of Genres and Modes* (Oxford, 1982), p. 180; and on the subject of sixteenth-century pessimism, cf., besides H. Haydn, *The Counter-Renaissance*, esp. pp. 619-636 on *Hamlet*, quite generally Robert S. Kinsman (ed.), *The Darker Vision of the Renaissance* (Berkeley-Los Angeles-London, 1974).

92 Cf. R. Stamm, "Englischer Literaturbarock?", p. 404.

93 Cf. David Young, *The Heart's Forest: A Study of Shakespeare's Pastoral Plays* (New Haven-London, 1972).

While Shakespeare stays within the boundaries of the Renaissance and of Mannerism, Milton's work, in its earlier stages still harking back to the Renaissance and equally exhibiting obvious mannerist traits, later reaches into the Baroque. This fact, further complicated through Milton's active involvement in the Puritan Revolution, made it difficult for criticism, especially when relying on purely stylistic or chronological criteria, to situate the poet properly in time. Thus one of the best Milton scholars, in discussing the early masque *Comus* (1634), vacillates inconclusively between terms like "pastoral" or "operatic" and "recital" or "mannerist display"<sup>94</sup>. Now, since none of these designations is actually wrong, we are once more forcefully reminded not only to differentiate clearly between generic and epochal denotations but, especially with Milton's *chef-d'oeuvre* *Paradise Lost* (1667 and 1674) in mind, also to accept generic complexity as a feature of mannerist texts, which ostentatiously refer back to the latent possibilities of the literary past by either concentrating or amplifying imitation<sup>95</sup>. Moreover, seeing that they mostly remain, as it were anachronistically, in this retrospective attitude, they at the same time give evidence—although this applies much less to Milton's late poem *Paradise Regained* (1671) than to *Paradise Lost*, this critical dialogue with the epic tradition at large—of their being prime witnesses of transition whose precarious presence may be regarded as the chronographic product of the many ambiguous tensions between the times.

Toward the end of his learned complaint about "The Fall of Literary History", René Wellek wrote: "What is needed is a modern concept of time, modeled on an interpenetration of the causal order in experience and memory"<sup>96</sup>. Now, *pace* Nabokov, I am not certain whether I have heeded this injunction sufficiently in pondering the problem of epochal transition. Too persistently our ways of thinking about time still follow spatial concepts in the old "interart" sense, thus permitting them to enter, by way of metaphor, into scholarly discourse even if it strives to emancipate itself from chronology in order to practise chronography. What's more, those who like their epochal demarcations nice and neat might find the textual model employed here too open, applicable in fact to any transition in time. To be sure, considering the life of texts along the line of a

94 Cf. Louis L. Martz, *Poet of Exile: A Study of Milton's Poetry* (New Haven-London, 1980), pp. 7, 23, 28, 29, 30. As for Milton's early mannerism, see L. Borinski, "John Milton", in K.H. Göller (ed.), *Die englische Lyrik*, vol. I (Düsseldorf, 1968), pp. 194-208, esp. pp. 204f.

95 As for the generic richness of *Paradise Lost*, see Rosalie L. Colie, *The Resources of Kind: Genre-Theory in the Renaissance*, ed. B.K. Lewalski (Berkeley-Los Angeles-London, 1973), pp. 121f.

96 R. Wellek, "The Fall of Literary History" (1973), in R.W., *The Attack on Literature and Other Essays* (Chapel Hill, N.C., 1982), pp. 64-77, esp. p. 75.

wider historical trajectory, the latent qualities of Shakespeare's plays, for instance, have over the centuries been brought out by ever renewed efforts of interpretation, most provocatively so perhaps in Jan Kott's actualizing readings of them in the light of modern drama<sup>97</sup>. But also Milton, although in a less conspicuous and controversial way, could be shown to have had a beneficial influence already a century after his own, for the major poets of the period realized "that one had to rethink Milton, sometimes in a new mode, in order to discover the creative possibilities latent in his work"<sup>98</sup>. Now, while this openness undoubtedly enhances the model's theoretical status, it would seem to invalidate its heuristic use in characterizing the specific epochal transition at issue here. Yet this is clearly not the case, for what we actually encounter in the period between, say, 1530 and 1600 is an unusually great number of metastable and retrospective texts in the sense defined, so that we are therefore all the same justified in speaking of Mannerism, even though, from the geographical point of view alone, England cannot be compared to Italy in this respect. More important, however, than to note once again England's relative belatedness should be the attempt to formulate, as I have been trying to do, the conditions of the chronographic mode of inquiry. In other words, to point to the methodological requirements necessary in talking of epochal transition and to temporalize an argument vitiated through unrestrained analogizing for too long perhaps might not have been a move in the wrong direction after all.

97 Cf. Jan Kott, *Shakespeare Our Contemporary*, trans. B. Taborski, rev. ed. (London, 1967), esp. pp. 100-133 ("*King Lear*, or Endgame"); as well as, for a critical tribute to the author, John Elsom (ed.), *Is Shakespeare Still Our Contemporary* (London-New York, 1989).

98 Cf. Dustin Griffin, *Regaining Paradise: Milton and the Eighteenth Century* (Cambridge, 1986), p. 42.